11. EXISTENTIAL THEMES IN HEGEL'S PHENOMENOLOGY

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ABSTRACT. This paper is not a study in the history of ideas; rather, it is an interpretation of the Phenomenology of Spirit, guided largely by the commentaries of Alexandre Kojève and Jean Hyppolite, and written from the standpoint of an existential phenomenology. It opens with an exposition of Hegel's concepts of consciousness and experience and a statement of his conception of the phenomenological method. Then, arguing that the Phenomenology of Spirit is a concrete idealism which offers a cogent philosophy of human existence, the paper examines the closely related themes of death, freedom, intersubjectivity, action, and speech in Hegel's phenomenology. Finally, it closes with remarks, suggested by Hegel's analysis of action in the intersubjective world, on the interpretation of philosophical works.

It is well known that there was a Hegel renaissance in France during the 1930s and 1940s. This rediscovery of Hegel's work was led by Alexander Kojève, who taught courses devoted entirely to the Phenomenology of Spirit at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études from 1933 to 1939, and whose students' notebooks, collected and edited by Raymond Queneau, appeared under the title, Introduction à la lecture de Hegel, in 1947; and by Jean Hyppolite, a professor at the Sorbonne and, later, at the Collège de France, who published a translation of the Phenomenology of Spirit between 1939 and 1941, and whose influential commentary, Genèse et structure de la phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel, also appeared in 1947. These two men introduced Hegel to a generation of French intellectuals.

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Kojève, who sometimes compared Hegel to Heidegger, maintained that the Phenomenology of Spirit was an existential phenomenology before the fact. In his course summary for the academic year 1933-1934, for instance, he reported that the Phenomenology of Spirit had "revealed itself to be a philosophical anthropology. More exactly: a systematic and complete description, phenomenological in the modern (Husserlian) sense of the term, of the existential attitudes of man, done in view of the ontological analysis of Being as such which is the theme of the Logic." Hyppolite, for his part, held that the alienation of the unhappy consciousness is "the fundamental theme" of the Phenomenology of Spirit; identified points of comparison between Hegel's philosophy and the works of Husserl, Heidegger, Jaspers and Sartre; and asserted that contemporary philosophers refused only Hegel's ontology, not his phenomenology.

The commentaries of Kojève and Hyppolite have largely guided my study of the Phenomenology of Spirit. However, it is not my intent in the present paper to suggest that Hegel was, obscurely, the father of existentialism, or even to argue (more credibly) that he influenced its development. This paper is not a contribution to the history of ideas. Rather, it is a reading of Hegel (in the event, the Hegel of 1807) from the perspective of an existential phenomenology. It is, then, explicitly an interpretation or an appreciation of Hegel's work from a stated point of view. The thesis governing this interpretation is that the Phenomenology of Spirit is, in Hyppolite's phrase, "a concrete idealism," that is, undeniably an idealistic system, but nonetheless a work which offers in the elaboration of that system a cogent philosophy of human existence.

In what follows, I will first present Hegel's concepts of consciousness and experience, and briefly set forth his conception of the phenomenological method. I will then examine the themes of death, freedom, intersubjectivity, action, and speech as they arguably emerge in his phenomenology of human existence. Finally, drawing on Hegel's analysis of action in the intersubjective world, I will comment on the nature of philosophical interpretation. Because this is a "reading" of the Phenomenology of Spirit, an explication de texte, and because the reading proposed here is not the received interpretation in this country (and remains, in fact, controversial on the Continent), I have supported my thesis by quoting from the work itself more extensively than would normally be considered good form in expository writing. I trust the reader will excuse the frequency and the length of my citations.
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CONSCIOUSNESS, EXPERIENCE, AND
THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHOD

In a key passage of the Preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit, Hegel introduces (and identifies as such) the insight upon which his system is based: "In my view, which can be justified only by the exposition of the system itself, everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as Substance, but equally as Subject."9 The one-sided conception of "the true," of reality, as substance, or as objective and autonomous Being, neglects the irreducible moment of the subject, the "self,"10 which discovers and discloses itself through the history of human consciousness. More fundamentally still: the Absolute itself is Subject, consciousness, self-consciousness. Hegel writes:

Further, the living Substance is being which is in truth Subject, or, what is the same, is in truth actual only in so far as it is the movement of positing itself, or is the mediation of its self-othering with itself. This Substance is, as Subject, pure, simple negativity, and is for this very reason the bifurcation of the simple; it is the doubling which sets up opposition, and then again the negation of this indifferent diversity and of its antithesis (the immediate simplicity). Only this self-restoring sameness, or this reflection in otherness with itself—not an original or immediate unity as such—is the True. It is the process of its own becoming, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal, having its end also as its beginning, and only by being worked out to its end is it actual.11

The "living Substance," then—the Absolute, or Spirit, or, here, the True—is neither static nor given once and for all. It is movement and becoming, a dialectical process, a progressive, mediated realization of itself whose end (future) is anticipated at its very beginning (past). It is, as Subject, "pure, simple negativity," which, denying the original and immediate unity, opposes self and other, loses itself in the other, and recovers both the other and itself in a new and reflective harmony. And "only by being worked out to its end is it actual."

The true, therefore, is the whole. "But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development."15 It follows that "knowledge is only actual, and can only be expounded, as Science or as system. . ."16 And, Hegel avers, "It is this coming-to-be of Science as such or of knowledge that is described in this Phenomenology of Spirit."17

The Phenomenology of Spirit, then, is a narrative and descriptive discourse, a "science" or "knowledge" which
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takes science or knowledge itself as an historical phenomenon, and which retraces the path from immediate sense-consciousness to the knowledge of Spirit in and for itself. The Phenomenology of Spirit is "the Science of the experience of consciousness."19

What, however, is "consciousness?" And what, in this context, is "experience?"20 Let us turn for a moment from the Preface, which characterizes consciousness as "negativity," to the Introduction for some suggestions.

Hegel's analysis of the possibility and nature of knowledge opens with a critique of the received epistemological distinction between consciousness, or awareness, and its object, or the familiar opposition of 'knowing' and the 'known.'21 Cognition is not merely a matter of recording and organizing impressions of the given, which, for its part, would exist autonomously. Rather, there is an object only for a consciousness; the distinction which cognition presupposes is, at the same time, an intentional relation, a being-for-another: "Consciousness simultaneously distinguishes itself from something, and at the same time relates itself to it, or, as it is said, this something exists for consciousness; and the determinate aspect of this relating, or of the being of something for a consciousness, is knowing."

The object is for consciousness, for another. Yet it also is, irreducibly and undeniably, in itself: "... we distinguish this being-for-another from being-in-itself; whatever is related to knowledge or knowing is also distinguished from it, and posited as existing outside this relationship; this being-in-itself is called truth."23

The epistemological problem, then—the critical problem—is to test the adequacy of one's "notion" of the object, that is, the adequacy of one's knowledge of the truth of the object. It is here that Hegel makes his decisive contribution. Consciousness is necessarily (although not yet explicitly or thematically) self-consciousness:

... the essential fact to be borne in mind throughout the whole investigation is that these two moments, 'Notion' and 'object', 'being-for-another' and 'being-in-itself', both fall within that knowledge which we are investigating ... For consciousness is, on the other hand, consciousness of the object, and, on the other, consciousness of itself; consciousness of what for it is the True, and consciousness of its knowledge of the truth.25

The comparison of notion and object, or of knowledge and truth, takes place, therefore, within consciousness itself, which provides its own criterion of adequacy.26 And to
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revise or to alter one's knowledge of the object in consciousness is to revise or to alter the truth of the object in consciousness as well, or to alter the object itself, because the object is essentially for consciousness:

If the comparison shows that these two moments do not correspond to one another, it would seem that consciousness must alter its knowledge to make it conform to the object. But, in fact, in the alteration of the knowledge, the object itself alters for it too, for the knowledge that was present was essentially a knowledge of the object: as the knowledge changes, so too does the object, for it essentially belonged to this knowledge. Hence it comes to pass for consciousness that what it previously took to be the in-itself is not an in-itself, or that it was only an in-itself for consciousness. 27

Consciousness thus (progressively) discovers the inadequacy of its conception of objective reality, discovers that what it thought to be objectively true, the truth of the object, was in fact merely subjective. But the error, recognized as such, is itself a new truth. 28 And, Hegel writes, "Inasmuch as the new true object issues from it, this dialectical movement which consciousness exercises on itself and which affects both its knowledge and its object, is precisely what is called experience (Erfahrung)." 29

In Hegel's view, experience is the "dialectical movement" by which consciousness tests the adequacy of its knowledge, finds it deficient, and advances to a new truth, to a more critical awareness of the object and, tacitly, of itself: of the object, which is (seen to be) other than it first appeared; and of itself, because consciousness itself becomes an object to itself, or becomes other to itself, in this movement. 30

The new object of consciousness, then, is the "experience" of the first object of consciousness, 31 which has been "sublated" or "superseded" (aufgehoben). Although Hegel's dialectical concept of experience is introduced in the terms of an epistemology, or a theory of knowledge, the experience in question is not merely theoretical, not merely cognitive, but broadly and profoundly existential. Time and again, to be sure, consciousness finds its knowledge of the truth of the object to be deficient, if not simply erroneous, and, thus driven, dialectically transforms both the object and itself. And the successive appearance of "new" or transformed objects "guides the entire series of the patterns (Gestalten) of consciousness in their necessary sequence." 32

But, because natural consciousness...

. . . directly takes itself to be real knowledge, this path has a negative significance for it, and

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what is in fact (i.e., for us) the realization of the Notion, counts for it rather as the loss of its own self; for it does lose its truth on this path. The road can therefore be regarded as the pathway of doubt (Zweifel), or more precisely as the way of despair (Verzweiflung).33

The loss of its own self on a pathway of despair: What natural consciousness experiences is not just the loss of what it had held, "from a theoretical point of view," to be the truth; "it also loses there its own vision of life and of being, its intuition of the world."34 Its "self."

This is Hegel's concept of experience, then, as lived by natural consciousness and described by philosophical consciousness. For the phenomenological method is, in principle,35 rigorously descriptive. Indeed, Hegel claims that our philosophical investigation of knowledge, seen as phenomenon, is "presuppositionless," at least in so far as we need not assume or "import" a criterion, a standard of cognitive adequacy:

Consciousness provides its own criterion from within itself... Consequently, we do not need to import criteria, or to make use of our bright ideas and thoughts during the course of the inquiry; it is precisely when we leave these aside that we succeed in contemplating the matter in hand as it is in and for itself... /Not only is a contribution by us superfluous, since Notion and object, the criterion and what is to be tested, are present in consciousness itself, but we are also spared the trouble of comparing the two and really testing them, so that, since what consciousness examines is its own self, all that is left for us to do is simply to look on.36

Hegel's method, then, is, as Kojève remarks, "purely contemplative and descriptive"; and this descriptive method is (also) dialectical only because, as we have seen, the experience of consciousness which philosophy describes is dialectical: "there is a dialectic of 'scientific' thought only because there is a dialectic of Being which that thought reveals. From the moment that the revealing description (la description révelatrice) is correct, one can say that ordo et connexio idearum idem est ac ordo et connexio rerum; for the order and connection of the real are, according to Hegel, dialectical."37

The ideal of phenomenology as direct and presuppositionless observation of the experience of consciousness is reaffirmed in the first paragraph of the first chapter of the Phenomenology of Spirit proper (on sense-certainty):

The knowledge or knowing which is at the start or
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is immediately our object cannot be anything else but immediate knowledge itself, a knowledge of the immediate or what simply is. Our approach to the object must also be immediate or receptive (aufnehmend); we must alter nothing in the object as it presents itself. In apprehending it, we must refrain from trying to comprehend it (wir haben von dem Auffassen das Begreifen abzuhalten).38

Thus, in Hyppolite's phrase, the philosopher will "disappear before the experience that he apprehends."39 Moreover, far from being limited in application to the description of elementary awareness and sense-perception, the phenomenological method extends as well to the ethical world (and so to the cultural world). In presenting the mind's experience of the ethical law, which reason, as lawgiver, knows immediately, Hegel writes:

What is thus given immediately must likewise be accepted and considered immediately. Just as in the case of sense-certainty, we had to examine the nature of what it immediately expressed as being, so here, too, we have to see how the being expressed by this immediate ethical certainty, or by the immediately existing 'masses' of the ethical substance, is constituted (beschaffen).40

In fact, the "pathway" to science which the Phenomenology of Spirit retracts "will encompass the entire sphere of secular consciousness (die vollstandige Weltlichkeit des Bewusstseins) in its necessary development."41 And this pathway, "the way of despair," is precisely "the detailed history of the education (Bildung) of consciousness itself to the standpoint of Science."42 Phenomenology is the itinerary of natural consciousness—which is, as we have seen, an intentional relation to the other, the object—en route to science or reflective knowledge. It is also, for us, philosophers, who perceive (or already know) what is going on "behind the back" of natural consciousness,43 the realization of Substance as Subject in the advent of absolute Spirit. Thus, Hegel writes, "the goal is as necessarily fixed for knowledge as the serial progression; it is the point where knowledge no longer needs to go beyond itself, where knowledge finds itself, where Notion corresponds to object and object to Notion."44

The goal is the point "where knowledge no longer needs to go beyond itself." But on the path to that terminus knowledge does, continually, need to go beyond itself, and consciousness is essentially self-transcendence. The passage we have just cited goes on to distinguish between natural life and conscious life precisely in these terms: "Whatever is confined within the limits of a natural life cannot by its own efforts go beyond its immediate existence;
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but it is driven beyond it by something else, and this uprooting entails its death. Consciousness, however, is explicitly the Notion of itself. Hence it is something that goes beyond limits, and since these limits are its own, it is something that goes beyond itself. 45

Consciousness, then, is a self-transcendence, a going-beyond-its-own-limits, an uprooting, an economy of death in its essential structure and dialectical movement. Kojeve goes so far as to argue that "the 'dialectic' or anthropological philosophy of Hegel is, in the last analysis, a philosophy of death," 46 and Hyppolite maintains that "the entire Phenomenology will be a meditation on this death which is borne by consciousness and which, far from being exclusively negative, the end in abstract nothingness, is on the contrary an Aufhebung, an ascension." 47 With these remarks, we will turn to an examination of the themes of death, freedom, and intersubjectivity in the Phenomenology of Spirit.

DEATH, FREEDOM, AND THE OTHER

We have seen that consciousness is becoming, negativity, mediation. It is knowledge of the immediate, knowledge of the in-itself, or thetic knowledge, and knowledge of the in-itself as known by consciousness, or thematic knowledge; it is knowledge of the object, the other, and knowledge of itself as the other of the object. In thus reflecting upon itself, it discovers that its knowledge of the object is defective, that the known, the object, the other, is other than it appeared, or that the in-itself was only for another, that is, for consciousness. And in negating or transforming its knowledge of the object it transforms or mediates the object too, for the object is essentially known, is "object" only in so far as it is an object for consciousness. 48

But consciousness is negation and mediation, not only in cognition, and not only in the process whereby absolute Spirit regains the original unity of the Subject and Substance, or becomes in-itself and for-itself in the fullness of time, but also, more concretely, in the abstract and manipulative activity of human understanding (Verstand). We can think and speak of things divorced from their "here" and "now," we can represent the absent and mentally displace that which is immediately given, we can creatively combine objects with one another and analytically break them down to their components. 49 We are free: we enjoy a certain autonomy vis-a-vis the given; we possess the ability to deny or to "negate" the given structure of reality and to imagine things otherwise, to imagine a different world.

This "activity of dissolution" is, Hegel writes, "the most astonishing and mightiest of powers, or rather the ab-
There is nothing surprising or wonderful in the immediate relationship between a self-enclosed thing, which is simply there, and its properties. But understanding, or abstract reasoning, which can "detach" an accident from an object and confer upon it "an existence of its own and a separate freedom," is "the tremendous power of the negative." It is, in fact, the power of death, "if that is what we want to call this non-actuality," that power of death which is borne by consciousness in its commerce with the world.

Understanding, or abstract and discursive reasoning, is, with the related power of speech, the faculty which distinguishes the human from the animal and the inanimate, or conscious life from natural life. Human beings are thus fully or authentically human only when, let us say, intellectually active (for reasoning is, as we have seen, an activity). But consciousness is negation; and the power of understanding is "the absolute power," death. Authentic human existence, or conscious life, therefore implies the most difficult acknowledgment of its own essential finitude, its mortality: "Death . . . is of all things the most dreadful, and to hold fast what is dead requires the greatest strength . . . But the life of the Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it . . . Spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it."

We have also seen that consciousness of the object is necessarily self-consciousness: the object, a "unity of differences," a manifold of properties, is merely in itself, is simply there; but the object is (there) for consciousness; and consciousness is for itself. This distinction marks the crucial difference between what we have called "conscious" and "natural" life, or between self-consciousness in its historical development, and physical existence. And the distinction is crucial not only for us, philosophers, but also for self-consciousness, which seeks to affirm itself as self-consciousness, as being-for-self, precisely by "superseding" the in-itself. That is to say: self-consciousness is assertedly for itself because, unlike its object, it is not merely in itself. In order thus to affirm its ontological status, or to be certain of itself, however, self-consciousness needs the other, the object, the in-itself, and in this sense it is "desire."

... self-consciousness is thus certain of itself only by superseding (aufheben) this other that presents itself to self-consciousness as an independent life; self-consciousness is Desire (Begierde). Certain of the nothingness of this other, it explicitly affirms that this nothingness is for it the truth of the other; it destroys the independent object and thereby gives itself the
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certainty of itself as a true certainty, a cer­tainty which has been explicit for self-conscious­ness itself in an objective manner.\textsuperscript{55}

Self-consciousness, we said—or, here, desire—needs the other: "in order that this supersession can take place, there must be this other." But desire is insatiable, or, more accurately, arises ever again; moreover, because self­consciousness is desire, or want, or lack, the other is es­sential to self-consciousness; or again, in epistemological terms, the object is essential to the subject. "It is in fact something other than self-consciousness that is the essence of Desire . . ." In other words, the object, always renewed, always reasserted, is effectively the independent term. "Thus self-consciousness, by its negative relation to the object, is unable to supersede it." The attempt to ne­glect the other, the object, the in-itself, and so to reaf­firm the for-itself as such, necessarily fails. Only if the object were to effect its own negation would self-con­sciousness achieve satisfaction:

. . . and it must carry out this negation of it­self in itself, for it is in itself the negative, and must be for the other what it is. Since the object is in its own self negation, and in being so is at the same time independent, it is con­s­sciousness . . . Self-consciousness achieves its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness . . . A self-consciousness exists for a self-con­sciousness. Only so is it in fact self-con­sciousness; for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness become explicit for it.\textsuperscript{56}

This, it must be noted, is Hegel's fundamental and stikingly original contribution to the problem of intersub­jectivity in modern and, indeed, contemporary thought.\textsuperscript{57} There is no question here of reasoning by analogy to the existence of the other as alter ego, an existence which can, in the end, only be "probable." Rather, self-consciousness is "the desire of desire," and the other, precisely as sub­ject or self-consciousness, is, in more familiar terms, con­stitutive of the self as subject or self-consciousness. In fact, self-consciousness is self-consciousness only when it is recognized as such by another self-consciousness: "Self­consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged (es ist nur als ein Anerkanntes)."\textsuperscript{58}

In order to be recognized as self-consciousness, howev­er, the self has to present itself to the other, be present to him, as such. We thus take up again the distinction be­tween conscious and natural life: self-consciousness must demonstrate to the other that it is not merely in itself but for itself, that it is not limited but "goes beyond limits" and "goes beyond itself," that it is not attached to any
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determinate being, in short, "that it is not attached to life."

This presentation is a twofold action: action on the part of the other, and action on its own part. In so far as it is the action of the other, each seeks the death of the other. But in doing so, the second kind of action, action on its own part, is also involved; for the former involves the staking of its own life. Thus the relation of the two self-conscious individuals is such that they prove themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle.59

The dialectic of mastery and servitude, or of "lordship and bondage," as Baillie and Miller would have it, has been explained and interpreted so extensively in the literature that we need not linger over it here. Let us pause only to comment on a passage of extraordinary power. The slave has chosen life over freedom, has confessed himself to be rooted in a determinate being and dependent upon the natural world. His consciousness is therefore "not purely for itself but for another, i.e., is a merely immediate consciousness, or consciousness in the form of thinghood."60 His "truth" is mastery, "the independent consciousness that is for itself," but this truth is outside the servile consciousness, and his reality remains utter dependence for life itself upon the world and the master. Still, servitude implicitly contains "this truth of pure negativity and being-for-self" within itself:

For consciousness has been fearful, not of this or that particular thing or just at odd moments, but its whole being has been seized with dread (Angst); for it has experienced the fear of death, the absolute Lord. In that experience it has been quite unmanned (es ist darin innerlich aufgelöst worden), has trembled in every fibre of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations. But this pure universal movement, the absolute melting away of everything stable, is the simple, essential nature of self-consciousness, absolute negativity, pure being-for-self, which consequently is implicit in this consciousness.61

In the experience of dread, or anguish, which arises from the fearsome confrontation with imminent death, every particular existent dissolves, and self-consciousness grasps the totality of its being. Moreover, this nearness of death, this dissolution of all subsistence, is the very definition of self-consciousness as pure negativity. The experience of anguish, then, is, in existential terms, the experience of authentic self-awareness. "Human consciousness," Hyppolite remarks, "can shape itself only through
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this anguish which bears on the entirety of its being."62

Self-consciousness, then, arises from the reciprocal action of two individuals, or self-consciousness is organically inter-subjective, and the world of Spirit will be an ethical world, a social and political and historical world, a world of obligations to self, and family, and state.63

The function of war in Hegel's philosophy of the state is well known. Once the community has organized itself into "systems of personal independence and (private) property," it tends to fragment: those increasingly isolated "systems," or private associations and interest groups, become more important than the whole, that is, the nation or the state. Moreover, the individuals, or "persons," comprising those atomistic groups tend to become preoccupied with the petty concerns of practical life, and thus to become "submerged in a (merely) natural existence." War serves to re-establish the communal spirit, the sense of belonging to a larger community and a higher order; at the same time, the threat of imminent death posed by war jolts the individual and restores him to what we might, once again, call authentically human existence as self-consciousness:

In order not to let them become rooted and set in this isolation, thereby breaking up the whole and letting the (communal) spirit evaporate, government has from time to time to shake them to their core by war. By this means the government upsets their established order, and violates their right to independence, while the individuals who, absorbed in their own way of life, break loose from the whole and strive after the inviolable independence and security of the person, are made to feel in the task laid on them their lord and master, death. Spirit, by thus throwing into the melting-pot the stable existence of these systems, checks their tendency to fall away from the ethical order, and to be submerged in a (merely) natural existence; and its preserves and raises conscious self into freedom and its own power.64

However, as the dialectic of mastery and servitude made clear, the threat of death is one thing; actually to die is quite another.65 To be sure, "death is the fulfilment and the supreme 'work' which the individual as such undertakes" on behalf of "the ethical community." But it is "an accident" that a particular individual should die in service to the community or "the universal." And such a death takes place "immediately," in "nature," not as "the result of an action consciously done"; it is "the natural negativity and movement of the individual as a (mere) existent, in which consciousness does not return into itself and become self-consciousness . . ."66 In this violently historical world, it is, Hegel concludes, the ethical duty and the spiritual
function of the family to 'add the aspect of consciousness' so that the dead individual does not belong to nature alone.

In a related passage devoted to the family, Hegel suggests that self-consciousness can, to a limited extent, be recognized in love, and that in educating the child the parents are preparing themselves for death:

. . . the relationship of husband and wife is in the first place the one in which consciousness immediately recognizes itself in another, and in which there is knowledge of this mutual recognition. Because this self-recognition is a natural and not an ethical one, it is only a representation (Vorstellung), and image (Bild) of Spirit, not actually Spirit itself. A representation or image, however, has its actual existence in something other than itself. This relationship therefore has its actual existence not in itself but in the child—an 'other', whose coming into existence is the relationship, and is also that in which the relationship itself gradually passes away . . .

Love, too, implies recognition, at least by the beloved, and it can also be characterized as the desire of desire, or at least the desire to be desired. But, in Hegel's view, and this intuition is, clearly, fundamental to his philosophy of human existence, only through the risk of his life can an individual be universally and unqualifiedly recognized as being-for-self; and only by actually being recognized as a free self-consciousness can an individual become a being-for-self, that is, fully and authentically human. Thus, Hyppolite remarks that, for Hegel, love "does not insist enough on the tragic character of separation, it lacks 'the force, the patience, and the labor of the negative.'" Similarly, Kojève writes that in the Phenomenology of Spirit Hegel implicitly reproaches love "on the one hand for its 'private' character (one can be loved only by a very few people, whereas one can be recognized universally), and, on the other hand, for its 'lack of seriousness,' in view of the absence of the Risk of life . . ."

We have already had occasion to comment on human freedom in the exercise of understanding, which Hegel calls "the tremendous power of the negative" and identifies as death. This freedom is, we said, autonomy with regard to the given, an ideational (but by no means fictitious) capacity to deny and to restructure 'reality.' We have also remarked that it is by consciously and freely putting his life at stake and threatening the life of the other in the struggle for recognition that self-consciousness asserts its independence from the natural world and achieves its truth as being-for-self. Consciousness is freedom, that is, negativity; and self-consciousness is the voluntary assumption of the freedom of consciousness in a deliberate and virtually suicidal con-
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frontation with death, an experience in which it learns that physical existence, natural life, is also essential.  

In this context, it is not surprising that abstract and absolute freedom, the "universal freedom" of the revolution, as defined, impossibly, by an individual will, should be capable only of "negative action" and should become "the fury of destruction." For absolute freedom, freedom in its pure state, "all reality is solely spiritual; the world is for it simply its own will . . ." Universal freedom, then, unlike the freedom and individuality of actual self-consciousness in its ordinary commerce with the world, is "merely the interaction of consciousness with itself"; abstract freedom, absolute autonomy, it is not rooted in the facticity of the natural world and the concrete historical situation, and it cannot produce positive works which would afford it enduring and objective reality. Absolute freedom is absolute negation. After destroying the social fabric, its only "object" is itself, and its only "work" is the meaningless death-dealing of the terror:

Now that it has completed the destruction of the actual world, and exists now just for itself, this is its sole object, an object that no longer has any content, possession, existence, or outer extension, but is merely this knowledge of itself as an absolutely pure and free individual self . . . The relation, then, of these two (i.e., freedom as consciousness, and freedom as the object of consciousness) . . . is one of wholly unmediated pure negation . . . The sole work and deed of universal freedom is therefore death, a death too which has no inner significance or filling, for what is negated is the empty point of the absolutely free self. It is thus the coldest and meanest of all deaths, with no more significance than cutting off a head of cabbage or swallowing a mouthful of water.  

Through this experience, Hegel writes, "self-consciousness learns what absolute freedom in effect is": "In itself, it is just this abstract self-consciousness, which effaces all distinction and all continuance of distinction within it. It is as such that it is objective to itself; the terror of death is the vision (Anschauung) of this negative nature (Wesen) of itself (i.e., of absolute freedom)."

The "terror" of death is self-consciousness' intuition of the "negative" essence of absolute freedom. But self-consciousness itself is freedom and negativity. Self-consciousness, then, is precisely consciousness of the self as negation, as negativity in action, and human reality, we conclude, is the reality of death. The human being is not merely mortal but death incarnate; indeed, qua self-con-
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sciousness, he is his own death. And authentic human existence is the explicit recognition and unflinching acceptance, acceptance without reservation, of thus absolute finitude. For "the life of the Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it."

There is in the Phenomenology of Spirit one other passage on death to which we direct our attention. It figures in the section entitled "Culture and its Realm of Actuality," where Hegel discusses the noble consciousness in its relation to the state. The heroic service of the noble consciousness is the true source of the state's authority; but, Hegel notes, the noble consciousness remains a haughty vassal, a self, an individual, whose loyalty is always suspect and whose counsel is always ambiguous. Only if the noble consciousness were to surrender its individuality without reserve, to renounce, in fact, its very existence as an individual, would the state-power be recognized as a monarch and have a self of its own. Yet the noble consciousness must sacrifice his being-for-self without actually dying—for actually to die, as we have understood, is to become a thing, a cadaver, and the state-power will be a self-consciousness only if it is recognized by another self-consciousness.

That renunciation of existence, when it is complete, as it is in death, is simply a renunciation; it does not return into consciousness; consciousness does not survive the renunciation, it is not in and for itself, but merely passes over into its unreconciled opposite. Consequently, the true sacrifice of being-for-self is solely that in which it surrenders itself as completely as in death, yet in this renunciation no less preserves itself.

It is through language that this 'contradiction' is resolved: not discursive language, but what we would today call performative language, a speech-act (here, presumably, an act of fealty). Hegel: . . . this alienation takes place solely in language, which here appears in its characteristic significance . . . It is the power of speech, as that which performs what has to be performed. For it is the real existence of the pure self as self; in speech, self-consciousness, qua independent separate individuality, comes as such into existence, so that it exists for others. In speech, self-consciousness comes into existence for others; spoken language "expresses the 'I', the 'I' itself," and gives it objective reality. Thus, here, the surrender of self in speech, the sacrifice of individuality in words, is as real and as effective as dying. With this, let us turn to a consideration of the existential features of work and language.
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ACTION AND SPEECH

The slave is slave to the master because he was first a slave to nature, rooted in a determinate being and governed by the animal instinct to survive. But the slave knows what freedom is, for the servile consciousness is also a self-consciousness whose explicit object and implicit truth is the master, "the independent consciousness that is for itself." And the servile consciousness has, in its anguish before death, experienced "within itself" the reality of absolute negativity and pure being-for-self which is, ultimately, the essence of independent self-consciousness. It "has trembled in every fibre of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations." Moreover—and this is the text we must now address—the slave's consciousness is not this dissolution of everything stable merely in principle; in his service he actually brings this about. Through his service he rids himself of his attachment to natural existence in every single detail; and gets rid of it by working on it."

In its immediately negative relation to objective reality, to the in-itself, or to the natural world, self-consciousness is desire; and, because satisfaction is transitory, "the unalloyed feeling of self" in the fulfillment of desire lacks the permanence of objective existence. In that immediate relation, Hegel writes, "the thing retained in its independence," and desire was the inessential moment. But work is deferred gratification, the repression of desire; rather than immediately 'negating' the thing, that is, consuming it, the slave prepares it for consumption. "Work . . . is desire held in check, fleetingness staved off; in other words, work forms and shapes the thing. Thus the negative relation to the object (i.e., desire) becomes its form and something permanent . . ." Let us say that desire, or self-consciousness, informs the worked object, and that the slave realizes or reifies himself in his work, which subsists independently of him. And "consciousness, qua worker," then recognizes itself in its objectively existing work; it "comes to see in the independent being (of the object) its own independence."

This key passage introduces several themes central to Hegel's philosophical anthropology, themes which will recur throughout the Phenomenology of Spirit. We note, first, that the freedom of self-consciousness acquires a more concrete and positive meaning here. Consciousness is the negation, in understanding and desire, of objective reality as it is given. But for self-consciousness, the object is not only 'external' reality but consciousness itself, because the given is for consciousness. Individual self-consciousness is in and for itself, therefore, in the negation of
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consciousness, its object, through the risk of one's very life or through the avowed willingness literally to annihilate oneself. The struggle of the two individuals who are to become master and slave, then, is the struggle to be recognized (by another self-consciousness) as a being-for-self which not only holds the objective existence of the natural world cheap, but also scorns its own life: to be recognized, and so validated, that is, as pure negativity and as an independent self-consciousness which transcends the natural world. But: "In this experience, self-consciousness learns that life is as essential to it as pure self-consciousness." That is to say, self-consciousness confronts the fact of its physical existence, the fact that it is in the natural world, and this, not accidentally but "essentially." Or, in the face of death, anguished self-consciousness becomes keenly aware of what we might call its facticity. And the slave chooses life. But, whereas the master's independence from the natural world is entirely a function of his willingness to risk his life, and can be "realized," therefore, only in death, in nothingness, the slave will dialectically liberate himself from his dependence on the natural world by working it, elaborating it, transforming it. The slave will master the natural world in which he finds himself. We see, then, that if the freedom of self-consciousness is not an illusion, and if it is not merely the freedom to destroy oneself, it must actually be realized through work, or, more generally, through creative action in the world as it presents itself to consciousness.

In the second place, what self-consciousness "realizes" through its work is precisely itself: freedom, desire, negation. It is, to rework the text, "the individuality or pure being-for-self of consciousness" which is externalized or projected in the worked object and thus "acquires an element of permanence." Or, since (as must by now be clear) self-consciousness is human consciousness, the slave may be said to humanize the natural world through his service and labor. He transforms the hostile natural environment through his "formative activity"; he elaborates the given and makes of the natural world a familiar, human world, a cultural world in which he is at home. And, because self-consciousness arises from the struggle for recognition, or because, as we said, the other is constitutive of the self, this cultural world is, in its very origins, intersubjective.

Finally, self-consciousness not only realizes itself in its work but also discovers itself there. Self-consciousness recognizes itself as self as self-consciousness in what it has done. We read a moment ago that in the independence or subsistent existence of the worked object, consciousness, qua worker, has an intuition of its own independence; and we will read in the following paragraph that the negativity of consciousness becomes an object for consciousness in the
transformed thing which the slave has "fashioned" or "shaped." Self-consciousness, then, realizes itself in its action and discovers itself in its achievements.

The notions of facticity and of self-realization through action in the shared world are reintroduced and further developed in Hegel's long and difficult critique of the naturalistic pseudo-sciences of physiognomy and phrenology, at the stage in which observing reason turns its attention to the spiritual world of conscious individuality. 87 Let us consider the following text:

The individual exists in and for himself: he is for himself or is a free activity; but he has also an intrinsic being or has an original determinate being of his own. . . . In his own self, therefore, there emerges the antithesis, this duality of being the movement of consciousness, and the fixed being of an appearing actuality, an actuality which in the individual is immediately his own. This being, the body of the specific individuality, is the latter's original aspect, that aspect in the making of which it has not itself played a part. But since the individual is at the same time only what he has done, his body is also the expression of himself which he has himself produced: it is at the same time a sign, which has not remained an immediate fact, but something through which the individual only makes known what he really is, when he sets his original nature to work. 88

The individual's body is being-in-itself; it is the individual's "original determinate being," his "appearing actuality," his "original aspect." It is that by which the conscious individual physically exists in the natural world and has a place there. Moreover, this original aspect, this corporeity, is "that aspect in the making of which [the specific individuality] has not itself played a part." 89

The beginning is always already the past; at the earliest stage of knowledge, the stage of sense-certainty, which is itself "a knowledge of the immediate or of what simply is." 90 the individual consciousness finds itself already thrown into the world. But the individual also exists for himself, "or is a free activity." Indeed, he creates himself through this free activity, his work, his projects: "the individual is at the same time only what he has done." And, because his body is animated by consciousness, or, better, because his body is that by which he is in the world and the world is for him, that body is also, in its creative action, a being-for-others, "a sign . . . through which the individual only makes known what he really is, when he sets his original nature to work."

The body, then, or, in the language of physiognomic
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observation, "the outer," is for Hegel an instrument: it acts as "an organ in making the inner visible, or, in general a being-for-another." But what the body publicly expresses in speech and action is the self of the individual. In fact, speech and action do not merely express that self; they are the inner self, the ego, made visible. But the externality, or the objective and subsistent existence, which the inner obtains through the "speaking mouth" and the "working hand" is a reality apart from and independent of the acting individual himself: "Speech and work are outer expressions in which the individual no longer keeps and possesses himself within himself, but lets the inner get completely outside of him, leaving it to the mercy of something other than itself." The individual projects himself in what he says and does: but his words and actions assume an objective existence of their own, and are thus open to interpretation by other individuals. In speech and action, then, the inner puts itself "at the mercy of the element of change, which twists the spoken word and the accomplished act into meaning something else than they are in and for themselves, as actions of this particular individual."

Hegel presents the idea of the self realizing and discovering itself through its action once again in his discussion of "the spiritual animal kingdom," where he also addresses the problem of the public character of the individual's accomplished acts. Individuality, he writes there, has an "originally determinate nature," which is "its immediate essence." However, "an individual cannot know what he [really] is until he has made himself a reality through action." This would seem to throw the individual self-consciousness into a vicious circle: because it is a self-consciousness, or because it is Spirit, it can act only in view of an end (Zweck), namely, the realization of itself, of what it essentially is, in the world; only thus can what it is in itself become explicit for itself; but the individual self-consciousness cannot know what it "originally" is until it has acted, or cannot know what the end of its actions is until it has carried it out.

From the perspective of an existential phenomenology, that is, from the standpoint we have adopted in this study, Hegel's resolution of this contradiction is most interesting. Action itself breaks this theoretical circle. The individual, Hegel asserts, must simply "start immediately, and, whatever the circumstances, without further scruples about beginning, means, or End, proceed to action; for his essence and intrinsic nature is beginning, means, and End, all in one." Self-consciousness is, let us say, situated and intentional. We find ourselves in certain circumstances; and the world which offers itself to us as situated beings is not merely objective reality existing in itself and independently of us: there is, as we have seen, an object only for a subject, or the world is for us, it is our world, and in the interest we take in this or that aspect of
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the world it is already ourselves that we discover there.

As beginning, this nature [i.e., the original, determinate nature of the individual] is present in the circumstances of the action; and the interest, which the individual finds in something is the answer already given to the question, 'whether he should act, and what should be done in a given case'. For what seems to be a given reality ... shows itself to be his own original nature by the interest he takes in it.

Similarly, the means for accomplishing the indicated action are at hand: the external or instrumental means suggests itself in the "given" situation,96 and the internal means is precisely our individual talents and dispositions, or again our "determinate, original individuality," considered as the transition from the end envisioned to the reality achieved. Individuality, then, is from the beginning "an interfusion of being and action."

There is, however, a fundamental disparity between the self-consciousness which acts, and the action which it accomplishes. This disparity is, indeed, the foundational difference between being-in-itself and being-for-itself. For "the work done" is something specific, a determinate thing, "like the individual's original nature which it expresses."97 Being a determinate work, it has the quality of negativity (omnis determinatio est negatio); but consciousness, as action, as movement, is negativity itself, "negativity in general," and "is thus the universal as against the specific character of the work done." Consciousness, then, realizes itself in its action (Tun), but withdraws from its accomplished act (Tat), which, as we have seen before, subsists independently of the acting individual. "The consciousness which withdraws from its work is, in fact, the universal consciousness in contrast to its work, which is determinate and particular—and is universal because it is absolute negativity ..."98 Nonetheless, self-consciousness projects itself, and realizes itself, and expresses itself in its work, and the work subsists as an external, objective, and independent reality. Moreover, external and objective, it is for others: it is, as an existent, their object of consciousness.

The work is, i.e., it exists for other individualities, and is for them an alien reality, which they must replace by their own in order to obtain through their action the consciousness of their unity with reality; in other words, their interest in the work which stems from their original nature, is something different from this work's own peculiar interest, which is thereby converted into something different. Thus the work is, in general, something perishable, which is obliterated by
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the counter-action of other forces and interests, and really exhibits the reality of the individuality as vanishing rather than as achieved. 99

At the term of this dialectic, then, the self-consciousness which transcends its own particular works and so transcends itself becomes aware of the antithesis of being and doing. But, as we have already remarked, this transcendence, this going-beyond-limits and going-beyond-one's own efforts, is precisely the definition of authentically human existence. The work, then, is the individual in so far as he is determinate and particular. And "the work is, in general, something perishable," just as the individual is mortal. Moreover, because one is his work, because one is what he does and says and produces, and this work, once done, is "obliterated" by other individuals, human existence is, in Kojève's phrase, "a mediated suicide."100 To publish is to perish in a struggle for recognition. But the work is the individual only in so far as he is determinate and particular. The consciousness which withdraws from the work and transcends it is, by contrast, universal; it is "negativity in general," which "can therefore compare one work with another, and by so doing grasp individualities themselves as different."101 He is those others. He is his own death.

In our discussion of the theme of action, we have several times had occasion to remark that self-consciousness also expresses itself and realizes itself in speech. In fact, Hegel tells us in his chapter on conscience that language is "the existence of Spirit": "Language is self-consciousness existing for others, self-consciousness which as such is immediately present, and as this self-consciousness is universal . . . "102 Language is Spirit. And when "the reconciling Yea is pronounced--whe the judging consciousness recognizes itself in the active consciousness, recognizes that its harsh condemnation of act and agent is also an action, and stands convicted--in this moment of mutual recognition and forgiveness, absolute Spirit is finally present, at least "objectively": "The word of reconciliation is the objectively existent Spirit, which beholds the pure knowledge of itself qua universal essence in its opposite, in the pure knowledge of itself qua absolutely self-contained and exclusive individuality--a reciprocal recognition which is absolute Spirit."103

Thus Hegel describes language. But let us talk about his own philosophical discourse. Philosophy is the love of knowledge and the search for wisdom. But knowledge, "science," is, for Hegel, Spirit in and for itself; wisdom is the fullness of self-consciousness. And Hegel aspires to absolute knowledge: in the Preface, he modestly remarks, "To help bring philosophy closer to the form of Science, to the goal where it can lay aside the title, 'love of knowing' and be actual knowing--that is what I have set myself to do."104 Indeed, Hegel claims, not anywhere in the Phen-
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... the pure element of its existence,"¹⁰⁵ Spirit is reconciled with and present to itself, Spirit desire nothing further--Spirit is tenured and his name is Hegel. His philosophical discourse, then, is, as Kojève urges, an effort to account for himself, or to account for human existence in the fullness of self-consciousness. Or, again: The True is the whole. And philosophy is not merely a true description but a description of the True, and the whole of reality. But "the whole of reality" embraces philosophy; the whole, the totality, includes philosophical discourse on the totality, and therefore includes the philosopher, the sage, the human being who observes, and reasons, and speaks. Philosophy must, then, take into account human existence in the historical world.¹⁰⁶

Moreover, we know, we philosophers, that the Phenomenology of Spirit is already "science": it is "the Science of the experience of consciousness, a descriptive reprise of the dialectical development of consciousness from its first revealing word about objective reality¹⁰⁷ to its true form of existence in and for itself as Science, or wisdom, or absolute knowledge, or Hegel's philosophy. And this "pathway" of consciousness is the progressive subjectivization of the objective world, the in-itself, and the concurrent objectification of self-consciousness, the for-itself. The experience of consciousness is the advent of Spirit, the transformation of Substance into Subject:

For experience is just this, that the content—which is Spirit—is in itself substance, and therefore an object of consciousness. But this substance which is Spirit is the process in which Spirit becomes what it is in itself; and it is only as this process of reflecting itself into itself that it is in itself truly Spirit. It is in itself the movement which is cognition—the transforming of the in-itself into what is for itself, of Substance into Subject, of the object of consciousness into an object of self-consciousness, i.e., into an object that is just as much superseded, or into the Notion. The movement is the circle that returns into itself, the circle that presupposes its beginning and reaches it only at the end.¹⁰⁸

With this, let us set Hegel's work aside and turn our attention to the question of interpretation.

INTERPRETATION AND VIOLENCE

The differences between Hegelian idealism and Husserlian phenomenology are, clearly, so great as to render any comparison derisory. On the one hand, we have a circular
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and thoroughly deterministic system whose beginning literally presupposes its end; on the other, a groping investigation and a strenuous effort, always renewed, just to reach the beginning, a presuppositionless standpoint. Again, on the one hand, a philosophy that presents itself not only as the product of its own historical development but also as the synthesis and the truth of all previous philosophies; and on the other, the work of a mathematician who came late to the study of philosophy and who was, on many points, unconcerned with its history—the work, in fact, of a philosopher who repudiated the Hegelian dialectic without having studied Hegel. Finally, on the one hand a doctrine which maintains that the achievement of philosophy is absolute Spirit revealing itself to itself; and, on the other, the simple premisses that philosophy is an intensely personal affair, and that philosophy is never "achieved."

Similarly, the differences between Hegel and Heidegger, the Sartre, the Merleau-Ponty who haunt the interpretation of Hegel proposed here, are undeniable. It would be most instructive not to compare but to contrast Hegel and Heidegger's concepts of finitude, Hegel and Sartre's notions of negation, project, and intersubjectivity, or Hegel and Merleau-Ponty's ideas of history, corporeity, language. These students of Husserl were also students of Hegel; but they were, no less than Hegel, profound and original thinkers whose works deserve to be respected in their integrity.

But the integrity of the work is precisely the question. Hegel has suggested, in this reading of his work, that interpretation is an act of violence, an assassination (and the author a willing victim, a suicide). Is he right? Are we justified in thinking that he thought so?

Emmanuel Levinas—a phenomenologist by training who has taken the refusal of all 'totalizing' thought to its logical limits and whose work is, let me be clear, radically and explicitly anti-Hegelian in its intent—has also written about interpretation in these terms. Levinas distinguishes between "expression," or speech, and "the work." In expression, the speaker is immediately present to his interlocutor as a "sovereign will," a self or a subject who assists at his own presentation, and can defend himself. But "through the mediation of the work, which separates itself from its author, his intentions, and his possession, and which another will lay hold of," the individual is "unceremoniously delivered over to the Other."

The work "allows itself to be appropriated" and is thus destined to a history which its author cannot foresee, a history at which he will not be in attendance.

Every will separates itself from its work. The movement proper to action consists in issuing in the unknown—in not being able to measure all its consequences. The unknown does not result from a
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factual ignorance; the unknown upon which action issues resists all knowledge, does not stand out in the light, since it represents the meaning the work receives from the other. The other can dispossess me of my work, take it or buy it, and thus direct my very behaviour; I am exposed to instigation. The work is destined to this alien Sinngebung from the moment of its origin in me.

This is, we read, the movement proper to action: Levinas writes—and Hegel would, I think, agree, had he survived—"this destination of the work to a history that I cannot foresee... is inscribed in the very essence of my power," that is, in the nature of will and action and authorship. For the self, the sovereign will, is faithful to itself in its action, but inevitably betrayed by its works. And, Levinas avers, "The will contains this duality of betrayal and fidelity in its mortality, which is produced or holds sway in its corporeity." It is because we are not pure will or pure spirit, being-for-itself, that we live in an historical world and produce works which themselves, and necessarily, are physical, and objective, and entirely independent of us.

The work, then, lends itself to interpretation. In fact, as an object of our consciousness, it solicits interpretation. We read the works of others in the light of our own interests and concerns, and we cannot do otherwise. And we write books, knowing full well that we will die and that our publications will either be open to interpretation—or of no interest. The Phenomenology of Spirit is rich enough to support more than one reading; indeed, as Mearleau-Ponty observes, there are several Hegels, and "to give an interpretation of Hegel is to take a position on all the philosophical, political, and religious problems of our century."


3. *Introduction à la lecture*, p. 57. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from the French appearing in this paper are mind, and all emphases are the authors'.


8. Roger Garaudy, for instance, offers a vigorous critique of Kojeve (who makes of Hegel "a disciple of Heidegger") and of Hyppolite (who chooses the "curious metaphysical option" of according primacy to absolute knowledge over history) in *Dieu est mort: étude sur Hegel* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), 191-2 fn. 1 and 202-3 fn. 3. Garaudy's study, which advances a certain Marxist reading of Hegel, is principally directed against Jean Wahl, who responds with a brief letter on the manuscript (431-34).

9. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 11 (sec. 20). See *Phenomenologie des Geistes*, ed. by Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952), 20. I have used Miller's translation throughout, augmented where necessary or helpful by key German words or phrases (in parentheses); and for every text cited in translation, I have provided the corresponding page reference for the German. Henceforth, I shall refer to Miller's translation as "M" and to the original, in the Hoffmeister edition, as "H".

10. Hyppolite: "This philosophy is a philosophy which conceives of substance as subject, of being as the Self. The word 'selbst' which Hegel will use so often corresponds to the Greek αύτος, and it designates at the same time the I and the Same, ipse and idem, ipseity and identity." *Genèse et structure*, 147.

11. M, 10 (Sec. 18); H, 20. Given the extreme density and the capital importance of this text, I have included the original, along with the translations of Baillie, Hyppolite, Kojeve, and (for convenience) Miller, as an Appendix to the present paper.
12. "That the True is actual only as a system, or that Substance is essentially Subject, is expressed in the representation of the Absolute as Spirit ..." M, 14 (Sec. 25); H, 24.

13. The end (Ende) of the dialectical process as a goal (Zweck) from the beginning because, in Hegel's view, "Reason (Vernunft) is purposive activity (Zweckmässige Tun)," and "The result is the same as the beginning, only because the beginning is the purpose ..." M, 12 (Sec. 22); H, 22. Note, however, that the purpose must actually be realized: "Substance is charged, as Subject, with the at first only inward necessity of setting forth within itself what is is in itself, of exhibiting itself as Spirit. Only when the objective presentation is complete is it at the same time the reflection of substance or the process in which substance becomes Self. Consequently, until Spirit has completed itself in itself, it cannot reach its consummation as self-conscious Spirit." M, 488 (Sec. 802); H, 599.

14. The beginning may here be identified as "past" because "We take up the movement of the whole from the point where the sublation (Aufhebung) of existence (Dasein) as such is no longer necessary." M, 17 (Sec. 30); H, 28.

15. M, 11 (Sec. 20); H, 20.

16. M, 13 (Sec. 24); H, 23.

17. M, 15 (Sec. 27); H, 26.

18. "But Science, just because it comes on the scene, is itself an appearance (Erscheinung) ..." M, 48 (Sec. 76); H, 66.

19. M, 56 (Sec. 88); H, 74. This conception of the work as "the science of the experience of consciousness" is first introduced in the Preface, at M, 21 (Sec. 36); H, 32.

20. We might ask, in addition, whose consciousness is to be described, or what experience is to be recounted. And by whom? To respond that "we philosophers" are tracing the "formative education" (Bildung) of "the universal individual" (das allgemeine Individuum) is not, at this point, particularly helpful. (M, 16 (Sec. 28); H, 26-7.) We shall return to these questions.

21. The "fear of error" which occasions epistemological reflection, or critical thinking, "presupposes that the Absolute stands on one side and cognition on the other, independent and separated from it, and yet is something real; or in other words, it presupposes that cognition which, since it is excluded from the Absolute, is surely outside the truth as well, is nevertheless true, an assumption whereby what calls itself fear of error reveals itself rather as fear of the truth. This conclusion stems from the fact that the Absolute alone is true, or the truth alone is absolute ..." M, 47 (Sec. 74-5); H, 65.

22. M, 52 (Sec. 82); H, 70.

23. M, 52-3 (Sec. 82); H, 70.
24. It is when consciousness explicitly becomes its own object of consciousness that Spirit will be Substance and Subject.

25. M, 53-4 (Sec. 84-5); H, 72. See also M, 102 (Sec. 164); H, 128: "It is true that consciousness of an 'other', of an object in general, is itself necessarily self-consciousness, a reflectedness-in-to-self, consciousness of itself in its otherness. The necessary advance from the previous shapes (Gestalten) of consciousness ... expresses just this, that not only is consciousness of a thing possible only for a self-consciousness, but that self-consciousness alone is the truth of those shapes. But it is only for us that this truth exists, not yet for consciousness ... ."

26. "Consciousness provides its own criterion from within itself, so that the investigation [i.e., into the truth of its knowledge] becomes a comparison of consciousness with itself; for the distinction made above [i.e., between notion and object] falls within it." M, 53 (Sec. 84); H, 71.

27. M, 54 (Sec. 85); H, 72.

28. This is the meaning of Aufhebung, which is "at once a negating and a preserving." M, 68 (Sec. 113); H, 90. On the specific "pattern of incomplete consciousness" as "a determinate negation," giving rise to a new truth, see M, 50-1 (Sec. 79); H, 68-9.

29. M, 55 (Sec. 86); H, 73.

30. The sense of experience as a dialectical movement emerges in this passage of the Preface: "Consciousness knows and comprehends only what falls within its experience; for what is contained in this is nothing but spiritual substance, and this, too, as object of the self. But Spirit becomes object because it is just this movement of becoming an other to itself, i.e., becoming an object to itself, and of suspending this otherness. And experience is the name we give to just this movement, in which the immediate, the unexperienced, i.e., the abstract ... becomes alienated from itself and then returns to itself from this alienation, and is only then revealed for the first time in its actuality and truth, just as it then has become a property of consciousness als." M, 21 (Sec. 36); H, 32.

31. "This new object contains the nothingness (Nichtigkeit) of the first, it is what experience has made of it." M, 55 (Sec. 23); H, 73.

32. M, 56 (Sec. 87); H, 74. Note that the "series" is "necessary" only for us, philosophers; for the naive consciousness, whose experience it is, the succession of "new objects" and "new forms of consciousness" is contingent.

33. M, 49 (Sec. 78); H, 67.

34. Genèse et structure, 18.

35. In principle. There remain (at least) two practical ques-
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tions: First, to what extent is Hegel's phenomenology an argument and an ontology, as opposed to a description of the experience of consciousness? Second, to what extent is the Phenomenology of Spirit merely Hegel's intellectual biography, or, alternately, a patchwork history of ideas, as opposed to a descriptive reprise of the experience of "the universal individual"? But my intent here is to offer an interpretation of Hegel's (own) conception of the method proper to phenomenology, not a critique of his performance.

36. M, 53-4 (Sec. 84-5); H, 71-2.

37. Introduction à la lecture, 449; see also 470.

38. M, 58 (Sec. 90); H, 79. See also the Preface, at M, 35-6 (Sec. 58); H, 48; and Hegel's play on Wahrnehmung in the chapter on perception, at M, 70 (Sec. 116); H, 92-3.

39. Genèse et structure, 15. And Hegel writes: "Scientific cognition ... demands surrender to the life of the object ... " M, 32 (Sec. 53); H, 45.

40. M, 253-4 (Sec. 423); H, 302-3.

41. M, 20 (Sec. 34); H, 31.

42. M, 50 (Sec. 78); H, 67.

43. M, 56 (Sec. 87); H, 74. Georges Van Riet discusses the problematic distinction between the spontaneous and the reflective attitude, or between the "natural" and the "philosophical" consciousness, in "Y a-t-il un chemin vers la verite? A propos de l'Introduction a la Phenomenologie de l'esprit de Hegel," Philosophie et religion (Louvain: Publications Universitaires de Louvain, 1970), 174-84.

44. M, 51 (Sec. 80); H, 69.

45. Note too that "consciousness suffers this violence at its own hands: it spoils its own limited satisfaction."

46. Introduction à la lecture, 539.

47. Genèse et structure, 23.

48. Thus, the relationship between concept and object, or knowledge and truth, is reversible: rather than saying that the concept does not conform to the object, or that our knowledge of the object is not adequate to its truth, we might say that the object is not identical to the concept, or that consciousness, "more profound than it believes," finds the object inadequate. Genèse et structure, 22.

49. Kojeve remarks that "this power is not at all fictitious or 'ideal.' For it is in separating and recombing things in and by his discursive thought that man forms his technical projects which, once realized by work, really transform the aspect of the natural, given 'World in creating a cultural World." Introduction à la lecture, 542.
50. M, 18 (Sec. 31); H, 29.

51. Introduction à la lecture, 541.

52. Admittedly obscure, this transition may be eased by recognizing that consciousness is in direct communion with itself in the activity of understanding, for example when formulating laws to explain natural phenomena or physical events and appearances: "although it seem to be busy with something else, it is in fact occupied only with itself." M, 101 (Sec. 163); H, 127.

53. M, 19 (Sec. 31); H, 29-30. This paragraph concludes with the remark: "This power is identical with what we earlier called the Subject, which by giving determinateness an existence in its own element supersedes abstract immediacy, i.e. the immediacy which barely is, and thus is authentic substance: that being or immediacy whose mediation is not outside of it but which is this mediation itself."

54. Hegel indicates that the distinctions between conscious and natural life, on the one hand, and being-for-itself and being-in-itself, on the other, are correlative at M, 106 (Sec. 168); H, 135, where he presents "the antithesis of self-consciousness and life: the former is the unity for which the infinite unity of the differences is; the latter, however, is only this unity itself, so that it is not at the same time for itself." One the opposition of the natural and the "historical" worlds, see M, 178-9 (Sec. 295); H, 220: "... consciousness, as the middle term between universal Spirit and its individuality or sense-consciousness, has for middle term the system of structured shapes assumed by consciousness as a self-systematizing whole of the life of Spirit—the system that we are considering here, and which has its objective existence as world-history. But organic Nature has no history; it falls from its universal, from life, directly into the singleness of existence. . . ."

55. M, 108 (Sec. 174); H, 139.

56. M, 109-10 (Sec. 175 and 177); H, 139-40. This, Hegel notes, is a decisive moment in the advent of Spirit: "A self-consciousness, in being an object, is just as much 'I' as 'object'. With this, we already have before us the Notion of Spirit," that is, the notion of Subject as Substance. "What still lies ahead for consciousness is the experience of what Spirit is . . ." But here, in self-consciousness, where 'I' is also 'object,' "consciousness first finds its turning point . . . and steps out into the spiritual daylight of the present."

57. Genèse et structure, 313-4.

58. M, 111 (Sec. 178); H, 141.

59. M, 113-4 (Sec. 187); H, 144.

60. M, 115 (Sec. 189); H, 145.

61. M, 117 (Sec. 194); H, 148.

63. But only, needless to say, after a long and laborious journey in whose course individual (and thus apolitical) reason achieves full consciousness of itself both as subject (self-consciousness) and as substance (objective reality, or the mirror of the world), and so becomes Spirit explicitly realizing itself in the historical world.

64. M, 272-3 (Sec. 455); H, 312. See also M, 288-9 (Sec. 475); H, 341. Note that for Hegel the term "person" denotes merely the legal status of 'numerical' equality, and not at all self-consciousness. "The individual who has not risked his life may well be recognized as a person, but he has not attained to the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness." M, 114 (Sec. 187); H, 144. And "to describe an individual as a 'person' is an expression of contempt." M, 292 (Sec. 480); H, 345. See also M, 384 (Sec. 633); H, 445-6, where the person is described as "the self that is devoid of substance."

65. Were either of the individual self-consciousnesses who are locked in the struggle for recognition actually to die, the dialectic would fail: the victor would merely be a survivor, rather than a master, and his "truth" would merely be a thing, a cadaver, rather than another self-consciousness. "For just as life is the natural setting of consciousness, independence without absolute negativity, so death is the natural negation of consciousness, negativity without independence, which thus remains without the required significance of recognition." M, 114 (Sec. 187); H, 145.

66. M, 270 (Sec. 452); H, 321-2.

67. M, 273 (Sec. 456); H, 325.

68. Genèse et structure, 158.

69. Introduction à la lecture, 513, fn. 1.

70. See also the central chapter entitled "Freedom of self-consciousness: Stoicism, Scepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness," esp. M, 123 (Sec. 202); H, 154-5: "Scepticism ... is the actual experience of what freedom of thought is ... In Scepticism, now, the wholly unessential and nonindependent character of this 'other' [i.e., determinate, 'objective' existence] becomes explicit for consciousness; the [abstract] thought [i.e., of Stoicism] becomes the concrete thinking which annihilates the being of the world in all its manifold determinateness, and the negativity of free self-consciousness comes to know itself in the many and varied forms of life as a real negativity."

71. M, 115 (Sec. 189); H, 145.

72. M, 359 (Sec. 589); H, 418.

73. "... and this is a general will." M, 357 (Sec. 584); H, 415. Hegel's argument here is that deeds are performed by individuals as such, and that Rousseau's general will can be actualized only as the
will of an individual (in which case it is not a "general" will at all).

74. See M, 358 (Sec. 387); H, 417.

75. M, 359–60 (Sec. 590); H, 418–9.

76. M, 361 (Sec. 592); H, 419.

77. Absolute finitude: Kojeve argues not only that Hegel effectively denies the immortality of the soul but that his philosophical system is atheistic, and that there is no Spirit outside its realization in human consciousness (that is, in the world). See Introduction à la lecture, 208; 527–8, esp. 527 fn. 1; 536–9; and 573–4, among other places.

78. M, 308 (Sec. 507); H, 361–2.

79. M, 308 (Sec. 508); H, 362.

80. Again, the opposition, fundamental to Hegel's philosophical anthropology, of (self-) consciousness on the one hand and the natural world on the other, or, here, the antithesis of the human and the animal. Kojeve writes: "No animal can commit suicide from simple shame or from pure vanity (as Kirillov would have it in Dostoievski's The Possessed) . . ." Introduction à la lecture, 498.

81. M, 117 (Sec. 194); H, 148.

82. M, 118 (Sec. 195); H, 148–9. The phrase cited below reads, "das arbeitende Bewusstsein kommt also hiedurch zur Anschauung des selbständige Seins als seines selbst."

83. Thus, the difference between nature and culture has also been expressed metaphorically as the difference between the raw and the cooked.

84. M, 117 (Sec. 189); H, 145.

85. It is for this reason that self-consciousness is essentially an historical reality.

86. Maurice Merleau-Ponty remarks, "Work, upon which history reposes, is not, in its Hegelian sense, the simple production of wealth, but in a more general way the activity by which man projects a human milieu around himself and surpasses the natural, given facts of his life." Sens et non-sens (Paris: Nagel, 1966), 189.

87. The spiritual world of conscious individuality: On the one side we have the in-itself, the milieu, "the circumstances, ways of thinking, customs, in general the state of the world" which have made the individual what he is; on the other side, the for-itself, the conscious individual. But this separation is ambiguous: the world shapes the individual in a particular way because he is a particular individual; moreover, the individual is not merely formed by the world, but transforms it. Therefore, "the world of the individual is to be compre-
hended only from the individual himself," that is, from the standpoint of the individual experiencing it. M, 184 (Sec. 306-7); H, 226.

88. M, 185-6 (Sec. 310); H, 227-8.

89. Note that the facticity of the "original determinate being" is not, however, limited to its physical existence; as Hegel will indicate in the following paragraph, the "given" includes not only the body but everything that the individual inherits rather than produces (customs, social class, legal status, and so on). Self-consciousness is for itself only in so far as it creates itself through its own action, or nobody is born free.

90. M, 58 (Sec. 90); H, 79.

91. M, 187 (Sec. 312); H, 229. Note that "the outer" acts only as an organ; "the inner" is the activity (Tätigkeit) itself.

92. In a refreshingly lively analysis which figures later in this same chapter, Hegel reaffirms that it is through his action alone that the individual creates and realizes himself in the world. When appearance and action are contrasted, it is not what the individual seems to be (or might prove to be) but what he does that matters: "The true being of a man is ... his deed; in this the individual is actual ..." And "when his performance and his inner possibility, capacity, or intention are contrasted, it is the former alone which is to be regarded as his true actuality, even if he deceives himself on the point . . ." M, 193-4 (Sec. 322); H, 236-7. Hegel is here pursuing his critique of physiognomical observation as an empirical "science" whose method erroneously consists in isolating the inner and the outer, and then claiming to make them correspond to one another. As Hyppolite remarks, "the body, as object, is an abstract exteriority"; and the individual soul, "reflected far from its operation in the world" and meaning or intending to be other than its actual (public) performance would indicate, cannot be grasped. That is, what the individual 'really' is or 'really' intended, apart from his action in the world, can only be a matter of conjecture for observing reason. "It is truly the case to say here that 'the inner is immediately the outer, and vice versa.' But observing reason does not suspect this dialectic." Genése et structure, 259. Intention, or conviction, will be recognized as essential by and to moral conscience (Gewissen).

93. M, 239 (Sec. 401); H, 287. Note that the individual has, or is, a determinate nature only when seen in its being, and not in its action or operation (Tun), which "is nothing else but negativity." M, 238 (Sec. 399); H, 286.

94. "Consciousness," Hegel says here, "must act merely in order that what it is in itself may become explicit for it; in other words, action is simply the coming-to-be of Spirit as consciousness." Action—human action in the historical world—is Substance becoming Subject as well.

95. Hyppolite develops this idea of the "situation" in another context, when he compares Hegel's analysis of conscience or Gewissen
with Karl Jaspers' notion of "historicity" as the unity of the self, on the one hand, and its empirical being, on the other. Genèse et structure, 480-1.

96. The actual means is the unity of the agent's talent with "the nature of the matter in hand" present in the interest which the individual finds there.

97. M, 241 (Sec. 402); H, 289.

98. M, 242-3 (Sec. 405); H, 290-1. Note that a similar disparity between the universal and the particular, or between being-for-self and being-for-another, arises when conscience acts, that is, when the individual acts in accordance with conscience (Gewissen). Conscience is "concrete moral Spirit," "Spirit that is directly aware of itself as absolute truth and being," "simple action in accordance with duty, which . . . knows and does what is concretely right." However, Hegel writes, "in that this right thing which conscience does is at the same time a being-for-another, it seems that a disparity attaches to conscience. The duty which it fulfils is a specific content . . . and the action is a specific action, not identical with the element of everyone's self-consciousness, and therefore not necessarily acknowledged." M, 394 (Sec. 648); H, 456-7.

99. Note again the similarity between this passage and Hegel's dialectical description of concrete moral conscience. The specific action of an individual conscience, as seen by others, "is something expressing only the self of another, not their own self: not only do they know themselves to be free from it, but they must dispose of it in their own consciousness, nullifying it by judging it and explaining it in order to preserve their own self." M, 395 (Sec. 648); H, 457.

100. Introduction à la lecture, 93. It would seem to follow that the interpretation of some else's work is a murder (or, more accurately, an assassination).

101. M, 241 (Sec. 402); H, 289.

102. M, 395 (Sec. 652); H, 458. Note that language is, for Hegel, always universal; it cannot designate the particular, because such basic referential words as "this," "here," "now," and "I" can be used, meaningfully, by any speaker at any time. See M, 59-61 (Sec. 95-99); H, 81-2.

103. M, 408 (Sec. 670); H, 471.

104. M, 3 (Sec. 5); H, 12.

105. M, 490 (Sec. 805); H, 561.

106. For a more sustained and nuanced treatment of the arguments suggested here, see Kojève, Introduction à la lecture, 271 seq. and 529-30.

107. "What we say is: 'This', i.e. the universal This; or, 'it
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is', i.e. Being in general." M, 60 (Sec. 97); H, 82.

108. M, 487-8 (Sec. 802); H, 558-9.


111. Totality and Infinity, 232.

112. Sens et non-sens, 110.

APPENDIX: COMPARISON OF TRANSLATIONS

"Die lebendige Substanz ist ferner das Sein, welches in Wahrheit Subjekt, oder was dasselbe heisst, welches in Wahrheit wirklich ist, nur insofern sie die Bewegung des Sichselbstsetzens, oder die Vermittlung des Sichanderswerdens mit sich selbst ist. Sie ist als Subjekt die reine einfache Negativität, ebendadurch die Entzweiung des Einfachen; oder die entgegensezende Verdopplung, welche wieder die Negation dieser gleichgültigen Verschiedenheit und ihres Gegensatzes ist; nur diese sich widerherstellende Gleichheit oder die Refexion im Anderssein in sich selbst—nicht eine ursprüngliche Einheit als solche, oder unmittelbar als solche—ist das Wahre. Es its das Werden Seiner selbst, der Kreis, der sein Ende als seinen Zweck voraussetzt und zum Anfange hat und nur durch die Ausführung und sein Ende wirklich ist." G.W.F. Hegel, Phénoménologie des Geistes, ed. by Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952), 20.

"La substance vivante est l'être qui est sujet en vérité, ou ce qui signifie la même chose, est l'être qui est effectivement réel en vérité, mais seulement en tant que cette substance est le mouvement de se-penser-soi-même, ou est la médiation entre son propre devenir-autre et soi-même. Comme sujet, elle est la pure et simple négativité; c'est pourquoi elle est la scission du simple en deux parties, ou la duplication opposante, qui, à son tour, est la négation de cette diversité indifférente et de son opposition; c'est seulement cette égalité se reconstituant ou la réflexion en soi-même dans l'être-autre que le vrai—et non une unité originale comme telle, ou une unité immédiate comme telle. Le vrai est le devenir de soi-même, le cercle qui présumpose et a au commencement sa propre fin comme son but, et que est effectivement réel seulement moyennant son actualisation développée et moyennant sa fin." G.W.F. Hegel, La Phénoménologie de l’Esprit, trans. by Jean Hyppolite (Paris: Aubier, 1939), 17-8.

"Ensuite, la Substance vivant [c’est-à-dire ne statique, ne donnée] est l’Etre que est en vérité Sujet; ou ce qui est la même chose,—qui n’est en vérité objectivement-réel que dans la mesure ou la substance est le mouvement—de-dialectique de l’acte-de-se-penser soi-même (Sichselbstsetzens) ou la médiation (Vermittlung) avec soi-même de l’acte-de-
devenir-autre-que-soi (Sichanderswerdens). En tant que Sujet, la Substance est la Négativité simple-ou-indivise (einfache) pure, et par cela même le dédoublement (Verdopplung) opposant (entgegensetzende), qui est également (wieder) la négation de cette distinction-ou-différenciation (Verschiedenheit) indifférent (gleichgültigen) et de son opposé (Gegensatzes). Ce n'est que cette égalité qui se re-constitue, ou la réflexion en soi-même dans l'être-autre (Anderssein), qui est le Vrai, [et] non l'unite-unifiante primordiale (ursprüngliche) en tant que telle, c'est-à-dire l'unite-unifiante immediate (unmittelbar) en tant que telle. Le Vrai est le devenir de soi-même, le cercle qui présuppose son terme-final (Ende) comme son but (Zweck) et qui l'a pour commencement, et qui n'est objectivement-réel que par le développement-réalisateur (Ausführung) et par son terme-final." Trans by Alexandre Kojève in "L'Idee de la mort dans la philosophie de Hegel," Introduction à la lecture de Hegel, ed. by Raymond Queneau (Paris: Galliaard, 1947), 530-1.

"The living substance, further, is that being which is truly subject, or, what is the same thing, is truly realized and actual (wirklich) solely in the process of positing itself, or in mediating with its own self its transitions from one state or position to the opposite. As subject it is pure and simple negativity, and just on that account a process of splitting up what is simple and undifferentiated, a process of duplicating and setting factors in opposition, which [process] in turn is the negation of this indifferent diversity and of the opposition of factors it entails. True reality is merely this process of reinstating self-identity, or reflecting into its own self in and from its other, and is not an original and primal unity as such, not an immediate unity as such. It is the process of its own becoming, the circle which presupposes its end as its purpose, and has it end for its beginning; it becomes concrete and actual only by being carried out, and by the end it involves." G.W.F. Hegel, The Phenomenology of Mind, trans. by J.B. Baillie (New York:Harper & Row, 1967), 80-1.

"Further, the living Substance is being which is in truth Subject, or, what is the same, is in truth actual only in so far as it is the movement of positing itself, or is the mediation of its self-othering with itself. This Substance is, as Subject, pure, simple negativity, and is for this very reason the bifurcation of the simple; it is the doubling which sets up opposition, and then again the negation of this indifferent diversity and of its antithesis [the immediate simplicity]. Only this self-restoring sameness, or this reflection in otherness within itself—not an original or immediate unity as such—is the True. It is the process of its own becoming, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal, having its end also as its beginning, and only by being worked out to its end is it actual." G.W.F. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. by A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 10.