

CHAPTER

1

THE INEFFABLE

What are the limits of knowledge and of language? This is the problem of non-knowledge and of the ineffable. The *Phenomenology* encounters it first on the empirical level as fatal ignorance, when Oedipus does not recognize his father in his offender and his mother in the queen that he marries, when in good conscience one acts as if one knows completely all the circumstances of an action. But this non-knowledge is relative. It does not imply necessarily an absolute non-knowledge, essentially escaping from the concept. The *Phenomenology's* philosophical consciousness moves against such an ineffable. The strained effort of conception must allow this original truth to be expressed conceptually, this original truth about which Reinhold speaks and in reference to which Hegel writes in his work on Fichte and Schelling that, if such a truth were

presupposed, it would be necessary to begin and end philosophy by forging inconceivable concepts rather than renouncing thought. To renounce discourse, to renounce the instituted community of consciousnesses, or to give oneself up to feelings that are below language are all the same:

Since the man of common sense makes his appeal to feeling, to an oracle within his breast, he is finished and done with anyone who does not agree; he only has to explain that he has nothing more to say to anyone who does not find and feel the same in himself. In other words, he tramples underfoot the roots of humanity. For it is the nature of humanity to press onward to agreement with others; human nature only really exists in an instituted community of consciousnesses. The anti-human, the merely animal, consists in staying within the sphere of feeling, and being able to communicate only at that level. (PH §69)

If it is true, however, that thought is a dialogue, a dialogue with another or with oneself, we can indeed wonder whether being lends itself to expression and whether it does not escape radically from the Logos which claims to signify it. In ancient philosophy, the problem is posed at the very level of the sensible world. What is merely felt is always fleeing, is in fact inexpressible, and science would not be able to remain science if it consists merely in sensation alone. The Platonist had to overcome the *doxa* so that human language is not objectless. Sensible being, as pure singularity or pleasure, is ineffable. Let us assume that singular things and souls exist in themselves. We would be able neither to conceive them nor to name them, since conception and language move within the universal. All the determinations through which we think things and which correspond to names are general determinations; they establish a community and a continuity between things which do not correspond to this opinion, which is, moreover, common, according to which the singular alone exists, is the first genuine object of sense certainty, the certainty which believes itself to be immediate and which claims to apprehend, on the far side of all language and all sense, an individual this or an incomparable this one. There would be therefore a "this side" of language which would be the immediate grasp of a being, of a being by nature ineffable.

There is, however, also a "far side," a "beyond" of language and of conception which appears as the object of a faith. The philosophies which Hegel studies in his Jena work, *Faith and Knowledge*, are for him philosophies of reflection which deny, more or less, knowledge in order

to make room for faith. Here the expression of non-knowledge is entirely at home. Knowledge would not be able to overcome the structure of experience as it is considered by the understanding and which is already implicit reflection. But, thanks to explicit reflection, knowledge discovers its own finitude. It is therefore only capable of negating itself and of allowing faith to overcome this knowledge. The Absolute then is the object of a faith and not of a knowledge. The Absolute is beyond reflection and all knowledge. Hegel shows how these philosophies of reflection retreat to the final subjectivity of knowledge, and drive everything into the mystery of a "beyond" of knowledge, into the mystery of an ineffable Absolute. Let us pause however at the analysis Hegel provides of Jacobi's philosophy, which he studies between the philosophies of Kant and Fichte.

Jacobi's philosophy has often been considered a philosophy of feeling, but this means only that it claims to replace knowledge with an immediate apprehension of being, to which Jacobi gives the general name, faith. Knowledge is only formal; it grasps no content; it structures propositions, and the only consistent philosophy is, for Jacobi, that of Spinoza, which moreover, Hegel tells us, Jacobi understands rather badly. But faith overcomes philosophy through the direct apprehension of an inconceivable content, of an unconditioned (the immediate) that it discovers in the finite as well as in the infinite. Thus Jacobi can write: "We are all born into faith and must remain in faith. . . . It is through faith that we know that we have a body and that outside of us other bodies and other sensible beings are present." In other words, faith here does not concern merely the eternal or God, but also finite beings themselves, insofar as they are existences, and in a formula which has a contemporary ring to it, Jacobi can write: "Doesn't the greatest attainment of an investigator lie in the unveiling and presentation of existence?," but this attainment, according to Jacobi, can be acquired only by separating it from the rational form of science which is incapable of this unveiling. The inconceivable, the unnameable is the singular being in its pure singularity, the existent. It is also the "beyond" of these finite beings, the transcendent, and the mutual relation of these two existents. Hegel tried to express Jacobi's worldview: "Now, this relation of an absolute finitude to the truly absolute is faith. In faith, finitude does recognize itself to be finitude and nothingness before the eternal, yet it manages this recognition in such a way that it saves and preserves itself as a being-in-itself outside of the Absolute" (FK 137). Certainly, Hegel recognizes that Jacobi is trying to maintain a singular vitality in moral life by asserting that "the law is made for man and not man for the law." But this vitality is buried in pure subjectivity, in the unsayable, singular soul. And the heroes of Jacobi's novels, the Allwills and the Woldemars, are always

tormented by themselves; they do not give themselves up to objectivity. These are beautiful souls, certainly capable of moral beauty, but incapable of forgetting themselves, of renouncing this consciousness of subjectivity, of renouncing this perpetual return of reflection upon the subject who acts: "The fundamental character of these figures is this conscious lack of objectivity, this subjectivity which is always attached to itself—the unhealthy moral character." Nostalgic suffering is the lot of beautiful souls, if, as the great poets, a Dante or a Goethe, have noted, hell is to be always self-aware, to reflect constantly on one's own action. By developing the theme of Jacobi a little, and this conception of faith that is opposed to knowledge, we would bring to light a primary silence before all language, a primary adherence to being which would be immediate and which knowledge understood as reflection and concept would disturb. This reflection, however, being capable of self-critique, of self-reflection, would discover its own nothingness and through faith would try to get back to the primary silence, the immediate contact with being. Philosophy—the expression of being in concepts or in discourse—would destroy itself. Silence, the ineffable, would be higher than speech. Like faith, non-knowledge would be the only possibility for man to overcome finite and conditioned knowledge, to overcome the knowledge which is stated in the mediation of discourse.¹

If non-knowledge, the inconceivable, the ineffable is an absolute limit of knowledge, then there is no absolute knowledge. Now, the *Phenomenology's* essential thesis is the establishment of absolute knowledge on the basis of the whole of human experience. Knowledge, however, is not only knowledge of being, it is also what makes the instituted community of consciousnesses possible. As the *Phenomenology* says: "The Dasein of the pure self as self." Language says things, but it also says the "I" (*le moi*) who speaks and it establishes communication among the diverse "I's." It is the universal instrument of mutual recognition: "In language, self-consciousness, qua singularity being for itself, comes as such into existence, so that it exists for others." In language, Hegel concludes, we can say that "the 'I' is this particular 'I'—but equally the universal 'I'" (PH §508). If, preparing for absolute knowledge, the *Phenomenology's* task is really double, if it is proposing simultaneously to show that being, life, is knowledge, and that self-knowledge is universal knowledge, that is, that universal knowledge sublates and absorbs all the consciousnesses of singular selves, it has to be the case that self-consciousness not be an ineffable singularity enclosed in its own intuition. It

1. Cf. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, 97–152, for Hegel's discussion of Jacobi's philosophy.

has to be the case that human discourse be simultaneously the discourse of being and the discourse of a universal self-consciousness. That implies the possibility of a universal recognition, of an intelligible discourse which is simultaneously this "I" and all "I's." Of course, the problem of recognition is not resolved immediately in Hegel's work. Violence is always possible, disdain or the haughty refusal to communicate, or even the feeling that one is unable to communicate at all. Barely having emerged from the pure self-feeling which defines animal existence, man faces a life and death battle from which spring the masters and the slaves, from which spring the workers who transform the world, a battle that lasts until thought presents itself as universal thought, conceptual thought; but discourse reproduces, in its own living dialectic, the confrontation of self-consciousnesses. It reproduces the movement of mutual recognition which is the very element² of absolute knowledge. Originally, what does the word *dialectic* mean, if not the art of discussion and dialogue? Socrates starts from popular opinions and forces his interlocutor to come out of himself, to confront his thought with that of another, a confrontation from which oppositions and contradictions come. Often the interlocutor is led to discover a contradiction in his own thought. He can then flee from Socratic irony, refuse to continue the debate or attempt to achieve harmony across the divergence of opinions. Thus dialectic is the moment of discourse that elaborates the development of a universal self-consciousness, in which singularity is at the same time universal, and in which universality is at the same time singular, that is, a subject which expresses itself and is constituted from determination to determination. Every other singularity, that is, every "I" who takes refuge in silence and rejects communication, even claiming thereby to reach an absolute on this side of or beyond expression, is the dupe of an illusion. Expression of sense is the work of thought and this work does not start from an ineffable which would be given first, nor does it lead beyond to an ineffable transcendence; sensible singularity, as well as the mystery of faith, are for Hegel illusions; or rather, since he could not allow unexplained illusions, sensible singularity and the mystery of faith are the presentation of the Absolute as pure nothingness or dissolution. Human life is always language, sense, without which human life loses its character and returns to animal life, and the singularity with which it thinks it has merged gets lost immediately in universality, but this is abstract universality. No less immediately, immediate being turns back

2. We are taking the word, *element*, in the Hegelian sense of medium (*milieu*), as when we say the "element of water." When saying "the self," we want to note, like Hegel, the absolutely reflective character of being itself and of the "I."

into nothingness. Only the becoming, which at the level of immediacy is already mediation, prefigures what this discourse will be, the reflection of being into itself, the Absolute as universal self-consciousness or as subject, positing itself, while at the starting point it was only presupposed, an empty name. "Apart from the self that is sensuously intuited or represented, it is above all the name as name that designates the pure Subject (that is, *hypokeimenon*, substance), the empty unit without concept" (PH §66). But yet again, what is this sensuously intuited or represented self? What is this sensible outside of the sense with which language endows it? On this point, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* contains analyses which will be taken up again on the ontological level of the logic and which can help elucidate already the famous reversal of being into nothingness with which this logic begins.

The refutation of the ineffable and the proper character of human language, as the Logos of being and universal self-consciousness, can be found again at several stages of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, from the first chapter on *sense certainty* up to one of the last in which the beautiful soul, rejecting universal recognition, sinks into nothingness, the sole expression of its failure. Of course, this development of self-consciousness seems able to be interrupted at each particular phase; it can get lost in violence (Socrates died as the victim of such violence) or it can be engulfed in boredom and dissolution. Dialectical discourse could therefore be interrupted, and skepticism is in effect always possible. What characterizes, however, this skepticism is that it always ends up as nothingness and that, in turn, it always has need of a new content in order to be able to dissolve it. This nothingness is nothing other than what is presented in living nature as death, and as pure and simple disappearance in nature in general. The consciousness which claims to live in pure singularity without thinking it or signifying it can in fact only be dissolved. In vain, it rejects language and discourse and claims to reach an ineffable absolute. What it says is the opposite of what it intends, and it is language which is right; or if it stubbornly renounces language, this consciousness can only get lost, dissolved. Let us repeat, this dissolution is always possible, and then the only virtual transcendence seems to be that of nothingness. Skepticism does not see that the discursive process is always being pursued, going from form to form, from figure to figure, from determination to determination, and that every nothingness is in a way determinate, "the nothingness of that from which it results." Skepticism itself finishes with the abstraction of nothingness; it isolates this nothingness as the ineffable, instead of thinking it as the internal negativity which allows discourse to follow its course by going from determination to determination. The consciousness, however, which claims to reach absolute being in singularity, either outside of itself or in

itself, is the victim of this claimed immediacy of being, and what it discovers instead of being is precisely nothingness, the transcendence of supreme abstraction instead of the sole concrete mediation. This passage from being to nothingness is the truth of immediate sense-certainty which, rejecting mediation, is then prey to becoming. Sense-certainty is consistent again only by accepting the determinations which establish the connection and community of all things, the connection and community which alone turn sensible singularity into an intersection of determinations. This possibility of dissolution, which is found in almost every phase of the *Phenomenology*, in no way implies that the development of self-consciousness goes from nothingness to concrete and determinate being. Dissolution is not the reverse of progression, for self-consciousness progresses in its discourse from one determinate figure to another, from one sense to another, and not from nonsense to sense. Dissolution, either as investigation of pure immediacy or as rejection of all communication (which amounts to the same thing), is only that which haunts all the particular figures of consciousness, and this dissolution, this nonsense is then the truth of the rejection of mediation.

In sense-certainty, consciousness tests its first relation to being; it is immediate certainty and claims to be certainty of immediacy. What it intends therefore is singular, unique and ineffable being, the being outside of itself, this night, or this unique light, itself, this incomparable consciousness. But what it intends, that about which it has an opinion (in the sense of the Greek *doxa*)—it really is unable to say it: “When science is faced with the demand—as if it were an acid test that it could not pass—that it should deduce, construct, find *a priori*, or however it is put, something called ‘this thing’ or ‘this one man,’ it is reasonable that the demand should say which ‘this thing,’ or which ‘this particular man’ is meant; but it is impossible to say this” (PH §102). Now Hegel, who here could take sides against language, adopts this very language as what alone has validity. He says, “Speech has the divine nature of directly reversing the sense of what is said, of making it into something else” (PH §110); “in other words, we do not absolutely say what in this sense-certainty we mean to say. But language, as we see, is the more truthful” (PH §97). We really believe that we grasp singular, immediate being as singular, but what we say is that there is something more universal, a “this,” a “this one.” But everything is a “this,” every “I” is a “this one.” We believe that we grasp what is richest, but what remains of this experience for us is only the consciousness of our poverty. We see the singular transforming itself into the universal, and unique being passing into nothingness as the nothingness of all determinations. Of course, we can place these determinations back into their connections and find then again being as determinate. But we are entering into the discourse which

starts with the gesture through which we designate things, and if the universal is particularized, or is more and more closely determined, we nevertheless always remain within the universal without ever being able to say anything other than the universal. Thus the categories already sustain all of what we call sensible perception insofar as this perception is lived by a consciousness: "These elements are the cohesive power and mastery of the understanding itself. They alone are what constitute what the sensible is as essence for consciousness, what determines the relations of consciousness with the sensible and that in which the movement of perception and its truth runs its course" (PH §131). The understanding, however, which constitutes only perception or immediate sense certainty, is unaware of this character of perception or of certainty; perception and sense certainty say that philosophy merely has to do with things of thought. "As a matter of fact, philosophy does have to do with them too, recognizing them as pure essences, the absolute elements and powers; but in doing so, recognizes them in their specific determinateness as well, and is therefore the master over them" (PH §131). Immediate certainty and perception are already a sense which does not yet reflect on itself, a discourse which is not yet the discourse which recognizes itself as such, as self, and as the discourse of things.

Sensible consciousness does not therefore reach what it believes it reaches, or at least what it only intends; it is not moreover able to reach itself as a singular and unique soul. From the *Phenomenology's* first pages, solipsism is refuted. However, is it not the case that for myself I—certainty's subject—am an immediate evidence prior to all reflection? I am, I exist, and I exist as unique and incomparable; it is I who sense, and to feel [*sentir*] is immediate only in me. But when I say "I," a "this one," I say in fact all the "I's." "When I say 'I,' this singular 'I,' I say in general all 'I's'; everyone is what I say, everyone is 'I,' this singular 'I'" (PH §102). The illusion, however, is tenacious. Certainty's subject seems to have for itself a privilege. It believes that it takes hold of an indivisible intuition of its being which is below language, but all the other "I's" claim to have the same intuition. Their confrontation makes the claimed immediacy of their viewpoint disappear. "Man," said Socrates, "you are him and me also." This "I," originary and original, is in its ground only a universal, since language states it. It is not unique insofar as it says "I"; it only believes itself to be unique. This unicity is an opinion. The "I" who intends itself as unique is really more of a "One" (*On*), who constitutes the abstract medium of experience, just as abstract being constituted the medium of the felt. Here the lived sublates language only in intention and not in fact. "The 'I' is merely universal like 'now,' 'here,' or 'this' in general" (PH §102). And this universal that language states is the poorest form of thought. It is the supreme abstraction, the implicit nothingness

of determinations, the being which exists as abstraction, but as self-abstraction not as psychological abstraction. That I am unique and incomparable means as well that I am nothing and, then, it means to be anything whatsoever. As this singular, I am the abstract universal, that is, having already in itself implicitly the moment of mediation as negation: "A simple thing of this kind which is through negation, which is neither this or that, a not-this, and is with equal indifference this as well as that—such a thing we call universal. So it is in fact the universal that is the truth of sense-certainty" (PH §96). Thus sensible singularity expresses itself truly through its own annihilation. It passes away, it becomes, it negates itself, and if we want to retain it, it remains only as this abstract universal, the being identical to nothingness, this medium of all the determinations. The singular "I" also passes away; what remains is this universal name, *I*, that language states so exactly by transforming this claimed unicity into something banal. Hegel's analysis in the *Phenomenology's* first pages is decisive for the interpretation of his philosophy. Including mediation under the form of universal negation or of nothingness, this universal is the being which is becoming, but which, removing itself from this movement of mediation, retains only the two identical poles, being, which immediately posited in its rigid immediacy negates itself (in effect, it becomes), and nothingness, which immediately posited in this same immediacy negates itself as well, that is, nothingness *is*, for being is always there, even in becoming. Far from excluding mediation, the genuine "I," authentic singularity, that is, self-consciousness, instead coincides with mediation; it is true becoming, that is, self-becoming. Hegel says, "The 'I' or becoming in general, the act of actualizing mediation is, by means of its simplicity, just the immediacy which becomes as well as immediacy itself."

Immediate singularity, which would be ineffable intuition, the "what we will never see twice," is therefore the worst of banalities. If we posit it, we see it dissolve immediately. Fundamentally, it is dissolution. If this dissolution is understood, if it is sense and discourse, it is genesis as well as annihilation; it is mediation. This is why death is the beginning of the life of spirit, because, at the level of nature, the Absolute (substance) appears as life as well as as death, and this cycle is endless. The singularity of sensible things, and of mortal living beings which are modes of the Absolute, present this Absolute in its annihilation. In nature, there is only a sketch of this true singularity which is reflected mediation, therefore the Logos as universal self-consciousness. Nature is only spirit for the spirit who knows it. Nature is in itself Logos; it is not Logos for itself. It is immediately the Dasein of the Logos, but it is posited as such only by spirit.

But organic nature has no history; it falls from its universal, from life, directly into the singleness of Dasein, and the moments of simple determinateness and the single organic life united in its actuality, produce the process of becoming merely as a contingent movement, in which each is active in its own part and the whole is indeed preserved; but this activity is restricted, so far as itself is concerned, merely to its center, because the whole is not present in this center, and is not present in it because here it is not *qua* whole for itself. (PH §295)

Singularity as immediate being, that is, that which wants to be abstracted from all mediation, is therefore immediately its dissolution. This is so in nature and likewise for the consciousness that would claim to escape from the becoming of sense, from discourse, and from mediation. Rejecting thought, giving itself up to something it believes to be purely lived, this consciousness degenerates into life's unconsciousness. What it discovers is necessarily death, a death of all the instants, and a death that—*ex hypothesi*—it does not understand, a death which therefore for this consciousness is simultaneously necessity and enigma. This is the case because necessity felt as such and not thought is the pure enigma: "for necessity, fate, and the like, is just that about which we cannot say what it does, what its specific laws and positive content are, because it is the absolute pure concept itself viewed as being, a relation that is simple and empty, but also irresistible and imperturbable, whose work is merely the nothingness of individuality" (PH §363).

Let us assume, therefore, that consciousness rejects the universal discourse that immediately reverses its opinion. Let us assume that consciousness tries to take refuge in what it believes to be a pure experience, in order to taste there the unique pleasure of its own singularity. It would like to live instead of think. Hegel describes this experience for us at a higher stage of the *Phenomenology* (PH §360–63). In fact, the issue is no longer the test of immediate certainty, in its most naive form; rather the issue is a sort of conscious, and if we can call it deliberate, decision to turn back. He takes the episode of Faust and Gretchen as his example of such an experience. It is the issue of a consciousness, weary of the universality of knowledge and of the burden of mediation, that claims to turn back completely towards ineffable pleasure. This consciousness knows that "all theory is gray and green the golden tree of life,"³ it

3. Goethe, *Faust*, lines 2038–39.—Tr.

despises "the understanding and science, the supreme gifts of man."⁴ But then it is delivered up to the devil and must return into the ground: "zu Grunde gehen." The expression *zu Grunde gehen* must be taken literally. This ground is precisely consciousness's annihilation, an annihilation which it even refuses to be able to understand. Consciousness aspires to immediacy, like Faust and Gretchen. This nearly amounts to saying that this consciousness aspires to disappear without even knowing it. Like the singular consciousness which wants to live the ineffable and refuses to think, it desires only to take life, "much as a ripe fruit is plucked, which readily offers itself to the hand which takes it" (PH §361). But, instead of being thrown from dead theory into life itself, it rather rushes into death, into the dissolution of its own singularity. It cannot understand this dissolution, since, *ex hypothesi*, it has refused to connect the true to discourse, has claimed to descend below mediation which alone constitutes a self-consciousness as such. It is therefore indeed the prey of necessity and of destiny. At this higher level, this consciousness repeats the experience of the stuttering consciousness with which the *Phenomenology* started. Sense-certainty believed that it held onto the singular "this," but possessed only abstract being. Being able to say only, "It is, it is," it is able to be present only at its abstract negation. It wanted to get to the bottom of this pure singularity and it really discovers the ground of it: the dissolution which still says itself, but which says nothing other than necessity or death, the pure enigma. Feeling does not contain by itself the explicit sense of the event. "Consciousness, therefore, through its experience in which it should have found its truth, has really become an enigma to itself, the consequences of its deeds are for it not the deeds themselves" (PH §365). It finds itself alienated from itself, without being able to say anything about itself or to understand itself. Already, the word, *destiny*, especially if we make reference to Hegel's early works, means more than *necessity*. Destiny is a beginning of comprehension accompanying the abstract movement of life. To have a destiny is already to penetrate the sense of necessity. It is not only to live, but also to live by elevating oneself to self-consciousness, by accepting mediation. "The transition of its living being into a lifeless necessity therefore appears to it as an inversion which is not mediated by anything at all. The mediating agency would have to be that in which both sides would be one, where, therefore, consciousness recognized one moment in the other: its purpose and action in fate, and its fate in its purpose and action, that is, would recognize its own essence in this necessity" (PH §365). If we were not a little wary of being paradoxical, we

4. Goethe, *Faust*, lines 1850–51.—Tr.

could say, by being careful to take the word *logic* in its Hegelian sense, that, according to Hegel, human experience can be only logical (it is logical even when it is unaware of being so). The pure lived, this return to nature, means precisely nothing and consciousness is always sense, discourse. Like an absolute limit, the ineffable is nothingness.

This "turning back" is present in the *Phenomenology* not only on the level of pleasure but also on the level of knowledge. The consciousness which knows goes back down to a pure empiricism: "Consciousness, which in its very first reality is sense-certainty and intention of the 'this,' returns here to this from the whole course of its experience and is again a knowledge of what is purely negative of itself, or of things of sense, i.e. of things which immediately and indifferently confront its being-for-self. Here, however, it is not an immediate, natural consciousness; on the contrary, it has become such for itself" (PH §558). This return to empiricism is based on the comprehension of the nullity of all the other figures, on a merely negative proof. Let us return therefore to pure experience, but this pure and ineffable experience reveals itself once more as the supreme abstraction. It has been said that "Skepticism is the fruit that empiricism always brings forth again." Skepticism is at least the result of this "turning back," which aims to find again a "this side" of discourse, and to keep itself there. When self-consciousness is not the Logos for itself, it is the prey of a Logic of which it is no longer anything but the victim. Dialectic in itself exerts force on self-consciousness when self-consciousness is not this dialectic for itself.

In order to be valid, this discourse must be the discourse of a universal self-consciousness. It is such a discourse already insofar as it is language, insofar as it presupposes an established communication between singular consciousnesses who, in language, mutually recognize one another and aspire to this recognition. This recognition is the fundamental element of absolute knowledge, but language is itself this recognition and this connection of the singular and the universal which defines for Hegel the concept or sense. If, for Descartes, the mathematician cannot be an atheist without losing the guarantee of his demonstrations, for Hegel truth finds its soil and ground in this communication of consciousnesses. The beautiful soul, which encloses itself in interior silence in order not to soil the purity of its soul, which imagines that it finds at the bottom of itself the divine absolute in its immediacy, can only dissolve into nothingness. "In this transparent purity of its moments, an unhappy, so-called 'beautiful soul,' its light dies away within it, and it vanishes like a shapeless vapor that dissolves into thin air" (PH §658). It must accept the transformation of its thought into being. It must let itself be given substantiality and entrust itself to absolute difference. But then it presents itself in its particularity, in the tight node of its determina-

tions. Its salvation, however, could not lie in this flight in the face of determination into an interior refuge where it believes it establishes a silent contact with divinity. This pure interior life is an illusion. It can neither renounce universality, nor reject the determination which alone endows it with Dasein. Such a rejection would lead it only to the dissolution which, as we have seen, always lies in wait for abstract singularity, abstract precisely by means of this rejection of determinations, and therefore revealing itself as identical to abstract universality. With less naivety, the beautiful soul accomplishes in itself the movement which immediate consciousness, believing itself unique on this side of discourse, accomplished. It ends up by coming apart into madness or by sinking into the immediacy of pure being or nothingness. The only possibility for resolving opaque determination into the transparency of the universal, to undo the node, lies in linguistic communication, in accepting dialogue. What the traditional philosophy of a Descartes or a Malebranche expects from a silent relation between human consciousness and God, Hegel expects from the expressed communication of consciousnesses who institute universal self-consciousness, which is itself the discovery of being as universal self. This is where the importance of the mutual recognition of self-consciousness in the whole *Phenomenology* comes from. This recognition finds its element in the very language which states dialectically the oppositions and the actual sublations. Language is the Dasein of spirit. Silence before the other, like interior silence, leads only to dissolution. One has to confess one's action, one's particular way of being in the world, in order to conquer one's universality, in order to make it recognizable. One also really has to welcome into oneself the particular determination of the other in order to raise it to universality, in order to promote this concrete universality which is the genuine unity of the singular and the universal. Here genuine (*véritable*) means accepting the mediation of particular determinations and not oscillating indefinitely from abstract singular to abstract universal which turn out to be identical by means of this rejection of mediation. Language states this universal mediation. I speak and I say events and things and what I say is already no longer me. "The 'I' is this 'I' and the universal 'I.'" What I say, however, insofar as I say it, insofar as it is an intelligible speech, transposes the opacity of determinations into the element of universality. Thus the Absolute as sense and as Logos appears across man but not across the one who "refuses to externalize his interior life in the Dasein of discourse, . . . [who] confronts the confession of the penitent with his own stiff-necked unrepentant character, [who] mutely keeps himself to himself and refuses to throw himself away for someone else" (PH §667). Perhaps we can see why in his early works Hegel, repeating Plato, calls Love what he now calls the concept. Both are immediate mediation.

The possibility of raising determinations to universality, the possibility of making the self that was lost in the determinations emerge, the possibility, however, of making it emerge as universal self, this possibility is the very possibility of absolute knowledge, the light of being as sense: "it is the 'I' which remains identical with itself, and, in its complete externalization and opposite, possesses the certainty of itself: it is God manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge" (PH §671). This God, however, or this Absolute, is no longer a transcendence beyond this knowledge, the ineffable endpoint of a never attained aspiration. This knowledge becomes absolute when it knows itself as such, that is, when it is no longer only a dialectical discourse of man on being or on man's destiny, but when it is a discourse of being, an absolute self-certainty in what was revealing itself explicitly only as the other of knowledge, when it is a logic of philosophy and no longer only a phenomenology.

Christian religion had the premonition of this universal self-consciousness which finds itself as self-consciousness, as the ultimate sense of being, or rather as the dialectical identity of being and sense, when, according to a still sensible modality (but isn't everything given in human experience?), it announces: "Divine nature is the same as human nature, and it is this unity which is given to intuition in revealed religion." This intuition is, however, still an alienation, a being alien to sense, or a sense which is not a sense of self. This is why Hegel can say: "God, or the Absolute, is accessible only in pure speculative knowledge, and is only in this knowledge and is this very knowledge." The Absolute therefore is this very knowledge as absolute knowledge, the very knowledge in which substance presents itself as subject, in which being presents itself completely as sense and sense as being. That, however, does not mean that the Absolute disappears and we are left only with a Humanism, as some say. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel does not say man, but self-consciousness. The modern interpreters who have immediately translated this term by man have somewhat falsified Hegel's thought. Hegel is still too Spinozistic for us to be able to speak of a pure humanism; a pure humanism culminates only in skeptical irony and platitude. Undoubtedly, the Logos appears in the human knowledge that interprets and says itself, but here man is only the intersection of this knowledge and this sense. Man is consciousness and self-consciousness, while at the same time natural Dasein, but consciousness and self-consciousness are not man. They say being as sense in man. They are the very being that knows itself and says itself. Only in this way can we understand that Hegel's philosophy results at least as much in a speculative logic as in a philosophy of history.

For Hegel, therefore, there is no ineffable that would be on this side of or beyond knowledge, no immediate singularity or transcen-

dence; there is no ontological silence, rather dialectical discourse is a progressive conquest of sense. That does not mean that sense would be in principle prior to the discourse which discovers it and creates it (and that we are obligated to use these two verbs simultaneously indicates the difficulty of the problem), rather sense develops itself in discourse itself. One does not go from a silent intuition to an expression, from an inexpressible to an expressed, any more than from nonsense to sense. The progress of thought, its development, is the very progress of expression. The opposition of intuition and language no longer makes sense if language does not form thought and thought language. But if the information of one by the other is common, the one is not an external translation of the other. Sense unfolds itself and determines itself without its being given previously in an ineffable form. Undoubtedly, this progress of expression is the result of an incessant battle thanks to which the universal turns itself into self-consciousness instead of falling back into nothingness. This battle, however, is the very progress of expression, its complete development. Then the universal content is said, and this speech is the speech which says this universal as well as the expression of the self who emits it and who, lost in this universal, ends up by returning to itself. The individual raises himself to the universal, while universality is presented as a self. Such is already the work of the poet and his creation:

Spirit is present in this individual as his universal and as the power over him from which he suffers violence, as his pathos, by giving himself over to which his self-consciousness loses its freedom. But that positive power of universality is subdued by the pure self of the individual, the negative power. This pure activity, conscious of its inalienable strength, wrestles with the shapeless essence. Becoming its master, it has made the pathos into its material and given itself its content, and this unity emerges as a work, universal spirit individualized and represented. (PH §704)

Hegel adds, "Now the perfect element at the heart of which interiority is also completely exterior, just as exteriority is interior, is still once more language." How can language, however, human speech, be simultaneously that of which one speaks and the one who speaks? How can it realize within itself this unity of self and being?