Chapter One

Hegel: Socrates As the Inventor of Morals

In the work of Kant the old metaphysical concept of reason, which sought to order the universe according to certain transcendental ideas produced by pure reason, receives its death blow. Kant achieves this philosophical revolution by refusing to allow to transcendental ideas the possibility of any constitutive employment; that is, they cannot be classed as constitutive of any possible objects of existence. They have a purely ideal existence, and any attempt to transgress this limit, which Kant argues is a quite natural tendency of humankind, leads to the pseudo-rational or dialectical employment of these concepts. It should be clearly noted that in giving up this metaphysical concept of reason Kant does not surrender the notion of reason as such. His aim is merely to assert that the ideas of pure reason cannot supplant experience in the ordering of our physical world. Their realm is, rather, that of the kingdom of ends, which is conceived by Kant as strictly separate from the order of nature. As part of this realm, these ideas have a purely regulative or hypothetical, as opposed to constitutive, employment. Although reason is, therefore, still charged with making sense of the world, it does so in full consciousness of the imaginary, hypothetical, or projected character of any attempt at universality. The task of ordering the objects of possible experience is the rightful task of the understanding or intellect *(Verstand)*. Hence, the critique of pure reason is designed to deny that right to reason *(Vernunft)* by drawing the boundaries of the legitimate use of transcendental ideas. Kant preserves the dignity of reason by teaching it some modesty.

According to Hegel, such a project is equivalent to trying to learn to swim without first throwing oneself in the water. For Hegel cognition is neither an instrument we employ to know things nor a passive medium through which we think things. Thinking is an activity. It is the activity of the spirit *(Geist)* coming to know itself through the simplest forms of cognition (sense-certainty, perception, etc.) to the most complex (self-consciousness, reason, etc.), and through a knowledge of the simplest types of objects (stones, rocks, etc.) to the most complex (cultural objectivations such as artistic works, religious systems, and philosophical texts). It is only when spirit reaches the end of its journey, which is absolute knowing, that the spirit realizes through a kind of recollective reconstruction that the stages of its development are stages in the progression toward the absolute. Having reached this stage, the spirit creates categories that can be examined in their frozen immobility in the Science of Logic. There is, therefore, no simple return to a constitutive employment of the categories of reason in the old metaphysical sense in Hegel; however, through the philosophy of *Geist*, Hegel is able to overcome the duality of *Verstand* and *Vernunft* by making the ordering of reality the paradoxical result of a providentially guided historical process of development. But this historiosophical employment of the concept of reason does not escape the Kantian strictures against any constitutive employment of transcendental ideas. Hence, in this regard Hegel's philosophy falls back to a pre-Kantian position in its attempt to order reality according to the notion of the absolute. Insofar as it takes the notion of the absolute as a result, it directs the attention of philosophy toward history and brings it, as a consequence, into touch with the reality of its own time by forsaking the comfort of a closed conceptual universe.

The greatness of the Hegelian philosophy lies, as Taylor has rightly seen, in its conception of the subject as self-defining rather than as definable in relation to an ontologically structured cosmic order or, I would add, to a closed theological universe.[1] The notion of the self-defining subject is an answer to the question of how the whole or the absolute can be posited as a result rather than as something eternally pregiven. When

Hegel says that "the true is the whole *(das Wahre ist das Ganze)*," he remains faithful to the metaphysical tradition; however, when he adds that "the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development *(durch seine Entwicklung sich vollendende Wesen)*," he leaves this tradition in a way that is completely different from Kant's departure.[2] The notion of the substance as subject thrusts the substance into history and sets the subject to work. Hegel further argues that "everything turns on grasping and expressing the true *(Wahre)*, not only as substance *(Substanz)*, but equally as subject *(Subjekt)*."[3] Hence, the true has to be grasped both as activity and as result. Through the process of positing itself as 'simple negativity' *(einfache Negativität)*—that is, by positing itself as something other or by becoming an other to itself—the subject comes to itself.[4] The true is, therefore, a result of the process of development in which what was there potentially is made actual. Only insofar as the rational becomes actual—that is, as the absolute (or God) realizes itself in history—does the actual become rational. In Hegel's philosophy the authority of reason is not denied; it is merely asked to travel through the *via dolorosa* of history and suffer crucifixion before it feels the heavenly light of resurrection.

The historiosophical turn of the concept of reason means that philosophy turns toward the world and, in particular, toward the theorization of its relationship to the world. In modernity this relationship can only be a dynamic and progressive one precisely because the absolute emerges out of negation, out of its collision with being. Hegel realizes the modernity of his own philosophy of *Geist*: "ours is a birth-time and a period of transition to a new era. Spirit *(Geist)* has broken with the world it has hitherto inhabited and imagined *(der bisherigen Welt seines Daseins und Vorstellens)*, and is of a mind to submerge it in the past, and in the labour of its own transformation. Spirit is indeed never at rest but always engaged in moving forward *(in immer fortschreitender Bewegung)*."[5] In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* Hegel contrasts this new concept of reason with that which prevailed in antiquity. He argues that the ancient concept of reason as *logos* means that the "in itself and for itself of consciousness only has an ethereal

formal existence as language *(ätherische formelle Existenz als Sprache)*."[6] The determination of the concept of reason as absolute spirit means that through the activity of the concept *(Begriff)* itself, spirit strives to overcome the opposition between the "in itself" and the "for itself," between being and thinking; hence, through becoming certain of itself as being all reality, it achieves its rational identity as absolute spirit. The split between thinking and being, which the Hegelian idea of spirit strives to overcome, is what defines the principle of modernity as active self-defining subjectivity. Reality must be grasped by self-consciousness in order for its rational content to be secured. Reason is not simply embedded in the structure of language as such. On the one hand, Hegel is modernist enough to understand the necessity of this split between thinking and being; on the other hand, the idea of reconciliation contained in the notion of spirit already indicates a romantic reaction against this disintegration of an ontological principle of ordering in modernity. The Hegelian concept of reason involves the idea of the redemption of fallen reality (or devalorized being) through the providentially guided journey of spirit in history. This journey is not endless; and the latest stage of the spirit's journey may also be its last, hence, the importance of the contemporary in the thought of Hegel.

Both Foucault and Habermas have recently argued that the philosophical discourse of modernity comes into existence when thought turns toward an analysis of the contemporary world rather than of the eternal problems that have been handed down in the philosophical tradition, and becomes conscious of its relationship to that world. Foucault argues that the inaugurator of this discourse is Kant, the Kant of *Was ist Aufklärung?* and *Der Streit der Fakultäten*. For Habermas, however, it is only with Hegel that the discourse proper gets under way, for only "in his theory does the conceptual constellation between modernity *(Moderne)*, time-consciousness and rationality become apparent for the first time."[7] What is central for both Foucault and Habermas is modern thought's recognition of its own historicity. According to Foucault, classical culture could only conceive of modernity in a "longitudinal relation to the ancients," which involved practical questions such as

"what model to follow" and questions of value comparison such as "are we in a period of decadence?"[8] With Kant, modern culture poses the question of its modernity in "an 'arrow-like' *(sagital)* relation to its own actuality."[9] Put simply, the philosopher now begins to read his newspaper, which is a creation of *bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit*, for news of those great historical events such as the French Revolution. Foucault cites as evidence for the self-reflexivity of modernity the fact that "the *Aufklärung* has called itself *Aufklärung*," as well as the fact that for Kant it is not the revolution as event that makes it a sign of progress but the revolution as affect; the enthusiasm of those who witnessed it, as did Kant, is a sign of a moral disposition in humanity toward freedom and peace. When Habermas makes Hegel the inaugurator of the discourse of modernity, he does so with the authority of Hegel himself; for the statement of the late Hegel that "philosophy is its own time conceptualized in thought" could stand as the philosophical signature of his whole oeuvre. Again it is the French Revolution that causes philosophy to pose the question of its own historicity. In an earlier essay Habermas notes that Hegel has celebrated the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille every year of his life, but that this celebration is in effect an exorcism.[10] Whereas Kant has not allowed himself to be mesmerized by the terror and judges it from the standpoint of the spectator, Hegel's abhorrence of it leads him to the view that the intellectual foundation of terror lies in the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Hegel's attitude toward the Enlightenment, in both its French and more particularly German form, leads him toward a critique of the formal and abstract character of *Moralität*. Hegel's interpretation of modernity forms a part of the hermeneutical horizon in which he grasps the tragedy of Socrates as a conflict between *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit* (morality and custom).[11]

If the task of modern thought is to grasp the principle of its own time in thought, then for Hegel that principle is subjectivity. It is important, however, to note that this principle is conceived metaphysically and not critically. Modern thought's recognition of its own historicity ultimately leads to relativism, but this terminus is not reached in Hegel precisely due to his retention and transformation of metaphysical notions such as

substance. The idea that substance is subject, as mentioned earlier, is also described by Hegel as the most sublime concept: "That the true is actual only as system, or that Substance is essentially Subject, is expressed in the representation of the Absolute as *Spirit (Geist)*—the most sublime Notion and the one which belongs to the modern age *(neuren Zeit)* and its religion."[12] With this metaphysical notion of the subject Hegel tries to solve "the problem of the self-certainty of modernity" (Habermas); it incorporates those elements of subjectivity that Hegel thinks of positively and lifts up *(aufhebt)* and those that he thinks of negatively. This means that Hegel's discovery of subjectivity as the principle of modernity is, at the same time, a critique of modernity. This principle attempts to conceive both of the nature of the modern world and its crises: "the world of progress and of estranged spirit."[13] Habermas argues that for Hegel the term *Subjectivität* has four connotations: individualism, the right of critique, the autonomy of action, and idealistic philosophy itself.[14] Furthermore, the principle determines, in Habermas's very Kantian reconstruction of Hegel's position, the forms of modern culture: it demagifies nature and liberates the knowing subject for the objectifying sciences; it desubstantializes customary life and elevates the subjective freedom of the individual to *the* principle of morality; and it deplasticizes the art object through the elevation of the principles of absolute inwardness and expressive self-realization in modern art.[15] Hence, there is a threefold separation of the domains of science, ethics, and aesthetics from their entanglement in the net of the life-world. Whereas Habermas tends to accept this separation as the hallmark of modernity, Hegel's philosophy of reconciliation *(Vereinigungsphilosophie)* tries to preserve, through lifting up *(aufhebt)*, what modernity tends to leave behind from the standpoint of the absolutization of the philosophy of the subject itself. Therefore, the philosophy that Hegel is most critical of is the one that most clearly expresses in thought the estranged structure of the modern world: subjective idealism.[16] In Hegel's interpretation of Socrates this separation of ethics from the life-world, which subjective idealism *inter alia* expresses, is read back into antiquity. What I want to argue in this chapter is that the power

that subjective idealism still exercises on Hegel's mind, despite the criticisms he makes of it, can be seen in the very Kantian Socrates that he depicts. In the early work of Hegel, Socrates is depicted as the advocate of a purely discursive and thoroughly disenchanted reason in contrast to the figure of Jesus within the Judaeo-Christian tradition. In the late Hegel, the conflict between *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit* is played out once again in the condemnation of Socrates in a situation in which neither is victor; rather, there occurs a mutual destruction of contending forces. From the standpoint of Hegel's philosophy of history, however, there emerges out of this destruction a new historical principle that will find its actualization only in modernity. Hegel's clear admiration for the discursive rationality of Socrates and for the unwillingness of the latter to accept the merely existent without asserting the right of free subjectivity to question conflicts with his critique of the formalism, abstractness, and impotence of the Kantian ought *(Sollen)* and his attempt to find a place within ethics for the authority of custom *(Sittlichkeit)* as represented by the Greek *polis*. In Hegel's retelling of the fate of Socrates, the *Urgeschichte* of modern rationality within the domain of ethics—the conflict between the individual's right of criticism and the *Sitte des Volkes*—forms the substance of the tragedy.

I

In his early writings, which have been published under the title *Early Theological Writings*, Hegel's thought circles around the attempt to articulate a form of Christianity that, while remaining within the orbit of what he calls in *Faith and Knowledge* the "principles of the north," experiments with the incorporation of elements that both precede and transcend this principle. The principle of the north, which is that of Protestantism, is "subjectivity for which beauty and truth present themselves in feelings and convictions *(Gesinnungen)*, in love and intellect *(Verstand)*. Religion builds its temples and altars in the heart of the individual."[17] Such a definition already goes beyond classic Protestantism in its incorporation of romantic

elements; however, for the early Hegel this is no problem, as the real danger to religion is in the tendency toward positivity. The positivity of the Christian religion rests in its dependence on the merely external authority of Christ, as made evident by his miracles, for the validity of its moral laws *(Tugendgesetze)*.[18] In Kierkegaardian terms, Hegel tries to reconcile Religiousness B with Religiousness A to form a religiousness in which elements of Protestantism, Kant, and Rousseau freely intermingle to form a version of Christianity in which there is no conflict between the immanent authority of morality and the transcendental authority of God. If this constitutes the part of the Hegelian experiment that goes beyond pure Protestantism, then what are the elements that precede it that Hegel also experiments with? The short answer is Greek religiousness.

As Taylor has rightly remarked, "Hegel's itinerary" involves an attempt at reconciling the expressivist current of romanticism with the rationalistic current of the Enlightenment—an attempt to reconcile the heart and the intellect *(Verstand)*, love and the law, freedom and reason *(Vernünft)*.[19] Within the expressivist current, however, there circulates images not merely of the 'beautiful soul', but also of an "integrated civilization," to use Lukàcs term. Hence, the concern of the "Fragments on Folk Religion and Christianity" is to develop a form of religion that will respect the claims of the Enlightenment and both strands of the expressivist current of romanticism. Hegel argues that the objective doctrines *(Lehren)* of a *(Volksreligion)* must satisfy three criteria:

1. Its teachings *(Lehren)* must be founded on universal reason.
2. Imagination, the heart, and the senses must not go away empty-handed in the process.
3. It must be so constituted that all of life's needs, including public and official transactions *(die öffentliche Staatshandlungen)*, are bound up with it.[20]

A folk religion is, therefore, not in conflict with a rational religion *(Vernünftreligion)*, as it reconciles the principles of imagination and reason, but is in conflict with a belief in

fetishes *(Fetischglauben)*.[21] As a public religion, a folk religion is also in conflict with a private religion *(Privatreligion)*, whose task is merely the cultivation of morality.[22] The critique of fetishism secures the rationality of a folk religion for Hegel, and the critique of privacy its potency. It reconciles the opposition between *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit* that modernity creates by acknowledging the respective claims of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. Hegel pulls these ideas together in quite an elaborate metaphor that centers on the image of milk *(Milch)*. This image returns in his later interpretation of Socrates, where it links religion to custom as mother's milk *(Muttermilch)*. In his early interpretation it is not mother's milk but *Wehmuttermilch* or *Säugammemilch* that concerns Hegel—that is, the milk of the midwife or wet nurse, which is religion, that expresses into its child the warm liquid composed of equal measures of reason, feeling, and love of fate.[23] Hegel writes that

> in harmony with these, his wetnurse (i.e. religion) reared this child without fear of the rod or ghosts in the dark *(Finsternis)*, without the bittersweet honey bread of mysticism *(Mystik)*, which the stomach grows tired of, or the fetters of words which would keep him perpetually immature *(Unmündigkeit)*. Instead she had him drink the clear and healthful milk of pure feelings *(lauterer und gesunder Milch reiner Empfindungen)*. . . . Her dominion *(Herrschaft)* holds sway forever, for it is based on the love, the gratitude, the noblest feelings of her ward. She has coaxed their refinement along, she has obeyed his imagination's every whim—yet she has taught him to respect iron necessity *(eiserne Notwendigkeit)*, she has taught him to conform to this inalterable destiny *(Schicksal)* without murmur.[24]

This warm milk is, therefore, still most definitely an agent of *Mündigkeit*. The answer to the question of how mankind can escape from *Unmündigkeit*—the question of Kant's "What Is Enlightenment?"—is not simply the courage, for Hegel, to use one's reason but involves the capacity for pure feelings and a relationship to fate *(Schicksal, moira)*. This redefinition of *Mündigkeit*, which now contains elements both of romanti-

cism and Greek religion, still emphatically retains *Mündigkeit* as a value.

The image of Socrates that Hegel presents in this context is one of an agent of *Mündigkeit*, such as *Wehmuttermilch*. A synonym of *Wehmutter* is *Hebamme*. The maieutic art of bringing youth to maturity is, in the play of metaphor, always a womanly art. Although Hegel stands, therefore, for a folk religion that is both rational and enlightened, he avoids the 'manly' self-assertion of Kant's call for courage through a shift to a maternal metaphor that reconciles reason and fantasy, privacy and publicness, freedom and authority. Hegel draws a portrait of Socrates that harmonizes with this verson of Enlightenment. He begins his reflections with the suggestion that it is only through writing that one can achieve a large-scale effect, for "here the educator *(Belehrer)* stands on an invisible dais *(unsichtbare Kanzel)* before the entire public."[25] Such an educator, however, finds it very easy to berate the public but lacks the courage to address himself to his own circle. Hegel argues, therefore, that if criticism does not begin within the medium of conversation that constitutes a circle *(Kreis)*, then it degenerates into drivel *(Radotage)* and theoretical quackery *(theoretische Quacksalberein)*. Writing needs conversation if it is not to lapse into dogmatism. The distinction that Hegel develops here is between the dialogue that a republican ethos demands and the dogmatism of certain religious ethoses. Only a republican ethos promotes a democratic form of enlightenment. A religious ethos of preaching *(predigen)* and disciples *(Apostel)*, even if it proclaims itself to be in the service of enlightenment as does the ethos of the Masons, rests ultimately on the magical and a dogmatic form of instruction. Hegel illustrates the latter through a contrast between the pedagogical style of Socrates and that of what he calls the national poets of the Jews:

> Socrates, who lived in a republican state where every citizen spoke with every other . . . without didactic tone, without the appearance of wanting to enlighten *(belehren)*, he would start an ordinary conversation, then steer it in the most subtle fashion toward a lesson

> *(Lehre)* that taught itself spontaneously *(die sich von selbst gab)*. The Jews, on the other hand, were long accustomed to being harangued *(haranguiert)* in a far cruder fashion by their national poets. The synagogues had accustomed their ears to direct instruction *(Belehrung)* and moral sermonizing.[26]

Here the opposition between indirect and direct, naive *(unbefangen)* and calculated *(haranguiert)* modes of instruction *(Belehrung)* defines the limit at which enlightenment turns into dogmatism.

In this context, the Jewishness of Christ's disciples is unfavorably compared with the Greekness of Socrates' disciples. For example, the open-ended number of Socrates' students is contrasted with the magically closed circle of twelve apostles. Furthermore, the nullity of these disciples in comparison to Christ is contrasted with the independent greatness of Socrates' students. Socrates is one who needs no disciples; he ascends no mountains and takes no voyages into deserts as Christ does, and he never speaks *ex cathedra*. He is an example of a type of moral individuality that still retains a relationship to beauty, which submission to law denies to the type of moral individuality as defined by Kant. Hegel argues that "he had no mould *(Model)* into which he wanted to pour his own qualities, no rule *(Regel[n])* by which he sought to level out their differences. . . . Each of his own pupils was a master in his own right *(Meister für sich)*."[27] In other words, he respected the moral personality of each of his students and did not want to keep them in a state of *Unmündigkeit* by magical means, such as resurrection. Instead, according to Hegel, he spoke to them of the immortality of the soul through the simple use of reason and imagination. Enlightenment cannot be brought to us, as the good lies within us. It has to be brought out, not drummed in. Hegel argues that

> Socrates left behind no Masonic signs, no mandate *(Befehl)* to proclaim his name, no method for seizing upon the soul and pouring morality *(Moralität)* into it; the agathon is born in us. It is not something that can be drummed into us by preaching. . . . He laid down no

> *ordinem salutis*. . . . Instead he knocked on the right door to begin with; dispensing with mediators *(Mittler)*, he led the individual only to himself without asking him to provide lodging for a guest, i.e. a spirit who was a perfect stranger *(wildfremden Gast)* who had arrived from some distant land. No, he was asked merely to provide better light *(Licht)* for this, his old landlord *(alten Hausherrn)*, whom the mob of fiddlers and pipers had forced to retreat into an old garret *(Dachkämmerlein)*.[28]

Socrates is neither a prophet with an *ordinem salutis* nor a sophist who relativizes the idea of the good, for the *agathon* is indeed this old landlord whom the sophists, those fiddlers and pipers, have forced into the garret. Socrates, in Hegel's reading, is the one who wants to return the good to the light and space of the downstairs rooms. He is not the overbearing guest or troublesome mediator. In short, he is not the parasite who interferes with the communication between the individual and his or her soul.[29]

Despite this almost celebratory tone and despite the critique of the Christian obsession with death, the oriental nature of its melancholy, and its anxiety-producing effects, which read almost as an anticipation of the Nietzschean critique, Hegel is still a Christian philosopher. Hence, if Socrates' students fare better than Jesus' disciples, that does not mean that Socrates is ultimately raised above Jesus. The importance of Jesus is world-historical for Hegel, even if his disciples were mere examples of Jewish culture. If it were not for the divine nature of Jesus, Hegel argues, he would be no greater exemplar of moral virtue than Socrates. This is the case even though the divinity of Jesus means that it costs him but a word to cure the sick, whereas for Socrates the perfection of moral character was a lifelong task. We could imitate the Socratic model, Hegel argues, but never the transcendental model that Jesus offers. Hence, the argument for Socrates' superiority falls down, according to Hegel:

> when our understanding *(kalten Verstandes)* coldly pursues such a line of reasoning, our imagination *(Phan-*

> *tasie)* pays no heed. It is precisely the ad-mixture, the addition of the divine *(der Zusatz des Göttlichen)* that makes the virtuous individual Jesus fit to be an ideal of virtue. Without the divinity of his person we would have only the man; whereas we have truly a superhuman ideal *(übermenschliches Ideal)*.[30]

This *übermenschliches Ideal* has been lost through the growing positivity of Christian religiosity. As usual, Hegel's criticism is mordant. Instead of public virtue or inner faith, the masses seek out all the external props to assure themselves of a future life. A 'morality of prudence' or, more accurately, shrewdness anchors such a private religion in contrast to the publicness of a folk religion, which Hegel sees as reconciling intellect and fantasy, the private and the public, *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*, the immanently ethical and the *Zusatz der Göttliche*.[31]

Hegel's later theological writings are concerned with the contrast between morality and positivity—that is, with the critique of Christianity and its reconstruction from a moral standpoint. The interest in Socrates, therefore, declines. In the *Positivity of the Christian Religion*, Hegel merely repeats his thoughts on the difference between Jesus' and Socrates' disciples; however, there is an important section concerned with the "difference between Greek phantasy and Christian positive religion."[32] Here positive religion is viewed as having grown out of the collapse of freedom in the ancient world; it is the spiritual correlate of political despotism. Greek and Roman religions were, for Hegel, the religions of free men. The republican ideal was one of self-mastery *(enkrateia)*. The ideal of self-legislation typical of Kantian morality or external direction typical of private religion is foreign to it. This external direction is what links positive religion and political despotism. Late antiquity was not a realm of freedom in any sense. Hegel argues:

> As free men the Greeks and Romans obeyed laws laid down by themselves. . . . They neither learned nor taught [a moral system] but evinced by their actions the moral maxims *(übten Tugendmaximen durch Hand-*

> *lungen aus)* which they could call their very own. In public as in private and domestic life, every individual was a free man, one who lived by his own laws.[33]

These maxims of virtue and the importance of the idea of the *polis* for the individual are the two most important value concepts in antiquity. With the breakdown of the *polis* and the decline of this *ethos*, death became a terrifying phenomenon. Hegel argues that faced with the brutality of the contingent, people fled into the magical. The rise of the Church and its accommodation within the Roman Empire is based on the slander that man's nature is essentially corrupt. Religion seeks its legitimation from the miraculous, and the moral teaching of Christ is lost. The solution to this problem in modernity is, however, no longer seen to be a folk religion but a reworking of the notion of *Moralität* so that it loses its Kantian harshness and incorporates more of the expressivist ideal. Instead of founding morality on the domination of inclination *(Neigung)*, Hegel proposes a supplement *(Ausfüllung)* of the law: "an inclination with the law whereby the latter loses its form as law. The correspondence with inclination is the *pleroma* (fulfillment) of the law."[34] He illustrates reconciliation *(Versöhnlichkeit)*, which he calls a modification of love *(Modifikation der Liebe)*, most strikingly in his retelling of the story of Mary Magdalene. With the movement from the attempt to construct a folk religion to a theory of love, Socrates cedes his place in the reflections of Hegel to the figure of Jesus.[35]

For Jesus, virtues were 'modifications of love'. For Kant, virtue was a result of subjecting oneself to one's own law. For Socrates and the Greeks, virtue was a product of self-mastery, a self-mastery achieved not through a submission to law but through the care of the self *(heautou epimelia)*. Love is reconciliation because "in love man had found himself again in another."[36] In the mature Hegel the motif of reconciliation breaks the bonds of mere love, be it either human or divine. It becomes the *telos* of world history itself. World history also presupposes, like love, the overcoming of division *(Trennung)*. The fate of Socrates in Hegel's later work illustrates just such a division.

II

If in modern times philosophy turns toward the contemporary, then what legitimates philosophy's turning toward its own past? The answer is that even if philosophy no longer looks to the past for models with which either to ground or criticize itself, it is nevertheless important for philosophy to search the past for confirmation of its own self-certainty. To put it in psychoanalytical terms, modern philosophy is essentially neurotic; just as the restrained and upright self-certainty of the inauthentic Puritan individual only barely hid a mass of self-doubt and guilt, so also with modern philosophy. The need to conceive of the modern world as the product of a world-historical developmental process links *Zeitdiagnose* and a historical impulse. As Koselleck argues, "Modernity *(Neuzeit)* lends to the whole of the past a world-historical character; . . . diagnosis of modern times and analysis of past epochs belong to one another."[37] Habermas's paraphrase of the latter argument continues: "to which corresponds the new experience of progress and the acceleration of historical events, and the insight into the chronological simultaneity of historically nonsimultaneous developments."[38] Thus, although the trial of Socrates precedes the development of Kantian ethics by more than two thousand years, it becomes in Hegel's interpretation a contemporary event because of the difficulties it reveals for any form of ethical rationalism. Through the trial of Socrates, Hegel puts modernity on trial. It is only from this vantage point that the untimely actuality of Socrates, for Hegel, can be grasped.

Hegel's most significant and extended piece of writing on Socrates occurs in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. I shall try to interpret this account of the life of Socrates in light of Hegel's ideas concerning both the nature of antiquity and the 'problems' of modernity. Insofar as they are relevant to this reading, sections of Hegel's other works will also be called on: namely, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Aesthetics*, and *The Philosophy of Right*.

Hegel introduces Socrates as a "*welthistorische* Person" and as a "major turning point of the spirit in itself."[39] He is one of

the first major portraits in "the gallery of the heroes of *reason's* thinking,"[40] who complete the bringing into consciousness of "the subjectivity of thought *(Denkens)*."[41] In line with his general philosophy of history, the products of absolute spirit are no less a product of their time than any other objectivation. His historicist impulse also informs his reading of Socrates; yet what is no less true of Socrates for Hegel is his ability to go beyond the last shape of reason's thinking. This is the dialectic that forms his reconstruction of the history of Greek philosophy. The two vital elements of Greek thinking that Socrates reconciles, and by that gesture separates himself from the sophists, are the Anaxagorian concept of *nous*, which raised thought to a negative power over all that is determined and existent (the similarity with Hegel's description of *Verstand* in the preface of *Phenomenology* and elsewhere is striking), and the Protagorian concept of the 'I' as a negative unity. Although Protagoras took the concept to be in movement, this movement occurs outside the 'I' as such. Hence, sophistry collapses into relativism when man becomes the measure of all things, whereas with Socrates, according to a striking expression of Hegel's, man "as thinking" *(als Denken)* is the measure of all things. The Socratic 'I' is mediated by the concept and, hence, is "the universal ego *(ich)*," which as self-subsisting consciousness is the good itself. Consciousness may be mediated by thought to produce the good, but the good must be known by me. With this assertion, according to Hegel, "infinite subjectivity, freedom of self-consciousness" has arisen in Socrates.[42] Hegel notes here, significantly from my point of view, that this principle is very much demanded in his own time. This is not quite the self-positing subjectivity of Hegel himself, as that notion reflects a dynamic, progressive, and future-oriented modernity. Here the self does not have to subsist with itself while deploying itself in history; it only has to make its way through the marketplace of Athens. Hegel now introduces the conflict that determines his reading of the fate of Socrates: the conflict between truth posited through thinking and "*die unbefangene Sitte*," which is mistranslated as "untrained morality" and is better rendered as "the unaffected or natural ethical order" or, more simply, "custom." Whereas

truth is produced by the thinking of the universal 'I', Sophocles remarked, as Hegel observes, that no one knows where "*die unbefangene Sitte*" comes from. Here we see resumed in a peculiar way the Greek distinction between *nomos* and *physis*, between the self-instituted law that is conventional and yet also generalizable (with regard to the individual, Hegel calls this morality) and the natural or rather pseudonatural character of the already-always instituted customary order, which is for Hegel *Sittlichkeit*.[43] Socrates was at odds with his fellow Athenians because he was a moral man, whereas they were only 'ethical men' *(sittliche Menschen)*: "the ethical order *(Sittlichkeit)* is natural *(unbefangen)*, the ethical order which is bound together with reflection is morality *(Moralität)*."[44] Hegel notes that this distinction has been made again in recent times by Kant. Socrates is linked to Kant in the thinking of Hegel because both belong to the tradition of moral philosophy. "Morals *(Moral)* mean," according to Hegel, "that the subject posits autonomously *(aus sich)* and freely *(in seine Freiheit)* the determinations of the good, the ethical *(Sittliche)* and the just, and insofar as these determinations are posited autonomously *(aus sich)*, any particular autonomously posited determination *(Bestimmung des Aussichsetzens)* is also raised up *(aufhebt)*, so that it is eternal. They are being in and for itself *(an und für sich)*."[45]

The fact that these two ethical powers must come into collision constitutes the fate of Socrates. Hegel can argue this even though he also recognizes that in the spirit of the Athenian people one can see "the ethical order transformed into morality" and that Socrates only brought this change to the height of consciousness.[46] Nevertheless, for Hegel both ethical powers had to come into conflict in antiquity, and this conflict determines the fate of Socrates. As I have already suggested at the beginning of this chapter, this conflict between the godly right of the natural ethical order *(Sittlichkeit)* and that of consciousness in its subjective freedom *(Moralität)* can be related to Hegel's conflict with subjective idealism. I would like now to pause to consider the validity of such a thesis in light of Hegel's general construction of the history of philosophy.[47]

I have already pointed out the way Hegel solves the anti-

nomy between relativism and universalism in his philosophy of history. The effect of the twin doctrines that philosophy belongs to its own time and that *Weltgeschichte ist Weltgericht* is that the individual can never escape his or her time because his or her time is but a moment in the world-historical time of spirit. Hegel's judgment as to the fate of Socrates, whom he considers not merely to be an individual but one of reason's great heroes, can easily be inferred from the following: "The individual is a son of his people, of his world. He may give himself airs as he likes but he does not transcend his time."[48] The authoritarian gesture of the world spirit, assured of its own progressive character, dismisses the vanity of the individual as ultimately pointless. The remnant of this philosophical theme within Marxism is what Benjamin wrote so beautifully against in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History." The other consequence of the doctrine is that once the theory of the absolute spirit is given up, as it must be and was in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the historicistic element alone remains, with the consequent inability of the philosophy of that time to explain the historically new and the transhistorical validity of the higher cultural objectivations.[49] But the universalistic element of the doctrine does satisfy, as Habermas rightly points out, modernity's need for self-certainty: to create its own normativity out of itself. This doctrine entails, more specifically, that no philosopher, no philosophical system, and no philosophical epoch can constitute a normative model for modernity. *'Il faut être absolument moderne'*. Consequently, Hegel chides attempts by his contemporaries to revive outmoded philosophies as if they had no idea that in modernity the craving for what is out of date is only the other side of the craving for novelty. Past philosophies are present but not actual. The reason for why they are not actual is that the shape of philosophy has moved on. But why are they still present? Do they represent, in Marx's phrase, the childhood of humanity? Hegel argues that to propose to reawaken older philosophies "by putting back into them the spirit which has developed further, plumbed more of its own depths, would be impossible, just as stupid as for a man to propose to labour to be a youth again, or for a youth to be a boy or a child again, although man, youth and child are one and the

same individual."[50] From the standpoint of modern hermeneutics, such statements do indeed stem from the childhood of modernist philosophy, which sought to reduce history to a pseudophysis in order to legitimate its doctrine of progress.

The way in which Hegel ascribes progress to the history of philosophy places limits on my thesis, which asserts that when Hegel discusses Socrates he is also discussing subjective idealism; for Hegel bases his whole project on the strict separation of world-historical epochs. Progress in the history of philosophy is determined by Hegel in line with his basic categorical framework: thought as the merely abstract universal gives way to self-determining thought or the concept, and it in turn gives way to the idea or the self-realization of the concept wherein the latter becomes identical with reality. The Orient is the homeland of thought; but because the oriental consciousness is a religious one, it does not detain Hegel. For him there are only two forms of philosophy: Greek philosophy, which discovered the concept, and Germanic philosophy, which discovered the idea. Two things need to be said about this discovery of the concept. First, it is only possible on the basis of freedom, which Hegel goes on to define further as personal and subjective. Later I will argue that the master-slave dialectic of the *Phenomenology* is a one-sided depiction of the necessary sociopolitical conditions that make possible the birth of the freedom of self-consciousness out of oriental despotism. In my mind this tying together of the birth of philosophy and freedom is forgotten by Hegel in his criticism of Socrates' decision not to go into exile.[51] Second, this discovery of the concept is a development of Attic philosophy; it emerges in Anaxagoras, but is brought to full development by Socrates himself. The Germanic discovery of the idea absolutizes the spirit as subjectivity by making it the self-knowledge of reality. This absolute self-awareness is defined by Hegel as freedom. As in Christianity, man as man has infinite worth; the characteristic of modernity is subjective freedom. As Greek philosophy was earlier described as embodying subjective freedom, wherein lies the difference? Of course, part of the answer lies in the fact that in the Greek world only some were free; that is, all were not yet equal before the sight of God. More importantly,

Hegel argues that the Greeks were naive and saw no beyond—no *mundus intelligibilis*—of the subjective determination by the concept. Hence, Hegel takes the Kantian position and its followers to be the representative position of subjective idealism and warns that "we must hold fast to the different outlooks of Greek and modern philosophy, or otherwise, owing to the similarity of their results, we shall fall into the error of not seeing the specific character of modern subjectivism."[52] Although Hegel is right to suggest that we cannot assimilate Socrates' thought to modern Kantianism,[53] this cannot hide the fact that his critique of both figures is animated by his attempt to replace the empty formalism of the moral standpoint with the standpoint of a reflected, and not naive, *Sittlichkeit*.

III

The next step in Hegel's analysis of Socrates is an outline of the latter's life. This is necessary because Socrates created no system, which for Hegel is the highest form of philosophizing, and because his life practice and his life fate were integral parts of his philosophy. Hegel depicts a Socrates who was a good son of his time, which is to say a good and courageous free citizen of Athens, who also fulfilled all the customary religious obligations, including, as Hegel mentions elsewhere,[54] sacrificing a cock to Asclepius. As well as noting that Socrates was a good son of his time, however, Hegel sees a new principle emerging in Socrates that is to come into conflict with his time: "the becoming-inward of consciousness."[55] The type of subjectivity that Socrates brings into the world is not an abstract and formal one, but one that is still mediated by what is natural and sensuous. Hegel depicts Socrates as one who "stands before us (has lived amongst his fellow citizens) as one of those great plastic natures (individuals) completely of one piece, as we can see them to have lived at that time,—as a complete classical work of art, which has brought itself to this height."[56] Before turning to Hegel's depiction of Socrates' two other characteristics—his moral virtuousness and Attic urbanity—I shall deal firstly with Socrates' plasticity.