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G. W. F. Hegel: Spirit and Absolute Truth CHAPTER 2

Hegel has been called "the Aristotle of our Post-Renaissance World." Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel is one of those figures in terms of whom an entire conceptual age can be summarized. It is fair to say that he brought to a climax a philosophical and cultural attitude only partially evident in Kant, an attitude which is definitive of nearly a century of European thought. For Hegel, philosophy was not merely philosophy, but the thought and feelings of an age made self-conscious. That age—Germany at the end of the eighteenth century—was a period of apocalyptic consciousness culminating in a period of unprecedented 'high-culture' and conservatism. This was the period of the French Revolution, with the upheaval of war, the self-aggrandizement of an exaggerated sense of history, a fear mingled with respect for the ideals of revolution, but also a passion for the comfort of the *status quo.* It was an age of conflict and the forced illusions of painful progress. It is no wonder that the Heraclitian concept of "contradiction" becomes the central theme of Hegel's philosophy, and it is no less surprising that the present-glorifying dialectic should become his method. Within this philosophy, Hegel attempts the most ambitious philosophical project of modern times, the synthesis of all human knowledge and culture into a single system, to show where it has been, how it has progressed, and to find the underlying purpose of it all.[1]

The Early Theological Writings

Because of the emphasis so often placed upon Hegel's famous 'system', his concern with logic and the nature of conceptual thought, he is frequently approached as a logician-metaphysician, whose concern is primarily the problem of knowledge as presented by Kant. With this emphasis (adopted by generations of English scholars, notably Stace and McTaggart), Hegel's frequent insistence that the "Truth is the whole" and that he seeks Absolute Truth simply refers to the epistemological thesis that there is some underlying or unifying Truth which is inadequately expressed by the partial truths of science and previous philosophy. However, Hegel, like Kant, was not primarily concerned with epistemological problems, but with religion and morality. But while it is easily possible to isolate Kant's great epistemological work and treat it separately from his moral and religious concerns, it is virtually impossible to separate Hegel's epistemology and logic from his moral and religious doctrines, for even his *Logic* has religious underpinnings.

If the later works were all that we had of Hegel's writings, the approach to his system would be far more difficult than it is. Luckily we have in our possession a series of early essays written by Hegel as a student, which he never published and evidently never intended to publish.[2] Perhaps the most striking difference between these essays and the later works is their clarity. They are written in an unprofessional style which is a pleasure for anyone who has struggled with the terminology of the *Phenomenology.* These essays are products of youthful enthusiasm and rebellion more than serious scholarship, and at least one of these manuscripts seems to have been a source of embarrassment to the older Hegel. However, the thematic concern of these essays with the opposing religious philosophies of Kant, the Romantics, and the Orthodox church continues to drive Hegel's philosophical enterprises throughout his mature works.

These manuscripts were written before 1800 and have been traditionally referred to as Hegel's "theological writings." However, a more fitting label has been supplied by Kaufmann, who refers to them as the "antitheological writings," as they consist for the most part of a brutal attack on Christian theology, on the Christian church, and even on Christ himself. In these attacks, the youthful Hegel surpasses even the bitterly anti-Christian Nietzsche in acrimonious and blasphemous sarcasm. Hegel's condemnation of Christianity, like that of Nietzsche and also like the defense by Kant, was inextricable from a concern for morality. All three thinkers insist that the only possible justification for any religious beliefs must be a *practical,* or a *moral* justification. Christianity is rejected by Hegel because it fails to fulfill the demands of morality, and, in its place, Hegel attempts to formulate a new religion which will satisfy these demands. Even in these early writings, there is evidence of Hegel's tremendous pretentiousness in his consideration of himself as a philosophical prophet and his attempt to found a new religion. This tendency to regard himself as an intermediary between man and God, or as a spokesman for universal Spirit, is never lost in Hegel's intellectual maturity.

His early manuscripts are four in number: "Folk Religion and Christianity" (1793), "The Life of Jesus" (1795), "The Positivity of the Christian Religion" (1795), and "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate" (1799).

In the fragments of "Folk Religion and Christianity," we already find the central threads of Hegel's philosophical development. We find him in alliance with Kant in the attack on theology (religion based on pure reason) and the demand for a 'natural' religion, one founded on the demands of morality and practical reason. We find him dissatisfied with the authoritarianism of traditional Christianity, but still seeking a religion, even if he finds it necessary to formulate one for himself. We find the attack on the traditional Judeo-Christian notion of a *transcendent* God, and the attack on the antagonism of Reason and passion in traditional thought and, specifically, in Kant's ethics. We find the notion of the historical development of religion, in which each religion contributes to the truth.

In this early essay, Hegel draws a distinction between "objective" and "subjective" religion (later expressed in the distinction between "positive" and "negative"). However, "subjective" religion is contrasted not with what is valid, or rational, or demonstrable, but is contrasted with what is merely objective, or merely theoretical, or divorced from action. In other words, "subjective" here means "practical," while "objective" means "theoretical," or, in this context, "impractical." "Subjective" carries with it no connotation of 'individual' or 'eccentric', but refers only to the relation of a set of religious doctrines to practice. A religion, because it is defensible only by appeal to practical reason, must therefore be subjective.

In this same essay on "Folk Religion," we see Hegel's departure from Kant, who so sharply separated reason from inclination and the passions (which were overpowering inclinations). Because of this separation, Hegel claims Kant's ethics to be unworkable, for the reason that morality must consist of these two factors working together. Without much argument, Hegel simply applies the commonsense reaction to Kant that one cannot condemn a man's actions because he *wanted* to do what was also his duty. Hegel, therefore, formulates an ethics in which duty and inclination are not in conflict—an ethics of love, "which though it is a pathological principle of action, is unselfish.[3] Morality must be authorized by reason but must also conform to the passions, which are not universal but rather specific to a particular people at a particular time. Passions as well as Reason are necessary to produce right action. In his immature reaction to Kant, we may discern an attack which is recurrent in Hegel's mature works. Hegel's unsophisticated attempt to reply to Kant unfolds a most important attitude in his philosophy, the emphasis on the importance of local custom (*Sitte*) as well as universal reason, which here manifests itself as an admiration for folk society, but later manifests itself as a generous tolerance for the eccentricities of particular societies.

In the fragments of this first essay, Hegel manifests an intense hostility to Christianity as a whole, not only to theological doctrine, but to the church and even Christ himself. These passages, like passages from Nietzsche's anti-Christian writings, are gems of sarcasm and condensed vitriol. Most often, and like Nietzsche, Hegel compares the Christians unfavorably to the Greeks:

Not only does one train the Christian mob from childhood on to pray constantly; one also tries continually to persuade them of the supreme necessity of prayer by promising its sure fulfillment. And one has piled up such a heap of reasons for comfort in misfortune . . . that we might be sorry in the end that we cannot lose a father or a mother once a week . . . It might be very interesting to compare all this with the faith of the Greeks. For them, misfortune was misfortune, pain was pain.[4]

Hegel contrasts Christ with Socrates, who fares the better, and Hegel sardonically comments that for Socrates, "the number of his closer friends was indeterminate . . . he had no mind to polish for himself a small corps that might be his bodyguard, with the same uniform, drill, passwords—a corps that would have one spirit and bear his name forever."[5] Even Christian morality is attacked, marking a major departure from Kant, who assumed that Christianity was necessary for morality. Hegel argues that Christian ethics provides us with impossible social norms. At most, these norms are workable for a group as small and as closely knit as a family, never for an entire society; but elsewhere,[6] Hegel comments that the teachings and principles of Jesus are really suitable only for lone hermitic human beings. He calls Christianity a provider of "debasing monuments of human degradation."

Hegel's intention is evident even in these early fragments. He is concerned for morality, and he is concerned for religion insofar as it serves morality, as was Kant. Where Kant simply supposed, with too little argument, that orthodox Christianity fit this role, Hegel claims that Christianity is far from moral. As illustrated by the comparison with the Greeks, Christianity's founder is not the exemplary human being (as was Socrates), and the ethics derived from Christianity is simply unworkable and therefore certainly not conducive to supporting morality. The problem, then, is to find a religion which does support morality. Beginning with an idealization of folk religion, and, specifically, attempting to reinterpret Christianity as a folk religion in which subjectivity (practice) and not doctrine is the essence, Hegel attempts to make Christianity into what Kant simply assumed that it was, morality.

In "The Life of Jesus," Hegel makes his first attempt to reformulate Christianity as a religion which will serve morality, and he begins by defining the Deity as Reason itself. The "Life of Jesus" is a popularized presentation of the categorical imperative presented by a very human Jesus in a clever but yet simple-minded attempt to equate historical Christianity with a religion whose *only* beliefs are those necessary to morality (that is, *Kant's* morality).

In "The Positivity of the Christian Religion," we have, for the first time, an extended discussion of Hegel's position vis-à-vis Kant concerning morality and Christianity. Again, we find them in essential agreement on the main problem—the nature of religion—and Hegel, like Kant, begins by affirming that:

the aim and essence of all true religion, and of our religion included, is human morality.[7]

The question now explicitly examined is whether Christianity, or the contemporary or early Christian church, or even Christ himself adequately serves this end.

At this point, Hegel reintroduces two notions found in Kant's discussion of religion, the notions of "authoritarian" or "positive" and "natural" religions—*positive* religion again being that which is founded on authority and not Reason (that is, practical reason)[8]—*natural* religion being that which is founded on morality (and therefore Reason) alone. Only a natural religion is a justifiable religion. It is obvious that the contemporary Christian church, in all its divisions, fails to meet this criterion, but furthermore, Hegel argues, even Christ himself taught a positive religion, one founded on authority and not on reason. He argues, then, that the Christian religion, from its very inception, has been unnatural and therefore unjustifiable according to the standards laid down by Kant. The church, "a system of contempt for human beings," cannot be, as Kant supposed, argued *in toto* as a postulate of practical reason in support of morality.

The last and longest of Hegel's theological essays, "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate," marks a prominent departure

from Kant, who thus far has more or less guided the young Hegel through his attacks on Christianity. In this essay, we meet for the first time the precursors of Hegel's later notion of 'alienation' in the form of 'disharmonies' or 'separations.' We also find fully explicated for the first time those failings of Christianity which, positivity aside, make it incapable of meeting the requirements of morality. We have a return to Gotthold Lessing's notion of the partial truth of all religions:

Why shouldn't we rather see in all positive religions nothing but the way in which the human understanding everywhere could not but develop and shall continue to develop, instead of either smiling at one of them or getting wroth? This our scorn, this our indignation nothing should serve in the best world, and only religions should deserve it? God's hand should be involved everywhere, only not in our errors?[9]

As Hegel's sharp criticism of Christianity begins to soften, he takes up the constructive task of looking for what is profound in Christianity rather than what is base.

The turn from Kant takes the form of two 'disharmonies' (*entzweiungen*) which lie at the very base of Kant's ethics and its supporting religious postulates. However, neither of these disharmonies can be attributed to Kant, for they are said to permeate all of Christian morality, and merely become explicitly formulated in Kant's writings. First, there is a disharmony between man and God arising from the traditional notions of the Divine. Secondly, there is a disharmony within man between reason and inclinations, making morality, as conceived by Kant, impossible. The first of these disharmonies is not adequately overcome until the *Phenomenology,* but the second is partially resolved even in these very early writings.

The disharmony of God and man is involved in any religious doctrine which teaches of a *transcendent* God, a God whose existence is somehow independent of men. A special case of such transcendence, of particular interest to Hegel, is found in traditional Christianity, where God transcends all possible experience. Kant, of course, adopts such a religious attitude in postulating a *noumenal* God in his system, but it is clear that this postulation is nothing more than a formal statement of the belief in a God "out there" which has always been the focus of Western religion. Hegel's objection to this conception of God begins, as we ought to expect, with a demonstration of its moral inadequacy. A view of God as transcendent moral judge takes moral autonomy and responsibility out of the hands of man and places it beyond him. Man is reduced to a 'slave', and his morality is not, as it must be, derived from his own reason, but is instead imposed on him from an outside source. In fact, Hegel explicitly refers to Christianity and Judaism as "slave religions," a phrase usually attributed to Nietzsche a full century later. In this essay, however, Jesus escapes blame for this attitude, and the burden of guilt passes in full to the Jews, whom Hegel, like Nietzsche, blames for the introduction of this slavelike attitude.

Because Kant endorses and formalizes this conception of a transcendent God, his ethics is attacked as inconsistent. Kant had argued that God was a necessary postulate for morality, but he had also argued that freedom was such a postulate. Hegel argues that these two postulates conflict with each other; a transcendent God makes human moral autonomy impossible.[10] Even in these early essays, "freedom" is a key concern in Hegel's writings. In fact, this 'contradiction' between God and freedom may be taken as one of the central themes of the *Phenomenology,* which is characterized not only as the "development of Spirit," but also as the "realization of Freedom" (in the second and third parts of the *Phenomenology,* the first and third parts of the *Encyclopedia,* the third part of the *Logic,* and the entire *Philosophy of Right).* In the essay on the "Positivity," freedom is referred to as the "source of morality,"[11] and we are already given a clear indication of the nature of Hegel's perceived 'disharmony' of man and God:

But this the character (Freedom), *the source of morality, has been wholly renounced by the man who has subjected himself to the law only when compelled by fear of his Lord's punishment; hence when he is deprived of the theoretical faith in this power on which he is dependent, he is like an emancipated slave and knows no law at all. The law whose yoke he bore was not given by himself, by his reason, since he could not regard his reason as free, as a master, but only as a servant; . . .*[12]

Hegel's attack on this disharmony does not contain any reference to the various metaphysical problems of 'transcendence,' and, specifically, contains no reference to any problems with a postulate of a *noumenal* God. His only objection to this long-standing Christian tradition is its contradiction with moral autonomy. This initial and total concern for religion as a moral problem must be kept in mind throughout the later, apparently 'metaphysical', writings as well.

The second disharmony between reason and the passions is given less space but far more critical philosophical attention than the first disharmony. Hegel argues that a morality of formal principles (*moralität*), a morality of practical reason which ignores the importance of the passions effects not right action but rather an internal personal war of one part of the self against another. This bifurcated ('alienated') soul is not, as Kant had argued in his formal statement of such a morality, the man of true moral worth, but rather a pathetic creature suffering from a bad conception of morality. To make man harmonious (as his idealized early Greeks), Hegel argues that we must replace this conception of morality (*moralität*) with a 'higher' conception. This more advanced notion of morality he refers to as *Sittlichkeit,* a morality which depends not only on the universal dictates of reason, but on the provincial dictates of *custom* (*Sitte*) as well. *Moralität* is viewed here as simply a passing stage to *Sittlichkeit,* and the movement is an early example of the sort of conceptual movement with which Hegel is occupied in all of his later works. Here we have two opposing *conceptions* of morality, one of which is a passing stage to the other. Of particular interest in this essay is the fact that it is Jesus who is said to preach *Sittlichkeit* (and not *moralität* as he did in the "Life of Jesus"). Jesus once again becomes a favored figure in Hegel's writings.

Hegel's observation of the schism between reason and passion was not original with him. It was explicit in Kant, who did not view it as a problem but as a given to be considered by any moral theory. It was of equal concern to nearly all of Hegel's illustrious German contemporaries, most notably, Schiller and Goethe, who contrasted fragmented modern men to the healthy, harmonious Greeks. Given that the separation existed, Kant had simply attempted to work with it, but his more literary compatriots rather cursed the lot of modern man and looked beyond and even worshipped the pre-Hellenic Greek.

Hegel, siding with the Romantics, condemns Kant's acceptance of the separation, and assaults his moral philosophy as the explicit statement of what is wrong with contemporary morality as well as contemporary religion—an irresolvable separation between "reason and heart." (It must be repeatedly emphasized that Hegel did not, with the Romantics, take Reason from its exalted position. He did emphasize, against Kant and the Enlightenment, that reason *alone,* without the passions, is lifeless, and Hegel, again like Nietzsche, was adamant about assuring a proper place for them in morality and in religion.)

It is interesting that, although both of these philosophers looked to pre-Hellenic Greece as an ideal of harmony between reason and passion, Hegel is usually taken as an extreme rationalist, in whom passion plays no role, and Nietzsche is interpreted as an antirational romantic, who treats reason as "pathological" in the same way that Kant treated the passions. Hegel insists that it is passion that propels reason, and, in the midst of his well-known demonstration of the rationality of history, he comments that "nothing great was accomplished in the world without passion."[13] Similarly, both Hegel and Nietzsche turn against *Moralität* in favor of a different form of morality, but Nietzsche is taken to be immoral, or at least amoral, while Hegel is pictured as a rigid authoritarian.

According to Hegel, a man divided against himself cannot have moral worth. Kant's ethics only adds "rigid conceit" to this division. According to Kant, an act or a person has moral worth only if the act is performed out of respect for duty alone, and here, Hegel interprets Kant in the familiar way (which we argued against in Chapter 1), namely, that such acts must be performed *in contradiction to* the inclinations. Hegel argues that:

To act in the spirit of the laws could not have meant for him "to act out of respect for duty and to contradict inclinations; for both [*parts of the spirit*] *. . . would*

have been not in the spirit of the laws but against that spirit . . .[14]

In other words, to act for the 'spirit of the laws' means to have a passion for the law, but supposedly Kant has demanded that such a will cannot be good because its respect for the law corresponds to a passion for the law. As we have seen in Chapter 1, this may be based on a serious misinterpretation of Kant, who would certainly wish to include these 'holy' persons as morally worthy. Kant himself was hardly blameless in promoting this interpretation. Much of nineteenth-century philosophy takes as a point of departure Kant's alleged treatment of the passions as "pathological" and demeaning.

Hegel does not merely argue here that Kant's ethics is therefore wrong, or, in the twist given the same charge by Nietzsche, that Kant's morality (*moralität*) is *immoral*. Instead, he argues that Kant's ethics is a phase in man's moral development, a natural and even necessary phase which began with Judaism and culminated in Kant. Such a phase must be transcended, argues Hegel, just because it undercuts its own aims. It begins with the demand that man be treated as rational, free, and morally autonomous, but then makes man a slave of himself. A man cannot be truly free unless he is free not only to obey the law (Kant's *positive* notion of freedom), but also free from the necessary frustration of his own passions. Thus morality, properly conceived, transcends *moralität* (duty to law) and becomes *Sittlichkeit,* passion for the law. Law and passion are in agreement, and moral worth is not obeyance to reason *against* the passions, but obeyance with the passion to be rational.

At this point, it is useful to compare Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* with Aristotle's "good life" (or *eudaimonia*) which Hegel would say provided a more advanced conception of "morality" than Kant's *moralität*. According to Aristotle, virtue, happiness, pleasure and the passions coalesce in the good (moral) life. It is not a sign of the virtuous man that one must act counter to passion. The virtuous man, to the contrary, has his passion in agreement with virtue. Hegel even insists that inclination and law in the good man are so closely intertwined that no longer is it "suitable" to speak of the "agreement" between them.

In a later (published) essay (1803, still before his *Phenomenology*), Hegel goes on to argue that Kant's first formulation of the categorical imperative, on which he rested the burden of adequacy of the categorical imperative in general, cannot work as a principle whose function it is to produce moral laws. Because it is a formal principle, and moral laws are principles whose importance is in their content ("What *specifically* should I do?"), the categorical imperative cannot succeed in moral legislation. In those cases in which it does seem to work, the imperative can be used just as easily to prove the contrary principle. As we noted in Chapter 1, Kant himself gives us only a few abbreviated examples of the workings of the imperative. Hegel provides us with his own examples which, remaining faithful to Kant's obscure notion of 'contradiction', prove that the categorical imperative, although it may work for a few examples which tend to prove Kant's point, will not work for many other cases. Hegel's counterexample is the universalization of the maxim to help the poor. This argument might be compared with Kant's example concerning promise keeping.[15]

When one thinks that the poor would be helped universally, then there would be either no poor at all any more or only *poor people; so none would remain who could help, and in both cases help would become impossible. The maxim then, universalized, does away with itself.*[16]

In order to correct this fatal flaw in Kant's ethics, Hegel reintroduces his notion of *Sittlichkeit,* and in a fashion typical of early Hegel, he returns to the Greeks as an example. *Moralität,* Kant's more or less technical notion, referred morality to formal principles, principles derived from reason alone. For all practical purposes, Hegel felt the problem of Kant's formalism —lack of content and emphasis on reason —and his denial of the relevance of the passions to moral worth were closely related if not identical problems. *Sittlichkeit* is not related only to principles or to the dictates of reason but is dependent on *custom* (*Sitte*). Morality is not universal for all time but is always tied to a *people,* to a particular stage of ethical development; the universality of morality applies only at particular places at particular times. At this stage, Hegel occasionally speaks of "absolute morality" (Absolute *Sittlichkeit*), and regards the manifestation of spirit in ethical community life as the highest realization of spirit. Here "absolute" refers not to one single *correct* morality for all people, but to the correctness of a morality for a given people. Hegel has not yet turned to religion or philosophy as the highest endeavors of man, but takes as his highest ideal the Greek folk society. However, Hegel realizes that the realities of modern life make realization of this ancient ideal totally impossible, and one of the personal confusions in his philosophy, not fully resolved until the *Phenomenology,* is the reconciliation of this ideal with the demand that philosophy should not be wishfully idealistic. When he did resolve this confusion, it was by removing *Sittlichkeit* from its exalted position and replacing it with the higher realizations of Spirit in art, religion, and philosophy.

The Purpose of Hegel's System

Hegel does give us a straightforward statement regarding the goal of his system, but this statement is as unenlightening as it is misleadingly simple. The purpose of philosophy is to find the *truth.* This goal is reiterated in the same superficially simple claim in the Preface and Introduction to the *Phenomenology,* in the Introduction to the *Science of Logic,* and in the comprehensive *Encyclopedia.* However, it would seem that every intellectual discipline would have an equal claim to the truth as its goal, and Hegel states that 'truth' is the goal of not only every intellectual discipline, but of every human activity. The truth which is searched for by philosophy (and, Hegel adds in the *Encyclopedia,* by religion) is not the limited, 'conditioned', 'nonsystematic' truths searched for by science, mathematics, and the practical disciplines of ethics and politics, but *truth* itself, the Absolute Truth. The purpose of Hegel's system is to give us knowledge which is absolute, of a truth which is absolute.

However, this characterization of Hegel's goals in terms of truth is not only too simplified to serve as an adequate summary of Hegel's philosophy, but it is seriously misleading. The "search for truth" sounds very much like a host of disciplines which are clearly not of interest for systematic philosophy. For example, "the search for truth" is so characteristic of empirical science that it is all to easy to think that Hegel takes philosophy to be a science differing from physics only in its scope. Because Hegel speaks of his own philosophy as 'science', and because of his fascination for detail in filling in his system, we are often confronted with interpretations to the effect that Hegel foolishly thought that philosophy can give us empirical truths (for example, some of the specific scientific theories mentioned in the first part of the *Phenomenology,* or some of the historical data mentioned in his many lectures on history). However, it must be clear from the outset that Hegel expects of philosophy only one sort of truth, that which is absolute, and makes no attempt to derive, in fact explicitly denies the possibility of deriving, specific nonphilosophical truth from his system. By 'science', Hegel means nothing like 'empirical' or 'natural' science, and science of that sort occupies only the initial and therefore least mature stage of the development of consciousness. Furthermore, the search for truth sounds too much like a purely theoretical endeavor, but Hegel emphasizes throughout his mature as well as his early works the *practical* aspects of his philosophy. For Hegel, the truth is the goal of ethics, politics, and religion as well as for science and mathematics.

Most importantly, the stress on the notion of *truth* makes the system look as if it is primarily an epistemological enterprise, which, at best, is an only partially adequate interpretation of Hegel's philosophy. We said above that Hegel's philosophy has an important practical aspect, and this aspect is constantly with us in Hegel's discussion of morality and religion (objective and absolute spirit). Christianity, the penultimate stage to the highest (philosophical) truth, remains from the very earliest writings the focal point of Hegel's philosophical activity. However, like Kant, Hegel found that his ultimate interests in morality and religion required a preliminary investigation of the possibility of knowledge in these areas. So, like Kant, Hegel begins his philosophy with an investigation of knowledge and the examination of the faculties of knowledge in order to defend morality and Christianity against their detractors from the sciences.

In the early 'theological' writings, we have already identified several concerns that Hegel carries with him throughout his mature philosophical writings. In subject matter, his interests are religious and moral, and in this sense, Hegel's lectures

on Religion and his *Philosophy of Right* may be thought of not so much as particular applications of Hegel's metaphysics, but as the culmination and *raison d'etre* of his entire philosophy. In his earliest writings, Hegel is concerned with the 'rationality' of the Christian religion, the extent to which its teachings and practices can be justified by appeal to reason alone. In these early essays, we have seen that Hegel first argues that Christianity fits this rational ideal insofar as it coincides with Kant's morality,[17] but then turns upon Christianity for its "positivity' and its failure to adequately support Kant's morality. Because Christianity and Jesus himself make constant reference to authority of God and to miracles, the religion is far from rational. Because the religion puts such emphasis on man as God's servant and on reward and punishment, it fails to meet Kant's ideal. In the earliest writings, we already see Hegel's immature attempts to reinterpret Christianity as a natural 'folk religion'; in the *Phenomenology,* we see the same kind of attempt in full maturity, where Hegel reintroduces Christianity as the 'revealed religion' whose rationality is demonstrated by its place in Hegel's system.

From these earlier works, we have identified two crucial 'disharmonies' or 'separations' which lay at the basis of Hegel's departure from Kant and from traditional Christianity. First, traditional *moralität* contains a fatal disharmony between Reason (duty) and passion (personal interest). Second, the 'disharmony' between God and man, based on the notion of a transcendent God, produces an irresolvable disharmony in Christianity and in any morality which seeks to support itself with the postulate of a transcendent God. According to Hegel in the essay on "Positivity," if we take the notion of a transcendent God seriously, we have a conflict with Kant's postulate of freedom; one cannot have both an omniscient, omnipotent being and maintain the postulate of autonomy. The problem here lies with Kant's central notion of the *Summum Bonum,* and Hegel points out, ineptly in the early writing, that such a notion undermines the support of Christianity by making God into an authority figure and inconsistent with autonomy of human action. This 'disharmony' becomes a key problem in each of the mature writings; the resolution of the 'disharmony' between God and man is the overall goal of the entire *Phenomenology,* of the entire *Encyclopedia,* and even of the entire *Logic.* This disharmony is only resolved in the final realization of "spirit," and in fact, is responsible for the notion of "spirit" in Hegel's philosophy. It is the driving force behind the movement in all Hegel's works from the particular (individual men, individual moralities) to the universal and is the simple motivation for Hegel's philosophically complex attempts to "make one" or synthesize the subjective and the objective. It is this 'disharmony' arising from the traditional notion of a transcendent God which leads Hegel to reject this notion and demonstrate the reality of an *immanent* God. This God is *Spirit* and the Hegelian system the demonstration of its realization.

To understand the mature Hegel is to comprehend the connection between the early religious-moral concerns and the later concern with 'truth', Kant's *Critique,* and the peculiar expository form of the mature system. If Hegel is interested in reinterpreting and justifying Christianity and in correcting certain inadequacies in Kant's moral philosophy, why could he not simply have written an essay on Christianity, as he once intended to do with his essay on the "Positivity"? Or he might have written a short book based on Lessing's very short "Education of Mankind." Or why could he not have written a brief pamphlet on Kant's morality extending the ideas of his essay on "Natural Right" of 1803? Why need these concerns be dealt with in systematic works the shortest of which (the *Phenomenology*) is over 800 pages in length? Why need a system dealing with the problem so simply stated in the earliest essays include not only religion and morality but all of philosophy, religion, history, and, in fact, all human culture in its broadest possible conception? To understand this need, we must return not only to Kant's ethico-religious philosophy, but to his critique of metaphysics as well.

Summarily, Hegel is interested in the subject matter of Kant's second *Critique*—the nature of morality and its supporting postulates of God, freedom, and immortality. Hegel's early attacks on Kantian morality and traditional Christianity had made no appeal to the Kantian *Critique of Pure Reason.* It is possible that Hegel had not even read the first *Critique* before he wrote his early essays. Hegel's knowledge of Kant at this time may have been limited to the *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone,* which was published while Hegel was studying for his theology degree and in the same year that he wrote the first of his 'theological' essays. Hegel's objection to the notion of a transcendent God thus far had no reference to Kant's piercing *Critique of Pure Reason* and demonstration of the impossibility of knowing noumenal objects. Hegel's objections had been strictly religious and moral, without the reference he later makes to the origins of these problems in Kant's first *Critique.* In the period preceding the writing of the *Phenomenology,* Hegel takes increasing concern with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason.* The *Phenomenology,* far from being a simple tract on religion and morals, finds itself confronting the whole of Kant's *Critique* of metaphysics.

In Hegel, as in Kant, we have found the demand that religion must be *rational* and justified by demonstration of its necessity for practical reason or morality. In Kant's second *Critique,* this demand was argued to be satisfied by appeal to a *Summum Bonum,* a *rational universe* in which virtue and happiness were commensurate. This notion of a rational universe in which the real and the ideal are identical might be interpreted quite plausibly as the defining philosophical attitude of nineteenth-century thought. Underlying the philosophies of both Kant and Hegel, and also Fichte, Schelling, and the many lesser figures of the German Enlightenment is the demand for order and rationality, and the business of philosophy is taken to be the explication and proof of this order and rationality. In Kant's philosophy, this took the form of the postulates of practical reason, but in Hegel's thought, the rationality of the development of spirit was not simply a necessary presupposition of morality, but the highest and absolute philosophical truth. For Hegel, the recognition of this rationality of spirit meant that the story of mankind need not be viewed as a meaningless history of atrocities and stupidity, but might be viewed as *progress.* With the realization of this ideal of rationality, the present could be viewed not simply as a new time period, but as a result of and an improvement on and even a culmination of the centuries of the past.

The demand for *teleological* explanation is continuously implicit throughout Kant's works, but is often defended by him only as a form of explanation of secondary importance. In the first *Critique* Kant argues the universality and necessity of the Principle of Universal Causation, and thus takes causal explanation to be explanation proper. In the *Critique of Judgment,* where we receive a detailed analysis of teleological explanation, Kant argues that teleological explanation is demanded when causal or mechanistic explanation is not available. Kant insists that there are kinds of situations in which causal explanations are not available, most importantly, in situations where the event to be explained is the action of a moral agent, but Kant's generally scientific bent makes it unquestionably clear that teleological explanation should be used cautiously and sparingly. Against this Kantian caution, Fichte came to take teleological explanation as the highest form of explanation, and Hegel, borrowing from Fichte, took teleological explanation as the central methodology of his entire philosophy. In Hegel, teleological explanation is not to be reserved for those cases in which causal explanations fail; teleological explanation is explanation, and the business of philosophy is to explain, or to *rationalize* its subject matter by relating it to its ultimate *end* or *purpose.*

However, Hegel's divergence from Kant does not consist solely in the scope and primacy which he allotted to teleology, but also in Hegel's insistence that teleological explanation must be *demonstrated.* Kant had defended the *Summum Bonum,* the ultimate rationality of the universe, as a necessary presupposition of morality and argued that one could not justify morality unless the seemingly purposeless mechanism of natural law and the rationality of justice and virtue coincided. Kant proved only that the *Summum Bonum* was a necessary presupposition of morality, not that this presupposition was *actual.* As we argued in Chapter 1, the proof of the necessity of the *Summum Bonum* for morality demonstrates neither the actuality of the *Summum Bonum* nor the objective validity of the morality it is needed to support. Rather, Kant proves only that *if* morality is objectively valid, *then* the postulates of God, freedom, and immortality must be true. This, however, does not constitute a proof of these postulates, and it is possible that the postulates are false and morality not valid. Unless there is some

independent justification of these principles, in short, some proof of the *Summum Bonum,* we have no proof of the objective validity of morality.

Kant does not offer us any such demonstration, and therefore his entire moral philosophy fails in its central ambition, to demonstrate the rationality of morality. He further fails, however, to demonstrate the rationality of the religious postulates (of Christianity), for their necessity for practical reason is a rational justification of them only if it can also be shown that practical reason itself is objectively valid. Because of the circular defense of morality in terms of God and immortality and the postulates of God and immortality in terms of morality, Kant has failed to demonstrate both the validity of morality and the rationality of religion.

Hegel clearly recognizes this deficiency in Kant's moral philosophy, and a crucial problem for his philosophy is the demonstration not simply that the postulates of practical reason are necessary for moral consciousness, but also that they are *true.* The task of the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* Hegel's first systematic work, is the demonstration of the necessary truth of these postulates which Kant had only assumed.

The problems involved in such a demonstration, however, had been made explicit in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason.* These postulates pretended to give us knowledge of noumenal objects, of the world-as-it-is-in-itself. Kant argued that the demand for rationality of the world-in-itself was a demand not only of practical reason, but also a disposition of theoretical (or pure or speculative) reason. However, this disposition was necessarily to be frustrated by the very nature of reason. The *Transcendental Dialectic* had supposedly dealt a death blow to any pretensions of reason to such knowledge. The *transcendent* objects of God and noumenal self (or Soul), because they are beyond the bounds of sensibility, are 'unconditioned', can be conceived of only through a misuse of the categories, and therefore cannot be known at all. Consequently, Kant argues that the disposition of reason to know the unconditioned or the "absolute" (a term occurring in Aristotle and Kant as well as in Hegel) is necessarily illusory. Knowledge of ultimate reality or ultimate purpose cannot be gained from pure reason, but, as we have seen, neither can it be gained by appeal to practical reason as Kant supposed, for practical reason itself requires the presupposition of such knowledge.

The purpose of Hegel's system may thus be related to Kant's critical philosophy in two ways: first, Hegel, like Kant, wishes to prove those principles of God, freedom, and immortality to be true, but, unlike Kant, argues that showing these principles to be mere postulates does not constitute such a proof. Secondly, Kant has argued that these principles cannot be *known* by us because of the limitations on reason argued in the first *Critique.* Hegel argues that if we cannot know that the world has an ultimate purpose, that is, is rational, and that there is an unconditioned Supreme Being responsible for this purpose, and that the human soul can survive its earthly body to share the rewards of the Kingdom of God, then it makes no sense to speak of the rationality of religion. Therefore, Hegel must prove that Kant's critique of knowledge is not correct, and that we can have knowledge of unconditioned things as they are in-themselves. The peculiar expository form of the system is largely due to the necessity of refuting Kant's critique of knowledge.[18]

The Phenomenology of Spirit

The Phenomenology of Spirit[19] is Hegel's first attempt to present his 'system' of philosophy. Far from being merely a system of philosophy, the *Phenomenology* is an attempt to provide *the* system of philosophy, to absorb the whole of Western thought in a single linear development. For this ambition alone, the *Phenomenology* deserves its place in Western philosophy. The conception of the book, in spite of its great difficulty, its often seemingly arbitrary or tedious inclusion of materials, is itself a remarkable feat of philosophizing. Hegel refuses to begin with basic undemonstrable propositions, as did Descartes, Spinoza, and Fichte, to name a few, for this would make the entire philosophy dependent or "conditioned" by this first principle. Rather, Hegel claims that his philosophy has 'no beginning', for his philosophy is not simply the presentation of *a* philosophical position, but is the presentation of *philosophy* itself, and the mature Hegel constantly refers to his works as simply 'philosophy'. Rather than begin with a premise, Hegel begins by taking up all the philosophies of the past, and (his) philosophy is shown

to grow from these as their fruition. Hegel's inclusion of all previous philosophies is not a gratuitous display of scholarship, but the very essence of the system.

The stated goal of philosophy is Absolute Truth, the attainment of absolute knowledge. The philosophies of the past, Hegel complains, have given us only partial truths. However, philosophy is not conceived as an isolated intellectual effort but as spiritual development made explicit. More general than various philosophies, there have been various *stages of consciousness,* of which philosophy is the explicit conceptual manifestation. These have also given us truths which were not absolute, but limited or conditioned. The purpose of the system, therefore, and the *Phenomenology* in particular, is to examine these inferior forms of consciousness with their partial truths to find out how we will be forced to progress to the Absolute Truth. The *Phenomenology* makes no less bold a claim than its own significance as the culmination and fulfillment of all previous thought.

Hegel often tells us that he is doing "speculative philosophy." This is most often interpreted as a return to speculative metaphysics—the fare of Spinoza and Leibniz—the investigation of transcendent objects or 'noumena'. However, this interpretation fails with the most superficial investigation of the actual contents of Hegel's works. By "speculation," Hegel does not mean 'speculation about noumena', but rather something closer to 'reflection and rationalization'. Philosophy, as a purely 'reflective science', always looks back on and tries to understand a set of already given material. Philosophy is the attempt to derive *meaning* from material, and because philosophy is the most general quest for knowledge and value, its function is to find meaning in or attempt to understand the whole of human intellectual and cultural development. In other words, philosophy as a reflective science makes it nothing like our ordinary concept of 'science'. It does not formulate hypotheses about why something happens or try to subsume one event under a general class of events. It rather *reinterprets* a past series of phenomena in such a way that it can be demonstrated that this series led up to some end. In other words, the business of philosophy is *post hoc* teleological explanation. Thus, philosophy, unlike the natural sciences, does not claim predictability as one of its results. The Hegelian dialectic, as Hegel himself repeatedly insists, can be used to predict nothing (compare Marx for whom prediction is the primary use of historical 'Dialectical' understanding).

An understanding of this attitude towards philosophy is of the utmost importance in understanding the mature system. By "rationalization," a term which Hegel uses, he does not intend to suggest an imaginative but false causal or pseudo-causal accounting of past phenomena, as connoted by the recent Freudian use of "rationalization" to refer to a mildly pathological ego-defense mechanism. Rationalization in philosophy is not a personal rationalization, but in Hegel's terms is *objective* and will become evident to anyone who works his way through the system, that is, who traces the development of culture, or concepts, or art through the hierarchy in which Hegel has arranged them. However, the sequence of events or 'stages' in the various forms of the dialectic are often not in proper historical order at all. In the *Phenomenology,* the stages of Spirit include modes of thought unmistakably identifiable as Kantian before modes of thought of the Roman Stoical philosophers, and these before modes of thought clearly attributable to the pre-Socratic Greeks. In the *Logic,* there is little reason to suppose that the acquisition of concepts in young babies, or the acquisition of these concepts for mankind as a whole, follows anything like the sequence marked by Hegel. Hegel's *Logic* is nothing like the psychology of logic as developed by Piaget or as carried out by other learning theorists which hypothesizes how people *in fact* learn to use concepts. Hegel's sequences are arranged a priori, and not on the basis of any experimental-empirical basis. Similarly, Hegel arranges the various stages of art in a manner which cannot conceivably be interpreted as a strict historical interpretation.

Yet, it is clear that the historical presentation of this system cannot be ignored. The system is not merely a historical interpretation, is not in any way an attempt to show causal accounts between stages (although this can be found in some works, for example, the philosophy of history), and in no way attempts to predict the future. In this sense, Hegel's philosophy is 'timeless' or outside of time, not in the sense usually argued to the effect that

Hegel argues the unreality of time, but rather in the sense that Hegel's philosophy consists of nothing more than this *post hoc* rationalization. Philosophy is concerned with understanding the past, and the present as an end to the past. It is this view of philosophy, more than any particular theses within it, that will force Kierkegaard to denounce the Hegelian foundations of early nineteenth-century thought.

Knowledge of Things-in-Themselves[20]

With Kant's distinction between noumena and phenomena, it becomes impossible for us to know anything as it is in-itself. Once the distinction is made between the world-for-us and the world-independent of us, there can be no escape from the conclusion that we can know only the world as it is for-us. Hegel's search for absolute knowledge depends on a rejection of this distinction. In the introduction to the *Phenomenology,* Hegel begins his attack on Kant's theory of knowledge by attacking just this distinction, which he claims is based on an unanalyzed and undefended metaphor in which knowledge is considered a "tool with which one masters the Absolute." If knowledge is a tool, there must be a certain necessary distortion due to the operations of knowledge on reality, and therefore we can never know reality (the Absolute) itself but only as it has been manipulated and distorted by the instrument of knowledge. We can, therefore, have only mediated knowledge of the absolute, and never know the absolute itself. This is Kant's problem in the first *Critique,* and his solution to it is the critical doctrine that we never know reality independent of the distortions imposed on it by knowledge. The best that can be done by the philosopher is an exploration of the nature of this tool of knowledge and the necessary distortions it imposes on reality. Kant's *Critique,* therefore, abandons the search for absolute reality and simply investigates the tool by which we come to know (in a distorted way) reality. In short, Hegel argues that the premise of the whole of Kant's philosophy is

> *before one attempts to know God, the essence of things, etc., one must first investigate the capacity of knowledge itself, to see whether it is able to accomplish such tasks. One must first become acquainted with the* instrument, *before one undertakes the work which is to be accomplished by means of it.*[21]

But why should we accept this metaphor? Kant never examines or defends this metaphorical starting point, and Hegel even ascribes not very commendable motives to Kant's adoption of it:

> *It [the fear of error in Kantian philosophy] starts with ideas of knowledge as an instrument, and as a medium; and presupposes a distinction of ourselves from this knowledge.*[22]

By beginning with the investigation of the faculties of knowledge, Kant has already determined the critical outcome of his first *Critique.* Once the distinction between things as known and things in themselves or between reality-for-a-subject and absolute reality are introduced, one must conclude that we cannot have any but conditioned knowledge and that the demands of traditional metaphysics are utterly impossible. However, Kant, according to Hegel, offers no justification for this starting point and, more importantly, fails to see fatal problems inherent in this approach. First, the metaphor simply plays on the notions 'truth', 'reality' and 'knowledge', and, given Kant's distinctions, Hegel argues that what he ought to have concluded was that we can have no knowledge at all, that our cognitive faculties are such that we can never know the truth. Secondly, Hegel argues that one cannot begin by investigating the faculties of knowledge before one attempts to gain knowledge in philosophy, for the investigation itself already utilizes these faculties and their concepts. Any such analysis is covertly circular.

The first criticism is that Kant, on the basis of this metaphor, distinguishes between two different sorts of knowledge, two different kinds of truth. There is limited or conditional knowledge giving us truth limited by the conditions of our cognitive faculties, and there is absolute or unconditioned knowledge of things as they are in themselves which human consciousness cannot have. This distinction is of a piece with the noumena-phenomena distinction, for absolute 'knowledge' of noumena would be of a very different sort than our conditioned knowledge of phenomena.

Kant claims that we cannot have knowledge of noumena, but we can have genuine knowledge of phenomena—limited knowledge. What is such limited or conditioned knowledge? According to Hegel:

> *. . . pointless talk like this leads in the long run to a confused distinction between an absolute truth and a truth of some other sort. . . .*[23]

This limited truth is indeed truth only if it is in accordance with reality—with the way things really are—in other words, with Absolute Truth. If it is a limited truth that all events must be temporally ordered (for us), then this limited truth is a truth only if it is true that all events really must be ordered. If events are not really so ordered, but rather we order them, then this limited truth is a falsehood, even if it is *necessary for us.* (Nietzsche will argue that *all* of our necessary truths are such 'falsehoods'). Similarly, our conditioned or limited knowledge is really knowledge only if it is in agreement with what is really true. If we have conditional knowledge that there exist objects 'outside' us due to the nature of our cognition, this knowledge is true knowledge and not false (but necessary) belief only if there truly are such objects. In other words, truth is Absolute Truth; knowledge is Absolute Knowledge; the 'real' world is the world as it is in itself, whether that is the world of our experience or not. The whole point of Kant's 'transcendental idealism' is to shift the significances of 'knowledge', 'truth', and 'reality' from the notion of a world-in-itself to a "real world of appearances." Hegel argues this shift is nothing but an absurd play on words, for as long as we hold to the possibility of a world-in-itself different from the world we know and experience, we *must* talk only of the noumenal world as the real or true world, and speak of knowledge only with relationship to this noumenal world. The world as it appears is the 'real' world only insofar as it conforms to the *real* world, and our knowledge of it is knowledge only insofar as it conforms to the *real* world. In other words, because of his dualist metaphor of knowledge as tool and reality as that which is to be known, Kant is ultimately committed to the same skepticism as Hume. To know something is to know it as it is, to know the truth, but to know something only as it appears—as it is experienced—is not knowledge at all. Thus, this dichotomy between noumena and phenomena leads one to the intolerable skeptical conclusion that we can never know the world as it is in itself, and that it is possible that we have no knowledge of reality at all. In order to avoid this conclusion, Hegel, like many prominent American philosophers in this century, becomes a violent antidualist, attempting to rid philosophy of these dualisms and their conclusions.

Hegel's reason for rejecting this dualism is not simply its skeptical conclusions; the preliminary investigation of knowledge, which is part and parcel of the Kantian "knowledge as tool" metaphor, is logically ill-conceived. Kant argues that philosophy must begin by examining those faculties which purport to give us knowledge, but with what do we examine these faculties? The investigation of the understanding must itself be carried out by the understanding; Kant demands that we use our instrument on itself before it is used at all. A preliminary investigation of the tool of knowledge is already a use of that tool. Hegel agrees with Kant that philosophy must begin with an investigation of knowledge, but unlike Kant he recognizes that this investigation cannot be independent of the use of the faculties of knowledge. The investigation of knowledge by itself cannot be thought of as a preliminary investigation which leaves its subject matter untouched, since its subject matter is itself. Kant believed that we could first investigate knowledge, find out what it can do, and then use these faculties in appropriate ways. Hegel argues that the investigation of knowledge changes that very knowledge, and that such an investigation can never be preliminary, but constitutes the whole of philosophical investigation. The critique of knowledge is the development of knowledge as well.

Once we appreciate this problem as Hegel perceived it, we are in an excellent position to understand the necessity for the peculiar dialectical structure of his work, particularly of the *Phenomenology.* Knowledge *develops* with our conceptual sophistication. This is not to say merely that as we learn more, our knowledge increases; rather, the *kind* of knowledge changes (compare Marx's derivative claim that changes in quantity become changes in quality). Specifically, knowledge changes *in kind* when we come to question the faculties of knowledge, when we question not the world, but ourselves. For Kant, self-knowledge was either empirical knowledge of ourselves as objects or transcendental knowledge which could disclose only the necessary *forms* of our consciousness. But, according to Kant, we could not have *knowledge* of ourselves in any other

sense (e.g., as moral agent or as immortal soul). Neither could we have *knowledge* of things-in-themselves. For Hegel, knowledge of objects and transcendental self-knowledge are but two stages in the attainment of further kinds of knowledge, knowledge of oneself as *Spirit,* and knowledge of objects as they are in-themselves.

Ultimately, one can have knowledge which is neither limited to an 'objective' world nor to the sphere of consciousness but in which these two kinds of knowledge are unified into a single form of knowledge. In other words, Hegel argues that knowledge progresses not simply in its content, but that the *form* of knowledge progresses as our conception of 'knowledge' becomes more sophisticated. Kant saw the more sophisticated levels, but was caught with an inadequate conception of knowledge that prohibited him from seeing the consequences of his *Critique.* This unsophisticated conception of knowledge has now been surpassed by Kant himself, although unintentionally, in his self-conscious *Critique.* One must cease to take 'objective' knowledge as paradigm of knowledge, and see as the ultimate end of all knowledge the highest or Absolute Truth. One must move beyond this kind of knowledge to a level on which philosophical problems, such as the skeptical conclusions of Hume and Kant, may be surpassed. The traditional conception of knowledge utilized by Kant gives rise to paradoxes which can be overcome only by developing a more adequate conception of knowledge. The *Phenomenology* is just this development, starting with the lowest forms of knowledge, showing how these are inadequate to other forms, and culminating in Absolute Truth in which all of the problems, paradoxes and inadequacies of the lower forms disappear.

Philosophy, for Hegel, is the demonstration of the 'becoming' of absolute knowledge. Such a becoming *need* not be the pattern of development of any particular individual consciousness, and the development of knowledge in the system is not the psychological development of an individual. The "forms of consciousness" or forms of knowledge derived in the *Phenomenology* lead to absolute knowledge, that level of conceptual development where all conceptual (philosophical) problems disappear. This stage of knowledge eliminates traditional philosophical dichotomies, and is not one-sidedly oriented either toward the natural world (as is science) nor towards the knowing subject (as in Kant's self-analysis), nor towards dogmatism (the ultimate consequence of the first one-sided conception), nor idealism (the ultimate consequence of the second). This stage of knowledge recognizes the inadequacies of traditional theories of knowledge, and replaces them by demonstrating how the rejection of traditional dichotomies solves the problems inherent in them. The development of the system is simply the ordering of these stages in a hierarchy of more sophisticated forms. The purpose of this ordering is to demonstrate how each level corrects inadequacies of the previous conceptual level and how it is possible to correct all these inadequacies in a final step. This step is the realization of the Absolute (absolute truth) in the *Phenomenology.*

Spirit

No notion is more central to Hegel's mature philosophy than the notion of *Geist,* sometimes translated as "Mind" (for example, by Baillie in his often-used translation), but better translated as the more vague and religious-tinged notion of "Spirit." Spirit is the 'subject' of Hegel's *Phenomenology,* and it is the development of Spirit with which the entire book is concerned. It is also Spirit, as the *Idea,* which is the subject of the *Science of Logic.* Spirit, however, is not simply the subject *matter* of these books, but the subject in the special sense of being He whose thoughts are recorded in this book. We have said that the *Phenomenology,* and the system as a whole, may be considered something very much like an "autobiography of God." In fact, it becomes very clear from the way that Hegel talks about Spirit that Spirit is equivalent to the Divine. Although Hegel rarely uses the term "God," it is clear that his notion of Spirit occupies the same position in his philosophy that the established vocabulary of Christianity plays in traditional philosophy. It is also clear that Spirit is something very human, for the development of Spirit we find in the *Phenomenology* is clearly the development of human thought. From our initial considerations of Hegel's early religious interests, specifically his concern with the 'disharmony' of God and man, we may already surmise that Hegel's attempt to reinterpret the traditional Christian notion of God as Immanent God is to be performed through the notion of Spirit, which is both human and divine.

Spirit is also referred to as "The Truth," with which it is identical (the entire *Phenomenology* is the demonstration of this equivalence) and thus is also referred to as the Absolute Truth or simply the Absolute. In the *Logic,* this same Spirit is referred to as the "Idea" or the "Notion" (*Begriff,* sometimes translated as "The Concept"). As Hegel expresses it, the culmination of the development of Spirit is its becoming the Idea, or Absolute Idea, which is sometimes expressed as "absolute Spirit" ("The Absolute" again). In Hegel's terminology with regard to Spirit, we find a simple, but easily confusing ambiguity. Spirit and Truth are (is) the subject of the system, specifically the *Phenomenology,* from the very beginning. Yet we do not really have Spirit and Truth until the end of the system. Thus, we find initially perplexing statements such as:

> *Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a result, that only at the end is it what it is in very (sic) truth.*[24]

Although we cannot fully explain this ambiguity until we discuss the detailed development of Spirit, we may simply state the problem. Hegel sometimes uses "Truth" or "Spirit" in a 'conditioned' or qualified sense. This is the sense in which Spirit has not yet reached its full development but is only *potentially* spirit or truth (such as manifested in traditional philosophy). When it fulfills its development, it is Spirit or Truth absolutely and unconditionally. To illustrate with a metaphor of which Hegel is fond, one can speak of the development of a 'tree', although the tree in question is only an acorn or a small twig. We speak of the development of the tree, but the tree is a tree only in the sense of its potential to be a tree. It is *really* a tree only when it has completed this development. Similarly, Hegel's notion of the development of Spirit leads to the same sort of 'ambiguity' in discussing "Spirit." Spirit is not really Spirit until the completion of its development. Thus, when Hegel implies that Spirit is not always Spirit or that "spirit is becoming," or that "spirit becomes in the end what it always has been in reality," this is not at all confusing if we keep the tree metaphor in mind.

Hegel is fond of speaking of Spirit as the Whole or the Totality. In some of his interpreters (notably, Royce), Spirit is identical to the Universe (Hegel does use the term "universal," but rarely "the universe"). Because of the popularity of this interpretation, which is correct only in a very qualified sense, Hegel has often been taken to be a pantheist, an interpretation which is reinforced by his well-known admiration for Spinoza. However, one of the most important characteristics of Spirit, which Hegel claims is also one of the key points to be demonstrated by the system, is the existence of Spirit as "subject as well as substance." Spirit, as we find at the end of the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic,* is the "merging of the subject and the obsubject" and "the universal subject." Most important in Hegel's insistence on Spirit as subject is his denial of Spinoza's pantheism. For Hegel, following Kant (for reasons we shall soon see), Spirit is not merely a *substance,* either mental or physical. For Descartes there is physical substance and mental substance. For Spinoza, these were two *modes* of God. For Hegel, these are God but God as subject as well as (physical) substance. It is debatable how great the alleged difference is between Hegel and Spinoza. Surely there are differences: for example, Spinoza is a determinist, Hegel is not. But Hegel's peculiar theism is remarkably similar to that of Spinoza, but cast in a Kantian mold.

The problem in understanding the meaning of Spirit and its many related terms is due to Hegel's own insistence and the insistence of so many of his commentators that his terminology cannot be understood until the system as a whole is understood. Thus, the tendency is to go through the entire development of Spirit before attempting to understand what it is that is developing. Of course, we carry some vague notions with us; for example, we see that it is a religious concept, that it is a world Spirit not an individual human spirit, but yet it is somehow 'in' humanity. All this vagueness is unnecessary, for Hegel's notion is a clear derivative of a notion we have already discussed which is central to Kant's philosophy, namely the *transcendental ego.* Although this connection is often recognized, most commentators treat Hegel's notion of Spirit as a sort of bastardization or pilfering of Kant's notion or else a serious misunderstanding. Hegel, in fact, considers himself as improving on certain inconsistencies in Kant's notion which we have already discussed. For Kant, the transcendental ego is a pure

ego, the "self itself," and not the self as appearance (empirical ego). Therefore, it cannot be understood under the categories, for it is not phenomenon. The status of this ego is purely as a postulate, argued to exist transcendentally from the facts of empirical consciousness. Therefore, whatever can be said about this transcendental ego can be argued only transcendentally, but Kant provides many such arguments. His entire set of categories and the pure forms of perception can be said to be properties of the transcendental ego, for these have been shown transcendentally to be necessary for experience and understanding. Furthermore, Kant argues in his second *Critique* that we must ascribe certain other properties to this ego, such as freedom of action and moral sensitivity. However, key to all these transcendental arguments is the requirement of *universality,* that what has been argued to be true for the transcendental ego must be true of all transcendental egos. In other words, the transcendental deduction is thought to be valid just because its categories are necessary for any human consciousness. Similarly the argument in the second *Critique* is thought to be valid because the postulates of practical reason and the moral law itself are thought valid for any rational being whatever.

This requirement of universality for any ascription to the transcendental ego is precisely what destroys Kant's thesis. Kant continually talks of transcendental egos and in such a way that it is clear that there is a one-one correspondence between transcendental egos and persons. This becomes most clear in his second *Critique* where he speaks constantly of other moral selves, other free agents. Kant never seemed to doubt that such an assumption was consistent with the rest of his theory. A preliminary objection might be simply to question Kant's supposition that there are other minds. This would not be an inconsistency in Kant for the problem of other minds does not seem to be any more difficult for him than for any philosopher attacking this same problem. (With reference to this second *Critique,* he could argue the existence of other conscious beings simply as a postulate of practical reason, on the grounds that doing one's duty to others is not rational unless there are other conscious beings.) Kant's dilemma is much more serious. His problem is not whether there are other minds, or even other transcendental egos, but what sense it makes to say even that I have an ego, or what it could even mean to say there is another ego or another three billion egos in the world. The reason for this is simply that Kant's concept of the transcendental ego makes individuation of transcendental egos impossible. The transcendental ego, being transcendental, is not subject to the categories of unity and multiplicity, and Kant's requirement of universality precludes the possibility of ascribing any property to 'one' transcendental ego that cannot be ascribed to all. There is nothing to differentiate any 'two' transcendental egos, and therefore no grounds to say they are different in any property except number. Kant never questioned the assumption of a one-one correlation between egos. He simply differentiated them by differentiating persons, or perhaps persons' bodies. However, there is no basis for this assumption in Kant; the transcendental ego cannot be argued to require a body within Kant's system for it is necessary only for experience. The experience of having a body is not one which requires a body and certainly does not require one body per ego.

In short, Kant has no way of individuating transcendental egos; by his own admission they have no distinguishable properties. The problem is just beginning, however, for it does not even make sense to ascribe numerical identity to them. On the one hand, since they are transcendental, the categories of unity and plurality and the category of substance do not apply, so that the principles of the understanding cannot even say whether there is one transcendental ego per man. Secondly, the fact that the transcendental ego is simply necessary for experience, and the experience for which it is necessary itself is unified by the ego, that is, identified as the experiences of that subject, the only possibility of differentiating experiences would seem to be the possibility of differentiating experiences of a particular ego. Then our only recourse is to go back to the assumption that subjects can only be differentiated by differentiating persons. Yet this currently acceptable conclusion is clearly closed to Kant, because his very characterization of the transcendental ego makes it impossible for him to assume that it has any properties, for example, location 'within' a body, which can differentiate it from any other ego.

If it makes no sense to speak of "my transcendental ego" as opposed to "your transcendental ego," then how can we talk about the transcendental ego consistently with Kant's derivation of it? The answer is that we can still speak of categories of experience and forms of perception and even of a moral ego and an ego with freedom of action. We can no longer make any commitment as to the number of such egos or the differentiation of them. We can simply speak of "transcendental ego" without thereby indicating individuality.[25]

But this notion of transcendental ego without the possibility of individuation is precisely Hegel's notion of Spirit. For Hegel, the transcendental ego is literally a general or universal consciousness, as it *ought* to have been for Kant. Hegel's *Spirit* is Kant's transcendental ego without commitment concerning its number or individuation. Spirit is simply the general postulated unifier of experience and understanding. Hegel does sometimes speak as if there is *one* general transcendental ego, which of course is equally inconsistent with its basic meaning, but these slips are not frequent and most often are due to Hegel's insistence upon personifying transcendental ego into a divine subject. This is not serious. Because Spirit is simply subject, Hegel can speak of it as subject without ever committing himself to any sort of differentiation. The mistake Kant made is only duplicated if one attempts to differentiate subjects, and this Hegel does not do.[26]

Consciousness and the Dialectic

The *Phenomenology* may be considered as the introduction to the system as a whole. Hegel once considered it as a mere introduction, but he became so involved in its detail that the *Phenomenology* became impossibly long and was published as a more or less autonomous work. The explicit goal of the *Phenomenology* is to show us the way to Absolute Knowledge, and in doing so, it is a reinterpretation and defense of Christianity, a correction of Kant's ethics and epistemology. As a vehicle for the Absolute Truth, it absorbs within it natural science, ethics, and aesthetics as well as metaphysics.

The problem is how this ambitious work is to be interpreted. It is presented as the historical development of Spirit, but does this signify the actual historical conceptual development of mankind, or the stages of development necessary for any individual or is it an hypothesis about the 'normal' development of consciousness? How literally is the historical form of the dialectic to be taken?

Secondly, we must understand the relationship between the various stages. Hegel greatly emphasizes the transitions between these, and it is clear from the developmental structure that there is some sense in which one stage 'leads into' the other, by which this *dialectic* proceeds. Sometimes Hegel speaks of "necessity" in this context, and often, particularly in the *Logic* and the *Encyclopedia,* he speaks of a "deduction." From such talk, many commentators, notably an entire generation of logic-minded British interpreters, took Hegel to be claiming necessary connections in the sense of deductive logic. Given this interpretation, it was easily discovered that Hegel failed to make such claims good. In reaction to this much too strong interpretation, some authors[27] have given up the notion of 'deduction' and taken Hegel to claim only that the connections are "not arbitrary", that one can give "some reasons" for the progression. This extraordinarily weak interpretation is too weak, for Hegel's grand system depends not only on the availability of *some* reasons. Rather, there is a single set of reasons given for each stage, namely, the self-realization of spirit.

The problem is the movement from one stage to another. The most currently accepted view is that Hegel discovers a process "hidden behind the back of consciousness." Findlay, for example, argues:

> *Hegel further maintains that the full inevitability of the process which leads consciousness from one inadequate view of things to another more adequate must be in a measure hidden from consciousness; . . . and will be evident only to the phenomenological observer or in the phenomenological retrospect.* (Phen 79–80 *footnoted*) (*In a meta-language, we should say, one can say things about a given language which that language is unable to say of itself.*) *Thus the scientist will be led on from the things of sense-perception to the non-sensuous things of the scientific understanding, but he will not know exactly why he is thus led. It is we, the phenomenological observers, practicing our external reflection, who can understand the whole transition. What is*

for him a merely factual discovery can be seen by us to be an inevitable revolution in consciousness.[28]

But it is not clear whether this dialectic is a process actually 'inherent' in this sequence of events, or rather whether it is to be considered *only* an interpretation.

In this same context, one questions the necessity of the system's following this particular dialectic. The *Phenomenology* traces a route to the realization of Spirit or Absolute Truth, and one wonders whether there might be alternative routes. The consensus of opinion is that Hegel claims that this is *the* way to the Truth, and that alternative routes are not open. Even Findlay, who provides the interpretation closest to that of this chapter, argues *against* Hegel that he ought not to have made this claim. Hegel did not make this claim; first of all, his various statements of the system do show very different progressions to the same end (compare the *Phenomenology* to the *Logic,* or the various *Lectures*). Most importantly, an adequate understanding of the teleological and 'reflective' nature of Hegel's system makes it quite clear that no such uniqueness claim is involved, for another sequence of past events might be similarly rationalized.

I shall argue that the *Phenomenology* must be considered more akin to an extended historical and philosophical metaphor than to an actual historical account, and that the purpose of this metaphor is to demonstrate by way of an incredibly complex counterexample to Kant, the way Spirit may achieve the Absolute Truth. This is not to say that Hegel does not intend it to be historically significant, or that he believes that the history of Spirit does not closely resemble this development, but it is clear that a literal interpretation is necessarily a failure. Kant's philosophy appears, for example, in the first section of the *Phenomenology;* the early Greeks appear in the third. The ordering of stages of Spirit is by levels of 'maturity', not strict chronology, and there is no claim to strict historical necessity here. In the *Phenomenology,* the point is to order, in metaphorical form, the stages of development of the maturity of Spirit, and to show how this maturity is a progression towards absolute knowledge. This ordering need not follow an actual historical sequence, and its purpose is not to provide an accurate intellectual history of man.

The *Phenomenology* is divided into three uneven parts, each representing one 'form' or 'level of consciousness' in ascending order of sophistication. The first and shortest section is called "Consciousness," which deals with relatively naive epistemological consciousness. The second is called "Self-Consciousness" and traces the beginnings of the awakening of the consciousness of Spirit in its early form of simple antagonistic recognition of other people. Finally, there is a long section on "Reason," which traces the ultimate development of Spiritual-Rational consciousness from a simple sense of community to the penultimate realization of Spirit in art and primitive Christianity and its ultimate realization in Hegel's philosophy. We shall not trace this impressive *Phenomenology* in detail, but must limit ourselves to brief outline of its method and its most influential chapters.

The first section of the *Phenomenology* discusses the most primitive stages in the development of spirit. Because it encompasses many of the traditional problems of philosophy, it can be partially viewed not only as the development of the understanding from mere experience, but as an analysis of the entire movement in modern philosophy including such central problems as the nature of substance, the necessity of concepts for understanding experience, and the nature of connections between experiences and the synthesis of objects; in other words, the subject matter of Kant's first *Critique* (and the *Transcendental Aesthetic* and *Analytic*), and the major epistemological work of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. The stages of *Consciousness* are three, which Hegel designates *"sense-certainty," "perception,"* and *"understanding."*

The stage of consciousness referred to as "sense-certainty," the very beginning of consciousness or knowledge, is "knowledge of the immediate."[29] It is "what is presented before us," "what is given." It is "pure apprehension" without yet any "conceptual comprehension."[30] It is raw experience, without any trace of understanding of this experience, the experience of a passive sensitive receptacle. As such, this stage is not truly consciousness or knowledge at all, but merely "knowledge implicit." This is the pure data of the senses which so many philosophers, of this century as well as the past, have taken to be the indubitable, secure foundation of human knowledge. It is pure experience, uninterpreted and thus unadulterated by us in any way. Many philosophers have argued that errors in human knowledge, when they arise, must arise after this level. For on this level, our knowledge is certain and becomes fallible only when we attempt to conceptualize or to understand our experiences.

Although this section is among the shortest of the *Phenomenology* (ten pages), it provides us with some vital clues for understanding the nature of Hegel's dialectic. Hegel's argument against this form of 'knowledge' as certain knowledge, or even as knowledge at all, is brilliantly clear and to the point and has far-reaching consequences for epistemological theory even in this century. Briefly, Hegel argues that this knowledge, which he describes as a mere "this, here, now," far from being, as so often is argued, 'authentic' knowledge, knowledge which is complete, from which all other knowledge is abstraction and limiting, is "really and admittedly the abstractest and poorest kind of truth." It is what we 'mean' only in sense of pointing (*this*) and not really meaning at all. (Again, the implicit distinction here between *meaning* and denotation has had a profound influence on contemporary analytic philosophy—compare Frege on 'sense' and 'reference'.) In fact, it is no knowledge at all, but simply *is.* Knowledge *requires* concepts, and the supposed certainty of this 'knowledge' is certain only insofar as it is not knowledge at all; it asserts nothing. The infallibility of sense-certainty, of pure experience, lies in its failure to give us any claim to knowledge which might be taken as wrong. This knowledge which "is called unspeakable, is nothing else than what is untrue, irrational, something barely and simply meant."[31]

From this argument, a great many puzzles of the *Phenomenology* and Hegel's work in general become clear. For example, the celebrated late nineteenth-century criticism of Hegel as a *negative* philosopher by Schelling and Kierkegaard is explained—Hegel is interested in knowledge and knowledge is conceptual. Mere confrontation, or in Russell's terms, "acquaintance," is not knowledge at all. The heavy emphasis on *The Concept* in Hegel's system and his constant interrelating of the Concept and Spirit, Consciousness and Knowledge, can be easily understood from this initial characterization of knowledge as necessarily *conceptual.*

From this characterization we may also see clearly that Hegel essentially agreed with Kant (in his *Transcendental Deduction*) that there can be no unconceptualized knowledge, that knowledge is essentially a product of the understanding. (It is not altogether clear whether Hegel further agrees with Kant that there can be no unconceptualized experiences). From this agreement, however, we have one of the keys to the Hegelian works, that knowledge is essentially an *active* process, that mere experience can never give us knowledge, that synthesis of experience by rules or concepts is necessary. To use the frequent Hegelian-Kantian term, knowledge is necessarily *universal,* it comes about by use of concepts in a language that always apply to not one particular case but to an indefinitely large number of cases. This initial insistence on universality as the essence of knowledge is already a reply to the Schelling-Kierkegaard criticism which gathers momentum after Hegel's death.

Even in this section we can see that many of the prominent interpretations of what Hegel is doing with his dialectic cannot succeed. The interpretation of the *Phenomenology* as a running autobiography of Spirit should have to explain how Spirit, at a stage in which it has no concepts and no knowledge, is capable of describing itself, which is what such an interpretation must take this section to be. As it is evident that no such description is possible on this level, it is clear that Hegel does not intend the *Phenomenology* as such a running developmental report, but rather as a retrospective of the development of Spirit. Hegel's own insistence (in the preface and elsewhere) that he is looking back on development to see how it got to the present is confirmation that the *Phenomenology* is retrospective. More importantly, Findlay,[32] most prominently, but other commentators as well, treat the transitions between sections as if they are a demonstration of a development, showing the causes or the necessity of transition from one stage to the next. In Hegel's argument for the inadequacy of sense-certainty, however, there is nothing that could even be interpreted as a *mechanism* which pushes this stage to the next, nor does the inadequacy of sense-certainty act to push the dialectic along. Hegel simply points out that this *conception* of knowledge is an *inadequate* conception, and that knowledge does not exist at this stage.

There is no argument for the evolution of a consciousness that does have knowledge.

If Hegel is not explaining a transition from one stage to the next, what is he doing? We have already answered this in our introduction, but the section on sense-certainty will allow us to demonstrate our interpretation. Hegel claims that there are two stages of consciousness (again we need not, but in this case probably should, take them as chronologically ordered), one of which is more mature than the other, "more mature" meaning closer to absolute knowledge. The transition from sense-certainty to perception is a step closer to the truth, by bringing us from knowledge implicit to knowledge of at least a primitive sort. This transition is not *explained* in the sense of showing why (causally) one step moves to the next, but is explained only in the sense that the transition is *rationalized* as bringing us one step closer to the truth. The work of the dialectic is thus not to show us how spirit developed (in the causal or evolutionary sense), but to rationalize this development, to show us a pathway to Absolute Truth by juxtaposing various stages of knowledge according to their approach to Absolute Truth. Of these many stages, the very lowest, which can only barely be called conscious at all, is that stage at which we have only experience. Sense-certainty is inadequate as knowledge because it is not knowledge at all. Therefore, *we* move along the dialectic to a more adequate form of consciousness, which is that of *Perception.*

Perception is the first appearance of knowledge, for this stage is the beginning of comprehension of our experiences. We now interpret our experiences by applying concepts. In Hegel's short description, the object of consciousness is now the *thing.* As a thing, this object is characterizable and characterized by ascription of properties, in other words, by the application of universally applicable concepts to this particular *thing.* Our experience is therefore no longer 'pure' experience but experience *of* something. In an argument which is still piercing to many philosophers of this century, Hegel notes that many of these properties, which only come about with the application of concepts to our experiences, are mistaken by philosophers to be inherent in the sense-certainty stage. However, the very nature of sense-certainty is to be without knowledge, and knowledge, even of this primitive sort that simply recognizes things, requires the application of concepts to exist.

The problem (inadequacy) that arises in the level of sense-certainty is one familiar to all readers of modern empiricist philosophy. How do we see, not experiences, but *things?* According to the perceptual consciousness, objects, things, have a unity, in fact, exist as a unity of properties. In other words, our perception of a tree is a certain unity of color experiences, of certain shapes, and perhaps consists also of certain tactile sensations, sounds, and smells. Over and above this, there is *the tree,* that which 'lies behind' all of these experiences and ties them together. In traditional philosophical terms, there is the tree as *substance* which is responsible for the unity of the tree-perceptions. The problem is, then, why we should be led to think anything beyond the tree-perception, for any substance 'behind' these perceptions is itself not the object of any possible perception.

In the history of philosophy, this line of questioning sent Berkeley to idealism, but idealism does not yet appear in the Hegelian hierarchy of knowledge. In his terms, this substance, which is an "unconditioned universal," cannot be part of perception. However, perception itself does not recognize the extra-perceptual, so that, if we are to understand this unity of objects, we must move to the next stage of consciousness, not yet idealism, which does help us explain this unity.[33]

The solution to the problem of unity is provided by the level of consciousness which is the *understanding.* The concept of 'understanding' here is clearly taken from Kant's use of the term, and like his use, refers to the application of concepts to experience. However, like Kant's use, there is the reference here not to just *any* concepts (for this is not the subject of discussion in Kant's *Analytic*), but rather those special sets of concepts to which Kant refers as the *Categories.* Among these categories is the category of substance, which is the solution to the problem of unity. The tree-perceptions have a unity of a tree because of the substantial tree that lies behind them. Similarly, problems such as the coexistence of various objects, the reality of causal interconnections between perceptions, as well as successions of perceptions, all appear at this level of the dialectic, to which one might refer as the Kantian level, for it consists primarily

of the conclusions of the *Transcendental Analytic* of the first *Critique.* Of central interest in this section is Hegel's analysis of the world of the understanding as culminating in a dual world-view. On the one hand, there is the world as perceived, and the laws intrinsic to that perception. On the other hand, there is the world in itself, which is postulated 'behind' this world to 'explain' it.

In the Understanding, we postulate 'unconditioned universals' behind our experiences as objects in themselves. However, Hegel does not adopt the traditional notion of 'substance' for those objects, but begins by referring to them as 'forces' or 'powers'. This is then related to the "kingdom of laws" which is Kant's vision of a necessarily unified and ordered (phenomenal) world.

While the chapter is essentially Kantian (although it contains a powerful critique of Kant's *Critique*), the implication is still clearly that the laws of which one speaks at this stage are not yet imposed laws, but laws *inherent in the world itself.* A few brilliant insights into the nature of science may be found here, for example, Hegel's discussion of whether laws are to be conceived of as laws in nature or as *concepts* (that is, provided by us), and his discussion of the nature of scientific explanation, which Hegel claims consists of a *redescription* of phenomena. The most important section of this chapter for our purposes is Hegel's peculiar argument in attack of Kant's theory of knowledge. What he argues, basically, is that Kant's noumenon-phenomenon distinction is fundamentally wrong; that if there is any sense to be made of the notion of "thing-in-itself" it must be part of the thing-as-phenomenon (that is, noumena are not transcendent to phenomena, but are immanent in them).

The argument itself consists of one of Hegel's long and peculiar counterexamples in which he provides a postulation of a noumenal world which happens to be an inverted (*verkehrte*) world. According to Kant, the world-in-itself, that is, as noumenon, is at once a necessary supposition of the conditions of knowledge, but by its very nature cannot be known. Because knowledge depends on the human faculties for knowledge, and because we cannot know that our knowledge is not therefore some distortion of things as they exist independent of our experience of them, we must, while supposing our knowledge to be valid, resort to *noumenon* which very possibly might have its own principles, different from the world as perceived and known by us. Hegel then goes on to suggest what the world-as-it-is *might* be like by suggesting that everything in this world is 'unlike' that in the other. "What is there black is here white, what by the first law (of phenomena) is in the case of electricity the oxygen pole becomes in its other supersensible reality the hydrogen pole."[34] The two-worlds doctrine is carried to the realm of morality, where Hegel argues that the two-worlds view destroys the very concept of morality it is invoked to protect. For, according to him,

> *an act which in appearance is a crime would in its inner nature be capable of being really good—a bad act may have a good intention; punishment is only in appearance punishment; in itself or in another world it might well be, for the criminal, a benefit.*[35]

Here we have the first reference to Kant's morality, which begins with the crushing criticism of Kant's *Summum Bonum* and his entire two-world view. The problem, as stated here, is that the *Summum Bonum* and Kant's morality in general require man and his actions to be considered as noumenon. A man and his actions are also part of the phenomenal world where they are evaluated, and Hegel is here briefly pointing out the problem in applying the phenomenon-noumenon distinction to a man acting. Or, as we questioned in our brief criticism, why suppose that what we consider punishment to the phenomenal man will have any such effect to man as noumenon. Here, even in this first section, we have a clear indication of the continuing attack on Kant's moral-religious philosophy that we have claimed is the core of Hegel's mature writings.

The inverted world passage is essentially an argument by ridicule, for what becomes evident is that, if we take Kant's notion of noumenon seriously, any sort of nonsense becomes equally intelligible. Either the noumenal world is just like the phenomenal world, or, not only does it not make sense to talk about it, but it does not even make sense to suppose that there might be one. It might be argued that Hegel takes the two-world view as literally consisting of two worlds instead of simply as one world as it is and as it might not

be subject to conditions of human understanding. Of course, Hegel's criticism applies as well to the latter interpretation. The inadequacy in the section on *Consciousness,* considered in its entirety, therefore, is the inadequacy of Kant's philosophy, which Hegel considers the culmination of all modern philosophies before it. The inadequacy of understanding is a signal to a new move in philosophy, a move which is not simply new knowledge or a new progression in consciousness, but which is an entirely new *kind* of knowledge—one that Kant did not consider as such—and a new kind of consciousness. Insofar as one wishes to interpret the progress of the *Phenomenology* along philosophical-historical lines, one might say that this new stage was initiated, implicitly, by Kant, and made explicit by Fichte. Again, the *Phenomenology* is not intended to be a history of philosophy.[36]

Self-consciousness: Master and Slave

Consciousness becomes self-consciousnes when it realizes *itself* as the source of the forces and laws of the understanding. Kant is the culmination of that particular stage called "consciousness" in his postulation of an underlying world (though not Kant alone, of course; nearly all traditional metaphysics supplied some such postulate). Kant, however, is also, in his recognition that the application of these transcendental concepts is actually carried out by consciousness itself, the mark of the turn to "self-consciousness."

The confrontation of two consciousnesses is the key to the most celebrated stage of the *Phenomenology,* the section called "Master and Slave," which Marx takes up as a model for his social theory and Sartre borrows as a paradigm for his analysis of "Being-for-Others" in *Being and Nothingness.* Hegel tells us that "self-consciousness attains its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness,"[37] and that,

> *Self-consciousness exists in itself and for-itself, in that, and by the fact that it exists for another self-consciousness; that is to say, it is only by being acknowledged or recognized.*[38]

These cryptic sentences are the crux of "self-consciousness"; they spell out for us the first appearance of Spirit—the recognition of the existence of a universal consciousness still in the primitive form of the recognition of other consciousnesses than one's own. What is Hegel trying to argue here? First, there is the suggestion that the *concept* of "self-consciousness" or "self-identity" can only arise in confrontation with others. Hegel's thesis might thus be construed as the claim that a person has no concept of 'self', cannot refer to himself, and cannot say things about himself (for example, ascribe states of consciousness to himself) until he is *taught* by someone else. This thesis has remarkable affinities with Ludwig Wittgenstein's claim that psychological predicates can only be learned through learning to apply them to someone *else.* (Findlay has claimed the two theses to be virtually identical.)

Secondly, there is a more modest thesis that one can only develop self-consciousness, that is, a *particular* concept of himself, through confrontation with other people. This thesis does not claim that one cannot have concepts of self-reference before social confrontation, but rather that the particular image one has of himself is acquired socially, not in isolation. It is this sort of thesis which occupies much of Sartre's quasi-psychological efforts in *Being and Nothingness.* The first claim, that concerning the concept of self-reference, is hardly treated by Hegel, for he considers self-reference "merely formal" and "entirely empty," hardly worth the title of "self-consciousness" at all. (Compare his discussion of the 'knowledge' of *sense-certainty.* An extended discussion of this empty self-reference can be found in Part III of the *Encyclopedia.*) The second thesis, however, seems to fit well into the overall direction of the system, and a discussion of the 'parable' of master and slave should make this clear.

The first part of the parable is quite simple and straightforward: two self-consciousnesses encounter each other and struggle to "cancel" each other in order to "prove their certainty of themselves" (prove their independence and freedom) against the other, who appears as an independent (and therefore limiting) being. Each self-consciousness originally tries to treat the other as object, but finds that the other does not react as an object, which demands that each recognize the other as an independent consciousness. However, recognizing another as independent limits

one's own independence, and, moreover, one then becomes determined to prove his own freedom and independence not simply to himself, but to the other as well. (As Hegel says, they wish to bring their self-certainty (autonomy and independence) to the "level of objective truth.") Hegel adds that it is solely by risking one's life that such objective freedom is obtained, and "one attains the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness."[39] The other must be 'cancelled' because his otherness contradicts one's view as self-conscious (free and independent as well as self-aware). However, it becomes clear that the role of the other in this life-and-death struggle is not only that of a threat or purely destructive. The recognition by the other of one's self is at the very crux of the conflict. Thus obtaining the recognition of the other as a self-consciousness is the point of the battle, not the extinction of the other. Hegel says that "trial by death cancels both the truth which was to result from it [that is, the recognition of self-consciousness by the other] and therewith the certainty of self altogether."[40] This passage seems to show that Hegel did hold the second thesis above, that self-consciousness requires the presence of another for one's own self-image. In fighting for recognition, each tries to save his own life, but each tries also, if possible, to preserve the life of his opponent. If one consciousness is victor, and neither loses his life, then one becomes a consciousness "for-itself," independent, a master, while the other becomes a consciousness "for-another," a slave (whose essence, Hegel mysteriously comments, is "life," indicating that it is perhaps he who arranged this relationship to save his life).

The master "is a consciousness existing on its own account which is mediated with itself through another consciousness."[41] The master is "self-existence," but he too is a being-for-itself existing only through another. The master, although self-sufficient in the sense of having the slave dependent on him, is also dependent on this dependence. Because the master maintains the power, he is the master, and thereby self-sufficient. Because he is now self-sufficient only through the industry of the slave, he is also dependent on the slave. Hegel here speaks obscurely of a relationship to "the thing," which the slave has immediately ("he labours upon it") but "the master only mediately, except that he gets the enjoyment of it."[42] In the course of development, the slave, because of his direct relation to the thing, becomes self-sufficient while the master, because of his dependence on the slave, becomes wholly dependent. (From this reversal Marx is to take his central theses of class struggle and the ultimate degeneration and self-destruction of the economic master classes.) Furthermore, the problem of the recognition of the other breeds a further instability into this relationship. The master, who depends on the servant for the 'recognition' that he is autonomous, finds the servant a totally dependent creature without an independent will, incapable of giving him the recognition of an independent other.

In the master-slave relationship, we first see the striving for freedom of Spirit, the *truth* for self-consciousness. In the master-slave relationship, where this striving begins, we see the inadequacy of the attempt to derive this truth from human relationships which treat persons as independent and opposed consciousness. The way to freedom, the goal of this stage of consciousness, lies not in such relationships, but in the direction of increased socialization. The explicit recognition of Spirit does not appear in the section on "self-consciousness." The master-slave relationship gives way to the explicit rejection of the master-slave situation, denying all 'external' reality and rejecting all action as meaningless *(stoicism).* In a more extreme form, "self-consciousness" attempts to take *everything* as meaningless *(skepticism).* Ultimately, the 'contradictions' or 'disharmonies' of all forms of self-consciousness become explicit in an alienated soul, a consciousness whose inconsistent state is 'unhappy'. The master-slave relationship, introduced as a relationship between two people, becomes internalized in a single schizoid individual. This 'unhappy' soul is the primitive Christian ascetic who believes himself to be *both* a part of this world and an essentially Divine consciousness, but the "creature of the flesh" and the "soul before God" cannot coexist. Kierkegaard will return to this disharmonious Christian for the material for his "knight of faith." Where Kierkegaard will insist that this incomprehensible schizophrenia is a necessary condition for Christianity, Hegel insists on going beyond this

internalized master-slave relationship with its self-flagellation and self-denial. In Christianity, and in the figure of Christ, Hegel finds the first explicit concept of Spirit,

the idea of Reason, of the certainty that consciousness is, in its particularity, inherently and essentially absolute, or is all reality.[43]

Reason

Rational consciousness is the end of the *Phenomenology,* a final "unification of the diverse elements in its process." Reason resolves by harmonizing *(aufheben)* the 'disharmonies' between God and Man, and between morality (Practical Reason) and personal inclination. The Spirit of Absolute Knowledge is both Immanent God and human society. There is no separating God from man or morality from custom. Reason in the *Phenomenology* also marks the synthesis of a number of disharmonies that have been introduced in the dialectic of the *Phenomenology itself:* the inadequacies of traditional epistemological thought (the "opposition of subject and object"); the resolution of the master-slave relationship and interpersonal conflict (including the internalized conflict of the 'unhappy' consciousness); and, most ambitious of all, the *Phenomenology* is Hegel's first attempt to 'harmonize' all human efforts and, in an Aristotelian way, find the proper conceptual place for each of them.

The stages of Reason move from philosophical idealism (Fichte's "ethical idealism" more than Berkeley's epistemological idealism), the first conception of the autonomy of consciousness, and through scientific idealism, in which man becomes confident in his ability to fathom the secrets of nature, not as an alien object (as in "Understanding"), but as objects inextricably tied to human consciousness. (A fuller understanding of this notion will have to wait for our discussion of Hegel's *Logic*; we shall see it developed in Nietzsche's epistemology and in Husserl's phenomenology as well.) Reason then moves through Spirit becoming explicitly formulated, through the custom-bound folk morality of the family, the tribe, and the small community to "Spirit certain of itself," that is, Kant's *moralität,* through religion to "revealed religion," Christianity, and finally to Absolute Knowledge.

The Reason of the *Phenomenology* is primarily concerned with early religious-ethical disharmonies. The epistemological 'opposition' between subject and object will become the central theme of the *Logic.* Ethics is the recognition of man's moral autonomy, a recognition for which Kant is primarily responsible. Kant's "moral world-view" recognizes this autonomy, however, only at a terrible cost, the one-sided picture of man as separated from nature, from his own desires and happiness, and concerned only with the imperatives of duty. Hegel argues (as he had in his early manuscripts) that morality and happiness cannot be separated: "enjoyment lies in the very principle of morality." Hegel restates the *Summum Bonum* as a necessary condition for morality:

The harmony of morality and nature, or . . . the harmony of morality and happiness, is thought of as necessarily existing . . .[44]

This "harmony of morality and objective nature" Hegel refers to as "the final purpose of the world."[45] Postulation, however, is not proof, and the vital belief in a Divine moral Legislator[46] and the Kingdom of Heaven cannot be left to mere postulation. The dialectical movement from Kant's ethics to religion is such a 'proof', an attempt to demonstrate the conceptual inadequacy of Kant's thesis. In a nasty critique of Kant's ethics, Hegel calls his basic notion of duty "dishonest" and a "perfect nest of thoughtless contradictions." Kant's morality is said to be "hypocrisy," for it pretends to take duty as absolute, but takes constant if devious recourse to appeals to inclination and Divine reward. In the *Phenomenology,* as in the early writings, Hegel suggests that a more sophistocated and harmonious conception of morality can be found in *Sittlichkeit,* the morality of custom. Conceptually, *Sittlichkeit* is bettered by the early Christian ideal of Conscience, in which, Hegel argues (after Fichte) the command of duty and the incentive of inclination are synthesized. Conscience acts on implicit principle, yet is specific to particular situations. It is derivative of reason, but also involves inclination; it is individual yet derivative of a person's upbringing in society. Conscience finds its living ideal in the figure that Hegel identifies as the "beautiful soul," a holy figure whose "pure goodness" makes him "lose contact with social reality." One immediately thinks of Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin (*The Idiot*). More aptly, it is the conception of the historical Jesus that best characterizes the beautiful soul and the perfect voice of conscience, and it is Jesus who moves the dialectic to that penultimate level of consciousness known as religion.

"The concept of Religion," according to Hegel, "is the consciousness that sees itself as Truth." After a brief excursion through primitive and 'artistic' religious consciousness, Hegel brings us back to Christianity, whose Judaic origins have already promoted the conception of God as Spirit, but an 'objective' or substantial Spirit, "out there." What Christ represents, according to Hegel, is not a concrete manifestation of God "out there" in the form of *one* man; Christ is rather the symbol of the conception that God and all men are a unity. Spirit is "substance and subject as well" means that the Christian Spirit and we ourselves are the same. Here is the resolution of the 'disharmony' between man and God which had caused Hegel to renounce Christianity in his early writings, but it is not to be thought that this is a simple endorsement of traditional Christianity either. Christianity has failed to become Absolute Truth, according to Hegel, because it has become obsessed with figurative thinking in stories and pictures. To become Absolute Truth, Christianity must reject such thinking and become wholly *conceptual.* Needless to say, this entailed a rejection of many of the teachings and most of the ritual story telling of the Christian church. In secularized Prussia, this did not seem to seriously affect Hegel's enormously powerful appeal. The Absolute Knowledge of the *Phenomenology* is thus a reconceptualization of the basic themes of Christianity. The insistence that Christianity thus become totally conceptual does not mean that it must dispense with any *content*; its content, the content of the *Phenomenology*, and the content of contemporary Prussian culture, was *everything* that had gone before it. Consciousness had its identity in its past, that is, in it rationalization of its past. The content and the justification for Hegel's revised Christianity was everything that had gone before it. The end and purpose of the *Phenomenology,* and the justification and end of all human activity ("Absolute Truth") rested in Hegel's revised Christianity, which, as Kierkegaard bitterly points out, is far more Hegelian than Christian.

The *Logic* and Absolute Knowledge[47]

Philosophy is the search for Absolute Knowledge—the search for rationality—for Reason in the world. In the *Phenomenology,* Hegel has shown that such absolute or nonconditioned knowledge is possible, namely it is possible if we understand that all knowledge and experience serves the ultimate purpose of our realization of ourselves as Spirit. The *Phenomenology* has demonstrated this important philosophical perspective by showing how the only adequate conception of ourselves and of our knowledge under intense philosophical scrutiny is that position in which we cease to distinguish real selves (transcendental ego) from each other, and we cease thinking critically (in Kant's sense) as if knowledge of things as they are in-themselves is impossible to us.

The *Phenomenology* is only the beginning of the system; it proves that systematic Absolute Knowledge is possible. On the Continent, this has proven to be the most influential of Hegel's works, so we have allotted most of our space to a discussion of it. However, the system as Hegel conceived of it is constituted by those books written *after* the *Phenomenology*. They are the systematic application of the philosophical perspective and method established in the *Phenomenology*. In them, Hegel investigates and demonstrates the rationality of many different manifestations of consciousness and shows how they lead to the same goal of Spiritual self-realization as do the cultural stages of the *Phenomenology.* In the *Logic,* this is done in the realm of "pure thought": the most formal concepts (those which Kant referred to as the Categories) are shown to be ordered in levels of sophistication leading to Absolute Truth. In the *Philosophy of Right,* ethical and political institutions (that is, ethical and political concepts) are similarly ordered according to sophistication. In the *Lectures,* the same is done for religion, the arts, the history of philosophy, and history itself. We may note from the outset that the only system which follows a strict historical pattern is the history. All of these vital human endeavors are ordered as their various conceptions approach the Spiritual climax of the *Phenomenology.*

Of these works, the most important is the *Logic,* which exists in two separate but similar versions. The *Logic* can only come after the *Phenomenology,* and Hegel clearly considered the *Phenomenology* a prolegomena to his work in *Logic.* The *Phenomenology* sets up the goal and methodology, and the *Logic* is the execution of the ordering of a priori concepts—those most basic concepts which we use to establish a general framework within which to understand all experience. Kant had given us a more or less arbitrary list of twelve such concepts and made no distinctions among them as far as conceptual sophistication. Hegel complains that this list *is* arbitrary, but more importantly, that Kant treated these concepts as concepts of the understanding while insisting they could only be misused by Reason. Against this, Hegel treats these concepts as concepts of Reason, not understanding (their employment in the understanding being a less adequate use of them) and asks, as he did in the *Phenomenology,* which of various antithetical sets of a priori concepts is most sophisticated, that is, can give the Absolute Truth. Unlike Kant (and like Fichte), Hegel argues that there are alternative sets of a priori concepts (that is, alternative conceptual frameworks for viewing the world), and that the job of philosophy could not be simply to show the a priori necessity of one set of categories (which Hegel felt that Kant had *not* succeeded in doing), but rather in showing the consequences and inadequacies of these various concepts, and then ordering these with regard to their adequacy.

Among the most startling and most often misunderstood of Hegel's claims is the claim that Kant had taken the antinomies[48] as a repudiation of the use of a priori concepts by Reason instead of recognizing that these antinomies are a natural and more adequate use of these concepts than understanding can give them. In other words, Hegel claims that antinomy is good, that contradiction of that sort is a more adequate, not an impossible use of concepts. To this end Hegel complains that Kant did not find enough antinomies (but limited himself to only four) and did not appreciate the true importance of what he himself considered his greatest discovery. Furthermore, Hegel makes the startling and frequently attacked claim that the *Logic* (concepts and their relations) are not merely embodied in a language or in a mode of thought but are *in the world.* In other words, logical relationships do not hold because of certain rules of thought, but because the world itself contains these relationships. Consequently, logical contradictions, as manifested in the antinomies, are properties of the world itself, not simply of the mode of thought that produced them. To understand these radical theses, we must return to the conclusion of the *Phenomenology,* which is there, and in our exposition, left obscure. In the *Phenomenology,* we moved from one form of consciousness to a more adequate form until we reached the highest form in which we realized that all of our various modes of experience and thought were part of a process of *self*-discovery. In the *Logic,* the notion or the concept of self-conscious Spirit which was introduced in the *Phenomenology* is shown to be the highest purely conceptual truth. In other words, the conception of the world which is most adequate is the conception of Spirit.

In *Logic,* Spirit is that conception of the world in which subject and object (subjective and objective) are not distinguished, in which various 'subjects' are not *distinguished either,*

it is only when absolute knowledge has been reached that the separation of the object of knowledge *from* subjective certainty *is complete resolved, and truth equated to this certainty, and this certainty equated to truth.*[49]

Because it makes no sense to distinguish subject from object, neither does it make sense to distinguish the abstract formal modes of thought in logic ("certainty") from the objects or content of knowledge ("truth"), and therefore it makes no sense to speak of "logic" independently of "truth."

On the contrary, the necessary forms and characteristic determinations of thought are the content and the supreme truth itself.[50]

In other words, *logic is metaphysics.* Again, God enters as the supreme principle.

This content (of the Logic) *shows forth God as He is in His eternal essence before the creation of nature and of finite spirit.*[51]

The "before" here is clearly a 'conceptual' not a temporal "before." Hegel frequently insists that the *Logic* precedes the *Phenomenology* as bare form precedes experience, but also insists that experience and understanding (concepts) are inseparable. This leaves in considerable confusion exactly what is the relationship between concepts and experiences, the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic.*

Although it is generally recognized that the attack on the subjective-objective distinction is the final step of Hegel's systematic works, few Hegelians have been able to make sense out of this notion. The corollary to this attack—the existence of logical properties in things—the operation of the dialectic in the world, so often attacked as serious confusion in Hegel, makes much better sense once the former is understood. First of all, Hegel does not mean, as his worst disciples would claim, that one cannot draw *any* distinction between subject and object. Clearly, I do not confuse myself with the table in front of me, and it makes perfectly good sense to speak of me (the subject) perceiving the table (the object). More seriously, Hegel does not deny the possibility of drawing the distinction between "subjective" and "objective" in the sense in which we speak (and Kant speaks) of "objective reality" (that experienced by any conscious being) and "subjective reality" (that which is experienced by a single peculiar consciousness and cannot be duplicated for another consciousness). Hegel does not even deny the possibility of a philosophical distinction between subject and object, such as that continually used by Kant. It is clearly the purpose of the early *Phenomenology* and the first two sections of the *Logic* (the "Objective Logic") to show exactly how such distinctions can be drawn. What Hegel does maintain is that such a philosophical distinction *applied to the foundation of experience and knowledge* is inadequate and leads to serious dilemmas—notably the skepticism explicit in Hume and implicit in Kant.

What Hegel claims is that an entire set of questions on which traditional philosophy has been based must be discarded. He does not claim that there is no "subject-object" distinction, but argues that this distinction has made advancement in philosophy impossible. Therefore, we ought to replace the "subject-object" conceptual scheme with one which contains no such distinction. Furthermore, the conception of *Spirit* (and the Notion) tells *us* that the problem is not *my* knowledge of reality but *our* knowledge. Concepts and reality itself are *socially* discovered. We must not ask whether our experiences are in accord with reality, or whether we can know things as they might be entirely different from the way we can know them. We must not ask whether some particular basic framework in which we view the world is in the world-in-itself ("objective") or imposed on the perceived world by *us* ("subjective"). In other words, philosophy for Hegel must proceed only by considering *everything* as a manifestation of ourselves, and by not asking whether there is any world beyond this (Kant's noumenal world). For Hegel, philosophy investigates the world (for *us*) and ceases to question the status of this world. One can already see the germ of the Phenomenological Movement to be initiated a half-century later by Edmond Husserl, who similarly argues that philosophy must begin by "bracketing existence," and who investigates only the world as it appears to *us* as phenomenon. (Husserl also comes to insist on the "Intersubjectivity" of all knowledge.[52]) Questions about the world-in-itself, if by this is meant a world which we do not or cannot know, have no part in philosophy. Similarly, one might consider J. L. Austin's[53] criticism of the modified two-world view of logical positivism, in which he argues, like Hegel, the commonsense position that we do have knowledge of objects-or-things in-themselves and that no other view can result in fruitful philosophy.

When Hegel maintains that the dialectic, that logic, is inherent in things-in-themselves, he is thus not making the absurd claims that we cannot ever distinguish objectivity from subjectivity or that logic exists in-the-world *as opposed to* in thought. What he is arguing is rather that traditional metaphysics, which investigates the world as rational or 'logical', is much closer to the truth than Kant's critical philosophy which denies the possibility of understanding things-in-themselves.

The older metaphysic had in this respect a loftier conception of thought than that which has become current in more modern times. For the older metaphysic laid down as fundamental that which

by thinking is known of and in things, that alone is what is really true in them. . . . Thus this older metaphysic stands for the view that thinking and the determination of thinking are not something foreign to the objects of thought, but are rather of the very essence of those objects.[54]

Hegel's radical claim thus comes down to a very old and commonsense dictum, but one which was in ill-repute in post-Kantian philosophy. Namely, he insisted that philosophy could tell us the way things really are, but to do so it had to give up those less adequate conceptual frameworks which lead us into philosophical impasse. (We might compare this modest view with Marx's version of it which literally placed the dialectic in history and in objects with no such conceptual revisionism in mind. We might also contrast Hegel's view with that which Kierkegaard attacks.[55] Had he better understood Hegel, Kierkegaard might have realized that his notion of 'subjective truth' is less incompatible with Hegel than he supposed.)

Hegel's love of contradiction and 'dialectic' is well known but usually misinterpreted so as to make his brilliant theses impossibly obscure if not absurd. Hegel praises Kant's *Transcendental Dialectic* and his 'antinomies' (but not his execution of them) as disclosing important characteristics of Reason which Kant himself did not appreciate.

Kant set dialectic higher, and this part of his work is among the greatest of his merits, for he freed dialectic from the semblance of arbitrariness attributed to it in ordinary thought, and set it forth as a necessary procedure of reason. . . . *When Kant's dialectical expositions in the* antinomies of Pure Reason *are looked at closely . . . it will seem that they are not indeed deserving of any great promise; but the general idea upon which he builds and which he has vindicated is the objectivity of appearance and the* necessity of contradiction *which belong to the very nature of thought-determinations; primarily indeed in so far as these determinations are applied by reason to* things in themselves.[56]

Hegel's love of antinomy is intimately connected to his glorification of the 'fluidity' of Reason in contrast to the 'rigidity' of the Understanding.

The battle of Reason consists in this, to overcome the rigidity which the Understanding has brought in.[57]

What Hegel objects to is the dogmatism with which Kant defends one 'correct' conceptual framework. "Understanding" (that is, Kant's *Analytic*) refuses to recognize what Kant himself demonstrates in the antinomies, that there are other conceptual schemes equally valid. Kant tries to get rid of the antinomies, notably the latter two 'dialectical' antinomies, by arguing that one set refers to noumena. This is defensible only by *practical* reason, and is therefore not *knowledge* at all. Hegel has continuously pointed out that this use of "knowledge" is akin to sophistry on Kant's part. What Kant ought to have recognized is that the antinomies demonstrate the impossibility of a transcendental deduction, and that philosophical truth lies in the realm of reason, not that of understanding or critique.

A modern way of putting Hegel's thesis of the 'fluidity' and necessary dialectical nature of Reason is to compare Kant's *Analytic* to a variety of currently accepted absolutist theories of meaning and Hegel's *Logic* to an opposed school of *contextualists.* Kant argues as if his key a priori concepts "being," "freedom," "causality," and so on, have a single fixed meaning which remains invariant in different philosophical contexts. Hegel argues to the contrary, that these concepts vary in meaning depending on context, and that no analysis of these concepts can disclose one 'proper' mode of thinking. Rather, different philosophical theories use these terms in different ways, with different meanings, but no single use is correct. (Compare Locke's and Lenin's use of "liberty," for example.) The movement of the *Logic* discloses to us various conceptions of the world demonstrating the changes of meaning in a priori philosophically important concepts. Finally we reach the highest conception of these concepts, which, to put the Absolute in very different terms than before, consists in the recognition of this conceptual fluidity and of the role which these concepts have played in various conceptual modes. The Absolute from this perspective is the realization of the variance of meaning of philosophical terms, and the covalidity of very different, even contradictory, philosophical theses. Absolute Truth, or the Notion, far from being the pretentious dogmatic concept it is so often accused of being, is the most tolerant of philosophical positions. It says that many philosophical theses are equally valid, and that the job of the philosopher, above all else, is to realize this, and to be tolerant of them. Perhaps, no philosopher has been less dogmatic than Hegel, his own pretentious utterances to the contrary. This is not to deny, however, that Hegel thought his own philosophy of superhistorical tolerance to occupy an exalted place. He calls philosophy,

the finest flower, it is the conception of its whole forms, it is consciousness and the spiritual essence of the whole situation, the spirit of the time, present in the spirit of comprehending itself.[58]

It should be evident what self-glorification must follow for the man who has finally articulated—for all mankind—this self-realization. Needless to say, it is this self-aggrandizement that will, more than any specific thesis or general methodology in Hegel's philosophy, fuel the antagonism of a century of anti-Hegelian, anti-Rationalist philosophers.

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