

## Introduction

The essays collected in this volume take their bearing from texts and themes provided by Hegel. Some of the essays celebrate Hegel, others take issue with his philosophy; so it has been, and continues to be, since the time of Hegel. Yet, within the terms of this mixed reception, Hegel is consistently recognized as having a major influence on nineteenth and twentieth-century Western thought. Thus, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, even as he distances himself from Hegel, suggests that “all of the great philosophical ideas of the past century . . . had their beginnings in Hegel.”<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, too, although he maintains that “our entire epoch struggles to disengage itself from Hegel,” admits that Hegel remains always “close to us.”<sup>2</sup> Jürgen Habermas, even as he challenges the critical spirit of Hegel’s mature works, joins the consensus in his own way, claiming no less than that “Hegel inaugurated the discourse of modernity.”<sup>3</sup>

The mixed influence of Hegel can be clearly observed with respect to those issues that define the contemporary field of hermeneutics—the validity of historical interpretation, the question of philosophical foundations, the crisis of reason, the understanding of others, and the possibility of a critical social theory. Hegel continues to have a voice in the ongoing philosophical conversations that shape these issues; his

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1. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-sense*, trans. Hubert Dreyfus and Patricia Allen Dreyfus (Evanston: Northwestern University Press), p. 63.

2. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, tran. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 235

3. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), p. 51.

texts continue to be a living force which elicits both sympathetic and agonistic responses.

Traditionally the modern discipline of hermeneutics, defined as the theory and practice of interpretation, has been associated, justifiably, with Hegel's colleague at the University of Berlin, Friedrich Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher, unlike Hegel, developed an explicit theory of textual hermeneutics. In the twentieth century, however, philosophers like Heidegger, Gadamer, and Rorty have developed hermeneutics beyond its traditional conception as method for textual interpretation. Hermeneutics has become a more general philosophical approach. In this broader context Gadamer suggests that Hegel may play a more important role than Schleiermacher, and that "if we are to follow Hegel rather than Schleiermacher, the history of hermeneutics must place its emphases quite differently."<sup>4</sup> For Gadamer, hermeneutics not only takes the Heideggerian turn away from the tradition of Schleiermacher and Dilthey, but also becomes more widely conceived by retrieving certain Hegelian elements. Outside of the work of Gadamer, however, the connections between Hegel and hermeneutics have been left relatively unexplored. The majority of essays collected in this volume develop these connections outside of the constraints imposed by Gadamer's own hermeneutical theory. The authors explore themes that form the common ground between Hegelian philosophy and hermeneutics conceived in the expanded sense of philosophical hermeneutics.

The term *common ground*, however, may be misleading in two respects. The ground is often contested rather than shared. Moreover, one of the issues that is hotly contested is whether anything like an epistemological ground or metaphysical foundation is possible. In terms of the much used metaphor, the 'conversation' of philosophy more resembles a debate among parties that do not always communicate. Not everyone agrees with Gadamer, that Hegel has a positive role to play in the field of hermeneutics. Other contemporary theorists such as Derrida, Foucault, and Habermas challenge the Hegelian legacy in a number of different ways. These voices too are echoed in the essays that follow.

### Hegel and Hermeneutics

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as an interpretation of the history of human consciousness, involves, according H. S. Harris, a hermeneutical

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<sup>4</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., revised translation by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad Press, 1989), p. 173.

recollection. This recollection follows a path through the *Phenomenology* to arrive at the self-comprehensive nature of absolute knowing. Harris, in the opening essay, defending a Hegelian interpretation of the rationality of history, argues that absolute knowing is comprehensive and universal because it acquires a standpoint from which absolutely everything—every historical occurrence—can be viewed as meaningful. This concept, however, does not exclude differing or developing interpretations of history. Absolute knowing is not something that can be measured in epistemological standards of certainty, that is, by standards that are defined from the ‘standpoint of consciousness.’ Rather, it is the standpoint in which the human community interprets itself. Thus, according to Harris, absolute knowing is not the endpoint of knowledge, the closure of interpretation, but genuinely the beginning, the opening of self-understanding. It involves a different conception of truth. Not truth as *adequatio* or correspondence, certitude, or absolute objectivity, but truth as self-comprehension. This is a concept of truth that involves the finitude of a discursive process.

In this respect Hegel differs from Kant, in the same way that hermeneutics differs from epistemology. Although this point will be contended in later essays by Robert Dostal and Walter Lammi, Harris suggests that Hegel, in contrast to Kant, deals with actual historical experience and not just possible experience. Harris insists that the realm of Spirit for Hegel is the realm of historical actuality and that it displaces Kant’s notion of an intelligible realm beyond the bounds of possible experience. Spirit, in effect, is a hermeneutical concept, and we enter into the realm of Spirit through conversation and study, practices through which pure thought is actualized in experience.

Quite in contrast to Harris’s reading, Robert Dostal finds in Hegel “a rationalism which is relatively innocent of experience.” On Dostal’s interpretation, both Kant and Hegel unsuccessfully set out to bring metaphysics to fulfillment. Kant, however, differs from Hegel in that he did not regard the metaphysical enterprise as a quest for foundations. For Dostal, Kant is not primarily an epistemologist, but a critical metaphysician. To bring metaphysics to fulfillment meant two things for Kant: first, to bring to an end dogmatic or foundationalist systems that take their starting point from abstract concepts like Being and non-Being (as in Hegel’s *Logic*); and second, to develop a critical metaphysics that takes experience as its *arche*. Kant’s non-foundationalist appeal to experience is too quickly overlooked by contemporary thinkers, like Rorty, who, in putting an end to philosophy hastily abandon the Kantian transcendental project and its further development in contemporary phenomenology.

Dostal champions a more metaphysical conception of Husserlian phenomenology, that is, a more Heideggerian conception of phenomenology. For the early Heidegger, to seek the conditions of experience is also to seek Being. This approach still begins with experience and, according to Dostal, is thus distinguished from a Hegelian subjective idealism. Heidegger, of course, construes Hegel to be a representative of modern subjective epistemology, especially to the extent that Hegel speaks of absolute knowing. So Heidegger would view the phenomenologies of Hegel and Husserl as parts of a modern metaphysics of subjective idealism. The later Heidegger even comes to view the early hermeneutical-phenomenological Heidegger as too metaphysical in the wrong sense. Dostal, however, is in favor of retrieving hermeneutical phenomenology as a way of developing a non-foundationalist speculative thought. But is it possible to retrieve such a project without also retrieving Hegel? Is it right to claim that Hegel's rationalism was innocent of experience? These are questions posed by Walter Lammi in his essay on hermeneutical experience.

Lammi examines Gadamer's fusion of Hegel and Heidegger, and asks on what criteria one can retrieve Hegel. The answer to this question requires an investigation of the concept of hermeneutical experience—a concept shared by all three thinkers. For all of them, experience is not a cognitive accomplishment so much as something that we undergo or suffer, something in which we are unavoidably involved. Moreover, it involves us in a transformative movement, a playfulness in which we are put at risk. For Heidegger, however, the “end of philosophy” involves the abandonment of the Hegelian notion that experience can come to an absolute completion. Despite Heidegger's rejection of what he takes to be Hegel's subjective idealism and foundationalism, despite his critique of the absolute, the dialectic, and the metaphysics of presence, Gadamer shows that Heidegger shares with Hegel the realization of the historicity of experience and the transcendence of subjectivity involved in it. Hermeneutical phenomenology, no less than Hegelian phenomenology, retains a sense of transcendence, either a movement toward the future or from out of the past, that opposes any easy conception of epistemological subjectivity.

The issue, for Lammi, is whether it is legitimate for Gadamer to choose Hegelian historicity but reject the Hegelian absolute. Are Gadamer's interpretations of Hegel within a Heideggerian framework, and of Heidegger within a Hegelian framework, cases of hermeneutical violence? Is it legitimate to turn Hegel's concept of objective, historical Spirit “against his Absolute?” The answer, for Gadamer, lies in *experience*. Experience, the issue at stake in his interpretations, turns out to be the very criterion required to justify the interpretations. This

hermeneutical circle depends a great deal on the language that is available to express experience. Experience, however, is not distinct from language, since language as it comes to us is linguistic experience. The language used by Hegel and Heidegger to express experience transcends the intent of the authors, but does not transcend experience itself. The very nature of experience, which, as Heidegger points out, allows Hegel to conceive of the dialectic in the first place, and the very nature of language, which, Gadamer points out, involves a dialogical openness to the unsaid, speak against the closure involved in the notion of an Absolute. Thus Lammi shows that Gadamer's concern is less a retrieval of either Hegelian or hermeneutical phenomenology than a transformation of them worked by letting experience speak for itself.

The kind of hermeneutical transformation that Gadamer engages in is, for John Caputo, too Hegelian, too domesticated. Caputo claims that Gadamer's reading of experience does not face up to the radical facticity of experience. The essence of experience, which for Caputo, following Heidegger and Derrida, is an abyss rather than a firm ground, is covered over by Hegelian metaphysics. Thus, he argues, the strategies of deconstruction need to be employed to push hermeneutics toward the edge. This does not mean that we give up on finding truth. But truth is not to be found in a hermeneutical reproduction of tradition—a set of forces that tend to level down our understandings. Rather we find ourselves in truth by confronting our own unavoidable facticity which undermines any aspirations we have to absolute knowledge. Over and above our wanting and willing, truth is given; it is a form of givenness. *Es gibt*. Although Gadamer demonstrates how the factual finitude of understanding both limits and enables understanding, according to Caputo, he fails to recognize what Heidegger calls the *Es gibt*, and he substitutes in its place a virtual Hegelian absolute framed in terms of the process of tradition that operates according to laws of mediation and appropriation.

A more radical hermeneutics, modeled on Derridian deconstruction, faces up to the facticity of the *Es gibt*. There are no presuppositionless beginnings; rather we are "always already" thrown into the difficulty of understanding something without understanding its origins or its complex implications, and we never get clear of this hermeneutical situation. We can never occupy the position claimed by Hegel, outside the hermeneutical frame, able to explain everything once and for all in neat dialectical stages. This realization, however, does not leave us in a state of nihilistic skepticism, with some firm conviction about the impossibility of truth. Rather, it calls us to a different conception of truth; a textualized truth that can only be worked out within the framework of uncertainty and suspicion.

Yet this is not the obvious interpretation of deconstruction. Numerous commentators from a variety of positions have suggested that deconstruction leads us into a free play of signifiers without the possibility of reference to a real world. Deconstruction moves away from the heights of Hegelian speculation only to fall into the abyss excavated by Nietzsche. This is an argument explored by William Desmond in his essay, "Rethinking the Origin: Nietzsche and Hegel." Desmond, starting from an insight provided by George Kline, attempts to chart a course differentiated from both Kantian and Nietzschean attitudes toward metaphysics, as well as from both Heideggerian and Derridian deconstructions. Metaphysics is not only unavoidable but the rightful destiny of human understanding. This is not a simple matter of endorsing philosophy over art, or Hegel over Nietzsche; it involves a complex interpretation of both. It is impossible to divorce art from metaphysics, and despite the postmodern and deconstructivist readings of Nietzsche, we do not find this divorce in Nietzsche's texts. His texts are more equivocal than this interpretation would allow; equivocal enough to allow both the Heideggerian interpretation, that Nietzsche is the last metaphysician, and the Derridian one, that Nietzsche deconstructed metaphysics. Nietzsche was playing with absolute spirit, as Hegel defined it. Art, religion, and philosophy are not only Nietzsche's topics, defined in the *topos* of the will to power, but, as Desmond makes clear, they are places where he seeks out origins.

Of course, the intention is not to conflate Hegel and Nietzsche, and Desmond explicates the differences between them. The point to be made is that Nietzsche, no less than Hegel, even if in a different way than Hegel, was everywhere seeking origins. Even in those of Nietzsche's texts celebrated by postmodern deconstructive readings, an interpreter can find, on the other side of the equivocation, metaphysical reassurance: the "generosity of being," the *Es gibt*. Yet, as it is construed by radical hermeneutics or as it is worked out in terms of Nietzsche's will to power or his concept of *amor fati*, even as it displaces modern subjectivity, the *Es gibt* is nothing other than an erotic origination in which an authentic self can come into its own. The task, according to Desmond, is not to think of it as another remnant of metaphysics to be further deconstructed, but to rethink it as a positive possibility of human understanding. For Desmond, and seemingly in contrast to Caputo, this means that the notion of the *Es gibt*, rather than a deconstructive force, should be understood as a positive, agapeic, metaphysical possibility. The thought of the giving of being that reduces the transcendence of the *Es gibt* to an erotic origin or repetition—and this includes the thought of Hegel and Nietzsche, as well as deconstructive and radical hermeneutics—fails to recognize the agapeic possibility.

## History and Critical Reason

"Whatever happens," Hegel writes, "every individual is a child of his time."<sup>5</sup> The truth of this assertion motivates individuals and cultures to pose the same question: how to interpret what no longer is, how to interpret an absence. Historical interpretation, however, has a significance that goes beyond a concern for the past; it extends through our present circumstances to the future in which we ourselves will be past. Our own sure demise motivates our interest in both antiquity and the fixing of the future. Historians are motivated by the same interest, and that makes all history personal. But history is also personal in a second sense: the historical existence and demise of every individual are always personal and particular events, and in this regard, never of universal scope. Every historical occurrence has a singular nature, and this has ethical implications for the practical distinctions between victim, survivor, and onlooker, as well as the theoretical distinction between fact and interpretation.

All of this puts into question Hegel's idea that history is completely rational. Although this idea fits well with the role of the interpreter, it is impossible for the victim. As Joseph Brodsky recently put it, "to accept history as a rational process governed by graspable laws is impossible, because it is often too murderous."<sup>6</sup> Still, interpretation always has the last word; the rationality of history is always more persuasive than history conceived as an irrational force. In certain instances, however, the cool distancing of objective, rational, historical interpretation falls short of persuasiveness and is overcome by the force of historical events.

Hegel, as Heidegger once indicated, was a philosopher who experienced the force of history.<sup>7</sup> Acknowledging the constant ending and starting of historical movement and its importance for Hegel, George Lucas in his essay on recollection and forgetting, develops a neo-Hegelian ontology and sets out to explore the implications it has for an ethics of historical interpretation. In contrast to the kind of resurrection or immortality that remembrance brings, forgetfulness obliterates

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5. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), §11.

6. Joseph Brodsky, "Profile of Clio," *The New Republic*, (February 1, 1993), p. 61. I want to note with some regret and sadness that Brodsky's essay was to have been included in the present collection. Various complicating factors, including his untimely death, however, prevented his essay from appearing here.

7. Martin Heidegger, "The Anaximander Fragment," in *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 14; also see Walter Lammi's essay in this volume.

victims. Yet even historical interpretation can be murderous. Recollection remains possible, however, only because the past remains to haunt the present, an absence that persists as an evidence that is always a potential testament to hermeneutical murder, to the terrorism of imposed silence.

Pursuing an ontological distinction made by George Kline, Lucas argues that the being of past events cannot be reduced to their interpretation. They have an ontological status that transcends remembering or forgetting. Lucas examines the forgetting of the past—both the natural and inevitable kind of forgetting, and the forced forgetting involved in revisionist and Orwellian history. Following Hegel's suggestion that forgetting forces us into the continual movement of history, Lucas demonstrates by several well-chosen and pointed examples that forgetting does not imply the erasure of history. The past still has an effect on the present even in the forgetting of it.

If the past does not reside in memory, where, external to intentional consciousness, does it reside? Here Lucas builds upon the past views of Hegel and Whitehead, as well as the current views of contemporary hermeneuticists and scientists. The past resides in the present. On cosmic levels, and in the complexities of living genes, the past continues to have an effect, positively or negatively, in present experience. On a cultural level, even the forgotten past, in a negative fashion, that is, precisely insofar as it has been forgotten, constitutes the "material ground" of the present. Like the negative moment of Hegel's dialectic, like Whitehead's negative prehensions, like Gadamer's concept of *Wirkungsgeschichte*, Lucas conceives of forgotten pasts as having determinate effects in the present.

If the real effects of history have an implicit and often hidden impact on current social practices, are we able to explicate and change them through critical philosophical reflection? Tom Rockmore, in his examination of issues that concern Hegel and the social-political function of critical hermeneutics, addresses the often-raised question of whether philosophy has a social function. To answer it he works out an interpretation of Hegel's attempt, within the context of his critique of Kant, to define the difficult relation between theory and practice.

Many commentators, most famously Habermas, argue that in contrast to the early Hegel who was a liberal intellectual activist, the later Hegel adopted the conservatism of the 'official' philosopher. On this reading, the later Hegel's contention, that philosophy cannot instruct the state on "what it ought to be; it can only show how the state, the ethical universe, is to be understood," is construed as an abandonment of political practice in favor of a detached hermen-



eutics.<sup>8</sup> Rockmore takes issue with this interpretation by showing that Hegel solves the problem of theory and practice in a way that makes theory always hermeneutically contextualized within social circumstances.

Hegel defines his position by taking up one side of a Kantian antinomy that opposes the traditional view of “theory as independent of, but indispensable for practice,” to the more innovative view that theory is subordinate to practice. Hegel pursues the latter, innovative thesis and contends that theory is both subordinate to, and yet influential for practice. Theory is subordinate to practice in the sense, made famous by Hegel, that theory is an attempt to explain retrospectively the social practice that has already occurred. Hegel then must show that retrospective hermeneutics can have a prospective effect. A prospective effect is possible only if the theory correctly interprets its object and remains intrinsically related to the social context. For Hegel, however, both theory and practice share the same spirit. Theory is not independent of practice; interpretation is not separate from its object. Theory, as a form of culture, is part of its own historical and social context and for that reason remains essentially linked to practice. Theory is not free from the finitude of experience, or the “stresses and strains of existence.”

Thus, for Hegel, reason necessarily has a social function because reason unavoidably has a social effect. On this view, the theoretical enterprise of showing how social and political arrangements are to be understood cannot help but have practical effect. Rockmore suggests that this realization has importance today especially in the wake of certain scandalous experiences involving recent philosophers in the infamous political contexts of the twentieth century, an importance that extends in its relevance to the current turn toward pragmatism.

My own essay, like Rockmore's, is an attempt to give Hegel a voice in the contemporary discussion about the nature of critical social theory. My intention is to place Hegel in a debate between Habermas and Foucault; between a utopian conception of critical theory and a non-utopian critical hermeneutics; between a search for the universal and remote, and a regard for the particular and local. Habermas views himself as the heir of a tradition of critical theory that starts with Kant and develops through the early Hegel and Marx. I argue that there is an alternative conception of critical theory to be found starting in Hegel, especially the later Hegel who is dismissed by Habermas. This alternative conception is developed in Foucault's genealogical analyses of historical discourse and practice.

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8. *Philosophy of Right*, §11. Also see Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon, 1973), 178–179.

Habermas seeks to work out his critical theory in terms of a universal solution based on an ideal communication procedure in which, as Foucault puts it, "the games of truth could circulate freely, without obstacles, without constraint, and without coercive effects. . ."<sup>9</sup> Foucault suspects that this is a utopian dream. The question, then, is whether it is possible to develop a critical theory that faces up to the force of the past and the circumstances of present power structures. I contend that a more hermeneutical model of critical theory would allow for the possible transformation of past traditions and present conditions and yet recognize that this possibility is inescapably constrained and limited by the effects of past and present resistances.

Like Desmond and Lucas, I am influenced here by an important theme developed by Kline. Kline's philosophy of time maintains clear ontological differences between past and future. The past is already actualized, has a certain reality, and is capable of definite historical effects. The future, in contrast, is not yet actual and thus is necessarily indefinite. For Kline, the "fallacy of the actual future," encountered in numerous philosophers, importantly entails consequences that transcend purely philosophical or ontological discussions.<sup>10</sup> This fallacy, Kline argues, underpins the political theory and practice of tyranny and terrorism, and finds a hermeneutical correlate in the way history sometimes gets interpreted.

The hermeneutical approach found both in the later Hegel and in Foucault opposes the fallacy of the actual future. Foucault, like Hegel, eschews utopian projects, and turns to an analysis of historical actuality to develop a critical interpretation that remains tied to particular and local circumstances. The critical theorist, on this model, does not escape the particularism of his historical situation but remains, as Hegel puts it, "a child of his time." Access to the universal is given, not by a technical procedure that would allow for a utopian escape, but only by critically interpreting and working through the particular situations in which we find ourselves.

### Alterity and Communitarity

The final part of this collection is united by a concern about another set of contemporary philosophical issues that revolve around questions

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9. Michel Foucault, *The Final Foucault*, eds. James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), p. 18.

10. See George L. Kline, "'Present', 'Past', and 'Future', as Categorical Terms, and the 'Fallacy of the Actual Future,'" *Review of Metaphysics* 40 (1986), 215–235; and "Was Marx von Hegel hätte lernen Können . . . und sollen," *Stuttgarter Hegel-Tage. 1970*. Ed. Hans-George Gadamer. (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1974), pp. 497–502.

about alterity and the ethical status of the other person. One of the most famous and influential of Hegel's analyses—the dialectic of lord and servant found in the *Phenomenology*—continues to be the subject of ongoing controversy. The effect of his dialectical analysis finds its way into numerous influential thinkers, including Marx, Nietzsche, Sartre, Marcel, Buber, Levinas, and Gadamer.

Philip Grier introduces us to another thinker who offers a unique perspective on these issues: the Russian Hegelian, I. A. Il'in (1883–1954). With his help, Grier begins to explore Hegel's conception of rationality and its predilection to reduce otherness to sameness. Il'in is one of those scholars whose work has been obscured by larger historical events. Grier sets out to retrieve Il'in's overlooked interpretation of the Hegelian speculative concrete—a doctrine that provides a central organizing principle of Hegel's philosophy. From Il'in's reading it becomes clear that the proper context in which to delineate the general complexity of relations to 'the other' is found in Hegel's conception of the *concrete*, which he contrasts to the *abstract*. An abstract view of something is always a one-sided, partial, and underdeveloped view that overlooks mediating relations with the other in a fuller context. Only speculative reason can grasp the concrete, and thus, only speculative reason can grasp the true import of abstract alterity within a context of concrete communality. On Hegel's account, speculative reason entails "a unity of thinking subject and object thought," a unity that seems to overcome the difference between the one and the other.

Il'in traces the influence of Spinoza, Leibniz, and Fichte on Hegel's conception of speculative reason. Grier explains that Spinoza's notion of substance as a self-contained identity is the basis for Hegel's view that the speculative concrete maintains itself "in simple and immediate relation to itself." Leibniz and Fichte provide Hegel with the idea of the interior dynamic self-development of the concrete self-relation. Speculative universality becomes the stage for the inner drama of movement between subject and object, the one and the other, which issues in a relation of self to itself. The one and the other, from this perspective, are merely abstract moments of a fuller concrete unity.

Il'in argues that the concept of the speculative concrete is "the fundamental idea" of Hegelian philosophy. As such, however, it operates as a principle of Hegel's rationality rather than as a theme for his interpretation. If this is so, then it is easy to see why a number of important commentators<sup>11</sup> reach the conclusions they do about the

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11. Grier cites a number of scholars who develop this critique. They include, William Desmond, Werner Marx, and Otto Pöggeler. The essays by Susan Armstrong and P. Christopher Smith in this volume further contribute to this critique.

inability of Hegel's conception of rationality to allow for genuine alterity. Grier acknowledges that this problem, which is also related to concepts of tragedy, suffering, death, and divinity, is probably the most fundamental one in contemporary debates concerning Hegel.

In this same spirit, Il'in had also concluded that on this central point Hegel's philosophy failed. In order to face up to the reality of tragedy, suffering, and death, even in the divine incarnation, Hegel would have to face up to the inadequacy of a rationality that would reduce otherness to unity. Il'in goes further, however, in order to show, first, that Hegel came to realize this inadequacy and as a result made significant compromises within his system, and, second, that these compromises cut across many of the themes that Hegel developed, including concepts like civil society and its multidimensional structures. The critical choice, then, both for interpreters of Hegel and Hegelian philosophers, is between preserving the system by insisting on the propriety of speculative reason, or recognizing that Hegel's compromises suggest a different conception of rationality—perhaps we could say a more hermeneutical rationality.

Michael Prosch explores this issue in Hegel's analysis of social relations and the full detail of associations found in the communality of civil society. Prosch focuses on the concept of the *Korporation* (corporation), a socioeconomic association that has as its principle of organization a common interest in a particular trade. Within civil society, the corporation is an institution that Hegel limits to those classes directly linked to commerce and industry. But this institution is not simply the expression of a set of economic ties; it constitutes an ethical identity, a way of moving beyond individual self-interests toward a more common interest. Although the existence of this interest is embedded in the particular and concrete economic purpose that defines the corporation's trade, it is also clear that it forms the basis for an ethical unity and universality. One might say, using terminology developed by Michael Oakeshott, that the corporation is a means for transforming a *societas*—a society united by civility but no common goal—into a *universitas*—an association united precisely by what Hegel calls a "conscious effort for a common end."<sup>12</sup>

How corporations are defined, and who is included or excluded from a corporation, can have practical import for the organization of society. If, for example, the ethical identity of a corporation includes only employers or self-employed artisans and professionals, and thus

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12. *Philosophy of Right*, §254. See Michael Oakeshott, "The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind," in *Rationalism and Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1975).

excludes workers and day-laborers, we might find a certain economic and political power invested in strict class-divisions. Prosch provides arguments which show that Hegel defined the corporation in a more inclusive fashion than a number of other commentators have suggested. Furthermore, he notes, Hegel identified corporations as important structures in the integrative organization of civil society. Like Rockmore, who indicates Hegel's concern about the persistence of poverty in modern society, Prosch points to Hegel's observation on the dismantling of corporate structure in England: it resulted in more poverty and unemployment, and it increased the moral degradation of its citizens. Surely Hegel's theoretical analysis of the role played by the corporation in civil society is not a detached interpretation of structures that already exist. It is, at least in part, a critical interpretation of the situation of poverty resulting from *laissez-faire* economic practices.

The corporation, Hegel judges, serves to protect its members against the contingencies of economic life, and thus plays an important role in maintaining the stability and welfare of civil society. At the same time the communality of the corporation elevates the isolated and immature individual to a new level of social relatedness. Inclusion in an "ethical whole" allows the individual to transcend the selfishness of mere personal well-being, but only in so far as he or she is a corporate member.

On one level the issue remains one of inclusion and exclusion. Who is included in such membership and who is excluded and thereby, as Hegel views it, deprived of the rank and dignity of a social class?<sup>13</sup> The issue, however, goes deeper still, as Grier and Il'in suggest: does the propriety of speculative reason, and its celebration of incorporation, reduce the difference of individuality to a communal sameness. Does inclusion as much as exclusion rob the one individual and the other of ontological and social dignity?

P. Christopher Smith examines Kierkegaard's contribution to this discussion and suggests that Kierkegaard does a better job than Hegel at facing up to alterity. For Hegel, the issue of the other is tied to the idea that consciousness always thinks itself, even when it attempts to think the other. Otherness, then, is mere appearance, a positing of the infinite self which remains a mere aspect of self. Even if, in Desmond's terms, this constitutes an erotic fulfillment, Smith points out that Hegel fails to develop his analysis of social recognition explicitly in terms of erotic desire. Hegel thus misses the link between subconscious desire and the conscious requirement of recognition by another. Rather, he

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13. See *Philosophy of Right*, §253

casts the analysis solely in terms of an asexual dialectic. Even when Hegel closes in on an experience of complete otherness—that is, the experience of *Angst* in the face of death, the complete otherness of existence—it gets immediately negated and repositied as a pure being for oneself. Hegel thus suppresses the otherness involved in sexuality and death. Likewise, the alterity involved in the opposition of lord and servant is reduced to the monological identity of one consciousness. Hegel's dialectic consistently dissolves otherness in order to reconcile itself, so that *Geist* always ends up as a self-contained experience, a self-possessed, and transparent consciousness.

In contrast to Hegel, Kierkegaard introduces a certain excess that disrupts the self-sufficiency of experience. Consciousness undergoes experience, suffers it as something that cannot be entirely self-contained. The despair, the fear and trembling, the *Angst* of consciousness is not a pseudo-dialectic of one-within-the-same, but an unresolvable and irreducible confrontation with alterity. Unlike Hegel, Kierkegaard does not ignore erotic desire. The erotic other, even in conquest, both exceeds and fails to satisfy desire. If resolution is possible in Kierkegaard's dialectic, it is not a synthesis of the one-in-the-other or the other-in-the-one, but a redemption that depends as much on the other remaining other as on the one giving itself up. The Hegelian reconciliation found within reason is here displaced by the possibility of redemption sought in a faith that remains outside of, other than, reason. The Kierkegaardian dialectic cannot be accommodated by the Hegelian one. Indeed, Smith suggests, experiences of desire, despair, and faith would necessarily disrupt the Hegelian dialectic with an irreducible alterity.

Susan Armstrong, in her feminist critique, deepens the analysis of Hegel's inadequacy in regard to otherness, and introduces a qualification to Smith's reading of Hegel and Kierkegaard. She contends that Hegel is no exception to the rule that governs most texts of Western philosophy, that the woman is always viewed as "the other." In Hegel's analysis of family life, the woman, "the other sex," is defined as biological and inactive in contrast to the male's mental and active life. This difference then takes on a rational and ethical significance, that is, men are ethically designed for political life, women for domestic duties. The mutual recognition involved in marriage remains limited because it is primarily based on natural passion and can only be fulfilled in the production of an other: the child. The child, however, who transcends the family and moves into civil society as the rational, autonomous individual, is construed as a male child, a brother rather than a sister, Eteocles or Polynices rather than Antigone. Hegel, we might say, remains a "child of his time" by embracing the ideology of the "sentimental family" as a way to legitimize the inequality of women.

Does Hegel's male-biased ideology invalidate his philosophy? Armstrong explores several conflicting answers to this question. One view is that this ideological prejudice is actually inconsistent with his basic tenets. Hegel's dialectic is motivated precisely by alterity and conflict. The other, the woman, is an essential and equal aspect of that conflict, and cannot be repressed without fear of contradiction. The other view, more in line with Smith's reading, is that Hegel's general philosophy actually forms the basis for his view of women, that is, that his dialectic systematically excludes "the other" by tracing out only the main story-line of history. Echoing themes explored by George Lucas, this view suggests that the others, the marginalized groups, become victims without history, or are totally absorbed in a dialectic and a rationality that is claimed to be universal, yet is clearly male and without remainder.

Armstrong circumscribes this conflict of interpretations with the suggestion that we develop a feminist hermeneutics. This would not only entail recognizing the philosopher, Hegel in this case, as part of a textual system beyond his control, but acknowledging that in most cases the philosophical author effaces *himself* in an attempt to provide impersonal, ahistorical, objective assertions—that is, assertions constructed in a male rationality. On this score, Armstrong suggests that Kierkegaard might be more promising than Hegel, since the former's concern is one with personal communication rather than objective reason.

On a closer look, however, Kierkegaard fares no better than Hegel with respect to the feminine other. Even if Kierkegaard places the personal author back into the text, and does this, not in spite of, but because of his use of pseudonyms, and even if, on the most general level, as Smith suggests, Kierkegaard provides for the irreducibility of the other, Armstrong still finds that Kierkegaard reduces the specific other, the woman, to insignificance. In all stages of existence—aesthetic, ethical, and religious—Kierkegaard portrays women as limited and incapable others, lacking "the full range of human achievement and awareness." So, even if in Kierkegaard we find a rationality that is less male, and a dialectic that is more open to alterity than in Hegel, we still find a double inadequacy. The woman is consistently the other, and this particular otherness is consistently devalued.

The essays contained in this collection suggest that Hegel continues to be an important source in ongoing contemporary discussions. In these essays his dialectical philosophy is kept alive through the transformations of hermeneutical dialogue and debate on such matters as the nature of rationality, the relation between ontological structure and ethical interpretation, the effects of historical existence and particularity, and their role in mediating the self-other relation. This volume thus

aspires to honor the spirit of George L. Kline's suggestion: "We need, and shall continue to need, both Hegelian and un-Hegelian—even anti-Hegelian—studies of Hegel, though not of *every* kind. Looking ahead, we may anticipate that in the best of future Hegel studies the opposition between 'Hegelian' and 'un-Hegelian' approaches will, in good Hegelian fashion, be definitely *aufgehoben*."<sup>14</sup> Perhaps it would be accurate to say that not only does Hegel continue to be read, but that his work, (with all of its dialectical oppositions, but without clear consensus or synthesis) continues to be written; his spirit extended into texts such as those collected here.<sup>15</sup>

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14. George L. Kline, "Some Recent Reinterpretations of Hegel's Philosophy," *The Monist* 48 (1964), p. 75.

15. In several recent works (see, for example, James P. Scanlan [ed.], *Russian Thought After Communism: The Recovery of a Philosophical Heritage* [London: M. E. Sharpe, 1994], p. xvi) references to the present volume of essays have been made listing the title as *Hegel and Hermeneutics*. This had been a working title when these essays were originally collected.