

2 You Can't Get There from Here: Transition problems in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*

I. WHAT IS A PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT?

Beginning around the summer of 1802, Hegel began to prepare his friends and students for the immanent publication of his own "system," or at least a part of it. For a young professor out to make his mark, this was apparently the thing to do in those heady days in the university city of Jena, which had already seen several of Fichte's "Doctrines of Knowledge" and Schelling's influential "System of Transcendental Idealism." But no such work appeared, since Hegel began to change his mind rapidly about a number of important elements in such a system, especially, after the lectures given in the 1803–4 academic year, about the relation between his category theory, or logic, and his metaphysics, and even more deeply, about many of Schelling's ideas.¹ These changes also prompted an interest, sometime around 1805, in a proper "Introduction" to such a system, a work that was to be a "Science of the Experience of Consciousness," and that would be published, together with his "Logic," in a single volume at Eastertime 1806.

That combined work also never appeared. By October of 1806, Hegel for some reason had ended up with something very different from these original intentions. He had hastily written and decided to publish not the originally planned 150 page introduction within a systematic study, but a very long, independent Introduction to his system, again called a "Science of the Experience of Consciousness" (a designation that still appears at the end of the work's ultimately published "Introduction").² Finally, by the time he had corrected the proofs and written its new "Preface" and the work itself had appeared in early 1807, another crucial change had occurred. The old

title had been discarded and a new one appended. The book was now *The Phenomenology of Spirit* and it was itself an independent "first part" of the "System of Science." (The original publisher, understandably, appears to have been very confused by all this, and he simply published the work under, in effect, both titles.)³

Thus began a long controversy about the intention of the work, its internal organization, its relation to the rest of Hegel's mature project, and the extent to which Hegel changed his mind about its importance. There are to this day, as Hans Friederich Fulda points out, philosophers and scholars seriously interested in Hegel who would prefer to read and study only the 1807 *Phenomenology*.⁴ (Many of these are among the most influential in the twentieth century, like Kojève, Lukács, Sartre, and Bloch, who read the work as a philosophical anthropology demonstrating the essentially historical, self-made nature of human being). And there are those who insist on the mature or Encyclopedic Hegel as the real Hegel, and therewith on the complete dispensability of what they regard as a mere piece of un-systematic juvenalia.⁵

This controversy about just what a "phenomenology of spirit" is supposed to be concerns both Hegel's original and his later understanding of the work. The original structure or architectonic of the work, the organization of its headings and chapters, is itself puzzling and raises many questions.

The book is organized this way. There are eight distinct chapters, each marked by roman numeral designations (I–VIII). But superimposed on these chapters is a puzzling, additional structure. There is a Preface, an Introduction, and then:

- A. Consciousness
 - I. Sense-Certainty
 - II. Perception
 - III. The Understanding
- B. Self-consciousness
 - IV. The Truth of Self-Certainty

and then a final lettered section, "C," which itself has no title, only subdivisions:

- C.
 - AA. Reason

V. The Certainty and Truth of Reason

BB. Spirit

VI. Spirit

CC. Religion

VII. Religion

DD. Absolute Knowing

VIII. Absolute Knowing

A first glance at this structure would appear to justify Otto Pöggeler's suggestion: that in actually writing the work Hegel seems to have simply lost control of its structure as he wrote the later sections, and had neither the time nor the inclination to revise the whole work in the light of those later discussions.⁶ For one thing, the individual chapters do not appear to have been well planned or thought out in advance. In the original edition, chapter lengths look like this: Chapter One – 16 pages, Chapter Two – 21 pages, Chapter Three – 42 pages, Chapter Four – 61 pages; and then Chapter Five balloons to 214 pages! For another, the chapters on Spirit and Religion introduce a reference to actual historical chronology in a puzzling way, or at least in a way that seems difficult to integrate with the earlier chapters and their more-systematic, idealized presentation of various possible “shapes of spirit,” possible stances toward the world, and others that bear no obvious (or at least no necessary) relation to actual historical institutions or societies, or even to individual philosophers.⁷

For some scholars, doubts about these historical sections and so about the overall coherence of the work are intensified by other pieces of evidence that purportedly show that Hegel himself adopted a radically revisionist stance toward his own work very soon after completing it. These include his own summary of the *Phenomenology* (as a “propadeutic”) for his students at Nürnberg, which summary included only the material up to the chapter on “Reason.”⁸ This suggested to some that he always preferred a direct transition from “Reason” to his “Logic” and so to his whole system, and so that the historical chapters in the 1807 version were digressions or in some other way dispensable. Also, and perhaps most significant for all the deflationary approaches to the *Phenomenology*, when Hegel published versions of his full *Encyclopedia* system at Heidelberg and later at Berlin, there was indeed a “Phenomenology of Spirit”

included, but not as a free-standing, introductory work, but as the middle section in the "Philosophy of Subjective Spirit." And, adding to suspicions about the real core of the work, he included in the *Encyclopedia* only general summaries of the sections on "Consciousness," "Self-Consciousness" and "Reason." It would appear that that additional material on "Spirit" and "Religion" in the 1807 version was simply reworked in lectures on the philosophies of history and religion, and that the original phenomenological project, itself ambiguous and never thoroughly worked out, had been abandoned. (This suspicion has been accepted in some quarters even though Hegel was preparing a new edition of the *Phenomenology* toward the end of his life. He certainly never abandoned the work, and continued to refer to it frequently. In the Introduction to the final edition of his most important work, his *Science of Logic*, he continued to insist on the *Phenomenology* as a necessary "presupposition," even "deduction" of the *Logic*.)⁹

Considerations like the above have led to several famous scholarly deconstructions of the work. For many years Rudolf Haym's, in his 1857 *Hegel und seine Zeit*, was the best known.¹⁰ He argued that the work was a "palimpsest": two texts, one overlaid on the other with no internal principal of order. It was, supposedly, originally planned as an account of the consciousness/self-consciousness/reason relation, a "psychology" in the tradition of Kant's transcendental psychology, or an account of the subjective faculties and activities necessarily involved in any representation of an object or intentional action. But Hegel supposedly shifted interests frequently in writing the book, adding on gratuitously a rational reconstruction of human history and an ambitious historical theodicy. "Put all at once, the *Phenomenology* is a psychology brought into confusion and disorder through a history, and a history brought to ruin through a psychology."¹¹

There are other such palimpsest interpretations more sympathetic to the internal, philosophical motivations that led Hegel away from any putative original plan. Theodor Haering also proposed that Hegel originally intended to end the book with the discussion of "Reason," but that, motivated by a desire actually to produce the first part of his long-promised system and to justify a claim that both he (Hegel) and human history had achieved the standpoint of absolute knowledge, he tried, clumsily and without much success, to work

into the text various reflections on the development of historical spirit.¹²

The contemporary scholar Otto Pöggeler has convincingly attacked the philological evidence used by Haering, and has proposed his own more philosophically motivated version of the work's composition history.¹³ In Pöggeler's account, it was when actually writing the chapter on Reason that Hegel realized the implications of his own earlier argument that the whole position or stance of "Consciousness" had been overcome or superseded. Once Hegel had demonstrated that our cognitive relation to the world could not be wholly passive or dependent, that the ways we take up the world were at least partly due to us as well as to the world (in Hegel's language once a "relation to an object" was understood to be a "self-relation in relation to an object"), the earlier planned "science of the experience of *consciousness*" was in effect already over.¹⁴ The subject of such a "relation to an other" was now already "spirit," determining collectively "*for itself*" its relation to others and objects. This suggestion by Pöggeler is one of the most philosophically valuable to come out of the long scholarly controversy, and we shall return to it below.¹⁵

Finally, all such palimpsest, or anti-unity, interpretations have been challenged by scholars who believe that Hegel actually had a relatively clear idea of the structure of the book throughout, from beginning to end. Many of these commentators rely on Hegel's Jena lectures on Logic and his general ideas about immanent logical development and the architectonic of this development, as these were presented later in his Jena years. Fulda, one of the most persuasive of this group, does not deny that Hegel experienced a great deal of difficulty in carrying out such a "logically grounded phenomenology," both because of the incomplete state of the 1805 *Logic* and Hegel's own confusions about the *Phenomenology*.¹⁶ But, he argues (together with J. Heinrichs and others), the overall architectonic of the *whole Phenomenology* is clearly derived from that earlier source.¹⁷

So much for the scholarly disputes. Have they brought us any closer to an answer to the question What is the *Phenomenology of Spirit*?

It will not be possible here or, in this limited context, very helpful to pursue these issues as philological or historical problems. But the long dispute about Hegel's intentions and the work's unity at least

brings into focus a basic philosophical dispute about the book. Clearly, those who cannot see any overall unity in the work often make a broad philosophical as well as a textual criticism. They are really claiming that there is no good internal argument supporting Hegel's most revolutionary claim in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: his rejection of both an empirical or naturalistic as well as a transcendental notion of subjectivity in favor of a notion of a subject of experience and action as necessarily *self-transforming in time* and necessarily *social*, in favor, that is, of the thinking and acting subject as *Geist*, Spirit. If, on the contrary, there is such an internal argument, then, as Pöggeler has suggested, we should at least be able to see in the work itself the philosophical reasons for Hegel's reconception of the problem of the "experience of consciousness" as a "phenomenology of spirit," why he would claim that the problem of consciousness's possible relation to objects and to others is really the problem of spirit's (basically social) relation to itself and why that relation must be accounted for in historical terms. Hegel's expansion of the work from an introductory indictment of various realist and Cartesian epistemologies into a fuller, more positive account of social subjectivity, and his reliance on the details of human history, literature, and religion to establish what seem to be philosophical conclusions about such a subject would thus represent far more than a hasty presentation of several separate ideas, loosely and clumsily thrown together.

In fact, the general problem of the work as a whole, and its most important transitions, bring into focus theses quite famously, even if often only vaguely, associated with Hegel. These concern (a) his critique of *individualist* models of the mind-world relation, a problem that includes the possibility of determinate representation at all as well as possible truth claims about the world, and (b) his critique of *individualist* models of agency, especially self-conscious, rational agency.

Understanding how Hegel would defend these sorts of claims will not resolve all the major controversies about the structure and implications of the work. In this context, raising the question this way will focus our attention mostly on limited questions: Why, according to Hegel, must the problem of "consciousness of objects" or human intentionality be reconceived as the problem of a mutually recognizing, social self-consciousness? and Why must reason be-

come spirit; why is the attempt to base beliefs and deeds on universal criteria, on what any thinker or agent would believe or do, to be reconceived as some sort of participation in a socio-historical practice? I am suggesting that understanding Hegel's answers to these questions can clarify the larger philosophical and methodological issues at stake in the work's overall movement, what general goal Hegel is after, how he proposes to pursue it, and that it is the most interesting issue raised by the scholarly controversies.

II. THE PROBLEM OF THE ABSOLUTE

I want to consider first Hegel's famous presentation of self-consciousness as itself a social struggle for recognition between independent and dependent subjects. Hegel calls this chapter the very "turning point" of the whole *Phenomenology* and in it first introduces the idea of an "I" that is a 'we,' and a 'we' that is an 'I.' It is puzzling that such a theme also appears to be introduced as a resolution, in some sense, of various aporiai that developed in the course of an assessment of "object-dependent" and essentially passive theories of human consciousness. This apparent shift of interest from accounts of how we could take up and have or represent a world, to what appears to be an independent interest in purposive agency, social identity, prestige, and religious accounts of human worth, presents us with probably the most serious of the transition problems, the "you can't get there from here" problems in the *Phenomenology*, so serious that even those with a minimalist reading of the real or original core of the *Phenomenology* have no satisfactory account of it.

To make matters worse, such a problem cannot even be addressed without taking some stand on a host of other interpretive controversies already at issue in the infamous transition. To get to the issues I am interested in, I shall simply have to set out the details of these controversies and briefly sketch what seem to me the most reasonable interpretations.

(i) In both his Preface and Introduction, Hegel introduces the central problem of the *Phenomenology* as if he were referring to a common philosophical term of art, as common as "truth of reason," or "innate idea," or "natural law." Without preparation or explanation, Hegel assumes that, in one way or another, philosophy is about "the *Absolute*." Such a term immediately suggests that the book's final

chapter, on "absolute knowing," will defend a claim to have discovered something like absolute reality, the truly, not apparently real, or the highest degree of reality as opposed to some finite or imperfect realm. If this is so, then a defense of "*spirit*" as "absolute,"¹⁸ our central interest here, would seem to involve some claim about the immaterial, spiritual nature of what truly is, and thus, ultimately, quite an implausible metaphysical model of the work's unity.

Yet, especially in the Preface, Hegel works hard to distinguish his position from any traditional claim about "what is in-itself," which he calls a knowledge of "substance." In a famous claim, "everything depends on grasping and expressing the true, not just as substance, but just as much as subject" (18; 10). To describe such a subject as yet again another sort of substance, this time an immaterial or mental one, would be to miss the whole point of the quoted phrase. Rather the "Absolute . . . is essentially a result, . . . it is first at the end what it truly is; and . . . precisely in this consists its nature, viz. to be actual, subject, the becoming of itself" (19; 11). This self-transforming *process*, or self-determining *activity*, is later glossed as a "self-moving selfsameness, or is a reflection into self, the moment of the 'I', for itself, pure negativity, or, simple becoming" (19; 11).

This emphasis on understanding the "Absolute" as "the I's" self-reflection and self-determination has a number of important implications. Since, Hegel tries to show, any possible cognitive relation to objects must involve the "I's" taking up the world "for itself," and so some sort of self-relation, or apperception, understanding theoretically how a subject could come to know itself in its relation to all otherness (and understanding this finally and without sceptical doubt) is how Hegel wants to understand "the Absolute as Spirit"; and how he wants to be understood when he claims that "the Spirit that, so developed, knows itself as Spirit, is Science; Science is its actuality and the realm which it builds for itself in its own element" (22; 14).¹⁹

This language of subjectivity and self-reflection is so prominent (and so tied to what Hegel regards as the problem of his own, or "the new" age), that there is little evidence to support the first impression that Hegel takes the task of "knowledge of the Absolute" to be the achievement of some first-order truth about what there is. The problem is rather our self-conscious justification of the *possibility* of any first-order truths about the world, the warranting principles or

justificatory criteria by appeal to which the possibility of a world “for us,” what counts as a world and evidence about it, could be established.²⁰

(ii) Hegel accepts the claim (due to Kant) that all sorts of knowledge claims are “conditioned” and rely on *a priori* presuppositions that cannot be confirmed by any relation to objects (because such assumptions determine or constitute what counts as relations to objects). But he rejects Kant’s transcendental account of necessary conditions for any possible relation to objects as well as his regulative idea theory, and he proposes a different approach. In fact he rejects any attempt simply to propose and defend a philosophic claim about what knowledge is or its conditions, or what it is for thoughts to have content, or how one could be said to know who one is, or what concepts are, and so on. All such claims, in his special sense of the term, “scientific” claims, can themselves always be shown to carry with them their own baggage of conditions, presuppositions impossible to discharge all at once in a pure philosophical account. (In a famous phrase, the “Absolute” cannot be “shot from a pistol.”)²¹ In a move that would virtually inaugurate what we now call “Continental philosophy,” Hegel claimed that “Science, just because ‘it comes on the scene (*auftritt*) is itself an *appearance*; in coming on the scene it is not yet developed and unfolded in its truth” (55;48). That is, there is no external or autonomous philosophic standpoint from which a critical assessment of possible claims to know could go on, no “bar of reason,” above the fray, to which candidate accounts could be brought for a hearing. Any such standpoint is itself a mere appearance, by which Hegel means itself conditioned, or ultimately unable to account for its own possibility. As a consequence, “science must free itself from this semblance (*Scheine*) and it can do so only by turning against it” (55;48). It is this internally self-correcting progression of possible claims about the absolute possibility of knowledge that will comprise the narrative of the *Phenomenology* (where it is understood that the “problem of what knowing is” is quite wide-ranging, includes the possibility of representing a world, establishing truth-conditions, understanding others, recognizing the good, and so on). The book will be an “exposition of how knowledge makes its appearance,” how the collective human “soul journeys through the series of its own shapes as though they were the stations set for it by its own nature, so that it may

purify itself for existence as Spirit, and achieve, through a completed experience of itself, the awareness of what it is in itself" (55;49).

In the Preface, this sort of final telos is described in quite explicit terms: "the goal" of this self-negating process is simply "*Spirit's insight into what knowing is*" (25; 17), even though Hegel's language already makes very clear that such an insight will not conform to standard expectations about such an account. The fact that Hegel has inherited and affirms much of the Kantian account of the apperceptive nature of experience, the Kantian critique of empiricism, the general problem of "unconditioned conditions," and that he seems to adopt the goals of the critical philosophy itself (e.g., "what knowing is") all should not lead one to think that the project of the *Phenomenology* is epistemological. There is, again, no autonomous standpoint from which a purely epistemological critique could operate. Or: in recognizing the Kantian turn, that any claim about a correct discriminating or evaluating must be understood to amount to a claim that "*we take* such an activity to be a correct discriminating or evaluating," we must not thereby assume that we have any methodologically pure way of identifying *who* such a "we" is (as in a transcendental account of subjectivity), or any independent criteria for resolving the issue of when such a "we" ought to be satisfied that the ways in which the world and others are taken up and assessed are well grounded or "absolute." (Any such account would simply reflect "us.")²² The whole point of Hegel's book is to counter any epistemological view of these tasks for critical philosophy and to develop a new account of such a "we" and such reassurance. Of course, to many this now looks like a recipe for relativism, historicism, sociologism, and so forth, but we ought to allow Hegel to launch his vessel properly before we worry about whether he has pushed it onto that slippery slope.

(iii) In the first three chapters of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel attempts a radically "internal" critique of very broadly described positions on the Absolute, or the possibility of knowledge. It is supposed to be internal in that no assumptions are made other than those shared by the positions in questions, and any inadequacies revealed are thus the result of inconsistencies and incompleteness internal to the position. The first three chapters all share the common assumption that "what is true for consciousness is something other than itself" (103;104). Commonsensically, this does not seem to be a posi-

tion one ought to be eager to attack, but, by the start of Chapter Four on Self-Consciousness, Hegel thinks himself entitled to claim that he has shown “this whole Notion vanishes in the experience of it” (103; 104), presumably meaning what is now realized is that “what is true for consciousness” is *not* “something other than itself,” that what we appeal to, what *makes* knowledge-claims true or false, is internal too, not other than consciousness itself.

This all suggests a metaphysical idealism that maintains that consciousness knows only itself, its own thoughts, and seems both extravagant and unsupported by any results established in the first three chapters. There Hegel had explored various “direct realist” accounts of the possibility of objects of consciousness, what we today might call the problem of intentionality or the possible content of representations. If the question is how we account for the directedness of conscious experience, for the fact that we think this, not that, thought and thereby successfully refer to this, not that, fragment of the world, Hegel tries to show the incompleteness and inadequacies of any account that maintains that the answer to such a question is: it is the world itself which, by impinging on our senses or mind, draws our attention to it in this or that way, given this or that feature of the object. Along the way in this account, he also tries to show why not much is gained by postulating different, non-sensible, sorts of external entities by apprehension of which a discriminating reference to the sensible world is possible: universals, abstract objects (in a later tradition, senses, thoughts, etc.), forces, and so on. Any relation to objects, even nonsensory objects, is, it is argued, inexplicable, or at least radically underdetermined, by any direct apprehension or causal influence of the object itself. Such a possibility is said already to presuppose some way of *comporting oneself toward* the world, some active attending and discriminating that cannot be a simple result of our encounter with the world, since the world offers up too many different ways for such a taking up and holding together. If this is true, then in experiencing the world any consciousness is also experiencing the world *as* discriminated and taken up in terms of such a comporting, or such a consciousness is not simply directly attending to some “other than consciousness,” but, at least indirectly or implicitly, to itself, its own mode of comportment, a mode at least relatively empirically independent.

And none of this has anything to do with Hegel shifting the focus

from the what's "Out There" as the guarantor of truth claims to what's all "In Here." In the first place, he maintains explicitly in the compressed opening passages of Chapter Four, that the "knowing of an other" has been "preserved" in the expanded account of knowledge as self-consciousness knowledge; that, for any self-consciousness, "the whole expanse of the sensuous world is preserved for it, but at the same time, only as related to the second moment, the unity of self-consciousness with itself" (104; 105). In the second place, he proceeds immediately to show that any account of the self "in the form of consciousness," supposedly simply grasping or apprehending its own thoughts or ideas, will simply replay the realist aporiai of the earlier chapters.

III. CHANGING THE SUBJECT: FROM CONSCIOUSNESS TO SPIRIT.

So far, perhaps, so good. But in the second full paragraph of Chapter Four, Hegel seems to shift topics abruptly, with little transition or even preparation. In discussing the stage now reached, he notes that the "sensuous world" is still understood as an "enduring existence," but in itself is merely an "appearance," discriminated as it is, possessing the sense or significance it has, only as a result of a subject's comporting itself toward it in a certain way.²³ He realizes that he has thus introduced the problem of how to account for these modes of comportment, or active, empirically undetermined ways of taking up and rendering intelligible the "sensuous world." In his language, this involves the "unity of self-consciousness with itself," and he simply states that "this unity must become essential to self-consciousness; *i.e., self-consciousness is desire in general*" (104; 105).

This claim about desire introduces a discussion of maintaining and reproducing life, eating, struggling with others to the death, and the social institution of mastery and slavery, all of which would seem to have little to do with the problem of adequately understanding how we might come to know more and more about the sensuous world.

One clue to why Hegel thinks such practical issues are relevant to the earlier topics is evident in his early, increasingly frequent use of the language of independence and dependence in accounting for the relation between a self-conscious subject and an external world.

True to dialectical form, we shall eventually learn that an abstract opposition between an independent, self-legislating subject ("commanding" rather than "begging" nature in Kant's phrase) and some wholly dependent other or other subject is an illusion. But at the present stage, Hegel believes he has just revealed the equally abstract one-sidedness of an independent, subject-determining sensible world, and that there must be some considerable measure of independence involved in how the subject takes up and orders its world. Since he is assuming that such independence means that such a contribution by the subject is *actively* contributed, and is not causally, even if remotely, dependent on its interaction with the world, he now assumes such activity is genuinely or internally self-directed, *purposive* in some sense. Or: if he has made his case that any coherent, unified experience of, or representation of, objects requires some truly independent activity on the part of a subject, then such independence can be realized only if the subject is purposively *self-directing*, if self-consciousness is desire or purposive activity in general.

Another important factor derives from the relation between phenomenology and epistemology cited earlier. He believes he has shown, by an internal critique, the insufficiencies of various realist or dependent accounts of consciousness. This means that any successful intending requires that a subject actively comport itself toward the world in some way, introducing the problem of the nature of this self-relation, how we should account for it. Here Hegel tries, not to purpose various theories and to test their adequacy, but to begin with a description of an "experience" of such a "self-relation in relation to an other" with minimal theoretical presuppositions, one putatively the most immediate or uncontroversial form of such a self-relation. Thus he proposes we consider the "sentiment of self" involved in leading or maintaining one's *life*, and so discriminations of experience that, while "objective," tied to the real properties of the world, are also necessarily relational and presuppose such a minimally self-directing, living being (e.g., categories like "food," "dangerous," "inedible," etc.).²⁴ Hegel has no illusions about this being an adequate classificatory scheme for our experience or an adequate account of the self-relation in question, but he wants to develop these inadequacies, and their resolutions, from within the framework of such an immediate form of self-consciousness.²⁵

This can still, of course, smack of paradox. The world's being a possible, determinate world for me now seems somehow *dependent* on it "mattering" for me in a determinate way (it being an object of desire), given some general purposive agency in the world. And while there might be some very interesting link between possible modes of representing and such mattering (or desire), obvious care must be exercised lest the world seem to be too quickly "lost," lest its own constraints on what could matter, and, perhaps, its own role in what comes to matter, drop out.

But Hegel is just beginning, and, as indicated, he *is* careful, introducing what are self-evidently too crude, too simple examples of a "living" relation to the world, all the while making the general point that such a relation must be conceived in *some* way as such a living or purposive one, about the dependence of the determinacy of objects of experience on *some* form of self-directed comportment toward the world. Having introduced this demand for the subject's empirical independence and linked it with self-directed or purposive activity, he then proceeds to move from immediate versions of such self-relation to progressively more adequate accounts not only of such desiring activity but of such activity in relation to another, to externality or to other selves.

This involves him first, as indicated, in a dense account of life as the end or purpose of desire and finally to the most important internal transition in this transitional chapter, one effected in two very compressed sentences.

We need first to note the following. Hegel explains that even though a living subject could be said to be relatively independent in relation to objects by virtue of being in what he calls a "negative" relation to them, overcoming their resistance to its pursuit of life, ingesting them, etc.,²⁶ it is still the fact that "something other than self-consciousness" is the "essence of desire" (107; 109). That is, this immediate experience of a minimally self-directing comportment toward the world (what, putatively, the first three chapters had established as a condition of determinate experience) turns out to be only a relative independence, still tied as it is to given biological imperatives and to the kinds of objects contingently experienced to be capable of satisfying such imperatives.

Such a living subject still understands itself, its own relation to self, on the model of a dependent or passive consciousness, and so

we are about to introduce all the problems hitherto demonstrated for such a model. How we come to understand our own desires, how we interpret such issues as intensity or priority, how we come to categorize the various objects or kinds of objects we think best satisfy such desires, will depend on, as it were, the conceptual arsenal we can deploy; and this again is not something, Hegel argues, we can understand as simply fixed or determined by our natures or by our direct interchange with the external world. As he will make clearer in the Introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, our desires must be *rendered* determinate to be determinate, and they must be connected to various kinds of objects by us, something not explicable if our self-relation is understood as a sentiment of life or an experience of indeterminate wants and urges.²⁷

It is not fully explicable for reasons Hegel thinks have already been established in the *Phenomenology*. That is, we should certainly admit, for example, that many animals could be said to act on the basis of a sentiment of and great attachment to life, and any cat owner knows that animals can be said to have preferences in the satisfactions of their desires. But Hegel is interested in the cognitive discriminatory capacities now taken to have something to do with a desiring, living relation to the world and, especially, in the origins of the determinate discriminations experienced as such by a subject and maintained as such over time. He thinks he has shown that no direct or immediate relation to objects could account for (or “radically underdetermines”) such determinacy, nor for the way such a subject could be said to experience the confirmations or disconfirmations of such discriminations in experience. This is so whether such a relation is conceived in causal-sensory terms or as simply established by the various pulls and pushes, desires and aversions, of “life.” To understand this possibility again means understanding the nature of the subject’s “independence” in its relation to the world.

Such an independence in this context means that any such rendering determinate is not simply arbitrary but is always based on some general self-conception. This in turn cannot be understood as the result of any simple self-inspection, for all the reasons (the objections to “Consciousness”) already cited. It is, to come to the term used to describe the major section in the chapter, a “free” self-determination. But just because of that, it is by no means *self-certifying*. In other

words, Hegel is proposing an account of self-reflection that would be rendered simpler and much more dramatic by Sartre a century later. The self is not and cannot be an internal object of self-inspection, but a "project," a way of projecting oneself forward into the world; a "promise to oneself to act" in a certain way or, in Hegel's account, a kind of practical resolution that fundamentally orients one to a world and is of crucial importance in any basic categorization of the world. When viewed this way, a great possible gap opens up between the putative "certainty" of such a self-understanding and its "truth," what, in the world, could be said to confirm or reject, render adequate or false, or render, phenomenologically, finally "satisfying" about such a self-understanding.

One threat to such a defeasible self-projection is, according to Hegel, unique. Hence the transitional passage spoken of earlier.

But at the same time it [self-consciousness] is just as much absolutely for itself, and it is so only through the sublating of the object; and it must, for itself, become satisfied in this, for it is the truth. Because of the independence of the object, therefore, it can achieve satisfaction only when the object itself completes this negation in itself, and it must itself complete this negation in itself, for it is in itself the negative, and must be for the other what it is. (108; 109)

The *problem* is how such a self-determining self-consciousness could be said to "satisfy" itself such that its own negative relation to objects and to itself, or its independence of such objects, has been genuinely realized. The *premise* is that a matter of fact negation of passive objects cannot accomplish such satisfaction. As we saw, such activities can occur under various possible self-interpretations and world-categorizations, and mere success (staying alive, leading a life with success against obstacles) establishes nothing about such conceptions. The *solution* suggested is that such a satisfaction can occur only by means of another free, self-determining being (the "object" which achieves "negation within itself"), or which is likewise self-determining with respect to its desires and ends. Or: "self-consciousness finds its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness" (108; 109).

Hegel is implying that the kind of resistance offered by another self-consciousness to the realization of my desires in the world (and so the kind of test or challenge to my self- and world-conception

raised by such a subject) is of a qualitatively different sort than that posed by normal objects. Given a finite universe, it is inevitable that two such independent self-consciousnesses will conflict in their struggle for resources or attempts to satisfy their desires. Implicit in this sort of struggle, however, is the realization that each rejects the other ("negates" the other) *as subject* by opposing each other; each implicitly rejects the subjective self-determination that would have led each to this contested object. In the most immediate form of such a struggle, each is rendered object by the other, a means for a subject's negative independence. Alternatively, such a situation also provides the opportunity for a kind of confirmation of my subjectivity in the possibility of a genuinely "mutual recognition" of such subjectivity.

Thus Hegel is denying that we can presume any common ground between such struggling subjects, at least not without begging all the interesting questions. There is no way to assume that each fears most passionately a violent death, that each values a rational or mutually acceptable secure satisfaction of as many of her projects as possible, that each will adopt a "live and let live" attitude. All of these cannot be explained naturally or metaphysically as uncontested facts of the matter, once the whole structure of "Consciousness" has been abandoned. Each sort of possible resolution thus represents a self-determined, or negative, relation to objects and others which we have no reason to expect will be simultaneously determined or affirmed by any other.

Now, admittedly, Hegel is not as precise as he might be in stating exactly what he means to claim about such subjects. For the most part, he remains true to the above gloss and to his famous claim that a self-consciousness finds *satisfaction* in another self-consciousness, that the very independence from the world established thus far makes possible only one way of realizing or confirming such a projecting, self-determining subjectivity: in mutual recognition, something that will eventually introduce the Hegelian notion of universally binding institutions, and so the necessity (the lived or experienced necessity) of a common commitment to rationality. Occasionally, however, he says such things as, "There is a self-consciousness for a self-consciousness; it is first of all by means of this fact that there really is a self-consciousness" ("*ist es in der Tat*") (108; 110). Or he claims that "self-consciousness exists only in being recognized" (109; 111). Such

claims have led many commentators directly to the theory of social identity at stake in these sections, and so to the controversial claim, apparently, that such a form of identity is the only possible one. This in turn suggests some sort of Robinson Crusoe thought experiment, the attempt to imagine the kind of self-awareness possible for a radically isolated subject, all as if the claim is supposed to be that such a subject could not use the first-person pronoun or be self-conscious in any sense.

But Hegel's own gloss on such passages suggests no such argument. In fact he sets up the discussion by positing that "there is a self-consciousness for a self-consciousness," presuming some conflict of independently self-relating beings. What *is* claimed is that it is only in such a relation that a self-consciousness can be realized or confirmed in its self-understanding, only therein can it be "*in der Tat*," actually, a self-consciousness. Or, when he says that self-consciousness "is only in being recognized," he means a self-consciousness that is "in and for itself," or a finally realized, completed, or reassured self-consciousness. Again, "self-consciousness achieves its *satisfaction* only in another self-consciousness."

Such claims will loom large in Hegel's ethical theory, later in the book and later in his career. They introduce Hegel's insistence that the modern idea of freedom as self-determination and the modern demand that I be able to recognize myself in my deeds as their originator must also take account of the fact that I am not my own origin; I am free even though a socially dependent being (in his unique terms, I am "an absolute substance which in the complete freedom and independence of its oppositions, namely different self-consciousnesses existing for themselves, is a unity with itself" (108, 110). Or, I am "spirit."²⁸

Here, however, he continues to make reference to the problematic begun in the Consciousness chapters; he continues to search for ways in which reflective beings might *reassure themselves* about the independent ways they take up and categorize the world as well as each other. If this reassurance cannot be provided directly or immediately, say, by truths of reason (the faith that the order of knowing and the order of being are the same), a rigorous, narrow, universal method, or by some reliance on an immediate, direct experience of the sensible world, then, he has argued, the problem of a "*self-relation in relation to the world*" can only be understood as the

purposive self-relation within which the world is immediately lived. The relevance of another self-consciousness for me is said to be that “only in this way” (through my opposition to and struggle with such a subject) “does the unity of itself in its otherness come to be for it” (108; 110). I take this reference to a “unity of itself in its *otherness*” to be quite a general claim and, I have been suggesting, to signal Hegel’s shift away from the modern problem of epistemology, away from an individual subject reassuring itself about its mode of representing, to a realization that any such mode of representing should be understood as already a social product, requiring some account of the possibility of such social origins and a possible social resolution of conflicting modes.²⁹

There are still miles to go before Hegel can try to demonstrate why such mutuality should be relevant to a genuine “relation to otherness” (why we should not have simply introduced here the prospect of mutual self-delusion or a proposal to turn the problem of knowledge wholly into an issue of “socially sanctioned beliefs”), but Hegel himself explicitly introduces these problems when he returns to philosophic expressions of the independence-dependence problems here introduced. His own introduction of his crucial term of art, spirit, is couched in the language of the rejected *cognitive* alternatives hitherto discussed. “In Self-consciousness, in the concept of Spirit, consciousness first has its turning point, from which it leaves behind the colorful appearance of the sensible immediacy [*Diesseits*] and the empty night of the supersensible beyond [*Jenseits*] and steps out into the spiritual daylight of the present” (108–9; 110–1).

This putative “spiritual daylight” illuminates what Hegel describes as a “many sided” phenomenon with “many meanings” (109; 111). His famous account of a “struggle to the death for recognition,” the resulting Master-Slave dialectic, and moments reactive to such social power, the slave’s work, the reconciling philosophies of Stoicism and Skepticism, and finally the unusual account of the social significance of the Jewish and early Christian experiences of God, “the unhappy consciousness,” are all said to be consequences of the attempt by self-conscious subjects to find their “satisfaction” through each other and *thereby* establish a relation to objects secure from the *Phenomenology*’s “pathway of doubt” and “highway of despair.”

We can now summarize the results of this reading this way: how we come to understand each other as purposive, self-directing subjects should not be understood as exclusively a problem concerning some unique metaphysical object or domain, or one with its own "logic" that must be respected for some metaphysical or practical reason.³⁰ It is not that there are simply special, irreducible categories for the "human sciences" or purposive beings. Rather, Hegel is suggesting that how we come to understand or make judgments *about anything* must be a function of some sort of mutually sanctioning process *among* such subjects, and that this process can be understood only by considering such subjects as practical, purposive, or living beings. Hegel has thus tied the possibility of some epistemic reassurance about our representational strategies and conceptual schemes to some form of social or mutual reassurance, and so to a general claim that the possibility of judgment always requires such independent, mutually related subjects.

IV. WHY REASON MUST BECOME SPIRIT.

In Hegel's presentation of the remaining sections of the Self-Consciousness chapter, the attempt to secure or confirm such a necessary form of independence in the face of the obvious experience of a dependence on an other ("the Master") and the biological necessities of life is a constant theme. Or at least this is the way Hegel interprets what Nietzsche would call the fundamentally "ascetic" character of much of the history of Western culture. Stoic dualism, the negative activity of skepticism, and the "unhappy" displacement of real worth and subjectivity in a relation to a beyond and an afterlife are all said to represent strategies by which laboring, dependent subjects could still nevertheless affirm, collectively, without engendering a new struggle for recognition, what cannot be denied even if not yet realized: their independence or freedom.

In the course of this narrative, Hegel presents a highly idealized account of a transition between elements of the Christian, ascetic, otherworldly self-understanding and a very different sort of assertion of independence with respect to this world, one not so abstractly negative, and so not so empty and dissatisfying. This more successful realization of what, controversially, Hegel identifies as the real Christian intention (to secure or realize the independence of a self-

consciousness now conceived collectively, in the light of each other) is identified as the standpoint of "Reason."

"Up to now," Hegel argues,

self-consciousness has only been concerned with its independence and freedom, concerned for itself to save and preserve itself at the cost of the world or its own actuality, both of which seemed to it as the negative of its own essence. But as Reason, assured of itself, is at peace with them, and can endure them, for it is certain of itself as reality, or that all actuality is nothing other than it; its thinking is immediately, actuality, and so it relates to it as idealism. (132; 139)

Initially, such a notion of idealism seems quite general and, since Parmenides, quite familiar: what reason cannot determine to be is not, and not-being cannot be. Or, to be is to be intelligible, where intelligibility is understood in terms of some procedure or method or intuition which can ensure the universal assent of anyone who "relies on reason alone." But Hegel goes on to suggest how such an idealism must develop "for itself" and from itself the categories by means of which its "identity with being" is concretely realized, and he very quickly begins to develop this problem in the explicit terms of post-Kantian and post-Fichtean idealism, the I's self-relation and the "outrage on Science" left by Kant, that the Understanding should not be able to demonstrate its own categories, "demonstrate a necessity . . . in its own self, which is purely necessity" (135; 143).

This leads Hegel into an account of what a subject that understands its "self-relation in relation to an other" as wholly based on reason, universal criteria of evidence and inference, would look like. That is, both the social origins of such an appeal to the authority of reason, and the social implications of such an appeal for the subjects who bind themselves to it, are kept in view as Hegel examines the nature of such a criterion. Or he treats reason as everywhere also a social sanction; he continues to keep in view the general problem of realizing some form of a self-determining subjectivity in a mutually self-reassuring way. And he again tries to develop this account by beginning with the most straightforward sort of appeal to reason, one wherein what counts as an acceptable claim about anything should be confirmable by strict, methodologically rigorous *observation*.

Given the way Hegel has set up the problem, this issue leads to a discussion of *who* the subjects of such an inquiry are, or at least what

they would look like within such a methodologically rigorous procedure, and so what sorts of claims they would or could have on each other, how their relation to each other would look if defined by an appeal to "observing reason." His question is whether that relation could be consistent with the canons of observing reason itself. His argument, too complex and too involved with various nineteenth-century sciences to summarize here, is that such a narrow view of a rational basis for mutual reassurance ends up inconsistently reducing such subjects to observable things, and thereby is unable to account for the authority or even the determinate character of the procedures by virtue of which that reduction is accomplished.³¹

In a way that parallels his earlier treatment, Hegel again argues that such an epistemic warrant ("Reason") must be consistent with the conditions under which it could be a mutually imposed sanction and could be authorized *by* self-authorizing, ultimately mutually recognizing subjects. Since this cannot happen under "observing reason," subjects must then be explicitly reconceived as *rationally acting* or *self-realizing* subjects, agents whose claims on each other must be based somehow on their recognition of each other as subjects who mutually commit themselves to a common, rational standard. And this development, the introduction of "The Actualization of Rational Self-Consciousness Through Its Own Activity," brings us close to another famous transition problem. For in exploring what could count as a reason in action or for a genuine *subject*, and why such an appeal would be necessary if any agent were to be a successfully self-determining subject, Hegel again criticizes an individualist notion of such agency, again introduces the explicit theme of sociality, or *Geist*, this time in a way that will lead to an extensive, detailed historical narrative, involving well-known accounts of Greek tragedy, Roman law, court culture, and the French Revolution.

There is one section in particular where Hegel's intentions in this transition can be most economically discussed, the section intriguingly titled "The Spiritual Realm of Animals and Deception; Or, the Real Thing."³² The section is preceded by Hegel's attempt to detail the insufficiencies of various accounts of a rational realization of one's individuality: a simple hedonism (the most rational assumption we can make about everyone is that they seek pleasure), a romantic individualism (what is rational is the recognition that there is no legitimate constraint on the each becoming who he or

she truly is), and a moralistic, sentimental individualism, locked in a perpetual fight to preserve an individual, self-certifying purity against the inevitably corrupt “way of the world.”

The inadequacies of all of these as standards for what is individually rational bring us to the section in question. In these “immediate” forms of rational agency, where the assumption is that rationality is measured by one’s success in realizing or satisfying one’s individual “true nature” (or “heart”), the common problem concerns how an individual would come to identify some content as his own nature or true individuality. And at one point Hegel comes to consider a form of individuality that rejects any potentially alienating conception of “true” individuality (measured against some “law” or ideal requiring that I *become* a “true” individual) and which instead simply “takes itself to be real in and for itself,” and so for which “action changes nothing and opposes nothing. It is the pure form of a transition from a state of not being seen to a state of being seen” (215; 237). Individuals view each other as naturally and/or historically endowed with particular and unique talents and capacities, and the public space or social world, now conceived as, at least minimally, rationally ruled and structured, is to be the arena wherein these capacities and talents are mutually displayed, where each is, as much as mutually possible, “who he is.”

Predictably, Hegel again asks, “Let us see whether this concept is confirmed for it by experience and whether its reality corresponds to it” (220; 242). This examination takes up yet again an individualist notion of agency and again suggests a reason for Hegel’s dissatisfactions, a kind of reason we have been seeing throughout the *Phenomenology*. Here the general problem is Hegel’s dissatisfactions with what a contemporary audience would most easily recognize as an individualist, *prudential* notion of rationality. It is in this context that he describes the liberal notion of social space as an arena of mutual self-realization, something he calls a “spiritual animal kingdom.”³³

The target of Hegel’s concerns could be termed a prudential notion of rationality because “Hegel’s spiritual animal is an acting consciousness that knows of no demands opposing it. It determines itself strictly in accordance with its own nature.”³⁴ It appears that Hegel is trying to show that no such conception of reason, in which a course of action is rational for me simply if it fits into and helps

realize my overall life plan and interests, could count as a reason, that "good reasons for action, to qualify as such, must fit into a supra-individual context of meaning,"³⁵ or, in other words, could be reasons only if tied to the development or realization of a supra-individual subject, *Geist*. The idea would be that nothing could conceivably count as a reason for *me* unless *I* can understand myself as also counting for something larger or of more general significance than just "little old me."³⁶

The question is how Hegel would argue for such a claim or effect such a transition to spirit. Of crucial importance in that argument is what Hegel calls the experience of "the antithesis of doing (*Tun*) and Being (*Sein*)" (221; 244) that results from my prudential action, my attempt simply to act for, to exhibit, myself. The argument turns on this issue, and it appears to refer to the fact that, no matter what I intend and plan, once I act, the results and implications of my action, most of which could not have been foreseen, determine on their own, contingently, what it is "I did," and so the *act* "vanishes" in the doing of it, is swallowed up by these implications and consequences. A gap opens up between what I *do* and, contingently, what the act *is*. I act, prudently, to secure my reputation for honesty, because that is important to me; but what I end up doing is insulting a friend, ruining a marriage, and become known as a mindless busybody. So, as the argument apparently proceeds, I come to experience this "vanishing" of my work as itself something that "vanishes," or is not real, does not really count, does not affect the true significance of my work, now called "die Sache selbst," or *the real thing* I am trying to effect, some supra-individual context not tied to me as an individual or to the contingent effects of my deeds in the world.

Reading Hegel this way (as committed to a kind of question-begging claim that such contingency alone deprives prudential reasoning of its possible worth)³⁷ will not get us very far into his argument. The problem is not that Hegel is looking for a kind of significance for my deeds that can console me about the variable interpretations, confusions, ambiguities, unforeseen effects, and general contingency that attach to any deed of mine. For one thing, Hegel is clearly by no means satisfied with the abstract "Real Thing Idealism" by which acting subjects do try to console themselves, by appeal to which they insist that there is a "real thing" or "heart of the matter" that transcends their particular fate. He admits that while

this sort of resistance to my losing control over the significance of my deeds and work introduces the idea of an ethical “substance,” it does so only “immediately” and has not yet progressed into a “truly real substance” (224; 247). In this limited social context, the attempt by subjects to preserve a kind of integrity or “honesty” about the true significance of their deeds turns out to be a difficult, ambiguous attempt. “The truth about this honesty, however, is that it is not as honest as it seems” (225; 248–49). What I “remain true to” as the “real thing” in my deed has exactly as much self-certifying authority as the immediate presumption of a self-determining subjectivity in the original struggle for recognition, that is, no self-certifying authority. What I hold back as “real” in the act and what the other takes up as real cannot be independently measured or confirmed either by me or the other. “Since, in this alternation, consciousness holds one moment as essential, for itself, and considers another moment as only externally in the deed, or for others, there occurs a play of individualities with one another, wherein everyone finds themselves everywhere deceiving and deceived” (226; 250).

At this stage of the narrative, no subject could presume simply to master another subject, to demand that such a subject’s “*Sache selbst*” be recognized as such. All are committed to a universally affirmable standard recognizing individually self-determining agency. But the result of such an invocation of an individualistically and prudentially conceived “Reason” as a standard of mutual recognition is, as it has been before, an unsatisfying and uncertain *self-relation*.

That is, the problem at stake for Hegel goes much deeper than worries about contingency and still concerns what it is for any deed to be *mine* in the first place, or whether I can reassure myself that my “life plan” is *mine*. What is important to him from the start about the “being” (*Sein*) of a work or deed is that it “is, i.e. exists for other individualities,” and these others confront the work as an “alien” or “strange” actuality which they, in their own “work” must “make their own in order to secure through their work their consciousness of a unity with the actual” (221, 243).

This situation is nicely summarized by the claim that,

It is just as much a *deception of oneself* and others to be concerned with some pure “real thing.” Any consciousness that takes up such a real thing

finds rather that others hurry along to such a thing, like flies to freshly poured milk, and want to busy themselves with it. One discovers that others treat one's affair not as an object, but as their own affair. (227; 251; my emphasis)

Hegel goes on in this section to point out that even what I regard as my own powers and capacities, my very individuality, is always something that is just as much for others and so never, even for me, can result in a pure "doing."

Thus for Hegel the heart of the on-going, often implicit social negotiations within modernity (when the notion of mutually free, self-determining subjects has been introduced and the realization of which has become an inevitable demand) cannot concern only the mutually secured, efficient satisfaction of interests, preferences, or life-plans. Even under the assumptions of such a project, a course of action could count as a prudential or instrumental reason for me to act only given some sort of reassurance that the interests or preferences are mine, are not the socially manufactured results of someone else's (or some other group or class's) "Sache selbst." But it is then obviously hard to see such a social struggle, about something so elusive and hard to confirm as, in essence, one's identity as a free agent, as some explicit issue that could be addressed by individual subjects (however free and unconstrained their communicative situation might be, to note a contemporary resolution of this issue). Action, the reality (*Sache*) of which is now conceived as "of each and everyone," requires an analysis of "the essence which is the essence of all beings, spiritual essence" (227; 252), or what Hegel had earlier introduced as the historical community, the *Volk*, within which reason is sustained and realized. And all of this is said to be necessary even if we assume that reasons can count as reasons only if they can count for me. That "me" can function no more successfully as "the real thing" as any other candidate, or at least not without some attempt to locate it within, to see its dependence on, "the spiritual essence."

But how to account for such a spiritual essence, now argued to have such explanatory priority in any account of mind-world relations or human agency? At this point Hegel notes that it might still be possible to account for the bonds of such a spiritual community in terms of what he calls "thought" as "distinguished from actual

self-consciousness" (228; 252). Or subjection to very general practical "laws of reason" might be sufficient to realize at least some minimal form of mutual agency in some publicly confirmable, "testable" way. These laws, however, without the connection to "actual self-consciousness" that Hegel will now introduce, mostly have a vague "don't make yourself an exception" character or "be rational" form which, Hegel argues, ensures that they cannot be concretely action-guiding. He will of course return to this theme when he considers the "actual" historical institution of "morality," but for now he turns quickly to the narrative of such actual self-consciousness itself. The extraordinarily rich details of that narrative cannot be followed here.

V. CONCLUSION

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is a book that had no predecessors and, with the possible exceptions of works such as Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*, or Pound's *Cantos* (and perhaps Wittgenstein's *Investigations*), no true successors. Many parts of it will doubtless always seem mysterious and unconnected to other parts. But it is not a hopeless gallimaufry of insights, suggestions, and stories. There certainly is a common theme running through its turns and transitions, and a common goal Hegel thinks he much reach: a mutually recognizing and so mutually reassured social subjectivity. Or the book is about what Hegel finally decided it was about – *Geist*.

The preceding discussion is only an introductory account of how Hegel thought he could reach that goal, but it does, I think, allow some generalizations about the work's form. First and most obviously, even those most skeptical about the work have to try to take into account the fact that Hegel intended a transition from "Consciousness" to "Self-Consciousness." There is no evidence that he simply regarded himself as changing topics, and there is good evidence that he explicitly did not regard himself as doing that. This meant that he wanted to connect the problem of the "mind-world" relation to the "subject-subject" relation, an argument summarized, or at least sketched, above. Moreover, since he wanted to avoid thinking of such subjects as understanding themselves and each

other on the discarded "Consciousness" model, he tried to reconceive such subject-subject relations in a way that avoided any suggestion of fully formed, self-inspecting rational agents confronting each other in social space. Such relations were to be understood as mutually self-forming in time.

This aspect of Hegel's case is introduced in as general and schematic a way as possible. He is not trying to talk about historical forms of such relations but about what must be the case for any sort of historical relation to be understood as relations of free subjects. (Of course he uses identifiable examples of such general possibilities, but it is very important that he avoids names, designations, or references to actuality, something he does do freely later.) He tries then to show that with the problem of a self-determining subjectivity understood this way, as a problem of mutual recognition or mutual reassurance, some common subjection to a universal criterion of thought and action, "Reason," one that would make possible a much more determinate (less "abstractly negative") relation to the world, would serve as the most likely resolution of this problem.

As noted above, from the very beginning of this discussion, still an idealized and theoretical account of what could accommodate subjects to each other in their relations to the world, Hegel already promises a completion or realization of such a hope in an account of actual historical communities and their histories, something he repeats at the end of the chapter. Again, as with the first transition, there is no great shifting of gears or leap to another topic. No account, no internal account, of the rationality of prudential and legalistic candidates for such an integrating, reconciling absolute turns out to be possible, or at least not without some account of how I got to be me, came in real human time to identify with all others what has come to count as "the real things."

With this insistence on the relevance of "actuality" (*Wirklichkeit*), though, Hegel does not abandon the general possibility of a rational integration in a modern community in favor of some social anthropology or sociology of knowledge; he carries on with the argument that only a concrete historical narrative of what we have come to count as essential to our mutually recognized self-determining agency will be able to account for, and *rationally* reconcile us to, such a developed form.³⁸ Or, put a final way: once the mind-world problem is linked to the subject-subject problem, and such subjects

are understood in the mutually dependent, self-transforming way they are, the problem of consciousness must become the problem of *Geist*, and *Geist* can only be accounted for by a “phenomenology” of its collective self-transformations. This, at any rate, is the argument (and the hope) of Hegel’s *Phenomenology*.

NOTES

- 1 Cf. H.S. Harris, “Processional Interlude,” *Hegel’s Development: Night Thoughts (Jena 1801–1806)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), ix–lxx, and the discussion and notes in my *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), Chapter Four, 60–66.
- 2 G.W.F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Reinhard Heede (Volume 9 of the *Gesammelte Werke*, published by the Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften) (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1980), 61. All translations in the text are my own and will be followed by the page number of this edition, then the page number of *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, transl. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 56.
- 3 Actually the situation is even more confused than this. See Friedhelm Nicolin, “Zum Titelproblem der Phänomenologie des Geistes,” *Hegel-Studien* 4 (1967): 113–23. In what the best evidence indicates was Hegel’s final intention, there is a “Haupttitel” page, announcing a “System der Wissenschaft: Erster Theil: die Phänomenologie des Geistes,” and there is an additional so-called “Zwischentitel” page inserted after the new preface, proclaiming simply “I: Wissenschaft der Phänomenologie des Geistes.” There is a good summary in Nicolin’s article of attempts by editors over the years to resolve the problem, and of the latest efforts by researchers at the Hegel archives to come up with a definitive narrative of Hegel’s intentions. To complicate matters, the most-used German edition for years was Hoffmeister’s *Philosophische Bibliothek* version, which, while recognizing that Hegel changed his mind, confusingly and with no justification, still inserted the “Wissenschaft der Erfahrung” title immediately after the Preface.
- 4 Hans Friederich Fulda, *Das Problem einer Einleitung in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1965), 1–13.
- 5 For a strong defense of the priority of the *Logic* in Hegel, but which nonetheless attempts to take account of the *Phenomenology*, see Stanley Rosen, *G.W.F. Hegel: An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

- 6 Otto Pöggeler, "Die Komposition der Phänomenologie des Geistes," in *Materialen zu Hegels 'Phänomenologie des Geistes'*, ed. Hans Fulda and Dieter Henrich (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973), 334.
- 7 Rosenkranz claims that the idea of the rationality of historical actuality began to take shape in notes for 1805–6 winter semester, and therefore with the problem of the historical possibility of Hegel's system. See Karl Rosenkranz, *Hegels Leben* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), 201–6. The best summary of the twists and turns in the Hegel literature on this issue is provided by Pöggeler, "Zur Deutung der Phänomenologie des Geistes" in his *Hegels Idee einer Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Freiburg/Munich: Verlag Karl Alber, 1973), 170–230.
- 8 See Pöggeler, "Zur Deutung," op.cit., 176–78.
- 9 "The Notion of pure science and its deduction is therefore presupposed in the present work in so far as the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is nothing other than the deduction of it." G.W.F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik, Vol. I* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1969), 30; *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), 49. For an analysis of this claim, see my *Hegel's Idealism*, 94–99.
- 10 Rudolf Haym, *Hegel und seine Zeit: Vorlesungen über Entstehung und Entwicklung, Wesen und Wert der Hegelschen Philosophie* (Berlin: R. Gaertner, 1857).
- 11 *Ibid.*, 243.
- 12 T. Haering, "Die Entstehungsgeschichte der Phänomenologie des Geistes," in *Verhandlungen des dritten Hegelkongresses*, ed. B. Wigersma (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1934), 118–38.
- 13 Pöggeler, "Zur Deutung," op.cit., 193ff, on Haering's "Sackgasse" or dead end.
- 14 Hegel defines the stance of "consciousness" as our natural or unreflective experience of a subject standing over against and trying to represent objects successfully, and of knowledge as a way of closing this subject-object gap, of grasping or picturing or intending the world as it is. By the chapter on self-consciousness, as we shall discuss below, that pre-theoretical attitude has already been undermined in various ways.
- 15 See Pöggeler, "Zur Deutung," op.cit., 221. See also his discussion in "Die Komposition," op.cit., 353–54.
- 16 H.F. Fulda, "Zur Logik der Phänomenologie," in Fulda and Henrich, eds., *Materialen zu Hegels Phänomenologie*, op.cit., 391–422.
- 17 Johannes Heinrichs, *Die Logik der Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1974).
- 18 "That the true is only actual as system, or that Substance is essentially subject, is expressed in the representation of the Absolute as Spirit – the

most sublime concept and the one which belongs to the new age and its religion" (22; 14).

- 19 This interpretation of the Hegelian Absolute is the central theme in my *Hegel's Idealism*. Kark Ameriks, in a review article to appear soon in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, has raised a number of questions about the logical status of the claim that "all" human knowledge and agency is "self-reflexive." He suggests that if Hegel can help us out with an "analysis" of the conditions for any thought or agency which *is* self-reflexive, then we ought to be satisfied and ought not to extend the analysis into a suspect claim about what is necessary for *all* thought or agency (i.e., implying that there are plenty of relations to objects and others that are not reflexive in the Hegelian sense). But (a) Hegel has no reason to deny that there can be matter-of-fact relations between psychological subjects and the physical world, or between such subjects; his question is the same as Kant's: What makes such relations *cognitive*, directed toward objects by means of *possibly true or false* claims? and (b) there is always, in this and many other cases, some sense in which claims about the conditions necessary for such relations could be said to be "analytic," where that simply means "not based on any matter of fact" or "autonomously philosophical." But in Hegel the notion has nothing to do with any thesis about language, meaning, truths of reason, and so forth. Moreover, Hegel has his own reasons for denying that the traditional (Kantian) analytic/synthetic distinction presents well-formed alternatives. See *Hegel's Idealism*, 251–52.
- 20 Several other questions about such a reading of the Absolute naturally arise, many related to suspicions that Hegel's famous accounts of history, sociality, and religion would be incoherent without a "metaphysical" Absolute. For some suggestions about that issue and a denial that such suspicions are warranted, see Terry Pinkard, "The Successor to Metaphysics: Absolute Idea and Absolute Spirit," *The Monist* 74 (1991): 295–328.
- 21 In the *Phenomenology*, the phrase occurs in the Preface, 24; 16.
- 22 This is one of many reasons to be careful about any claim concerning Hegel's "transforming" epistemology into "social theory," a turn of phrase that implies that Hegel believes in the autonomy of social theory. Cf. the Preface to J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon, 1971), and the discussion in G. Körtgen, *Metacritique: The Philosophical Argument of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). See also my "The Idealism of Transcendental Arguments," *Idealistic Studies* XVIII (1988): 97–106. A number of important dimensions of this problem, many of great relevance to Hegel, are insightfully discussed in Jonathan Lear, "Transcend-

- dental Anthropology," in *Subject, Thought and Context*, ed. P. Petit and J. McDowell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 267–98.
- 23 More precisely, such a spontaneous activity is at least a necessary condition of any experienced determinancy, although certainly not sufficient. The sensuous world does not "vanish" what vanishes is its status as wholly independent ground of experience.
- 24 See Pöggeler's discussion on the Aristotelian issues introduced by the issue of life; "Die Komposition," *op.cit.*, 363.
- 25 It is thus a mistake to ask in too narrow a way directly, as posed earlier, what arguments about possible objects of consciousness have to do with, e.g., practical strategies like eating, struggles for recognition, etc. Such an approach narrows a reader's focus too much and does not allow the full problem of a self-determining subjectivity to emerge, or Hegel's explicit account of the internal inadequacies of various pragmatic or social experiences of self-consciousness (or why subject-subject relations *themselves* require some resolution of mind-world problems). Looked at more broadly, I am suggesting, one can see how and why the more recognizable issue of a "self-relation in relation to objects" re-emerges with philosophies like Stoicism. See the discussion in *Hegel's Idealism*, *op.cit.*, 143–71.
- 26 "Certain of the nothingness of the other, it posits this nothingness for itself as its truth; it destroys the independent object and thereby gives itself the certainty of itself as a true certainty, a certainty which has become explicit for it in an objective way" (107; 109).
- 27 See, especially, the Remarks to section 12 and 13 in *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1955), 36–37; *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, transl. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 26; and the discussion in my "Hegel, Ethical Reasons, Kantian Rejoinders," *Philosophical Topics* 19 (1991): 105.
- 28 There is a very good discussion of the implications of this theory of agency in the *Phenomenology* by Terry Pinkard in his forthcoming *History and Self-Identity: Hegel's Phenomenology of the Human Community*. I should also note here that I am concentrating on the neglected topic of the continuity between aspects of Hegel's account of theoretical and practical philosophy in the *Phenomenology*, and so am neglecting the very great, direct relevance of his account of recognition for his philosophy of religion and his social theory. Compared with his earlier Jena period theory, Hegel himself alters and narrows his early account of recognition in the *Phenomenology* in order to make this continuity issue easier to see. Cf. my account of this issue in *Hegel's Idealism*, 154–63, and the valuable discussions by H.S. Harris, "The Concept of Recognition in Hegel's Jena Manuscripts," *Hegel-Studien* 20 (1980):

- 229–48; Ludwig Siep, *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie* (Freiburg/Munich: Karl Alber, 1979); and Andreas Wildt, *Autonomie und Anerkennung, Hegels Moralkritik im Lichte seiner Fichte-Rezeption* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982).
- 29 Putting the point this way naturally introduces the topic of the relation between Hegel's project and Habermas's. For a more-extended discussion, especially of their differences, see my "Hegel, Habermas, and Modernity," *The Monist* 74 (1991): 329–57. Also see one of the most-suggestive Hegelian discussions of Habermas, Axel Honneth, *The Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory*, trans. K. Baynes (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).
- 30 He does of course believe that purposive beings require different sorts of accounts than those limited to mechanistically conceived, or merely organic, "growing" beings. But his reasons are complex and non-metaphysical. See my "Idealism and Agency in Kant and Hegel," *Journal of Philosophy* LXXXVIII (October 1991): 532–41.
- 31 An exemplary account of Hegel's worries here can be found in Alisdair MacIntyre, "Hegel on Faces and Skulls," in *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 219–36.
- 32 "The real thing" is a translation of "die Sache selbst," which is in this context, to put it mildly, difficult to translate. "The heart of the matter" or "the matter at hand" seem too far from the original.
- 33 This odd phrase is meant to capture the irony of subjects who demand to be taken "just as they are," as if simply displaying to each other natural species-differences in the animal kingdom, but whose self-conscious interaction creates an experience that undermines such an immediate reconciliation with one's "nature" or "life interests," which reveals one as, oddly, a "spiritual animal" (or no simple animal at all).
- 34 Rüdiger Bittner, *What Reason Demands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 146. Cf. *Phenomenology*, 220–21; 242–43.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 144.
- 36 "Rational determination of action is conceivable only as taking place in a context of meaning extending beyond the individual's actions" (*ibid.*, 143).
- 37 If this problem of contingency is what is worrying Hegel, it would always be possible to claim, as Bittner does, that there is no such disconsolate experience, "not because the spiritual animal does not care about the work" but "for the opposite reason." "As a rational being, the spiritual animal does not console itself on the transience of its works with the ideals if the 'matter in hand', but surrenders itself and its work to this transience" (*ibid.*, 151).
- 38 All of which only introduces the greatest "transition" problem – to the

Logic and the system. Although the Encyclopedia system includes accounts of individual and collective subjectivity, Hegel (for the most part) understands himself to be presupposing that he has "introduced" and justified such notions as: the general idea of a historically self-determining subject, the kind of formation process by means of which such subjects could come to understand themselves, the whole problem of a "reconciliation" among subjects and with their world and why that is *the* problem, both for philosophy and for modern societies. No claim for the "self-grounding" character of the *Logic* and the system can, it seems to me, dispense with the way the *Phenomenology* introduces and legitimates such ideas, although, admittedly, Hegel could never seem to make up his mind finally about such issues. Cf. the discussion in my "Hegel and Category Theory," *Review of Metaphysics* XLIII (1990): 839–48.

I am much indebted to Terry Pinkard for many helpful discussions about the issues raised in this paper.