
H. S. Harris

HEGEL'S LADDER

II: The Odyssey of Spirit

Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
Indianapolis / Cambridge

H. S. Harris: 1926–

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Printed in the United States of America

02 01 99 98 97 5 4 3 2 1

Interior design by Dan Kirklin

For further information please address

Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.
P.O. Box 44937
Indianapolis, Indiana 46244-0937

Harris, H.S. (Henry Silton), 1926–

Hegel's ladder: a commentary on Hegel's Phenomenology of spirit /

H. S. Harris.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Contents: v. 1. The pilgrimage of reason—v. 2. The odyssey of spirit.

ISBN 0-87220-278-x (v. 1: cloth: alk. paper).

ISBN 0-87220-279-8 (v. 2: cloth: alk. paper).

ISBN 0-87220-280-1 (set: cloth: alk. paper)

1. Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 1770–1831. Phänomenologie des

Geistes. I. Title.

B2929.H345 1997

193—dc21

96-52608

CIP

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48–1984.



To the members of
St. Edmund Hall
where it was my good fortune
to be taught;
and of
Glendon College
where it has been my good fortune
to teach.

Dentro al cristallo che 'l vocabol porta,
cerchiando il mondo, del suo caro duce
sotto cui giacque ogne malizia morta,
di color d'oro in che raggio traluce
vid'io uno scaleo eretto in suso
tanto, che nol seguiva la mia luce.
Vidi anche per li gradi scender giuso
tanti splendor, ch'io pensai ch'ogne lume
che par nel ciel, quindi fosse diffuso.

(*Paradiso*, Canto XXI, 25–33)

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Note on Conventions and Abbreviations

I have numbered the paragraphs of Hegel's text in two ways. For the convenience of those who use Miller's translation, I have adopted his running numbers (in spite of one or two mistakes that he made), but for the benefit of other readers, I have also numbered the paragraphs in each section. This should make it fairly easy to find the place in my commentary with any accurately printed text.

Bibliographical references in the Notes are given in abbreviated form: author's name, (publication date, page number or chapter). Translations of Hegel's works are similarly referred to by the translator's name with a page number. The full reference can be found by looking for the name and date in the Bibliography. Translations are listed in section 2 of the Bibliography specifically. Cross-references are provided in section 3 where confusion appeared likely.

The following abbreviations have been employed regularly:

- Akad.:* Kant, Immanuel, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Royal Prussian Academy, Berlin, Reimer, 1902–38.
- Anm.:* Anmerkung (Remark)
- D.-K.:* *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, ed. H. Diels and W. Kranz, 7th ed., 3 vols., Berlin, Wiedmannsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1954.
- Dok.:* *Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung*, ed. J. Hoffmeister, Stuttgart, Fromann, 1936, 1974.
- E.L.:* *Encyclopedia Logic*
- Enz.:* *Enzyklopädie (Encyclopedia)*
- G.S.A.:* Hölderlin, J.C.F., *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. F. Beissner and A. Beck, Stuttgart, Kohlhammer, 1943– (Grosse Stuttgarter Ausgabe)
- G.W.:* G.W.F. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Hamburg, F. Meiner, 1968ff.
- H.S.A.:* Hegel Society of America
- H.S.G.B.:* Hegel Society of Great Britain
- I.J.P.:* *Independent Journal of Philosophy*
- K.P.V.:* Kant, Immanuel, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft (Critique of Practical Reason)*, Riga, Hartknoch, 1788.

- K.R.V.(A,B):* Kant, Immanuel, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft (Critique of Pure Reason)*, Riga, Hartknoch, 1781 [=A], second edition with occasional improvements, 1787 [=B].
- N.E.D.:* *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1933 (1971).
- L.C.L.:* Loeb Classical Library
- L.L.A.:* Library of Liberal Arts
- S.T.:* Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*
- S.V.F.:* E. von Arnim (ed.), *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, 4 vols., Leipzig, Teubner, 1903–24; reprinted, Dubuque Iowa, W.C. Brown, n.d.
- S.W.:* *Sämtliche Werke*
- T.W-A.:* G.W.F. Hegel: *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K.M. Michel, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1970 [*Theorie Werkausgabe*].
- W.L.:* *Wissenschaft der Logik*

Prelude

The singular consciousness has reached its Calvary. "Reason" is its last and highest "shape." But its natural destiny in that shape is to experience its alienation from the universal rational order which it instinctively assumes to be its own true Substance. It is alive and free; but in that Substance it meets only its own death. Where then is the substantial reality of its own living selfhood to be found?

The movement from Observing Reason to Self-Actualization is one that involves both the whole experience of Reason and the last stage. On the one hand, the self that was observed in Phrenology becomes the subject of the new experience; but, on the other hand, because that self was a rationally comprehended whole of expressive capacities, its living expression is in the world of rational observation. So the freedom of self-expression is faced by the necessity of the world, and the first discovery of the self-expressive singular shape is that its own world is a Necessity that is not dead, but independently alive and free. With this the dialectical interaction of the singular and universal sides of Active Reason begins. First the singular rational agent takes itself to be the principle of a freedom that must replace the law of worldly necessity; then it becomes the true consciousness of the law as opposed to a false worldly consciousness of it; and when the two sides of this consciousness recognize one another as equally necessary, rational Individuality is achieved.

Even then the identity of singular desire with universal law is ambiguous and unstable. The rational individuals all have their own lives to lead; and when they claim to be exercising their Reason, by doing what is best for everyone, it is evident both that their view of the rational good is biased, and that there is a competition to be the one individual who does the rational Thing.

The immediate solution of this problem is a new kind of distinction between the singular and the universal sides. The universal Thing cannot be done individually; but surely it can be said by any rational individual? Alas, we discover that this is not the case. The singular rational consciousness cannot say what is right, universally, and without regard to the social situation and circumstances. It cannot even furnish an infallible criterion for deciding which universal formulas can be "laws of rational freedom." We only think that we can do this (and even that we can state universal laws of good behavior) because we already know (instinctively) what we must do, not rationally and universally, but within the definite community of which we are already members.

With this discovery, singular consciousness leaves the centre of the stage and withdraws to the wings. The subject of experience now is the Spirit. "Spirit" has been explicitly present (for us) as the universal side of the singular consciousness, ever since the active career of Reason began. But now this universal side emerges as an independent "shape of consciousness." From this point onwards the agent that we observe is the social Substance which the singular active Reason faced at the beginning of its career.

But how can there be any subject that is not a singular self-consciousness? How can there be an agency that is communal? The answer is simply "through the rational recognition of it as such." There is a speech, a language and a saying that is not singular because it is communally recognized as authoritative. This is the "voice of Reason" which the Real Individual tried but failed to be. She was obliged to admit that practical Reason can only be effectively voiced by and for an actual community; and as soon as that admission is made, it is evident beyond argument that the voice of Reason is heard, and recognized as such, in every actual community.

The Dasein of the Spirit is language. Wherever I hear (or read) a speech which I recognize to be not mine or yours, but equally mine, yours and "ours" (with reference to a community of others for whom it is equally authoritative, sacred, or valid) there the Spirit is. Indeed, it was already there in the Necessity that brought Faust and Gretchen to ruin; but it was not yet recognized under its proper identity as the communal voice. The dialectical development of this recognition is the theme of Active Reason and Real Individuality. When the Categorical Imperative gives way to the commanding voice of Antigone's natural feeling, Spirit is recognized in its "immediately true" shape.

As the voice of immemorial custom, however, that shape is doubled, as soon as particular groups within a wider community begin to make their own social arrangements. They are bound to do this by the same necessity that drove the Real Individuals into Lawgiving. Someone has to be designated to make executive decisions, and settle disputes. So Custom itself dictates that certain human voices must be obeyed; and from the inevitable conflict between the universal voice that speaks to all, and the particular voice that Custom designates as authoritative for our particular group, springs disaster for the immediate (or True) Shape of Spirit as a communal self.

From the breakdown of Spirit as customary unanimity, ordinary commonsense "selves" emerge. But this world of private individuals is not, and cannot be, a properly rational world. For them the Law of Reason is a formal ideal. Everyone is now recognized individually for what they already were (and did) in the customary world. But the execution of the law still requires a singular agent; and the authority of the law must be maintained by a power that is no longer "ours" but alien and arbitrary. So the formal ideal of universal legal recognition turns into tyranny and the primitive "law of the stronger"—but on a universal scale.¹

To escape from this breakdown, the voice of the universal Spirit must be alienated conceptually. The authority of the law must be seen to come from outside the world of finite experience altogether. But this discarnate voice still has to be incarnated in individual agents; and we have seen already why a plurality of incarnations is unsatisfactory. So what is achieved now is a nationally universal incarnation of Reason—a voice that speaks for that universal community of communities which the voice of custom spoke to.

This time there is no division between the voice of God and the voice of the King: they are one and the same.

This situation still contains the same absurdity that was present in the world of legal recognition. The King is now a constitutional monarch, so there is not anarchy whenever he dies; but the faith in a divine authorization of the constitution, is faced by the insight that every rational consciousness must be recognized as such, and hence as equal. The absolute authority of God, becomes the universal law of Reason—and the Revolution follows.

At this point, the Spirit must retreat into the inward voice of moral duty; and instead of a dialectic of private and public interest, we have a dialectic of moral good and evil. We arrive at the “situated conscience” (i.e., the moral conscience in harmony with the constitutional law and with its own social situation). Spirit finally reaches its subjective extreme in the religious language of the Beautiful Soul; and this time the opposition between speech and action leads to the explicit appearance of God—the Absolute Spirit—as the word of forgiveness.

Once God himself is on the scene, the whole evolution of consciousness has to be gone through again on its substantial side. We now know that the Spiritual Substance is the community, so we can observe the human community coming to the collective self-consciousness of its place in, and its relation to, the natural order of Necessity. This is what was still left out of the evolution of human society as the divine voice of custom that was finally incarnated properly as the individuated voice of conscience. The terminus of this evolution of Substance is the same community of mutually respecting and forgiving consciences; and the end of Spirit's odyssey is reached in the community of logical “science,” and the subjectivity of the philosophical self-consciousness.

Thus the final reality of the Absolute Spirit—which makes its first appearance as the “Yes” of acceptance exchanged mutually between the judging consciousness and the agent—is the System of Science itself communicated between the singular thinking consciousness of the philosopher, and the universal thinking community. If it were not for the “Science of Experience” the communication would only be effective between the philosopher and us, the philosophically prepared audience. But through the demonstrated identity of the religious community with “us,” the communication becomes universal.²

We should note that in the “Yes” of comprehending acceptance exchanged between agent and judge (both of them metaphysically sinners, because the act must fail to be a truly universal good, and the universal judgment to that effect must fail to be an actual good) the impersonal voice of the universal good (which Antigone received from above) has become completely incarnate as a human relation. Thus, the movement of the Objective Spirit as a transcendent subject is first from above downwards; and when its immediate Truth is shattered it moves from outside inwards, becoming in this way an intellectual voice from the Beyond—i.e. an inner voice that is taken to have its own place and being somewhere else. At this stage it is like the Imperial Roman Law, except that it is known to have its authoritative seat in the eternal world of thought. Antigone's divine voice was that of our life itself in this world; it could not have a mediator, and it did not need one. It was symbolized by the stone figures of the Gods. The new thoughtfully universal divine voice is mediated to us by human advisers on behalf of the

community. When it assumes the forms and powers of external authority, it is simply falling back into the Roman Imperial shape from which it emerged. The proper destiny of that Imperial shape is to be “constitutionalized”; and the final emergence of the socially situated Conscience presupposes the constitutionalization of political life and its public law.

When the voice reaches the shape of Conscience (including Forgiveness) the integration of community and individual is achieved. The Spirit is simply the mediating discourse that maintains the identity between them. Now a new movement of integration can begin—one that goes from inside outwards. The free community can now be observed as it advances toward the full comprehension of its absolute relation with the envroning world of natural necessity. For this we must go back to a time when human freedom was not even thought of, and the individual had no concept of herself as a responsible agent (or a sinner). The community begins as an immediate shared consciousness of the Absolute. It is like Faust except that it is not self-consciously assertive. We can think of it as going through the stages of Consciousness, Self-Consciousness and (Instinctive) Reason; or through the stages of Sense-Certainty, Perception and Understanding. But since it is necessarily a Spirit, the shapes in which Active Reason encounters Spirit without recognizing it are the most appropriate ones for the conceptual expression of the free Objective Spirit's unrecognizing encounter with itself in the “absolute otherness” of Objective Necessity. We have here a further confirmation that the “odyssey of Spirit” can properly be said to begin with Self-Actualizing Reason. The necessary appearance of the self-conscious Volk at this point in the argument (as the contextual Concept for the phenomenology of the singular rational consciousness) reciprocally confirms this interpretation of the unselfconscious Absolute Spirit on its way to the immediately self-conscious identity of the Volk as “True Spirit.”

The self-consciously free objective (or communal) Spirit is reconciled with the absolute Necessity of things in the Art-Religion. Hegel tells us this explicitly, and thus provides us with the explanation of why the internal contradiction in the Concept of True Spirit was presented (both to it and to us, but with opposite intended “meanings”) through its literary art. True Spirit presents its relation with the Absolute to itself through the Olympian religion; but the relation between its own nature and its freedom is presented in the religion of the Underworld (to whose Justice Antigone appeals).

All religions must contain the two perspectives—backwards towards nature and forwards towards conceptual self-consciousness. But only what is necessary to our Science is dealt with explicitly in it. In its conceptual result, the Art-Religion shows the free community face to face with natural necessity (intuitively recognized). This stark opposition is the immediate Concept from which the syllogistic movement of the Manifest Religion begins. But its “phenomenology,” which is given first, shows us how both the appearing of the finite Spirit, and that of Objective Spirit, are taken up and integrated within it. From our own philosophical perspective we can finally understand why the phenomenology of Spirit required us to follow “the leading of language” from the very beginning. The free spirit is what is released in human thought; and as a substantial activity—an identity that is “not Substance, but just as much Subject [and Substance]”—thought must manifest itself to itself in discourse. It is not the (eternal) necessity of Platonic

truth, but a freedom that recognizes itself in the necessity of a conceptual motion. With that provisional (and still formal) comprehension we can begin.

Notes

1. M. H. Hoffheimer (1992, 1992b) has made two insightful surveys of Hegel's treatment of "Law" in the *Phenomenology*. His negative-sounding arguments can in general be seen as the opposite side of the dialectical continuity pointed out here. But I would say that it is the positive position that the dialectic returns to. Hegel does *not* mean to "reject law . . . as adequate foundation for freedom" (51). That is a *lawyer's* use of "adequate." (For another study of the concept of "law" in the *Phenomenology* see R. Bernasconi, 1989.)

Why norms and rules of all kinds contain a *dialectical* tendency is brought out with admirable clarity (and with examples at many levels) by F. L. Will (1993).

2. I suppose that when Habermas says "Hegel did not pursue any further the traces of communicative reason that are clearly to be found in his early writings" (1987, 31) he means to include the *Phenomenology* in the "early writings." But his comment still seems to me to be unjust to the great lecture-courses on Art, Religion and Philosophy. Hegel's work is all of it a theory of "communicative reason." (On Hegel and Habermas see R. B. Pippin [1991c] and A. K. Honneth [1991]).

Chapter 1

From Faust to Fichte (Almost!)

(B) *The Actualization of Rational Self-Consciousness through Itself*

The second part of Hegel's fifth chapter begins with this heading. Logically we have reached the self-consciousness that is naturally rational, i.e., the modern self that has Reason, and knows that every self must freely make its own destiny by the use of its Reason. This is the result that Phrenology has bequeathed to us as the subject of the new phase of experience. So we are now observing the rationally cultivated self as it finds itself in our modern world. The first Gestalt on our journey will be Faust (who deliberately turns his back on the "gray in gray" of scientific observation, and seeks to pluck the fruit of "life's golden tree"). Faust will find the structure of ethical life to be a harsh impersonal "Necessity"; and the result of his encounter with Necessity will be a conscious opposition between two universal laws (subjective and objective); this opposition will evolve until finally the rational subject who identifies with the objective law discovers that there is nothing left to struggle about. At that point we shall have reached the ordinary commonsensical awareness of the social world that we regard as the natural attitude now.

Hegel is very explicit that active Reason involves a self-conscious awareness of the need for communal recognition. Reason as the active Category, the active unity of the self with all reality, is the consciousness that everyone recognizes my rational freedom.¹ Thus active Reason—the consciousness that I am not a singular self, but the category of all selves—is already Spirit; but it does not know that. We could see this as soon as we began to observe Reason observing its own activity. But active Reason only knows it instinctively. This means that when it discovers that its instinctive assumption about the social world (of which it is fully aware in the "form of thinghood") does not correspond with empirical facts, its "certainty" assumes the form of a false "knowledge" of how things ought to be. The transformation of this practical certainty about what ought to be, into an adequate comprehension of how things actually are (i.e. an understanding that shows why they ought to be the way they are) is a process that remains instinctive in most "liberal" minds. On the surface of their consciousness liberal idealists tend to remain "bleeding hearts." This illustrates how the Gestalten are self-contained. As observers of experience we shall pass from one kind of "social improver" to another; and finally we shall come to rest with the instinctive conservatives who always knew that the world is just the way it should be.

In paragraph 348 Hegel tells us that "this Reason will run through the doubled motion of Self-Consciousness again, and pass over into its freedom out of independence." From the poles that he gives there we can see that "this Reason" includes Individuality that is Real to Itself as well as Self-Actualizing Reason. The terminus of the parallel is the Happy Consciousness of the Ethical Substance. This is to be set beside the Unhappy Consciousness of the Unchangeable. So there is a mirror-inversion involved, because the Ethical Substance moves towards fragmented alienation, while the Unhappy Consciousness moves towards reconciliation and union. The beginning of the parallel is with an individual consciousness that "must demand and produce its actuality in the other." This covers all the stages of Self-Actualization, so it is proper to assume that "Pleasure and Necessity" is the rational "desire for another self." In that case we must see the conflict between the Law of the Heart and the Heartless Law as a life and death struggle; and it is Virtue that must acknowledge the Lordship of the Way of the World. Freedom of Thought becomes real freedom of action in the Spiritual Animal Kingdom; and it is reduced to Sceptical nullity in the universal Betrug. Finally the Unhappy Consciousness is inverted in Reason's Law-Giving, Law-Testing and in True Substantiality.

(a) The Clean Slate

- 1./347. Observation finds the identity of self and thing. This identity is what it is as a mediated self-making process. As Spirit it relates to an object which is another self who recognizes it. *This* certainty is now to be raised to truth through *interaction* with selfhood recognized as free self-maker, but *experienced* as object.

The "result" of Rational Observation, was the embodied mortal self that knows it is *free*. As "subject" this living self exists in an ethical world (rather than a natural one). So the whole world of Observation (not just the object of the phrenologist) is inverted into a practical shape by the transformation of observation into action. It is logically necessary that the whole world of Observing Reason should change its character at this point. For although it is our last resulting shape that becomes the subject of the new phase, this subjectivity *entails* a new world, precisely because it has an active, not an observing attitude. So it is Observing Reason as a whole that is sublated in Self-Actualization. Reason is the "certainty of being all reality"; so when Reason develops, the whole world changes with it.

The new attitude is a mediated one. The observing self was immediately identical with its observed knowledge. Self-Actualizing Reason is a higher mode of Self-Consciousness; it knows that the objective world is there, but it is there to be transformed. Selfhood is not to be *found* in the world, but *expressed* there; Reason is not to be observed, but made. This making is an interaction, because the immediate object of this self-conscious activity is another self (and is soon to be recognized as a world of other selves).

The agent self is a rational self. So it does not need to struggle for recognition, because all rational selves *must* recognize one another as such. There is a world of embodied selves, and its "infinity" is the circularity of self-recognition, i.e. of Spirit. But this infinite self-recognition does not come into being automatically.

The active self has to *learn* how to recognize itself in the other. The other self whom it does spontaneously recognize will turn out not to be the total sum of the independent selfhood in the world.²

The object of the rational self-consciousness that has “found the thing as itself and itself as thing” is the self-conscious rational “thing” that is independent of it.³ This rational “thing” is what we shall be concerned with continuously from here onwards. It will be transformed, but it is not something that we can put behind us.

The primitively natural self-consciousness was concerned with another self-consciousness, and what it wanted to show was that it is free. But its singular freedom came into conflict with its own singular embodiment. Observing Reason has also had this disconcerting experience in its own way. It does not literally die in it, because its aim is different and its experience is different too; but it encounters death as the final frustration of its efforts; and it is sublated as a result, just as the natural freedom of Self-Consciousness was.

Observing Reason wanted to observe itself as universal in its own singular embodiment. It could universalize its knowledge of the inorganic into “laws”; but it found that the living spirit was indeed *free*. The skull (as the unmistakable record of death) bears witness only to the spirit’s liberation. The encounter of Hamlet with Yorick’s skull illustrates this point. Yorick is dead; but his spirit is still living in Hamlet’s memory.

Even when we were seeking to observe the spirit in its body language we found out where it really was; indeed, we knew where to look for it even as rational psychologists. The true expression of the rational self is in the world of human action. Every singular agent, being embodied, is a “thing”; and the philosophical message of Yorick’s skull is that spirit is not just singular freedom, but freedom realized in a universal thing. Yorick’s spirit is not dead, because it was not embodied in his skull, but in what he did in the world. It is the world which (as the real bearer of the spiritual record that Gall looked for in the skull) is the object of the rationally free self-consciousness; its universality consists precisely in my recognition that it is shared and made by every other rational agent with me. This is the independent object that has the “form of thinghood,” but is really a self-consciousness. Hegel says so explicitly. This objective Self-Consciousness is the ethical substance that Observation vainly sought for in the naturally given body of the singular subject.

The existence of this “universal thing,” this “independent object in the form of thinghood,” is very evident in all active experience, even though it is not sensibly singular, and hence not observable. What is not immediately evident is that it is “a self-consciousness.” The “active Reason” that we shall observe has only an instinctive awareness of that. But at every stage of our spiritual experience we must be aware of the *Volk* as our social substance. Thus Hegel thought of Württemberg as his *Volk* and spoke of himself as a Württemberger; but this *Volk* is only a potential self-consciousness. We have this civil consciousness as an inheritance from the Greeks. But we no longer have the Greek intuitive awareness of our community as a *self* (represented by our artists as Athena was for Athens). We have only the “certainty” that it is not “alien,” and the “knowledge” that we are “recognized” by it.⁴

“Observing Reason” itself (being an activity of essentially *universal* import) involves and presupposes this *real* Universal Self. It came before our observing eye as an object in “Psychology,” because we get our educational norms from it. But also it sustains our observing activity; indeed that is how it exists for Reason in its completely universal shape. Our scientific discoveries achieve the status of “knowledge,” only when they are published to the community of other interested observers. A rational observer cannot exist in isolation. It is of the essence of Reason that it belongs to everyone; so there have to be logically recognized ways of demanding and receiving recognition for a rational discovery, since otherwise it could not be that at all. A letter may be enough; but only if it goes to the right address. Writing to Mr. Henry Oldenburg as Secretary of the Royal Society established the status of a scientific claim clearly. This was illustrated even in the case of a scientific discovery as fundamental as the theory of natural selection.⁵

Even in the world of Observing Reason ethical conflicts could arise. The controversy about the discovery of the differential calculus illustrates this. So it is not surprising that the first experience of Practical Reason causes something analogous to the life-and-death struggle. The naïve agent self believes that it can make its own fortune in the world, and ignore whatever it does not perceive to be relevant. It knows that it needs a community, because it is aware of its own universal (i.e., shared or communal) character. But it does not yet have the awareness (which *we* have) that the community is its own thinghood. This consciousness is precisely what it has to “actualize completely through itself.” For Reason as Observation, “Spirit” was its own “meant” inwardness (not the customs and laws that are the substance of the community). Active Reason has the social world as its conscious object; but it does not have our memory of the experience of Observing Reason. In its primitive shape we shall see that its social world is reduced to the *natural* minimum where Reason’s “certainty” and “knowledge” can be *absolute*. But the “first experience” will teach the agent-self that it cannot take its pleasure in the social world just as it likes. The *real* objectivity of Reason has the necessary shape of universal custom or law. So, after that first experience, Active Reason ceases to be naïve; but even then it does not cease to be instinctive. It loses its instinctive character only after its second experience.

- 2./348. The pattern of development will repeat that of Self-Consciousness (just as Observation repeated the stages of Consciousness). As independent but singular, it will try to make the other over into its own image; learning what free universality is, it will identify with the community of mutual recognition and become the real substance of spirit (into which all singular shapes return).

Hegel points out here that the section on Reason as Observation was a recycling of Consciousness at the level of Rational Self-Consciousness. The correspondence is a strangely transmuted and ironic one, but it is there.⁶ Sense-Certainty becomes the certainty of Reason discovering and classifying everything in nature, and establishing the universal laws of the order. This certainty is secure at the foundations and runs away into abstraction as the observer reaches the organism.⁷

This moves us to the rational perception of the Self as a logical Thing (*Sache*) with psychological properties. Here the correspondence is more direct. There is no problem now about the identity of the thing with its properties, but it is a problem to determine what the real properties are.

This displacement of the problem from the identity of the thing to the identification of its properties is an inversion, because in Perception it is the properties (our “ideas”) that are immediately known. In the rational analogue of Understanding, the consequences are plainly visible. The Understanding itself constructs the purely intellectual infinite thing/Thing (*Ding an sich* for it, *Sache selbst* for us) which sustains all properties lawfully, Physiognomy teaches us that the logically active thing has *no* determinate properties except that of being able to assume any property it likes. Observed in the mode of Understanding, the active Thing is a divided infinite, an infinite judgment. Whereas the Understanding *resolves* the difficulties of Sense and Perception, Bodily Observation arrives at a contradiction; and the inversion of direction shows itself in the fact that Observing Reason *arrives* just where the Understanding started: at the radical separation of the sensible from the intelligible world.

Self-Actualization will repeat the dialectic of Self-Consciousness in a similarly transmuted and inverted way.⁸ I suggested a fairly detailed parallel in my preamble to this section. We shall have to examine it step by step as we go along. We must begin by seeing that the rational agent starts from the naturally given foundation with a clean slate. She is *not* in a “state of Nature” because she has a modern education, and lives in a modern rational community of equal recognition. But like the natural Self-Consciousness she has the awareness of her immediate being as sublated.

It is the embodied individual who acts. The free, living, individual was the result that Phrenology gave us. Active Reason is initially aware of itself only as an individual. It does not have to *prove* this to itself, because in its “Observation” process, Reason became clearly aware of itself as the universal category of all rational agents. But now (unlike Rational Observation) Active Reason begins with the Concept of itself as rationally individuated. It recognizes that it is one of *many* rational selves; but it does not care about the others. The immediate standpoint of Reason, as the observation of nature (which was reinstated in Physiognomy and Phrenology) entails that Active Reason must begin on the same level of spontaneous impulse as the natural Self-Consciousness. That was why I could make plausible use of Faust (who properly belongs *here*) as a paradigm of the primitive self-assertive Ego. Faust is quite aware that everyone recognizes his rational status; and he recognizes theirs, likewise. *He* is not in any danger of getting into a life and death struggle, and he does not keep serfs in fear of their lives. But the self-realization of others is not his concern; and the first lesson that life teaches him is that that is a mistake. This was the only lesson made fully explicit in Goethe’s “Faust-Fragment” (1790). The parallel with perfected Desire is a direct one. The rational Self must discover and experience what the other feels; but (as Reason) it must do so categorically or universally, since the *other* of rational consciousness is the human

Spirit as such. Reason is implicitly Spirit; so the object with which active Reason has the certainty of identity is Spirit. But because of its “form of thinghood” this active certainty is the certainty of identity with Spirit as Substance. We see first the figure of Rational Desire, and at the climax we shall reach the Happy Consciousness of the Ethical Substance. When the object is recognized as the spiritual substance, all of the forms of subjective consciousness flow back into it. This will be apparent to us as speculative observers; whereas the consciousness that we are observing, comes back simply to the complacent sense that it is the supreme judge by which everything rational is certified as such.

This paragraph identifies for us the poles of the movement: Faust and the Ethical Substance. It also reminds us that the intervening movement is “doubled.” When the natural Self-Consciousness met its *double* no equilibrium was possible, until one of the two accepted the dependent role. Then Self-Consciousness existed as *two* complementary half-selves. Unified again in the Stoic, the understanding self doubled itself as Stoic and Sceptic; and finally it achieved the infinite unity of an internalized contradiction as Unhappy Consciousness. The rational analogues of the beginning and end of this movement are Faust rejecting the Tree of Knowledge in favor of the Tree of Life, and Socrates conducting his internal dialogue with “the Laws.” What intervenes is a “doubled” movement analogous to that of lord and serf, and Stoic and Sceptic. The rest remains to be seen.

- 3./349. The spiritual substance is the concept that *we* are already conscious of as real. It is the realm of *Sittlichkeit*, i.e. a community of actual individuals whose spiritual essence is a unity. For them it is both another self-consciousness, and an existing thing; and precisely because they are at one with it, they are rationally self-conscious. *Law* is its abstract objectivity, but *custom* is their own self-conscious identity with it.

Nothing could demonstrate more graphically the fact that we have turned the crucial corner, and embarked on a new journey whose goal is positive, than the logical need to discuss the terminus of the movement at once. When Hegel says that this goal has “already arisen for us,” we should remember how he introduced the Concept of Spirit at the beginning of “Self-Consciousness” (par. 177). But that was only by anticipation. At that point he wanted to underline the fact that Self-Consciousness is “the realm where truth is at home” (par. 167); what logically arose was only the Concept of Spirit that we needed in order to interpret Desire properly. I took advantage of that to discuss how the *polis* satisfies Desire perfectly. I showed how it can be conceived to do that without a “struggle for recognition.”⁹ But it might plausibly be claimed that my commentary was going beyond what was unambiguously required and justified. “Truth is *at home*” (par. 167), and Desire is (or can be) satisfied without any radical conflict, in the Family. The defence for going beyond that, is that no nuclear family is a subsisting *realm*. In order to be a subsisting community the family becomes a tribe (which may hold a territory, and must have an authoritative head). Then, according to the young Hegel’s image of Theseus, a group of warring tribes may be reconciled by a charismatic leader into the community that calls itself a *polis*. This achievement will only be possible where

the tribes have a mass of customs in common, and in particular a mass of family pieties that are universally respected. In this sense—the sense of the *polis* as a community of families, for which Antigone will protest and die—Spirit as the “ethical substance” arises logically from (and for) natural desire; and for that reason natural Self-Consciousness can rightly be called “the realm where truth is at home.”

The *polis*, however, is not the Ethical Substance, but the ethical thing. The Substance is *das Volk*, the Hellenes who are a warring community of these “constitutions.” What arises “for the sake of life” is only the real Concept of the ethical *Ding*. Only now has the “ethical Substance” arisen logically as the objective of the instinct of Reason. Sophocles did right (in the *Oedipus at Colonus*) to make Theseus a contemporary of Creon’s. What Theseus created from the natural base of the Attic tribes was the political community, the rational authority of the “daylight” of Reason for which Creon stands. The Substance had to be there already; the ethical *thing* is secondary and derivative in the sight of natural self-consciousness. When it comes into conflict with natural piety it is nothing but arbitrary tyranny, the blind *hubris* of a man (or a council of men) which does not know itself, and respect its own limits. But natural Desire *needs* this community of rational recognition, and can never be harmoniously fulfilled without it; so, as Aristotle said, “the *polis* is natural, yet he who invented the *polis* was the greatest of benefactors.”¹⁰

This spiritual *Ding* is what arises now for Self-Actualizing Reason. It arose for us already when we were watching Reason (as Psychology) look for it *inside* the rational individual. We had to know, even then, that the real nature of the human spirit was what is expressed out in the world. The rational psychologist had to know it “instinctively” too (i.e. she had to be aware of it empirically). The problem for her was whether the rational self that she was observing was virtuous or criminal in *character*; and the criterion for that was the custom already incarnate in the observing self. But the naïve observer had not yet recognized that this custom was the real thinghood of the self.

The active rational self recognizes that the *thinghood* of Reason is its own self-expression; so, for it, that is still an objective to be realized. This self does not know that the objective is already real. Naïve Reason is unconscious of its identity with custom—the identity that Plato called “Justice.” But every citizen who has reached the “age of Reason,” must incarnate it, if her education has been successful. The active Reason we are observing has also been educated theoretically; but when it makes “self-realization” its goal, it forgets that education. It can do this, because (as we saw in our observation of Psychology) rational individuality has two sides. It will not forget the custom instinctively because it is the actual substance of rational self-consciousness. The custom can be violated, and rational individuals are bound to be aware of that; but they do not wilfully choose to break it. So far as they are substantively rational, they must feel they have brought shame on themselves if they cause it to break. Gretchen is only rational in an instinctive sense; but she feels the shame put upon her by the social Reason. Faust, on the other hand, is a perfect logical reasoner, who has consciously cast off all of his rationally imposed psychology. In Valentine he meets the instinctive response of one who knows that even to

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