

## CHAPTER 1



# “Mediation, Negativity, and Separation”

—from *Le malheur de la conscience dans  
la philosophie de Hegel* (1929)

**Jean Wahl**

The unhappiness of consciousness is appeased in the idea of the death of a God. The texts that we have cited commit us to considering two different ideas, which have necessarily appeared from time to time: the idea of mediation and the idea of negativity. Through either idea we will find ourselves at the center of our concerns, but we will find ourselves at this center by considering things from a viewpoint that will make us pass from history to logic or to a metalogic, as well as to a kind of mysterious history of divinity. And we will be able to go towards the idea of sacrifice, towards the still more mysterious idea of separation in the divine.

However great the proper importance of history is for Hegel, at any given moment, history has been transcended. And what has appeared on the scene all of a sudden is the mystery of theological mediation, of divine negativity and of the infinite.<sup>1</sup> The philosophy of history stops being philosophy and history at the moment of Christ’s appearance and disappearance. It becomes religious speculation. History is opened up. And the divine appears not only in the unfolding of history, but also, in a sense, in history’s being torn apart.

By unifying elements from the systems of Fichte and Schelling, Hegel has discovered an interpretation of the Christian mysteries (cf. Kroner, II, p. 231), toward which these two philosophers were already tending—at first a more or less obscure way, but in a way that they were going to make explicit in their turn.

In Christianity, Spirit gives to itself the form of consciousness, thinks itself as a real man who can see the divinity immediately and thinks itself as the divinity seen by men in an immediate way. Only by starting from the immediate can one reach real mediation. And it is not by chance if Christianity presents to us an immediate mediator. The Christ, God, is put into the dialectic of the immediate in order to mediate man better and make the concrete universal appear in him (*Phänomenologie*, p. 568) [PS 460/GW IX 406].<sup>2</sup> One must no longer think therefore that the sensible exists on one side and the concept on the other. The concept encloses the sensible within: “the moment of immediate being” (*ibid*) (PS 460/GW IX 406). The dinner at Emmaus is eternally true, if the presence at the tomb is eternally false, and the absolute essence reaches its highest point when, seeming to descend into the sensible world, it presents itself as a “here” and a “now” (p. 571) [PS 477/GW IX 419–420]. “Spirit forgives the evil and gives up its own simplicity and its hard immutability” (p. 591) [PS 492/GW IX 433]. At the same time as the immutable is formed in Christianity, it also stops being immutable in the strict sense. This is the outcome of the whole *Phenomenology*.

We have somehow an *energeia kinesis*, a *noesis* which is no longer content with attracting things, but which, descending toward things, condescends toward them, is the things themselves. There is a movement of the immutable, and this movement is gift and forgiveness.

The dualities, which more or less all philosophies maintain, disappear. One sole thought divides itself, in order to return to itself in a richer way (cf. Kroner, II, 214). The absolute religion is the revealed religion or God appearing in what is other than Himself (*Phänomenologie*, p. 569) [PS 475/GW IX 418]. One then attains the unity of being for itself—concept, thought—and being for the other (*ibid*, p. 570) [PS 476/GW IX 419]. God loves his opposite as himself because in this opposite He recognizes himself. Through the same process by which God becomes man, man becomes God.

Through the idea of mediation, logic and theology met up. “The *sylogismus* is the *principium idealismi*” Hegel said in his 1801 dissertation. He opposed the philosophies of reasoning to the philosophies of judgment. Kant would have triumphed over dualism had he focused his attention on the specific characteristics of reasoning, and not on those of judgment. In his *First System*, Hegel was studying the subject of the proposition, the pure *Dieses*, so that one can say that the subject’s starting point is simultaneously psychological and logical. “The subject is the pure individuality of substance,” the empty quality of the “this” which is a pure nothingness. What will therefore be at issue will be to relate—thanks to the reasoning that concludes while the discernment separates—individuality to generality just as the theological mediation gathers together men and God. Hegel thinks he can logically found the idea of mediation upon which Novalis was insisting so forcefully. The real will be the mediated immediate. And just as there are three stages of reasoning, likewise there will be three stages which philoso-

phy will have to traverse in order to grasp reason in its development. As Hegel said in his *First System*, “The two extremes are subsumed under the middle; they are each one for itself; and they are each for the other” (*First System*, Ehrenberg, p. 85). In the middle, we grasp the notion as the unity of the general and the individual. In reasoning, we see Spirit’s movement uniting and separating the ideas. Through reasoning, the wound is closed (*Schluss*). Mediation is the remedy to the contradiction from the idea suffers.

Now, unhappy consciousness is essentially mediation. Through it one will go from the inferior immediate to the superior immediate. Through it the propositions “I am finite” / “God is infinite” will be reconciled—but in a mysterious way and in a way that exceeds the classical laws of reasoning. All the psychology of humanity, and even all humanity itself, will appear as a great process of reasoning. Logical mediation and theological mediation will be united. The priest will serve as the mediator between us, as immediate individuals, and the mediator. And theology will be the logic of God.

The *Dieses* is, in effect, not only the disappearing “this” which is described in the *Phenomenology*. While he may have written a phenomenology, Hegel has thought a noumenology. The *Dieses* of perception encloses within itself “a living relation and an absolute presence” (*Naturrecht*, p. 359) [NL 90/GW IV 447].

Because it is mediation, consciousness, and particularly unhappy consciousness, is negation. It is the act of passing from one idea to another. Is it not thereby the same to say that consciousness is the essential negativity of ideas, the two ideas of negativity and of mediation being all the more tightly connected, since the unique thing that they refer to is the very connection of notions? Unhappy consciousness therefore is an aspect of the dialectic that is immanent to Spirit. We can say that it is the dialectical element separated, as much as it can be, from the speculative element, or if one prefers, the negative dialectic insofar as it is separate from the positive dialectic. It is this perpetual agility of chaos of which Friedrich Schlegel will speak; it is this infinite elasticity of the ether of which Hegel speaks in his *First System*.

The very idea of movement, in effect, is only understood through the idea of negativity (about which Bosanquet gave a profound interpretation), or rather the two ideas imply one another and finally form only one. Negativity is incompleteness; it is the note of the melody that inclines towards the next; it is the movement of a statue, such as that of Rodin, which seems to lose its balance at that very moment that it acquires it; it is the movement of life, or as Hegel says, the immanent pulsation of the spontaneous movement of vitality. Unhappy consciousness is “the simple negativity insofar as it becomes conscious of itself” (*Phänomenologie*, p. 569) [PS 475/GW IX 419].

We can approach this idea from certain pages of the treatise on *Natural Law* from the beginning of the *Phenomenology*: the infinity of consciousness is nothing other than that absolute “restlessness” that characterizes movement. Just as

consciousness is differentiation from that which is not different, just as it is the notion of infinity, it is self-consciousness, but, we can add, consciousness of itself as another.

The *Phenomenology* will be the study of the different aspects which consciousness takes. And since in every one of these aspects there is a conflict, we can say that in each of them we will find this unhappy consciousness. Unhappy consciousness undoubtedly is manifested more clearly in a particular epoch, but it renews itself under one form or another in all the epochs of the life of humanity.

One must understand that rational consciousness can only be expressed through a series of incomplete manifestations, by a string of conflicts and errors that are constantly rectified. The true is the negation of its negation, Hegel said in his 1801 dissertation, and he develops this idea in the system of 1802. It is in this manner that unhappy consciousness, insofar as it is this multiplicity of successive consciousnesses, is a necessary element of the happiness of consciousness, being identical in its essence to the very movement of the dialectic.

Moreover, Hegel was able to find in Fichte on the one hand, and in Schelling on the other, some elements which directed his thoughts in this regard.<sup>3</sup> In *Faith and Knowledge*, he establishes an identity between negation and indifference: “There is for us, says Schelling, no subjective and objective; and the absolute is considered by us only as the negation of these oppositions, and their absolute identity.” But it was necessary to transform this identity into an identification, in order to turn indifference into negativity, in order to turn Schelling’s absolute into that of Hegel. The idea of sacrifice was the center of Schelling’s philosophy. But because he lacked the idea of pain, at least in the first version of his philosophy, because he lacked the serious, the pain, the patience, and the labor of the negative (*Phänomenologie*, p. 15) [PS 10/GW IX 18], the divine sacrifice does not yet in Schelling have a truly tragic character.

As early as the Jena period, Hegel had seen that it was necessary to oppose the idea of immanence to the “transcendence” of the Schellingian principle. He had seen that it was necessary to substitute the activity of the *Aufheben*<sup>4</sup>—destructive restlessness of the realities that it let, in a sense, subsist—for the passivity of the *Aufgehobensein*. The idea of negativity was no longer then that of a pure and simple negative, empty and abstract, like indifference. The idea of negativity was now that of a plentitude of movement, that of a relation and at the same time a unity, and thereby something positive, something which is the absolute itself. And yet it had to harmonize with the idea of the subject. In other words, we have to return from Schelling to Fichte. Already at this moment Hegel was uniting, following Ehrenberg’s remark, Fichte’s dialectical movement and the Schellingian idea of totality. Hegel thus arrived at the idea of the “true infinite.”<sup>5</sup>

No surprise that Hegel had to see his former thoughts on the paradoxes of consciousness and his new thoughts on theology, morality, and the state, adjust-

ing themselves to one another. He had to see himself realizing from that moment on that negativity, which is the force of passion, also looked to be the force of logic.

In the very examination of the systems of Kant, Jacobi, and of Fichte, thought is known as “infinity and the negative side (meaning) of the absolute, which is the pure destruction of the opposition and of the finite but likewise the source of eternal movement, that is, of the finite, of the finite which is infinite since it destroys itself—nothingness and pure night of the infinity where truth takes its flight, as from a deep secret” (*Glauben*, p. 156) [FK 190/GW IV 413]. By studying the three philosophies of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte, and by studying the negation which is the judgment that concerns them, thought recognizes itself as united with being. Its negation was therefore another aspect of this affirmation which is the common foundation of the philosophies of Schelling and of Hegel. Hegel explains this affirmation, moreover, in Schellingian terms when he writes: “the pure concept or the infinity as foundation of Nothingness, where all beings disappear” (*Glauben*, p. 157) [FK 190/GW IV 413]. But the Schellingian indifference, the absolute considered as the negation of the subjective and the objective, is replaced by the movement of negativity, the negativity that goes, by uniting them, from the finite to the infinite, from the subjective to the objective. Thereby one reaches the aspect of infinity, the negative meaning of the absolute itself.

The concrete ideal of the *Aufheben* is going to be substituted for idea of the *Sollen*. There are two infinities. The *Aufheben* allows us to catch a glimpse of the concrete infinite, in opposition to the abstract infinite of the Fichtean.<sup>6</sup>

There is an active negativity, a creative negativity. The idea of negativity is an aspect of the very idea of freedom. Thanks to the negative what Hegel calls the “deliverance from the finite” is accomplished. Thanks to negativity, the world moves; thanks to it, the world is purified; thanks to it, the world is just. And this is through the return of negativity to itself, by its reflection on itself that the idea of Spirit becomes complete. It is its negativity that turns Spirit into the true absolute.

In effect, there must be an absolute reality, Hegel wrote in *Glauben und Wissen*, a non-dualistic reality. But there also must be a non-dualistic negativity, an infinity, a nothingness (p. 135) [FK 173/ GW IV 402]. This is the destructive aspect of reason.

This negativity will be the ideality of nature just like the ideality of God; both become at the same time what they are. The disappearance of the “this” and the “now” occurs in nature as well as in us. The dialectic is objective as well as subjective. Movement is dialectic. Because ideality is dialectical, it is movement. This means that nature is Spirit. As Goethe said in his *Faust*, nature constantly tries; and it is for that reason that it will be, like Faust, delivered.<sup>7</sup>

There is therefore an ideality immanent to nature as there is a reality immanent to Spirit (*Differenz*, p. 264) [D 172/GW IV 76]. And Schelling had seen that.

The sharp point of spirit, the progress of matter to the infinite are only the two opposite limits of the same process of contraction and expansion, conceived in the same way as Bruno had conceived it.

And time is precisely this essential ideality, which is in nature itself. This is the negation of every definite idea insofar as every definite idea is an isolated affirmation. Thereby we can say that time is a universal affirmation. As Schiller writes, “what must live immortally in the song — must perish in life,” and Goethe: “because everything must be destroyed in nothingness — it must maintain itself in being.”

Through time one heads towards true memory which is the interiorization of the movements of time, and in this sense it is a double ideality.

But negation has still another role in Hegel’s thought. If it is true to say that an idea denies itself, it is also true to add that it is through its negation that one becomes conscious of the idea. Thus, the feeling of the loss of life is knowledge, is the joy of life. We are led back to the idea that by the negation of the negation, one arrives at the true; by losing life, one conquers it. The genuine concept is the negation of negation; and Spirit, going out from itself, returns to itself.

After having studied the ideas of mediation and negativity, we must now say a few words about the ideas of separation, of diremption. By examining separation, we easily see how Hegel has somehow beaten out the final Schelling, at least the Schelling of *The Philosophy of Religion*, by means of the implicit presuppositions of the first version of his philosophy itself.<sup>8</sup> We see also that if, for Hegel, God is made in the very course of the evolution at the same time, if we can say this, as He is produced from all eternity in an intemporal domain, perhaps it must be added that this creation makes sense only because God is at first unmade, torn apart at one moment of the evolution. There was an act, at once original cosmic sin and divine sacrifice, a judgment by which God divided himself, the creation of the Son and at the same time creation of the world.<sup>9</sup> It is quite possibly this divine act which reverberates to an inferior degree when through the flood nature is violently separated from man. It is still this act whose echo we encounter in the moral domain, when we see the individual, by his violent emergence out of the uniformity of life, through his division from life, create for himself his own destiny.

To tell the truth, Fichte and Schelling here also had opened the way which later they had to deepen.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in his response to Reinhold, Fichte writes that the essence of the finite is composed of the intuition of the absolute identity of the subjectivity and objectivity; as well it is composed of an intuition of a separation (*Trennung*) of subjectivity and objectivity; and finally the essence of the finite is composed of an analysis of the infinite, an analysis that goes all the way up to infinity. It is this analysis which constitutes temporal life. Xavier Léon, who brought to light in a remarkable way this aspect of Fichte’s theories, points out that Fichte seems to borrow from Schelling his expressions. Indeed, through his

relation to Schelling, Fichte defines his own thinking, and he endeavors to prove that Schelling admits that there is a foundation of separation that is real entirely by being inconceivable. It seems that there was also a presupposition toward which Fichte's thinking, in a more or less spontaneous fashion, was ascending to. He had become aware of the irrational that was necessary to his very rationalism, which was like the root of this rationalism. For Fichte, the absolute, as he wrote to Schad, is quantified, is divided in knowing and in being. Divisibility, said Fichte in his 1801 *Darstellung*, has its principle in reflection itself; it is the form that defines knowledge itself. The world is born from the divisions of reflection, of quantifiability, which, it is true, is pure possibility. But in one sense, should it not have to be the same for Hegel? This *projectio per hiatus* looked to Fichte therefore like something essential to his philosophy. (Here one should also look at the idea of an *actus individuacionis*.) And Gurvitch has insisted correctly on the *Hiatus irrationalis* which Fichte acknowledged, one could say, at the root of things. Fichte had given the idea of this reflection that divides a religious sense in the *Anweisung zum seligen Leben*; what is at issue here is to overcome reflection in order to be united with God.

Schelling also thought that at the origin of the world there is "a division of reflection" that is purely quantitative and formal. This division consists in the infinite series of possible representations of the Absolute; on the basis of this primitive division, the world's epochs develop. The idea of a division, of a fundamental tearing apart, seems essential to Schelling's philosophy, as it will be to that of Friedrich Schlegel.

In his philosophical fragments, Hölderlin illuminates this theory of separation in an interesting way that is quite similar to Hegel's theory:

The sensibility of the whole therefore increases in the same degree and in the same relation in which the separation into the parts and into their center (where the parts and the whole are at the point of their highest sensibility) increases. The unity, present in intellectual intuition, sensitizes itself insofar as it emerges from itself, insofar as the separation of its parts takes place. These are parts that separate themselves at this very moment only because they feel too united when, in the whole, they are near the center, or because they do not feel that they are united enough, from the viewpoint of perfection, if they are only juxtaposed parts, distanced from the center, or from the viewpoint of life. . . . And here, in the excess of spirit, at the heart of unity and in its effort toward materiality, in the effort of the divisible infinite, the non-organic in which all the organic has to be included, in this effort of the divisible infinite toward separation . . . , in this necessary will of Zeus properly lies the ideal beginning of the real separation.

Zeus is indeed for him the highest thing separable, and it would be curious to compare the Zeus sketched by Hölderlin to Blake's Urizen, the bad understanding that separates, of which Hegel speaks. It is necessary to note also—and this returns us to the idea of the unhappy consciousness—that Hölderlin's editor indicates a variant of the word "separation" in the second sentence of the fragment, and this variant is constituted by the word "suffering." This separation, this suffering, according to Hölderlin, is necessary for self-knowledge. According to Hölderlin, "In order for one to be able to know life, life must present itself in such a way that, in the overabundance of interiority where the opposites change into one another, life separates itself."

What is in question is a very old idea,<sup>11</sup> which is undoubtedly imposed on the thinking of this time through the intermediary of Lessing and Schiller, notably in Schilling's *Theosophy of Julius*. There while moreover apologizing each time that his expressions are sensible and human, Schiller talks about a ripping apart of God, about a separation of Nature that is itself an infinitely divided God. In fact, God is similar to a beam of light, which by striking a prismatic glass, divides into seven dark rays. This idea of separation is at the center of Schiller's aesthetics. Art separates, divides (*trennt, entzweit*) man and nature, Schiller says sounding like a disciple of Rousseau. "Feeling" is characterized by duality. The meditation on Rousseau allows Schiller to rediscover an ancient conception of the mystics and philosophers. If one joins the ideas of the *Theosophy of Julius* with those of the essay on *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry* one manages to conceive the entire world, in relation to the primitive unity, as being in a "sentimental" state. In other words, one manages to reach the idea of the unhappy consciousness.

According to Hegel, this notion is connected to his whole philosophy, and in particular to his theory of the immanence of relations. If God relates to the world, this relation has to have its foundation in God himself. Consequently, the union of God and the world has for a counterpart of its appearance, for its foundation, for its synonym a separation in reality of God from Himself. Therefore alterity, duality, negation, and determination are there as so many names in order to affirm the concrete character of God. The concrete is mediate, and thereby differentiated.

God conceived as a pure and simple substance is an abstraction for Hegel and consequently tends to complete itself, and thereby to separate from Himself, to put a difference between Himself and Himself, to be other than Himself, by means of the process of His own negativity. Through creation—which is not moreover the creation of something which would be purely and simply opposed to itself—through community, God is conscious of Himself.

The idea of the Fichtean "I" made it possible to understand this idea of the fundamental distinction. The "I" of Fichte and the *Grund* of Boehme are the ideas which were united to one another in the thought of Hegel and of Schelling.



The auto-destructive partiality of thought, such that we see in Fichte seems to symbolize for Hegel from that moment on a deeper separation, a divine separation, or if one prefers, a possibility of separation, of which Fichte, as we have seen, had the idea. All of what there is that is real in this separation is its possibility, the separation being reflection and reflection being possibility. We grasp the unique metaphysical root of the idea of the bad infinite, the idea of the *Jenseits* and that of the *Sollen*.

God separates from Himself in order to unite Himself with Himself, and this is why He is subject, why He is Spirit, Hegel will say in the *Phenomenology* (*Phänomenologie*, p. 576) [PS 481/GW IX 424]. Spirit, Subject, and God are qualified by this union of separation and union, of diremption and resumption, of the non-relation and of relation. In other words, God is the *logos*, the *Urteil* that unites just as it rends (*Phänomenologie*, p. 393) [PS 327/GW IX 292]. Spirit, Hegel was already saying in his *First System*, can find itself and can reach the Absolute only through scission.<sup>12</sup> The concept is enriched by dividing itself into its own contrasts. And it is this idea that Hegel will take up when he speaks later on, in his *Logic*, of a judgment (*Urteil*) of the notion: every judgment separates, every separation is judgment. Such is the productive act of alterity. As Heimann says, the judgment will exist for Hegel between the concept and reasoning just as contradiction is between identity and *Ground*.<sup>13</sup>

Essentially there are two things that we can distinguish: this separation that we have spoken about is finally a union; to self-divide is still a way of remaining unified with oneself. Sin, the act of eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge, is at the same time that it is a separation the source of redemption.

Thus, the *Logos* is exteriorized spirit only in order to be internalized spirit once again. "Diremption" absorbs itself somehow back into itself, and this is the true concept of spirit—it is "reconciliation."<sup>14</sup>

The true objectivism merges with a profound subjectivism. And here we hit on one of the essential points of Hegelianism, if it is true that Hegelianism is an attempt to reconcile all oppositions entirely by preserving them, in order to inaugurate an armed peace or a serene war of notions, where there is constantly exchange and succession, and at the same time identity between the negation of contradictories and the fact that they are maintained. That is the mystery of reason which Hegel was making visible in the pages of the *Phenomenology*,<sup>15</sup> when he shows us how the appearance is disjoined and gathered back together. This mystery of reason is the very mystery of love, the joining of that which is itself with that which is not itself.<sup>16</sup> Just as with God, sin is separation and union since it is knowledge. Sin is in a sense the lowest degree of this process of rending and reunification of contraries of which God is the highest degree. In a still very general way, we can say that the ideas of particularity and unhappiness coincide.

We find the prefiguration of this division of God at the beginning of the *Phenomenology*, moreover, when Hegel describes the play of forces in which the solicited force tends to emerge out of itself.

But even more this is life; this is Spirit; this is the essence of man that shows us what the essence of God is. In what does this essence consist, if not in the separation of the self, in its going beyond, in order to return to itself? The separation resides in the notion of man himself. Such is the judgment, that is, the primitive separation of the spirit, the separation that makes up its life.<sup>17</sup>

Now Christianity precisely characterizes itself by this absolute separation that it presupposes. "The infinite in opposition with the finite exists through freedom, and when it separates, separates absolutely."<sup>18</sup>

However, it must be added that Christianity defines itself as well by this constant suppression of the Other, by this disassimilation and reassimilation of the Other which departs from God and returns to God.

If we apply this to the domain of consciousness, we will say that knowledge, which is produced by the separation, would be a falsification if it were only the product of the separation. But if it is true that the stress must be put on the separation and as well on the identity, there is therefore no absolute falsification (*Differenz*, p. 252) [D 161–162/GW IV 68–69] no more than there is an ultimate separation.

Philosophy must be located in the separation as well as in the identity. It must turn the two into metaphysical realities, into absolutes, but also philosophy must realize that they are two things relative to one another.

In his *Spirit of Christianity* (which, by the way, had some similarities with certain thoughts of Fichte), Hegel said that all reflection presupposes something which is not subject to reflection. This is why at the same time as the affirmation of the *Logos*, that is, at the same time as a possibility of separation and a separation which can go to infinity, there is the affirmation of something in which there is no division: God and *Verbum* are separate and are one. The multiplicity of the real is the infinitely realized division. And it is in this sense, according to Hegel, that we say that everything is made by the Son. Hegel here rediscovers the thought of Lessing on Christ, the divided God: the divinity is matter, and the *Verbum* is its form, says Hegel perhaps inspired by the doctrines attributed to David of Dinant. But here form and matter are one. The world is not an emanation of divinity, but rather an emanation of what separates itself in the divinity; it is part of what departs to infinity. At the same, it is what is separated and what separates. Thereby it is life at the same time it is death. What is individual, what is limited, is a branch of the tree of infinite life.

Each part is a whole, a life, and at the same time this life is reflected, is separated into subject and object, into life and into truth. Now to appear and to be reflected, to separate oneself, is one and the same thing (*Differenz*, p. 263, 265) [D 171, 173/GW IV 75, 77]. Oppositions appear; life and light seem to be outside

of one another. The *Phenomenology* is essentially a theory of separation insofar as it destroys itself in order to attain reason. And in the *Differenzschrift* Hegel seems to outline the plan of the *Phenomenology*: “every form of Spirit is determined through an opposing form” (p. 265) [D 173/GW IV 76].

The very beginning of philosophy, which is the feeling of a rupture, makes us catch a glimpse of this fundamental schism which projected its appearance outside of the absolute (*Differenz*, p. 172) [D 92-93/GW IV 15]. This feeling of a rupture gave us at the same time this enigmatical philosophical word: “unity.”

While protesting against the oppositions that Fichte erects between things and us—oppositions that are no more than the hardening of reason’s process of opposition by the understanding, since the understanding is essentially the positing of oppositions—Hegel declares in a passage that resembles those of Hölderlin that “rupture is a necessary fact of life, which is founded upon eternal opposition, and totality is only possible in the highest vitality through its reestablishment outside the highest separation” (*Differenz*, p. 178) [D 95/GW IV 17] [D 98/GW IV 19]. Moreover Hegel strongly acknowledges that reason is the force that posits the opposite subjective and objective totalities, without him coming out as a partisan of Fichte’s theory. Hegel sees at the same time in reason the very force which denies separation.

He revisits this idea while speaking about faith, where we see reason as the power of separation and as the power of the negation of separation, but while conserving then in itself the form of separation (*Differenz*, p. 185) [D 103/GW IV 23]. This is why one need only take a step, hardly a step to be able to say that the absolute that is identical to reason is at the origin of separation. “Separation into subjective and into objective is a production of the absolute” (*Differenz*, p. 201) [D 120/GW IV 35].

This separation<sup>19</sup> is the principle of sin, because sin consists in separation, in judgment, but it is at the same time the principle of redemption.

And finally, if it is true that there is a movement of God, eternal producer of the eternal *Verbum*, cannot we, without Hegel having said this explicitly, speak of an unhappy consciousness of God by employing a language that would recall certain Boehmain terms? In any event, in the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel writes, while speaking of the religion of Adonis, that the divine must be understood as spirit, that is, that it must be concrete and must have in itself the moment of negativity which presents itself here as death and the cult of pain: “During the festival of the death and resurrection of Adonis is where the concrete meets consciousness.” Hegel also says, “In God the negative and the contradiction come to intuition.” At the same time that humanity’s consciousness contradicts itself in its unhappiness, it sees the divine consciousness contradicting itself and being itself unhappy.

From the idea of unhappy consciousness, we can return to the idea of negativity, if we seek to transpose the psychology of humanity into the Logic. But, if

we transpose the Logic in the language of the *Phenomenology*, that is, of the history of humanity, that is, of the history of God, we can just as well say that negativity is the unhappy consciousness of God because there is a “pure negativity” of God (*Phänomenologie*, p. 585) [PS 488/GW IX 430]. This can hardly be anything other than unhappy consciousness. Thus, we have absolute restlessness, the inequality of absolute Spirit, the creator of the Otherness.<sup>20</sup>

That is to say that one finds in the speculations, which are the embryo of the Hegelian system, the gnosis and the theories of Boehme, the *Grimmigheit* that Boehme speaks about, the torment of things which is the source of their existence, of their quality (*Qual, Quelle, Qualität*). And Hegel’s philosophy is a lot closer than one first thought to the last philosophy of Schelling.

Before practicing on the subject of the theory of the notion, Hegel’s mind was practicing on these ancient speculations. Rosenkranz notes that in 1806, during his course on *Realphilosophie*, Hegel was still calling the pure idea the night of the divine mystery from whose thickness come nature and spirit.<sup>21</sup> The ideas of Schelling and of Boehme easily rejoin one another.

In an 1802 philosophical and lyrical variation, Hegel shows the idea of negativity to be very similar to the wrath of God, making the finitude of creatures appear and disappear. He shows us God, this infinite center, being irritated with the expansion of the nature to which He gave birth, and consuming it. He speaks to us of this divine wrath, making the infinite tremble without rest where there is no present but only a formless seething beyond limits, an infinite pain and a burning flame of this necessary pain so that spirit becomes conscious of itself. And in the *History of Philosophy* he will insist on the analogy between his idea of negativity and the Bohemian theories, although he judges severely, as barbarous, the unreflective character that this philosophy has left to these ideas. It will be necessary, he said in 1802, to subject these conceptions to a function thanks to which we see spirit free itself from them. It will be necessary to transform into knowledge this process by which the creature separates itself from God; it will be necessary to see that this very process is knowledge, spirit itself separating itself by means of reflection, then consuming itself through reflection, in order to turn its pain into the principle of religion and return finally to spirit.

The unhappy consciousness, a man more than anything, came to reveal to us his essence, insofar as his essence is felt through us. And this man is Pascal, but perhaps we can go further than him in the domain of speculation, if with Boehme we return from the pain of the Son to the pain of the Father.<sup>22</sup>

Eckhart’s theology and Boehme’s speculations came to blend with the Lutheran experience of salvation. Far from believing that the philosophy of Hegel is a purely rational philosophy, we would say that it is an effort toward the rationalization of a background that reason cannot attain. Despite what Hegel sometimes says to us, there are no purely transparent symbols for reason. Light

shines in the darkness. The symbols exist—of an opaque and resistant existence—upon which lights come to be projected, lights that make the symbols burn with a somber glare.



What the author of the *Logic* had originally at the bottom of his soul was a Christian vision of the cross and a Bohemian vision of the wrath of God. At the bottom of the soul of this rationalist, there is this double mystery; at the base of the soul of this optimist, there is this double pain. The wrath of God appears as the principle of the dialectic and of this movement of return into itself by which the dialectic is achieved.

The finite will reach happy consciousness only when God, who is the infinite totality, will break this finitude and thereby console and exalt it. Yet, all totality, even the smallest, is, by and large in the course of its life, happy. And if this is so, this very finitude, by which the individual is abstracted from everything, turns the individual precisely into something that is not abstract, a heart that calls to the heart. The result is that what negative there is in him is something absolutely positive

In Hegel's *First System*, we saw obscure monads aspiring toward the God who created them, and this restlessness of the monads was already unhappy consciousness. And by consuming themselves, by working, by complaining, they will go towards joy, toward the moment when all the parts which appear isolated and fixed will dissolve in the whole of life, each one extending itself into its opposite, each one exposing the absolute infinite. What will be at issue for Hegel will be to reach a synthetic view of the unhappiness of the two consciousnesses, divine and human, to gather them into one sole unhappiness. And here still we see the image of the cross and the idea of negativity responding to the same exigency, showing us that the unhappiness of God and the unhappiness of man are one and the same unhappiness.

Unhappy consciousness is also thereby happy consciousness. If nature is the product of God's negativity, then God is the very negativity of nature. And as their unhappiness, God's happiness and man's happiness are one, thanks to this very image of the cross and to this very idea of negativity. This is what Hegel was already declaring at the end of *Glauben und Wissen*: "the pure notion, or the infinite . . . must indicate purely as a moment, but only as a moment of the highest idea, infinite pain, which previously was in the culture only historically" (*Glauben*, p. 157) [FK 190/GW IV 413]. And he sees the Christian affirmation as the foundation of the religion of modern times, particularly in the form that it takes in Luther and in Pascal. God himself is dead, "which is expressed in a form that is only empirical in the words of Pascal: nature is such that it marks

everywhere, inside man and outside of man, a lost God.” One reaches therefore all at once the ideas of absolute freedom and absolute pain, at the idea “of the speculative Good Friday” (*Glauben*, p. 158) [FK 191/GW IV 414] above the sphere of history and of feeling. What is presented as history must not make us forget that in reality the domain of history is already overcome. It is necessary to keep in mind simultaneously the two ideas of duration and of eternity and see them be reunited in the conception of a duration, of a change, in the eternal.<sup>23</sup> If one celebrates the speculative Good Friday in all its heartbreak, in all its abandonment, in all of the harshness of the death of God, one will no longer see it as the sacrifice of the sensible existence conceived by the disciples of Kant or Fichte, but one will see the deepest sweetness emerge from this harshness, the highest totality, the loftiest idea in its entire seriousness and in its most serene freedom. Happiness is a bird of storms; it is born from unhappiness; it lives in unhappiness; it is the anti-halcyon; it is the storm itself, becoming conscious of itself at the most violent center and likewise in all the twists of its whirlwind.

Such is yet the flame insofar as it constantly changes its substance and conserves it in its permanent form. Movement is rest; the infinite *Verbum* is silence. Such are the absolute movement and the absolute negativity, identical with the satisfied essence of itself and at rest.<sup>24</sup> Such are these Menades for whom the turmoil means that the turmoil of nature is becoming conscious through itself. These Menades line themselves up among the Olympic Gods; they lose nothing of their movement, but form this movement into a peaceful dance, or even a motionless song.

Not only is the pain of the soul the testimony of spirit, not only is pain the affirmation of the belief of the divine apparition that we need, not only does unhappy consciousness have its place in happy consciousness just as all the moments that are overcome find themselves again in the final movement, but yet we can say that unhappy consciousness is the image, only darker, of happy consciousness. Unhappy consciousness is the passage from one opposite to another and thereby somehow the union of them. It is like the reverse reflection of the flame of happy consciousness; it is the consciousness of happiness insofar as projected in the individual and changing him, and thereby becoming doubled and the consciousness of unhappiness. By wiping clean the mirror in which it reverses itself and in which following Schiller’s image it is divided, we see again this straight flame. Through the divine disequilibrium, equilibrium is ratified, and the obscure background becomes transparency itself. Unhappy consciousness is in itself (*nur an sich*) reason. It must simply realize that it is reason (*Phänomenologie*, p. 496) [PS 413/GW IX 366]. And also it must not jealously enclose itself. It must not be like Novalis’s heart, perfume which is incessantly enclosed at the heart of the blue flower out of fear that it will vanish.

From then on the immediate becomes mediated, the individual universal, unhappiness happiness. And if this is so, if the true particular is a generality, if the

true immediate is mediated, if position and negation imply one another, not only can we say that there is a necessary movement of spirit weaving a fabric of relations, brightening the jewel of the immediate at the very center of relations, but also we can say that we have seen the diamond in what there would be incorruptible in the coal, the diamond with which our eye, to adopt Neo-Platonic language, identifies itself. We have thus attained the concrete universal. The suppression of separation is, in order to take up Schiller's expression in the *Theosophy of Julius*, God's very genesis.

Thus, beyond the properly Christian vision, and beyond the properly Boehmian vision of which we have spoken, there was in Hegel's soul, tightly bound to these two ways of seeing, a third vision, the vision that at the same moment is expressed in certain poems of Blake (under moreover a very different form), the vision that Hegel discovered in the passages cited by Mosheim which he had copied over: "the good man is the unique son of God which the father eternally has engendered. In souls there is something that is not created, and this is reason. All of what the Holy Spirit says about Christ is true of every divine human. All of what belongs to the divine nature belongs to the divine human."<sup>25</sup> Every man is both burning light and flame. In order to love God, one has to be His equal. There is in man a divine spark as the ancient Stoics and the German mystics had seen. Through the intermediary of the Bull of John XXII, and the orthodox historian Mosheim, the thought of Eckhart worked on the Frankfurt theologian.

The moment will come when a universal and truly philosophical religion will appear. Then the true spirit of religion will be revealed, which according to the very laws of history could not show itself in the past moments, but which was contained in them as seeds. Then the third religion will be realized, the second good news which will come to fill in the gaps, the breaks in the text from the first, the eternal Gospel on which certain mystics and intellectuals as Lessing were reflecting (in a way that was moreover quite different), renovating the heretical ideas of the Montanists of the early Church. And the depth of the Christian reconciliation will be one with the beauty of the Greek vision without having to renounce the Boehmian vision and the pride of certain disciples of Eckhart, without having to renounce divine negativity and human affirmation.

Spirit is the force that puts negativity in motion and puts up with it. It is the pain and the force of putting up with pain, at the same time.

It is this coming-and-going, this anabase and this catabase, procession, ecstasy and at the same time interiorization which finally coincide.

God, says Hegel, is absolute wisdom and absolute beatitude, insofar as He is immersed, but mediately, in the process by which the universe is at once at rest and in movement, that is, insofar as He is absolute ideality. And Hegel adds: "the tribunal before which the individual is going to be called, cannot be, precisely because the individual is isolated, an abstract tribunal. God as the judge of the

world must, because he is this absolute totality, break the heart; he cannot judge, he can only console.” Although this reconciliation takes on for Hegel a nearly ironical appearance in certain passages of the *First System*, or an appearance of forgiveness as in the *Phenomenology*, reconciliation always appears to him as the essential idea of religion.

Thus, evolution is understood for Hegel only because it is a matter of going from unity to unity: “the moment of the reunion cannot coincide with the moment of separation. There are necessary stages between separation and the final union of the infinite notion,” necessary stages that, at least according to what Hegel wrote in 1802, cannot be determined through the meaning and direction of the whole.

All of that must not make us forget the realist and classical aspect of Hegelian thought. Unhappy consciousness is consciousness as subject. It is the moment of infinite difference. To turn self-consciousness into a thing, to pass from the subjective to the objective, to escape beyond the romanticism of the *Sehnsucht* to found a classicism of the world—a classicism of the world that is complete precisely because it is incomplete, incomplete because it is complete—such was Hegel’s work from this last viewpoint. Spirit must be reality; spirit must be a thing and be identified with things (*Phänomenologie*, p. 504, cf. 496) [PS 419/GW IX 371] [PS 413/GW IX 365–66]. This will turn philosophy into the very expression of Protestantism insofar as it takes its foothold in the subject. But this will be to overcome its stricter forms. It is a matter of creating from reason a religion, from religion reason, to go beyond romanticism while making it classical, to go beyond classicism while making it romantic, to unite romantic subjectivity, restlessness or incessant movement, negativity, and objectivity, the perfect fulfillment of the classical soul, to reach, as we have said, the idea of an infinite development of perfect reason, to sense in divinity itself the theme of essential separation which resounds in the philosophies of the final Schelling and Schopenhauer, to oppose at the same time the triumph of the happy consciousness to the apotheosis of the unhappy consciousness, and to reveal the real and divine tragedy.

The true happiness is not a blank page, a beatitude without suffering. It is the virile happiness. It is Lucifer reascending to the heavens, the particular opening itself and redeemed, under the negative influence of reason, under reason’s generality. Thus, the Lutheran theme of humility and triumph is taken up and developed.

Against the philosophies of reflection, Romanticism has placed a value on the idea of the person, but this very idea risked disappearing if one does not reintegrate it into reflection. The person and the state will be concrete universals only if the reflection, which is its moving measure, is put into order around the vital fire.



It is a matter of creating self-consciousness from substance, and from self-consciousness a substance. The double movement meets up in the concrete universal. Substance is self-consciousness because it is the passage toward the opposite, because it is movement. Consciousness being permanence in the midst of the opposition is generality, is substance. But this substance is consciousness for itself: it is spirit.

If one can say that the goal of Hegelianism is to turn the subject into substance by opposing Fichte's first conceptions, then the goal is as well to turn substance into the subject by opposing Schelling. At the same time, it consists in triumphing over all false oppositions that create the unhappiness of consciousness: the opposition of the finite and the infinite, of appearance and essence, of the within and the beyond. The infinite is not opposed to the finite and is not reduced to a vain repetition of the finite. It is comprehended in it, redeemed, sublimated.

The *Phenomenology* in its entirety is, one could say, a movement of disincarnation of the particular, which is explicated through the inverse movement thanks to which the universal was incarnate, and became truly universal by becoming particular, while being incarnate. It is reflection on a trans-substantiation.<sup>26</sup> It is the study of the spirit at work giving birth to itself, revealing itself to itself. The pain of childbirth, the black smoke of the fire from which the Phoenix has arisen is the pain of the aspiration which penetrates all those forms (*Phänomenologie*, p. 566) [PS 472/GW IX 415]. There, Hegel rediscovers one of his first ideas: "just as the anxiety of the one who gives birth is turned into joy, in the same way your worries will transform themselves into bliss." Unhappy consciousness no longer appears then as the movement which follows the religion of beauty, Stoicism and skepticism: it is present in them. The ancient world at the moment of its flowering is a vain aspiration. Comedy is tragedy and the happiness that makes Hölderlin sigh is already in itself, despite the first appearances to which we fixed our attention—the deepest of misfortunes. If we must name an idea that contains all these moments, moments other than revelation of reason, it will be suitable to call it unhappy consciousness (ibid) [PS 473/GW IX 415]. Thus, one cannot exaggerate the generality of this idea. All of what is not the concrete universal, such that primitive Christianity, then Lutheranism, then Hegelianism have defined it, is the unhappiness of consciousness. This idea is a concept in motion that embraces, according to the way we interpret it, a more or less long stretch of history; in the narrowest sense this would be the Middle Ages; in a broader sense the Middle Ages together with Christianity. Extending back farther, it would engulf Judaism and classical antiquity.

The unhappy consciousness is thus the ancient world insofar as it is an abstraction and the vague consciousness that there is something other than abstraction. It is for the same reason the Hebraic world. It is the Christian world

in which this double aspiration of the ancient world and the Jewish world comes to transform itself in the cry: "God himself is dead!"

If we project it into modern history, it means the Enlightenment, Kantianism, the reaction against Kantianism. Moreover, there it is this amplification and this reversal of the notions—one of the characteristics of Hegelian thought which at the same time contests theses which initially are opposed, and at the very time that it contests them, conserves from them what in its eyes is their essence.

If we want to translate these ideas into more abstract terms, this consciousness in unhappiness is the very duality of consciousness insofar as it is going to be necessary to the notion of spirit, a duality which still cannot manage to seize its unity. It is the consciousness as subject over and against the object (*Phänomenologie*, p. 590) [PS 492/GW IX 433]. Painful subjectivity comes from the opposition of objectivity, and the object produces the unhappiness of love and of religion. It is thus mediation and negativity.

All the movements of spirit are comparable to this movement of the infant who first places the gods outside of himself, the gods that he fears. He isolates himself from them more and more, but he returns thereby to his own unity, to this unity that was not developed, not evolved and which through its very separation is enriched. He reaches a unity produced by himself, sensed by himself, and he recognizes that the divinity is in himself. The infant recognizes himself as the son of God. He became other for himself only in order to find himself again in himself. As Hölderlin says in *Hyperion*, "at the end, spirit reconciles us with everything. We separate from ourselves only in order to be united more intimately, divinely, pacified with everything, with ourselves. We die to live." And he compares the dissonances of the world to the quarrels of lovers; "the reconciliation is in the middle of the struggle, and all of what is separate is rediscovered."

Abstraction is synonymous with unhappiness; the concrete universal will be for spirit joy. The idea will appear no longer as projected into a foreign being, but as being very close to us, our work, and at the same time the force that creates us and is our substance. The knowledge that appears first as falsification and separation is revelation and union.

In God conceived as triune, we see first the general and indeterminate notion, then particularity opposite other individuals, finally accomplishing in spirit the union of particular and of general, and achieving true individuality. Hegel thus rediscovers this idea of the trinity, of the triangle of triangles, such that under the influence of Baader he conceived it, but here deepened it in a different way.

Furthermore, it is not only true to say that the notion is for Hegel what was the being of the Eastern religions, the beautiful or sublime essence of Greece and Judea, and finally the subject of the Christian religion, it is true likewise to say that for him—the successor to the whole tradition of German mysticism—the notion is at the same time what he would have called the Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit; the notion is the essence, first being in itself, then being outside of itself, and finally knowledge of itself in another, and being for itself. The notion is love, the identity of the Father and of the one that He produced. This unity is Spirit; it is “Spirit insofar as it runs through these three elements of its nature; this movement by which it traverses itself creates its own reality” (*Phänomenologie*, p. 591) [PS 493/GW IX 493]. Thus, above the abstract, above even the dialectical, spirit arrives at the positive, at the “speculative.” The study of unhappy consciousness and the reflection on the death of God make us grasp the identity of the speculative with the negative element, dialectic.

As long as consciousness produces only a beyond, which it tries in vain to reach, spirit cannot discover its rest (*Phänomenologie*, p. 575) [PS 480/GW IX 423]. It is too little for itself since it is greater than itself.

As Hegel said in his *First System*: “the highest being has created a world which is for Him made of an aethereal transparency and clarity; but for itself, this world is dark.” Obscurity itself must illuminate itself, without losing anything of this original background that it possessed. Unhappy consciousness is cancelled and conserved. It appears close to the faraway shore that forms the horizon, as an island, which, burning in the sun, seems to become a happy cloud.

The wider the gaps, the deeper will have been the abysses, the more they will be filled in a complete fashion. The dissonances of suffering will be resolved. Likewise, the necessary dissonances had to be resolved at the end of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* or of Empedocles. Schiller said that the peace of divine harmony ascends from the most savage combat. Deeper and deeper reminders of painful memories harmonize with moments of the greatest appeasement, through a sort of paradoxical condensation of duration, as in a great symphony.

At times, Hegel’s conception is not very different from that of Goethe. The spirit of nature speaks, in one of Hegel’s fragments, in a way quite similar to that in which it would speak to Faust.<sup>27</sup>

But, the Goethian nature, at least at first sight, entails in its vast current all the contradictions and pains without being stopped by them; here in Goethe the separations are finally perhaps only appearances. In contrast, the Hegelian absolute contains “the seriousness, the pain, the endurance, and the labor of the negative” according to the expressions of the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, which we have already cited: it contains oppositions. These are the rocks in the absolute and around which the absolute is thrown in higher and higher waves. The reflections on the antinomies of thought and on the pain of the Christian soul have led Hegel to conceive a more tense Absolute, to take from this absolute a tragic consciousness. Likewise, the Ninth Symphony—whose finale just like the *Phenomenology*’s conclusion finishes with some Schillerian words—has shown the depth of necessary pain at the height of joy. The Hegelian idea of Destiny, born of the reflection on Greek tragedy, deepened through the reflection on the mysteries of religion and philosophy, will effortlessly return to tragedy and will

give birth, at least in part, to the conceptions of a Hebbel and a Wagner. If Hebbel has been able to apply Hegelian concepts to tragedy, it is necessary to take account of the fact that these concepts in themselves were tragic concepts.

Like a Caroline de Günderode, who was so representative of what was more profound in German Romanticism, like a Wagner or a Nietzsche, Hegel has tried his hand at a synthesis of joy and unhappiness where these are dissolved or surpassed. Such is therefore one of the ways the problem presented itself to Hegel: how does one become conscious of one's own destiny so that one reaches happiness? We discover here as in Nietzsche the motto of a love of fate. Above the unhappiness of consciousness burns the beauty of the Goethean soul; above the Goethean soul burns the beauty of *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. But the dark brilliance that one perceives above this sweet glow is Etean redness, and the reconciliation of Empedocles with his destiny. Empedocles discovers in the underground flames the twinkling of stars; he finds the sparkling aether at the same time as the sparkling Ocean. And his life is illuminated for him by the flame of his own death. Through this pain which intoxicates him, the pain of the midnight, the song of the nightingale in the darkness, man, for Hölderlin, stands taller than the gods. And perhaps, still superior to Empedocles, at least in a sense, is the soul of the poet or the philosopher who sees these movements of this hope and this despair being changed into one another. The soul that observes that the spirit that conquers itself in time possesses itself since always above time, that observes that the drama knotted in time is eternally unknotted in an eternity full of life, in a marriage of centuries such as the one of which Novalis was dreaming, this soul "is spirit, the simple movement of these pure moments."

Everything is infinitely penetrated, Hölderlin said, with pain and joy, with struggle and peace, with form and the absence of form.

(Translated by Christopher Fox and Leonard Lawlor)

### Notes

1. Haym had been led to make an analogous remark: "as soon as one attains Christianity, the historical study is suddenly broken. The third part of the *Philosophy of Religion* completely abandons the phenomenological terrain and it exclusively keeps to the metaphysical terrain" (p. 418). Thanks to the idea of the death of Christ, the philosopher jumps from the fact to the idea; the fact as fact here becomes itself the idea (p. 423).
2. TN. Wahl's references to Hegel's *Werke* will be followed, in brackets, by brackets to the current English and German editions. The following English editions will be cited: *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) [abbreviated as PS]; *Natural Law*, trans. T. M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975)