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How Necessary is the Phenomenology for Hegel's Logic?

The Phenomenology as introduction to the Logic

Much of what follows is about the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel's literary and philosophical masterpiece. But if the attention is on this work, the interest far transcends it. At issue is the nature of rationality according to Hegel, and, since the Logic is Hegel's science of reason *ex professo*, this science, rather than the Phenomenology, is the main subject. Why the Phenomenology should nonetheless be given pride of place, despite the main interest ultimately lying elsewhere, needs, therefore, some justifying.

The assumption must be, of course, that reason is normative; in the sense that it transcends and governs anything bound to the *hic et nunc* of experience. If we refer to the latter as the "the temporal," then reason, inasmuch as it transcends this *hic et nunc* while providing the norms for its meaningful determination, can be called "the eternal." This has been indeed its common denomination, at least in the Platonic tradition. The issue is whether from this assumption of reason as normative one concludes that the temporal ought to be subsumed under the eternal; that truth thus substantially resides only in the latter; or whether, on the contrary, that the eternal is rather to be found realized in the temporal, and *there alone*. Two radically different theories of being follow according as one draws either consequence; by the same token, two radically different interpretations of Hegel's system. So far as the latter is concerned, the difference is best illustrated precisely by how the choice would influence the interpretation of the Phenomenology's relation to the Logic. Inasmuch as one draws the first consequence, the Phenomenology would be an introduction to the Logic only in the sense that it prepares the mind for it subjectively, so that, once the moment is ripe, one can perform the mental leap required for taking abode in the realm of science. Just like a ladder which can be pushed away once the top is reached, so the Phenomenology would be left behind once abstract thought enters the scene with its categories. The resulting Logic would then be metaphysics still in the classical sense of Leibniz and Spinoza, as the first, intuitively and independently apprehended, conceptual outline of a cosmogony. On the second position, on the contrary, the norms

of reason, not unlike Kantian categories,¹ would already be demonstratively at work in the experiences portrayed in the Phenomenology. Even as an introduction to the Logic, the Phenomenology would thus be *itself* already science²—albeit a science which yet lacks the clear concept of itself *as science*, and for which, therefore, the primary concern is precisely to distill such a concept out of its historical reflection. Once attained, however, the concept and the sciences that follow from it would be of a rationality immanent to experience, such, therefore, as would have no existential significance apart from the latter. On this position, the categories of the Logic would constitute the first outline, not indeed of a cosmogony as on the first position, but of a universe of meaning, in the context of which alone the particular sciences of being could be developed.

It is this second position that I want to defend—in the current presentation, however, only indirectly. The Phenomenology, as I intend to show, is to be read as a conceptually motivated historical *roman*. Why a *roman*? Because the story it relates nowhere, and at no time, happened as recounted by it; it is not the subject of an historical chronicle; for this reason, therefore, a product of fiction. Why conceptually motivated? Because the make up of the story, and the personalities of its characters, are shaped for the sake of conveying to the reader a truth about experience, namely, that they are inherently reflective, and hence rational, even in their most inchoate forms. Why historical? Because the events and characters of the story, although fictional, require nonetheless a historical context within which they can be located in real space and time, and to which the reader recognizes himself as personally connected. The story, in other words, although fictional in its make-up, is not thereby mere phantasy. It bears directly upon his present historical situation. Thus, although *subjectively* the Phenomenology is for the reader the introduction to the idea of a reason which is essentially historical in nature; as introduction, therefore, is the first part of a system; *objectively*, that is, according to the rationality, of which the idea is explicitly unfolded in the system, it is just as much the system's final product. As such, i.e., as final product, although itself not philosophy of history, it is nonetheless an introduction to it.

¹But without the formalism of the latter.

²GW, IX.61.28-30. I am citing from Georg W. Fr. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, hrsg. Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag), according to volume number in Roman ciphers, page number, and line numbers when required.

We shall return to this point at the end. At issue right now, however, is the *Phenomenology* precisely as work of philosophical art.

*The Phenomenology as narrative*³

Granted that at one level the *Phenomenology* is a historical fiction, who is the author? Who the audience? Who the protagonists? Where the plot? Where the historical interest?

The question apropos the author is of special interest because there is a narrator of the story who is himself implicated in the plot, yet also purports to be the author of it. This is the “twist,” so to speak, that gives the *Phenomenology* its unique character. The author is the one who at once generates the story’s historical interest, i.e., the requirement that it be located in the course of actually events, yet adds to these an extra dimension, a conceptual interest, which in turn requires that they be presented in the medium of a fiction.

I am referring, of course, to the ubiquitous *we*, first referred to in the Introduction and recurring in a variety of forms at crucial points in the rest of the work.⁴ This *we* is the philosopher (Hegel himself, in fact) who, as of 1807, finds himself in this world historical situation; namely, that there is a culturally wide-spread belief that true knowledge, or science, is possible; indeed, that it is already with us; yet there is no clarity regarding why this is possible, or, for that matter, how we got to the present certainty that it is. One can immediately see how both, the historical interest and the need for romanticizing, are simultaneously produced. The narrator/author is a real individual standing at just as real a point in history. His spatio/temporal position is open to documentation. If his interest in how he got to that point is to be satisfied, the required narrative must be one that leads up to it in ways which are equally open to real space/time determinations. This might sound trivial. But it is not. In a Kantian or Fichtean universe, for instance, where historical events are by definition only appearance of a transcendent order of things—mere *Schein*, in other words—history never is in truth what it seems to be; how anyone relates to its course individually, how straight lines are supposedly being drawn despite the asymmetry of one’s apparent position, must be, therefore, always

³Versions of this section of the essay was presented orally in English, but not published, in other venues.

⁴It first appears in IX, 58.36ff.

a matter of subjective belief, of ideological commitment.

On the other hand, history—I mean, real history—is complicated. Catalogues of events do not necessarily make for meaning. Our narrator/author must choose such facts as are relevant to his theme of how reason is *with us*, indeed has been *with us*, from the beginning.⁵ Moreover, he must craft them imaginatively in order to make the relevance apparent. Here is where the fictional dimension of the narrative comes into play, the imaginative plot. It might be said that our narrator/author is cheating, for, in the very setting up of the theme of his narrative, he is already presupposing the upshot—namely, that there is no history without reason, and no reason without history. In this sense, however, all authors are cheats. They know what’s to happen from the beginning—or, at least, seriously have a work at hand only when they know how it ends. And the best of them (like Hegel) know how to intimate the end, without however actually revealing it, even with the first line. But the demonstration of the theme is in the story itself, in the romanticized plot.

There are several such plots in the *Phenomenology*. The narrator/author’s engagement in them is what makes for the overall story linking them together. First, however, one point must be made. There is no such thing in the *Phenomenology* as a thesis/antithesis/synthesis procession; nor for that matter, is there one in the *Logic*. That procession is a myth propagated by the Schellingians, and their inheritors, the nineteenth-century Marxists. Rather, each plot proceeds exactly the way one would expect of a good narrative. There is, first, the detailed account of the factors that go into a given situation—the plot at any stage of the *Phenomenology*, in other words. Unlike usual stories, in the *Phenomenology* the plots are conceptual, and the account consists in each case in the analysis of a concept, be this, of an object, such as “Thing”; or a mental state, “Unhappy Consciousness”; or a culture, “The Ethical Community.” These concepts, to which our narrator/author (Hegel!) dedicates pages analyzing into the most minute details, are not unlike a Kantian *a priori*. They define the essence of an objective situation: the norm, therefore, of what enters into it meaningfully.

But there are internal discordances in these concepts, like flaws in a plot otherwise intended as internally coherent. If one still cares to speak of “antitheses” in the *Phenomenology*, here is where they are to be found: in a conflict of determinations internal to the concepts defining the various plots. The story, whether the overall story or each plot, proceeds, however, not by way of thesis to

⁵IX, 53.34-35.

antithesis (this, I repeat, is a myth), but by way of repetition (*Wiederholung*). Once a plot has been defined in principle, Hegel simply repeats it by *realizing* it, to use his usual expression; in effect, by portraying the consequences that inevitably befall the individuals existentially caught up in it. These are the protagonists of the overall story, in the particular personas they assume at different stages of its development (in the various plots). As we know, how the *we* (the narrator/author) got to the present universal conviction (as of 1807) that science is possible, indeed, is already actual, is the theme. This is a conviction, however, that entails a definite belief regarding the vocation (*die Bestimmung*) of the human being. What the protagonists do in their various personas is to manifest with their decisions and actions, as contained within the limits of a given plot, the fundamental belief they hold regarding their identity precisely as human beings. These beliefs are embedded, as if *a priori*, in the plot they act out. Indeed, the plot is flawed precisely to the extent that the belief is flawed. The protagonists are not aware of the flaw. But it nonetheless plays itself out in the course of their actions, with consequences that painfully affect them at their most intimate level of existence. And when the pain becomes unbearable, the stage is set for a reformation of the beliefs—for a renewed *a priori* of the human situation, a *Wiederholung*, a new plot for which the previous one stands as its past. This is a forgotten past, just as forgotten as the commitment to the new defining belief regarding human identity which has just led to the new plot. It has gone unconscious behind the back of the protagonists, as Hegel puts it.⁶ But the *we*, the narrator/author, remembers it; he has been instrumental in bringing it about, and this constitutes the unity of the overall narrative.

Here we have a first instance of how the narrator/author can be, as narrator, also a protagonist in the story, and, as author, be historically engaged in it. It all hinges on the fact that, although one should expect logical continuity in the sequence of the concepts defining *a priori* the limits of the narrated actions, that one set of beliefs would actually follow in the aftermath of the previous, and a renewed humanity thus come into being, carries no existential necessity with it. The internal disruption of one plot provides the existential conditions for its logical reformation: but, so far as the resources of the narrative up to that point go, there is no guarantee that it actually occur. For this, a

⁶IX, 61.22.

creative leap, a *novum*, is required⁷ for which there is no other in the story to contribute it except the narrator himself, who thus assumes protagonist role in the narrative. He is the inheritors of those who made the creative leap and he now recognizes the fact. This is the factor that generates at once interest in the fictional narrative, yet the need that, though fictional, it be framed in real history. All this, however, is still very vague. We have been speaking of action realizing a conceptual *a priori*, and of a narrator/author intervening in it, without defining what “action” might mean in this context. Here a bit of historical contextualization helps. The author’s year is 1807. By that time Hegel had already dropped Schelling’s intuitionism—that dark night where deep sleep was best recommended for doing philosophy.⁸ This was already the case in the 1804/05 Jena System, in which Hegel had finally closed his system, without recourse to intuition, by *de facto* removing the distinction hitherto adhered to between Logic and Metaphysics, thereby turning Metaphysics into Logic.⁹ But Logic is the domain of the spoken word, where the power of discursiveness holds sway. And this is reflected in the Phenomenology. Action in its context means, first and foremost, language. This is true at its every stage. Each of its plots can be defined by the quality of the language spoken in it. There is the opening character’s still unreflective, naïvely realist, scattered language of common sense.¹⁰ Then the language of theoretical science, which is no more than sophisticated common sense, the classical metaphysics of the understanding.¹¹ Then there is the language of mutual recognition, the many forms of which mark the stages in the history of the human spirit. They follow in sequence. There

⁷This is a point, incidentally, which Emil Fackenheim never tired to stress in his lectures on the Phenomenology in Toronto in the 60’s.

⁸I draw from a contemporary parody that obviously influenced Hegel, by G. E. Schulze. For a discussion of the episode and further relevant materials, see Kurt Reiner Meist, “‘Sich vollbringende Skeptizismus’: G. E. Schulzes Replik auf Hegel und Schelling,” in *Transzendentalphilosophie und Spekulation: Der Streit um die Gestalt einer Ersten Philosophie (1799–1807)*, pp. 192–230.

⁹For a brief summary of this process, according to the latest scholarship on the subject, consult the Introduction to my translation of Hegel’s *The Science of Logic* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. xiv–xxvii.

¹⁰This is the language of the “this and that,” the “now and then,” the “here and there,” of sense-certainty which takes itself to be the richest form of knowledge, but turns out to be given to mere abstractions. IX, 63ff.

¹¹In Sections II, III, and IV which are based on the still realist language of the “thing,” the “thing and its properties,” the “thing and its law-governed appearances.”

is the symbolic language of the still inarticulate unhappy consciousness (the tinkling of bells and smoking of incense)¹² The language of the ethical spirit, which is a language of law and simple command, and also a lamentation about the necessity of Fate.¹³ The many languages of alienated culture:¹⁴ fealty,¹⁵ counsel,¹⁶ praise,¹⁷ flattery,¹⁸ base flattery:¹⁹ and those of Enlightenment culture, which culminate in the destructively witty discourse of the *philosophes*,²⁰ finally in the deadly thump of the guillotine.²¹ The list can go on: the non-language of moral consciousness;²² the disappearing one of the beautiful soul;²³ the language of the religious community about itself;²⁴ finally the discourse of the philosopher, where discursiveness is another word for dialectic.

The Phenomenology also reads like a treatise on language. But the point now is that behind a language there is a speaker, and the quality of the speaker's language manifests the speaker's capacity to speak authoritatively; in other words, it manifests the extent to which he or she, in speaking, feels bound to a predetermined script, or, on the contrary, knows to be responsible for it.

¹²IX, 125: "Sein Denken als solches bleibt das geistlose Sausen des Glockengeläutes oder eine warme Nebelerfüllung, ein musicalisches Denken."

¹³IX, 351.32-34: "Die Sprache des sittlichen Geistes ist das Gesetz und der einfache Befehl, und die Klage, die mehr eine Thräne über die Notwendigkeit ist."

¹⁴IX, 276.5: "Diese Entfremdung aber geschieht allein in der *Sprache* . . ."

¹⁵IX, 274.16-17: cf. "Es ist der Heroismus des *Dienstes*."

¹⁶IX, 275.9-10: "Seine Sprache . . . wäre der *Rath*."

¹⁷IX, 278.26: "Die Sprache ihres Preißes."

¹⁸IX, 278.7: "die Sprache der Schmeicheley."

¹⁹IX, 282.5-6: "die Sprache der Schmeicheley, aber der unedeln."

²⁰IX, 282.32: "und dessen Sprache daher geistreich ist."

²¹IX, 320.14: "In der Platttheit dieser Sylbe besteht die Weisheit der Regierung."

²²IX, 351.24: "dad moralische Bewußtseyn hingegen ist noch *stumm*."

²³IX, 354.25-26: "aber diese erschaffene Welt ist seine *Rede*, die [das Bewußtseyn] ebenso unmittelbar vernommen, und deren Echo nur zu ihm zurückkommt."

²⁴IX, 353:34-35: "Die Religion, die [. . .] das Sprechen der Gemeinde über ihren Geist ist."

By the same token, it manifests the capacity of the speaker's language community to stand by the meaning of its language. Language, as Hegel says, is the existence of Spirit.²⁵ This is the all-important point. The form of the *we*'s engagement in the narrative depends precisely on the way this *we* can enter into discourse with its protagonists; and this depends in turn on the degree to which such protagonists have attained sufficient interiorization for supporting the discourse as independent speakers. The development of the self-containedness of their languages proceeds *pari passu*—indeed, it amounts to the same thing—with their development from merely singular (*Einzeln*) characters to self-standing individuals (*Individuum*).

Take, in the first instance, the character who comes on stage at the very beginning of the *Phenomenology*—Frau Bauer, as Hegel refers to her in an aphorism.²⁶ The appellation is both elitist and sexist, needless to say. But we must remember that we are in 1807. Moreover, Frau Bauer really stands for all of us, as we go about our ordinary lives using such tools as thermometers, clocks, and maps, relying on common language and practices, completely unaware of the conceptual problems we run into if we try to *explain* exactly what is that we actually measure when believing to be measuring heat, or time, or space. The *we*, who in 1807 already knows quite a bit about such problems, can afford, therefore, to address Frau Bauer patronizingly, even to hector her: she is simply not up to speed with the times. The condescending tone is for the sake of challenging her *to get* with the times. And we know from history that at least *some* Frau Bauer accepted the challenge. What we have in Section II and III, then again in Section V (with its many sub-plots) is a Frau Bauer the scientist, who conceptually refashions the natural things she otherwise assumes as *already there*, ready-made, precisely in order to be able to recognize them for what they actually are as *objects* of measure. For this she excogitates all kinds of conceptual models, physical, organic, psychological, social, even legal.

All this makes for a very complicated story. But we need only note that, strictly speaking, the *we* cannot engage in discourse with Frau Bauer. He can only let her work out the conceptual

²⁵IX,276.10-11: "Denn [die Sprache] ist das *Daseyn* des reinen Selbsts, als Selbsts." 351.11: "Wir sehen wieder die *Sprache* als das *Daseyn* des Geistes." 380.31: "[die Sprache] ist die als Seele existierende Seele."

²⁶Karl Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegels Leben* (Berlin, 1844), p. 539 (tenth aphorism from p. 537). Hegel actually speaks of *Bauersfrau*.

problems she encounters, only documenting, thereby also inscribing in explicit memory, the moves she makes to resolve the problems which she otherwise forgets. This is so because Frau Bauer, as scientist of nature, does not relate to it as one subjectively engaged with it, but as an observer putatively standing outside it, at an objective distance. Her attitude is that of the dogmatic realist, still a product of common sense, for whom language should optimally disappear before its spoken object.²⁷ In fact, of course, it does not. On the contrary, as it transpires from Frau Bauer's experience, nature is significant only as spoken; it's the *word* that turns out to be the *effective* reality. The difference between Frau Bauer, the protagonist of Sections II and III, and the Frau Bauer of Section V, lies precisely in the different subjectivity the two historically bring to their observed nature. The second Frau Bauer is the scientist whose attitude towards nature has already been informed by the Christian experience; for whom, therefore, nature comes from the start packed with intentions it would not otherwise have.

Frau Bauer knows nothing of this. But the *we*, the narrator/author, the Hegel of 1807 who has been contending with Fichte and Schelling, not to speak of the Romantics, does. And he learns. He already knows from Kant, but especially Fichte, that there is no objectivity without the subject being already involved in it. This is the "*Fichtes Verdienst*," as Hegel jotted down in a Jena aphorism.²⁸ The intelligibility Frau Bauer sought in nature was in fact contributed to it by her own subjective operations. This, as I have just said, the *we* already knows. He also knows, moreover, that intuition cannot be the motive force, or the validation, for such operations.²⁹ What he has however learned by retrieving the historical vicissitudes of theoretical reason is that this reason is only an abstraction of a more concrete reason—call it "speculative"—in the operations of which a subject of experience is engaged from the beginning, even *is* their object precisely *as subject*. He has learned, in other words, that the problem theoretical reason has been trying all along to resolve, namely, how to bridge the gap separating the universal and the singular, cannot be resolved on the basis of the object it has

²⁷IX, 63.6-8: "Wir haben uns ebenso *unmittelbar* oder *aufnehmend* zu verhalten, also nicht an [dem Seyenden], wie es sich darbietet, zu verändern, und von dem Auffassen das Begreifen abzuhalten."

²⁸For the aphorism, and how it was lost, see Friedhelm Nicolin, "Unbekannte Aphorismen Hegels aus der Jenaer Periode," *Hegel-Studien*, 4(1967), 9-19.

²⁹IX, 12.10ff.; 24.10ff.

realistically assumed so far as primordial, because this object, *nature*, lacks sufficient interiority: the conceptual constructions brought to bear upon it remain, therefore, unavoidably abstractions. The problem must rather be restated speculatively; the self-containedness theoretical reason missed in nature is to be sought in the context of human actions, in typically *human existence*.³⁰

A Kant or a Fichte would have introduced practical reason at this point, in antithesis to the theoretical, eventually bringing them together on the strength of intuition, or at least (in the case of Kant) the idea of intuition. It is significant that Hegel does not. The historical vicissitudes of speculative reason in the *Phenomenology*'s narrative only repeat those of the theoretical, but at a more complex level of experience in which, as we shall see momentarily, nature assumes a new significance. The overarching theme is still the same: how to mediate universality and singularity. But the mediation now is between communal and singular existence, and the goal is the attainment of a self-contained community, as contrasted with the theoretical problem of defining the perfectly self-contained object. And the medium for the mediation is “feeling” (*Gefühl*), not the abstract concept. In this, too, Hegel takes a page from Fichte (the latter's *Verdienst*, again); but the difference is that, for Hegel, nature must be allowed irreducible presence in the process of mediation, such as requires theoretical treatment—not be reduced, rather, to merely subjective idea (as *per* Fichte), or (as *per* Schelling at that particular time) to an attribute of absolute substance.

The keyword here is “feeling”—the German *Gefühl*, which cannot be translated as “sentiment,” “*sentiment*,” or “*sentimento*,” which rather all translate *Empfindung*. To be sure, Hegel himself disparages *Gefühl*, notably, but not exclusively, in his review of Solger's works,³¹ or in the

³⁰For this reason Hegel's disquisitions on physiognomy and phrenology at the conclusion of Part A of Section V are important for the plot the “we” is unfolding. Hegel ridicules the two pseudo-sciences, yet takes them seriously as ultimate, even desperate, attempts on the part of observing reason to see itself objectified in externally visible shape, as in a bone. But, in fact, rationality is visible only in the quality of human conduct as originating in character, or generally in judgment. Accordingly the rest of Section V is dedicated on what we would nowadays call the social sciences, where conduct is indeed the subject-matter, although still considered from the standpoint of an external observer. It is only in Section VI that human actions are recounted from inside-out, so to speak, as lived in the existence of a community.

³¹Solger-Rezension: *Solger's nachgelassene Schriften und Briefwechsel* (1826). XVI, 77ff. See especially pp. 105ff., where Hegel praises Solger (but with reservations) for opposing the new theology which reduced the doctrines of Christendom to a subjective content, thus giving rise to a “*Gefühlschristentum*” which, in this new theology's view, reawakened the Christendom previously killed by philosophy. But Hegel's main object of attack in the Review is Schlegel, whose theory of irony Hegel attributed to what he took to be (but wrongly) the subjectivism of Fichte's “I =

Philosophy of Right.³² But that's because Hegel is attacking the Romantics there—attacking *their* understanding of “feelings” which denied them any objective content; reduced them rather to merely subjective events, yet made the source of knowledge, as clear an oxymoron, according to Hegel, as there could be. Feelings, as they appear in the Phenomenology, exhibit quite a different, and much more complex structure, than one can find in the Romantics (at least as interpreted by Hegel). And it is precisely in connections with the role they play in the Phenomenology that one can see in what deep sense the Phenomenology is already Logic: not just a pedagogical introduction to it that can be dismissed once the latter is attained.

Exactly what kind of experience are “feelings” in the Phenomenology? Fichte's *Verdienst* is now palpable. As Fichte said, feeling is our cognition's mediated connection with things in themselves,³³ a claim for which he had already provided the conceptual frame as early as in the added § 2 of the second edition of his *Kritik aller Offenbarung* where, to use his later 1804 language, he *genetically* deduced the feeling of respect for the law which Kant had only *factically* introduced. On his analysis, such a feeling would not be transcendently possible unless one assumes the presence of a *novum* in nature, namely, that of reflective reason, by virtue of which a new space (call it moral space) is generated in hitherto only natural existence. Here, in this space, an individual subject of experience bound to nature's singularity finds himself as if threading on holy ground, as if embarrassed by that singularity, which now needs justifying.³⁴ This is a new existential attitude on

I.” Cf. especially pp. 113ff. Solger was suspicious of the theory, but, according to Hegel, was ultimately unable to escape the negative effects of its subjectivity.

³²Cf. the long addition to § 140, where Hegel begins by defining *Heuchelei* (hypocrisy) and concludes by referring to his treatment of the “beautiful soul” at the end of Section V of the Phenomenology. XIV, 123ff.

³³“ . . . daß unsere Erkenntniß zwar nicht unmittelbar durch die Vorstellung, aber wohl mittelbar durch das Gefühl mit den Dinge an sich zusammenhänge.” J. F. Fichte, *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* (1794), *Gesamtausgabe*, hrg. R. Lauth *et al.* (Stuttgart Bad Cannstatt, 1965 —), I.2: 109.13, note.

³⁴*Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung* (1793²), *Gesamtausgabe*, I.1, § 2. I am using my own imagery which differs from Fichte's at this point deliberately scholastic language. But cf. pp.142.20ff. “Insofern diese Bestimmung [of the senuous impulse, *Trieb*] auf die absolute Spontaneität [of the categorical imperative] zurückbezogen wird, ist sie bloß negativ—eine Unterdrückung der willensbestimmenden Anmaßung des Triebes; —insofern sie auf die Empfindung dieser geschehenen Unterdrückung bezogen wird, ist sie positiv, und heißt das *Gefühl der Achtung*. Dieses Gefühl ist gleichsam der Punkt, in welchem die vernünftige und die sinnliche Natur endlicher Wesen innig zusammenfließen.” The immediately following paragraphs are also relevant.

the individual's part, the effectiveness of which is however attested by what the individual does with nature, which only now, since it has become problematic, assumes before him the aspect of an irreducible "other" to be contended with. Nature is thereby invested with a meaning it would not have by itself.

As I have just noted, Fichte had the feeling of respect for the law especially in mind in his early text. In the case of the law, as Kant said, we know that it is effective because it hurts: to invest nature with moral significance means to repress it. But it is easy to see how Fichte's conception can be extended in basic outline to feeling as such, and how precisely it describes the situation of the *dramatic personas* of the Phenomenology. The crucial point is that feelings are nothing immediate; on the contrary, they are highly reflective phenomena. A feeling is a kind of primordial judgement: a taking of position regarding how one stands with respect to nature, this last perceived as an irreducible "other"; a taking of position, moreover, which directly affects the quality of one's conduct in nature (indeed, has no content apart from nature), but in which, nonetheless, at issue first and foremost is the identity of the one taking position. As primordial judgement, feeling is a judgment of identity, a *parti pris* regarding one's place in nature. The protagonists who first come on the stage in the Phenomenology at Section IV as abstract representatives of social arrangements which are then developed *in concreto* in Section VI—I mean, the hero battling before the walls of Troy; the servant labouring under the universal, but abstract, law of the imperial Lord; the stoic and the sceptic, with their conceptual rendition of the servant's labour; the Christian believer, with his anguished conscience—each stands for a definite *feel* for nature³⁵ that carries with it its own characteristic language tone.

But to say that "feeling" is a primordial judgment is necessarily to entail that it is, not just a material amenable to rationalization, but, *as feeling*, already *reason*. This is the lesson of the Phenomenology. The difference between feeling and speculative reason is not one of immediate and reflective, but (*pace* Romantics and intuitionists) one of inchoately and fully developed reflectivity. The continuity between the two is what makes for the continuity of the Phenomenology's narrative.

³⁵as when one *feels the blues*.

Here is where commentators—Alexandre Kojève most notably among them³⁶—normally misrepresent Hegel. They assume that desire, rendered infinite by the negativity of reason, is for him at the origin of human existence. This might be all right for the likes of Spinoza, Schelling, or Marx, or any for whom Spirit is but an illusionary epiphenomenon. But not for Hegel. Indeed, in thus representing his position, one in fact deprives the Phenomenology’s narrative of its motive force. Take the warrior who battles before the walls of Troy. He is still innocent of abstractive reflection, but knows with his body (*feels*, in other words) that he would not deserve the name he carries, were he not ready to stand by it. In satisfying his otherwise natural desires (abducting Helen, for instance), what counts most is not the physical satisfaction, but the *right* to it. But this amounts to communal recognition, despite the fact that the satisfaction at stake is eminently singular—nature guarantees that much—and to extort the recognition, thus to invest singularity with universal significance, inevitably leads to conflictual claims of right to equally singular satisfactions. And our hero must stand by his claim to universality at his most singular, courting death for its sake.

Commentators imperceptibly shift from “infinite desire” to “desire of desire” to “desire of prestige” to “personality.” But the point is that natural desire, even when infinitized by abstractive reflection, might indeed give rise—mechanically, as it were—to unfettered systems of power relations. We know from history that it does. What it cannot do, however, is to establish the *norm* of what counts as the *right* desire, the kind one should stake one’s identity on. This is the Kantian/Fichtean moment of the Phenomenology. Normativity is the *novum* at the origin of human existence. Reason does not just infinitize desire negatively; it invests it with a new qualitative meaning, as, historically, it did indeed—in a variety of ways, which the “we” of the Phenomenology reenacts dramatically. But, whether nature is thereby experienced as a speechless, capricious Lord to be feared, or as a loving God’s incarnate Word, or a source of temptations, or what have you, in all cases it is in its medium that the human being must work at his self-identity by spiritualizing it. Theoretical reason is part of this work. Reason is definitely positive in its effects.

There is another, even deeper consequence, that follows. Let me go back once more to the warrior battling before the walls of Troy, and juxtapose him with the character of the beautiful soul

³⁶Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* (Gallimard, 1947), cf. pp. 167ff.

that comes on the stage at the conclusion of Section VI.³⁷ This character is a contemporary of our narrator/author who, at this stage of the Phenomenology, has himself become a protagonist of the narrative. This is Hegel coming to terms with the post-Enlightenment Romanticism of his age, raising precisely the issue of what reason is all about. Together, these two *personas* stand like end pieces to Sections IV/VI of the narrative. Both are engaged in a battle of prestige, the one at the risk of physical death; the other, the beautiful soul, who is clearly a Christian product, now battling for the supremacy of individual conscience, in his case at the risk of spiritual death. Hegel himself hints at a connection between these two battles.³⁸ In both—important to note—the protagonist has from the beginning already resolved the problem of reconciling universality of norm and singularity of nature; has done so *exhaustively* by spiritualizing nature without the compromises, the abstractive positions, of the characters in between, but for different reasons. The heroic warrior because, standing at the origin of history, reflection is for him only inchoate. Normativity, communal recognition, death, valour, all blend together in the one *feel* of prestige. Quite different is the situation of the beautiful soul, at the end of history. His heroism is of a different kind. This is the character who has undergone the alienating experience of culture; more recently, has submitted to the discipline of the guillotine, itself a spiritual creation that brought heaven to earth;³⁹ has also heard the transcendent voice of the ought, at whose command he stood before nature in fear and trembling. And now, in a heroic effort at redeeming his singularity, he attributes to the voice of his conscience, dependent as such voice is on the highly particularized historical circumstances under which it was formed, the kind of universal authority that only God would have. It's a matter of wanting to be like God. So it is that a battle of conflicting witnesses inevitably emerges, all to universal truth; all implicitly violent, albeit in a spiritual sense. And the risk now incurred in the battle—a risk to which every contestant has in fact already fallen victim from the very start—is to be exposed as a liar.

Whether at the beginning or at the end of history, or, for that matter, as the Phenomenology's

³⁷IX, 341.17ff.: "Diß *Selbst des Gewissens* [. . .] ist das *dritte Selbst* etc."

³⁸But only in the sense that recognition of a moral judgment as being one's own, rather than its content, is taken as the judgment's validation. The battle for prestige is similarly one of recognition simply for the sake of recognition. IX, cf. 345.6-7: "und eben diß, daß [der einzelne Inhalt] anerkannt ist, macht die Handlung zur Wirklichkeit."

³⁹IX, 316.7-8: "Beyde Welten sind versöhnt, und der Himmel auf die Erde herunter verpflanzt."

narrative shows, in between, conflict, even violence, whether physical or spiritual, normally both at once, is essential to the human situation: it is the medium where the synthesis of universal and singular, reason and nature, is consummated. We are violent *because* we are rational. This is the all-important point where Hegel sheds any vestige of Platonism. *This is what it means to bring the eternal within the temporal* The story, however, does not end there. Before the walls of Troy, after Achilles had wreaked his vengeance over the body of Hector, Priam came to him to reclaim his son's body for honourable burial. And Achilles and the Gods agreed that that was the right thing to do. Where violence shall be, the community intervenes, not to do away with it, which would be impossible, but to contain it and redeem it. The community is itself a product of reason. In the Phenomenology, the subsequent narrative portrays the series of social arraignments which, at least in the West, institutionalized violence, and by the same token also contained it. At the end, where the source of the violence is finally unmasked at its root as the attempt to be like God, in the course of their battle, the beautiful souls are existentially forced to acknowledge both: that they are perpetrating violence, but that they *must* if their natural singularity is to be invested with universal significance. We are evil because we are rational. Therefore, the beautiful souls learn the language of confession and forgiveness.⁴⁰ The community of those who know how, not indeed to abolish, but to contain and redeem evil is thus created.

This is the religious community. The "we" also learns. He learns that religion, which, as he recognizes, has appeared in the narrative so far only on the side-line, is in fact the matrix within which all the narrated forms of human conduct have in fact unfolded. He therefore starts re-telling his story from the start, as a story about religion. It is in the medium of religious beliefs and liturgical practices that individual identity is first created. Such beliefs and practices are essentially rational. They do indeed suffer violence in the ether of pure reflection, as philosophy sets in. But all the latter accomplishes is simply to abstract *for itself* their form of rationality. Whether in the medium of religious imagination or in the ether of reflection, the vocation of reason is reconciliation.

The Phenomenology as logic and history

⁴⁰The significant text is at the conclusion of Section VI, IX, from page 358 ("Das Urtheil ist aber. . . etc") to the end.

Let me return to the theme of reason's presence in history: of the immanence of the eternal in the temporal. I am now in position to say why one should look for Hegel's conception of history above all in the *Phenomenology*; at the same time, in what sense the *Phenomenology* reads like a historical *roman*. At the origin of human existence there is the Category (the Greek κατηγορία: the accusation, the legal brief). This is the *novum* that defines human existence. Therefore, we, humans, necessarily look for meaning in the course of events, measuring them against what they might have been or should have been; we expect a plot, in other words, and some sort of lesson, just as we do in a *roman*. We measure events in this way because the Category, although a *novum* with respect to nature, occurs nonetheless nowhere but *in* nature, and its effectiveness is manifested to the extent by which, when confronted by it, nature, as it might otherwise be theoretically apprehended *in itself*, becomes *for us* totally contingent, impotent, in need of validation. By the same token, precisely *because* the Category has thus overcome the mere naturalness of nature—indeed, has done so *tout court* from the beginning—the actions governed by it become vulnerable to this naturalness. It is not just that the intentions behind them can be thwarted, or simply rendered moot, by the sheer weight of happenings, as they often do. The point, rather, is that they are exposed to error and evil; indeed, have fallen to both at the beginning, *tout court*. And it is the vocation of the historian to recognize that that's what it is to be human: anything else is a delusion. This is the moment of reconciliation which, however, would lack seriousness if it were not also, at once, normative judgement about the present and a creative commitment for the future. The historian thus becomes himself protagonist in the story he is narrating. In this sense all history is, like the *Phenomenology*, not unlike a historical *roman*.

In brief, there is no reason in history marching on towards its revelation as the pre-appointed end, although, to be sure, that's the impression that Hegel can well convey in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. This is a document which, surprisingly, to all appearances harks back to Enlightenment's theories of history.⁴¹ There are, rather, rational actions constantly being overtaken

⁴¹I am referring to the theory of history common to such otherwise disparate personalities as J. J. Spalding, Moses Mendelssohn, Isaak Iselin, Adam Weishaupt, and others as well. Kant also subscribed to it, although duly revised in accordance with critical restrictions. In his *Lectures*, Hegel seems to return to it, even shorn of critical modesty. That such is the case could, however, be disputed. Much depends on how one interprets Hegel's saying that history is "*das Weltgericht*"—more precisely, how one resolves the ambiguity of the genitive implied in the constructed word, whether

by their inner logic. And it is the vocation of the philosopher to pass judgment on them, not, however, as Hegel seems to be doing in his Lectures, as if standing outside the vicissitudes of history and assuming God's point of view, but as one immersed in them, creatively intent on coming to terms with them.

Where does this come to light in the Phenomenology and the Logic? Exactly at the juncture where the one, as narrative, demonstrates that it is already logic; and the other, as science of categories, demonstrates for its part that it is a logic of experience. To start with the Logic, the place is at the end of Book Two of Volume One, that part of the Logic where the categories of classical metaphysics come in for analysis. These are also the categories of ordinary language which, like classical metaphysics, is constitutionally committed to Parmenides and the principle of identity. Common sense is ultimately behind the move from unity as achieved in "substances" to the absolute unity of the presumed One Substance. But, as Hegel points out, the modal categories thereby lose their distinctness: necessity is contingency just as well, and contingency necessity.⁴² It is not often noted in the literature that in the revised Part One of Volume One the 1832 edition of the Logic, Hegel had occasion to criticize both Spinoza and Kant—in the same breath, but Kant more harshly so than Spinoza—for having attributed to the modal categories no more than epiphenomenal value.⁴³ But discourse runs on the modal categories. The Absolute of classical metaphysics is, on the contrary, where discursiveness comes to an end and the dark night of intuition is induced where deep sleep is best advised for doing philosophy.⁴⁴

Here is where Hegel overcomes Spinoza and the classical tradition behind him. His move is to Spirit, to the absolute idea (which is none other than the Logic itself) as contrasted with the

one takes it as objective or subjective. If one takes it in *both* senses, then the judgement would be *of* the world (objective) *by* the world (subjective). In that case, all that would be meant by *Weltgericht* is the judgment which any of us (the world) would pass, and would even be morally obliged to pass *ex post facto*, on how the actions of individuals and communities have worked themselves out in the actual course of events, thereby demonstrating their rationality and/or irrationality. This is exactly what the "we" of the Phenomenology does as of 1807. But this a far-reaching topic that demands extensive treatment in a different forum.

⁴²XI, 391-392.

⁴³XI, 323-324.

⁴⁴See Note 8 above.

Absolute. But the existence of Spirit is discourse, which is the subject of Volume Two of the Logic. The unity which classical metaphysics sought in the categories of the understanding, Hegel now seeks in a discourse about discourse demonstrating the capacity of the latter to retain unity of meaning precisely on the basis of its historical dispersion. The Logic is just *that*: logic. It does not follow that it does not make an ontological commitment. It actually makes it at the very beginning, where, contrary to all tradition, it privileges “becoming” over “being” as the first complete category. But discourse is only a form of life—a becoming which is capable to contain itself. The Logic simply exhibits this form in the medium of the abstract concept. Its slide back to phenomenology is all too natural.

But who carries the discourse of the Logic? In the Logic itself, the carrier and motive force is what Hegel calls “*das Logische*”—“the logicity” of the discourse, or its internal normativity. But this is only a distillation by way of conceptual art of the rationality of historical action as realized in the medium of discourse. The phenomenological counterpart of “*das Logische*” is thus the “we” whose phenomenological reflections we have adumbrated: the historical individual who, under pressure from the normativity of his own reason and the cultural circumstances of the day, undertakes the historical task of discovering how the certitude that science is possible, which is the mark of the day, ever came to be. The Phenomenology is logic, indeed only implicitly at the beginning, yet, as the “we” arrives at it explicitly in conclusion, he recognises it precisely as the logic of his experience up to that point.⁴⁵

But there is yet another point where the Phenomenology and the Logic converge, or better, where the transition in the Logic from Absolute to Spirit takes on a historical face. This is at the conclusion of Section V of the Phenomenology, where Antigone comes on the stage to give

⁴⁵In this sense the Phenomenology is both introduction to speculative science and conclusion. History is what holds introduction and conclusion together. Unless the issue of the presence of reason in history is brought into the picture, the relation of Phenomenology to Logic becomes indeed murky. Cf. Stephen Houlgate, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 9, and the issue of circularity. One must read Schelling's account in his Munich Lectures of his early attempts at giving a historical dimension to Fichte's Idealism to see how much Hegel's method in the Phenomenology owes to Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800). Of course, these lectures date from 1833-34, and it might well be that Schelling was the one influenced by Hegel (much that he at the time rejected him) as he recollected his Jena work. But see *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie. Münchner Vorlesungen, Sämtliche Werke* (Stuttgart, 1856-1858), X.167-68. The 1827 date in this edition is no longer deemed reliable.

expression to the lesson which the still objectifying reason should have learned through its experiences so far. Namely, the rationality of things, the immanence of universal norms which reson expected to recognize realized, first in the singularities of nature, and then in the patterns and vicissitudes of individual human behaviour, an immanence of which it was subjectively certain, and the certainty had motivated its investigations so far, is in fact already realized in communal existence, the product of a primordial judgement of self-identity which establishes the values of a community, and thereby invests nature with new existential meaning. And it is by participating in this communal existence, abiding by communal norms, that an individual finds, as subjective self, also its objective being (*Wesen*).⁴⁶ Antigone was responding to the binding power of precisely this primordial judgement, which she felt as coming from the Gods since time immemorial, enshrined as it was in her natural role as sister, when she chose to bury her brother despite the King's command to the contrary.⁴⁷ Community existence as enshrined in types of discourse thus becomes the subject of Section VI. The slide of the Phenomenology into logic is just as obvious as that of the Logic into phenomenology.

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Montréal, 6 June 2016

⁴⁶Hegel refers to communities in their still pristine, self-transparent yet unreflected state, as spiritual "masses": "mackellose himmlische Gestalten, die in ihren Unterschieden die unentwehte Unschuld und Einmüthigkeit ihres Wesen enthalten." IX, 236.4-5.

⁴⁷IX, 236.7=11.