

11/20/2013

Week 12

- Introduction: I am developing, as promised, a *semantic* reading of Hegel: a reading of the *Phenomenology* as a *semantic allegory*. But the semantics in question is to be (astonishingly) an *edifying semantics*. Edification here is a *practical, cognitive* and *cognitive* achievement: making oneself a *better person* by coming to *understand* something.
- 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. (40)
- So the claim is first that when the hyper-*objectivity* 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 hyper-*subjectivity*: alienation. And second, that what drives that pendulum from the one extreme to the other is failure to appreciate the mediated structure of reciprocal sense-dependence of the concepts of dependence and independence, that is, responsibility and authority. (41)
- What is constituted by Faith is a certain kind of self-conscious individuality. The cognitive account of self-consciousness tells us that this is possible only if a corresponding kind of **recognitive community** is instituted at the same time. The religious community is established by individuals' reciprocal recognition of each other as serving and worshipping, which is to say as identifying with the norms through sacrifice of merely particular, subjective attitudes and interests of the individuals they would otherwise be. **This cognitive relation Hegel calls 'trust' [Vertrauen].**

Whomsoever I **trust**, his certainty of himself is for me the certainty of myself; I recognize in him my own being-for-self, know that he acknowledges it and that it is for him purpose and essence. [PG 549] (84)

What trust brings about is the “unity of abstract essence and self-consciousness”, of the norms believing individuals identify with and those believers. That unity, Hegel claims, is the “the absolute Being of Faith,” that is, the distinctive *object* of religious belief.

The absolute Being of faith is essentially not the abstract essence that would exist beyond the consciousness of the believer; on the contrary, it is the spirit of the community, the unity of the abstract essence in self-consciousness. [PG 549]

On his view, the real object of religious veneration, Spirit, is not a God in the form of a distinct thing that causally creates human beings, but the religious community that believers create by their cognitive identification with it and

with each other. That, after all, is the lesson of his reading of the real lesson of the Christian Trinity: God the Father is the sensuously clothed image of the norm-governed community synthesized by reciprocal cognitive attitudes (having the structure of trust) among self-consciousness individuals. (86)

- Conclusion: Both Faith and Enlightenment have a cognitive, theoretical dimension, and a cognitive, practical dimension. Faith is wrong in its cognitive attitudes, misunderstanding its object and its relation to that object. But it succeeds with its cognitive practices, creating a community of trust. Enlightenment is right in its cognitive attitudes, correctly seeing that the normativity both are concerned with is not something independent of our attitudes and activities. But it fails on the cognitive, practical side. Because it creates a community with the reciprocal cognitive structure of trust, Faith acknowledges norms that can have some determinate content; they are contentful norms because a community like that can actually institute, sustain, and develop determinately contentful conceptual norms. But Enlightenment creates no such community. On the cognitive side, it sees that contentful norms cannot simply be read off of the way the world simply is, independently of the attitudes, activities, practices, and capacities of the creatures who are bound by them. Rationality is a human capacity. But Enlightenment is stuck with a purely formal notion of reason. It can criticize the contents Faith purports to find, but cannot on its own produce replacements. (90)

- When pure consciousness in the form of Enlightenment is the self-understanding of actual consciousness in the institutional form of State Power (the practical cognitive expression and actualization of a theoretical cognitive view), the result is the Terror, whose paradigm is the final bloodthirsty death-throes of the French Revolution. Absolute Terror is what happens when the authority of individual self-consciousness to institute norms is conceived and practiced as unconstrained—as a matter of independence without correlative dependence. (94)

Summary:

Faith and Enlightenment are each one-sided appreciations of the true nature of norms in relation to attitudes. **Faith** is on the right track on the practical cognitive dimension of self-consciousness, but has the wrong theoretical cognitive take on the side of consciousness. Faith is right in what it *does*: to give the norms determinate content by building a *community*. It builds a *community of trust*, which can *develop* and *sustain* determinately contentful norms. It is right to see that its relation to the norms should be one of *acknowledgement* and *service*. It is wrong to think that private conceptions and concerns must or can be totally sacrificed to make that possible. Faith is wrong to take over the traditional immediate conception of its relation to the norms: to ontologize, and in a sense naturalize them. It does not recognize itself in those norms. Neither its community, nor its individual activities are seen as *essential* or as *authoritative* with respect to those norms.

Enlightenment is right that the norms depend for both their force and their content on the attitudes and practices of the very individuals who become more than merely particular, natural beings by being acculturated, that is, by being constrained by those norms. It is wrong to think that all we contribute is the *form*. And it is wrong in the practical cognitive consequences of its insight into our authority over the norms. It is right in its criticism of Faith's metaphysics, but wrong to think that undercuts its form of life. On the cognitive side of constituting communities and self-conscious individuals, the contrast between the Terror and the community of trust could not be more stark. So what is needed is to combine the humanistic *metaphysics* of Enlightenment (with its cognitive emphasis on the contribution of the activity of individual self-consciousnesses) with the *community of trust* of Faith (with its practical emphasis on the contribution of the activity of individual self-consciousnesses through acknowledgement of, service to, and identification-through-sacrifice with the norms). (95-6)

Moralität und Gewissen

- **Enlightenment cannot understand the norms as both binding and contentful, and Faith cannot understand the role we play in instituting them: making them binding and contentful.** The task is to reconcile the sittlich acknowledgment of the authority of the norms with the modern acknowledgment of the authority of subjective attitudes. The explicit aspiration to do that, which is the bridge forward from modernity to a new epoch in the development of Spirit, Hegel calls “**Moralität**”. Kant is its prophet. (96)
- Morality ultimately reveals itself as a form of the contraction strategy for understanding agency, which we examined in connection with the honest consciousness. In shrinking what the agent is genuinely responsible for to a pure act of will, uncontaminated by particular sensuous inclinations, it precludes itself from understanding agents as having any genuine authority over what actually happens in the objective world. The failure to make intelligible the content of the norms agents bind themselves by in its purely formal terms that is implicit in the metaconception of morality becomes explicit in the metaconception of the relation between norms and attitudes that Hegel calls ‘**conscience**’ [**Gewissen**].
- Thought of from the side of recognition (and so of self-consciousness), morality and conscience are structures of justification and appraisal. (97)
- Morality seeks to combine the universal applicability of moral principles (consequences of the applicability of a rule) with their origin and validation in the free commitment of an independent individual agent to the principles as universally binding (grounds of the applicability of a rule). While the requirement of universality represents morality's attempt to re-achieve *Sittlichkeit*, its recognition of the role of the individual in constituting the appropriatenesses so acknowledged consists in its account of how

universal principles become validated. For morality's claim (Kant's claim) is that what ultimately legitimates the constraint of principles is their appropriation *as* binding because expressive of one's self as *rational*) by the individuals bound. Freedom and acting right coincide, and consist in acting according to principles one has chosen to be bound by as universal. This is the Kant-Rousseau criterion of demarcation of the normative in terms of autonomy. (99)

- **Morality** reconciles justification and appraisal only for each agent, but not in itself or for all in their interaction. From the agent's point of view, then, justification and appraisal appeal to just the same principles, and don't stand in any wholesale opposition or conflict of principle. **But securing this lack of opposition for each agent-appraiser is not enough. In actual social practice those individual points of view must also cohere, since justifying and appraising must in general be the actions of different individuals.** This social coordination is not achievable on Kantian principles. (102)
- **Conscientious consciousness** also attempts to reconcile universal responsibility to norms with the constitution of those norms by their acknowledgement and appropriation by individuals. The form of all justifications of actions is now explicitly understood to be: the action was appropriate because it was performed in accord with the conviction on the part of the agent that it was an appropriate action. That attitude institutes the norm. Corresponding to this approach to justification is an approach to appraisal. The appropriateness of actions is to be evaluated solely on the basis of whether the agent acted out of a conviction of the appropriateness of the action. Acting according to duty is acting according to what one *takes* to be duty, both on the side of justification and on the side of appraisal. (103)

Problem [2017: Recast this in terms of statuses and attitudes]: Thus even if an appraiser disagrees with a justifying agent about what is in fact appropriate or required by duty in a particular situation, they can still agree that the agent acted appropriately, so long as the appraiser attributes to the agent the conviction that appropriateness demanded the action which was in fact performed or intended.

The seeds of the paradox of the conscientious consciousness are already apparent in this formulation. An appeal to conscience as the justification of an action presupposes the existence of duties or appropriatenesses that are constituted independently of the appeal to conscience. The attempt to generate the duties or appropriatenesses themselves entirely on the basis of the legitimacy of such appeals is incoherent. Appeals to conscience of this sort provide a way of dealing with the occasional epistemic inaccessibility of duty in the primary sense. Action with may not accord with duty is excused as falling shoulder rt only on the side of knowledge of that duty, not on the side of the will or intent to perform that duty. Allowing secondary appeals to conscience as an excuse for failure to do one's duty, to fulfill one's actual obligations, are a way of

acknowledging the rights of intention and knowledge without making those rights fully *definitive* of duty.

- The essential point is that appeals to conscience of this sort presuppose an independently constituted notion of duty or appropriateness that can transcend the individual agent's capacity to know what is appropriate in a particular case. Only against the background of the possibility of the failure of the individual to grasp correctly what is in fact appropriate, independently of what he takes to be appropriate, does this form of appeal to conscience have a coherent content. So appeals to conscience are in principle parasitic on practices of appealing to duties which are not constituted by appeals to conscience (that one tried to do one's duty, or did what seemed to one to be one's duty). Conscience-talk presupposes an antecedent stratum of appropriateness-talk, as seems-talk presupposes is-talk and tries-talk presupposes does-talk, and for just the same reason. So the mistake of the conscientious consciousness is structurally the same as that of the honest consciousness and of consciousness understanding itself as sense certainty. It is in each case a mistake to take an idiom that qualifies or withholds a commitment, as to whether something is really one's duty, whether things are as they're taken to be, whether what is accomplished was what was intended, and erect it in to an autonomous stratum of discourse in which the only commitments possible are the hedged or minimal ones which are in fact defined only in relation to their more robust antecedents. (105)

Two Meta-Attitudes, Four Species of Niederträchtigkeit

An important perspective on the concept of alienation is provided by two meta-attitudes that are in play throughout the final two thirds of the *Spirit* chapter. Hegel's terms for these attitudes is '**edelmütig**' and '**niederträchtig**'. Miller translates these as 'noble' and 'base' (or 'ignoble'). I will argue that a better way to think about the contrast is as that between 'generous' and 'mean-spirited', or 'magnanimous' and 'pusillanimous' (literally: 'great-souled' and 'small-souled'). (107)

- The **edelmütig meta-attitude** takes it that there really are norms that attitudes are directed towards and answer to. It treats norms as genuinely efficacious, as really making a difference to what individuals do. Attitudes—paradigmatically the acknowledgment of a norm as binding, taking oneself or another to be committed or responsible, practically distinguishing between performances that are appropriate and those that are not—are the way the norms are actualized, the way they become efficacious, how they make things happen in the causal order.
- The **niederträchtig meta-attitude** sees only normative attitudes. The norms are construed as at most adverbial modifications of the attitudes: a way of talking about the contents of those attitudes. Niederträchtigkeit is the purest expression of the alienated character of modern normativity (hence culture, self-consciousness, and community). (107)

- The two meta-attitudes of Edelmütigkeit and Niederträchtigkeit are initially both manifestations of alienation because they seize one-sidedly on the unity of knowing-and-acting consciousness, in the one case, and the distinction that it involves, on the other. Since the defining flaw of modernity is its failure to get the unity and the distinction that knowing-and-acting consciousness involve in focus together in one picture, the way forward to the re-achievement of unalienated Sittlichkeit is a kind of higher Edelmütigkeit. On the theoretical side, that is coming to apply metaconceptual categories of Vernunft, rather than those of Verstand. (111)
- Famous passage about “playing the moral valet.” ‘Valet’ is ‘Kammerdiener’, so I will call this absolutely crucial stretch of text “**the Kammerdiener passage**”. It expresses a cardinal form of **Niederträchtigkeit**, holding fast to the **disparity** that action involves:

it holds to the other aspect...and explains [the action] as resulting from an intention different from the action itself, and from selfish motives. Just as every action is capable of being looked at from the point of view of conformity to duty, so too can it be considered from the point of view of the particularity [of the doer]; for, qua action, it is the actuality of the individual. This judging of the action thus takes it out of its outer existence and reflects it into its inner aspect, or into the form of its own particularity. If the action is accompanied by fame, then it knows this inner aspect to be a desire for fame. If it is altogether in keeping with the station of the individual, without going beyond this station, and of such a nature that the individuality does not possess its station as a character externally attached to it, but through its own self gives filling to this universality, thereby showing itself capable of a higher station, then the inner aspect of the action is judged to be ambition, and so on. Since, in the action as such, the doer attains to a vision of himself in objectivity, or to a feeling of self in his existence, and thus to enjoyment, the inner aspect is judged to be an urge to secure his own happiness, even though this were to consist merely in an inner moral conceit, in the enjoyment of being conscious of his own superiority and in the foretaste of a hope of future happiness. No action can escape such judgement, for duty for duty's sake, this pure purpose, is an unreality; it becomes a reality in the deed of an individuality, and the action is thereby charged with the aspect of particularity. **No man is a hero to his valet; not, however, because the man is not a hero, but because the valet—is a valet**, whose dealings are with the man, not as a hero, but as one who eats, drinks, and wears clothes, in general, with his individual wants and fancies. Thus, for the judging consciousness, there is no action in which it could not oppose to the

universal aspect of the action, the personal aspect of the individuality, and **play the part of the moral valet towards the agent.** [PG 665] (112-113)

- Consider the official who exercises state power. He has committed himself to act purely according to universal interests or norms. That is, he commits himself to doing *only* what acknowledgement of the norms requires. But every actual performance is a particular doing, and incorporates contingency. It is always *more* than just the acknowledgment of a norm, and may well also be *less* than that. (I can never *just* turn on the light or feed the poor—I am always *also* doing other things, such as alerting the burglar, or cutting the education budget or raising taxes.) Contingent motives and interests will always also be in play. Thus it will always be possible for the *niederträchtig* consciousness to point out the moment of disparity, the particularity and contingency that infects each action. It is never *just* an instance of the universal. The Kammerdiener can always explain what the hero of service did in terms of self-interested (hence particular, contingent) motives and interests, rather than as a response to an acknowledged normative necessity. There is no action at all that is not amenable to this sort of reductive, ignoble description. (115)
- V.1)** The issue being raised concerns the relations between norms and attitudes quite generally. The Kammerdiener does not appeal to norms in his explanations of behavior. The attitudes of individuals are enough.
- [**Harman**]
- V.2)** The Kammerdiener's meta-attitude eschews what are sometimes called "external reasons." (117)
- The selfish particular motives that are all the Kammerdiener attributes are independently authoritative attitudes that can be reflected only in statuses such as usefulness to private purposes, not in statuses such as duty, or being *unconditionally obligatory*—in the sense that the obligatoriness is authoritative for attitudes, rather than conditioned on them, as in the hypothetical, instrumental imperatives arising from prudent pursuit of privately endorsed ends. The Kammerdiener banishes talk of values that are not immediate products of individual valuings. (119)
- V.3)** There is a third, still more general issue being raised by the Kammerdiener's meta-attitude, beyond treating attitudes as independent of norms (which remain in the picture only in an adverbial capacity, in an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to individuate the contents of the attitudes). That concerns the relation between **reasons and causes** generally, or, still more abstractly, the place of norms in nature. For the Kammerdiener essentially treats the hero of duty as a merely *natural* being. the most general issue Hegel is addressing in his discussion of the Kammerdiener is that of **reductive naturalism about normativity.** (121)

- **The Kammerdiener stands for a niederträchtig, relentlessly naturalistic alternative to this edelmütig, normative description of concept use.** In place of the picture of ‘heroic’ practical sensitivity to norms—trying, in deliberation and assessment, to determine what really is *correct*, what one *ought* to do, what one is *obliged* to do (what ‘duty’ consists in), acknowledging genuine normative constraint on one’s attitudes—**this meta-attitude appeals only to attitudes**, which are not construed as the acknowledgment of any normative constraint on or authority over those attitudes. Reasons are traded for causes. It is this large-scale, fundamental disagreement between the reductive naturalist and the rational-normativist that Hegel is committed to resolving in his discussion of what the Kammerdiener gets right, what he gets wrong, and what lessons we should learn from him. This project, broadly construed, is to provide a response to Kant’s Third Antinomy—the challenge to integrate reasons and causes. (123)
- **V.4)** The general thought is that the possibility of offering a certain kind of *genealogical* account of the process by which a conceptual content developed or was determined can seem to undercut the *rational* bindingness of the norms that have that content. This is a form of argument that was deployed to devastating effect by the great unmaskers of the later nineteenth century. We appear to have reasons for our deliberations and assessments, and it may be comforting to ourselves to think that is why they have the contents they do. But talk about what reasons there are for adopting one attitude rather than another is unmasked by a convincing genealogy of the process as a *mere* appearance. The genealogy tells us what is *really* going on, by presenting the underlying mechanism actually responsible for our taking this rather than that as appropriate, fitting, or correct. (130) **[Wittgenstein]**
- The strategy of the genealogical argument is to find some fact *f* such that *f* is not *evidentially* related to *p*—there are no true or plausible auxiliary hypotheses which, when conjoined to *f*, yield an *argument* for *p*. If one can then show that *S*’s believing that *p* is sensitive to the obtaining of *f*—ideally, that *f*’s obtaining provides a *sufficient explanation* for *S*’s believing that *p* (thought of as an event)—then one can argue that the belief is not *rational*, for it does not show the requisite sensitivity to the truth of *p*, via evidence for *p*. *S* cannot claim to have been acting *according* to the norm, to have her belief *governed* by the norm, to be *acknowledging* the norm (even though her belief may well be correct, and so be as the norm *would* dictate)—she cannot claim to be *applying* or *assessing according to* the norm, to be *sensitive* to the norm—if she can be shown to be sensitive to *f*. The genealogical (aetiological) realization saps the *rational* credibility or credence of the belief in question. The *authority* it would otherwise have as an application of a conceptual norm is thrown into doubt. (134)

- I think the later Wittgenstein worried about this issue. I think he saw the temptation to see a demonstration of the parochiality of the content of a norm—its dependence on or reflection of certain kinds of contingent features of the practitioners and their practices—as undercutting the intelligibility of that norm as genuinely binding, as being a real norm, as having normative force. . The effect of the demonstration of the parochiality and contingency of the practices in which our norms are implicit is not meant to be normative nihilism. Rather, space is to be opened up for new ways of construing the relations between genealogy and justification. (139)
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Four Meta-Meta-Normative Attitudes to the Two Meta-Normative Attitudes

VI.1) The **first** way of understanding the relation between the edelmütig normativist and the niederträchtig naturalist is as a cognitive disagreement about a matter of objective fact. They disagree about the correct answer to the question: Are there norms, or not? If one makes an exhaustive catalogue of the furniture of the universe, will one find norms on it, or only normative attitudes? (144)

VI.2) This objectivist way of understanding the status of the two meta-attitudes towards norms and normative attitudes is not the only one available, however. It is possible to adopt instead an almost diametrically opposed subjectivist meta-meta-attitude. According to this way of thinking, the normativist and the naturalist employ different vocabularies in describing the world. Using one rather than the other is adopting a *stance*. The two stances are incompatible; one cannot adopt them both. One either uses normative vocabulary or one does not. But both of them are available, and both of them are legitimate. (144)

As for the legitimacy of the reductive, niederträchtig attitude, Hegel acknowledges that the Kammerdiener is *not wrong*. “**No action can escape such judgement,**”

there is no action in which it could not oppose to the universal aspect of the action, the personal aspect of the individuality, and play the part of the moral valet towards the agent. [PG 665].

Every intentional action is “charged with the aspect of particularity,” in that the agent must have had some motive for performing it, some attitude that was efficacious in bringing it about. Norms are efficacious only through attitudes towards them. (145)

Just so, “**every action is capable of being looked at from the point of view of conformity to duty,**” that is, in the edelmütig normative vocabulary. What shows up in the causal-psychological vocabulary of the Kammerdiener is nature,

natural beings, and natural processes: the world of desire. What shows up in the normative vocabulary of the hero is Spirit, *geistig* beings, and discursive practices: the world of recognition. The realm of Spirit comprises experience and agency. It is a structure articulated by relations of *authority* and *responsibility*, of *commitment* and *entitlement*, of *reasons* and *concepts* with the *obligations* and *permissions* that they involve and articulate. This normative, discursive realm of Spirit is Hegel's topic. It, too, is real. According to the *stance* stance (meta-meta-attitude), the reductive naturalist is wrong to take it that the explanatory completeness of the naturalistic-causal vocabulary in its own terms indicates its expressive completeness—so that any claims it cannot express cannot be true. For it must leave out concept-use as such (and hence the whole *geistig* dimension of human activity), even though every application of concepts in judgment and action can be explained in naturalistic terms, if it is described in naturalistic terms of noises and motions. But the normative vocabulary is *also* sovereign and comprehensive within its domain, and can achieve a corresponding explanatory equilibrium. For it is a vocabulary for describing the use of vocabularies—including the vocabulary of natural science. Everything the scientist does, no less than the activities and practices of other discursive beings, can be described in the language of judgment, intentional action, and recognition. The Kammerdiener's attitude, too, is a *discursive* attitude. (148)

(1) and (2) are purely *cognitive* meta-meta-attitudes.

VI.3) Adopting the *niederträchtig* normative meta-attitude institutes a kind of normativity that has a distinctive, defective structure. To say that is to say that *Niederträchtigkeit* is in the first instance a kind of *recognition*, rather than of *cognition*. Adopting the *niederträchtig* meta-attitude not only “holds fast” to the “disparity of the action with itself,” but “divides up the action” and “produces” the disparity. This sounds much more practical than cognitive—a matter of *making* something, rather than *finding* it. (150)

The moral valet does not just *notice* or *point out* the disparity that action and consciousness involve, he *identifies* with it. For his recognitive act is also a recognitive sacrifice. What the Kammerdiener gives up is the possibility of a certain kind of self-consciousness: consciousness of himself as genuinely bound by norms. **The principled grounds he has for refusing to recognize the hero as a norm-governed creature apply to himself as well.** His position is that the idea of someone practically acknowledging a norm as binding is unintelligible. (152)

The third construal of the *niederträchtig* and *edelmütig* meta-attitudes toward norms and normative attitudes is then that they are recognitive attitudes that have

the effect of *practical commitments*. Adopting the edelmütig stance of spirit is committing oneself to *making* what we are doing being binding ourselves by conceptual norms, so acknowledging the authority of such norms, by practically *taking* it that that is what we are doing—by recognitively treating ourselves and our fellows as doing that. On this view normativity (which, because the norms in question are for Hegel all *conceptually* contentful, is the same phenomenon as rationality) is not feature of our practices independent of our meta-attitude toward it. **“To him who looks at the world rationally, the world looks rationally back,”** Hegel says [the Spiegeleier slogan]. **Normativity and rationality are products of our edelmütig meta-attitudes, of our practically taking or treating what we are doing (recognizing each other) as acknowledging rational commitments. Spirit exists insofar as we make it exist by taking it to exist:** by understanding what we are doing in normative, rational terms. We make the world rational by adopting the recognitively structured constellation of commitments and responsibilities I have—following Hegel’s usage in connection with the community Faith is committed to instituting—denominated *trust*. (153) This third understanding of the meta-attitudes of Niederträchtigkeit and Edelmütigkeit, as practical, cognitive, hence community- and self-constitutive, like the second, still presents them as **options available for the subject freely to choose between**. It is up to us whether to make ourselves into merely natural or genuinely normative beings.

VI.4) A fourth way of understanding the status of these two stances is that **we have always already implicitly committed ourselves to adopting the edelmütig stance**, to identifying with the unity that action and consciousness involve, to understanding ourselves as genuinely binding ourselves by conceptual norms that we apply in acting intentionally and making judgments. For we do judge and act, and we cannot avoid in practice taking or treating those judgments and actions as being determinately contentful—as materially incompatible with certain other judgments and actions, and as materially entailing still others. We count some judgments as reasons for or against others, and some intentions and plans as ruling out or requiring others as means. Even the Kammerdiener and his resolutely reductive naturalist generalization offer contentful *accounts* of our doings (performances and attitudes), accounts that aim to satisfy the distinctive standards of intelligibility, adequacy, and correctness to which they hold themselves. *If* the determinate contentfulness of the thoughts and intentions even of the niederträchtig is in fact intelligible *only* from an edelmütig perspective, *then* anyone who in practice treats what he is doing as judging and acting is implicitly committed thereby to Edelmütigkeit. The semantic theory that I have

been extracting from the *Phenomenology* has as its conclusion the antecedent of that conditional. (154-5)

- The apparent parity of the two meta-normative stances is an illusion. No genuine choice between them is possible. By talking (engaging in discursive practices) at all, we have already implicitly endorsed and adopted one of them, whether we explicitly realize that or (like the Kammerdiener) not. On this reading, what Hegel is asking us to do is only *explicitly* to acknowledge theoretical and practical commitments we have already *implicitly* undertaken just by taking part in discursive practices—which is to say, by being acculturated [gebildet]. Our explicitly adopting the edelmütig practical-recognitive attitude is accordingly just achieving a certain kind of self-consciousness: realizing something that is already true of ourselves. So the issue is, in the end, a broadly cognitive one: a matter of finding out how things in some sense already are. But the achievement of this definitive kind of self-consciousness is also, as must be so according to Hegel’s social account of what self-consciousness consists in, the adoption of a distinctive kind of cognitive relation to others and to oneself. (155)

- About the relation between the third and fourth construals of Niederträchtigkeit and Edelmütigkeit: According to the final one, normative statuses are made by (reference-dependent upon) normative attitudes (including the meta-normative attitudes of Niederträchtigkeit and Edelmütigkeit), while conceptual norms are found (reference-independent of normative attitudes, including the meta-normative ones). Because objective conceptual norms are (reciprocally) sense-dependent on the normative statuses of subjects (objective idealism), the niederträchtig reductive naturalist is wrong to think that he can deny the intelligibility (his reason for denying the existence) of normative statuses and still be entitled to treat the objective world as a determinate object of potential knowledge. “No cognition without recognition!” is the slogan here. Because normative attitudes and normative statuses are *both reciprocally sense-dependent* and *reciprocally reference-dependent*, the attempt to entitle oneself to talk about determinately contentful normative attitudes while denying the intelligibility and (so) existence of normative statuses is bound to fail. We saw Hegel make arguments to the effect that normative attitudes must be thought of as contentless if normative statuses are taken out of the picture, at various places in the text, such as the discussion of skepticism, of the honest consciousness, and of the conscientious consciousness. Denying the intelligibility of normative statuses—denying that genuine authority and the bindingness of commitments can be made sense of—is alienation. Asserting the sense- and reference-dependence of normative statuses on normative attitudes—in this dual sense denying that normative statuses are independent of normative attitudes—is the core insight

behind the modern rise of subjectivity. We are accordingly now in a position to see how that insight can be reconciled with the overcoming of alienation. (160)

- Niederträchtigkeit is a pure expression of alienation, while Edelmütigkeit shows a way forward from the impasse of modernity. The progression through the four, ever more sophisticated, meta-meta-normative ways of understanding these meta-normative attitudes track the principal stages in the development of Spirit.

- 1) The **first, objective/cognitive construal** runs together normative attitudes and conceptual norms by in effect assimilating the former to the latter. They are either just there, independently of our (meta-normative) attitudes toward them, or they are not. This corresponds to the traditional, pre-modern attitude toward norms.

- 2) The **stance stance**, which sees a free choice between two ways of talking, with either meta-normative attitude available for adoption by subjects as a theoretical commitment corresponds to the modern, subjectivist attitude toward norms, as that attitude is epitomized by Enlightenment. This second rendering runs together normative statuses and conceptual norms by in effect assimilating the latter to the former by seeing conceptual norms as constituted by normative attitudes in the way normative statuses are (the principle of utility).

- 3) **Understanding the stances and the choice between them as a matter of adopting a *practical commitment*, as *producing* the unity it discerns, hence ultimately as a *recognitive* matter of community- and self-constitution corresponds to the response Hegel makes to Enlightenment's misunderstanding of the nature of the community of trust, on Faith's behalf.** That is, these two construals correspond to the two alienated institutional forms of characteristically modern understandings of norms, statuses, and attitudes.

- 4) Understanding the edelmütig attitude as a practical-recognitive commitment that has always already implicitly been undertaken as a pragmatic condition of semantically contentful cognition and agency (of determinate subjective attitudes) then corresponds to breaking through the confines of alienated modernity into the form of self-consciousness Hegel calls "Absolute Knowing".

- At the **first stage**, in which necessity is construed as objective necessity, the norms are *found*. For normative statuses (duty, propriety, what one is committed to do, what one is responsible for doing) reflect and are determined by objective (attitude- and practice-independent) norms. In the **middle, modern stage**, in which necessity is construed as subjective necessity, normativity and reason must be *made* by our attitudes and practices, rather than being found. At the **projected post-modern third stage**, finding and making show up as two sides of one coin, two aspects of one process, whose two phases—experience and its recollection, lived forward and comprehended backward, the inhalation and exhalation that sustain the life of Spirit—are each both makings and findings. **In experience, error is found and a new phenomenon is made. In**

recollection, a rational selection and reconstruction of an expressively progressive trajectory of experience is made, and an implicit noumenon is found

- Senses are made, and referents found. The unity, the identity of content, that consciousness and action involve must be made, and the complementary disparity is found. Absolute Knowing is comprehending the way in which these aspects mutually presuppose, support, complement, and complete one another. (162)

Confession, Forgiveness, and Trust: The Final Form of Reciprocal Recognition

Understanding the edelmütig attitude as a practical-recognitive commitment that has always already implicitly been undertaken as a pragmatic condition of semantically contentful cognition and agency (of determinate subjective attitudes) then corresponds to breaking through the confines of alienated modernity into the form of self-consciousness Hegel calls “Absolute Knowing”. At the first stage, in which necessity is construed as objective necessity, the norms are *found*. For normative statuses (duty, propriety, what one is committed to do, what one is responsible for doing) reflect and are determined by objective (attitude- and practice-independent) norms. In the middle, modern stage, in which necessity is construed as subjective necessity, normativity and reason must be *made* by our attitudes and practices, rather than being found. At the projected post-modern third stage, finding and making show up as two sides of one coin, two aspects of one process, whose two phases—experience and its recollection, lived forward and comprehended backward, the inhalation and exhalation that sustain the life of Spirit—are each both makings and findings. In experience, error is found and a new phenomenon is made. In recollection, a rational selection and reconstruction of an expressively progressive trajectory of experience is made, and an implicit noumenon is found. Senses are made, and referents found. The unity, the identity of content, that consciousness and action involve must be made, and the complementary disparity is found. Absolute Knowing is comprehending the way in which these aspects mutually presuppose, support, complement, and complete one another. (165)

The final movement of *Spirit* is discussed in the concluding eleven paragraphs of this long chapter. It takes the form of a parable, a narrative recounting sequential stages in the relationship between an “evil consciousness” [PG 661] and a “hard-hearted judge” [PG 669-70]: evil [PG 661-62], judgment [PG 662-66], confession [666], refusal of reciprocal confession [PG 667-68], the breaking of the hard heart and confession by the judge [PG 669], forgiveness [PG 669-71], and the achievement of a new kind of community (“The reconciling Yea, in which the

two 'T's let go their antithetical existence, is the existence of the 'T' which has expanded into a duality." [PG 671]). Our task, as it has so often been, is to read the allegory—in this case, so as to understand the nature of this final form of mutual recognition as reciprocal confession and forgiveness. (167)

The two parties to this morality tale, the judged and the judging consciousness, personify the two social perspectives on the application of concepts in judgment and agency familiar to us from our consideration of Hegel's theory of agency. **These are the first-person context of deliberation (Vorsatz-Handlung) and the third-person context of assessment (Absicht-Tat). The one judged makes himself responsible, by applying a concept, and the judge holds him responsible for that application.** What we are eventually to comprehend—thereby achieving “absolute knowing”—is the way in which a process of negotiation involving the normative attitudes of the self-conscious individuals occupying the two perspectives is intelligible as instituting a normative status: a cognitive or practical commitment resulting from the application of a conceptual norm whose determinate content is expressed, clarified, and developed in that very process.

As our story begins, the cognitive attitudes in virtue of which the acting consciousness is denominated ‘evil’ or ‘wicked’ [böse], and the judge “hard-hearted” are niederträchtig ones.

The consciousness that judges in this way is itself base [niederträchtig], because it divides up the action, producing and holding fast to the disparity of the action with itself. [PG 666]

“The consciousness of an act declares its specific action to be a duty.” [PG 665]

This is how the agent justifies his action: by saying (here using Kantian terminology) that it falls under a norm, that it correct or required.

Now the judging consciousness does not stop short at the former aspect of duty, at the doers knowledge of it that this is his duty, and the fact that the doer knows it to be his duty, the condition and status of his reality. On the contrary, it holds to the other aspect, looks at what the action is in itself, and explains it as resulting from an intention different from the action itself, and from selfish motives. **Just as every action is capable of being looked at from the point of view of conformity to duty, so too can it be considered from the point of view of the particularity [of the doer]...No action can escape such judgement, for duty for duty's sake, this pure purpose, is an unreality; it becomes a reality in the deed of an individuality, and the action is thereby charged with the aspect of particularity....** Thus, for the judging consciousness, there is no action in which it

could not oppose to the universal aspect of the action, the personal aspect of the individuality, and **play the part of the moral valet towards the agent.** [PG 665]

As Hegel tells the story, the acting consciousness, which “declares its specific action to be duty,” and both the judging and confessing consciousness, which explain actions in terms of non-normatively characterized motives (attitudes), see the issue about which they disagree as a *cognitive* one: a matter of who is right about an objective fact. Is the agent in fact acknowledging the bindingness of a norm (being sensitive to a normative necessity), or merely responding to other attitudes (so the performance belongs in a box with other phenomena explicable by appeal to contingent matters of fact)? **Is naturalism about motives true? If it is, then it applies in the context of assessment just as much as in the context of deliberation, and so to the judge who assesses and attributes actions as much as to the agent who produces them.**

But at this stage in the parable, the judging consciousness “is hypocrisy, because it passes off such judging, not as another manner of being wicked, but as the correct consciousness of the action.” [PG 666] The judge takes it that though the acting consciousness is evil, responding to the particular rather than the universal, the contingencies of his subjective situation and dispositions rather than acknowledging what is normatively necessary, he himself *is* responsive to the universal, to norms. What the judge says is *correct*, the *right* way to describe what is going on, the way one is *obliged* to think about it. The judge still takes it that he can “oppose to the universal aspect of the action, the personal aspect of the individuality,” because *he* still perceives that universal aspect. So the assessor and attributor of actions applies quite different standards to his own activities than he does to those of the ones he assesses. This is an *asymmetric* *recognitive* relation.

The first step toward a symmetric, genuinely reciprocal interpersonal cognitive relation is taken by the individual who is judged, who *confesses* its particularity and the contingency of its attitudes. [PG 666] Confessing is acknowledging and accepting the correctness of the indictment of the *niederträchtig* judge. It is a speech act, because “language as the existence of Spirit...is self-consciousness existing for others,” [PG 652], “it is the self which as such is actual in language, which declares itself to be the truth, and just by so doing acknowledges all other selves and is acknowledged by them.” [PG 654] The content of the confession is accordingly something like: “I confess that my judgments and actions have not been just what I was obliged or permitted (committed or entitled) to do by the norms implicit in the concepts applied therein; they were not simply responses acknowledging the normative necessity embodied in those concepts. They also express, reflect, and are sensitive to my subjective attitudes—the doxastic and practical commitments, the particular contingent course of experience I have undergone, the

beliefs that I have contingently acquired and rejected or retained during this historical-experiential process of development, my contingent practical ends, projects, and plans and their evolution—everything that makes me the distinctive individual I am. They are, in the end, *my commitments, my attitudes*, shot through and through with particularity that is not a mere reflection of the universals I took myself to be applying.”

Making such a confession is a *identifying* with that structural disparity that knowing and acting consciousness involves. For it is *sacrificing* the claim to entitlement for or justification of the judgment or action by appeal to the content of the conceptual norm being applied. It is identification with one’s own attitudes (particularity), rather than with the normative statuses (individuality) that are adopted in virtue of applying concepts, binding oneself by norms (universals). That universal dimension is no longer acknowledged as being in play—only attitudes. So the confessor, too, adopts a *niederträchtig* attitude, now toward his own commitments. Like the judge, he “opposes to the universal aspect of the action, the personal aspect of the individuality.” Doing that is a step toward the achievement of mutual, symmetric recognition, because the confession consists in adopting the standards of assessment deployed by the judging consciousness, ceasing to insist on his own. And that means that the same standards are brought to bear by the agent as by the assessor—even though they are *niederträchtig* ones, basely identifying with the disparity of form that cognition and action involve, rather than nobly identifying with their identity of content.

But there is a residual asymmetry. For **if the Kammerdiener’s reductive naturalism is correct, then it applies to the judge too.**

Perceiving this identity and giving utterance to it, he confesses this to the other, and equally expects that the other, having in fact put himself on the same level, will also respond in words in which he will give utterance to this identity with him, and expects that this mutual recognition will now exist in fact. [PG 666]

Yet the judge need not (though he ought) acknowledge this identity. He can persist in applying different standards to the concrete actions of others than he does to his own assessments: understanding what they do genealogically, as the result of peculiarities of their particular cognitive-practical experiential trajectory, while understanding his own judgments just as correct applications of universals, whose determinate contents necessitate those applications. The details of his own breakfast, he insists, are irrelevant to his assessment.

The confession of the one who is wicked, 'I am so', is not followed by a reciprocal similar confession. This was not what the judging consciousness meant: quite the contrary. It repels this community of

nature, and is the hard heart that is for itself, and which rejects any continuity with the other. [PG 667]

At this stage, the judge does not appear as impartially applying universals, simply responding appropriately to their normative demands. What he is doing shows up as adopting a *stance*, rather than just cognitively apprehending how things objectively are. For he *decides* to adopt a *different* stance towards his own sayings and doings than he does to those of others.

As a result, the situation is reversed. The one who made the confession sees himself repulsed, and sees the other to be in the wrong when he refuses to let his own inner being come forth into the outer existence of speech, when the other contrasts the beauty of his own soul with the penitent's wickedness, yet confronts the confession of the penitent with his own stiff-necked unrepentant character, mutely keeping himself to himself and refusing to throw himself away for someone else. [667]

The hard-hearted judge is doing what he originally indicted the other for. He is letting particularity affect his application of universals: applying different normative standards to doings just because they happen to be *his* doings. And in doing so, he is *producing* a cognitive disparity, allowing his particular being-for-self (attachment to his own attitudes) to disrupt the achievement of a community (universal) by reciprocal recognition.

It is thus its own self which hinders that other's return from the deed into the spiritual existence of speech and into the identity of Spirit, and by this hardness of heart produces the disparity which still exists. [PG 667]

The stage is set for the transition to the next and final stage in the development of self-conscious Spirit by the judge traversing the four meta-meta-attitudes laid out in the previous section:

- a) First, the judge acknowledges that he is adopting a *stance*, rather than simply acknowledging a *fact*;
- b) Second, the judge acknowledges that the stance is a *cognitive* one;
- c) So, the judge acknowledges that which stance he adopts *produces* a community of a certain kind;
- d) Next, the judge must acknowledge that acting and judging (acknowledging and attributing, deliberating and assessing) implicitly presuppose (are intelligible only in the context of) *edelmüttig* cognitive stances.
- e) Finally, the judge must explicitly adopt such a cognitive stance and institute an *edelmüttig* cognitive community.

Edelmüttigkeit, generosity or magnanimity, the noble cognitive stance that contrasts with Niederträchtigkeit, mean-spiritedness or pusillanimity, the base

recognitive stance, consists in treating oneself and others in practice as adopting normative statuses, rather than just changing natural states.

That requires more than confession, even reciprocal confession. In Hegel's allegory, what it requires is *forgiveness*. Hegel introduces this notion in the penultimate paragraph of *Spirit*:

The forgiveness which it extends to the other is the renunciation of itself, of its unreal essential being which it put on a level with that other which was a real action, and acknowledges that what thought characterized as bad, viz. action, is good; or rather it abandons this distinction of the specific thought and its subjectively determined judgement, just as the other abandons its subjective characterization of action. The word of reconciliation is the objectively existent Spirit, which beholds the pure knowledge of itself qua universal essence, in its opposite, in the pure knowledge of itself qua absolutely self-contained and exclusive individuality—a reciprocal recognition which is absolute Spirit. [PG 670]

Forgiveness [Verzeihung] is a recognitive attitude that practically acknowledges the complementary contributions of particularity and universality to individuality—both the way the application of the universal raises the particular to the level of the individual, and the way application to particulars actualizes the universal in an individual. It is a practical, community-instituting form of self-consciousness that is structured by the meta-conceptual categories of Vernunft, rather than Verstand. It is sittlich, rather than alienated, in understanding the complex interdependence of norms (universals, on the side of content, necessity, on the side of force) and attitudes and the process by which together they institute and articulate normative statuses (commitments).

FORGIVENESS

Forgiving, like confessing, is a *speech* act, something done in *language*. It is doing something by saying something. That is why Hegel talks about it in terms of the “word of reconciliation [Versöhnung” [PG 670].

The most important clues concerning the nature of forgiveness are contained in a few gnomic, aphoristic sentences:

“Spirit, in the absolute certainty of itself, is lord and master over every deed and actuality, and can cast them off, and make them as if they had never happened.” [PG 667]

The wounds of the Spirit heal, and leave no scars behind. The deed is not imperishable; it is taken back by Spirit into itself, and the aspect of

individuality present in it, whether as intention or as an existent negativity and limitation, straightway vanishes. [PG 669]

The invocation of mastery indicates that the forgiving that accomplishes this healing is the exercise of some sort of constitutive authority: the capacity of making something so by taking it to be so. The ‘wounds’ are the contingent particular attitudes (“the aspect of individuality”) and the errors and failures they bring about (“existent negativity and limitation”), which are confessed. The question is what one must do in order to “cast them off and make them as if they had never happened,” to heal the wounds, “leaving no scars behind,” what the forgiving individual must do in order to count as having successfully exercised that constitutive healing authority.

I think the answer is that *forgiveness* is a kind of *recollection* (Erinnerung—cf. [PG 808]). What one must do in order to forgive the confessor for what is confessed is to offer a rational reconstruction of a tradition to which the concept-application (theoretically in judgment or practically in intention) in question belongs, in which it figures as an expressively progressive episode. Telling such a story is a substantive undertaking, one that the magnanimous (edelmütig) would-be forgiving assessor may well not be able to accomplish. Indeed, what the assessor *confesses*, in his turn, is his subjective inability successfully to forgive everything he is committed to forgiving. Speaking of the relation between the individual who confesses and the individual who forgives, Hegel says:

But just as the former has to surrender its one-sided, unacknowledged existence of its particular being-for-self, so too must this other set aside its one-sided, unacknowledged judgement. And just as the former exhibits the power of Spirit over its actual existence, so does this other exhibit the power of Spirit over its determinate concept [seinen bestimmten Begriff¹].

[PG 669]

What is “surrendered” or “set aside” is *sacrificed*. What the one who confesses gives up is his “particular being for self,” his “actual existence.” That is to say that he ceases to assert the authority of his actual attitudes, acknowledging that he has bound himself by an objective conceptual norm that differs from his subjective conception of it. For that authority was not recognized or acknowledged [nicht anerkanntes]. What the judge relinquishes is his insistence on the authority of his hard-hearted assessment, which, as a one-sided assertion of disparity was also not reciprocally acknowledged. Sacrificing the authority of these one-sided, subjective attitudes—what things are for one—is identifying with what one has sacrificed for: what things are in themselves, the content that unifies the disparate forms in which it was expressed (showed up for individual

¹ I have altered the translation here. Miller has: “over its specific Notion *of itself*” [emphasis added], reading “its concept” (or “his concept”), “seinem (bestimmten) Begriff,” as a concept *of* the forgiving judge in the sense of having him as its object, rather than its subject—that is, as an objective, rather than a subjective genitive.

consciousnesses). Both sides acknowledge that what recollectively shows up as what was really being talked or thought about (the objective concept) has authority over their attitudes and applications of the concept (subjective conceptions). Unlike the attitudes that each sacrifices, *this* authority *is* acknowledged by both. Recognition as confession and forgiveness is reciprocal.

Magnanimous forgiving recollection is the exercise of the power of Spirit over the determinate concept. Hegel summarizes, in the penultimate paragraph of *Spirit*:

The forgiveness which it extends to the other is the renunciation of itself, of its unreal essential being which it put on a level with that other which was a real action, and acknowledges that what thought characterized as bad, *viz.* action, is good; or rather it abandons this distinction of the specific thought and its *subjectively* determined judgement, just as the other abandons its subjective characterization of action. The word of reconciliation is the *objectively* existent Spirit, which beholds the pure knowledge of itself *qua* universal essence, in its opposite, in the pure knowledge of itself *qua* absolutely self-contained and exclusive individuality—a reciprocal recognition which is *absolute* Spirit. [PG 670]

Forgiveness is a “renunciation” of the previous identification of the hard-hearted judge with the disparity between his “subjectively determined judgment [fürsichseiendes bestimmendes Urteil]” and the “determinate thought [bestimmten Gedanken]”—that is, of the distinction between what things are for the judge and what they are in themselves, the subjective conception or attitude and the objective concept or thought. Through forgiveness—the “word of reconciliation”, which is not just *saying* that the other is forgiven, but actually going through the recollective labor of *making* it so—the judge brings about the unity that he identifies with. On the cognitive and practical dimensions of activity it is the unity of actual particularity (the causally explicable and efficacious attitudes and behavior of subjects) and universal essence (the conceptual norms whose application in attitude and act institute normative statuses) visible when what is said and done by subjects is understood as applying, binding themselves by, making themselves responsible to concepts or conceptual norms. On the cognitive dimension, it is the unity of particular, acting subjects and the normative community they synthesize by reciprocal recognition. Explaining forgiveness as recollection displays the fine structure underlying the general claim made in Chapter Two that recognition serves both as the *model* of and as the *context* within which the application of conceptual universals to actual particulars is to be understood.

Forgiveness is the process by which immediacy is mediated, by which the stubborn recalcitrance of reality is given conceptual shape, acknowledged in what things are for consciousness. The semantic holism consequent upon understanding conceptual content in the first place in terms of relations of material incompatibility (determinate negation),

and hence material inference (mediation) among such contents means that getting one determinate concept right requires getting them all right. And the interdependence of what follows from and is incompatible with what, on the one hand, and what we take to be *true*, how we take things to be, in themselves, on the other, means that rectifying our concepts and rectifying our beliefs and judgments are complementary aspects of one enterprise, neither completable apart from the other. In the conceptual setting provided by those overarching semantic commitments, the inexhaustibility of immediacy entails the ultimate instability of any set of Verstand-determinate empirically-and-practically contentful concepts. No matter how much we have studied the matter, there will *always* be a course of possible experience that would result in someone's being in the same position with respect to our concept of hands that we are with respect to Aristotle's or Moore's. But the notion of there being a way things determinately are, in themselves—that is independently of what they are for us, indeed, in which how things are for us is on the contrary dependent on how they are in themselves, in the sense that the latter is authoritative for, sets normative standards for, the former—is, Hegel thinks, an essential element of the concept of theoretical and practical consciousness. Apart from the idea that our conceptually articulated attitudes are *about* something in the normative sense of having made ourselves responsible *to* it, that it settles what we have made ourselves responsible *for*, the actual content of the normative status we have undertaken, what we have bound ourselves by, we cannot make the concepts of consciousness and action intelligible. Any adequate account of the determinate contentfulness of thought must make sense of the realistic, representational dimension of intentionality. The two-phase model of finding referents retrospectively, within each recollective story, and making new senses prospectively by coming up with such stories in response to the felt and acknowledged inadequacy of the previous ones, is Hegel's account of how these two demands on the notion of determinate conceptual content can both be satisfied. The Verstand conception of determinate conceptual contentfulness is important, and it is right as far as it goes. But it is one-sided and incomplete, leaving out elements of the larger context that are essential to its intelligibility.

The magnanimous commitment to concrete practical forgiveness is a commitment to act so as to *make* the act forgiven *have been* correct as the acknowledgment of the norm that can now be imputed as the content of the governing intention. In a community with the cognitive structure of trust and forgiveness, there is a real sense in which everything is done by everyone. For everyone takes responsibility for what each one does, and each takes responsibility for what everyone does. (This is the Musketeer form of agency: “All for one and one for all.”) This is what I meant by talking about an “expansion strategy” for edelmütig self-consciousness, by contrast to the “contraction strategy” of alienated self-consciousness. The conception of the agent in the sense of the doer who is responsible for what is done is expanded so that the self-conscious individual is just one

element in a larger constellation including those he recognizes through trust and who recognize him through forgiveness.

The deed is not imperishable; it is taken back by Spirit into itself, and the aspect of individuality present in it, whether as intention or as an existent negativity and limitation, straightway vanishes. The self that carries out the action, the form of its act, is only a moment of the whole... [PG 669]

Much more central to Hegel's project, however, is fulfilling this obligation of generous recollection to his specifically philosophical predecessors. The *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* culminates in what he insists is not *his* system but *the* system of philosophy that he expounds in the *Science of Logic*, and applies in the *Encyclopedia*. Each prior figure is presented from the point of view of what he understood, what his thought can retrospectively be seen to have revealed about how things actually are, which aspects of the philosophical concepts that articulate his current, adequate self-consciousness are expressed, however darkly, in his conceptions, and how the expressive inadequacies of those views can be seen to have served the progressive purpose of being necessary preconditions of the next stage, providing the experience of error and failure out of which a newer, better conception arises. As Hegel says in the conclusion of his three volumes:

At this point I bring this history of Philosophy to a close. It has been my desire that you should learn from it that the history of philosophy is not a blind collection of fanciful ideas, nor a fortuitous progression. I have rather sought to show the necessary development of the successive philosophies from one another, so that the one of necessity presupposes another preceding it. The general result of the history of Philosophy is this: in the first place, that throughout all time there has been only one Philosophy, the contemporary differences of which constitute the necessary aspects of one principle; in the second place, that the succession of philosophic systems is not due to chance, but represents the necessary succession of stages in the development of this science; in the third place, that the final philosophy of a period is the result of this development, and is truth in the highest form which the self-consciousness of spirit affords of itself. The latest philosophy contains therefore those which went before; it embraces in itself all the different stages thereof; it is the product and the result of those that preceded it....It is my desire that this history of Philosophy should contain for you a summons to grasp the spirit of the time, which is present in us by nature, and—each in his own place—consciously to bring it from its natural condition, i.e. from its lifeless seclusion, into the light of day.²

² *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, E. S. Haldane and F. H. Simson (trans.) [New Jersey: Humanities Press 1983] volume 3, pp. 552-53.

The aspiration is to offer a rational history: a reconstruction in which each element makes an essential contribution to what is finally revealed as having been all along implicitly the topic. The progression is *retrospectively* necessary. It is not the case that a given stage could have evolved in no other way than as to produce what appears as its successor. Rather, that successor (and ultimately, the final—so far—triumphant, culminating conception) could not have arisen except as a development from the earlier ones.

Practicing the recognitive hermeneutics of magnanimity is not just one option among others. A proper understanding of the kind of creatures we are obliges us to be forgiving and trusting: to see the world through rational eyes, not only because the world then looks rationally back, but because that rational world is the only mirror in which we can see ourselves.

The reconciling Yea, in which the two 'I's let go their antithetical existence, is the existence of the 'I' which has expanded into a duality, and therein remains identical with itself, and, in its complete externalization and opposite, possesses the certainty of itself: it is God manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge. [PG 671]

VII. Reachieving Heroic Practical Conception of Agency by Expansion Strategy