

Introduction

A DIALECTICAL GENEALOGY OF SELF, SOCIETY, AND CULTURE IN AND AFTER HEGEL

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Against the current drift into cultural and political minoritarianism, I believe that without Hegel and Marx in our toolbox we are doomed to flounder in a world marked by the split between postmodern indifference and premodern passion.¹ Inasmuch as postmodernism pronounces itself to be post-Hegelian and post-Marxist—if not post-Freudian—I think we are called to account for this remarkable shedding of intellectual weight as something akin to cultural anorexia.² How did Hegelianism-Marxism fall so low in the current market of ideas? The answer, paradoxically, can come only by asking the ghosts themselves what it was that killed them. So we must let them speak—as we do in the present collection of texts and commentaries. I hope that they help convince us that we cannot afford to trash our Hegelian-Marxist culture because it contains the very engine of cultural renewal that has always been the mark of any great cultural apparatus.

The texts here suggest a persistent topos in Western philosophy, namely, the narrative of the rise of human consciousness from within the world of nature and a historical society that recognizes itself through such a story. This narrative of the struggle over recognition and desire may be regarded as the secular sequel to the biblical narrative of a failed

1. John O'Neill, "Critique and Remembrance," in *On Critical Theory*, ed. John O'Neill (Washington, DC.: University Press of America, 1989), 1–11.

2. John O'Neill, *The Poverty of Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

recognition between the Creator and the creation. In this sequel, life, labor, and language are each subject to a historicized dialectic of (unconscious) desire and (class) recognition, developed in the Hegelian-Marxist and in the Freudian version of the economy of recognition, reciprocity, and alienation. We can find a persistent concern with the issue of human reciprocity and alienation (to put it most simply) throughout the human sciences. Within this history, I have reconstructed a genealogy of the dialectic of recognition that derives from:

- the Hegelian-Marxist master-slave relation
- French commentary by Kojève, Hyppolite, Sartre, and Lacan that has been central to existential philosophy, politics, psychoanalysis, and literature with the result that the latter disciplines have reworked their original sources in remarkable ways
- German commentary by Lukács, Habermas, Gadamer, and Siep as well as Avineri, Harris, and Kelly, which has considerably clarified the background in political economy and hermeneutics required to situate the Hegelian master-slave dialectic within the history of bourgeois society and the attempt to elaborate an emancipatory critique of its social relationships
- some contemporary commentary in which the problematic of the master-slave dialectic is translated into the recognition-scene of critical hermeneutics weighted by Freudo-Lacanian concepts of the split-self, misrecognition, and alienation

The overall effect of these selections is to show how the Hegelian-Marxist topos is a contested one, shot through with the problematic of difference in class, race, and gender, and thus how it constitutes a model of de-canonization along the lines of contemporary debate in the academy.

From Hegel to Freud/Lacan we can discern a persistent attempt to analyze the reproduction and resolution of the cultural knotting of subject who must "split," so to speak, in order to become a social subject. Hegel describes this dialectic in terms of the dynamics of an intra-subjective division and an intersubjective exchange. Marx translated this dialectic into class-division, alienation, and communism, while Freud recast it in the dynamics of transference, religious illusion, and civilizational discontent. In each case, the certainties of narcissism, solipsism, and possessivism—and their institutional displacements—are inserted into an expanding cycle of dialectical reciprocity without which "we" can make no progress. As Hegel shows in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, to ask what something or other means is either to ask

for the thought (*Gedanke*) behind an expression (*Vorstellung*), or else to ask for an instance or example (*Beispiel*) of the thought. The passage—translation or recollection—involved in either case is itself exemplary of the self-transformation of consciousness as narrated in the *Phenomenology*.

It is the destiny of sensuous experience to be raised to the level of the concept just as the concept itself must find instantiation in the sensuous. Spirit (*Geist*) is at home (*zu Hause*) in the contents of the world not as one more thing in the world but as the example or model (*Vorbild*) of all things. In short, the world and the spirit presuppose interpretation. In Hegel, however, interpretation cannot be based on mimesis, since that model lacks the dynamic force of transformation that Hegel locates in the soul's incorporation of meaning in order to emphasize the activity of self-production and appropriation (*Aneignung*) in the interpretative act (*Meinen*):

We may be permitted here, in this appeal to universal experience, to anticipate with a reference to the practical sphere. In this connection we may answer those who thus insist on the truth and certainty of the reality of objects of sense, by saying that they had better be sent back to the most elementary school of wisdom, the ancient Eleusinian mysteries of Ceres and Bacchus; they have not yet learnt the inner secret of the eating of bread and the drinking of wine. For one who is initiated into these mysteries not only comes to doubt the being of things of sense, but gets into a state of despair about it altogether; and in dealing with them he partly himself brings about the nothingness of those things, partly he sees these bring about their own nothingness. Even animals are not shut off from this wisdom, but show they are deeply initiated into it. For they do not stand stock still before things of sense as if these were things *per se*, with being in themselves; they despair of this reality altogether, and in complete assurance of the nothingness of things they fall to without more ado and eat them up. And all nature proclaims, as animals do, these open secrets, these mysteries revealed to all, which teach what the truth of things of sense is.³

Hegel's pun on the "inability" of opinion to mean (*Meinen*) what it says—its inability to hold onto "mine" without "thine"—turns off the

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1947), 158–59.

capacity of language to transform commonsense, rational, and mythical discourse.⁴ As Sussman's commentary shows so well, however, there is a constant return of the repressed evinced in the double pun on alimentary, reproductive, and spiritual transformation, in which communication and communion are themselves redoubled. Neither can be reduced to the other—there is no community without the body and no body without community, just as there is no communion without the body and no body without communion.⁵

In sense-certainty we are (un)certain of the primacy of sensation ("Like, man, I'm *seeing* this whale") or of the primacy of the object ("Man, I'm *talking* whale; I saw this—like—huge, *really* huge whale!"). As soon as we ask, "Where, what sort, with whom?" sense-certainty is mortified by the rejection of its insistent language: it is puzzled by the request for the observance of laws and convention, of communication that it had hoped to bypass. This occurs because there is no *punctum* outside language. Thus, "Like, man, I'm walking along this street . . ." or "Like, there's this car, and I'm walking along this street . . ." in striving to place the object "immediately" in consciousness or to present the *punctum* of consciousness as an object on the same level as its object, can only stage itself through the impersonal, "*man*," or "*you know*," that is, by invoking the collective speech whose grammar it seeks to forget. In short, naive realism cannot say what it means—"Like, I mean . . ."—without translation into what "we" mean; thus, it suffers that first reversal (*umkehren*) that substance and subject will experience throughout the course of Hegel's developmental phenomenology of mind and society. Sensory realism cannot say what it means without resort to classification—a more complex language game—just as opinion can clarify itself only through appeal to more complex levels of understanding and explanation: "Language . . . is the more truthful; in it we ourselves refute directly and at once our own 'meaning'; and since universality is the real truth of sense-certainty, and language merely expresses *this* truth, it is not possible at all for us even to express in words any sensuous existence which we 'mean.'"⁶

The limits of expression and knowledge are the limits of our language. So far from being the ultimate referent of language, our

4. Donald Phillip Verene, *Hegel's Recollection: A Study of Images in the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).

5. John O'Neill, *The Communicative Body: Studies in Communicative Philosophy Politics and Sociology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989).

6. *Phenomenology of Mind*, 152.

sensations are rule governed. Language has no foundational language games such as are proposed by sensory realists. Similarly, our perceptual acts, like seeing, imply a grammar in which they are linked to imagination and thinking. The latter are in turn presupposed in the act of perceiving an object in some relevant aspect, since any object is a unity of both internal and external properties.⁷

During the Jena years, Hegel himself had been tempted by a kind of speechlessness rather different from that of the sensate realist. It derived from his experience of the inadequacy of language to express either the divinity or the sublimity of nature, as well as its inability to capture the harmony in the Greek spirit. Yet, even in his awe before the waterfall at Reichenbach, Hegel had begun to grasp the living principle of contradiction as the endless identity through change that constitutes the waterfall. In fact, he saw that the encounter between himself and the waterfall could only be experienced in their mutual reflection:

To understand is to dominate. To endow objects with life is to make them into gods. To look at a brook, how it must fall according to the laws of gravity to deeper places, and how it is limited and compressed by the bottom and the banks, this is to understand its to give it a soul, to participate in it as something equal, means to make it into a god.⁸

Here Hegel's own language begins to join philosophy and poetry, just as the child joins its parents and the tool joins reason and the body. So Hegel calls speech "the tool of reason, the child of intelligent being." All three are modes of alienation, *Entäusserung*, that exteriorization of the spirit through which it produces its self-contents.

We are now a long way from Hegel's initial despair over the incapacity of language to capture experience, leaving us in estrangement (*Entfremdung*) from the source of our life and being. It is this experience that Hegel reenacts, so to speak, in his opening phenomenology of the language games of realism, solipsism, and skepticism, each of which threaten to return consciousness to silence. Hegel's account of the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness is taken by most

7. P. T. Geach, *Mental Acts* (London: Routledge, 1957); David Lamb, "Sense and Meaning in Hegel and Wittgenstein," in *Hegel and Modern Philosophy*, ed. David Lamb (London: Croom-Helm, 1987), 70–101.

8. Hegel, *Theologische Jugendschriften*, ed. Herman Nohl (Tübingen, 1907), 376.

commentators to occur through the experience of desire. Yet, as Navickas⁹ and Loewenberg¹⁰ have remarked, Hegel's account of how desire operates in the first stage of the constitution of self-consciousness is not easily understood. We have seen how Hegel arrives at consciousness as a structure—within—difference, as a living entity with subject and object polarities that continually conceals any exclusivity in either object—awareness or self-awareness. The sensory ego can never be satisfied on the level of appetite—"he eats like a pig"—because the growth of the living body is a more complex structure of differentiation and integration, involving higher levels of endo-/exo/structuring. Hence, the senses are subject to fading and exhaustion in the wake of the embodied subject even before we encounter the higher level of intersubjectivity that Hegel calls the "highway of despair" so far as natural awareness is concerned.

The commensurability of subject and object-consciousness appears to break down in the experience of desire since in canceling its object the desiring consciousness merely reproduces its object as the very essence of desire. Consciousness is therefore obliged to treat the object of its desire as something living, endowed with an opposing consciousness, that is, as the genus "life" in which our own life is lived out. Having achieved primacy over the object, self-consciousness has still to press on with the articulation of its own self-determination. To achieve this, self-consciousness must both split and integrate its awareness of its self *qua* "self" and its awareness of objects as "other" than itself but only as objects of thought. This structure is exemplified in the operation of desire in which I propose to myself an object that, in this very act, exerts upon me an irresistible attraction. I am, so to speak, my desire and I am not my desire. To integrate this conflict between the self and "its" desires, rather than to remain in endless subjection to the insatiability of desire on the level of appetite (I can never eat the one meal that will satisfy hunger), consciousness must propose to itself an object of desire that will shut down its enslavement to desire:


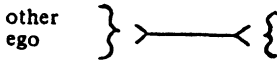
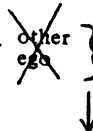
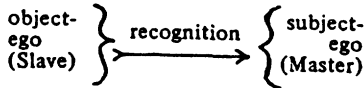


It is in these three moments that the notion of self-consciousness first gets completed: (a) pure undifferentiated ego is its first immediate object. (b) This immediacy is itself, however, thorough-going mediation: it has its being only by cancelling the independent object, in other words it is Desire. The satisfaction of

9. Joseph Navickas, *Consciousness and Reality: Hegel's Philosophy of Subjectivity* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976).

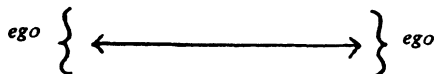
10. Jacob Loewenberg, *Hegel's Phenomenology: Dialogues on the Life of the Mind* (Lasalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1965).

THE MASTER-SLAVE DIALECTIC

Transitions

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|----|---|---|-----|--|
| A. |  | } | ego | Self-consciousness seeks for a reflection of itself in the external world (otherness). |
| B. |  | } | ego | It seems to find such a reflection only in another ego, which appears different. |
| C. |  | } | ego | It tests the other "ego" to determine whether that other is just a sensuously existent object, or a free self-consciousness like itself. It carries out this test by challenging the sensuous being (body) of the other. |
| D. | | } | ego | If it completely cancels the sensuous being of the other, however, it cancels the other ego. |
| E. |  | } | ego | It finally settles for a more practical arrangement, whereby it is satisfied with an external reflection of its own freedom in the other. |
| F. |  | } | ego | The object ego, forced to give recognition to the subject ego, comes gradually to recognize his own subjectivity, by a negative rebound. |
| G. |  | } | ego | The object ego, fully aware of his self-conscious freedom, ceases to be an object-ego, ceases to be a Slave. The subject-ego must therefore also cease to be "Master" of the Slave. |

All the preceding transitions should be understood in terms of the following ultimate transition:



H. In this transition, which does not take place until the end of the first part of the *Phenomenology*, the mutual recognition of egos replaces the various kinds of one-sided recognition; and intersubjectivity in the fullest sense ensues.

desire is indeed the reflexion of self-consciousness into itself, is the certainty which has passed into objective truth. But (c) the truth of this certainty is really twofold reflexion, the reduplication of self-consciousness. Consciousness has an object which implicates its own otherness or affirms distinction as a void distinction, and therein is independent. The individual form distinguished, which is only a living form, certainly cancels its independence also in the process of life itself: but it ceases along with its distinctive difference to be what it is. The object of self-consciousness, however, is still independent in this negativity of itself: and thus it is for itself genus, universal flux or continuity in the very distinctiveness of its own separate existence; it is a living self-consciousness.¹¹

Self-consciousness, then, must now encounter as its other a self-consciousness that can accord to it the same "self" that it is aware of in its own case. The transitions involved so far are nicely summarized by Kainz¹² on the previous page.

Before we can reach the level of the master-slave dialectic, there must occur a doubling of the subject/object-relation on the level of sociology as well as of epistemology. Henceforth, consciousness exists in a *double entente* of mutual recognition, that is, *intrasubjectivity is intersubjectivity*, the achievement of identity accorded to each by the other rather than as a self-insistent stance excluding all others except as objects of self-appropriation. Admittedly, even intersubjectively aware consciousnesses at first confront one another in creaturely isolation, more sure of themselves than of any other, more attached to their own life and survival than to anything else, as Siep and Harris show in their commentaries. Yet this very situation is unstable since, unless there is a conscious decision to risk "one's" life in the potential conflict with another "self" making the same decision, one will surely die—or be enslaved, as Sklar shows in her commentary. In short, self-consciousness must seek freedom as something higher than its own independence, since in the worst possible scenario only *one* self might survive the life-and-death struggle. This negative freedom would return us to the very impossibility of self-possession that the *Phenomenology* has so far demonstrated, and that finds its example in the stoic and the skeptic. Here Sklar's commentary is important inasmuch as it makes clear that the

11. *Phenomenology of Mind*, 226.

12. Howard P. Kainz, *Hegel's Phenomenology, Part I: Analysis and Comments* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: The University of Alabama Press, 1976), 86.

unending pursuit of the self by itself can only forge knowledge and community on the level of collective sacrifice. The figures of the epic hero, the stoic and the skeptic and the unhappy consciousness, are ridden by death, passivity, and uncreative consumption. Even so, Hegel sought to retain the hero's freedom in the face of necessity by translating the hero into the figure of the Athenian citizen whose freedom is given through the law. Of course, the Greco-Roman world remained politically divided, "dreaming" of its unity on the level of culture¹³ to be pursued in the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.

We cannot remove the equivocations in Hegel's concept of desire (*Begierde*), except to remark that he characterizes its operation in both presocial and social terms that must not be conflated, as Kelly's commentary reminds us. We might say that it is only from the standpoint of the social self that its natural, precontractual self can be imagined—and then only as a spur to the imagination, to remind it of the impossibility of life before or after society. The importance of the commentary on the Jena period (Avineri, Habermas, Harris, and Lukács) is to show that there is neither reason nor freedom in the state of nature. Likewise, self-consciousness can only stage the life-and-death struggle as a *role* for itself that presupposes a common discourse for the display of rational, independent selves whose limit is sheer violence. Siep asks in his commentary whether Hegel is harking back to Hobbes in locating reason's mastery in the animal passions. I suggest the difference lies in their concept of imagination, which remains sensate in Hobbes but in Hegel is also related to recollection (*Erinnerung*) and language.¹⁴ In Hegel the sensate repetition of animal desire is mediated in human beings by the intention of tools that transform desire through cultural and institutional modes of appropriation and recognition.

We might say that for Hegel, Hobbes' fantasy of origins—*ex eundem e statu naturae*—remains an impossible originary fantasy without the mediation of language, and the intersubjective structures of which it is the originary condition. As we see from the commentary by Siep and Harris, this sublates the Hobbesian distinction between man as the material of society, ruled by fear, and man as the subject of society, the product of the laws that rule Leviathan. We can reflect on this in the

13. Stanley Rosen, *G. W. F. Hegel: An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

14. Jacques Taminiaux, "Hegel and Hobbes," in his *Dialectic and Difference: Finitude in Modern Thought*, ed. James Decker and Robert Crease (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1985), 1–37.

conflict between Creon and Antigone. In the struggle between life and death, between the family and the state, reasons of state are confronted with the reasons of the heart, if not the unconscious of androgyny. Here the father may not sacrifice the daughter/son to the law that reinstates his power. Rather, what confronts Creon is Antigone's appeal for reciprocity between generations so that the life of the state is not exhausted in its conflicts as it is when these are viewed only in the present time. What Creon has to learn is that Antigone is not threatening the state on the level of parity of the ruler and ruled but on the level of life where everyone is ruled by death—to which we can respond only in honoring the rituals of burial.

Reciprocity is not simply the reversal of its constituent terms: it is the ethical internalization by both terms of the relationship they bear to one another. In other words, reciprocity is the life of the collectivity in-and-for-us. In the episode on "Lordship and Bondage" a symmetric relationship is shown to dissolve into a conflict forces over life and labor. Whether the servant's renunciation of honor and his apprenticeship to the practical arts and sciences is a model for the priestly renunciation operative in the episode on the "Unhappy Consciousness," what is experienced here is the transformation of physical force into self-restraint and social service. "Civilization" has opened up the master-slave relation to the possibility of the craft of reflection with its proper orientation toward public-mindedness.¹⁵ Thus, we have the employment of a distinction between a substructural level of "need" and a superstructural level of "recognition," to which Hegel adds a third level of the specifically political or collective virtue (*Gemüt, Tapferkeit*), in which—despite Habermas's claim to an original critique—we may see the origins of his notion of *Mündigkeit* (political maturity) that is achieved in the ideal speech community as a model polis.

For this reason I believe it is important that Hegel thought less of the hierarchy involved in the shift from need to intersubjective communication than of the need for a political pedagogy that would encourage people to keep the collectivity in mind:

For Schiller this was the task of aesthetic imagination (in the broad sense): for Hegel it was the task of philosophy in general and of a philosophy of *Sittlichkeit* in particular. In Hegel's case, however, this process of coordination and self-evaluation had very definite correlates in the objective world of experience.

15. Lawrence Dickey, *Hegel: Religion, Economics and the Politics of Spirit, 1770–1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

That is because he regarded self-evaluation as a collective process to which a people must subject itself if it were to become a truly political and truly human entity. Thus, if Schelling had moved the point of indifference from external nature to internal man, Hegel was committed to moving it from a point internal to man to a point that would be external to him in the sense that it would be located in the world of a shared socio-economic and political experience. There, it was to become a subject of collective debate: and out of that debate, in which intuitions could become concepts and concepts intuitions, was to emerge, for better or worse, the political character of a people. In that context, Hegel's conception of the point of indifference is a point of departure for, rather than the culmination of, thinking about the Absolute.¹⁶

It must be stressed that Hegel sees the first estate as a product of the social division of labor through which it acquires the task, or "calling," of thinking the public mind, or of thinking in public how men should reproduce themselves not only on the level of need but on the level of humanity. So far from constituting a political elite, Hegel's first estate represents a moral group organized on the basis of a covenant theology to offer a countervailing force to the economism of the bourgeoisie. Now although Hegel locates the "voice" of what we may call the ideal political community in the first group, this group is constituted by its members' cultivation of "indifference" toward immediate needs and pleasures and by its reflective concept of an enlightened public.

In Hegel, education, *Bildung*, is operative as both a psychological and a sociological process that raises the need for unity from its barest intuition on the level of life's struggle to its full political conception:

For Hegel, *Bildung* brings the collectivity to a social point of indifference. It is the point where all things—body and spirit, the one and the many, intuitions and concepts, universals and particulars, subjectivity and objectivity, the organic and inorganic, the infinite and the finite—converge in one very pregnant textual and historical moment of "dramatic action." In a simple phrase, it is what Hegel called the moment of "living indifference," the point where "all natural difference is nullified" such that "the individual intuits himself as himself in every other individual." This moment, Hegel suggests, is when the idea of

16. *Ibid.*, 268.

individual." This moment, Hegel suggests, is when the idea of "a people" becomes a practicable political possibility. A people, he tells us, is neither a "mass" nor a "plurality." Rather, it is a "living indifference" with the potential for "organic totality" within itself. By that Hegel means the people have the possibility of becoming "self-constituting," of becoming a "cause" for itself. And should it realize that possibility it will be drawing nearer to "the Absolute," to true *Sittlichkeit*, "rising" toward the organic "from below," as he put it. In other words, "the people" are now the objective, social carrier of the "intuition" that had longed for unity, true *Sittlichkeit*. And were a people to try to realize itself as such, Hegel thought, it would open itself to the future and begin the kind of "pilgrimage" that leads ultimately to religious recollectivization.¹⁷

By now we are well into Hegel's later phenomenology of objective spirit and the mutuality of civic and state institutions. I do not mean to suggest that all this flows "directly" from the master-slave dialectic. It does so "dialectically" and how it does—both in Hegel's mind and in the history that he interpreted—is meant to be considered more closely through the commentaries by Lukács, Avineri, Habermas, and Harris, without imposing any unified thesis upon them.

Hegel's master-slave dialectic was, of course, subjected to Marx's world-shaking "misreading."¹⁸ We shall try to convey the main lines of Marx's appropriation of Hegel, while again leaving it to the reader to estimate from the commentaries by Lukács, Habermas, and Avineri exactly what is fair to Hegel even on Marx's own ground of economic history. In a few words, Hegel and Marx are agreed that there is no history (though there may be time) of nature outside human society, and that all history is the history of the social development of the human mind and its sensorium. What Marx adds to this is that it is the history of social relations that determines the generality of the sciences and arts rather than any objective natural referent outside human society. All history is "prehistory" until this pragmatic notion of the history of material and cultural institutions has emerged. This is not the history of a fall or of the soul's alienation in the body, but rather the slow history of how it is anyone becomes human in mind and body, in work, language, and politics. Once this shift in human consciousness has occurred, the

17. *Ibid.*, 273.

18. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

history of nature is the history of second nature endlessly refashioned in the order of political economy and the history of the civilized arts and sciences.

Human nature is the historical and civil achievement of ways of thought, perception, language, and labor through which we mediate our own humanity.¹⁹ Understood in this way, alienation is a necessary moment in the history of our lived-being:

But man is not only a natural being, he is a human natural being. This means that he is a being that exists for himself, thus a species-being that must confirm and exercise himself as such in his being and knowledge. Thus human objects are not natural objects as they immediately present themselves nor is human sense, in its purely objective existence, human sensitivity and human objectivity. Neither nature in its objective aspect nor in its subjective aspect is immediately adequate to the human being. And as everything natural must have an origin, so man too has his process of origin, history, which can, however, be known by him and thus is a conscious process of origin that transcends itself. History is the true natural history of man.²⁰

The human world involves at every level of sensation, perception, thought, and action a *social praxis* in which man's inner and outer worlds are mutually articulated. The human eye is civilized by what it sees in the field of art as is the human ear by the music to which it listens. In each case, what is proper to human physiology is inserted into a hermeneutical field whose own historical articulation includes the relatively autonomous praxes of optics, acoustics, art, and music:

Only through the objectively unfolded richness of man's essential being is the richness of subjective human sensibility (a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form—in short, senses capable of human gratification, senses affirming themselves as essential powers of man) either cultivated or brought into being. For not only the five senses but also the so-called mental senses—the practical senses (will, love, etc.)—in a word, human sense—the human nature of the senses—comes to be by virtue of its object,

19. John O'Neill, "Naturalism in Vico and Marx: A Discourse Theory of the Body Politic," in his *For Marx Against Althusser: And Other Essays* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), 97–108.

20. Karl Marx, *Early Texts*, trans. and ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 169.

by virtue of humanized nature. *The forming of the five senses is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present.* (emphasis added)²¹

In many ways Marx overstressed his difference from Hegel. Avineri's commentary rightly points to Hegel's concept of the transsubjective and nonindividual nature of property as what pertains to the person who is recognized as such by others. This is a remarkable extraction from the possessive individualism that is otherwise thought to be underwritten by the device of contract. Similarly, in his commentary Lukács calls attention to Hegel's concept of labor as the transformation of individual appetites into creative social work presupposing recognition of the other and the outline of a civil society, as found in his *Philosophy of Right*. Yet Hegel was also aware of the problematic of early industrialism—as Lukács, Avineri, Habermas, and Harris show in their citations from the works of the Jena period. I have included this commentary precisely because it shows how Hegel struggled with the social division of labor, property relations, commerce, money, commodity exchange, and alienation, yet did not abandon the enterprise of philosophical anthropology to the supposed natural necessities of political economy.

In view of the current concept of postindustrialism to which the relevance of Hegel and Marx is generally denied, I think it is imperative to hold on to the relevant difference between Hegel's concept of civil society and Marx's concept of class society:

The class nature of political power is to Marx a sin against the state's claim for expressing the universal as against the particularism and egotism of civil society. For Hegel, the institutionalization of class relationships into the political structure is the way through which the atomism of civil society is being integrated into a comprehensive totality. . . . While for Marx classes represent a division of labor that has to be overcome, for Hegel they stand for the integration of this division, regrettable, yet necessary, into a meaningful whole. (Avineri, 196)

Of course we cannot simply appropriate Hegel's concept of civil society—certainly not in its Platonic or quietist aspects, pointed out by Lukács and Avineri. Yet for his recognition of the civic task of reconciling difference in modern society I believe we cannot do without Hegel. Here

21. Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, trans. Martin Milligan and ed. Dirk J. Struik (New York: International Publishers, 1964), 141.

we may notice again the difference between the Hegelian and Hobbesian concepts of fear. The latter cancels itself in a greater authority, whereas in Hegel fear is an educative force on the level of both individual and society. Hegelian desire, likewise, is not presocial but mediated by other selves, through language and work.

In the French Hegelian-Marxist discussions of the master-slave dialectic a considerable first step was taken by Kojève in his "reading" of the *Phenomenology*, which percolated into the work of Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Hyppolite, and Lacan on the themes of recognition, desire, and death that are, of course, central to Lacanian psychoanalysis (to which we shall return later). Kojève's reading of Hegel is remarkable for its decisive anthropologization of desire or as the metonymy of desire of a desiring other who freely renounces his or her desire in an act that constitutes the arbitrary premise of human history:

Generally speaking, by accepting the four premises mentioned above, namely: (1) the existence of the revelation of given being by speech, (2) the existence of a desire engendering action that *negates*, transforms, given being, (3) the existence of *several* desires, which can desire one another mutually, and (4) the existence of a *possibility* of difference between the desires of (future) masters and desires of (future) slaves—by accepting these four premises, we understand the possibility of a *historical* process, of a *history*, which is, in its totality, the history of the fights and the work that finally ended in the wars of Napoleon and the table on which Hegel wrote the *Phenomenology* in order to *understand* both those wars and that table. Inversely, in order to explain the possibility of the *Phenomenology*, which is written on a *table* and which explains the wars of Napoleon, we must suppose the four premises mentioned. (Kojève, 50–51)

Kojève reads everything in the *Phenomenology* through the master-slave figure—a reading strategy that must be weighed in our own approach to it (see the commentaries by Sussman and Kelly) if we are not to lose sight of the more subtle dialectic of reason and violence in, for example, Merleau-Ponty's *Humanism and Terror* (1969) or Sartre's later *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1976). Here the "end of history" is preserved in order to avert the fall into relativism while nevertheless trying to avoid the equally violent fall into scientism—two moves that underlie the ideology of the end of historical narratives.

Hyppolite's commentary focuses on the dialectic of subjective and intersubjective desire at the heart of consciousness seeking mutual recognition through another self-consciousness in a life-and-death struggle:

In this new experience, the life element, the medium of life, becomes a new self-consciousness (the specific figure of the slave) and immediate self-consciousness (that of the master) poses itself facing it. Whereas in the prior experience the life element was only the form of the emergence of differentiated self-consciousnesses, it is now integrated to a type of self-consciousness. The two moments of self-consciousness, self and life, confront each other now as two unique figures of consciousness. This is the case throughout the *Phenomenology*. Just as master and slave oppose each other as two figures of consciousness, so noble consciousness and base consciousness, and sinning consciousness and judging consciousness, oppose each other until finally the two essential moments of every dialectic are simultaneously distinguished and united as universal consciousness and individual consciousness. (Hyppolite, 78)

Inasmuch as Sussman comments at length upon the similarities between Hegel's dialectic of recognition and Freud's dialectic of misrecognition taken up in Lacan (1968)—here it may be worth recalling how Hyppolite²² later came close to reading the *Phenomenology* as the discovery of the *historical unconscious* in the mind's history of its self-revelation, unfolding in:

- (a) Self-consciousness as *misrecognition* of itself in the figures of solipsism, complete, flattery, hypocrisy: and
- (b) as misrecognition that simultaneously involves partial recognition so they can chafe against each other until self-consciousness discovers its own truth.

If I suppress the other I suppress myself. Hyppolite moves the master-slave dialectic, which had arisen on the level of understanding, to a higher level of self-consciousness. Here the separation between the uncontrollable circumstances of life and the freely/contingent act of living toward death is internalized in the figure of the unhappy consciousness as the prototype of the failure of speculative consciousness to provide its own mirror:

- (a) this is the experience of an embodied self whose nature is appropriate only through *appetitive desire*—and

22. Jean Hyppolite, "Hegel's *Phenomenology* and Psychoanalysis," in *New Studies in Hegel's Philosophy*, ed. Warren Steinkraus (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977), 57–70.

- (b) the mutually recognized desire of self/other, or *anthropo-genetic desire*: so that
- (c) self-consciousness desires its own desire: but it can achieve this only in the circuit of *others* who likewise desire their own desire in
 - (i) mimetic rivalry—struggle to death;
 - (ii) repression of desire—service, work, cultures
 - (iii) sublimation of desire/*Bildung*.

It is Sartre who reverses the commonplaces of the master-slave dialectic. In Sartre, desire is social rather than presocial; the self is *solitary* and its language and emotions only *contingently* connected through insurmountable conflicts with others over whom it can establish no priority—contrary to the truce in the master-slave relation. If anything unifies Sartrean consciousness, it is its experience of nausea, its overwhelming disconnectedness. Yet Sartre allows the possibility of losing oneself in a melody or an “affair” (a love story)—perhaps even in the decision to write *La Nausée*. Such temptations are, however, to be scrupulously distinguished from the “bad faith” in both ascriptive and achieved identities (servant, leftist, professor) since—this side of God—human beings can never be what they “are.” For all else, Sartre would say, I am an open wound in the world of others and this wound cannot be sutured either by Hegel’s optimistic epistemology, in which I can know myself in the other for whom I am at first an object, or by Hegel’s optimistic ontology, where an overarching totality is postulated in order to reconcile its own conflicting elements. On the contrary, my encounter with the other always dissolves these two options. Only through embracing the conflict that is emblematic of intrasubjectivity can I begin to work through the “original choices” that have patterned my life and its relationships and thus assume responsibility for the original violence in my passions, my knowledge and my relationships.

Although Sartre later attempts to reconcile subjectivity and collectivity in the complex structures of his *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, we may see in his earlier work the movement of the master-slave dialectic into its most forceful figure that I shall call *the recognition-scene of philosophy/psychoanalysis*, which looks back to Hegel and forward to Lacan (see commentary by Casey and Woody). It should be said that it is Hegel’s dialectical concept of language and life that is borrowed by Lacan to redeem Freud’s early biologism and to place psychoanalysis beyond all egological figures of consciousness from Descartes to Sartre. Hegel, so to speak, shows consciousness its mirror in the world, society, and history just as Marx later showed consciousness its true face in the

mirror of production—and it is these two mirrors that are triangulated by Lacan's "mirror stage," that is, the infant's first misrecognition of its unified self reflected in a mirror.

Lacan regards the specular self as the originary model of alienation that is repeated on the levels of language and sexual difference in endless circuits of unfulfilled desire that cannot be broached either in incest or from the dead ends of sadomasochism (as we see in Benjamin's commentary on the *Story of O*). Nor can the subject of desire ever be absorbed in history since Lacan regards the individual's history as a history of the repression and subversion of (un)conscious desire that forever bars the way to *jouissance*, keeping death at the door of life:

Symbols in fact envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together, before he comes into the world, those who are going to engender him "by flesh and blood"; so total that they bring to his birth, along with the gifts of the stars, if not with the gifts of the fairies, the shape of his destiny; so total that they give the words that will make him faithful or renegade, the law of the acts that will follow him right to the very place where he is not yet and even beyond his death; and so total that through them his end finds its meaning in the last judgement, where the Word absolves his being or condemns it—unless he attain the subjective bringing to realization of being-for-death.²³

Once philosophy becomes inseparable from literature and psychoanalysis (see commentary by Sussman and Benjamin) we may ask whether desire can ever again be reconciled in the other or whether "we" are forever condemned to the mirror play of the self's misrecognition in the other—master or mother, slave or lover, writer or reader:

The fantasy of erotic domination embodies both the desire for independence and the desire for recognition. This inquiry intends to understand the process of alienation whereby these desires are transformed into erotic violence and submission. What we shall see, especially in voluntary submission to erotic domination, is a paradox in which the individual tries to achieve freedom through slavery, release through submission to control. Once we understand submission to be the *desire* of the dominated as well as their helpless fate, we may hope to answer the

23. Jaques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 68.

central question, How is domination anchored in the hearts of those who submit to it?²⁴

Can we still hold on to the romance of recognition and reconciliation at the end of a tortuous history or of a painful analysis? Here the initial problems we considered around solipsism appear to be swamped in narcissism. This may be due to the Freudian conception of origins in the infant fusion with the mother body whose own desire, like that of the father, may be "elsewhere." Here, if Adelman's commentary (supported by Hyppolite, Kelly, and Harris) on the Abraham story is considered, Freud may have restarted human history. In the biblical account, the misery of the "first man" arises because Adam is "nobody" and can only project his desires upon "Eve" as a first body. What the couple has to learn, as Benjamin also argues in her commentary, is to desire each in the other, to overcome narcissistic self-projection and the vicissitudes of sadomasochism in the labor and sacrifice of love.

The Bible account of the master-slave dialectic in effect sketches the structuralist account of the relation between the imaginary of Adam and Eve and the symbolic law, or real of reproductive labor. This is what permits Lacan to tease us with the taunt that "there are no sexual relations." What he means is that—to connect with our introductory remarks—there are no relations on the level of the imaginary that are social; it is only in the circuit of the symbolic that we are social beings. Whether we attribute the latter insight to Marx or to Lacan, it is insightful to turn the master-slave trope into a hermeneutic or deconstructive rule for resistance to the enslaving function of ideologies, canons, and classic texts. Thus, the text is not the mirror of either authorial or critical intention because, as Gadamer²⁵ has shown us, it is the text and its tradition that puts *us* into question. In effect, this recognition of our answerability to a tradition (literary, political, or scientific) modifies the contemporary dominance of "gaze hermeneutics," which so easily invokes an empty specularity that privileges contemporary ideologies of alienation and exclusion. Thus, the split-subject of language and interpretation must learn to struggle with interpretation on the levels of combat, play, and agony—all of which move in the light of the recognition of a potential reconciliation of the ratio of recognition and misrecognition—but within the limits of our respect for an unconscious residue of desire that cannot understand itself.

24. Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon, 1975), 52.

25. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).