

Part Five **Hegel on the Historicity of Normativity**

Lecture 15

Epochs of *Geist*:
Traditional Normativity as Immediate *Sittlichkeit*I. Epochs of *Geist*

Philosophers such as Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Hume, and Kant helped give theoretical shape to new attitudes toward the nature and significance of subjectivity that can, in retrospect, be seen to be characteristically *modern*. But Hegel was the first major philosopher to take the advent of modernity as an explicit theoretical *topic*.¹ Indeed, as the chapter on *Spirit* makes clear, in an important sense that is *the* topic of the *Phenomenology*. The principal aim of the book is to articulate, work out, and apply a way of understanding the transition from premodern to modern social practices, institutions, selves, and their immanent forms of understanding. “Geist” is Hegel’s collective term for everything that has a *history* rather than a *nature*—or, put otherwise, everything whose nature is essentially historical. *Geist* is all of our properties, doings, and institutions, specified in a suitable *normative* vocabulary. *Geist* as a whole has a history, and it is Hegel’s view that, in an important sense, that history boils down to one grand event. That event—the *only* thing that has ever really happened to *Geist*—is its structural transformation from a traditional to a modern form.² The advent of modernity in this sense is not just an intellectual matter—not just the Enlightenment or the scientific revolution. Hegel was the first to see its economic, political, and social manifestations as all of a piece with those theoretical advances.

Hegel offers us a vocabulary in which to understand that titanic transformation, and the new kind of selfhood it brings with it. For coming to understand the transition to modernity is the

¹ Robert Pippin has argued this at length in *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

² This is an oversimplification. In many places Hegel attributes more gross structure to history. For instance, in the *Philosophy of Right* (§§353–360) he identifies *four* stages in world history, putting the Oriental before the Greek, and interposing the Roman between the Greek and the modern (Nordic or German). I think there is a point to his practice in the *Phenomenology* of ignoring the first and treating the Roman as part of the extended transition to modernity.

achievement of a distinctive kind of self-consciousness: historical self-consciousness. *Geistig*, normative beings are to be understood in terms of their becoming: their present in terms of their past, their states and normative statuses in terms of the processes that produced them. By reading the *Phenomenology* we are to become *self-consciously* modern, conscious of ourselves *as* the products of an unprecedented revolution in human institutions and consciousness.

The ultimate point of this theoretical, historical, recollective enterprise is practical, prospective, and progressive. For rational reconstruction of the process of self-formation so as to exhibit it as expressively progressive is for Hegel the engine of self-development. Achieving an explicit historical understanding of the genesis of one's current stage is how one moves to the next stage.

The history of *Geist* is its own act. *Geist* is only what it does, and its act is to make itself the object of its own consciousness. In history its act is to gain consciousness of itself as *Geist*, to apprehend itself in its interpretation of itself to itself. This apprehension is its being and its principle, and the completion of apprehension at one stage is at the same time the rejection of that stage and its transition to a higher. To use abstract phraseology, the *Geist* apprehending this apprehension anew, or in other words returning to itself again out of its rejection of this lower stage of apprehension, is the *Geist* of the stage higher than that on which it stood in its earlier apprehension. [*PR* §343]

Hegel's claim is that making explicit what is implicit in the vast sea change *Geist* has undergone in becoming modern shows that the same normative forces that brought forth that change make appropriate and necessary another one, no less sweeping and significant than the first. Properly understood, modernity becomes visible as a way station rather than a destination. It constitutes only the middle, interim phase of a *three*-stage process. Hegel is the prophet of a second large-scale structural transformation of *Geist*, of its passage beyond modernity into a radically new form: a new beginning, the birth of a new world. The principal positive practical lesson of Hegel's analysis of the nature of modernity, the fruit of his understanding of the One Great Event in human history, is that if we properly digest the achievements and failures of modernity, we can build on them new, better kinds of institutions, practices, and self-conscious selves—ones

that are normatively superior because they embody a greater self-consciousness, a deeper understanding of the kind of being we are.

Hegel understands modernity in terms of the rise of self-conscious subjectivity of the kind his philosophical predecessors had theorized about. His social cognitive theory of self-consciousness—of the intersubjective structure of subjectivity—means that he understands the achievement of that new sort of subjectivity as part of a more wide-ranging process than the earlier modern philosophers had considered, one that necessarily encompasses also fundamental transformations of social practices and institutions. But his thought nonetheless self-consciously develops the modern philosophical tradition stretching from Descartes to Kant. At the core of the distinctively modern attitude toward subjectivity to which they gave explicit philosophical expression, Hegel sees a genuine insight. He takes it that modernity is the theoretical and practical elaboration of a *better* understanding of some fundamental aspects of the rational (because conceptually articulated) norm-governed activity in virtue of which we are the kind of creatures we are. So the first big question about the *Spirit* chapter of the *Phenomenology* is how we should understand that crucial, orienting insight of modernity:

Question One: What exactly is it that traditional forms of life got wrong about us that modern forms of life get right? What have we gained? What is it that we have learned and incorporated into our practices and institutions that makes us *modern* selves? What is the “rise of subjectivity”?

Hegel accepts Kant’s trope in “What Is Enlightenment?”: the transition to modernity is the passage of humanity from the “self-imposed tutelage” of its childhood into the grappling with responsibility that is its adolescence. But he is concerned to envisage the maturity that lies beyond that adolescence. He generates these three stages conceptually by construing them as different combinations of two basic elements. While Hegel does think that the transition from traditional to modern culture was expressively progressive—that it essentially involves the becoming explicit of central features of ourselves and our practices and institutions that had previously remained implicit—he does not think that that progress was either complete or unalloyed. Something crucial and important was also lost. His term for what traditional

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communities had that modern ones do not is “*Sittlichkeit*” (from *Sitte*: mores, ethos). (Miller translates “*Sittlichkeit*” as “ethical life,” but for our purposes it is best left untranslated, to underline that it is a term of art in substantial need of interpretation.) The absence or opposite of *Sittlichkeit* is *alienation* (“*Entfremdung*”). Hegel is a romantic rationalist, who aims to synthesize Enlightenment cheerleading for modernity and Romantic critiques of it. Alienation is the master-concept articulating what Hegel thinks is right about those critiques. It is because the rise of modern subjectivity can be seen to have been accompanied by alienation that the possibility of a future third stage in the progressive development of Spirit—an advance beyond the modern—becomes visible. That notional third stage would preserve the modern appreciation of the significance of subjectivity, while reachieving *Sittlichkeit*.

So the picture is like this:

Stage One: *Sittlichkeit*, no modern subjectivity;

Stage Two: Alienation, modern subjectivity;

Stage Three: *Sittlichkeit* (in a new form, compatible with subjectivity), modern subjectivity (in a new, *sittlich* form).

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As he is writing the *Phenomenology*, Hegel sees *Geist* as beginning to consolidate itself at Stage Two. The book is intended to make possible for its readers the postmodern form of self-consciousness Hegel calls “Absolute Knowing,” and thereby to begin to usher in Stage Three. The new form of explicit philosophical self-consciousness is only the beginning of the process, because new practices and institutions will also be required to overcome the structural alienation of modern life.

These schematic presentations of the developmental stages of *Geist* indicate that the further large questions about *Spirit* that must be addressed are the following:

Question Two: What is premodern *Sittlichkeit*?

Question Three: What is modern alienation?

Question Four: Why did the advent of modern subjectivity bring with it alienation—that is, why did these two structures arise together?

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What is *Sittlichkeit*? I have suggested that “alienated” just means “not *sittlich*.” In contemporary usage, the term “alienation” is usually applied to psychological attitudes of individuals. Though this usage derives from Hegel’s, it is extremely misleading to read it back into his view. Attitudes are indeed part of what is at issue for him, but *Sittlichkeit* and (so) alienation are in the first instance metaphysical structures of normativity—structures of the whole, *Geist*, which comprises communities and their practices and institutions, as well as individuals and their actions and attitudes. *Sittlichkeit* is a kind of normativity. Attitudes are not all of it, and the attitudes that matter are *normative* attitudes, rather than psychological ones.

To begin with, we can think of the normativity in question in very general terms of proprieties or appropriatenesses, of the “fittingness” of things, of what is or is done being right or proper, being as it ought to be. This is a notion of normative status that is so far undifferentiated into ought-to-bes and ought-to-dos, which we saw in the previous chapter to be distinguished and related in intricate and important ways in Hegel’s theory of action. *Sittlichkeit* is then a matter of the *bindingness* (“Gültigkeit”) of norms. That is, it concerns the nature of their *force* or practical significance. The Hegelian image is that one is *at home* with *sittlich* norms, one *identifies with* them. They are the medium in which one lives and moves and has one’s being. Ultimately, this is a matter of them being a medium of *self-expression*—understood as *constitutive* self-expression. That is the practice of making explicit what can then recollectively be seen to have been implicit. It is the process of subjectivity: *self-formation* by *self-expression*.

Sittlichkeit is a matter of the kind of *authority* that *norms* (normative statuses) have over normative *attitudes*. The attitudes in question are *practical* attitudes: taking or treating something *as* appropriate, fitting, or correct, as obligatory or permitted—that is, as having some normative status—in individual, institutional, or communal practice. They are practical attitudes toward *normative* statuses: what *is* rather than what is *taken to be* correct or appropriate, what *has* authority (what one *is* responsible to), as opposed to what is merely *treated as* authoritative (what one takes oneself to be responsible to). In this sense, *Sittlichkeit* is the authority of normative *statuses* over normative *attitudes*.

The norm-governedness of attitudes has two components: deontic normative and alethic modal. Norms (normative statuses, such as what one is really responsible for) provide standards for assessments of the correctness of attitudes. One ought to attribute and acknowledge just the commitments one actually has. The other element of normative government of attitudes by norms is that attitudes are to be subjunctively sensitive to the norms that govern them, in the sense that if the norm *were* (or *had been*) different, the attitudes *would be* (or *would have been*) different. So another important element of the authority-structure that is *Sittlichkeit* is that *sittlich* norms are and are taken to be actually efficacious. Their normative bindingness or authority over attitudes is actually and practically acknowledged. What is appropriate according to a practice (a normative status or norm) makes a real difference in what is actually done (the attitudes and performances of practitioners). Participants in a *sittlich* practice *acknowledge* and *act on* their acknowledgments of proprieties, responsibilities, commitments, and authority.

For *Sittlichkeit* is not just a matter of actually doing what one ought to do—in fact conforming to the governing norms. *Sittlichkeit* requires that practitioners identify with the norms that govern their practices. Hegelian identification is risk and sacrifice. One identifies with what one is willing to sacrifice for. *Sittlich* identification is accordingly willingness to risk and sacrifice for the norms, for what is really fitting, appropriate, or correct, for what one is in fact obliged or committed to do. What is it that is risked and sacrificed for the norms? It is the particular, contingent, subjective practical *attitudes* of practitioners. *Sittlichkeit* requires a particular kind of acknowledgment of the authority of the norms over the normative attitudes of practitioners: the willingness to sacrifice (and take it that others ought to sacrifice) attitudes and inclinations that are out of step with the norms. That is identifying with the norms. It is identifying with the norms, *rather than* one's own particular subjective attitudes—what one eternally risks and occasionally sacrifices *for* the norms. The participants in *sittlich* practices accordingly identify with something larger and more encompassing than just their own individual attitudes. They identify with the norms implicit in the practices they share.

The process of identifying with some *attitudes* at the expense of other attitudes is not restricted to *sittlich Geist*. It necessarily characterizes *all* concept use. For the adjudication of the claims of competing, because incompatible, commitments is the process of experience, in which

determinate conceptual contents are both applied and instituted. But at the metalevel, that process can show up practically in two different forms. It can be a matter of the acknowledgment of the authority of *norms*—what really follows from and is incompatible with what, what one is actually obliged or committed to do—over *attitudes*. Or it can be a matter *merely* of the collision of *attitudes*, where the norms the attitudes are attitudes *toward* are demoted to something like adverbial modifications of the attitudes. The former is a *sittlich*, the latter an alienated structure. Only attitudes, not genuine norms, are visible in alienated *Geist*.

To understand this requires looking more closely at what Hegel says about premodern *Sittlichkeit* and modern alienation. The ultimate goal of this diagnostic exercise, though, is a therapeutic one: to point the way forward from modernity to a future shape of *Geist* characterized by individually self-conscious *Sittlichkeit*. That third stage of the development of norm-governed social substance is to be the result of *retaining* the insight into the authority of subjectivity and the attitudes and activities of individual subjects, while overcoming alienation. Overcoming alienation would be *reachieving* *Sittlichkeit*. But *Sittlichkeit* requires identifying with the norms understood as transcending individual attitudes.

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II. Immediate *Sittlichkeit*

Hegel's term for the normative structure of premodern Spirit is "*immediate* [unmittelbare] *Sittlichkeit*." In keeping with the general procedure in the *Phenomenology*, his treatment of the topic is allegorical. This time—by contrast, for instance, to his discussion of the death struggle for mastery in *Self-Consciousness*—he explicitly reads the allegory for us himself. The allegory is the version of ancient Greek society portrayed in Sophocles's *Antigone*. At the end of his discussion, Hegel sums up the overall point of the allegory this way:

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This ruin of the ethical [sittlichen] Substance and its passage into another form is thus determined by the fact that the ethical consciousness is directed on to the law in a way that is essentially immediate. This determination of immediacy means that Nature as such enters into the ethical act, the reality of which simply reveals the contradiction and

the germ of destruction inherent in the beautiful harmony and tranquil equilibrium of the ethical Spirit itself. [PG 476]

The “ruin” is the breakup of a premodern structure of normativity (“law”). It is the manifestation of the instability of practices that identify the *normative* with the *natural*. The practical view in question is one that looks for norms in the way things simply are, independently of any human activity. The fittingnesses of things—how things ought to be and what one ought to do—are thought of as objective, natural facts. This is the constitutive misunderstanding of the normative characteristic of *immediate Sittlichkeit*. The norms with which practitioners identify are thought of as brutally given facts about how things are. “What observation knew as a given object in which the self had no part, is here a given custom [Sitte].” [PG 461] The mediation that is denied by this practical conception of norms as *immediate* is mediation by the *attitudes* of those who are bound by them.

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Talking about this sensibility elsewhere in the book, Hegel says of the laws that they appear to immediate *Sittlichkeit* as

unalienated spirits transparent to themselves, stainless celestial figures that preserve in all their differences the undefiled innocence and harmony of their essential nature. The relationship of self-consciousness to them is equally simple and clear. They are, and nothing more; this is what constitutes the awareness of its relationship to them. [PG 437]

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Thus, Sophocles’ Antigone acknowledges them as the unwritten and infallible law of the gods.

They are not of yesterday or today, but everlasting, / Though where they came from, none of us can tell.

They are. If I inquire after their origin and confine them to the point whence they arose, then I have transcended them; for now it is I who am the universal, and they are the conditioned and limited. If they are supposed to be validated by my insight, then I have already denied their unshakeable, intrinsic being, and regard them as something which, for me, is perhaps true, but also is perhaps not true. Ethical disposition consists just in

sticking steadfastly to what is right, and abstaining from all attempts to move or shake it, or derive it. [PG 437]³

Sittlich consciousness's relation to the norms is one of passive acknowledgment of their bindingness: obedience, and shame and guilt for disobedience (attributed and acknowledged, respectively). This subjection of subjective attitudes to objective norms is sacrifice of what is particular to what is universal, hence identification with that universal. This is "immediate . . . ethical consciousness which knows its duty and does it, and is bound up with it as its own nature." [PG 597]

What is wrong with the distinctively premodern metaphysics of normativity, which treats norms as a kind of fact, whose *authority* (*rational* authority, in the sense of settling what has the force of a *reason*) is *immediate*, in deriving from their simple *existence*, independently of human practices, attitudes, acknowledgment, or interpretation? *We* can see that the mistake lies in implicitly modeling the *normative products* of social practices of *recognition* on the *natural objects* of *cognition*. But how does this mistake show up practically for the practitioners themselves, for the members of communities whose norms are practically construed as objective and immediately *sittlich*? What is "the contradiction and the germ of destruction inherent in the beautiful harmony and tranquil equilibrium of the ethical Spirit itself"? The answer is clearest if we think about what Hegel takes to be the correct metaphysics of normativity. On the side of the *force* of norms, normative bindingness or validity is intelligible only in the context of a recognitive community, in which the attitudes of recognizing and being recognized, claiming authority and undertaking responsibility oneself and attributing those statuses to others, play an essential role. On the side of *content*, norms are intelligible as determinately contentful only in virtue of their being caught up in practices of adjudicating the competing claims of materially

³ The Antigone passage is from lines 454–457, *Sophocles I* [University of Chicago Press, 1954], David Grene, Elizabeth Wycoff, which Elizabeth Wycoff renders as

the gods' unwritten and unfailing laws.
Not now, nor yesterday's, they always live,
and no one knows their origin in time.

Hegel mentions this passage again in PR 144H in the third paragraph of his introduction to *Sittlichkeit*: "Antigone proclaims that no-one knows where the laws come from: they are eternal. That is, their determination has being in and for itself and issues from the nature of the thing [Sache]."

incompatible commitments and entitlements. By denying these basic features of its own implicit norms, immediate *Sittlichkeit* condemns itself to practical self-contradiction.

To begin with, the “beautiful harmony and tranquil equilibrium of the ethical Spirit” is a recognitive achievement. It is a reflection of a community—the *polis*—instituted, maintained, and structured by *mutual*, reciprocal recognition.⁴ (Of course, there are also asymmetrical recognitive relations in play, literally between masters and slaves, but they are orthogonal to the ones that matter for the allegorical point Hegel is after in this discussion.) That recognitive structure involves two normative poles of potentially competing authority: the universal, or recognitive community, and the particulars whose recognitive attitudes institute it. Individuals—that is, particulars *as* falling under the universal, as members of the recognitive community—both exercise authority and acknowledge the authority of others, both undertake and attribute responsibilities. Practically reifying and objectifying normative proprieties as natural properties *presupposes* a preestablished “harmony and equilibrium” among them, because any conflicts there were among them would be irresolvable by individuals. But formal reciprocity of recognition does not *guarantee* and cannot *establish* such a system of norms. For the determinate contentfulness of conceptual (reason-articulating) norms depends on incorporating matter-of-factual contingency in the form of normative necessity: acknowledging the authority of particulars over universals, as well as the converse. Friction, individuals finding themselves subject to the competing demands of materially incompatible norms, is both the price of determinateness of normative content and an inevitable consequence of “the distinction that action (and consciousness) involve.”

In the *polis* Hegel describes, the reciprocally recognizing particulars who institute the community are not individual humans, but *families*. The *polis* and the family are accordingly the two normative centers from which potentially conflicting demands can issue, addressed to the self-conscious individual agents who must actualize the norms by applying them in particular, contingent circumstances. The family is in one sense a natural, hence immediate, biological unit,

⁴ Does Hegel think that all premodern societies are characterized by reciprocal recognition? Not at all—as his remarks elsewhere about traditional Indian and Chinese societies show. Thus at the end of the *Philosophy of Right* he puts “Oriental world-historical realm,” which “originates in the natural whole of patriarchal society,” as a stage more primitive than the epoch epitomized by the Greeks. But he *does* seem to think that the sort of incompatible norms whose practical obtrusiveness triggers the transition to modernity arise only in this sort of recognitive context.

held together by bonds of sexual desire and reproduction.⁵ But as a *normative* locus, it, too, is a *recognitive* community—albeit one with asymmetrical relations, at least between parents and children, and traditionally, also between the husband and wife.

However, although the Family is immediately determined as an ethical being, it is within itself an ethical entity only so far as it is not the natural relationship of its members . . . this natural relationship is just as much a spiritual one, and it is only as a spiritual entity that it is ethical. . . . [T]he ethical principle must be placed in the relation of the individual member of the Family to the whole Family as the Substance. [PG 452]

Sophocles' *Antigone* is the perfect allegory for Hegel to use to exhibit “the little rift within the lute / That bye and bye shall make the music mute / And, ever-widening, slowly silence all,” in premodern (immediate) *Sittlichkeit*, because its conflict turns on the collision of the *recognitive* demands of family and *polis*. The dispute is over the recognitive status of an individual who belongs to both communities, who has rights and owes duties to both normative institutions.

In the allegory, the concrete, practical bearer of recognitive significance—the practical attitude-expressing performance constitutive of community membership—is the act of *burial*. It is a paradigm of how the acts and attitudes of individuals *do* matter for normative statuses, which must go beyond what is merely found in nature. For this sort of recognitive performance *gives* a normative significance to a natural occurrence. The normative status is *conferred*, not just *found*. The significance of burial is to turn something that otherwise merely *happens* into something *done*.

Death . . . is a state which has been reached immediately, in the course of Nature, not the result of an action consciously done. The duty of the member of a Family is on that account to add this aspect, in order that the individual's ultimate being, too, shall not belong solely to Nature and remain something irrational, but shall be something done, and the right of consciousness be asserted in it. [PG 452]

Burial constitutively recognizes someone as not merely a dead animal, but as a member of the community—a member with a particular status: a *dead* member of the community, an honored

⁵ “A *natural* ethical community—this is the Family.” [PG 450]

ancestor. “Even the departed spirit is present in his blood-relationship, in the self of the family.” [PG 486] The family “interrupts the work of Nature,” it

keeps away from the dead this dishonouring of him by unconscious appetites and abstract entities, and puts its own action in their place. . . . The Family thereby makes him a member of a community which prevails over and holds under control the forces of particular material elements and the lower forms of life, which sought to unloose themselves against him and to destroy him. [PG 452]

Burial “makes him a member of a community”; it is recognition.

It is this recognitive deed that is at issue between Creon and Antigone. The laws of the *polis* demand that her brother not be acknowledged as anything more than a dead animal, and the laws of the family demand that recognition. The normative institutions actualizing the two recognitive moments of the community (universal and particular) clash over the propriety of adopting a recognitive attitude, of performing a recognitive deed. Because it is individuals who must act, these conflicting demands fall on individuals representing the two institutional recognitive moments. Because the norms in question are immediately *sittlich*, the two figures identify themselves with (are willing to sacrifice for) one set of those norms—one issuing in a demand not to recognize by burial, the other in a demand for such normative constitution. The immediacy of the *sittlich* norms means that this conflict cannot be avoided, adjudicated, or resolved.

Because, on the one hand, the ethical order essentially consists in this immediate firmness of decision, and for that reason there is for consciousness essentially only one law, while, on the other hand, the ethical powers are real and effective in the self of consciousness, these powers acquire the significance of excluding and opposing one another. . . . The ethical consciousness, because it is decisively for one of the two powers, is essentially character; it does not accept that both have the same essential nature. For this reason, the opposition between them appears as an unfortunate collision of duty merely with a reality which possesses no rights of its own. . . . Since it sees right only on one side and wrong on the other, that consciousness which belongs to the divine law sees in the other side only the violence of human caprice, while that which holds to

human law sees in the other only the self-will and disobedience of the individual who insists on being his own authority. [PG 466]

Neither of the *sittlich* *characters*—avatars decisively identifying with and acting for one institutional aspect of the normative community⁶—is subject to conflicting demands. But the audience sees the structural conflict of incompatible laws. And we see that the contradiction or collision between the family and the polis stands for a collision between the authority of the recognizing parties (particulars) and the recognitive community (universal), respectively. These are not merely contingent normative institutions, but necessary and essential structural dimensions of the recognitive context in which any norms can be discerned.

Antigone and Creon identify with and speak for different aspects of the recognitive community. Neither distinguishes between the attitudes they evince and express and the norms they identify with. Neither takes her- or himself to be *settling* what is right. Each is only practically *acknowledging* what is objectively right, independently of those attitudes. The other's stubborn refusal to acknowledge what is objectively right cannot be seen by them as a *normative* attitude at all. The other's attitude shows up rather as the expression of merely subjective, contingent particularity. The intransigence of the dispute is thus a consequence of the *immediacy* of the *sittlich* practical attitudes: treating norms as objective matters of fact, whose normative force owes nothing to the attitudes of those who are by their nature bound by those norms.

The immediacy that is the fatal structural flaw in premodern *Sittlichkeit* is a running together of the normative and the natural. On the one hand, this means that normative proprieties are treated as natural properties: as simply there, part of the furniture of the world, independently of the human practices they govern. On the other hand, it means that merely natural properties are treated as having intrinsic normative significance. To say that the normative significance of some natural properties is "intrinsic" is to deny that it is in any way attitude-dependent. The paradigm to which Hegel appeals to make this point is the way natural differences of biological gender are taken objectively to determine fundamental normative roles. Specifically, which

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⁶ "[C]haracter . . . that ethical consciousness . . . which, on account of its immediacy, is a specifically determined Spirit, belongs only to one of the ethical essentialities." [PG 597]

recognitive aspect of the community one decisively is identified with, and hence what *sittlich* character one is (not “has”) is taken to be settled by nature.

Women are the agents of the private family, men of the public political community.

[T]he two sexes overcome their [merely] natural being and appear in their ethical significance, as diverse beings who share between them the two distinctions belonging to the ethical substance. These two universal beings of the ethical world have, therefore, their specific individuality in naturally distinct self-consciousnesses, because the ethical Spirit is the immediate unity of the substance with self-consciousness—an immediacy which appears, therefore, both from the side of reality and of difference, as the existence of a natural difference. . . . It is now the specific antithesis of the two sexes whose natural existence acquires at the same time the significance of their ethical determination. [PG 459]

The problem is not that natural distinctions are *given* or taken to have normative significances, but that they are understood as already *having* those significances independently of the practices or attitudes of those for whom they are normatively significant. “Nature, not the accident of circumstances or choice, assigns one sex to one law, the other to the other law.” [PG 465] These defining normative roles are accordingly not practically conceived as roles individuals can play, but simply as facts about them.

This is fetishizing the natural: seeing normative phenomena as merely natural ones, independent of the attitudes of those bound by the norms. There is accordingly a structural conflict built into “the beautiful harmony and tranquil equilibrium” of immediately *sittlich* Spirit. Commitment to different “laws” is understood as given as part of the nature of individuals, assigned by biological gender.

Human law in its universal existence is the community, in its activity in general is the manhood of the community, in its real and effective activity is the government. It is, moves, and maintains itself by consuming and absorbing into itself . . . the separation into independent families presided over by womankind. . . . But the Family is, at the

same time, in general its element, the individual consciousness the basis of its general activity. Since the community only gets an existence through its interference with the happiness of the Family, and by dissolving [individual] self-consciousness into the universal, it creates for itself in what it suppresses and what is at the same time essential to it an internal enemy—womankind in general. Womankind—the everlasting irony [in the life] of the community. [PG 475]

Hegel thinks that traditional society is distinguished by a one-sided objectivism about norms: taking it that natural distinctions immediately and intrinsically have normative significances. The decisive move to modernity will be acknowledging the significance of normative *attitudes* and *practices* in instituting norms and normative statuses. (The need to pass on beyond the modern arises because the initial form this insight takes is a one-sided subjectivism about norms.) The paradigm example he chooses to exemplify this claim about traditional misunderstandings of the significance of natural properties for normative proprieties is gender essentialism. In emphasizing that the core of modernity consists in a rejection and overcoming of the most basic presuppositions of this constellation of practical attitudes, Hegel deserves a place in the feminist pantheon.

The most basic structural conflict that Hegel's allegorical reading of *Antigone* uncovers, however, is not that between its protagonists, or what they represent—not between two laws, between *polis* and family, or between men and women. Those are real conflicts. But the more fundamental clash is at a higher level: between the *immediacy* of the construal of norms and the *constitutive* character of the recognition that is at issue between the two sides. It is the tension between the implicit understanding of normativity as immediate—as wholly natural and objective, independent of human practices and attitudes—on the one hand, and an equally implicit grasp of the significance of actual recognitive attitudes, performances, and practices for the institution of normative statuses, on the other. In the allegory, what Creon and Antigone are fighting about is officially understood by both to be a matter of objective fact, of how it is right and proper to treat the dead Polyneices, something that it is up to the various parties simply to *acknowledge*. But the stakes are so high—identification with the recognitive law of the family up to the point of sacrificing biological life, for Antigone—because both sides implicitly acknowledge that recognition-by-burial *confers* the normative status in question. If Polyneices

remains unburied, he will *be* nothing but a dead animal, whereas burying him, even in secret, “*makes* him a member of the community,” as Hegel says in the passage quoted earlier.

The wrong which can be inflicted on an individual in the ethical realm is simply this, that something merely happens to him . . . the consciousness of [those who share] the blood of the individual repair this wrong in such a way that what has simply happened becomes rather a work deliberately done. [PG 462]

In recognition through burial, the family substitutes its action for the merely natural occurrence that is biological death. The family *gives* that natural event a normative significance, *takes* responsibility for it, *exercises* its recognitive authority. It thereby gives contingency the form of necessity—that is, a normative form. That constitutive recognitive act is not intelligible as the immediate acknowledgment of how things already objectively are. The attitude-dependence of normative statuses is implicitly being acknowledged.

The *polis* and the family *are* recognitive communities. *Sittlich* substance (Spirit) *is* synthesized by reciprocal recognition. Making explicit the commitments that are implicit in *sittlich* practices requires giving up the practical understanding of *Sittlichkeit* as immediate. One cannot properly understand normative statuses such as commitment, responsibility, authority, and correctness apart from their relation to normative attitudes: recognizing others by *taking* or *treating* them *as* committed, responsible, authoritative, as acting correctly or incorrectly. That practical realization is the motor of modernity.

[S]elf-consciousness . . . learns through its own act the contradiction of those powers into which the substance divided itself and their mutual downfall, as well as the contradiction between its knowledge of the ethical character of its action, and what is in its own proper nature ethical, and thus finds its own downfall. In point of fact, however, the ethical substance has developed through this process into actual self-consciousness; in other words, this particular self has become the actuality of what it is in essence; but precisely in this development the ethical order has been destroyed. [PG 445]

Hegel is here talking about an expressively progressive transformation of Spirit: one that reveals something that was all along implicitly true. The claim is not that this transformation was inevitable. It is “necessary” only in the sense that it is necessary *if* what we are implicitly is to

become explicit to us. And the transformation need not be *total*. Some individuals and institutions may retain traditional practical conceptions of self, agency, and community, even while others take modern form. All of that is compatible with a decisive cognitive and practical breakthrough having been made.

III. The Rise of Subjectivity

In taking the advent of modernity as an explicit topic, Hegel inaugurated a discussion that would shape the whole of nineteenth-century thought, defining the founding issue of what was to become the new discipline of sociology, providing focal ideas that would be developed in the work of such figures as Marx, Durkheim, Tönnies, and Weber. The slogan for his construal of that transition that Hegel offers in the passage just quoted is “the development of ethical substance into actual self-consciousness.” Hegel understands modernity to begin with in terms of the rise of a new kind of individual, subjective self-consciousness. By contrast to the modern subject, in the

ethical realm . . . self-consciousness has not yet received its due as a particular individuality. There it has the value, on the one hand, merely of the universal will, and on the other, of consanguinity. This particular individual counts only as a shadowy unreality. [PG 464]

In a sense, individual agents are dissolved into the social institutions to which they are understood to be assigned by nature, and with which they decisively identify. The individual person is a mere reflection of his status, and can understand himself as an agent only in terms of the duty of actualizing those implicit, objective norms.⁷ The modern conception of an individual person as one who plays many roles and must make choices to adjudicate the many conflicts among them is not yet on the horizon.

The ethical Substance . . . preserved [its simple unitary] consciousness in an immediate unity with its essence. Essence has, therefore, the simple determinateness of mere being

⁷ F. H. Bradley summed up this view in the title of his essay “My Station and Its Duties,” in his book *Ethical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1876).

for consciousness, which is directed *immediately* upon it, and is the essence in the form of *custom* [Sitte]. Consciousness neither thinks of itself as this *particular exclusive self*, nor has substance the significance of an existence excluded from it, with which it would have to become united only by alienating itself from itself and at the same time producing the substance itself. [PG 484]

“Essence” [Wesen] here means the norms implicit in the customary practices of the traditional community (“substance”).

One point of contrast with the self-understanding of modern individual subjects is that immediately *sittlich* ones do not take themselves to be *producing* those institutions and their norms (“substance” and “essence”) by their own activities. Spiritual substance is “the in-itself of every self-consciousness.” So it is what is *found* as always already there, as “the unmoved solid ground and starting point for the action of all.” But a crucial part of the founding insight of modernity is that it is also *made* by the individual self-consciousnesses that are the form of Spirit as it is *for* itself:

This substance is equally the universal *work* produced by the action of all and each as their unity and identity, for it is the *being-for-self*, self, action. [PG 439]

Individuals in traditional society understand themselves as made by the norms they identify with by practically acknowledging the authority of those norms over particular attitudes and inclinations. But they treat the norms as found, rather than made. They do not see themselves as having any corresponding authority over the norms, which are treated just as part of the objectively given furniture of the world. They do not appreciate the contribution their own activity makes to instituting those norms. That appreciation—seeing “the trail of the human serpent over all,” in William James’s phrase—is distinctively modern.

Agency is what individuates, carving up the social substance into individual agents, as loci of responsibility. And it is in the practical conception of individual agency that we are to find the key to this historic sea change in the relations between acting subjects, the norms that lift them above the merely natural, and the practices and institutions in which those norms are implicit. In the traditional world as so far considered

[a]s yet, no deed has been committed; but the deed is the actual self. It disturbs the peaceful organization and movement of the ethical world. . . . It becomes the negative movement, or the eternal necessity, of a dreadful fate which engulfs in the abyss of its single nature divine and human law alike, as well as the two self-consciousnesses in which these powers have their existence—and for us passes over into the absolute being-for-self of the purely individual self-consciousness. [PG 464]

Of course, premodern individuals performed intentional actions and pursued private ends. What is the difference in their relations to their doings that Hegel is referring to in these apocalyptic terms? It is a shift in the practical conception of the “distinction that action involves”—the distinction between what is in the broad sense done by the agent and what is more narrowly intended. This is the distinction between *Tat* (deed) and *Handlung*, and between *Absicht* and *Vorsatz*. We have seen that Hegel understands the premodern self as an expansive self, in that agents are characters, immediately identifying with the recognitive communities to which nature has assigned them, sacrificing their particular attitudes and inclinations for the norms implicit in their practices and institutions. “Ethical consciousness . . . is the simple, pure direction of activity towards the essentiality of ethical life, i.e. duty.” [PG 465] But the traditional self is construed as an expansive self along another dimension as well. The premodern practical conception of agency is *heroic*, in that agents identify with what they have done in the broader sense, not the narrower—with the *Tat*, rather than just the *Handlung*. They acknowledge responsibility for what they have done under *all* the descriptions that turn out to be true of it, not just the ones they intended or envisaged.

Thus Oedipus *is* a parricide; he has committed that crime, even though he did not know that the man he killed in anger was his father. He takes responsibility for that deed, and others attribute to him responsibility for it. That he did not intend the deed under this description, and did not know that that is what he was doing, in no way mitigates his guilt. He is responsible for the deed under *all* its specifications, the consequential as well as the intentional.

Guilt is not an indifferent, ambiguous affair, as if the deed as actually seen in the light of day could, or perhaps could not, be the action of the self, as if with the doing of it there

could be linked something external and accidental that did not belong to it, from which aspect, therefore, the action would be innocent. [PG 468]

That what the agent does—what he is responsible for—outruns what he intends or can know is what makes this heroic conception of agency also *tragic*. Tragedy is just the way the distinction that action involves appears in the context of the heroic acceptance of responsibility for the whole deed.

Ethical self-consciousness now learns from its deed the developed nature of what it *actually* did. . . . The resolve [Entschluß], however, is *in itself* the negative aspect which confronts the resolve with an “other,” something alien to the resolve which knows what it does. Actuality therefore holds concealed within it the other aspect which is alien to this knowledge, and does not reveal the whole truth about itself to consciousness: the son does not recognize his father in the man who has wronged him and whom he slays, nor his mother in the queen whom he makes his wife. In this way, a power which shuns the light of day ensnares the ethical consciousness, a power which breaks forth only after the deed is done, and seizes the doer in the act. For the accomplished deed is the removal of the antithesis between the knowing self and the actuality confronting it. [PG 469]

(Because the resolve “knows what it does,” it can be identified with the *Vorsatz*.) The tragic aspect of the heroic conception just is that one cannot know what one is doing, does not have the power to avoid crime and guilt, can know what one has made oneself responsible for only after the fact. In acting, one is exposing oneself to the forces of fate [Schicksal], over which the subject has no authority. “By the deed, therefore, it becomes guilt.” [PG 468]

Immediate *Sittlichkeit* has shown up under two aspects. It involves individuals identifying with the norms implicit in the practices and institutions of a recognitive community, in the sense of being willing to risk and sacrifice their particular, contingent attitudes and inclinations to the dictates of those norms. This is what Hegel calls “character.” Immediate *Sittlichkeit* also involves the heroic conception of agency. Individuals take responsibility for their deeds under every description: the unforeseen consequential ones as well as the acknowledged intentional ones. What is the connection between these two aspects of traditional *Geist*? The first concerns norms

in the form of ought-to-bes; the second norms in the form of ought-to-dos. And it is of the essence of this form of life that the connection between them is practically construed as being *immediate*. That is, what one ought to *do* is understood as settled directly by how things ought to *be*. It is one's *sittlich* obligation to *do* what must *be*. That *duty* is independent of one's knowledge of how to bring about that state of affairs. That one does not know how to bring it about that one does not kill one's father does not let one off the hook. Parricide ought not to be. It is accordingly one's obligation not to do anything correctly describable as father killing. The eruption of modernity begins when a gap emerges between these—when how things ought to be is not simply, directly, and immediately translatable into what one ought to do. The wedge that opens that gap is conditioning the connection on the attitudes of the subject—on what the agent knows and intends.

The essence of the modern is contained in what Hegel in the *Philosophy of Right* calls “the rights of intention and knowledge.” This is the right to have one's responsibility apportioned to one's authority—to be held responsible only for what one does *intentionally* and *knowingly*, only for that part of the *Tat* that is the *Handlung*. This right is the right of the individual consciousness. It always implicitly collided with the *sittlich* structure of norms:

Its absolute right is, therefore, that when it acts in accordance with ethical law, it shall find in this actualization nothing else but the fulfillment of this law itself, and the deed shall manifest only ethical action. . . .

The absolute right of the ethical consciousness is that the deed, the *shape* in which it *actualizes* itself, shall be nothing else than what it *knows*. [PG 467]

Explicitly acknowledging that right of individual consciousness is making the transition from the traditional heroic, and therefore tragic, practical conception of agency to the modern, subjective one. On the modern conception, the tragic structure of guilt and fate is seen as *unjust*.

Responsibility and authority must be reciprocal and coordinate. The two sides of the traditional conception of agency appear from this point of view to be out of balance. The heroic aspect is that one takes responsibility for the whole deed, the *Tat*. The tragic side is that one actually has authority only over what one intends and can foresee, the *Handlung*. The

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responsibility and the authority are not commensurate. Only individual self-consciousnesses can *apply* the norms in concrete situations, and so actualize them. The modern conception of agency accordingly treats subjectivity as sovereign, in that one's normative *status*, what one is committed to or responsible for, is determined by one's normative *attitudes*, what one *acknowledges* as a commitment or responsibility. The expansive heroic conception of agency is contracted. Responsibility extends only as far as the specifications under which the doing was intentional—the ones in virtue of which it was a doing at all—and not to all the consequential specifications. This is the rise of subjectivity.

On the side of normative force, Hegel sees the revolution of modernity as culminating in what I have called the “Kant-Rousseau criterion of demarcation of the normative.” This is the thought that what distinguishes constraint by norms from nonnormative constraint (for instance, by causes in nature or coercion by power) is that one is genuinely responsible only to what one *acknowledges as* authoritative. One's normative status as committed or obliged depends upon one's normative attitude of having undertaken or acknowledged that commitment or obligation (perhaps not explicitly, but at least implicitly). The Enlightenment theories of political obligation in terms of implicit social contracts that inspired Rousseau are only one expression of this conditioning of normative statuses on normative attitudes. Kant's distinguishing of the realm of nature from the realm of freedom—constraint by nature from constraint by norms—in terms of the contrast between being bound by rules or laws and being bound by *conceptions* of rules or laws already substantially generalizes the conception.

IV. Alienation and Culture

What I have been calling “the rise of subjectivity” is a new appreciation of the significance of normative attitudes—of undertaking and attributing commitments, acknowledging authority and responsibility. Alienation is not identifying with those normative statuses, not acknowledging the authority of norms over one's attitudes by being willing to sacrifice attitudes for norms. On the practical conception distinctive of alienation, what one gives up some attitudes for can be only other attitudes. The attitudes are not understood as answering to something that is not a subjective attitude. One question I asked at the outset is: “Why did the advent of modern

subjectivity bring with it alienation?" The answer is that where the immediate *Sittlichkeit* Hegel takes to characterize traditional society practically construes the implicit normative structure of its practices in a one-sidedly objective way, the alienation he takes to characterize modern society practically construes the implicit normative structure of its practices in a one-sidedly subjective way. First, subjective attitudes are understood as merely reflecting objective norms, and then norms are understood as merely reflecting subjective attitudes.

What makes both traditional and modern forms of normativity one-sided, and so ultimately inadequate, is in both cases the *immediacy* of their practical conceptions. More specifically, to use one of Hegel's favorite ways of putting the point, both understand normativity in terms of *independence*, rather than *freedom*. As I understand him, Hegel uses "independence" [Unabhängigkeit] in two different ways, depending on whether its contextual contrary is "dependence" or "freedom." In the first usage, what is independent exercises *authority* over what is dependent upon it, which is accordingly *responsible* to it. The second usage concerns a particular, defective, way of understanding those generic notions of independence and dependence, authority and responsibility. This is the conception allegorized as Mastery: *pure* independence, authority without correlative responsibility. It is an atomistic and immediate conception, by contrast to the holistic, mediated conception of freedom in which authority and responsibility, and status and attitude are practically understood in their necessary interrelations. This is the sense in which the narrative of recollection Hegel offers us is the "history of the progress of the consciousness of freedom."

Hegel introduces the sense of "independence" that contrasts with freedom under the heading of "Mastery." The allegorical Master's conception of authority is that it is incompatible with any and every sort of dependence, rather than being the converse of just some particular kind of dependence. The authority of the Master is to be recognized as immediate, independent of all relations to others. In particular, it is to be independent of the attitudes of those who recognize and are obliged to recognize him—those who acknowledge and are obliged to acknowledge that authority. So the Master construes recognition as necessarily asymmetrical. He cannot acknowledge the authority of those who recognize him, the dependence of his authority on their recognition of it, the sense in which he is responsible to others. The correct

understanding of normative statuses as instituted by reciprocal recognitive attitudes is the conception of freedom that contrasts with the Master's notion of pure independence. Like the corresponding conception of the Concept as infinite, this notion of freedom essentially involves moments of independence in the first sense: the reciprocal authority of recognized and recognizer.

The characteristically modern insight is that norms are not, as traditional forms of life implicitly took them to be, independent of the subjective normative attitudes of concept users. The dependence of norms on attitudes is a dimension of responsibility on the side of the norms or statuses, and of corresponding authority on the part of the attitudes. It is because that authority of attitudes over norms is construed on the model of independence-as-Mastery, *pure* independence, that the insight into the normative role of subjectivity shows up in its distinctively modern, *alienated*, form. For what is distinctive of the atomistic conception of authority that is epitomized by the Master is precisely that authority (independence) is construed as ruling out any correlative responsibility (dependence). It follows that if norms are dependent on attitudes, there can be no intelligible reciprocal dependence of attitudes on norms. Alienation is the structural denial that subjective attitudes are responsible to norms which, as authoritative count as independent of those attitudes. The claim is that traditional and modern practical understandings are alike in taking it that if norms exert authority over attitudes, then attitudes cannot exert authority over norms, and *vice versa*. Either norms are independent of attitudes and attitudes dependent on norms, or attitudes are independent of norms and norms are dependent on attitudes.

The most sophisticated theoretical form in which this defective sort of practical normative understanding is expressed is what Hegel calls "Verstand." He is recommending replacing that sort of understanding by one that has quite a different structure, what he calls "Vernunft." The holistic *Vernunft* conception is one in which dependence is always reciprocal, and always involves reciprocal independence. For X to be dependent on Y is for Y in that respect to be independent of X. But that relation is not only *compatible* with Y being dependent on X in another respect, in which X is accordingly independent of Y; it is *necessary* that there be such correlative dependence. The paradigm, as always, is the structure of reciprocal authority-and-responsibility by which self-conscious individual selves and their communities (universals) are

together synthesized by mutual recognition (by particular desiring organisms). That sort of reciprocal, mediating recognition is, of course, just what the Master's atomistic immediate asymmetrical conception of authority and responsibility rules out. That is the context that makes it seem that one must choose: either norms have authority over attitudes, or *vice versa*—but not both.

So the claim is first that when the *hyperobjectivity* about norms characteristic of immediate *Sittlichkeit* is shattered by a practical realization of the essential role played by the normative attitudes of individual subjects in instituting norms, the result is a complementary *hypersubjectivity*: alienation. And second, that what drives that pendulum from the one extreme to the other is failure to appreciate the mediated structure not only of reciprocal sense-dependence, but of reciprocal reference-dependence of the concepts of dependence and independence (that is, responsibility and authority). In short, it is retaining the *immediacy* of the conception of normativity that dictates that appreciating the dependence of norms on attitudes precludes retaining a *sittlich* appreciation of the dependence of attitudes on norms, and so entails alienation.

Hegel introduces his discussion of “Spirit alienated from itself” in terms of the concept of culture [Bildung].⁸ Cultivation or acculturation is the process by which we are transformed from merely natural into spiritual creatures, coming to be governed by norms and not just driven by desires. It is what makes self-conscious individuals out of merely particular organisms, by bringing them under universals—making them members of a community, subject to norms.

It is . . . through culture that the individual acquires standing [Gelten] and actuality. His true original nature and substance is the alienation of himself as Spirit from his natural being. This externalization is . . . at once the means, or the transition, both of the [mere] thought-form of substance into actuality, and, conversely, of the specific individuality into essentiality. This individuality moulds itself by culture into what it intrinsically [an sich] is . . . its actuality consists solely in the setting-aside of its natural self. . . . [I]t is

⁸ “Der sich entfremdete Geist,” from the title of chapter 6B. Alienation, like *Sittlichkeit*, is not a psychological attitude of individuals (though it can be reflected there), but a structure the whole of Spirit exhibits.

the contradiction of giving to what is particular an actuality which is immediately a universal. [PG 489]

Gelten is normative standing (etymologically related to Kant's "Gültigkeit," or validity). "Substance" is the community, and "essence" is the constellation of norms implicit in its practices and institutions. The acculturation of individuals is accordingly not only the process by which they pass into "essentiality"—become *geistig* beings, subject to norms. It is also the process by which those communal norms (the "thought-form of substance") are actualized in the attitudes of individuals who acknowledge them as binding.

What, in relation to the single individual, appears as his culture, is the essential moment of the substance itself, viz. the immediate passage of the [mere] thought-form of its universality into actuality; or, culture is the simple soul of the substance by means of which, what is implicit in the substance, acquires an acknowledged, real existence. The process in which the individuality moulds itself by culture is, therefore, at the same time the development of it as the universal, objective essence, i.e. the development of the actual world. [PG 490]

Not only does the culture make us; we make the culture. For the only actual existence the norms have is in the attitudes and activities of individuals who acknowledge them *as* norms. That is actualizing what otherwise is merely implicit. Norms are causally inert apart from the normative attitudes of those who acknowledge them.

What appears here as the power and authority of the individual exercised over the substance, which is thereby superseded, is the same thing as the actualization of the substance. For the power of the individual consists in conforming itself to that substance, i.e. in externalizing its own self and thus establishing itself as substance that has an objective existence. Its culture and its own actuality are, therefore, the actualization of the substance itself. [PG 490]

Alienation is the inability to bring together these two aspects of *Bildung*: that self-conscious individuals acknowledging the norms as binding in their practice is what makes those selves what they are, and that self-conscious individuals acknowledging the norms as binding is what makes the norms what they are. These are the authority of the community and its norms

over individuals (their dependence on it), and the authority of individuals over the community and its norms (its dependence on them), respectively. In the traditional structure, attitudes have no normative weight at all. They are not really in the picture because they are supposed to reflect only the norms. In the modern structure, both communal norms and individual attitudes are fully in play. Each claims a certain authority. For the rise of subjectivity is the realization that the communal norms whose acknowledgment makes us cultural, and not just natural creatures depend in turn on our attitudes and activities to actualize them. We readers of the *Phenomenology* are to come to see those claims as not only compatible but complementary—indeed, as each intelligible only in the context of the other. In alienated spiritual substance, however, the claims to authority of self-conscious individual attitudes and communal norms compete, both in practice and in theory. The opposition and competition between normative attitudes and normative statuses is the core of alienation. The challenge of modernity is to secure the binding force and determinate contentfulness of conceptual norms from the threat posed to them—in the context of practical construals of authority according to the implicit structure of Mastery and theoretical construals of authority according to the explicit categories of *Verstand*—by giving up the picture of those norms as something we simply find as part of the attitude-independent world and accepting the essential role our attitudes play in instituting them. How can the *responsibility* of subjective normative attitudes (what is acknowledged as correct) to normative statuses (what really is correct) be reconciled with the *authority* of subjective normative attitudes over normative statuses? Any social, institutional, or conceptual context that forces a choice between these is an alienated one.

The norms in question are *conceptually* contentful norms, in that their determinate contents settle what is incompatible with conforming to that norm and what would be a consequence of doing so. That means that the norms articulate *reasons*—reasons for applying concepts by judging and acting intentionally. So the issue Hegel is addressing under the heading of “alienation”—about practical conceptions of the relations between conceptual norms and normative attitudes—includes the relations between *reasons* and *causes*. Indeed, it encompasses the question of how to think about the relations between the *normative* and the *natural* orders more generally. *Naturalistic reductionism*, in the form of commitment to an explanatory framework that eliminates reference to norms entirely, in favor of attitudes, is a principal

expression of the alienation of the modern world. Hegel's account of the nature of the expressively progressive development he can envisage by which the modern alienated structure of self-conscious subjectivity and social substance can give rise to a new, better structure, which overcomes alienation, and so reaches *Sittlichkeit*, while retaining the advance in self-conscious subjectivity characteristic of modernity accordingly encompasses a nonreductive account of how we should understand the place of norms in the natural world.