

GEORG WILHELM FRIEDRICH HEGEL

The Phenomenology of Spirit

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) is one of the most influential texts in the history of modern philosophy. In it, Hegel proposed an arresting and novel picture of the relation of mind to world and of people to each other. Like Kant before him, Hegel offered up a systematic account of the nature of knowledge, the influence of society and history on claims to knowledge, and the social character of human agency itself. A bold new understanding of what, after Hegel, came to be called "subjectivity" arose from this work, and it was instrumental in the formation of later philosophies, such as existentialism, Marxism, and American pragmatism, each of which reacted to Hegel's radical claims in different ways. This edition offers a new translation, an introduction, and glossaries to assist readers' understanding of this central text, and will be essential for scholars and students of Hegel.

TERRY PINKARD is Professor of Philosophy at Georgetown University. He has published numerous books on German philosophy and on Hegel in particular, including *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge, 1994), *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge, 2000), and *German Philosophy 1760–1860: The Legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge, 2002).

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TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY

TERRY PINKARD

Georgetown University, Washington DC



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To Susan

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Introduction

HEGEL'S PATH TO THE PHENOMENOLOGY

The Voyage of Discovery

Hegel frequently described his 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit* to his students as his “voyage of discovery.” It was in that work, Hegel’s first published version of his own systematic views, that Hegel, a virtually unknown, barely employed academic figure in Jena, became Hegel, the philosopher celebrated all over Europe. Nonetheless, however much of a voyage the book was for him, it was by no means an easy passage. Published in April of 1807, it was a work written hurriedly while Hegel was in extremely dire circumstances. He was thirty-seven when the *Phenomenology* appeared, and during its composition he had no tenable job, no real prospects, and an illegitimate child on the way. He did indeed have a teaching position at the university at Jena, but the salary for that position was not merely meager, it was nothing at all (Hegel was a private lecturer at the university). He had been supporting himself in a condition rapidly approximating to a state of penury on the basis of a small inheritance he had obtained when his father died in 1799. In 1806, the minister of the government which ran the university, Johann Wolfgang Goethe himself, managed to procure a 100 Thaler per year salary for the beleaguered Hegel, but that really amounted to a minor honorarium, not a sum that even the poorest student could live on. To survive, Hegel needed some type of employment, and, if it was to be in a university, he was going to have to produce a book of some importance. However, not only were positions at universities few and far between, they were becoming even scarcer because of the Napoleonic wars in Germany at the time. The *Phenomenology* was a book born out of both despair and a steadfast confidence on Hegel’s own part that his audience – whom he envisaged to be no less than the people of modern Europe itself – needed this book.

Hegel did not originally set out to be a philosopher.¹ When he graduated from Tübingen's famous Theological Seminary in 1793, his career path had supposedly already been set for him. He was supposed, and in one sense even obligated, to become a Lutheran pastor in the duchy of Württemberg. He rejected that option while he was at Tübingen, and quite fortunately for him, at least as far as he was concerned, the number of positions available for pastors were about as few as those for university professors, ensuring that the matter would never really come to a head. At the Seminary, he had struck up a close friendship and shared a room with two other students who had equally decided against the destiny chosen for them of becoming pastors: Friedrich Hölderlin, who was to become one of Germany's greatest poets, and F. W. J. Schelling, who was also to become one of Germany's greatest philosophers. Each of the three Tübingen friends had a great impact on the others, and the development of their own views and talents after leaving the Seminary around 1793 were intertwined with each other for a number of years. After a short stay in Bern, where Hegel tried, unsuccessfully, to work up some more popular manuscripts for publication, he moved in 1797 to Frankfurt to be near Hölderlin, who already had a position as a private tutor there and who had managed to procure for Hegel a position as a private tutor at another household.² Under Hölderlin's influence in Frankfurt, Hegel came to believe that his early conceptions of what was needed in philosophy were severely misguided, and it was there that he began to entertain the idea of seeking a position as a university professor of philosophy.

After leaving the Seminary, Schelling himself had gone on to become the boy-wonder of German philosophy. He staged a meteoric rise in German intellectual life, and in 1798, at the age of twenty-four, he became a professor at the celebrated university at Jena. Shortly thereafter he became the successor there to the famous post-Kantian philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte, who was forced to leave Jena after having trumped-up charges of atheism leveled against him. Schelling managed to arrange for Hegel to leave Frankfurt and come to Jena in 1801, where, at the age of thirty-one, Hegel decided to see if he could make his mark as a philosopher. Hegel's

¹ For the more detailed account of Hegel's life, see T. P. Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

² Hegel was not entirely unsuccessful in his literary career while in Bern. While there, he translated into German and provided a commentary on a political pamphlet by the French-speaking Jean-Jacques Cart. The pamphlet was a quasi-revolutionary indictment of the Bernese aristocracy (one of whom Hegel was working for as a private tutor for the children). The translation and commentary were published anonymously, and not even Hegel's own family in Berlin many years later knew that this came from his own pen.

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position at Jena was an unpaid one (although he was allowed to charge a pittance for admission to his lectures, which was the accepted practice at the time), and his financial support was almost entirely due to his small inheritance. He was at first taken by the intellectual world to be simply a disciple of Schelling, and his first few published monographs were widely taken to be mere variations if not simple iterations on the Schellingian program in philosophy. When Schelling left Jena to assume a position in Würzburg in 1803 (as scandalous and utterly false rumors having to do with his marriage to the talented Caroline Michaelis Böhmer Schlegel circulated around Jena), Hegel was left with nothing much to rely upon for support. Worse, the university around him had begun to collapse, and not merely Schelling but almost all the other intellectual luminaries at Jena at the time rapidly departed, leaving Hegel virtually alone there.

The Intellectual, Political, and Social Ferment of the Time

Two major developments during this period should be kept in mind. First, there was the French Revolution of 1789 which had upended all conventional thought in Europe. While at Tübingen, Schelling, Hegel, and Hölderlin had in fact all been excited by the prospects in France. (Hegel was a nineteen-year-old Seminary student studying philosophy when the Revolution happened, and some of his compatriots and friends at the time in Tübingen actually went to fight on the side of the Revolution. While still at Tübingen, Schelling even translated the “Marseillaise” into German.) The reactionary German powers had tried to suppress the revolution in France but had at great cost been defeated several times. Throughout this period, the fear of a French-style revolution and the institution of a Jacobin reign of terror was never far from the minds of the ruling German powers, and the rise to power on the part of Napoleon in 1799, followed by his coronation as Emperor of the French in 1804, did nothing to allay those fears. In 1806, as Hegel was finishing up his work on the *Phenomenology*, the Prussians and their allies once more tried to teach the French a lesson, and in response Napoleon sent his armies into German territory to meet up with them. It was in fact at Jena on October 14 that the decisive battle took place, and Napoleon and his army delivered a crippling blow to the Prussian army, sending the whole Prussian force into wild retreat in a matter of only about thirty minutes. Hegel was later to claim that he finished the writing of the book under the sound of the cannon fire of the battle itself, and that rather boastful claim became itself part of the Hegel legend.

The second thing that must be kept in mind was the intellectual upheaval brought about by Immanuel Kant's writings. Starting with the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, Kant had effectively revolutionized philosophy and repositioned the philosophical faculty as the leading edge of what was turning out to be a complete reform of the German, and later the entire European, and even still later, the entire worldwide university system. Kant's closely related claims that "freedom" was the watchword of his system and that the meaning of the movement known as the "Enlightenment" was that of learning to "think for oneself" had galvanized an entire generation of intellectuals. Kant's related claims – that nothing could count as morally or politically legitimate except that which issued from the autonomous, self-determining wills of individuals, and that the wills of such individuals were autonomous to the degree that they followed rationally self-determined laws – together articulated a widely felt experience in European youth at the time. In his three *Critiques* (of pure reason, practical reason, and of the power of judgment), Kant had effectively undercut all prior metaphysics and managed to transform completely the theory of knowledge, philosophy of science, moral philosophy, the theory of agency in general, political thought, aesthetics, and even the philosophy of biology. Moreover, it did not by any means go unnoticed that the revolution in philosophy brought on by Kant's insistence on freedom as the linchpin of his system and the new revolution in politics and social institutions in France might be more than casually linked. At one point, Wilhelm von Humboldt was asked by some of the leading revolutionaries to give some talks explaining Kant, and Kant's writings began appearing in French. Even Napoleon got into the act. (He did not like Kant, not at all.)³ In particular, Kant had seemed to many to resolve many of the culturally unsettling debates of the day. Kant had held that all we can know of nature is in effect what physics and the other natural sciences can teach us, but that this kind of knowledge was restricted to the world as we had to experience it, and we could not without pain of contradiction extend that to the world as it might exist independently of the subjective conditions of human experience. In practical matters, on the other hand, we had to assume that we were in possession of a kind of radical freedom. In effect, Kant had provided, so many thought, a framework for endorsing all of modern science while at the same time holding onto many traditional,

³ See the discussion in F. Fehér, "Practical Reason in the Revolution: Kant's Dialogue with the French Revolution," in Fehér, ed., *The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1990), 201–18.

even Christian doctrines about human freedom and the irreducibility of faith in religious matters.

Along with the French Revolution and the Kantian revolution in philosophy, there was also the revolution in the nature of the university going on at Jena. By the time of the end of the eighteenth century, many people had concluded that universities in general were outmoded institutions which were run by dull professors teaching outmoded orthodoxy and useless knowledge, and which were populated by students who devoted most of their energies to getting inebriated. Better, so many thought, to abolish them altogether and substitute various technical institutes in their place. It is a long story, but in the 1790s, Jena, under the far-sighted leadership of Goethe, was in the process of changing all of that. The university at Jena had provided a new model of the university that focused not on the teaching of orthodoxy but on bringing young minds into contact through lectures and seminars given by leading researchers. The image of the professor as stodgy, dry as dust, and out of touch was replaced with the image of the professor as hero, as the individual who was following out Kant's injunction to "think for oneself" and who was laying out the blueprint for the emerging modern world itself. Kant himself had pushed this development further with his last book, *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798), in which he argued that the traditional subordination of all the faculties to the faculty of theology had effectively been ended by the advent of the Kantian critical philosophy. The philosophical faculty had now proved itself to be autonomous of the theological faculty and had shown that its research depended not on any revelation given from the outside but only on the free, critical use of reason itself. Indeed, on Kant's account, it was the philosophical faculty and not the theological (or the medical or law) faculties that had to provide the core and the unity of the new emerging university based on the rejection of orthodoxy and on the unity of teaching and research. (The "philosophical" faculty in this period was not simply identical with what would now be called in American universities the "philosophy department." It also included what are now called the natural sciences along with other "humanities" departments. This distinction among sciences, humanities, and the like came later on in the development of the modern university. In terms of the American university, the "philosophical" faculty eventually became something like the "college of arts and sciences" that is virtually universal now among American institutions of higher learning.)

Although it was widely felt that Kant had laid out the outline of the new program in culture and philosophy, he had not provided all the links to it, and what was still outstanding, so many believed, was some way to

bring his three *Critiques* (along with his other writings) into some kind of unity. If the philosophical faculty was to be the guiding light of the new university, and philosophy per se was to be the unifying discipline among all the other elements of the philosophical faculty, then it was considered to be crucially important for the whole project of modern life that the Kantian system – known as the critical philosophy, the term Kant used to describe it – be itself brought into order. The watchword became that of following not the letter but the “spirit” of Kant, and at Jena there was a succession of celebrated attempts to provide the requisite systematization of Kantian philosophy, with each new attempt becoming bolder than the earlier one.⁴ First, Karl Leonhard Reinhold became a professor at Jena in 1787 and attracted hundreds of new students to the university to hear him lecture on his own version of the Kantian program. When Reinhold left Jena for a better-paying position at Kiel, he was succeeded in 1794 by the brilliant and charismatic Fichte, who radicalized the Kantian program even further and took it into new territory. Fichte energized a new generation of students and helped to push what was now being called “post-Kantian” philosophy into an even faster line of development.

However, not everyone in German intellectual circles was enthused by the new Kantian turn in philosophy and by the idea of a university training the new elite in terms of critical thought. To many, this seemed disturbingly close to importing the French Revolution into Germany. To many of the same people, it amounted not merely to the lowering of the importance of the theological faculty but even to the rejection of the Christian religion altogether. Leading figures of the time such as Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi made public arguments to the effect that Kant’s philosophy, like all doctrines coming from the Enlightenment that claimed to rely on human reason alone to discover the truths about the world and to erect schemes for how we ought to live collectively and individually, were each and every one inherently destabilizing and self-defeating systems of ideas. Jacobi, an insightful intellect and a key figure in many German circles (and himself not a reactionary conservative wanting to hold back all the forces of change)

⁴ For accounts of this development, see T. P. Pinkard, *German Philosophy, 1760–1860: The Legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); F. C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987); Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781–1801* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002); D. Henrich and D. S. Pacini, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2003); E. Förster, *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy: A Systematic Reconstruction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012); and P. W. Franks, *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2005).

argued that all such “critical” philosophy ultimately leads to a form of fatalism and atheism. His watchword for this result was “Spinoza,” both the secret hero of many of the new thinkers and the *bête noire* of the anti-Enlightenment crowd. Baruch Spinoza had famously claimed that there was only one substance, which meant that God could not exist “outside” of (that is, was not transcendent to) the world, and this meant that there could not be a personal God. All such Enlightenment thinkers, so Jacobi argued, are ultimately pushed to such Spinozism, and, so Jacobi also claimed, Kant was no exception.

In addition to the straightforward suspicion about the potentially anti-religious and “revolutionary” tendencies of the new movement, there was also the new movement growing out of other people at Jena which called itself “Romanticism.” Inspired by Fichte’s lectures and the way he was working out the implications of Kant’s own stress on freedom – some would say his “radicalization” of the Kantian program – they began to articulate an alternative direction for post-Kantian philosophy that stressed the need for a “fragmentary” and more aesthetic rather than systematic approach to the same problems. In his third *Critique*, Kant himself had noted, almost in passing, that the experience of the beautiful gives us a sense of what the underlying unity of nature and freedom might be, of something that would be itself neither “nature” nor “freedom.” The Romantics of Jena took that seriously and tried to show that it was through diverse acts of imagination, especially those involved in *art* of all sorts, that we get at what the “whole” of reality is really like, and not through the further systematization of Kantian philosophy, as Reinhold and Fichte had tried to do. In particular, they objected to what they saw as the overly abstract nature of systematic philosophy and to its pretensions to encompass all that ultimately mattered in life. We orient ourselves in the world through a kind of pre-reflective grasp of the whole, and this pre-reflective grasp is never susceptible to full systematization and articulation; we get a better sense of it from the poets and musicians rather than the systematic philosophers. It was in the hands of Hegel’s old friend, Schelling, that this version of Romanticism became unified with a magisterial systematic philosophy; the unity of Romanticism and system propelled Schelling into the first ranks of intellectuals in Germany.

SOME OF THE CONTROVERSIES SURROUNDING THE PUBLICATION

It was against this background that Hegel began composing his *Phenomenology*, most likely around the beginning of 1806. Hegel had been

intensely working on working out and publishing his own system virtually since the day he arrived in Jena. To that end, he constructed several more or less complete and publishable drafts of his proposed system over the next five years, only to put each of them aside as he came to see that they were, at least in his mind, fatally flawed. This required no small amount of courage on his own part. He desperately needed a job, and to land an academic position he desperately needed a book, and he in fact wrote, for all practical purposes, four or five such books, only to put them off to one side as he once again began from scratch on a better presentation.⁵ Given the way all his possibilities for any funding were running out, what turned out to be the *Phenomenology of Spirit* was in effect his last chance at producing the book he needed. It also turned out to be his single most brilliant piece.

Hegel contracted with a publisher in Bamberg to bring the book out, and the publisher promised to pay Hegel for the manuscript only when the book was half finished. As both Hegel and his publisher discovered, there is no clear line to be drawn when one is writing a completely original book as to when it is “half finished.” The publisher kept demanding the final manuscript, Hegel kept replying that it was not yet half done, and the book seemed only to be growing and not to be coming to a conclusion. At one point, the exasperated publisher threatened to renege on the contract, and Hegel had to get his good friend, Immanuel Niethammer, to vouch for him and promise to buy up the entire run at his own expense if Hegel did not get the manuscript to the publisher at a set deadline. During this hectic and heady process of composition, Hegel could not even settle on a title for his work, and so he kept changing it until the moment of publication. The book finally appeared with the imposing title, *System of Science: First Part: The Phenomenology of Spirit*, but in the meantime Hegel had supplied some other titles, and the printer, so it seems, became somewhat confused and stuck some of the other titles between the “Preface” and the “Introduction.” In some editions, that other title was “Science of the Experience of Consciousness”, while in others it was “Science of the Phenomenology of Spirit.”⁶ Even the order in which he made those changes remains disputed among scholars today, and even the circumstances surrounding the dispute with the publisher make a difference to the interpretation of the book.

As if there were not already a number of difficulties with the book, there is even a dispute about the table of contents. According to Hegel’s own instructions, there are two ways of organizing the table of contents. All

⁵ See Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography*, for an account of these various preliminary drafts of the “system.”

⁶ See F. Nicolin, L. Sziborsky, and H. Schneider, *Auf Hegels Spuren: Beiträge zur Hegel-Forschung* (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1996).

editions since the 1832 reprint have included both of them simultaneously. Although the issue at stake is one of interest primarily to Hegel scholars, there are some real problems with figuring out just what the system is in this “system.” Is, for example, the chapter on “Reason” really part V of the work (coming after part IV: “The Truth of Self-Certainty” and therefore falling under part B: “Self-Consciousness”)? Or is it really part C of the work, something that is not a sub-chapter under “Self-Consciousness” at all but a separate and independent chapter itself? Those issues are not settled with this edition, which keeps both tables of contents.

WHAT IS A “PHENOMENOLOGY”?

Strangely enough, ever since the publication of the book itself the community of Hegel scholars have disputed not merely what key chapters of the book might mean but also the very idea of what the book is supposed to have as its subject matter. The book has been taken by different interpreters to be that of a “coming of age” novel (a *Bildungsroman*). Likewise, some have called it a new version of the divine comedy, while others have said, no, it is a tragedy, while still others have claimed that it is both, a tragicomedy. Not unsurprisingly it has also been called a work in epistemology, and a philosophy of history, or perhaps an extended piece of social philosophy. It has also been labeled as a treatise in Christian theology and as an extended announcement of the death of God. Any quick overview of interpretive literature will add to the list of new ideas about what the book is supposedly about.

In light of the diversity of the various interpretations, it worthwhile at least to keep the words of the titles in mind. Hegel claims over and over again that his book is a “*Wissenschaft*,” a “science,” something which raises special issues for contemporary readers that were not there in Hegel’s own time. In calling for philosophy to be a “science,” it might seem as if Hegel is proposing to make philosophy into something like physics or biology, but nothing like that is the case. The use of the term, *Wissenschaft*, encompasses more than what we currently mean by “science.” In the usage of Hegel’s time, it means something like the systematic, rigorous pursuit of knowledge. For example, during the same period, theology was also turning itself into a *Wissenschaft*, a “science,” but, to put it anachronistically, nobody at that time thought that it meant that theologians were eager to don lab coats and fire up their propane burners. (It is also easy to forget that such relatively loose talk of “science” was once more common in English. In the early establishment of law schools as parts of the university

in the United States in the late nineteenth century, people freely talked of the establishment of “legal science.” However, few law professors nowadays speak of themselves as practicing scientists.)

Most clearly, the book is a “phenomenology” of something called “*Geist*” (which introduces yet another ambiguity, since in English *Geist* can be equally well and equally badly rendered as either “mind” or “spirit”). The term “phenomenology” was in various uses at the time, but since it was being used in a variety of ways by different people, there is (of course) a dispute about what exactly the “phenomenology” in the title refers to. There is a dispute about from where and why Hegel adopted the term. One obvious candidate for its meaning comes from Kant himself, who in his 1786 book, *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* (a book with which Hegel was deeply familiar), had spoken of “phenomenology” as a part of physics concerned with the science of “true motion” as opposed to only “apparent motion,” and thus as having to do not with “the transformation of mere appearance (*Schein*) into truth, but of appearance (*Erscheinung*) into experience (*Erfahrung*),” that is, into something from which we could learn.⁷ In light of that, one of Hegel’s alternative titles of the book, “Science of the Experience (*Erfahrung*) of Consciousness,” is perhaps indicative of what Hegel intended.⁸

A “phenomenology” in physics also has to do with how the various theoretical formulations are to be related to experiment, that is, how the formulations and theoretical entities are to be related to the way they appear in our experience of them.⁹ As Hegel picked up the term and put it to his use, his work thus focused on the way in which a theoretical term, “*Geist*,” would be said to appear to us. “*Geist*” would be the essence hidden behind experience, and the phenomenology would be the “science” itself of how that essence makes its appearance, until at the end of the book, we supposedly would have comprehended just what “*Geist*” really was (which turns out not to be an essence hidden behind appearance – but that is getting ahead of the story). This shift in the book from its original aim of being “the science of the experience of consciousness” into that of the “phenomenology of spirit” had to do with several crucial events intervening as Hegel was

⁷ I. Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. M. J. Gregor (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 119 (AA 555).

⁸ The phrase “science of the experience of consciousness” is also used by Hegel in the “Introduction” to characterize what his book is. It seems that this was the original title of the book, but as Hegel developed the book in writing it, he changed it to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

⁹ This distinguishes Hegelian phenomenology from the sense in which Edmund Husserl created a twentieth-century philosophical movement also called “phenomenology.” Husserl spurned the idea of such theoretical entities.

composing the book which caused him to change the aim of the book in such a broad fashion.¹⁰

Moreover, in even calling his book a “science,” Hegel was clearly taking sides in the post-Kantian controversy about what was needed to complete the movement Kant had started – and what was therefore required if one was to give some orienting sense to the new form of the university that was beginning to take shape (and the new society it was supposed to be an important part of) – namely, whether what was needed was more systematicity in philosophy or, as many of the early Jena Romantics had argued, almost no systematicity at all and much more aesthetically oriented, fragmentary approaches. As Hegel began his work, he thought of it as the basic introduction to his entire proposed system, and one of the reasons for the exponential growth of the manuscript as he was writing it had to do with the issues of how one was to manage an introduction that would both do justice to all the competing sides in the post-Kantian debate while at the same time vigorously defending his own highly original approach and to do this without presupposing what it was in fact supposed to be proving. Famously, Hegel claims in his “Preface” (written after the work was completed) that “this path to science is itself already *science*.” That is, making the case for pursuing systematic philosophy – instead of, for example, writing in Romantic fragments – can itself only be a *sui generis* form of systematic philosophy that is supposed to make such a case for itself without begging any of the questions at issue, such as whether systematic philosophy was in fact the right way to proceed at all.

One of the other striking features of the book was Hegel’s stated view of it in his “Preface” that the volume was not merely needed for philosophy to assume its rightful place in the emerging modern university, but that this university and the philosophy within it were necessary for modern Europeans to become culturally educated about *who* they had come to be as a people who were now called on and calling for themselves to become “free” and to “think for themselves.” The stakes, as Hegel saw them, were not merely narrowly academic but cultural and historical in the broadest sense.

To that end, Hegel crafted a book with a highly unorthodox structure. Since so many things about the book remain in dispute, even an overview of the main set of conclusions that purposely ignores the details of the case Hegel made for them is itself going to be a contested matter. Keeping that in mind, one can read the following as a kind of short synopsis of Hegel’s

¹⁰ See Förster, *Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy*.

Phenomenology that is best read as an invitation to think over the structure of the book for oneself.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

Hegel begins his book with a preface, in which he states at the outset that nothing of real importance can be stated in a preface to a work of philosophy, after which he goes on in a lengthy and subtle manner to outline the key elements of his views. The “Preface” was written after the book was completed. He follows it with a short introduction, which almost certainly was written at the outset of composing the book, when Hegel still thought of his work as a much smaller book to be called the “Science of the Experience of Consciousness” which was to serve as an introduction to forthcoming volumes on logic, metaphysics, the philosophy of nature, and the philosophy of *Geist*.

Consciousness

Hegel actually begins the “Science of the Experience of Consciousness” with the conceit that he is beginning the discussion with something relatively banal, absolutely certain, and obviously true, and thus under the heading of “Consciousness” he begins with a section called simply, “Sensuous-Certainty.” At the very least, it straightforwardly claims, we can be absolutely certain that we are aware of worldly items right here, right now, and when we are thus aware of some singular something-or-other right here, right now, our awareness is itself self-contained, such that it warrants me in confidently asserting that I know this: I am certain of this, and I express this certainty not by simply reporting on it as an inner psychological state but instead by just simply being certain and by holding myself to that certainty. I thus know that I am immediately aware of simple, singular items. However, as I reflect on what it is I am doing in terms of how I actually state that certainty, various tensions and contradictions arise. As the argument develops, it turns out that if it is really to be knowledge, then it will have to be knowledge of something ineffable. Unfortunately, nothing ineffable can serve as a premise in any kind of inference, so if it really is knowledge I have, it is not knowledge that is going anywhere else. As Hegel develops the chapter, the contradictions involved in my saying that I am directly aware and truly certain of this, here, now begin to pile up. But if it is true that my certainty, when it expresses itself, is fully self-contradictory, then I cannot really be said to know this, here, now, at all, or not at least in the way I thought I had known it. If that is the case, what was

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I really doing when I claimed such certainty? It seems that my “certainty” has parted company with the “truth” of what it is that I was so certain of doing. The certainty of being aware of this, here, now, does not go away as much as it becomes untenable: I am certain of this, but I am not (cannot be) certain of this. And it turns out that what I was doing (the truth of the matter) is much different from what it was I was so certain of doing. In being certain of my awareness of this, here, and now, what I was in fact doing was perceiving individual objects as exemplifying general properties. The reader breathes a sigh of relief: Certainty and truth seem to merge back together.

That unity of certainty and truth, however, does not last. In making perceptual claims, it turns out (so Hegel argues) that what I am really doing is perceiving things in a wider context – I am driven to that when once again my expressions of this new type of certainty start contradicting each other. But when I bring in that wider context of what I am doing, I end up digging myself into a pit of increasing contradictions. In short, although I started out with confidence, once again, I found that I had stopped making any sense. Once that wider context is taken into account, we have gone beyond the experience of a simple perceptual world into one involving time, regularities of appearance, natural laws, and non-visible postulated matters such as non-perceptual forces that explain why this has suddenly become so confusing; but as we further try to explain what it would be to explain such things and get out of the morass, we find ourselves instead tying ourselves into even deeper conceptual knots. The reasons we give for things appearing the way they do seem to invoke more and more invisible objects, and the reasons themselves start spreading out to infinity.

However, once the concept of infinity has been introduced, it is very clear that we are no longer even remotely in the same area in which we started. Infinity, or what Kant called the “unconditioned,” brings with it an emerging set of new contradictions. The infinite is always full, but it can always have one more thing added to it. It can have things taken from it but remain the same size. There can be two different sets each of which has an infinite number of members, but when those two sets are combined, the resulting set has the same number of members (infinity). It is thus not even clear that infinity is a real concept at all. Nor is it ever presently real, since the infinite is that which can never be traversed.

Once the concept of infinity enters our thoughts, it becomes clear that we are in deeper waters. It is a central thesis of the kind of idealism that Hegel advances that the infinite is real (actual, in his terms) only in our thought of it. It can never itself be touched, felt, or perceived, but only

conceived. In thinking this perplexing thought, consciousness finds itself pushed to a consciousness of what it is really doing. It no longer simply has its purposes before itself but now has purposes *as* purposes; it no longer merely responds to truths but responds to them *as* truths; it no longer responds to reasons but to reasons *as* reasons. In doing so, consciousness becomes consciousness of consciousness, that is, self-consciousness. That self-consciousness has turned out to be what we were really doing all along. At first, though, we did not know that, and, so it seems, it was just that blind spot that landed us in such trouble in the first three sections of “Consciousness.” If we had never started thinking about what we were really doing, we might have thought we were making sense. However, it turned out that we were not making sense, and as we reflected on it further, we found the bounds of our consciousness pushed further than we had originally anticipated.

Self-Consciousness

Hegel follows his chapter on “Consciousness” with a new chapter under the heading “Self-Consciousness,” and begins it with a section titled, “The Truth of Self-Certainty.” What we are certain about, so it seems, is not the individual things of the perceptual world but ourselves and especially ourselves as inhabiting a natural status. In that context, we are certain that we are experiencing a natural world in which we live, and that we know we are alive. How do we know this? It is not, so it seems, through any observation or inference from data but simply by the activity of living itself. Living things have something like this concept of infinity built into their lives since they seem to be both the cause and effect of themselves. What an animal does, it does because of its nature, which is determined by its species. However, the particular animal is what it is by virtue of what it does. Life itself seems to have this “chicken/egg” feature. We explain the particular organs by reference to the animal itself (and by reference to its species), but the animal is itself constituted and explained by its organs. Life has a kind of purposiveness to it that has no obvious reference to a designer, but it is only in self-conscious life that this whole of life becomes a problem to itself. Only in self-conscious life is the species aware of itself *as* the species it is. The self-conscious subject has a knowledge from the inside of what it is to live a life of this genus, specifically, the self-conscious life of a rational animal.

In being certain of myself as myself, I am doing something, and it is by doing this that I really am certain of my being alive. However, this

certainty also has its truth in something else. A *self-consciousness* is, or exists, *for a self-consciousness*, so Hegel says. I am conscious of myself only in a kind of second-person form, that of my consciousness of being known by another embodied consciousness and by my awareness of that other's knowing me while knowing that I am aware of their knowing me. Right at the outset, self-consciousness is already a two-in-one. The truth of my own certainty of my life *as* such a life is my being known by another self-consciousness and vice versa. The second-person unity is as real as the first-person separateness. Together, such second-person relations build up into a first-person singular and plural relation, the I that is a We, and the We that is an I, which, so Hegel says, is identical to *Geist*, spirit, itself. *Geist* just is self-conscious life in its individual and social formations.

That seems to settle it, but it does not. If self-consciousness requires recognition by another self-conscious person, then the other person has to have the authority to bestow that recognition. If all authority is recognized authority, then yet another type of infinite regress gets started, and it seems it can be stopped only by one of the members of the recognitional complex simply having authority, full stop. That itself seems to have no answer, and the way the regress is imagined to have been stopped is that one of them simply claims authority and forces the other to submit to it. In one of the most famous of all the turns in Hegel's system, one becomes the master, the other the slave. Very roughly, the turn-around goes this way: The master demands recognition from the slave while also refusing recognition of the slave as even having the status to confer such recognition at all. This in turn sets up a contradiction: The master requires recognition from somebody else who by the master's own doing cannot be authorized to bestow such recognition. The slave, on the other hand, in working for the master acquires a more fully developed self-consciousness, and, as it were, becomes the true hero of this story, rather than the conquering, domineering master.

This chapter on mastery and servitude, which brings out all the tensions inherent in human authority, has been one of the most commented upon and influential pieces of writing in the history of philosophy. The self-certainty the master seemed to uphold in dominating the slave turns out, as did the previous versions of "consciousness," to be untrue. What the master thought he was doing, what he was so certain about, and what keeps him in power depends on a setup that makes no sense since it is deeply contradictory. What we thought had resolved the problems of "consciousness" has turned out to generate a different but equally difficult set of problems.

Hegel follows up on the decisive conceptual failure of the relations of pure domination with some short sections on stoicism and skepticism,

presented as philosophies that grabbed the attention of the ancient world as the great slave societies of antiquity (Greece and in particular Rome) dominated the world of their day. This has puzzled many commentators since it seems to leave an ahistorical or only vaguely historical chapter on mastery and servitude to discuss a particular period in history. If one takes the titles in the table of contents seriously (where the parts on stoicism, etc. follow the passages on mastery and servitude), it seems to be clearly a move from the failure of the aim of self-sufficiency (which the master thinks he has achieved in enslaving the other) to another aim, that of freedom.

These contrasting strivings for freedom (stoicism and skepticism) themselves turn out to be attempts at a solution to the problems at which mastery failed. The stoic seeks the essence of appearance in his or her own thought as answering to a higher essence (the reason of the cosmos), whereas the skeptic turns reason against itself to assert his own freedom from everything. Neither works, and it is followed by a section on what Hegel calls “The Unhappy Consciousness,” itself the outcome of the failed aims of self-sufficiency through mastery and the failures of both stoicism and skepticism to achieve freedom. Hegel seems there to be discussing the religions of late antiquity and early medieval Christianity as despairing attempts at getting a grip on the unchanging essence behind the flow of appearance, only to finally come to terms with it by understanding their own role and activity in the process. At the conclusion of the chapter, the unchanging essence turns out to be reason itself. Once again, at the end of a section, it looks like the big problem that was driving the earlier sections has finally been resolved by dissolving the inadequate solutions that preceded the resolution.

Reason

The next large chapter is in fact called “Reason,” and its place in the structure of the book has also animated many different and conflicting interpretations. The chapter begins with what seem like obvious references to the emerging debates about “idealism” between 1781 and 1806. It then rehashes some of the material discussed in the earlier chapter in “Consciousness” on “Force and the Understanding,” and the various conceptual knots encountered in trying to give an account of accounts, an explanation of explanations. When we postulate laws of nature, are we merely stating regularities of appearance (in which case, how are we explaining anything?), or are we stating necessary grounds, and if the latter, what is the relation between ground and grounded? If they are the same, there is no explanation. If

they are really radically different, then the ground will fail to connect to the grounded in the right way. These are all problems with a view of reason that sees itself as somehow merely regularizing appearances (as found in empirical observation), and inevitably, this idea of “observing reason” runs into its own set of contradictions. Even worse, in those areas where “observing reason” does best, namely, the modes of explanation that work relatively well in physics, they all run into treacherously deep conceptual difficulties when it comes to biology. Hegel discusses a number of spurious attempts in his own day to discover laws of organic development that would mirror the law-likeness of physics. All fail, undone by their own self-contradictions and facile abstractness.

The idea that one might do the same thing in the human sciences is then effectively lampooned by Hegel in his mock-serious discussion of the “sciences” of physiognomy and phrenology. (It is not that Hegel thought there were no human sciences. He thought, for example, that Adam Smith’s economics offered a good model for developing laws of economic exchange and growth. Hegel thought that the attempt to understand human history and social life in the terms in which we correlate independent things was metaphysically limited.)

The chapter on “Reason” suddenly and rather surprisingly switches gears, and Hegel provides an account of how rational self-consciousness actualizes itself. It is one thing to disparage the ways in which pseudo-sciences like phrenology try to explain human life, but it is another to construct an adequate account. Hegel’s own developmental account of *Geist* thus resurfaces in the section on reason. Human action is not to be explained, as “observing reason” would have it, as if it were a matter of two independent things being correlated with each other or linked causally to each other. From “observing reason,” the picture that one gets of human agency is that of a material “thing” that moves, and one wishes therefore to explain the movement. To use an example taken from Ludwig Wittgenstein, the issue looks like it is explaining the difference between an arm raising (something somebody is doing) and an arm rising (merely a physical event). Since what is being explained is, from the viewpoint of “observing reason” the same in both cases (an arm going up), the difference between the arm raising and the arm rising must lie in some “inner” psychological state that effectively causes the bodily movement. Hegel rejects that picture in favor of, again very roughly put, a more developmental view of agency. Agents start with purposes, they then engage in the process of actualizing the purpose, and they thereby get underway, and at various points they have succeeded, failed, changed their minds or been prevented. (One can

think of a very general doing, such as making dinner, as an activity including many other purposive activities within itself, which can finally succeed or fail in various ways and which can also be simply interrupted.)

The “Reason” chapter then concludes with a discussion of various ways in which rational self-conscious agents form a purpose to become what they as agents really are. Their essence is that of “rational self-consciousness,” but that essence somehow seems to be hidden from them, so that the issue for them is to find out what is actually involved in it. Working one’s way through this section is an affair of great interpretive complexity, but Hegel runs through what seem to be various literary examples of what it is to develop one’s rational self-consciousness under the spell of a picture of what rational self-consciousness really is, and the characters in this account all attempt to become a realization of that picture only to find at the end that in succeeding in actualizing that picture of themselves, they have in fact failed to accomplish what it was they had taken themselves to have been doing. Crucially, though, for the figures discussed, it is not that they fail to achieve, say, some distant ideal, but rather that in achieving something like their ideal, they turn out to be forced to realize that it was in fact the very ideal itself which was false. The picture they took themselves to be actualizing turned out to be deeply self-contradictory in itself.

The various figures discussed include a kind of Faustian Don Juan figure who resolves only to increase his own pleasure and power, only to find that he has really thereby subjected himself to a necessity that he disavows; next, a figure who internalizes the necessity of a certain kind of fate and acts so as to bring others under that banner, only to find that in proclaiming his own heart to be the real pulse of a universal humanity, he has instead become a kind of raving madman cursing at the world for its lack of appreciation for his inspired leadership as he finds himself surrounded by other madmen doing the same thing; and, finally, a figure who rather preciously proclaims his own virtue in the face of the wicked ways of the existing world, and who proclaims that despite the self-seeking nature of the ways of the world, the true essence behind all the various and mere semblances of his world is really a pristine order of virtue to which he and he alone attends, but who ends up himself being just one more individual trying to get his own way in the world, becoming at best a comic figure like Don Quixote, and certainly not the knight of virtue as he had originally painted himself.

The Disputed Turn from Reason to Geist

At this point, so it seems, Hegel thought he had concluded the book. There is good evidence to believe that having finished this chapter, he then

completed the book with a chapter titled “C: Science,” thus completing the “A: Consciousness” and “B: Self-Consciousness” chapters. (If that is true, then “Reason” would have been a sub-chapter of “Self-Consciousness.”) Hegel sent the completed manuscript off to the printer.¹¹ It was also at this point that Hegel entered into his dispute with the printer, apparently telling him that the book was not in fact complete, and in the argument back and forth Hegel almost scuttled the entire contract to publish the book at all. The printer was in fact so angry with Hegel’s prevarications that Hegel’s friend Immanuel Niethammer had to promise to pick up all the costs of the print run if Hegel defaulted on producing what he now claimed was the missing chapter or chapters of the whole book. What prompted this? Eckart Förster has convincingly argued that after having been introduced to Goethe’s *Metamorphosis of Plants* by a friend while he was teaching the history of philosophy, Hegel came to one of his defining insights; namely, first, that the history of philosophy could be understood as a developing set of shapes of the same thing instead of just a procession of competing philosophical systems, and, second, that this insight could be extended to all of human history itself. With that in hand, Hegel saw the failures of the shapes exhibited in the “science of the experience of consciousness” showed that the supposed essence hidden behind appearance was in fact not hidden at all but was actually itself working its own way out in history as it shape-shifted itself in time. The form of self-conscious life was reshaping itself in time, in a way very, very roughly analogous to the way in which the development of plants was understood in Goethe’s system.

Thus, in the original scheme, the section on the actualization of rational self-consciousness through itself was supposed to culminate in “Science,” which was to provide the immediate transition into a book on logic and metaphysics. In the new scheme, Hegel realized he had to add an entirely new section to the chapter on “Reason,” so that the transition to *Geist* would be appropriate. The new section was called, “Individuality, Which, to Itself, is Real in and for Itself.” In it, Hegel spoke of the culmination of a kind of individualism, which he called the “spiritual kingdom of animals” (“*geistige Tierreich*”), and the meaning of the chapter and its title have been debated ever since.

The overall contours of the chapter develop out of Hegel’s critique of treating human activity from the standpoint of “observing reason,” which is led by its own logic to view such activity from the “outside,” from a third-person viewpoint, instead of taking the purposiveness of life and especially of human self-consciousness into account. In this chapter, Hegel draws out

¹¹ This argument is made by Förster in *Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy*.

the logic of the kind of “monological” view of self-consciousness that develops out of this “observing reason” approach. Such an approach acknowledges the social facts of human self-conscious life, such as birth, nurturing, learning a language, and so on, but it holds that once self-conscious life is formed, it is then self-sufficient unto itself for its tasks, even if as a matter of contingent fact, it always ends up depending on others. For the “monological” view, such facts of dependency are not taken to be essential to the metaphysics of purposive self-conscious life any more than, say, facial hair on men is essential. Put into practice, this leads to a monological view of purposiveness itself, and we imagine what a society based on such subjects each viewing themselves completely monologically would look like. The kind of second-person recognition which was essential to the chapter on “self-consciousness” is thereby for these actors sidelined, moved into being regarded “merely” as a natural biological feature of self-conscious life, or simply submerged from our notice. Thus, in the world that sees itself fully monologically, everybody claims to be working only out of their own singular interest concerning what really matters (“*die Sache selbst*”) and to be essentially unconcerned with what others think. Thus, it presents a semi-comical scene in which everybody keeps busily making loud public pronouncements, all while claiming that the public’s reaction to their pronouncements is fully irrelevant. Hegel speaks of this as a kind of dual self-deception and a deception of others. Such a view of course collapses under its own weight – that of affirming the essentiality of the other while insistently denying the essentiality of the other – and discloses that in fact what really matters, the real thing at stake, is *Geist* itself as “the *doing of each and all*, the essence that is the essence of all essence, that is *spiritual essence*.” He follows that with two highly compressed sections whose purpose is to argue on the basis of some curated examples that appeal to pure practical reason itself as if it were essentially independent of the “*doing of each and all*,” for its meaning is in fact empty. He has now set the stage for his new discussion.

Spirit

With that, Hegel makes the transition into a new and even longer chapter, titled “Spirit”, and his book becomes something different from what he had set out to do. No longer restricted to the “science of the experience of consciousness,” it is now fully the “phenomenology of spirit.”¹² The book

¹² It should be noted that not only are there interpretive difficulties in fixing what role exactly the next chapter, “Spirit,” is supposed to play: The different tables of contents that have appeared

had started out as an inquiry into what was the true essence behind appearance, that is, into what Kant had already dubbed the thing in itself. Under the pressure of its own developmental logic, the book had instead metamorphosed into a larger enterprise, asking what the being-in-itself (Hegel's successor concept to the thing in itself) of spirit itself really was.

In turning to spirit as the topic of a separate section, Hegel returns to the discussion of life that was briefly sketched in "Self-Consciousness" and then more fully developed in "Observing Reason." The items that fall under the concept of spirit *as* concepts are the statements of the ways in which that way of life can flourish (or, in Hegel's updated version of Aristotle's conception of Eudaimonia, "be satisfied"). Judgments about spirit are thus both fact-stating and evaluative as are all judgments about species and genera. Just as the magnolia tree flourishes only in certain environments and only in certain ways, self-conscious life flourishes only in certain contexts and certain ways. Stating the facts about magnolia trees is also stating the conditions under which they flourish and under which they do not. What is unique about spirit among all the life forms on the planet is for Hegel that it is aware of itself *as* a life form, and it thus measures itself by its concept and tries to adequate itself to that concept. That much he had argued in the chapters on "Self-Consciousness" and "Reason." However, now he takes that view further. In actualizing itself in terms of its concept, "spirit" sets itself up for changes in itself that it brings on itself as it shifts its concept of itself. Its concept of itself is not an ideal against which it measures itself but a statement of its true form, to which it tries to shape itself, and in its true form, spirit stands in a unity of I/You relations and I/We relations. If spirit were to shape the real flesh-and-blood lives of individuals into their true form, they would become what they really were: free and equal, united in friendship in the personal sphere and justice in the wider social and political sphere. Spirit as it is in itself would be equal and adequate to spirit as it appeared. If spirit does in fact require the kind of actual and not merely hypothetical recognition for which he had argued in "Self-Consciousness," then the inquiry into the essence of spirit would have to turn to real history, not hypothetical accounts of how this might have happened.

So, Hegel argued, the existence of something that could be genuinely called "true spirit" was in fact the case for a brief period in the development of the ancient Greek shape of life, in which free and equal men (but

in different editions only complicate it. Is the original book only three sections – consciousness, self-consciousness, science? Or is "Reason" a separate chapter or a newly added subsection of self-consciousness? If "Reason" is "C," then it is a new and separate section. If it is "(AA)," then it is a subsection of "B: Self-Consciousness."

notably not slaves and not women) met each other *as* free and equal in the polis, and the overall social order embodied the second-person virtue of justice. The Greeks knew what they were doing, so their self-certainty matched up with the truth of their lives. Unfortunately, that very shape of true spirit carried a deep contradiction within itself. It produced reflective individuals driven to an ideal of glory that turned out to be incompatible with the intensely communal shape of life that sustained it. Famously, Hegel turned to Sophocles' tragedy *Antigone* to show how the Greeks themselves came to an awareness of this contradiction. In the play, Antigone, the daughter of Oedipus, is faced with the fact that as a Greek, she has an unconditional ethical requirement to perform certain burial rites on her brother, who has died in battle with another brother over who had the right to claim the rulership of the realm. She also had an unconditional ethical requirement as a Greek and as a young woman to obey the orders coming from her uncle Creon – who had taken over the city after the brothers' death – not to perform those rites. Moreover, she had in addition an equally unconditional ethical requirement not to take it upon herself to decide what her unconditional requirements were. Thus, whatever she did was unconditionally wrong. Still, out of her own desire for glory, which also seems to have been forced on her and which was supposed to be outside of the feminine domain, she buries her brother and accepts her fate and her punishment. Hegel's analysis of Antigone has been both praised and disputed, and his portrait of Antigone has been the object of much feminist interpretation. For Hegel, Antigone is the foreshadowing of the kind of self-conscious individuality that the Greek world created and which undid the Greek world that created it.

The Greeks as a form of true spirit could not hold themselves together, and they fell into submission to the Roman Empire, which Hegel treats in just a few, overly condensed paragraphs in the *Phenomenology*. The result of the Greek denouement and the Roman takeover followed by its own spectacular downfall is the topic of a new section, "Spirit Alienated from Itself," in which Hegel argues that in light of the Greek and Roman failure, European life took its concept to be more narrow than it had in "true spirit." It comes to think that the essence of self-consciousness is not to find itself essentially in any particular social order at all but to be only an individual point of view on the world that has to accommodate itself to the external facts of life. It cannot ever fully inhabit that life, and so living a self-conscious life becomes a matter for it of standing back and judging whether it can reflectively identify with its given world since spirit alienated from itself can never be immediately at one with it as the Greeks had

been. In alienated spirit, self-certainty and truth separate again. The concept of self-conscious life as simply a point of view on the world does not imply any determinate conduct or virtue. Whatever standards there are come from outside of what it is to be a self-conscious, living human.

If the world of “true spirit” was dyadic – embodying the ways in which friendship and justice expressed the essentially relational structure of self-conscious lives in a community with each other – that of self-alienated spirit was essentially monadic, expressing the mediated relation of self to others via something like a system of rules. In the world of self-alienated spirit, justice becomes a matter of social rules and not the virtue of justice it had been for the Greeks.

In a series of different historically arranged sections, Hegel traces out the way in which self-alienated spirit is compelled to empty itself further. It progresses through the conflicted struggles of aristocrats versus the commoners of early modern Europe, who find at the end of the struggle that they have turned out to be the same as each other while vehemently asserting their differences. As a result, the aristocratic and high bourgeois world, in gradually comprehending its own emptiness, comprehended even more the vanity of its own vanity, and it thereby undermined what slim authority remained to it. In light of that comprehension of the vanity of its own vanity, the progress of self-alienated spirit moved into the stages of the European Enlightenment, where the alienated self comes to believe that in the application of its own special powers of insight (based on “observing reason” and its logical cousins), it could see through the mere semblances of the world all the way to its core, and trusts that it and it alone can drill deeply into the real essence behind the appearing world. The Enlightenment finds itself at odds with the movements of emotionalist religions that formed its contemporaries and its enemies, who thought that armed only with the power and purity of their own hearts, they and they alone could peer into the true and divine essence of the appearing world. Even if the Enlightenment always ends up winning the argument (which is to be expected, since the emotionalist religions disdain all argument), both were still playing by something like the same rules: monologically conceived, monadically structured, certain of their own powers to peer beyond the veils of appearance.

Self-alienated spirit culminates at first in the full alienation of spirit that sees itself as really only a point of view on the world and sees the facts of the world as putting no real normative constraints on itself. It thereby comes to think that self-conscious life alone determines the rules of the game it plays, and it thinks of itself thereby as absolute freedom. Hegel

contentiously interpreted the transition in the French Revolution from its constitutionalist beginning to the Jacobin Terror as the logical result of this self-imposed exemption from any normative constraint except those which it brought on itself. Bounded only by itself, it thus found itself outfitted only with the principle of utility at best to constrain it, and, through the use of the guillotine, it proceeded rationally and calmly and under the pretense of judicial thoroughness to eliminate all those deemed a threat to itself.

The chaos and meaninglessness of the deaths left in its wake led this phase of self-alienated spirit's development to push for some kind of brake, some set of ends that would provide firm limits to the progress of such self-destructive collective self-determination, and it found that in the German philosophy of Kant and his successors. (This is not merely wishful thinking on Hegel's part. Various key figures in the revolutionary government after the fall of Robespierre did indeed for a short while turn to Kant for something like that.) The idea of "morality" as a system of rules dictated by the very structure of practical reason itself looked like it was itself fashioned, as it were, to provide the theoretical structure for the modern life that the French Revolution brought about in practice.

However, the Kantian insistence that moral action should always be done out of the motive not of personal happiness but out of duty, coupled with Kant's equal insistence that we could also not be expected to renounce our happiness and become moral drudges, led to a series of conceptual knots that "morality" on its own seemed unable to untie. In particular, so Hegel rather contentiously argued, it led to a kind of moralistic dissembling about what one's real motives are, and the postulation of all kinds of extraneous matters to make the otherwise self-contradictory moralistic system work. Inevitably, such a monological point of view leads – so Hegel equally contentiously argues – to a kind of ethics of conviction, where it is always ultimately the individual's own judgment call as to what his or her conscience requires, and the monadic and monological conception of self-conscious life inevitably point in the direction of an ever-more contracted sense of subjectivity and what it really implies.

The end-point of that logic is the Romantic version of an older idea of "beautiful souls," those whose inward purity and rigor contrasts sharply with the messiness of the world around it. Rather than being the high point of post-revolutionary life, however, the arrival of the beautiful soul on the scene signals its complete breakdown. An inner life so radically cut off from others might think of itself as indeed beautiful and pure, but ultimately there is nothing to it, and, left to itself, its initial glow quickly dies like a

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burning ember, it fades out like a bell rung only once, and finally evaporates into thin air. It is alone, friendless, and without justice.

In his staging of the breakdown of the “beautiful soul” as a way of living, Hegel imagines a confrontation between two beautiful souls, with each accusing the other of hypocrisy (of not really being in reality so pure) and even of radical evil, since it accuses the other of putting self-love in place of the moral law. One of them comes to understand this about both of them, and he confesses, avowing his own radical evil, but the other, stiff-necked and rigoristic, refuses to conciliate. That is an impossible position, Hegel says, and such a stance either consumes itself in its own self-absorption, or eventually its own isolated life is too much to bear, its hard heart breaks, and the two reconcile. With that, the purely monological, monadic form collapses, and the I/You dyadic form is recaptured. Intriguingly, Hegel then asserts that in such a two-in-one of forgiveness and reconciliation, God actually appears in their midst.

Religion

That launches Hegel into the penultimate chapter, titled “Religion.” When Hegel first began thinking about a possible system of philosophy, he thought that religion would in fact have to be the end-point since the finale of such a system is a full comprehension of infinity itself, and at his early stage of philosophical development, he thought that infinity simply escaped all attempts at conceptualizing it and had to be left to a kind of religious intuition, a position he was never comfortable to inhabit. He radically changed his mind by the time he got to writing the *Phenomenology*, where he came to the notorious and difficult to interpret Hegelian claim that ultimately the claims of conceptual thought trump the more representationalist imaginings of religion. Religion can only go so far and must cede way (in some sense) to philosophy.

Hegel takes religion to be one of the most basic ways in which self-conscious life tries to make sense of things and in doing so to make sense of itself. It is in religion that the infinite is first grasped incompletely as some kind of supersensible essence, as the real truth behind the semblances of the phenomenal world. As religion progressively develops, this conception undermines itself and is replaced by a more sophisticated religious comprehension and practice. The Hegelian “phenomenology” of religion takes it to progress from a kind of Zoroastrian “religion of light” – where light is taken as the perfect symbolic representation of what infinity would, as it were, look like – to religions that represent the supersensible as some kind

of life itself (as abstracted plants or animals) and in its final, fully symbolic form up to something like ancient Egyptian religion, where the abstracted animal forms and human forms are combined.

Out of that type of natural religion comes the ancient Greek religion with its representations of the gods of Olympus as having an almost fully human form. The crucial thing about Greek religion was its being the religion of “true spirit,” which meant that in it, beauty was considered to be at one with truth. The beautiful Greek gods were the truth of what we mortals in our daily activities are really doing. This idea in turn leads Hegel into a discussion of the nature of Greek sculpture, epic, tragedy, and comedy, which form the outlines of his later much more elaborated and nuanced lectures on the philosophy of art in Berlin in the 1820s. Alas, that will have to be left aside in this short overview.

Greek religion fades out as Greek life fades out. It was essentially an aesthetic solution to a set of real problems, and as the real problems mounted up, it was clear that another merely aesthetic solution to the real problems would be inadequate. It was into that conceptual space that the “revealed religion” (i.e. Christianity) stepped. Nonetheless, it was with Greek religion that the “essence” that was supposedly behind appearance turned out not to be an inert substance but an activity of gods, a subject. In Greek portrayal, that is, the gods were not conceived as a supersensible substance. They instead take on human form, and in Christianity, the divine takes on human form directly and not just in aesthetic imagination. Hegel supplies a long discussion of how early Christianity first gave itself something like a Neoplatonic interpretation of itself, but this self-interpretation was transformed in the workings of the Christian religious community into a kind of communal second-person address, with the members of the community addressing each other as members of the religious community, united as fellow communicants and not united only monadically by a set of rules. This community establishes a universal self-consciousness, an I that is a We, and a We that is an I out of the communal ties that are at basis second-personal. The “appearing God” mentioned at the end of the section on beautiful souls turns out to be the God of Christianity. God is present among us as *Geist*.

But what does that mean? Hegel’s thoughts on religion were in his day the most divisive of all his views. He was interpreted by those who knew him and those who followed him as lying somewhere on the line between pure atheism and orthodox Lutheran Christianity. That divisiveness among Hegel scholars continues today, and it is no place for an introduction to settle that issue. Here, the reader is on his or her own.

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The conclusion of the book, “Absolute Knowing,” draws the conclusions from the preceding. It seems that even with this religious denouement, we still end up speaking of *Geist* in mutually exclusive ways, or, that is, in “infinite judgments,” that is to say, that judgments have an unconditional and not merely conditional content. In paragraph 794 of the *Phenomenology*, he announces, somewhat symphonically, the conclusion of the book:

The unification of both aspects [of the mutually exclusive judgments] has not yet been shown; that unification wraps up this series of shapes of spirit, for in it spirit arrives at the point where it knows itself not only as it is *in itself*, or according to its absolute *content*, and not only as it is *for itself* according to its contentless form, or according to the aspect of self-consciousness. Rather, it knows itself as it is *in and for itself*.

That is, at that point in the book, in terms of content, it knows what it is to be a self-conscious life, which involves having the form of self-consciousness in all our activities. What had been an inquiry into the essence behind appearance has turned out as a “phenomenology” to show that *Geist* is in fact not the hidden essence behind appearance but actually is its series of appearances as it has shape-shifted itself in its history up to this point. A phenomenology itself thus turns out to be a way of examining the contingencies of *Geist*’s appearances in history with an account of how its concept of itself has so shaped itself that in having completed this inquiry, it is now in a position to know that its self-certainty (its knowledge of what it is doing) is equal to its truth (what it is really doing). Knowing that, Hegel concludes, it is now ready for another kind of philosophical work, which involves producing the “system” that Hegel worked out in lectures and publications in Berlin.

Hegel concludes the book with a cryptic reference to *Geist* ascending to its own Golgotha and then taking up a position on a throne. He ends with some misquoted lines from a poem by Friedrich Schiller. But why end with lines from a poem? Why lines from this particular poem? And is the misquotation deliberate or intentional? These are matters Hegel himself never explicitly cleared up, and they continue to inform the various conflicting interpretations the book has received.

CONCLUSION

There is, of course, much more to Hegel’s *Phenomenology* than a synopsis of its most general set of conclusions can provide. Generations of readers have discovered in its intricate set of chapters inspiration which has set

them off in many different directions, and there is no reason to doubt that the book will continue to inspire as well as perplex its readership for some time yet to come. Hegel's book is rich in details and almost none of them are extraneous, and it is those details which are, alas, exactly the kind of thing that an introductory overview of the contents necessarily has to leave out. Even more unfortunately, their omission throws into question whether the overview can really provide a genuine view. But perhaps that is no reason to worry. The book's own brilliance, apart from the translation here, will surely inspire the kind of readership that will one day also come to see this very synopsis as itself deficient in novel ways or maybe even seriously misleading. Wherever you are and whoever you are when you are reading this introduction, keep in mind that there has been a lot of water under the bridge since it was written and since Hegel wrote the book. Be encouraged by that. I also hope this encourages people to turn to the book to help firm up their own thoughts about where "spirit" as self-conscious life is going. To be sure, all the readings and interpretations of the work will be contentious, but really good books of philosophy always provoke that kind of reaction. A work that celebrates dialectic would hardly be expected to do anything different.

Translator's Note

Although Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is undoubtedly a canonical work and deserves the high reputation in the history of philosophy which it has always had, even Hegel's staunchest admirers have to admit that it is not, at least on a first reading, a clearly written book. Indeed, even those who defend what one philosopher has called its "ferocious idiom," surely must acknowledge that whatever other virtues that idiom possesses, its initial density is almost unrivaled.¹³ In translating such a densely written book, the translator (especially if he is otherwise favorably disposed to the book's contents) is thus always under the temptation to make the author more easy-going in the translation than he was in the original. However, in the case of the *Phenomenology*, giving in to the temptation to make Hegel's text more easy-going inevitably means that more of the translator's interpretation of the text will be introduced than is otherwise desirable. To be sure, all translations are interpretations of a sort, but that is still no excuse to transform the normal amount of interpretive give and take into a license of sorts to make the book mean what the translator wishes it meant. Like many of Hegel's other translators, I too have often been tempted to take Hegel by the hand and tell him that, no, this is the way he *should* have said it. I hope that in all instances I will have resisted that temptation. Now I, like others, have my own interpretation of this book, but I hope that the current translation will make it easy for all the others who differ on crucial interpretive matters to be able to use this text to point out where they differ and why they differ without the translation itself making it unnecessarily more difficult for them to make their case.

One of the suppositions I have used in undertaking the translation is that Hegel is serious about his terminology, and that his claims to make philosophy into a "science" (a *Wissenschaft*, the systematic pursuit of knowledge)

¹³ Robert Brandom, "Freedom and Constraint by Norms," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (1979).

are fleshed out in his choice of terms. A reader of the original German sees certain phrases and key terms appear regularly on the page; that often indicates that there is something like an argument or at least a line of thought that is being developed or that comparisons between this stage of the narration and some other stage are being suggested. As far as possible, the English reader should be able to do the same thing and make up his or her own mind about whether there really is a distinct line of thought being put on display or whether Hegel is switching meanings or whether something else altogether is going on.

For example, there is Hegel's usage of "*an sich*" and "*für sich*" ("in itself" and "for itself"). The term, "*an sich*," is of course best known to anglophone philosophers in Kant's use of it in the term, "*Ding an sich*," the "thing in itself."

"*Für sich*," on the other hand, has an ordinary German usage where it often means something like "on its own" or "apart from," or even "on its own account." Jean-Paul Sartre also famously picked up the Hegelian terms "in itself" and "for itself" to use in his own ontology of subjectivity and freedom in *Being and Nothingness*, and, although his use of those terms could be said to be very generally "Hegelian," he also gave those Hegelian terms a life outside of their more restricted purely Hegelian context. His usage should not be confused with Hegel's own use of those terms. Hegel usually uses "*für sich*" in a fairly technical sense to call attention to a type of self-relation, especially the kind that human agents have to themselves; but sometimes he uses it in its more ordinary sense (and sometimes in both senses at once), and he is almost always playing on both senses even when he employs it in his more technical usage. As I see it, the job of the Hegel-translator is not to resolve the interpretive issues about what Hegel meant by, for example, "*für sich*," but only to make Hegel's somewhat technical terms apparent to the reader and, within the idea of keeping the flow of the original text intact, to let the reader do as much of the interpreting as possible. Unfortunately, in the case of "*für sich*," the obvious connections between "on its own" and "for itself" cannot be made entirely clearly in the English; thus, I have rendered "*für sich*" as "for-itself" in almost all cases. However, where I have switched the translation to its more colloquial sense of "on its own," I have indicated this in a footnote. For "*an sich*," earlier translators toyed with "inherent" or "implicit" as a translation, and "explicit" as a translation of "*für sich*." Many interpreters, though (myself included) think the distinction between "in itself" and "for itself" does not map well at all into that between "implicit" and "explicit." By leaving "*an sich*" and "*für sich*" literally as "in itself" and "for itself," this translation invites the reader to decide

for him or herself whether “explicit,” for example, is the best way to render Hegel’s use of “für sich.” Another, more colloquial way of rendering “an sich” would be “on its own” (which is roughly how Kant’s *Ding an sich* is to be taken: the thing on its own apart from the conditions under which we can experience it). If one took that route, then the distinction between “für sich” (on its own) and “an sich” (on its own) would be rendered invisible. Yet another more vernacular meaning of “an sich” would be the term “as such.” (One can easily see that although one might make a case for rendering “*Ansichsein*” as “being as such” and “*Fürsichsein*” as “being on its own,” neither of those two ways of talking would make Hegel’s thought any more perspicuous.)

Keeping Hegel’s terminology visible also means that I have to be relatively rigorous in distinguishing Hegel’s uses of “an sich” from “in sich,” although both could be equally well rendered as “in itself.” To do so, I have often translated “in sich” as “within itself.” However, since neither that distinction between “in” and “within,” nor the distinction between “for itself” and “in itself” are parts of ordinary English conversation (except perhaps among dyed-in-the-wool Hegelians and Sartreans), this makes the text a bit less colloquial than one might otherwise like it to be, but it makes Hegel’s line of thought, I hope, a little more easy to pick out.

Likewise, in many cases, I have chosen to translate Hegel’s deliberately odd German into deliberately odd English in order to preserve the sense of the text; Hegel sometimes speaks of things like “*das Ansichseiende*” (“the existing in-itself”), instead of “that which exists in itself” or “what exists in-itself.” To bring out Hegel’s intent, I sometimes also use the idiom of “the in-itself,” which sounds just about as odd in English as it does in German. Hegel also uses “*an ihm selbst*” and “*an ihr selbst*,” which themselves could both be rendered as “in itself.” This is again a matter of interpretation, but since Hegel sometimes uses both “an sich” and “an ihm selbst” in the same sentence, I take it that he wants us to keep those separate, as I think they are. I have therefore consistently rendered “*an ihm selbst*” and “*an ihr selbst*” as “in its own self.” Readers can decide for themselves how much of a difference they think there is.

For a number of Hegel’s other usages, especially his use of “*aufheben*,” there simply is no good single-word translation. “*Aufheben*” is an ordinary German word used by Hegel in a technical way, and it has no single counterpart in English; to translate the word differently in each context in which it is used would make it impossible for the English reader to be able to make out how that term figures in the ongoing argument; or it would involve an impossibly large set of footnotes. As Hegel himself notes in some other

works, the German term carries two senses in different contexts, namely, “to cancel” (as in canceling one’s insurance policy) and to save or preserve (as in “save a place for me”). Hegel tells his German readers that he intends to use the word in both senses, although in the context in which he usually employs the term, he most often clearly means “cancel” or “negate,” whereas in other cases he clearly means something more like “preserve.”

To render “*aufheben*” into English, Hegel’s translators in the nineteenth century opted to revive an older term in English, “sublate,” which for all practical purposes had died out of English usage by the middle of the nineteenth century. Starting its semantic life in English (having been imported from the Latin) in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it meant “to remove” or “to take away,” and it came to be used in discussions of logic, such that even an authority like Sir William Hamilton used it in the mid-nineteenth century in his writings on logic and knowledge to mean “negate.” When Hegel’s first translators adopted the older term to translate Hegel’s use of “*aufheben*,” they simply stipulated that it was intended to carry both of its German meanings. Although many have suspected that their motives for using this term were a little suspect (one cannot avoid the suspicion that they thought it was supposed to indicate just how esoterically profound Hegel really was), it has nonetheless stuck, and there is no other very good alternative. The most obvious alternative is that of “supersede,” but that avoids the idea of “preserving”; and in many contexts, it is in fact misleading. One way of understanding Hegel’s usage here is to think of “sublation” as figuring in the kind of philosophical conversation in which one might say to an interlocutor, “Your claim, X, is, as you have phrased it, not right; but if we reformulate it as, say, X*, we can preserve the main point of your idea without having to buy into all of its problems.” This is a typical move in a philosophical argument, and it is roughly equivalent to saying, “We take your point and deny it, but because there is something to it, we preserve it in a changed format in our ongoing discussion.” There is no single word in English to capture that sense, and since there is no ideal way of translating “*aufheben*” in any reasonably short way, I have decided to stick with “sublate” in the text and let the reader use his or her own best judgment as to what other term might in that context be substituted (that is, whether in this or that context, Hegel *simply* means “negate,” or whether in this or that context he *only* means “preserve” or whether he consistently means both at once).

There is also a third sense of “*aufheben*,” where it means to “raise up,” and many interpreters of Hegel have thought that this simply also had to be at work in Hegel’s usage. That may well be, but Hegel himself only speaks

of there being two meanings of the word, even if he does not deny that there are more than he points out. Whether the third meaning, “to raise up,” is also at work is something the reader will have to decide for him or herself as they run across the various occurrences of “sublate” in the text.

Likewise, Hegel uses “*Wesen*” to mean both “essence” and sometimes in its more ordinary sense of “creature,” or “being.” No single word is going to translate that term perfectly. I have opted to leave it at “essence” in some cases where “being” would be arguably as good a translation, and I have indicated in footnotes where although the German term is “*Wesen*,” I have rendered it as “creature” or “being” instead of “essence.”

A key Hegelian concept is the German term, *Bildung*, which means education, culture, having a mind of one's own, a skill in judgment; and it also carries the sense that this is the result of a type of formation of character, the result of an educative formative activity. This is a key term in Hegel, since the whole book can be interpreted (and has been) as a study of the *Bildung* of consciousness. I often render it as “cultural formation,” which is not ideal and which represents a compromise with all the different senses packed into the German term. Where I render it otherwise, I note the original in a footnote.

Hegel uses “*Ruhe*” and its cognates to mean not just “peaceful,” or “calm,” but to contrast it with movement, *Bewegung*. As any reader of Hegel knows, there is something that is always in “movement” in the *Phenomenology* and something at rest. Even though it is somewhat awkward, I have tried to use versions of “at rest” for all those uses of “*Ruhe*” and its cognates, in order for the reader to see where there is a contrast being drawn between “movement” and being “at rest.” Sometimes, I even render “*ruhende*” as “motionless.” (Some think it is only the “concepts” or “thought” that are moving; others think it is things themselves that are in motion. Again, the purpose of a translator is not to resolve that issue.)

One of the ongoing difficulties over which Hegel interpreters like to argue is how to translate Hegel's use of “*Wirklichkeit*” and its cognates. The term is ordinary German for “reality,” but if one renders it as “reality,” then one runs into two obvious difficulties: First, one would then have no good way of distinguishing Hegel's use of *Wirklichkeit*/reality from his use of *Realität*/reality; second, Hegel uses “*Wirklichkeit*” in a technical sense that plays on its supposed etymology from “*wirken*,” to have an effect, and he uses it in a way that is supposed to bring to mind what is usually rendered in English as “actuality” when translating Aristotle or Aquinas. What is actual, one might say, is what is *at work* in reality, a sense captured nicely by Jean Hyppolite's decision to translate “*Wirklichkeit*” in French as

"*effectivité*." I have nonetheless rendered it here as "actual" and "actuality" in order to keep that link to Aristotelian thought (and to previous translations of Hegel), even though in many places the more ordinary "real," "reality," and the like would make the text flow better. That decision unfortunately also means that I have to resort to the rather clumsy "non-actual" to render "*unwirklich*" rather than the more easy-going, "unreal." In all cases, however, where "actual" and "actuality" appear in the text, the reader might ask him or herself whether "real" wouldn't be better there, as long as one keeps in mind the extra meaning of "effectivity."

There is also the obvious problem of rendering "*Erkennen*" and "*Wissen*," both of which mean (in English) "knowledge" (or "knowing"). This is one example where I have chosen not always to mark the different occurrences of "*Wissen*" and its cognates and "*Erkennen*" and its cognates by different terms. I have always rendered "*Wissen*" (and its cognates) as "knowledge" or as "knowing," and so on; and when "*Erkennen*," "*Erkenntnis*," and their cognates occur, I generally translate it as "cognition," "cognizing," and so on.

The term "*Entäußerung*" and its cognates, require special mention. This was the term that Luther used for his translation of *Kenosis*, the act of God "humbling" himself (as the King James translators had it) or of "emptying" himself (as some more modern translators have rendered it), so that, for Christians, God became flesh.¹⁴ In choosing to use *Entäußerung*, Hegel is likely assuming his readers' knowledge of Luther's translation of the Bible. Rather than use "objectify," "externalize," "realize," or "alienate" (three popular translations of that term), I have opted for the more theologically evocative, "relinquishing." In more ordinary German, *Entäußerung* means "to renounce," "to divest," or "to give up." One reason for doing this is so that the other uses of "renounce" in the text (where it translates, for example, "*verzichten*") are kept separate from the occurrences of the more theologically freighted, "*Entäußerung*." There are of course disputes about just how much Hegel meant for this term to be used in its religious sense at all; the translator's goal cannot be to settle that dispute but only to make it

¹⁴ See Philippians 2:6–8 for the passage. In Luther's 1545 Bible, it goes: "*welcher, ob er wohl in göttlicher Gestalt war, hielt er's nicht für einen Raub, Gott gleich sein, (7) sondern entäußerte sich selbst und nahm Knechtsgestalt an, ward gleich wie ein anderer Mensch und an Gebärden als ein Mensch erfunden; (8) er erniedrigte sich selbst und ward gehorsam bis zum Tode, ja zum Tode am Kreuz.*" The King James Version goes: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: **But made himself of no reputation**, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: / 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Some other German translations since Hegel's time use *verzichten*, or "relinquishment," for the translation of *Entäußerung*. Hegel himself uses *verzichten* in other contexts in the *Phenomenology*.)

as clear as possible where the term occurs, what its background associations are, and to let the readers decide for themselves.

Hegel's use of the ordinary German term, "*Sittlichkeit*," which could easily be rendered as "morals" or "morality" (as Kant's translators usually render Kant's use of the same term) presents another conundrum. If one renders it "morality," then one has no way of making the Hegelian distinction between *Sittlichkeit* and *Moralität* (morality). In other places, Hegel explicitly says that *Sittlichkeit* and *Moralität* basically mean the same thing in ordinary German, but he is insisting on using them in different senses to mark what for him is a crucial conceptual distinction. The term, "*Sittlichkeit*," draws heavily on the term, "*Sitte*," which can be rendered as the "mores" of a time, and that might suggest that one adopt a new usage in English, "moresness." The inadvisability of that choice speaks for itself. Instead, I have chosen the now established term of art, "ethical life," which has been used by other translators of Hegel as a rendering of "*Sittlichkeit*."

There is another issue all too familiar to interpreters of Hegel: How to translate "*Vorstellung*"? The term colloquially means "idea," and in some contexts it even means something like "imagine." It makes its appearance in German Idealism in Kant's use of it, where Norman Kemp Smith rendered it in his translation of the first *Critique* as "representation" (following Kant's own Latin rendition of it as "*repraesentatio*"). However, whereas in the first *Critique* Kant claimed that there were two types of "representations," namely, intuitions and concepts, Hegel typically contrasts "representation" (*Vorstellung*) with "concept" (*Begriff*). Moreover, in his practical philosophy, when Kant talks about freedom consisting of acting in terms of our *conception* (or *idea*) of law, he typically uses "*Vorstellung*" for the word that English readers are familiar with in that context as "idea" or "conception." I have tended to render it as "representation" and in many cases as "representational thought" where I think Hegel is trying to contrast "representational thinking" with "conceptual thinking." I also think that it makes Hegel's text flow more easily (although "flowing easily" is clearly a relative term when applied to any part of the *Phenomenology*). In a very few places I have rendered it as "imagine," but since I think that this might be a matter of possible dispute, I have always indicated where I have done that in a footnote. Likewise, I have on the whole rendered "*Anschauung*" as "intuition" to keep the similarities and differences between Hegel's use of this word and, to anglophone readers, Kant's use of the word (where Kant uses it to distinguish that type of "representation" from that of "concepts").

To keep the relation to the Kantian vocabulary, I have also translated "*der Verstand*" as "the understanding," the classic translation of what Kant

regarded as one of the basic faculties of the mind. In many ways, “intellect” (or maybe even “ordinary understanding”) would be a better rendering of this phrase, and I have occasionally used that and indicated in a footnote that it translates “*Verstand*.”

A related problem has to do with Hegel’s use of “*Bewußtsein*” (“consciousness”). Much hinges on the distinctions he makes between “consciousness,” “self-consciousness,” and “spirit.” But when he uses very ordinary German terms such as “zum Bewußtsein kommen”, or “mit Bewußtsein,” which would ordinarily simply be translated as “aware of” or “consciously”, he is often trying to make a point about what is going on in light of those distinctions. I have therefore often translated those phrases more literally than they would otherwise be rendered as “coming to consciousness” and “with consciousness.” That makes the text a bit more awkward than it would otherwise be, but it at least lets the reader note those types of occurrences.

There is also the problem of “*In-sich-gehen*” and “*In-sich-sein*”: Hegel makes frequent use of these terms near the end of the book. I have rendered “*in-sich-gehen*” as “taking-the-inward-turn” instead of the more literal and wooden “going-into-oneself” or “going-into-the-self.” However, even if one likes that as a solution, it raises another problem: What to do with “*In-sich-sein*”? To keep the link between the two, I have rendered it as “inwardly-turned-being.” I realize that this sounds a bit odd, but then so does “*In-sich-sein*.” It also makes more perspicuous the distinction between “*an sich*” and “*in sich*” as that between “in itself” and “within itself.”

Likewise, one of Hegel’s key terms is that of consciousness or self-consciousness being “*bei sich*.” The term carries lots of different connotations, but I have rendered it as “being at one with oneself.” The term is crucial since in other works, Hegel goes so far as to claim that freedom itself consists in being “*bei sich* in an other.” I have usually indicated its presence in a footnote.

There is also the matter of translating “*die Sache selbst*.” Every writer on Hegel in English has his or her own idea about how to render this, and they all disagree, sometimes vehemently, with each other. There simply is no single English word, nor, for that matter, a single phrase which adequately translates the German term with all the nuances that Hegel plays with (especially in the chapter, “The Spiritual Kingdom of Animals”). Some of the renderings run from “the thing that matters,” “the point of it all,” “the heart of the matter,” “the crux of the matter,” to simply “what is at stake,” “the Thing itself.” It could probably be rendered slightly more accurately as “the nitty-gritty”, but that is not perfect and it is far too

colloquial to serve in this context. Almost all the proposed translations also obscure the obvious relations in the text between a mere “*Sache*” (a “thing,” or “fact”) and “*die Sache selbst*” (the “thing itself”), and they also obscure the distinction and connection between two German terms, a “*Sache*” (as a “thing”) and a “*Ding*” (as a more “thingy” thing). For all that matter, perhaps “thing” in the sense of hipster sixties lingo (as in, “Do your own thing”) might work, but it too is not only far from perfect, it is just simply out of place here. Eduard Gans, a law professor, Hegelian, and close friend of Hegel said that the term, “*Sache*,” means both a thing outside of oneself and “the substantial essence.”¹⁵ Since there is no simple English translation of the term, “*Sache selbst*,” the “crux of the matter” will have to do.

In the case of a few words that no longer appear in most contemporary German dictionaries (such as “*Selbstwesen*”), I consulted the older nineteenth-century Grimms’ *Deutsches Wörterbuch* for a meaning. I have noted those occurrences in the footnotes.

I have decided to keep the independent paragraph numbering that was introduced by A. V. Miller in his translation. There is no such numbering system (or anything like it) in the original German text, but the system has proven itself to be useful for marking the place in the text for class discussions and for reference, and thus I have retained it. Unfortunately, Miller added and subtracted paragraphs in his English version that were not there in the German edition, so my numbering scheme, which follows the paragraph markings of the critical edition in German, is slightly different from the older Miller translation.

The pagination in margins refers to the text of the *Gesammelte Werke* by page number. For the translation, I used the 1807 edition of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* and checked it against the critical edition published by Felix Meiner Verlag in 1999 as volume two in their six-volume critical edition of Hegel’s works. That is page-for-page identical with the critical edition edited by Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Reinhard Heede in Hegel’s *Gesammelte Werke*, also published by Felix Meiner. I also consulted the Jubilee edition of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* edited by Hermann Glockner as volume two of that series (1927). I consulted the past translations in English, and I consulted Jean Hyppolite’s translation into French (along with the newer one in French by Gwendoline Jarczyk and Pierre-Jean Labarrière).

¹⁵ Eduard Gans, *Naturrecht und Universalrechtsgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), 58.