



*Love
and
Politics*

Re-interpreting Hegel

Alice Ormiston

LOVE AND POLITICS

SUNY series in Hegelian Studies

William Desmond, editor

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Alice Ormiston

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For my parents



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INTRODUCTION

Hegel in the Context of Modernity

THE AGE OF MODERNITY is the age of abstract freedom, the shaking free of the bonds of traditional community, of the natural ties of birth, and the stepping forth into the world as an individual equal in worth to all. It is this feature that is fundamentally determinative of the meaning of modernity, and it is with the implications of this feature that thinkers have sought to grapple since the beginning of its emergence in history.

In political theory, Hobbes constitutes a major marking point for the category of the modern, precisely because it is the modern individual that he takes up as his subject. The individual with which the discussion of *Leviathan* begins is the individual torn from the context of community, ripped out of the existing structures of identity, and considered side by side with other, similarly abstracted individuals. This was no misguided intellectual exercise; Hobbes was writing after the time of the religious civil wars when individuals had, on a mass scale, begun to abstract themselves from the community and to assert themselves as individuals. His philosophy is a reflection of what was happening *in life*. And in recognizing this emerging reality, Hobbes begins to chart, with powerful precision, the profound implications of the modern principle of subjectivity for human existence.

The “war of all against all” that Hobbes depicts in *Leviathan* must be understood fundamentally as the struggle of the modern for identity. For while traditional individuals were *given* an identity at birth, situated in a particular class, a particular gender, a particular vocation, according to an idea of their nature, the modern is given nothing by nature; what she becomes she must make herself into. And this requires the effort to gain the recognition of others. That is why the category of “glory” figures so prominently in Hobbes. Glory is defined as “Joy, arising from the imagination of a man’s own power and ability” (Hobbes 1985:124–25). But power and ability are not, generally

speaking, *objective* qualities. For power in a complex society entails most essentially the power to influence others, the power to add others' influence to one's own (Hobbes 1985:150). And this power only exists in the medium of recognition. The individual who seeks power thus seeks the qualities that will influence others, seeks to cultivate an identity that will sustain them in the world. But because the qualities that go into making an identity are always relative, because in order to be regarded as intelligent or handsome one must be measured against one who is less intelligent and less handsome, the seeking after recognition is fundamentally antagonistic. There is no solid ground of identity upon which one can rest secure. Rather there is a constant process of struggle to acquire and sustain one's identity in relation to others. Furthermore, opting out of the pursuit of identity is not possible for, according to Hobbes, identity is tied to survival.¹ One needs others to survive, so one needs qualities that can influence others. And these qualities only exist, only sustain their power, through the medium of recognition.

Hobbes's depiction of the freedom of modern subjects in terms of the desperate pursuit of an ephemeral identity, and the dynamic of antagonism bound up with that pursuit, is a depiction of the problem that has, in one way or another, preoccupied thinkers of modernity since. The shattering of the bonds of trust upon which traditional community depended, the undermining of the security and stability of that world, and the condition of alienation, insecurity, and war into which moderns have thrust themselves in their struggle for individual freedom constitute the paradox of modernity. The principle of subjectivity *is* the hallmark of the modern age. But what Hobbes teaches us is that this very principle itself binds us to a condition of unfreedom. As Rousseau was later to articulate: "Men are born free, but everywhere they are in chains."

Hobbes's own solution to this problem—the humbling of the individual through a confrontation with her own mortality at the hands of another, and the enforcing of the wisdom that results from this experience through the unified powers of an Absolute sovereign—has been a notoriously unsatisfactory one, since it appears to crush the very freedom with whose conception it had originally begun. The history of modern political thought can be traced in terms of the various attempts to address this problem, first outlined by Hobbes, in a more satisfactory manner. Locke's republic, Rousseau's social contract, and Hegel's idea of the modern state are all responses to the crucial condition of modernity, all ways of trying to accommodate, and in some cases transcend, the paradox of being modern.²

Within this history, Rousseau and Hegel constitute key participants in a strand of modern thinking that has held that the principle of subjectivity, while it does put us into the position of alienation and loss that Hobbes describes, contains within it the seeds of a higher realization, toward a new

kind of community and a new kind of identity. In Rousseau, in the German romantics, and in German idealism, we find the notion of a genuine authenticity or deeper truth to the self, an essential substance of freedom that, within the context of the struggle for recognition that Hobbes describes, must find its own expression. This is a substance that is to be realized in and through modern subjectivity, in harmony with the modern principle of will. The general will in Rousseau, practical reason in Kant and Fichte, substance become subject in Hegel—all these are expressions of this ideal.

We can situate Hegel more specifically within this ideal and outline the originality of the project that he undertook by looking at his relationship to the generation of German idealists and romantics of which he was a part. Hegel began, in his earliest writings, as a kind of political Kantian, seeking in the Kantian principles of moral reason the basis of a new society of freedom that could counteract the rigidity and heteronomy of the religion and the society of his day. But in addition to this, he shared with anti-Enlightenment Sturm und Drang figures the concern with sensuous spontaneity, for the satisfaction of feeling and imagination, and, with his contemporaries at the Tübingen seminary, the longing for a rejuvenated communal life along the lines of the ancient Greeks.³ It was to a renewed and *rationalized* Christianity, a Christianity that preached the Kantian message of autonomy, that he looked in these earliest days to provide the foundation for a living political community that could satisfy all of the above requirements.⁴ While Kantian moral Reason (*Vernunft*) was to provide the content out of which the new society would be shaped, religion was to play the role of “persuasion.” Christian love was that which could serve Reason, aiding its realization in the world not as a “pathological” motive but as containing something analogous to reason within it. As Harris describes, “[i]t seeks out and harnesses every impulse that supports Reason, so that our inclinations harmonize with Reason and the imperative aspect of Reason disappears from view” (1993:29). Against the asceticism of Kant, all aspects of the self could be harmoniously integrated in this new “religion of freedom,” which would thus provide the motivating force for a modern, rational, and fulfilling political community.

But in 1796, with his move to Frankfurt, Hegel fell more under the influence of the romantics, particularly his friend Hölderlin, and it is here that we see a significant shift in his thinking, as evidenced in the “Spirit of Christianity” essay. Both Harris (1993) and Henrich (1970) describe this shift as rooted particularly in Hegel’s encounter with Hölderlin’s developing “Identity theory.” Here, instead of the rational society being something that was to be constructed from abstract principles of Reason, with the knotty problem of how to bring sensuous being in after the fact, that society was to be *borne out* from a broader ontology of Being, from a primordial Identity of the subjective and objective world from which we had become ruptured but

to which we inherently strive to return. The significant issue here is that humans *already* had the capacity for access to this deeper reality, not in the sense of deriving the postulates of Reason from the concept of 'moral autonomy,' but through an "intuition of the divine life," a primordial experience of unity with the objective world (Harris 1993). This is no longer an abstract conception that must bring sensuous being in after the fact; it is in itself already a unity of reason and sensuous existence, a contacting of them in their unity as they were prior to separation. And it is this *intuition* of a primal unity of thought and being that comes to form the core of Hegel's new ontological conception and new political vision.

Thus in the 1797 "Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate," it is no longer Kantian Reason per se that is to be realized, but the intuition of Identity, an intuition that already has a basis in the individual's being. Moreover, in Hegel's understanding, as we shall see, that intuition comes to consciousness in humanity in the experience of Christian love. In a dramatic reversal then, love becomes the true substance of subjectivity, the true consciousness of autonomy, not as an aid to Reason but as itself the very seed of the new community.

It is this shift that is key to situating Hegel within the tradition of German idealism and romanticism. The ontology of Identity, as experienced in love, retains the Kantian ideal of autonomy but puts Hegel closer in line with the romantics and the earlier Sturm und Drang figures in the emphasis on sensuous spontaneity and harmonious selfhood. His embracing of this ontology, as Taylor (1975) argues, thus constitutes the basis for a happy synthesis of these apparently competing concerns.

While we may more clearly situate Hegel within German idealism and romanticism by this understanding, his true originality and what will constitute the legacy of his thought lies beyond this, in his subsequent, lifelong attempt to work out how modern reason might be reconciled with the deeper knowledge of the truth of Being, with the "mystical certainty" of love.⁵ For the encounter with the knowledge of Being, which for the romantics would constitute the end of their journey, in Hegel is only the beginning. As I shall try to show in chapter 1 of what follows, the "intuition" of the Identity that Hegel sees in Christian love encounters a problem unique to the modern subjectivity—that of alienation by reflective thought. While Schelling would look to the singular experiences of artistic genius as the place of overcoming of this alienation, Hegel will cling to the more widespread experience of love, historically manifest in the early community of Jesus, *even in the face of its loss*, and will seek to comprehend how it might be realized in and through the modern principle of will. Love, for Hegel, as a knowledge that resides within all of us, and to which he believes we can all come back, even in the midst of our alienation from it, will continue to provide for the modern subject the seed that can flower into a fully rational human community, a community that integrates all

aspects of the self in a genuine and complete freedom. This is the gargantuan effort that underpins much of Hegel's subsequent phenomenological, historical, and political studies. And it is this effort that the work here seeks to trace, from Hegel's articulation of love as the true experience of self and community in "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate," to his statement of the problem it encounters in the sphere of modernity with the principle of reflective thought, to an examination of his mature system as an attempt to comprehend how the problem is resolved in the history of the modern human will, through to his final confrontation with the possibility of failure and the message that this "failure" yields to us today.

The focus on love as the continuous foundation at play in Hegel's understanding of the modern self and its development situates the interpretation that follows within a minority tradition of Hegel scholarship that focuses on the human *experience* of an infinite principle—in either intuition or faith—as foundational to his philosophical enterprise. This tradition includes the work of Adams (1984), Bienenstock (1985), Copleston (1971), Dickey (1987), Fackenheim (1967), Houlgate (1991:ch.5), Jaeschke (1990, 1981), Shanks (1990), and Westphal (1979).⁶ While Fackenheim, Houlgate, Jaeschke, and Shanks have emphasized a religious knowledge or experience as central in the mature Hegel, Adams, Bienenstock, Dickey, and Westphal have stressed the importance of an intuitive knowledge in the writings of Hegel's developmental period to 1807, a knowledge that continues to play an important role in his mature thought.

Fackenheim has termed this interpretive approach the "Hegelian middle," because it comprehends Hegel's project neither as an attempt to establish the truth of the finite world solely in terms of the abstract logical Idea (the right-wing Hegel) nor as a limiting of all knowledge and being to the finite human (the left-wing Hegel), but as finding a basis of infinity within human experience, which must perpetually be actualized in the finite secular world, in order to achieve the rise to the philosophical consciousness that vindicates it.⁷

The interpretation here seeks to contribute to the development of this tradition in two ways. First, in focusing on the experience of love, rather than religious faith per se, the hope is that this work will help to reveal the significance of this interpretive tradition to more secular readers, who may have steered clear of it because of its apparently religious preoccupations. The larger tendency within Hegel scholarship has been to try to appropriate his thought in a way that strips it of what are seen as its untenable metaphysical assumptions; but it is not always clear that this approach is viable (Gillespie 1997). The idea here is that exploring Hegel's work in terms of the *experience* of love and the antagonism between love and reflective reasoning within the modern, secular self, offers a more meaningful way into Hegel's metaphysics than a more external approach might do.

Second, in examining the relationships among love, conscience, and modern ethical life in Hegel, this work seeks to develop the implications of this experiential basis of an infinite principle for Hegel's *political* philosophy. This is something that has been developed somewhat by Jaeschke and Shanks but that requires further elaboration, particularly in regard to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*.³

At a more general level, in terms of social and political philosophy and the reception of Hegel therein, this work seeks to show three things. First, it seeks to expand our understanding of the importance of love for Hegel's theory of action (the discussion of modern history and conscience in chapter 2), and for his understanding of modern ethical life (chapter 3). For in spite of his confrontation with the antagonism between love and rationality in his early writings, Hegel never abandons the former in favor of a more abstract kind of knowing and willing. Rather he seeks to comprehend how the intuition of love itself is what comes to be developed more fully in human secular existence in and through the principle of will.

Second, the study here is concerned to show that Hegel's mature philosophical system can be at least partially understood as a response to the problem of how to reconcile the experience of love with a modern reason that appears to be fundamentally antagonistic toward it. The worst caricatures of Hegel's thinking, such as we find in Marx and Kierkegaard, depict him as subsuming all actual life into an abstract concept. The argument here is that Hegel's system never *was* an attempt to replace the wisdom of life but sought in fact precisely to protect and preserve that wisdom. This philosophy, it is argued, was born out of a modern existential dilemma, the dilemma of the modern skeptic within ourselves and the tendency of that skeptic to denigrate and dissect our own deeper forms of knowing. The need for a purely rational philosophical system is most fundamentally the need for the modern individual to have a *rational vindication* of their own intuitive knowing, a vindication that can stand up to the dissecting, skeptical tendencies of the narrower Enlightenment rationality that has come to dominate us. Hegel's larger, dialectical thinking is an attempt to meet precisely this need.

Third, this work seeks to draw out the ongoing significance of Hegel's theory of the will as motivated by the deeper knowledge of love, for some of our contemporary problems. Against the prevalent notion that historical events have rendered Hegel's thought less relevant to us today, the argument here is that this history can, in fact, be explained from *within* Hegel's own perspective, in terms of the ongoing antagonism between love and a reflective reasoning that has been given too wide a scope. It argues, furthermore, that Hegel's notion of a will that is rooted in the knowledge of love and of a public life and a public philosophy that recognize and seek to develop such a

conception of the will remain valuable in conceptualizing how we are to respond to certain problems of today.

The precise outline of the book is as follows: The first chapter, “The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate’: Toward a Reconsideration of the Role of Love in Hegel,” examines Hegel’s early understanding of love a basis of autonomy in the modern self, which overcomes the divisions of reason and emotion, self and other, and finite and infinite. Yet as he demonstrates, it is a basis we are unable to sustain in its immediate fashion because of its antagonism with the principle of reflective rationality and will that have come to dominate the modern consciousness.

The second chapter, “From Christianity to Conscience: The Role of Love in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*,” explores the implicit role of love in Hegel’s depiction of the history of the modern will and the culmination of this history in conscience and forgiveness. This latter is understood in terms of a resurfacing of the knowledge of love and a depiction of how it is realized concretely in the world, in and through the modern will, thus pointing to the ongoing significance of love for Hegel’s mature political philosophy.

In the third chapter, “*Philosophy of Right*: The Final Reconciliation of Love and Reason,” I argue that the dialectic of conscience and forgiveness is key to understanding Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*. The experience of conscience and the mutual understanding achieved in forgiveness stand at the root of the objectification of love in history, in the valid laws and institutions depicted in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* and thus stand at the root of a developed reconciliation between the modern self and its world. But because the action of conscience is undertaken “through a glass, darkly,” without always finding a rational justification in the immediate moment of history, and because its recognition by others seems to depend on an experience of grace, it remains obscure to a reason that stands outside it. Hegel’s “Notion” of the will as unfolded in *Philosophy of Right* is meant to be a retrospective capturing of the inherent rationality of this movement in history, which thus provides a final reconciliation between love and reason.

In the fourth chapter, “The Historical ‘Failure’ of Ethical Life: A View from within Hegel,” I seek to explain why the developed unity between individual and society, law and being, and reason and emotion, which Hegel had envisioned, has failed to come to full historical fruition, being only partially realized in Western liberal democracies. It is argued that this reality, and some of the central problems associated with it—atomism and the domination of instrumental rationality, poverty, and other ills associated with capitalism, and the evil of genocidal events such as the Holocaust—can be explained from within Hegel’s own perspective, by extrapolating from various remarks he made in *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* and elsewhere.

In the concluding chapter it is argued that Hegel's own diagnosis of the failure provides the key to the task before us, in philosophy and in life, a task that remains within his own conception of a will driven by love. The task of life is the need to cultivate experiences of love and conscience in an age when they are threatened by eclipse. And the task of philosophy in relation to this is to vindicate experiences of love and conscience that individuals do achieve and thus to protect these from the reductive attacks of a narrow reflective rationality.

1

“The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate”

Toward a Reconsideration of the Role of Love in Hegel

INTRODUCTION

HEGEL'S “SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY AND ITS FATE” (SC), written in 1798–99, constitutes his most extensive consideration of love and his attempt to work out why a community based on the immediate bond of love is not possible for modern individuals. Although Hegel himself never published it, because it involved the articulation of a problem for which he had not yet conceived a solution, it is nevertheless important as a philosophical text in its own right.¹ It is important because in it, Hegel is attempting to come to terms with what it means to be a modern individual, with the defining feature of modernity at the level of individual subjectivity. In exploring why a community of love, which he sees historically manifest in the early followers of Jesus, could not be sustained by modern individuals, Hegel is seeking to come to grips with what it is about us as moderns that *necessarily* makes such a unity impossible to sustain; he is coming to terms with the loss of *immediacy* that characterizes moderns.² The essay can be read, thus, as Hegel's confrontation with the nature of the modern subjectivity.³

Rather than as a philosophical text in its own right, however, this early essay by Hegel has received attention mainly in terms of its place in the development of Hegel's thought.⁴ It represents a phase when he believed that love was the highest kind of knowing for humans, a knowing that could only find objective expression in the religious symbol. And the inadequacy of love in terms of satisfying the modern principle of abstract reasoning and achieving a true reconciliation between the self and its world is what initiates

Hegel's move toward, first, a philosophy based on intuition,⁵ and subsequently, the philosophy of the concept.⁶

I do not, with the examination offered here, wish to dispute this view of Hegel's development, so much as to raise the question of *what happens* to love as he makes his movement into the mature philosophy. That is, what is the relationship between the *experience* of love and the mature ethical thought and philosophical system? Such a question is important because it remains so ambiguous in much of the commentary on Hegel's development. Some commentators actually seem to point toward the *loss* of the knowledge of love as Hegel moves into his mature philosophical system.⁷ For others, the relationship remains unclear.⁸ Clearly Hegel did come to disavow his earlier emphasis on love as the highest knowledge and sought to find a conceptual understanding of it. But what this means about the role of love in life remains unclear. Only George Adams fixes his attention specifically on this question and provides a satisfactory answer to it.⁹

The idea that Hegel leaves behind intuitive knowing in his move into the concept, or the failure clearly to address the relationship between experience and concept, has serious implications for our understanding of his mature system. For example, it lends tacit support to the criticism of certain feminist scholars who, in observing Hegel's analysis of the movement from ancient to modern communities, or from family to civil society, point to the apparent dialectical "loss" of the feminine principle of "blood and hearth," or "reproduction" (Benhabib 1996, O'Brien 1996). Love, it is said, in Hegel's mature work is restricted to the limited realm of the nuclear family, constituting only the private life of men, while reason becomes the true bond of the political community. This theme of the loss of other forms of knowing has similarly been a concern for postmodern (e.g., Connolly 1988, Derrida 1982) and Christian (Desmond 1995, 2001) commentators on Hegel.¹⁰ The idea is that, while Hegel might acknowledge love and intuitive knowing generally as a moment in one's life, this is seen to be absorbed by a conceptual knowing that stands above it.

From a less critical standpoint, the emphasis on Hegel's development as being one from the standpoint of love to the standpoint of reason has lent support to prominent Marxist appropriations of Hegel, where the emphasis is on the idea of subjects creating their own world from the perspective of a critical rationalism.¹¹ The notion of a deeper substance or knowledge of unity informing—and limiting—the will, a knowledge experienced in intuitive form, is abandoned, just as Marx strips the substance out of Hegel's ontology in his own attempt to anthropomorphize it.

Against such views, the consideration of "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate" given below aims to begin to make the argument that, while Hegel did indeed move away from a philosophy based on intuition and a commu-

nity based on the immediate bond of love, the central place that he assigns to love in this early work is not something that he ever really abandons at the level of life. The movement toward a community based on reason and constructed through the human will and toward a philosophy based on the concept rather than upon intuition should not lead us into thinking that Hegel meant to leave the intuitive knowledge of love behind. Rather, as a knowledge of unity, love remains the source of the modern will in its drive to realize its unity in the world, *albeit a source that becomes unconscious*. And the philosophical system, while it does seek to provide a higher form of knowing than Hegel had earlier conceived was possible, does not thereby seek to replace the knowledge of love. Rather, the deep antagonism between love and reason with which Hegel tries to come to grips in this early essay points toward his mature system as an attempt to protect and preserve love against the divisive and eclipsing effects of a narrower, abstract rationality. By considering how Hegel understands love in this, his most extensive elaboration on the topic, as well as the problem of the inherent antagonism between love and reason, we can begin to move toward a better understanding of the role of love in his mature philosophy.

HEGEL'S CRITIQUE OF REFLECTIVE RATIONALITY

While Hegel ultimately embraced the rationalism of the Enlightenment, a study of “The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate” reveals his deep awareness of the negative effects of what today would be termed “instrumental rationality.” Hegel is hostile to the dominant strand of Enlightenment reasoning at this time because he has not yet conceived his larger, dialectical thinking, which will seek to incorporate but transcend the claims of the more limited reasoning of the Enlightenment. In this essay, he understands reason largely in terms of the static and disengaged character of the modern scientific standpoint. This is a thinking that is characterized fundamentally by the act of reflection—reflection away from the body, away from our direct engagement with the world, to the distant and neutral perspective of the scientific observer. This is the thinking that registers the external world in terms of the static and “neutral” judgment of “facts.” And it is the kind of thinking that Hegel will later derisively refer to as “the Understanding” (*Verstand*).

In “The Spirit of Christianity,” Hegel sees reflective rationality as fundamentally bound up with the atomism of rights-based societies, with the incapacity to establish and comprehend a meaningful and satisfying basis of community. Traditional societies such as ancient Greece are prereflective, according to Hegel, in the sense that they are not marked by the radical separation between thought and existence. The ethical order is rather built upon

the natural morals and sentiments of individuals; it is an extension of their being, and so their commitment to it is implicit and unreflective. But with the emergence of reflective rationality in the modern individual, we have the radical separation between thought and being, self and ethical substance, abstract thinking ego and concrete individuality. The basis of the new political community, in such a scenario, becomes the “abstract Ego,” which Hegel sees historically manifest in ancient Rome. Nature is no longer accorded a place in the moral order, as rights developed on the basis of this “unfeeling, non-spiritual unit” (PH 288/351).¹²

The political philosophy that embodies this reflective separation of thought and being is found in the early moderns such as Hobbes and Locke, who were dominated by the spirit of scientific rationality. The isolated self, viewed as an object of science, can be seen to be driven merely by appetites and aversions. It realizes itself in the expression of these passions, in the taking of what it wants from the material world. Furthermore, these passions are seen to be fundamentally idiosyncratic, since nature is no longer regarded or experienced as the locus of one’s social identity, the way it had been in traditional communities. Hence the establishment of self in the world through property is a fundamentally isolated act, the assertion of an absolute particularity of self in which others cannot share. This is the character of private property and of how it is bound up with the self of self-reflection.

While there is a conception of unity involved in a society based upon the “abstract Ego,” it is a conceptual unity only, a putting together of a multitude of individuals according to a principle of right that is external to nature, that exists purely in thought. In contrast to traditional societies and customary morality, there is nothing in the *nature* of individuals that ties them together, no inherent bond of feeling. Rather nature is understood only as idiosyncrasy and raw desire, an absolute particularity of self in relation to the other. As Hegel says of Rome, it had “no spiritual centre which it could make the object, occupation and enjoyment of its spirit” (PH 311–12/378) Furthermore, while there is a conception of justice here whereby individuals must respect each other’s rights, the experience of fulfilling one’s obligation to the other is inherently divisive. One limits one’s own rights in order to respect the rights of the other. This may indeed constitute a kind of ethics, based on a unifying principle of equality, but, says Hegel, it is only an “equality of enmity” (SC 218/270). One’s own interests are always conceived as separate from the interests of others and in perpetual tension with those others. At best what can be achieved is a mere balancing or overlapping of fundamentally separate self-interests rather than a unity in something truly common.

The inherent relationship between reflective rationality and an atomistic political community finds its religious counterpart, according to Hegel, in the Jewish separation of God and man. The notion that God exists in the beyond,

and that this world is condemned to finitude, is a *product* of the reflective separation from nature and the viewing of that nature from the standpoint of abstract rationality.¹³ Such a viewpoint can *only* see finitude in nature and in human existence and in order to preserve any notion of universality must project it into the beyond, as God. Thus reflective rationality is bound up not only with the separation of human and human, self and other, as reflected in the society of Rome but is also integral to the separation of finite and infinite.

Furthermore, because the Jews projected the universal or divine aspect of the self outside into the beyond and submitted to the dictates of a law coming from that beyond, he sees the religion as bound up with the further separation of law and being, of what in Greek society had been united in the being of the individual. In this sense Hegel saw Judaism also as a religion of positivity, of unfreedom, involving the submission to a law given and external to the self rather than generated from within, just as he had earlier criticized Christianity for its positivism.¹⁴

Hegel is hostile to positivity, to a law given outside of the self, because he is committed to the modern principle of freedom. In spite of his idealization of ancient Greece, and in spite of his concerns about the negative effects of reflective thinking, he recognizes even at this early stage that such thinking is bound up with the principle of freedom. While in its negative sense thought had torn the individual away from the unity she experienced in her ethical substance, such a tearing free also had a liberating effect. No longer bound by nature to their ethical substance, and accepting its demands in an unreflective manner, individuals had to find a *rational* confirmation of what is right. But reflective thought itself was incapable of generating such a content of right. The Roman commitment to the universal that lay over against their natural self, the abstract ego and the equally abstract universality of the state that held them all together, was clearly an unsatisfactory basis of right and of community for Hegel.¹⁵ And the Jewish and later Christian projection of the universal into the beyond was seen as an abdication of the position of freedom.

While Hegel had earlier looked to Kant's philosophy, to his notion of a larger moral reason, as providing a more meaningful basis of autonomy and unity for the modern self in "The Life of Jesus" fragment, by the time of the "Spirit of Christianity," he sees Kant's position as itself bound up with the divisive limitations of reflective rationality. Indeed, it posits a new division within the self, between reason and emotion. As Hegel argues in a now-famous polemic, the apparent progress of Kant's position is simply one of a transition of the master from the outside to the inside of the soul.

[B]etween the Shaman of the Tungus, the European prelate who rules church and state, the Voguls, and the Puritans, on the one hand, and the man who listens to his own command of duty, on the other, the difference is not

that the former make themselves slaves, while the latter is free, but that the former have their lord outside themselves, while the latter carries his lord in himself, yet at the same time is his own slave. (SC 211/266)¹⁶

Hegel's desire in "The Spirit of Christianity" is to find a basis both of individual autonomy and of political community that overcomes the limitations of reflective rationality, with its harsh separation of reason and emotion, law and being, self and other, and finite and infinite. And it is in love that he finds such an overcoming. An examination of Hegel's view of love in this early essay shows in just what sense it constituted transcendence of reflective rationality.

LOVE AS THE OVERCOMING OF REFLECTIVE RATIONALITY

For the Hegel of "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate," love constitutes the highest kind of knowing, higher than reflective thought. This is because love captures a deeper unity of existence, a unity of self and other, consciousness and being, finite and infinite, that is primordial and from which reflective thought has alienated itself.

The Hegel of the late 1790s had come directly under the influence of his old friend, the poet Hölderlin, and the latter's developing "Identity" theory. Hölderlin and some of his contemporaries such as Schelling and the romantics were concerned to articulate a deeper source of knowledge than that accessible to modern Enlightenment reasoning, one that could overcome the negative, divisive effects of this rationality and reveal the one-sidedness of its views. Such a task was coming to fruition in the Identity theory, with its roots in Spinoza's notion of substance, and in particular Hölderlin's notion of an Identity that exists in Being (Henrich 1970, Harris 1993). According to this theory, the experience of being separate from the world and of viewing it as a neutral, external object—the standpoint of modern consciousness—is derivative and corruptive of a more primordial identity that exists in nature. This primordial unity of subject and object is the divine, for Hölderlin. And it is the condition of the modern subjectivity that, in its very being, it is constituted by a rupture from this primordial Identity.

Reflective thought itself is incapable of capturing the deeper unity of existence because it is constituted by the separation of subject from object, of concept and being. Hence it must be a different faculty or mode of knowing, an intuitive one, that grasps the deeper unity. It must be a knowing comprised by unity of reason and emotion, of mind and body. While thinkers such as Schelling believed that only those blessed with the appropriate poetic genius could encounter this knowledge, this conscious reexpe-

riencing of the primordial identity, Hegel locates the intuition, more democratically, in the experience of Christian love.

As such, for Hegel, love is not a mere “emotion.” To view it so would be to view it from the perspective of the reflective understanding. Rather, love is the experience of the *harmony* of mind and body, of thought and being, of consciousness and existence, of reason and emotion. But it speaks in the language of emotion rather than in the language of concepts. This must not provoke the view of it as “irrational,” however, for it also embraces the side of the rational. Love is a *transcendence* of the position of reflective rationality, a *refinding* or *reexperiencing* of a primordial experience of unity that had been lost due to the separative influence of reflective rationality. It is the overcoming of the subject-object divide.

What is so significant about this conception of unity, as opposed to the unity manifest in societies governed by custom, such as ancient Greece, is that love is a coming back to unity after the suffering of diremption. And because of this, love is a unity of acute awareness. It *is* the self-consciousness of the unity, a self-consciousness that is felt. And most significantly, because it is a self-consciousness achieved after separation, love is to be compatible with the principle behind that separation, the principle of freedom implicit in reflective thought. Love is to be the finding of what is right in one’s own self, not as the abstract ego, nor as the rational moral law divorced from feeling, but as a higher unity of the universal and finite being. As this unity, and as the transcendence of the negative separations of reflective rationality, love is to be the ultimate realization of the principle of freedom.¹⁷ It is in Hegel’s specific interpretations of the teachings of Jesus in the “Spirit of Christianity” that we can see more clearly the way in which love constitutes the overcoming of the divisions of reflective rationality.

Christian Virtue: The Unity of Reason and Emotion

Christian virtue, according to Hegel, was consonant with the modern principle of autonomy, with the idea of adhering to a principle of right that is found within one’s own self. But it went beyond the Kantian notion of adhering to the moral law within, while subordinating one’s sensuous desires. Indeed, it is the “fulfillment” of Kantian morality, in that through love we realize the Kantian moral law not only with the rational side of our being, but with the whole of our selves. Love is the overcoming of an authority that sets itself over against actual being and the transcendence of a morality founded on mastery.

Hegel finds this notion of virtue in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, where virtue is described as being a “modification” of the subjective disposition of love. Rather than ignoring or repressing the sensuous side of the individual, in virtue this is to be raised up into a higher unity, while the moral rule in turn

becomes something living. Thus it is not a subservient response to a “command” coming either from outside or within the self. Instead, one is pulled toward the virtuous action with the whole of one’s being.

While indeed the Christian virtues are expressed in command form by Jesus in Sermon on the Mount, as in “Thou shalt not kill,” this is only because the language of reflective thought is inherently incapable of adequately expressing the kind of unity that virtue represents and that the actual individual experiences. It was the figure of Jesus himself that was the inspiration for Christian virtue, for he was the concrete embodiment of it. Thus it was not in obedience to his commands that one was to practice virtue but rather because he himself “evoked love and a spontaneous desire to imitate” (Harris 1972:402).

In Jesus, the disposition of love is the unity that grounds the action, just as in traditional morality the law is the ground. But unlike the abstract, external nature of law, that simply imposes itself on particular circumstances, love “modifies” itself to respond to the particularity of the context. This is no domination, no response to an external command, for the action emanates from a unified self, at peace with itself. The sensuous side of the self is not repressed in the name of moral fulfilment but is engaged as precisely the motivation for that fulfilment.

Fidelity in marriage, for example, is not rooted in mere respect for duty independent of one’s desires. Nor is it based on a particular inclination for one person, making the fidelity dependent upon constancy of desire. Nor indeed is it a question of a fortuitous correspondence between the moral rule of fidelity and particular desire for one person (an accidental balancing of the universal and the particular). Rather the action must emanate from a higher synthesis of the self, from a disposition of love: “[T]his sanctity alone makes a man capable of checking any one of his many aspects which may wish to make itself the whole or rear its head against the whole; only the feeling for the whole, love, can stand in the way of the diremption of the man’s essence” (SC 217/270). Love integrates any competing desires and thus resolves moral conflict.

Love furthermore overcomes the inevitable clash of duties that emerges under rule-bound morality. For if moral rules or commands are considered as absolutes, in the multifaceted reality of concrete situations we will be faced with the paradoxical situation of having a plurality of absolutes. If this is dealt with by ranking specific duties as to which is most important, the lower duties take on the status of vices. Love, however, is “the one living spirit which acts and restricts *itself* in accordance with the whole of the given situation” (SC 245/294). Against the elevation of particular duties as absolute, we have love as a “*living bond* of the virtues,” their “all-pervasive soul”: “[I]t does not set up a determinate virtue for determinate circumstances, but appears,

even in the most variegated mixture of relations, untorn and unitary. Its external shape may be modified in infinite ways; it will never have the same shape twice. Its expression will never be able to afford a rule, since it never has the force of a universal opposed to a particular" (246/295). The root of the virtues is thus not their universality of form, but the unified self, the self of love, from which the virtues emanate as love "modifies" itself according to its context. It is this love, this unity of self, that informs the practice of virtue, that allows for the many-sidedness of the situation and calls forth an action. Rather than consciously invoking one absolute and imposing it on particular circumstances, thereby destroying other absolutes that might also find some rights therein, the virtuous action represents a fusion of the universal and the particular *in life*.

Love, then, as the fusion of law and inclination, is meant to overcome the abstract form of theories of moral law, without transgressing the rational content of that law. The notion of virtue as a modification of love finds a way to reconcile sensuous being with ethical action. It humanizes the morality of Kant without compromising the moral seriousness of his project, the seriousness of what he expected from us as rational beings. The moral law is fulfilled not out of mere obedience, but willingly, with one's whole being. This, says Hegel, is the most genuine "fulfillment" of the moral law. The rational content of law is no longer set over against being. Rather it now exists as the real harmony of reason and being that love represents.¹⁸

"Reconcilability": The Unity of Self and Other

Christian love also overcomes the atomism of the standpoint of abstract right, in Hegel's interpretation, by revealing the deeper unity between self and other from which abstract thought, and the political philosophy founded upon it, has separated us. It is upon Jesus's command to "Love one another" that Hegel develops this notion of a community based on love. For this "command" contains the idea of a virtue of "reconcilability," a modification of love that is to govern one's relations to others.

Reconcilability constitutes an escape from the inherent divisiveness entailed in rights-based justice. It constitutes an annulling of the "equality of enmity" that Hegel had complained of in relationship to this justice. In reconcilability, if one asserts one's right against another, there must be no hostile reaction in act or feeling. For reconcilability, "even anger is a crime" (SC 216/269). For to feel anger is to feel wronged and to want to do wrong in return or to assert one's rights in the face of the other. Reconcilability on the contrary wants to give up the notion of a right as something held against another. Only then can one treat the other from a disposition of love; only then can one feel the true bond with the other that transcends the atomistic relation.

A heart thus lifted above the ties of rights, disentangled from everything objective, has nothing to forgive the offender, for it sacrificed its right as soon as the object over which it had a right was assailed, and thus the offender has done no injury to any right at all. Such a heart is open to reconciliation, for it is able forthwith to reassume any vital relationship, to re-enter the ties of friendship and love, since it has done no injury at all to life in itself. On its side there stands in the way no hostile feeling, no consciousness, no demand on another for the restoration of an infringed right, no pride which would claim from another in a lower sphere, i.e., in the realm of rights, an acknowledgment of subordination. (SC 236/286)

If one continues to assume one's place in the competitive world regulated by a system of rights, then one will always be involved in an injury to "life,"¹⁹ to the fundamental unity with the other. But if one withdraws from this system of justice, from the profanity of the public world, if one stops making claims on others, then there will no longer be feelings of resentment, hostility, and pride to deal with. By clearing the self of these emotions, the way is opened up to love, to the "sensing of a life similar to one's own" that takes individuals back to the truth of their life and to the real bond of community with others (SC 247/296).

But already, in this conception of love, we can see that its character is bound up with a morality of retreat from the modern world. It is impossible for love to find any existence on the terrain of atomistic individuals who express themselves in private property. The standpoint of atomism already presupposes the moment of reflective separation from self and community. Reflective rationality is the knife that severs, that cuts into and distances us from any previous experience of unity we might have had. And private property is the expression of that separated self, and its nature considered only as appetite and idiosyncrasy. Even if common possession is posited—"community of goods is still only the right of one or other of the two to the thing" (FL 308/382). What the lovers genuinely share as a unity cannot be the relation to the external, dead objects that belong to them. As a living relation, love cannot penetrate the lifeless world of things. Seeking to find its relation to the other, it encounters the impenetrable wall of property, the boundary of the other's ego in which it can share nothing, and retreats.

Thus to find unity again love must go *behind* the separative principle of reflective thought and its expression in private property. Unlike the unity of individuals in ancient Greek society, in the shared ethical substance that constitutes their being, the unity of love is implicit and undeveloped, lying *beneath* the actual existence of individuals in the world of property relations. To attain the unity of love, then, is necessarily to strip away the world of property that hides and smothers the true relation to the other. And because the world of

which the followers of Jesus were a part was so completely dominated by property relations, because there seemed to be no space for love to express itself there, opposition to that world became a fundamental feature of the community. The purity of the union could only be preserved by withdrawal. Hence "Jesus required his friends to forsake father, mother, and everything in order to avoid entry into a league with the profane world" (SC 236/386).

Nevertheless, by such a retreat, the early Christians *could* find the unity they were looking for. And it is in Hegel's discussion of the "culmination" of the community in the notion of the "Kingdom of God" that we can understand how such a community of love was achieved and how it represented the experience of the divine in the finite lives of individuals.

"The Kingdom of God": The Unity of Finite and Infinite

For Hegel, Jesus is not to be understood literally as the son of a transcendent God, but as representing the unity of the finite and the infinite, the idea that there is an infinite principle that exists in this life, a principle of unity with which we can come into contact and through which we can find the deeper truth and meaning of existence. But because individuals were so broken from any experience of the infinite in the Roman world, because they could not find any divine in their own selves, they required the figure of Jesus as a way of coming to consciousness of the divine within, as an intermediary step in the achievement of genuine love. Faith in Jesus is this intermediary step.

Belief in Jesus as an embodiment of the divine stems, on the one hand, from a felt absence in one's own life, from the feeling of being broken from the whole of life, and on the other hand from a recognition that Jesus represents this unity of life, this infinite principle that exists in a finite form. This was not a procedure of the rational understanding; rather the individual must "grasp the communication with the depths of his own spirit" (SC 256/306). Faith is "a knowledge of spirit through spirit," a sensing of the infinite in the other (SC 239/309). But such a recognition presupposes also a sensing of the infinite in oneself. Indeed, faith is "only possible if in the believer himself there is a divine element which rediscovers itself, its own nature, in that on which it believes, *even if it be unconscious that what it has found is its own nature*" (SC 266/313 [my emphasis]). Jesus is the concrete embodiment of an existence that is separated and over against us, and yet that is implicitly within us.

Beyond this intermediary step of the love of Jesus is envisioned a "culmination," an achievement of complete oneness among the followers. This final stage is an achieving of independence from the objective existence of Jesus. Jesus went against the notion of himself as "personality," an "individuality," "for the ground of such an individuality would be an absolute particularity of his being in opposition to theirs" (SC 271/316). The living link of faith that

must be strengthened is one that allows no exclusive individuality, no difference. The culminating relationship that Jesus sought with his friends was that complete overcoming of the subject-object, self-other separation in love. It is in this unity of individuals with one another that the true meaning of Jesus is realized: "Where two or three are united in my spirit . . . then I am in the midst of them, and so is my spirit" (ibid.).

A further illustration of this notion of unity is found in the unity of lovers. The joining of the two persons is not a conceptual unity, a putting together of two separate egos, but a becoming as one: "It is a *living* link that is said to be something divine" (ibid.). The lovers are separated only in the sense of their individuation as mortal bodies. But even this they strive to overcome in the act of love.²⁰

What we see in this notion is that a complete love requires the moment of separation and difference, which must be worked through if love is to achieve its highest development. In his "Fragment on Love" Hegel expresses this most clearly. Love entails the encountering and overcoming of differences in the other, a mutual giving up of personality. The more differences, the more particularities the lovers encounter in one another, the more aspects of themselves they can reunify and the deeper love can become. "[Love] seeks out differences and devises unifications ad infinitum; it turns to the whole manifold of nature in order to drink love out of every life. What in the first instance is most the individual's own is united into the whole in the lover's touch and contact; consciousness of a separate self disappears, and all distinction between the lovers is annulled" (FL 302–08/Nohl 378–82).²¹

We can see here the distinction from Platonic love, which is love of the beautiful only and which ultimately seeks to leave the realm of finite embodiment behind. In Hegel's notion of love the finite realm is not a mere stepping stone to the infinite but is its ultimate dwelling place. This is why physical love plays a central role in Hegel's conception, whereas for Plato it is an inferior expression.

The developed experience of unity with one's fellow human beings was the true spirit of Christianity according to Hegel and the culmination of existence that Jesus preached. A community of individuals who love one another is the true "Kingdom of God" and not some otherworldly or transcendent existence. Love, as an experience of the infinite, is an infinite that can live only in and through the finite. Even as each member of the community must die, the bond of love that unites them will live on. And it is this bond that gives truth and meaning to a mortal existence.

In Hegel's discussion of the kind of unity that Christian love achieves—the unity of reason and emotion, of self and other, of finite and infinite—we

can see the ways in which it constitutes, for him, the overcoming of a morality that subjugates feeling, of an atomistic society that ties us together through the cold principle of right, and of a religion that strips the world of any spiritual significance. And in portraying it with the beauty and the feeling that he does, it is clear that he has a profound investment in the notion that it might have worked. But already in the analysis we can see the seeds of its failure. For in retreating behind the world of private property relations, behind the self of reflective rationality that knows only its own idiosyncrasies and differences, love fails truly to overcome reflective reasoning. Rather it turns its back upon the latter. The principle of reflective rationality that love was meant to overcome, in fact turns out to be the "fate" that continues to plague it. And it is out of Hegel's confrontation with the clash between love and reason that we can begin to comprehend the motivating impetus of his mature philosophy.

THE FAILURE OF LOVE AS OVERCOMING

We have already seen that the community of love depended fundamentally on a retreat from the world of private property relations that dominated the early Christian era. Because there was no space for love to express itself in the world of things, where one encounters only the idiosyncrasy of different selves, the preservation of the bond of love required an ethic of withdrawal. The clash between the world of Christian love and the world dominated by private property relations has been emphasized by some commentators as the chief cause of the failure of the community.²² And certainly by their opposition to the world the Christian community of love did find itself conditioned by that world. By dismissing the world as polluted, they ironically gave it tremendous importance.

The problem of withdrawal, however, was not in itself the ultimate cause of the failure of the community. For the early Christians, in spite of this withdrawal, did have a positive life. They defined themselves by common ownership of goods, and the love of Jesus that bound them together expressed itself in their love for each other and in the single activity of spreading the faith, with its shared pleasures in praying, believing, and hoping. The real cause of the failure of the community thus was not so much withdrawal as it was the deeper antagonism between love and reflective rationality *within the modern self*. Ultimately, the escape from the divisiveness of reflective rationality and its expression in private property could not be sustained by a strategy of withdrawal. For reflective reasoning was not simply an external, governing factor in the world; it had penetrated their very selves, and it is this deeper penetration, this irrevocable change in the self of the modern individual, that was the chief cause of the failure of the community of love.

We have already considered how love was a rational emotion, a transcendence of the position of reflective thought because it is a real capturing of the unity of life, of which reflective thought had been incapable. Nevertheless, reflective rationality remains a reality for the subject who participates in a relation of love. In the eyes of reflective rationality, love is merely an emotion, something subjective, the other of thought. As Hegel says in his 1800 Fragment, the relation of reflection to emotion, however divine that emotion may be, “is only consciousness of feeling, in which reflection reflects on emotion but each is separate from the other” (FS 314/349). The reason imbedded in love feels this inadequacy, feels that it is conditioned by reflective thought in this way. If it is to be a true knowledge of the whole, then it knows that it must bring reflection into the experience of the unity. Reflective understanding, with all the oppositions it entails, has emerged as a part of the truth of life and must be accounted for.

How does love deal with the reality of reflective rationality and address its claims so that it can bring that rationality into the unity? It does so through the *objectification* of the feeling of love in a way that can satisfy the reflective understanding of the truth and reality of love; it renders love a knowable object. Otherwise, love’s knowledge will always be in competition with the knowledge of the intellect that cannot grasp it and will always be conditioned by that knowledge. To truly harmonize feeling and intellect, then, the divine must appear, “the invisible spirit must be united with something visible” (SC 291/333). This, says Hegel, is “the supreme need of the human spirit and the urge to religion” (SC 289/332). Thus the religious object is to be the objectification of the subjective experience of the infinite. Religion, and not philosophy, is to be the completion of the knowledge of love, its fulfillment, and preservation.

Religion is a rational objectification of the experience of the divine in life. But we are dealing in religion with a different kind of reason. It is not the same as a conceptual abstraction. It is not the reason of reflective understanding for which every object is a thing that can be united with others only under an abstract category, by means of a barren universal. The religious object is constructed “by means of fancy,” by reason in its *imaginative* use, a higher form of reason (inspired by Kant’s *Vernunft*) that transcends the categories of the understanding (*ibid.*). It is through the intellect in its imaginative use that the separation between reflection and emotion is overcome and that the truth of the religious object can be comprehended.

For the first Christians, the religious object was an immediate objectification of the feeling of love, a symbol of the unity of life. While they could not attain such objectification in the world around them, in relations that had been so despiritualized, according to them, they did achieve it in religious worship. It was in the figure of the individual Jesus that they initially found

such an object. He was the image of the unity, of the pure life in which believers implicitly felt the truth of their own life. And it was through their imaginative faculty that they could recognize him as such, that they could, even if it be unconsciously, know the unity between themselves and him.

But the object was inadequate, because they focused on the fact of his separate individuality, on that which was irrelevant to the truth of Jesus. By their understanding they *saw* him as separate from their own selves, but by love they *felt* his true reality as the unity of divine and human, law and being, self and other. Thus with his death they were devastated by the understanding’s belief that “[h]e had taken everything into the grave with him” (SC 291/333). But by the intuition of love they felt his truth persisting after death amongst them, and it was in the resurrected Jesus that they found their true religious object, that “love found the objectification of its oneness” (SC 292/334).

The resurrection of Jesus was a sign of the genuine union of spirit and body, the overcoming of the finite human form as a fundamentally exclusive particularity. The real truth of Jesus was his unity with life, the unity of the finite and the infinite, of this life with the divine. And this truth was realized in the living bond of the finite human community. The finite Jesus *had* to die, for it was not he himself that was the unity of God and human, of spirit and body; rather he only represented that. The personal, individual Jesus was not in the end what was to be immortalized, but his existence as the unity of love, the spirit of the whole that transcends the form of separate individuality (a form indeed imposed by reflection) and that goes on living in the finite community of which he had been a part. And with his death and resurrection, the individuals of the community could come to comprehend this. The resurrected Jesus was a better sign of the unity that Jesus represented, of his real existence as the love of the finite community, which enabled the members of his community to make the final transition to the higher truth, to the fully developed knowledge of love.

However, the religious object, the objectification of the knowledge of love, had an immanent tendency to become positivistic, to be understood as an *external* bond uniting them. Ironically, this tendency was partly a product of the temporary success of the community and it points to another intrinsic difficulty in sustaining a community of love—the problem of size.

It has already been discussed how a truly developed love entailed the encountering and overcoming of the differences in the other. The intensity and completeness of such a developed love means that it is exclusive and indifferent to others; it *necessarily* restricts itself to a small number of people. Yet the task of the Christians was to extend love to others, to proselytize and bring more people into the spirit of the community. A large group can live a shared life and experience a “common spirit.” But it is not the spirit of love; rather it

depends on similarity of need, a common sharing of objects and a striving after common goals. And the early Christians would not compromise the spirit of love as the principle of their community by engaging in activities outside love's boundaries. As the group expanded there could be no hope of working through individual differences and incorporating them into a higher unity. "For the sake of a petty interest, a difference of character in some detail, love would have been changed into hatred, and a severance from God would have followed" (SC 281/323). The only way for them to ward off this danger, says Hegel, was "by an inactive and undeveloped love, i.e., by a love which, though love is the highest life, remains unliving" (SC 381/325). Rather than being "surrendered" in the higher unity of love, particularity must simply be removed from the possibility of expression.

Because the love of the Christians remained undeveloped, a mere "sensing of a life similar to one's own," as the group enlarged its love became more and more fragile, less and less alive. The undeveloped nature of this love was what caused the Christians to seek an external source of unity. "Love itself did not create a thoroughgoing union between them, and therefore they needed another bond which would link the group together and in which also the group would find the certainty of the love of all" (294/336). This bond was the "mundane reality" of the factual Jesus that the Christians continued to read into the purity of the symbol, "hanging on the deified one like lead on the feet and drawing him down to earth" (SC 293/335). They remained attached to the memories of the individual, his activities and his death. They could not sustain the certainty of the truth of love without clinging to the historical, factual reality of Jesus as the criterion for the recognition of their love. The harsh opposition between spirit and body, which the resurrected Jesus was meant to overcome, remained, in the tendency to regard the sign as a "vague hovering," "midway between heaven's infinity, where there are no barriers, and earth, this collection of plain restrictions" (ibid.). Rather than simply the love uniting them, they found in the religious object a factual reality, a common master and teacher, to bind them together. The divine was something given to them, an alien spirit, an external master, not what they themselves had become, not the true realization of freedom.

It remains ambiguous whether, for Hegel, any relationship of love, no matter how developed, could be strong enough to withstand the crystallizing power of reflective rationality. Any externalization of love, any attempt to express its meaning for thought, will be subjected by this reason to misconstrual, "because every form of life can be objectified by the intellect and then apprehended as its object, as a cut-and-dried fact" (SC 288/331). Reflective thought is inherently incapable of comprehending love. As Hegel later says in *Philosophy of Right*, "Love . . . is the most tremendous contradiction; the Understanding cannot resolve it" (§158A). And while love in this mature

work is seen to find objective expression in the marriage ceremony, in family capital, and most ultimately in children, even here reflective rationality is at odds with it; for it is the development of this principle in the child and its legal recognition that is responsible for the "ethical dissolution" of the family (PR §177). Furthermore, as the knowledge of the Absolute at the level of feeling, the bond of love in the family only ultimately finds its vindication through the rational knowledge achieved at the level of the state.

Hence while Hegel does point to the problem of size as a central one in the demise of the Christian community, while it is clear that a true community of love must be small and developed in nature, a look at the later work confirms that the deeper antagonism that love could not resolve is the antagonism of reflective thought. This is evidenced in "The Spirit of Christianity" by the implications of the progress of reflective rationality for the fate of the community. The early Christians *did* find the objectification of their love in the resurrected Jesus. They *were* capable of understanding the truth of that symbol as their love given shape. But this is only because they were less intellectual than we. The crudeness of the union between divine and human in the symbol, a seemingly direct connection between Jesus's actual body and the ascendance, was compensated for among the early Christians by this lower development of reflective rationality. "They were breathed upon by the oriental spirit; the separation of spirit and body was less complete for them; they regarded fewer things as objects and so handed fewer things over to intellectual treatment" (SC 297/334). Their imagination was more capable of finding in the resurrected Jesus the true unification of spirit and body, feeling and objectivity, and thus of satisfying the rational self. But even for them the cleft in the symbol between God and man was there, so the grasp on the unity was very tentative. The longing for religion, for a completion of the sense of unity with life, remained. "[E]ven in its highest dreams, even in the transports of the most finely organized love-breathing souls, it is always confronted by the individual, by something objective and exclusively personal. In all the depths of their beautiful feelings those who felt this longing pined for union with him, though this union, because he is an individual, is eternally impossible" (SC 300/341).

The continuance of the opposition between God and man experienced by the early followers of Jesus has plagued the entire history of the Christian church, who in its consciousness, if not in its feeling, has seen God variously as friendly, hating, or indifferent to the world, but always as opposed. And as we grew more intellectual, the incapacity to see any spiritual truth in life was extended to our incapacity to see it in the religious object. The opposition between God and human in the symbol was deepened by the imposition of reflective thought, until that, too, became simply a spiritless object.

Hegel's recounting of the ultimate failure of religious objectification, its tendency to become positivistic, confirms that the deeper problem that love

faced all along, in an era of modernity, was the confrontation with reflective reason. While love did constitute an overcoming of the negative divisions of reflective rationality, it was never a complete overcoming. Because reflective rationality ultimately separates itself from love and stands outside it, unable to comprehend or do justice to the deeper truth of existence, love cannot finally transcend that rationality. Yet this reason, and its centrality to the modern subject, cannot be denied.

CONCLUSION: LOVE, WILL, AND THE TASK OF THE MATURE PHILOSOPHY

The fate of the Christian community appears to be of tragic dimensions, reflecting the fundamental clash between love and reflective rationality in the modern self, and the apparent triumph of the latter, with all of the loss that this entails. For Hegel, however, this clash and this triumph are not ultimate. While he must turn his back on the notion of a community of love, this rejection is not, in the end, an abandonment of the truth of love but only an abandonment of its immediate *form*. Love now becomes only the beginning point. To reclaim life, to actualize its fundamental unity, is to be a task of the *will*.

It is in this early essay that Hegel is being forced to come to grips with the modern principle of will. For will is precisely what makes its emergence with the reflective separation of thought from nature, of individual from ethical substance, and with the concomitant demand of the individual for self-determination. In *Philosophy of Right* Hegel is explicit that will must not be considered separately from thought, as if it were another faculty, but that the two are one and the same (§4, 4A). For will is the self-assertion of the individual that legitimizes itself according to the notion that we are rational, thinking beings. And the assertion of self in private property, which appears so inimical to the bond of love, is the first, most primitive expression of that will. In his mature work, then, Hegel will not only reluctantly acknowledge the will, as he does here, but will actively embrace it as a mode of realization of the Absolute. And it is this reality, that the Absolute must include the expression of difference and particularity, one mode of which exists as private property, that he is already coming to embrace in his famous statement in the 1800 "Fragment of a System": "Life is the union of union and non-union" (FS 312/347).

But after witnessing Hegel's deep attachment to the principle of love as the fountain of autonomy and the overcoming of the division between reason and nature in the modern self, it should be very difficult to believe that he so easily abandoned it to the concept of a will driven purely by the logic of necessity or by the need to actualize its own natural potentialities.²³ Rather, love is

implicitly behind the movements of the will that we witness in the later works. The drive of the feudal consciousness in *Phenomenology* toward a unity with its objective world, the achievement of reconciliation between the judging and the acting conscience in that same work, the expression of the modern will in private property and in the subsequent manifestations that Hegel traces in *Philosophy of Right*, the need of that will to objectify its certainty of itself in the world, and the drive of the individual of civil society towards the knowledge of its unity with others, all these can *only* be understood if the will already has some deeply rooted conviction of its own inherent significance, of its implicit unity with the world and with other individuals around it. And these convictions presuppose the knowledge of love. For as we have seen, love is precisely the knowledge of the unity of self and other, of self and world, and of self with an infinite principle.

Thus while the will, in its very coming into being, may have separated itself from the knowledge of love, it is nevertheless unconsciously driven by it. And this unfolding of love is precisely the process of "History," according to Hegel: "The process displayed in History is only the manifestation of Religion as Human Reason—the production of the religious principle *which dwells in the heart of man*, under the form of Secular Freedom. Thus the discord between *the inner life of the heart* and the actual world is removed" (PH 335 [my emphasis]). It is to a consideration of the ongoing role of love in Hegel's mature works, then, of its fundamental place in his philosophy of the modern will, that we must now turn.

2

From Christianity to Conscience

The Role of Love in Hegel's Phenomenology

TOWARD A PHILOSOPHY OF UNITY: HEGEL AND THE TRANSCENDENTAL INTUITION

IN THE 1800 FRAGMENT, Hegel holds that reflective thought can never comprehend a unity such as love and that love can only find objectification in the religious symbol. By the time of his 1801 *On the Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's Systems of Philosophy*, he is engaged with Schelling in an attempt to develop a *philosophical* comprehension of the Absolute. This movement reflects Hegel's growing appreciation of the significance to the modern of the impulse to rational conceptualization and thus the necessity that this impulse be satisfied. For we have already seen in "Spirit of Christianity" how reflective thought was immanently linked to the demise of religious faith and the impossibility of a community based on love. The harmony of law and being, mind and body, experienced in love, is totally disrupted by this consciousness. It *loses* the truth that love had discovered in being. Thus, by 1801 he has come to consider that if there is to be any possibility of a spiritual life for modern individuals, of something beyond the relations of dead objectivity and ethics of mastery that are implicitly tied to reflective thought, it must have a philosophical comprehension that can transcend the standpoint of that thought and its negative implications. In an age of reason, philosophy must illuminate the richness of life, show the individual the significance of her particular individual experiences by relating them to the Absolute. And it was through Fichte and Schelling that Hegel drew his hope that philosophy, a "new philosophy," which consisted not in mere fixed and abstract concepts divorced

from existence but in a systematic movement of concepts in connection with existence, could provide for the genuine, rational grasping of the infinite in life. Like the poetry of the Greeks, and the resurrection of Jesus for the early Christians, philosophy must cognize for the modern the unity of self and world and of finite and infinite.

But this is far from suggesting that philosophy constitutes a replacement for the experience of spirituality that we saw with love. The strength of Hegel's attachment to the principle of love, as witnessed in "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate," makes it difficult to believe that he could completely abandon it. Rather the philosophy Hegel is seeking to conceptualize here is one that incorporates the intuitive knowledge of love and provides it with a conceptual expression or element that will shield it from the negative, reductionist effects of a merely abstract thinking. This is a philosophy rooted in intuition, that provides a conceptual fulfillment to that intuition that will ultimately lead to its vindication. Only then will the problem that reflective rationality poses to love—the problem of the separation from and eclipse of intuitive knowledge—be solved.

In the *Difference* essay, Hegel conceptualizes this new philosophy as based on "transcendental intuition," which he defines as "an activity of both intelligence and nature, of consciousness and the unconscious together" (D 110/28).¹ As in his understanding of love, the transcendental intuition is something that, in being conceptualized by reason, should not thereby be seen as an object over against that reason but as a unity of subject and object. That is, the conceptualization must not be made from the reflective standpoint, for that would see the knowledge that exists in being, the knowledge of love, as a merely subjective and finite experience. The concept is not something different from the experience of being, which conditions and dominates it. Rather, in the "transcendental standpoint," the concept and being are seen as one and the same. Thus one begins philosophizing from the intuition itself, from "the identity of Idea and Being" (D 112/30).

One gets a sense of what Hegel means by this transcendental standpoint in his examination of Fichte's conflicting statements about the relation of the Ego to nature. We experience nature in ourselves as "drive" according to Fichte, versus the Ego, which acts according to a "concept of purpose" (D 136/48). For Hegel, the genuine synthesis or knowing of this opposition between the Ego and its drive is "feeling." But, as in love, when the Ego separates itself from feeling and views it reflectively, it appears as a merely subjective and finite emotion. The Ego's relation to its own drive from this reflective standpoint is one whereby they are different, "one is the condition of the other, one dominates over the other" (D 137/49). The Ego is asserted to be the Absolute and must bring the emotion under its sway. This tends to be Fichte's standpoint. But there is another possibility, the transcendental stand-

point, whereby “Ego=Ego; freedom and drive are one and the same” (D 137/49). Here the I does not need to regard its objective being as the antithesis to its freedom, as that from which it must act completely independently, but as that which contains the same truth as itself, a truth that exists in sensible form.

According to Hegel, Fichte seems at moments to take up the transcendental viewpoint, as when he says, “My drive as a natural being and my tendency as pure spirit are the same basic drive (*Urtrieb*), the drive that constitutes my being)” (D 137/49). But he inevitably slips back into the reflective stance, separating the Ego from its drive and advocating a relation of command to its own being. For Hegel, on the contrary, one must begin by taking up the transcendental standpoint.

“Feeling,” then, is an example of the transcendental intuition, of a knowledge that includes being, but that has a conceptual expression. It is not an abstract reflection on the Absolute as object. Rather the philosopher actually engages with the experience of the Absolute, because that experience *is* the knowledge, just as we have had with love before. Thus it is “an activity of both intelligence and nature.”

Philosophizing from the standpoint of “feeling,” however, does not seem very different from the philosophizing that Hegel had undertaken in his earlier attempt to comprehend the spiritual significance of love. Hegel appears merely to have substituted the idea of a philosophical concept attached to the knowledge of intuition, for the previous satisfying of intellect through the religious symbol. He appears merely to have rehabilitated conceptual thinking by attaching it to intuition, whereas before he had seen it as inherently destructive of intuitive knowledge. There is, however, a significant difference. For whereas love constituted the highest standpoint of knowing, the transcendental intuition is merely the beginning. The transcendental intuition is not a final standpoint to be arrived at but is conceptualized explicitly in terms of Fichte’s idea of Ego or “activity,” an activity to be understood in terms of a teleological drive toward self-knowledge that is vindicated in a complete system of knowledge. That is, Hegel is already moving here away from the notion of the Absolute as a relatively inert intuition that can express itself only within the confines of the Christian community, in praying, proselytizing, herding sheep, and making love, toward a notion of the Absolute as embodied essentially in a “will” or subject that progressively expresses itself *in the world*. Thus it is not in the transcendental intuition per se that we have the final knowledge of the Absolute, but in philosophy as a system.

While the foundation of this philosophy of the Absolute Identity is Fichtean, it is Schelling’s developing system of philosophy that Hegel, in *Difference*, sees as holding forth the most promise for rationally cognizing the Absolute in existence. For Fichte had conceptualized the Absolute as coming

to self-consciousness through a primitive act of self-division into the subject world and the object world and thus as a ground behind being and experience, behind the subject-object relation of ordinary consciousness, rather than existing *in* experience. Furthermore the object world was for Fichte simply the other posited by the Absolute against which it could begin to come to self-consciousness, and thus it is the side of the subject that is privileged in his system; the subject must prove its underlying identity with the object world by a one-sided process of mastery. In Schelling's idea for a philosophy of nature Hegel saw, on the contrary, a recognition of the Absolute as positing itself in the world of appearance, in that the natural world is seen as an actual existence of the Absolute. Key here was the idea that Hegel and Schelling derived from Kant's "Idea" of "teleological judgment" in *The Third Critique*, that nature, like the self, must be conceived fundamentally as a self-striving activity (Beiser 1993). But whereas for Kant the teleological judgment was merely regulative, posited to comprehend our experience of the organicism of nature, and did not necessarily tell us anything about nature "itself," Schelling and Hegel insist that nature must be seen as constituted by a teleological principle. In other words, the judgment does actually capture a truth about nature itself. Nature is not dead being, inert matter, but also the movement of subjectivity, purposive self-overcoming, albeit at an unconscious level. In Hegel's terms, it is an "objective subject-object." In Schelling's idea of a philosophy of nature, one begins with this objective world, examining and understanding its movements and its patterns as fundamentally teleological.

But how can Schelling assume such a view of nature without falling into the problem of dogmatism that all the post-Kantian idealists are so aware of, of claiming knowledge of an objective being without accounting for the contribution of consciousness to that knowledge? The answer is that knowledge for Schelling is not something foreign, added on to Nature, but an emanation of nature itself, indeed the very telos of nature. As he says in the 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism*, "Nature's highest goal, to become wholly an object to herself, is achieved only through the last and highest order of reflection, which is none other than man" (6). Hence we have here a teleological treatment of the development of nature and intelligence, as the self-positing of the Identity in existence toward its own self-consciousness. This is opposed to the loss of the Identity in the postulated act of self-division by which Fichte's system begins and where, in the project of reconstructing the Identity for consciousness, the objective world comes to take on a subordinate position. It is in this idea of a teleological or developmental tracing, then, that Hegel sees the potential for comprehending the Absolute in the experience of ordinary consciousness. Hence it is to be in the carrying forth of Schelling's project that Hegel believes we might find a genuine verification of the Absolute in existence.

If the Absolute is self-positing, if it posits itself in an objective and a subjective form, in nature and in intelligence, toward its own self-comprehension, then, according to Hegel, philosophy can trace this self-unfolding, can trace the Identity as it exists in each moment and situate each moment in relation to the Absolute as a totality. One accompanies the Identity in its own self-positing, first, following Schelling, in its visible form as nature. The manifold of nature is comprehended as the striving of the Absolute toward reflection on itself in visible form, and thus there is an evolutionary development of being from its first existence in inorganic nature, toward an increasingly centralized self-striving in the organic activity of plants, then in the self-feeling of animals, and finally in the consciousness of the human, the being who reflects nature to itself and thus begins to bring the Absolute to self-consciousness.

At first humans do not find their unity with nature but, from the subject-object division which characterizes consciousness, take nature as something separate and distinct. It is in *self*-consciousness, in reflection away from nature and back onto their own self, that we have the beginning of a rational reunification with nature. Through the experience of its own self as activity, as subject, self-consciousness will gradually come to find itself as the conscious activity that parallels precisely what has gone on unconsciously in nature. The Absolute as self-consciousness emerges out of the unconscious Absolute of nature and wills its own existence. It will construct consciously the rational structure of itself, and it will find that structure mirrored in nature. Nature is thus the ground and confirmation of the Absolute as self-consciousness. And self-consciousness in its self-unfolding consciously constructs what in Nature had been unconsciously working therein.

What this presupposes is that the Absolute ultimately achieves its goal of self-knowledge, ultimately comes to know itself both in self and in nature and thus is its own rational self-grounding. The philosophical system, then, is the final emanation of an Absolute that seeks rational self-comprehension. The philosopher follows the unfolding of the Absolute in both these worlds of nature and humanity and comprehends the unity of both of them in the Absolute as a totality. And the “transcendental intuition” is the key to this philosophical engagement. The transcendental intuition is precisely the Absolute in the *moment* of its existence, the conscious expression of an unconscious activity, which then goes beyond itself and finds its ultimate verification in its relation to the whole.

The transcendental intuition, then, is at the basis of Hegel’s conviction that there is a way to philosophically cognize the Absolute. In taking up the “transcendental standpoint,” in comprehending the subject-object identity as it exists in each moment, this philosophy can show each moment in its relation to the totality of the Absolute, thus *conceptualizing* the true infinity of each moment in a self-grounding system. In this cognizing, nature is rescued

from its status as dead objectivity in relation to a modern subjectivity that is inherently alienated from it and can accord it merely instrumental value, because that nature is *known*, experienced by human consciousness, as the genuine existence of the Absolute.

Within the individual's own self, the transcendental intuition implies precisely the knowledge of love—a harmony between reason and inclination, law and self-interest. But *now*, in conjunction with the philosophical system, it is a knowledge that can achieve a *philosophical* comprehension and justification. Thus Hegel's idea of philosophy here as based on the transcendental intuition unfolded into a system can be seen to address the very problem with which he grappled in "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate"—the problem of the divisive and denigrating effects of reflective rationality on the knowledge of love, the problem of the antagonism and apparent irreconcilability of these two forms of knowledge. In this new idea of a system, Hegel seems to believe that reflective thought can be managed by being brought into conjunction with intuition and satisfied by the truth expressed in the philosophical system as a whole. Thus can its negative effects on the knowledge of the Absolute, the knowledge of love, be dealt with, without at the same time denying or refusing the principle of reflective thought itself.

Hegel spent a number of years in Jena, through lecture courses and in coordination with Schelling, working out the details of this philosophical system. But in what is known as his "phenomenological crisis" of 1805² came the crystallization of what had been a growing uneasiness with Schelling's system of philosophy and ultimately with his own work based on the transcendental intuition. The democratic intent that he had believed to be implicit in their philosophy, the intent to give credence to the world of experience by revealing it as the Absolute in existence, seemed marred by an increasingly evident elitism.

In Schelling's work this was more blatant in that, for him, the true comprehension of the subjective and objective worlds, the Absolute Identity in its full self-consciousness and ultimate self-verification, was an experience that could be achieved only by those who possessed the appropriate "poetic genius." But a unity of subjective and objective worlds that lay ultimately and only in the capacity of the artist to lose himself in the mystic identity was one that left behind the whole experience of ordinary consciousness and its ambiguous relations with the world. Hegel's own work certainly did not relegate the truth of the Absolute to the privileged artist but sought to be a philosophy accessible to everyone and that could bring to light the true significance of the world of appearance.³ But it must have dawned on him that this philosophy itself relied on a privileged standpoint, the standpoint of the transcendental intuition. For the standpoint of ordinary consciousness, for whom Hegel believed philosophy to be so essential, was precisely the standpoint of

reflective thought, of fixed and rigid categories, of alienation from unity, and hence of an incapacity to conceive any genuine identity.

In focusing on unity in experience from the transcendental standpoint, Hegel *still has failed truly to address the fundamental problem characterizing the modern consciousness—the radical breach between self and nature*. The fact is that even if the experience of unity could have a conceptual expression that would satisfy the modern individual of its truth, that individual is alienated even from the experience of the unity by the standpoint of reflective thought that has come to dominate him. It is not that this consciousness is incapable of experiencing a unity such as love, or the knowledge of the transcendental intuition, but that in its reflection it becomes alienated from that unity. To come back to that experience for the modern is thus *in itself a special problem that cannot be addressed by Hegel's existing philosophical system*. The birth of *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the true introduction to Hegel's philosophical system appears to have been the result of the final crystallization of this idea. The taking up of the standpoint of modern consciousness and its separation from being must be the initiating point for the system. And the task of a *Phenomenology*, the "science of the experience of consciousness," is to trace the experience of how reflective consciousness, or the modern will, overcomes this separation, how, through its own experience, it comes to transcend its limited, one-sided perspectives, toward a standpoint of unity between self and world, subject and object, reason and nature. In other words, it is to see how consciousness comes to the transcendental intuition as the genuine truth of its existence.

PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT:
THE JOURNEY OF THE MODERN WILL

In *Phenomenology*, the task is to build a "ladder" from finite consciousness, which is in the position of reflective thought, to the "transcendental standpoint." While before Hegel had presumed this latter position, now he must show how reflective consciousness is immanently driven there. In the method of *Phenomenology*, thus, we begin with reflective consciousness, which has a particular idea of the truth according to which it operates. We merely observe how this consciousness, through its experience with this idea, discovers the flaw or contradiction therein and moves on to a new view of the truth, which incorporates the previous insight. Thus the method is meant to illustrate a *logical necessity* in the movement of reflective consciousness toward the establishment of a higher truth.

But already we can see a strangeness in this task. For it is not clear why reflective consciousness must move at all; it is not clear what is driving it.

Phenomenology is meant to be a tracing of a movement that reflective consciousness does of its own accord, that it undertakes by its own hands, and not a construction created by the philosopher. Rather the philosopher is merely to be the observer of the process in which reflective consciousness engages by its own self, according to its own immanent logic. Yet reflective consciousness by itself would seem to be static. Hegel indeed accuses it of being so in various places in his philosophy. Thus why it is at all that this consciousness would embark on a project of self-overcoming is an ambiguity that plagues us from the beginning and that is only too rarely addressed by commentators.⁴

A will to truth, to seeing its own inadequacies and transcending them in a higher standing, is simply assumed in many readings. Further, there is a notion that the journey we witness is a purely reflective overcoming of a reflective consciousness and that to trace it is to follow a seamless unfolding of rational necessity. Reflective consciousness is to be driven simply by the nature of its own logic and gives up its truth and embraces a new one in each movement only according to its *own* standards.

I would like to propose something different here, which is that the very undertaking of the journey of reflective thought witnessed in *Phenomenology of Spirit* requires us to assume not merely that reflective consciousness has a will to truth through which it comes to confront its own contradictions, but that it has this will only because it already *possesses* the truth in a subconscious form. It is this subconscious knowledge that drives it forward, to make explicit what it knows only in a dark, intuitive manner. Furthermore, it has acquired this knowledge of truth, of unity, through its experience of love. Reflective consciousness appears to have *lost* the truth of love by separating from it. But the experience of love can never ultimately be lost, although it may be eclipsed. It remains as an intuitive knowledge, separated, lurking in the background, no longer explicitly part of the self-consciousness of the figures we encounter. And it is only in and through the experience of reflective consciousness that it will come to light again.

Reflective consciousness, the beginning point of *Phenomenology*, thus presupposes the knowledge of love and is driven forward by this knowledge. We can see this at crucial points in the text that shall be examined, most notably in the movement from the consciousness of "Abstract Right" in the Roman Empire to the noble consciousness of the ancien regime. Hegel is not explicit about this in the text because it is not taking place at a conscious level and hence cannot be brought to the forefront of the phenomenological presentation (which only deals with the conscious idea of consciousness about its truth). However, at a crucial point it becomes necessary to acknowledge the presence of this subconscious knowledge, in order to explain the very drive to unity. It is only at the end of its journey that this knowledge will again become

explicit, become *for* consciousness, in the experience of conscience and forgiveness. Hence the whole movement that we will be tracing begins and ends with the knowledge of love.

What the following examination will thereby show is that, far from constituting a purely logical unfolding, what we encounter in the initial drive of the noble consciousness toward unity, and in the final reengagement with love in the experience of forgiveness, is a will that is implicitly driven by the knowledge of love. *Phenomenology* will not achieve what we expect it to—we will not see a reconciliation of self and other, or of finite and infinite, achieved in a manner that is purely transparent to rational thinking. Instead, the exposition that follows will seek to show how love is at play and must be invoked at crucial moments in order to comprehend the pathway of the modern will.

It will not be necessary for our purposes here to engage with the entire series of movements of consciousness that the *Phenomenology* traces, for the major purpose of our investigation is to see how a reflective consciousness that has, *in history*, become separated from the experience of unity with its own self and with the cultural world around it, gets driven forward toward a conscious reengagement with its lost experience of unity. Specifically, we shall take up consciousness in its experience of the Roman Empire, what Hegel calls “the world of legal status,” for it is here that we encounter reflective consciousness—on a widespread scale—in history for the first time.

The Roman Consciousness

In its reflection away from nature and customary morality and back onto its own self, the fundamental political principle of the consciousness Hegel attributes to Rome is the abstract category of “the person.” The idea of the person is abstract because it is arrived at by negating all particular characteristics. It is political because it is upon this concept of individuals as persons that rights are asserted and recognized. In the world of “legal status,” consciousness understands its own sensuous being only as finite, particular being, with no larger spiritual significance. Its universality here is the “empty unit of the person,” the abstract self of legal personality that is purely external to its natural being (PS §480). Its nature is merely the insignificant filling of its legal personality, a filling that is accorded no recognition in this world (PS §477–79). But it is from this standpoint that it gains the right to concern itself with its own individual self, conceived as something separate from the community. It is from this standpoint that it is conceived as “will,” as an individual justified in occupying itself with its own separate being and living according to its immediate, individual impulses. And this is realized in private property (PS §480).

The major significance of the discussion of Rome (and this is regardless of whether Hegel gives us an adequate comprehension of Rome *per se*) is the

argument that a society that constructs itself purely according to the category of the legal person, or “abstract ego,” cannot sustain itself as a political community. For while such a community contains the positive principles of legal equality and individual freedom, ironically, even these positive aspects will be destroyed in the absence of some deeper moral principle—in the absence of an ethical life—binding citizens together in a more substantial way. And this is precisely what, according to Hegel, was lacking in Rome. The result was that the republic inevitably deteriorated into a state of empire where “colossal individualities” were required to hold things together.⁵ Only through force can a purely atomistic society be held together, as Hobbes also comprehended. Hence we have the paradoxical spectacle of a freedom that turns into subjugation (§481).

What we will ultimately see, and the significance of the next phase of the discussion, is that the concept of ‘abstract right’ or ‘legal personality’ as the basis of political community must be transcended in favor of a *unity* of personality and nature, in favor of a *moral* subjectivity that is *situated* in nature and in a particular social and political context. But as I shall argue, this transcendence does not take place at a purely logical level. To go beyond abstract right requires the knowledge of love.

For now, however, consciousness has learned merely of its own nothingness, both in terms of its abstract being-for-self and its own natural being. The very condition of the upholding of its right, that of the absolute power of the emperor, is at the same time an abrogation of that right, for the emperor is subject only to his own whims. Having confronted this, consciousness is “driven back into itself from this actuality” and “ponders this its inessential nature” (PS §483). It now projects the idea of the universal, which it had previously attached to its own self, onto that external force that holds it together. It sees its essence now as outside of itself, as “state power.”

The Noble Consciousness

In the transition from the Roman consciousness to the noble consciousness of the ancien regime, Hegel does not explicitly mention the experience of Christian love, focusing instead on Christ as a religious object from which individuals feel alienated (PS §485). Hegel’s failure to mention the principle of Christian love in this section of *Phenomenology* could well lead to the conclusion that such a principle has no historical significance and no intrinsic phenomenological meaning to the modern. It would seem that the movement forward is conducted without the knowledge, or the need, for love.

But such an interpretation is problematic, for the movement from the Roman to the noble consciousness in fact presupposes the knowledge of love. While the Roman had produced only a knowledge of itself as alienated, as finding its essence outside of itself, in the figure of state power, the noble con-

consciousness undertakes an activity of trying to *unify* itself with the essence that lies beyond it. Why it should do so is a question that requires considerable attention, for it is not the only, or even the most obvious, path available to it. One, which Hegel saw the Stoics as doing, would be to retreat into the universality of thought, abandoning sensuous existence (PH 316, 323). Or for the Jewish consciousness as Hegel viewed it, more aware of its embeddedness in finitude, the knowledge of alienation from universality takes the form of sorrow and yearning but at the same time of a resignation to living in the actual, finite world (PH 323). The idea of the noble consciousness—that one could attain unity with the truth outside oneself and that by one’s own activity—is not the most logical path forward. Indeed, it seems to presuppose something quite beyond the logic of reflective rationality.

It is here that we must confront the knowledge of love as the presupposition of the noble consciousness. For it is only with the experience of love, the experience of the implicit identity of the finite self with the universal, of human and God, and of self and other, that we can comprehend the drive of the noble consciousness toward unity with a truth that it now holds as beyond it. The noble consciousness must have some intuition of its implicit unity with the universal, with “state power” and the metamorphosis that this universal undergoes, in order to undertake the striving toward unity with it. As Hegel suggests, even though it experiences itself as alienated from the actual world and political order, “at the same time, certain that this world is its substance, it sets about making it its own” (PS §490). Its striving is the striving to render an implicit truth explicit.

But if this is the case, why does Hegel not make it more explicit in *Phenomenology*? Why is there no mention of the experience of love, at this stage, but simply a chronological shift from the historical epoch of Rome to that of the ancien regime? The answer is that we are dealing with a phenomenological presentation here and thus have before us only consciousness’ idea of its truth. If there is an implicit knowledge, a knowledge that is not conscious, at play, it cannot be brought to the forefront. It attains reality here only in the symbolic figure of Christ, in whom consciousness has faith, but without any comprehension of the nature of this belief itself (PS 485). Only when consciousness has before itself the full idea of itself, of what is driving it, only when the knowledge has become fully conscious, will it be presented to us. We will get closer to this knowledge of the unity of self and universal in the figure of “the Enlightenment.” But even here, as we shall see, the identification of self with the universal is abstract only and leaves out the realm of being. It is only in conscience and its further development in forgiveness that the knowledge of love will once again come to the surface.

The notion that the noble consciousness is implicitly driven by the knowledge of love can be corroborated by an examination of *The Philosophy of*

History, where Hegel is more explicit about what is going on here. The experience of love, which in Christianity is reflectively captured in the positing of “the unity of Man with God” (PH 324/392), is what pushes “him who is a partaker of the truth, and knows that he himself is a constituent [Moment] of the Divine Idea, to give up his merely natural being” in order to try and unify himself with the universal. This giving up is precisely the activity that we see undertaken by the noble consciousness.

That this movement takes the form of a subconscious impulse, rather than a conscious knowledge of unity, is evident from Hegel’s statement in *Philosophy of History* that “[t]his implicit unity exists in the first place only for the thinking speculative consciousness” and that “for the sensuous, representative consciousness” it becomes present only in the form of an external object, the figure of Christ. And yet we know already that it is the “witness of one’s own Spirit” (PH 326/294) that is the real truth of Christ. Or, as Hegel said earlier in the “Spirit of Christianity”: “Faith in the divine is only possible if in the believer himself there is a divine element which rediscovers itself, its own nature, in that on which it believes, *even if it be unconscious* that what it has found is its own nature” (SC 266/313 [my emphasis]). Hence it is the recognition of the truth of Jesus on an *intuitive* level by Christians—the experience of love, of one’s unity with an infinite principle—that becomes the immanent force of history.

Indeed, in *Philosophy of History* Hegel is very explicit that the meaning of the idea of history from this point forth is precisely the unfolding of the experience of love *in the actual world*. “The process displayed in History is only the manifestation of Religion as Human Reason—the production of the religious principle *which dwells in the heart of man*, under the form of Secular Freedom. Thus the discord between *the inner life of the heart* and the actual world is removed” (PH 335 [my emphasis]).

The significance of the insinuation of love as the basis of the noble consciousness and its subsequent unfolding is manifold. For what it means in terms of the modern human subjectivity is that a true overcoming of the position of abstract right, the position that Hegel believes politically to have played itself out in the fate of the Romans, *requires* the experience of love. The movement of overcoming in the mature Hegel—the Hegel of *Phenomenology* and of subsequent works—is *not* a purely rational, reflective one, where the logical inadequacy of the position of abstract right is recognized, as most commentators would have us believe. Certainly there is a logical inadequacy, which he depicts in *Philosophy of Right* and which he dramatizes in *Philosophy of History*.⁶ But at the level of actual, individual existence, it presupposes more than mere logic—it presupposes the experience of love.

It is of the utmost significance for understanding Hegel’s mature thought that he sees Christian love as making its appearance on the histori-

cal scene at the time of the Roman Empire, the society most purely determined by the principle of abstract right and the abstract reflective reasoning that lies at its basis. And this is the case *not* because it emphasizes the Christian presupposition of Hegel's thinking but because it shows love, the principle he identifies with the early Christian community, to be essential to the overcoming of the standpoint of reflective rationality and of a society founded purely on relations of private property.⁷ While he may have rejected love as a final overcoming of the divisions of reflective rationality, as we saw in chapter 1, love nevertheless continues to serve as the basis of that overcoming, as the basis of the modern will.

But to realize this process, to be able to will the knowledge of love in the world, requires, first, a profound process of disciplining. This is why Hegel emphasizes the significance of Christ not only in terms of the inner knowledge of the heart but also in Christ's teachings that one must sunder oneself from one's natural being (PH 327–28). Only by “abstraction from all that belongs to reality, even from [natural] moral ties . . . only by stripping himself of his finiteness and surrendering himself to pure self-consciousness, does he attain the truth” (PH 328/397). The idiosyncratic will that had been liberated by the principle of Rome must now be educated, in order to attain the truth that lay within it, the truth that the self is universal. That truth now is placed *outside* the self, in the figure of Christ, or with the noble consciousness, in “state power.” The negative process by which one approaches this truth is conceived as a “disciplining”: “‘Zucht’ (discipline) is derived from ‘Ziehen’ (to draw). This drawing must be towards something; there must be *some fixed unity in the background* in whose direction that drawing takes place. . . . A renunciation, a disaccustoming, is the means of leading to an absolute basis of existence” (PH 320/388 [italics mine]).

Yet the very presupposition of this disciplining is that one *can* attain to a unity with the truth that stands beyond one. One is drawn toward the external figure of unity by the inner feeling of connection with that figure. One is drawn by the intuition of love.

It is this process, this “disciplining” by its own hands, that we see commencing with the noble consciousness, that will ultimately result in its coming back to *itself* as containing the truth, as containing an infinite principle. The noble consciousness, who has understood the lesson of chaos encountered in the experience of Rome, the nothingness of its own existence, devotes its attention to its new truth—“the universally acknowledged authority” that holds the society together and seeks to bring about a unity with that authority. Its entire movement is a movement of discipline, by which it denies its own natural self in order to come to unity with the universal that it perceives as outside of itself. What Hegel calls “culture” (*Bildung*) is the means by which it conforms to the universal. This is the negating of its own natural, particular desires, the desires

that it now sees as nothing and as the source of its previous chaos. It must alienate itself from its natural being, become “one who voluntarily renounces possessions and enjoyment and acts and is effective in the interests of the ruling power” (PS §503/274).

In the section of *Phenomenology* called “Culture,” the truth that consciousness sees as external to itself and for which it sacrifices itself takes on a number of different shapes through the course of its experience. And as it does so, the consciousness itself changes “shape” or adopts a different view of what it is working towards. At first, as the “noble consciousness,” it sees the truth of itself as state power and adopts a negative attitude to its own ends in obedience to that power. Indeed, it completes this self-negativity by abasing its very being-for-self, its very sense of itself as an ‘I,’ in the activity of flattering the monarch. Flattery is the true sacrifice of the self, the debasement of any vestige of being-for-self. The irony is that in doing so, the noble receives back wealth from the monarch. This is because the monarch is in fact dependent on the nobles for recognition. Indeed, it is only through the recognition achieved in flattery that the very being of the monarch as an actual, self-conscious state power can exist. Through their flattery, he “knows that the nobles not only are ready and prepared for the service of the state power, but that they group themselves round the throne as an *ornamental setting*, and that they are continually *telling* him who sits on it what he *is*” (PS §511/277). The monarch implicitly acknowledges this reality by imparting wealth to the nobles in return for the recognition. And thus the noble discovers that state power, or the monarch, is not in fact the truth for which he sacrifices himself. Rather, in the end, the sacrifice turns out to be for money. Its new object of truth is money.

But in order to save its idea that it is still working for a higher truth, and not for itself, the noble consciousness takes upon itself to distribute its wealth for the benefit of others. However, it remains in a contradiction because the criteria by which it imparts its money—its noblesse oblige—are “independent and arbitrary” (§519/281). It is its “contingent personality,” precisely what was supposed to count for nothing to this consciousness, that is the fundamentally determining aspect of its activity. It is up to the “base consciousness,” however, the consciousness which supplicates itself to the noble in order to gain wealth, to expose the real truth of this situation.

The Base Consciousness

The base consciousness degrades itself before the noble in order to get money, just as the noble consciousness had done with the monarch. But only the base consciousness faces up to what it is doing, for the base consciousness has nothing to lose by confronting the truth. Indeed, in its self-degradation lies a

resentment and inner rebellion at its situation, which Hegel sees portrayed in Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*. This resentment entails an implicit taking back of its self, its dignity. It is aware of the inessentiality to which others are hypocritically devoting themselves and, although it itself engages in such devotion, in its flattering behavior it harbors a secret mockery and despising by which it retrieves its own being-for-self. In its witty talk it externalizes this mockery, shows itself the real power over the situation, the power over every object—state power, wealth, and benevolence—that had before been taken as the given and the true.

The real insight to which the base consciousness attains is that it is not the sovereign power or the objects of wealth that are the real truth of the situation, but the individual subjects. The truth of the whole movement of culture is the recognition by the self that its real truth and universal does not stand outside itself, in state power or wealth, but in its very own being. Everything is in fact done for its own self. It thereby overcomes its alienation and returns once again to its own self.

Enlightenment Consciousness

The return into the self by the base consciousness is not a return to itself as a natural self. That is what we had with the self of the Roman Empire, which lived according to its own found desires and impulses. On the contrary the reality of this new consciousness is the “pure self,” the self purified of any self-subsistent content, “determined neither by reality nor by thought” (§526/286). In knowing the vanity of the objects of wealth and power, it knows itself as their truth, knows itself as the power of negativity and the truth of the world. It is no longer mired in its own desires or in denying its own self in the name of something higher, because it has come to see itself as the real truth of what went before. Its former content and substance have “turned into something negative. . . . The positive object is merely the *pure I itself*, and the disrupted consciousness *in itself* this pure self-identity of self-consciousness that has returned to itself” (§526/286). Its object is itself as a pure abstraction, a pure ‘I’.

What had been politically instantiated in Rome—the legal status of the person—becomes here self-consciously embraced as the real truth of the self. It is capable now of denying its own desires, not in the name of state power and wealth but in the name of itself as a higher truth. Hence the disciplining process through which consciousness had sought to reunite itself with a universal that stood over against it has here been largely achieved. It finds itself—as pure self-consciousness—as the infinite principle.

With itself as object, consciousness appears implicitly to have come to a harmony with its object, to have overcome its own alienation from its truth.

And yet this is clearly not the return to the intuition of love for which we have been waiting. Rather, it is the rational self of the Enlightenment, which holds that the truth does not lie in some external authority, but in the rationality of humans, that being attains its true validity and verification in human self-consciousness. This self as the object of truth has indeed progressed beyond the “abstract ego” of the Roman Empire, which acted according to the truth of its contingent, particular self, and beyond the noble consciousness that did not recognize its self as the truth of its own activity.

Yet the purification to pure self-consciousness, the seeing of its rational essence as the truth of things, is only one side of the matter, and this is the essential inadequacy of the Enlightenment consciousness, which shows that it has not *fully* come back to itself. For this “pure I,” “pure self-consciousness,” purged of its natural desires, is incapable of willing anything in the world. It is defined only negatively, over against the world, and can find no positive substance. It knows itself as the truth of the world, but that world still appears as a reality and an ‘other’. To *realize* its knowledge of itself as the truth and power over the world, it must show itself as such. It must show itself as the might of negativity, “which eliminates everything objective that supposedly stands over against consciousness, and makes it into a being which has its origin in consciousness” (§529/288). *The entire story of the Enlightenment is the actualization of this idea*, first against the content of faith, then in the positive concept of ‘utility,’ then against the very *form* of being in the French Revolution, and finally against its own sensuous being in the moral consciousness of Kant (see appendix).

The disciplining process that has led consciousness to the standpoint of the Enlightenment has laid the *groundwork* for a coming back to the knowledge of love. But pure self-consciousness is not capable of willing from love or recognizing love as its true principle. It recognizes only its own ‘I’-ness. And the overcoming of *this*, essentially abstract, standpoint, will be achieved *not* through the Kojévian-Marxist pathway of labor, or objectification of self-consciousness in nature, *or* through the mutual recognition of two pure self-consciousnesses (Habermas 1999), but through a coming back to the nature in one’s own self, in the form of conviction, and a willing from there. It is *this* moral self-consciousness that is rooted once again in nature—nature not as mere desire but as conviction. Furthermore, as I shall argue in the next section, it constitutes Hegel’s positive conception of moral agency and of a will that can will the knowledge of love in the world.

The disciplining process to pure self-consciousness is thus only one side of the story, as I have suggested here all along. The other side is the inner knowledge of love, which serves as the ground of the modern subjectivity and which must be returned to after the process of separation and disciplining. However, it is only after pure self-consciousness has experimented with

attempting to realize itself as such, only after it has been forced to see the truth of itself as pure negativity, that it will come back to conscience, to an embodied idea of itself, as its larger truth and as the basis from which it can will something positively in the world (see appendix).⁸

*Conscience and Forgiveness: The Return to the
Knowledge of Love and the Willing of It in the World*

Hegel's discussion of conscience in *Phenomenology of Spirit* constitutes his idea of how a concrete morality can be realized in the world. It represents, for him, the overcoming of the poverty-stricken nature of the concept of utility and the problem of abstractness that plagued the French Revolution and Kantian moral philosophy.

Kant's moral philosophy, which embodies in thought what was realized historically in the French Revolution, according to Hegel, contains the positive notion of an autonomous self, a self that can determine itself according to reason. Hegel's problem with Kant is not in the idea that an individual has the capacity for autonomy, as is so often interpreted; it is in how Kant *conceptualizes* that autonomy as a purely abstract reason, receiving neither substance nor motivation from the sensuous self. According to Hegel, in separating reason from being, Kant can find no content for moral action. Neither can such a reason act out its "pure duty" in the world while remaining pure, unmotivated by sensuous concerns. Similarly, the idea of the general will at the basis of the French Revolution can also find no positive realization when conceived in abstraction from nature. A merely abstract reason can realize itself only in "the fury of destruction."

Conscience represents the transcendence of this merely abstract standpoint, for it is the standpoint that realizes the limit of the abstractly rational self described above, which sees the one-sidedness of this kind of reason and which now seeks the substance of morality elsewhere—in unity with its own sensuous being. It responds to a given situation not by consulting its merely abstract reason but in and through its own sensuous reactions to the situation. It grasps onto this reaction as its duty and its reality.

This is conscience as "conviction," as the certainty that one is right, that this is what one must do in a given situation. The truth according to which it acts is a truth it finds in its own sensuous being and self-consciously heeds that truth. It *authorizes* its own sensuous response, and gives it the status of a duty (646/349). Through conviction, conscience elevates and validates the sensuous or particular aspect of its response. The appropriate moral response is not something known in advance—an abstract rule to be applied in a given case—but only emerges in and through the response called forth by the situation itself. Furthermore, the validity of the

response is given simply through the certainty of conviction, simply in the *belief* that this is the right thing to do.

As the finding of a moral response in a given moral situation, and within its own sensuous being, conscience constitutes the unity of reason and being; it is law no longer in an abstract form that stands over sensuous being as something alien that commands it, but law in existence, in the form of being, expressed *through* individuality. In giving up the internal division between its natural self and its pure duty, a true unity of self has been achieved; the antithesis has been overcome.

It is in light of this understanding of conscience that we can begin to see why it is such an extraordinary attainment in *Phenomenology*. As the unity of mind and body, reason and sensuous being, abstract principle and concrete situation, conscience represents, finally, the transcendence of the standpoint of a merely “reflective rationality.” It represents the achievement of the “transcendental intuition,” of a genuine reconnection with the Absolute as Hegel conceives it. After the entire trajectory of identifying its truth as outside its sensuous being, in the abstract ego of the Romans, in the state power and wealth of the noble consciousness, in the abstract ‘I’ of the Enlightenment consciousness, the French Revolution and the Kantian moral self, in conscience we finally have a return to unity with being as the fundamental substance of the truth.

According to Hegel, Kant had achieved the transcendental standpoint with his establishment of the unified subject in “the Transcendental Deduction” of the First Critique (D 79/5). But he then proceeded, like Fichte, to conceptualize that unity reflectively, instead of taking up the transcendental viewpoint implicit in the deduction. Existentially, it is conscience that achieves this standpoint and sustains it—that wills from a unity of mind and body *in the world*. Conscience—at least truth conscience⁹—is the coming together of the divine and the human, of reason and emotion, and—still implicit at this point—of self and other. In other words, *it is a return to the earlier knowledge of love* as Hegel had discussed it in “Spirit of Christianity,” *but now come to in and through the will, in and through the medium of reflective thought*.

But if the standpoint of conscience is the achievement of the transcendental intuition of Hegel’s *Differenzschrift*, the foundation of the philosophical system, and the transcendence of the position of reflective rationality, then it would seem that *Phenomenology of Spirit* has completed its task and that we may begin to regard the unfolding of the intuition from within the framework of Hegel’s philosophical system. And yet *Phenomenology* does not close here. Rather, Hegel goes on to trace the dialectic peculiar to this standpoint, and it turns out that this is necessary because, in spite of being a reexperiencing of unity, a reexperiencing that has been achieved in and through the journey of reflective rationality, conscience has nevertheless turned out to be inadequate

as a final *philosophical* standpoint. Hegel has, by the time we reach the section on conscience, fully abandoned the transcendental intuition as the basis of his philosophical system, and we can point to two reasons here that give a preliminary understanding of why he should have done so.

First, the character of conscience as conviction, the mere certainty that it is right in what it does or holds, remains a mere assertion. Conscience has not stood the test of judgment. It faces similar counterassertions from others and must actualize itself in the world in order to gain any vindication at all. With Kantian moral consciousness there was a preexistent basis for judging actions as good or bad; actions were regarded either as pure or impure, as good or evil. But this is not the case with conscience. Because there is no such thing as a pure duty, because it is always being that gives content and reality to duty, the former way of distinguishing between actions in terms of law versus being or happiness becomes ineffectual. Now, “[e]very content, because it is determinate, stands on the same level as any other” (§645/348). This includes content that seems to will for “the general good,” for that good could go against the good of an individual, who could thus challenge this claim to legitimacy. One furthermore cannot refer to existing law and right for what “is valid on its own account independently of the individual’s knowledge and conviction . . . [for it is] precisely against the *form* of that duty that morality in general is directed” (§645/348); it is precisely willing from one’s own self that constitutes the principle of autonomy that has been attained. This problem of judgment is thus a fundamental problem with the standpoint of conscience and what shows that it has still not fully transcended the standpoint of reflective rationality, for as we shall see, it is reflective rationality that poses the question of judgment.

Even beyond this, however, the attempt by conscience to overcome its inadequacy and gain recognition for its conviction in the world reveals a second problem with it as a philosophical standpoint. As I shall try to show in the following discussion, the final recognition of the truth of conscience in the experience of forgiveness is one that does not take place according to a purely transparent rationality but appears to involve a kind of experience of grace. This is because it is a movement rooted in love. It is this strangeness to the dialectic of conscience, that it is tracing a movement that cannot, in the moment, be clearly logically followed, that is at least partially responsible for Hegel’s abandonment of the transcendental intuition as the basis for philosophy, and his subsequent turn to the “Notion” in the final chapter of *Phenomenology*. The idea that moral action and its recognition by others in the world takes place “through a glass, darkly,” is one of the major significations of the dialectic that we shall examine.

Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that we can point already to Hegel’s rejection of conscience and the transcendental intuition as a final philosophical

standpoint, conscience does represent the basis of Hegel's theory of moral agency and the realization of right in the world. As an achievement of the transcendental standpoint, as a coming back to the knowledge of the unity of reason and sense, *in and through the activity of the will*, conscience is the basis by which the knowledge of love can be realized *in the world*. Whereas before the principle of reflective thought and will stood outside that knowledge and was hostile to it, now, after its whole history of disciplining and despair, the will has come to embrace its unity with being as its very substance and as that which it must will in the world. Conscience is love come back to, in and through the activity of the will, so that the truth of love can now be actualized in existence, instead of remaining merely in retreat.

That Hegel's discussion of conscience contains his theory of moral action has been recognized by other commentators (e.g., Bernstein 1994, Shanks 1991). But its bears reemphasizing. For the more widespread view, promoted by commentators such as Habermas, is the notion that Hegel does not in fact have any theory of individual moral action and that he points instead to given laws and institutional structures as the reference point for individuals (Habermas 1999, Robinson 1977). Such a viewpoint is also implicitly present in the widespread appropriation of Hegel's thought by communitarians (e.g., Sandel 1982). Yet this viewpoint misconstrues Hegel fundamentally. Not only does it efface the essentially Kantian nature of Hegel's enterprise, his lifelong concern with the moral autonomy of the individual, but it fails to answer the question of how the objective structure of laws and institutions get realized in the first place.

It is significant to note that Hegel's discussion of conscience in *Phenomenology* comes on the heels of his assertion that the problematic of the French Revolution lay in the incapacity of an abstract reason to generate an objective structure for organizing society. This problem, according to Hegel, is played out in Germany at the level of thought in the difficulties with Kant's moral philosophy. Hence the historical time period to which Hegel's discussion of conscience can be paralleled is precisely the time when all old, feudal structures have been wiped away and nothing adequate has emerged to take their place. For conscience, at least as we can understand it in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, there simply is no institutional structure to which it can refer.¹⁰ Hence the individual is cast back upon herself, on her own moral autonomy, as the basis for action and judgment. Not only does Hegel *not* repudiate this condition but he indeed is portraying in this section just how a new order comes into being *through* individual conscientious action and judgment, an order that replaces the irrationality and injustice of the ancien regime. Just how conscience achieves this, and how the realization of a new social and political order happens in and through the knowledge of love, is what must now be examined.

*The Dialectic of Conscience and Forgiveness or,
the Realization of Right in the World*

For conscience, the validity of its position exists in its self-certainty, in its conviction, its unity with its own sensuous being. But there is an inadequacy to this standpoint, an inadequacy that is felt by conscience itself and that explains its drive to realize its conviction in the world, through action. This inadequacy lies in the possibility that its conviction may be wrong, that it may not in fact embody the universal. In fact, as a merely subjective self-certainty, the whole world lies outside of its truth, and this world includes other individuals and their convictions, convictions that may go against the certainty of the individual. Hence simply containing a certainty within oneself is not enough. One must will it in the world and achieve recognition for it.

That conscience is driven to action reveals once again the implicit role of love at work. The knowledge of love that we examined in chapter 1 entailed a unity not only of reason and emotion, of law and being, but also of self and other. But it is this latter knowledge that is still left out, that has not yet been established. While conscience may have attained a unity within itself, with its own being, it still stands over against other self-consciousnesses and the world around it. It still has not attained a unity with these. Once again, then, the drive to unity that Hegel depicts here, the drive to realize its truth in the world, through action, presupposes that conscience has a prior conviction of its unity with that world. And it could only have gained that conviction through the knowledge of love. The inadequacy that conscience feels, which drives it to action, is its inadequate fulfillment of the knowledge of love, the inadequacy and untruth of the ongoing disjunction between itself and the world. Hence it seeks to put itself forward in the world, to gain recognition and objectification for its inner truth, to realize the knowledge of unity.

There is a significant risk involved in this procedure. For the world into which conscience acts is a world dominated by the principle of reflective rationality, with its narrow, divisive categories. And conscience, in embracing the unity of reason and emotion, of universal and particular, has only just succeeded in transcending those categories. To put its action out there in the world is to expose it to a judgment, then, that cannot truly comprehend it. It is a judgment that will indeed chop it up once again into its universal and particular aspects. That is, others could take the essence of the action to be "an ordinary reality, and the action . . . [as] the fulfilling of one's pleasure and desire" (§650/350). They could deny the good intent of the actor and insist that the latter was acting from purely self-serving motives. Indeed, it is in their interest to do that, says Hegel. There is a necessary impulse to judge the other as evil, because in conscience one is *convinced* of one's own truth, and the action of the other may not reflect that truth. This other is thus a threat, a

threat they must “nullify . . . by judging and explaining it” (§649/350). To expose oneself to this, then, is to expose oneself to harm, to the frightening prospect of having one’s essential being torn to pieces by the dissecting power of reflective rationality. It is to risk the judgment of the world.

Yet it is only by such action that the substance of its conviction, the principle that it believes to be right in this particular case, can be realized. For conscience can attain nothing, will be only an isolated and meaningless event, if its action is not recognized by the world at large as embodying some genuine and legitimate truth. It *needs* the recognition of others for its truth to attain genuine reality, a genuine objectification. Recognition is the medium in which its action gains significance. The risks to its own self involved in this exposure are necessary to the realization of the inner truth of conscience. These risks include the possibility that it be branded a heretic or dubbed insane.

The fact that taking a conscientious action in the world can be such a frightening and risk-filled enterprise helps to explain why so many individuals will not do it. Instead, they will take the less authentic pathway of the “Beautiful Soul.” The beautiful soul is an individual who experiences the truth of conviction, the harmony of her being with the call of duty, but becomes terrified of action because of the vulnerability it entails. This conscience attempts to avoid its entrapment in a particular content that can become subject to the judgment of others, by insisting that the deed and its consequences are not its objective reality. It focuses on duty solely in the moment of selfhood, solely on its own good intentions, and not on the act itself. That is, it emphasizes the form of conscience, of its own self-certainty, rather than the substance of what it believes and does.

It is thus only in language (rather than deeds) that this conscience can actualize itself, can objectify itself as a good intention, without losing control over its truth in the deed. Thus it “declares” for others its own conviction, and “this declaration is the true actuality of the act, and the validating of the action” (§653/351). That is, in declaring its conviction, in declaring that it really *believes* this to be right and good, this consciousness absolves itself of responsibility for the consequences of an action and posits its intention explicitly in order to try to prevent others from pathologizing its motives. Such a conscience will find others who are receptive to its assertion, who will believe and validate it, because these others are themselves self-consciousnesses who believe in their own truth. Thus the formal element of selfhood, in abstraction from the actual content of what is declared, is something these consciences do share with one other and becomes the basis of mutual recognition.¹¹

But the reality of this conscience in its community with others thus reveals itself to be, as Hegel mockingly says, “the mutual assurance of their conscientiousness, good intentions, the rejoicing over this mutual purity, and the refreshing of themselves in the glory of knowing and uttering, of cherish-

ing and fostering, such an excellent state of affairs" (§656/353). It is a completely solipsistic reality, whereby all existence, including its own being, has been brought for it into the contemplation of itself as 'I', has resolved itself into an "absolute *certainty*" of its own self (§657/354). Nothing else counts but the world and being as it views it, in its own self-certainty. Unwilling to let the deed go free as the expression of itself in the world and for others, this conscience clings to itself as a self-contained self-knowing, which in this form can only be validated by other self-consciousnesses who are the same as itself. This is the poverty of the beautiful soul. The reality of its conviction, its declaration, is "changed immediately into a sound that dies away" (§658/354). It is a will-less self that in fact achieves nothing.

Yet in spite of the hypocrisy and self-protectiveness of the beautiful soul, it does have a role to play in the realization of right in the world. Because it is not an authentic actualization of its inner truth, the beautiful soul is plagued by a sense of its own inadequacy, and it is threatened by others who would actualize their inner convictions in action, convictions that may well be different from their own. Thus it not only forms a community of language around itself, but it sets itself up as the judge of others, to discredit their actions and their convictions. It becomes the harsh agent of the world of which it was so afraid and which prevented it from realizing its action in the first place.

This process of judging others, in spite of its dangerous tendencies,¹² is nevertheless essential to the realization of good in the world; for exposure and judgment is a process that the truly conscientious actor must go through in order to get its truth recognized. The beautiful soul plays this judging role. Hence conscience splits itself up into the two figures of the acting and the judging conscience.

In face of the action of the acting conscience, the judging conscience will indeed reflectively divide up the unity of the action into its universal and particular components. In other words, it will accuse the acting conscience of being "evil," of really acting from a selfish motivation, rather than from principle. It will furthermore charge the acting conscience with hypocrisy, because that conscience insists that its action is "duty and conscientiousness" (§660/356) and does not admit its particular interest. Rather than focusing on the fact that the acting conscience is acting out of a sense of conviction, or duty, the judging conscience focuses on the particular aspect, the selfish "intention" involved in the action. So for example: "If the action is accompanied by fame, then it knows this inner aspect to be a *desire* for fame," if the action shows the talent and abilities of the individual such that it could advance its station in the world, then intention is judged to be ambition, if the action gives a person the feeling of their own self-expression and development, then the true motivation is viewed as "the

urge to secure his own happiness, even though this were to consist merely in an inner moral conceit" (§665/358).

There is indeed a truth to the judgment that is made. For all willing requires a motivating force, and that force is found in the individual's sensuous being, the locale of particularity. Thus, while the idea of what is to be done may not be particularistic, the carrying out of the idea must include a particular motivation. Or, as Hegel says in *Philosophy of History*, "[i]f I am to exert myself for any object, it must in some way or other be *my* object" (PH 22/36). Yet this does not mean that the content of the action can be entirely reduced to the self-interest of the acting conscience; it does not mean that something higher and greater is not being enacted—and this is what the judging consciousness is unwilling to see. Indeed, in his criticism of the judging consciousness as a "moral valet," who sees in the heroic individual only "one who eats, drinks, and wears clothes" (PS §665/358), Hegel clearly points to the idea that something *more* than merely individual interest is being realized through acts of conscience and that the beautiful soul blinds itself to that higher perspective.¹³ Conscientious action is the means by which a substantial universal is realized in the world, and it does this in and through the medium of the particular passions of individuals.¹⁴

Against the attempt by the judging conscience to reduce its moral action to nothing, the acting conscience will assert the universal aspect of its action—the purity of its intention, the principle that it believes to be at stake. As long as both sides cling to their interpretation of the action, there is no way to reconcile. However, in the judgment of the action Hegel sees the beginning of a movement toward unity. The judging consciousness, who criticizes the acting conscience as being guilty of self-interest and thus of hypocrisy in its purportedly moral action, by this very criticism reveals *itself* as hypocritical, "because it passes off such judging, not as another manner of being wicked, but as the correct consciousness of the action" (§666/359). It sees *only* the particularity of the action, and in this lies its own wickedness. This implies, once again, not only that there is genuine moral action but that the judging conscience knows that there is and nevertheless represses that knowledge to preserve its own self-identity as pure and good. But what it really preserves is its own conceit, the idea of itself as superior to the acting consciousness, as in touch with some higher truth, while at the same time, in the case of the beautiful soul, it shows itself incapable of action at all. Thus by this judgment it reveals its own self as base and wicked, as concerned with its own self-interest as fundamentally as with duty.

According to Hegel, this revelation has a liberating effect on the acting conscience. In seeing the evil in the other, it enables it to give up its insistence that its own action was pure; it is liberated to see the particularity that had been involved in its action. In seeing that the other is hypocritical or "evil,"

and in its desire to gain recognition for its action, it gives up its own insistence on purity. It “confesses” to the element of particularity in its action, thereby expressing its sameness with the judging conscience, in an attempt to bring the two sides closer together. It gives way on one aspect of the judgment, in order to get this aspect out of the way and open up the possibility that the larger significance of the action might be recognized.

Again here, we must point to the role of love in order adequately to comprehend this movement. For while there is a truth to the judgment that the acting conscience is enmeshed in particularity, that it is partially motivated by self-interest, it is not clear that this truth by itself is enough to motivate it to make its confession. It seems more likely that it would insist on its own purity, in the face of the harshness of the judgment that it confronts. The fact that it does make this confession, and the subsequent forgiveness by the beautiful soul, remains baffling in Hegel’s portrayal unless we presuppose that the two are motivated not merely by a reflective knowledge of the truth but also by a deeper knowledge of their unity and by a drive to realize that knowledge in the world. This deeper knowledge is the knowledge of love.

The likelihood of disunity between the two figures that we might more aptly expect is indeed portrayed by Hegel in the next part of the dialectic. For in spite of the confession by the acting conscience of the element of particularity in its action, the judging consciousness “repels this community of nature.” It wants to sustain its view of itself as pure and superior, and because it cannot actualize itself in a purely universal form in action, it sustains itself only negatively, against the other whom it judges (§667/359). And yet there is a *necessity* for it to act, for action is involved in the very self-concept; it understands itself as “the absolute will of duty, as a consciousness whose determining comes solely from itself” (§664/357).¹⁵ But it determines nothing. Furthermore, it is mired in its own self-interest and cannot get out of that by mere denial.

The only real pathway to reconciliation, according to Hegel, is for the judging conscience to reciprocate the confession of the acting conscience, to admit the element of self-interest in its negative, judging behaviour, and then to acknowledge the positive element of the action of the other party, to acknowledge what has been achieved. By this mutual exchange, suggests Hegel, they come to a unity with one another in the universal. It is as if, through their mutual confession, the element of particularity in action and judgment is shorn of its significance so that the true universality of the deed can shine through. In the acting conscience positing its particularity as a moment of the action, and in the judging conscience seeing its own unreality and acknowledging action as good, both “exhibit the power of Spirit” over the element of particularity and attain to a genuine unity with one another in the universal (§669/361).

The universal, then, is what comes to light in the element of mutual recognition once the particularity involved in the realization of the universal is overcome, merely through being acknowledged. What is *left* after this process is the truly substantial nature of the moral achievement. The real bond with the other turns out to be rooted not in the merely formal self of conscience nor in the fact of self-interest, but in a universal substance, the substance of morality that attains expression in the deed.¹⁶

What should become apparent here is that Hegel is not seeking to validate every action done from conscience but only those actions that realize something truly good in the world. He is not simply referring to the conditions for the recognition of another as conscientious, not just about the liberal principle of mutual toleration and respect. Rather, when he refers to the actions of Napoleon and the moral valet he is speaking also about the substance of the action. He is talking about great acts. And in this, one must be able to distinguish between acts that are done from conscience but that are clearly wrong or insane and actions that are ultimately right and must be vindicated. However, it is not just procedure that can determine this, in advance. Rather what compels recognition is the encounter with the truth and goodness of *this particular action*; it is the encounter not just with the form, but with the substance of the action. What Hegel is describing, then, in this description of mutual recognition is a truly good and just action that *compels* the recognition of the judging conscience because of the truth contained therein. For “the duty that is known to be such is fulfilled and becomes a reality, just because what is essentially a duty is the universal for all self-consciousnesses” (§640/345).

But again, what is so extraordinary and curious about this movement is that the truth contained in the deed of the acting conscience would force its way into the consciousness of the judge, such that he/she would be compelled to admit it. What is extraordinary is the moment of recognition, which allows the judge to forgive the particular aspect of the action and allows the true substance of the deed to shine forth. Hegel never tells us here what the substance of the universal is that gets recognized, nor does he give us any concrete examples. Hence it is unclear exactly what the rationality of the deed is. Instead, he describes the universal as “God manifested in the midst of those who know themselves in the form of pure knowledge” (§671/362). What I think this refers to is that, even if what gets recognized is essentially rational, the individuals do not come to it in a purely rational manner. Rather, it is come to “through a glass, darkly,” as a kind of religious experience, an experience of grace. In terms of the analysis offered here, it is a reencounter with the knowledge of love, the knowledge that has been driving consciousness all along. In forgiveness, the knowledge of love, the true substance of the will and what implicitly unites self and other, comes once again to the surface, becomes fully present to the individuals involved.¹⁷

Fackenheim also suggests this when he says that the two figures of conscience come into contact with a religious substance that already *is*, and “in recognizing and accepting what already is, the *Moral* self turns *religious*” (1967:66). Hyppolite as well suggests that the product of the experience of forgiveness is a religious consciousness and that Hegel here points in a mystical direction (1974:568–69).¹⁸ This also explains why the discussion on conscience is followed by the section on religion in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*.

But there is a crucial difference now, in comparison with the earlier experience of love in the Christian community. For while the early Christians found a deeper truth in love, they could not reconcile it with the principle of will, of reflective thought, that had come to dominate the secular world. Thus, their love remained an impotent feeling that could only exist in retreat from the world. And because it could attain no objectification, they fell back on belief in positive doctrine to guide them in actual life. In contrast to this, conscience has overcome the position of positivity; it has traveled through the whole discipline of history, and in doing so subjectivity has come finally to rely on its own self as the author of truth and thus is freed of external authority. Moreover, and most crucially, it will not succumb to positivity because—unlike the Christian self—it *is able to will its truth in the world*. This is the fundamental achievement of conscience—over against the early Christians. Rather than retreating from reflective rationality, it puts its truth out there in the world. It exposes itself to judgment. In judgment, the momentary unity achieved by conscience with its own being is rent apart once again by the power of reflective rationality, is chopped up into the division between universal and particular. But in doing so, in acknowledging the element of particularity in its action and in being forgiven, both figures of conscience go beyond, into the common substance of the universal. Thus it is in and through willing, in and through the confrontation with reflective thought, that a higher unity of self and other, of self and world, is achieved.

Thus, the whole pathway consciousness has traversed seems to have been necessary both for it to come *back* to what Hegel in “Spirit of Christianity” believed to be Christ’s real teaching—the truth of love, of a nontemporal reality that dwells within us, *and* to will that truth in the world. It has been that truth as a subconscious reality that drove the noble consciousness forward, to the establishment of truth as abstract subjectivity in Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and Kant, until it can come back to the full knowledge of the truth within not as the abstract self, but as conscience and as the truth that is actualized through action, judgment, and forgiveness.

What we can furthermore begin to see is that conscience, and its actualization in the world, is *at the basis of Hegel’s politics*. For it is *in and through* the activity of conscience that the knowledge of love is actualized in the world, instead of remaining in retreat. The religious encounter itself, or the resurfacing of the

knowledge of love, constitutes the actualization of the principles of right, the very principles we see articulated in *Philosophy of Right*.

What is startling about this is that, in the very moment of the individuals' actualization of the universal, the actualization of right and law, the actors themselves do not have rational transparency about what they are really achieving. Both in the moment of its action and in its recognition, the truth of conscience is realized "through a glass, darkly." And it is precisely because the universal remain unclear, as an experience of grace, that there remains so much ambiguity in Hegel's presentation about what exactly the substance of the universal is.¹⁹

CONCLUSION: THE INADEQUACY OF INTUITION AS A PHILOSOPHICAL STANDPOINT

The lack of transparency surrounding the realization of the universal through conscience, however, clearly constitutes a philosophical *problem* for Hegel's thought. For his assertion that the two figures of conscience—the judging and the acting—overcome the element of particularity and attain unity in a genuine moral universal seems to be merely that, an assertion. There is no clearly logical reason why this must be so. As an experience of grace, it is really a kind of revelation, a revelation of that substance in which the two sides of conscience find their unity. It is, thus, an affair of the heart, as much as of the head. At the very moment of its transcendence, conscience could not say *why* it does what it does, but simply that it encounters a truth it must recognize.²⁰ It encounters the knowledge of love.

But this means that reflective rationality has not truly been transcended. For while the two figures of conscience may be at one with each other in the recognition of the truth that has been attained, this is not evident to any reflective consciousness looking on. An observing consciousness cannot see any universal but only the mutual confession of self-interest. Thus in spite of the achievement of the figure of conscience itself, by the end of the dialectic this achievement has not been vindicated to reflective consciousness. The truth to which they have attained, the apparently universal substance, still remains other to this rationality. What Hegel has been searching for all along, the transcendence of the standpoint of reflective rationality, may have been achieved by the two figures of conscience—but only by means of a leap, which leaves reflective rationality behind. The knowledge of reason and the knowledge of love remain still at odds, still outside of one another.²¹

The problem here is that the observing consciousness, standing on the outside of the experience of mutual recognition, can easily disrupt or spurn the truth that has been encountered, in the name of its own rationality. Hence

even though conscience represents a modern reconnecting with, and willing of, the deeper knowledge of love, after the whole trajectory of experience of reflective consciousness it does not appear that it has come any closer in the end to a genuine reconciliation with this rationality. It does not appear that it has got beyond the problem of love.

The threat that reflective rationality still poses to conscience is profound when one considers that Hegel is articulating here the very method by which principles of right are actualized in history. For if love is integral to the actualization of right, and if Hegel cannot contain the threat that reflective rationality poses to love, then what is at stake is the very realization of right in the world.

Hence the philosophical standpoint that Hegel has been seeking all along in *Phenomenology*, the standpoint of unity that overcomes reflective rationality and thus overcomes its destructive potential, has *still* not been achieved. This is not, however, because conscience does not constitute the transcendental intuition toward which reflective consciousness has implicitly been striving. On the contrary, it is this intuition, the unity of “intelligence and nature.” It is the self of the Absolute, the self-conscious realization of the Absolute in the human world. But Hegel has come to rethink, and to reject, the intuition as the basis for philosophy, precisely because this intuition is achieved—in the end—only through the suspension of reflective rationality rather than through its transcendence.

Nevertheless, the encounter with the deeper substance of morality in the experience of forgiveness is implicitly rational, even though it is not yet rational in form. And to reveal that rationality in a way that will satisfy reflective thinking requires a different standpoint—the standpoint of “the Notion.” In a dramatic departure from his earlier notion of the transcendental intuition, Hegel’s philosophical standpoint will no longer seek to take us back to the experience of the Absolute Identity, to the knowing of the Absolute in the moment of its own self-positing. Rather it will presuppose that experience and will seek to illuminate and vindicate its intrinsic rationality with the reflective power of logic. In the final chapter of *Phenomenology*, “Absolute Knowing,” Hegel explains how the standpoint of the Notion has already implicitly been accomplished and the task that it must yet undertake.

APPENDIX: THE NEGATIVE TRAJECTORY OF ENLIGHTENMENT CONSCIOUSNESS

Against the Object of Faith

The object of faith has been around all along for consciousness, but the “actual consciousness” of the world of culture—the noble and base consciousness—

did not concern itself directly with that. For actual consciousness knew the world as its present reality, a reality with which it must come to terms. But at the same time, alongside that consciousness we had the consciousness of Christian faith, the belief in God, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost. These two realities coexisted peacefully in this consciousness, one concerning only this world, the other, the world beyond. Now, however, Enlightenment consciousness will have none of this other-worldly truth. It knows itself as the truth of everything and hence must seek to show itself as the truth of the object of faith.

The object of faith is, in truth, a construct of consciousness, an object it makes for itself in order to symbolize the inner knowledge that exists in the form of love, as we saw in the analysis of Chapter 1. It recognizes in the object an expression of its inner truth, and in that recognition is the truth of the object (although the believing consciousness does not recognize its own role therein). The problem with faith, as we have already seen in chapter 1, is its inability to become a living reality in a world that is dominated by reflective consciousness and its relations of private property. Thus it has a tendency to fixate on the physical reality of the object, as something external to and foreign from itself. The obsession with the physical Jesus, his life, works, and death, is the sign that the knowledge of love—the unity of law and being, self and other, human and God—has failed to become a living reality for individuals. Hence they depend instead on the actual Jesus and respond to his teachings as to an external authority. It is *this* limitation of faith, the positive character of its belief, that proves key to its downfall in the face of Enlightenment attacks. For it is precisely these positive characteristics that Enlightenment targets.

First, Enlightenment attacks the idea that the object of faith—God—is an intrinsic being, by pointing out that the belief in the Absolute is brought about by the activity of the believer, by its own obedience and action, and in the service and worship it performs in the religious community. Second, Enlightenment charges that the objects of faith's worship exist merely in the form of things, of sensuous objects. It condemns these objects as constituting the essence of the absolute Being of faith and thus faith as being superstitious. Third, Enlightenment attacks the ground of faith's knowledge as being merely "a fortuitous *knowledge of fortuitous events*" (§554/300). It charges faith "with basing its certainty on some *particular historical evidences*" that suffer from the inaccuracies of lost information, the vagaries of recorders, and particular interpretations of surviving texts (§554/301). And finally, Enlightenment attacks the actions of devotion and sacrifice as being hypocritical, of representing merely a token gesture that does not truly accomplish the renunciation of pleasure and property as ends in themselves, toward some higher good.

According to Hegel, the Enlightenment is successful in its attacks on the religious consciousness precisely because of the fact that Enlightenment is

internal to the religious self. This self is in fact living by two different kinds of knowledge—the religious or “slumbering consciousness” and the “waking consciousness which lives solely in the world of sense” (§572/310). And the “waking consciousness”—the self of reflective thought—is what it shares with Enlightenment consciousness and why it cannot refute the charges made against it. Its deeper religious consciousness cannot answer to these charges, which in the world of the Enlightenment turn out to be true. The religious objects truly are things, external to the self, with no inherent spiritual meaning. The “waking consciousness” thus takes over the slumbering consciousness; it “has monopolized every distinction and expansion of it and has vindicated earth’s ownership of every portion of it and given them back to earth” (§573/310). Thus does faith lose its content to the Enlightenment.

What Hegel portrays as the triumph of the Enlightenment over faith is the same as the earlier triumph of reflective rationality over love. Because reflective rationality—which is the very essence of Enlightenment rationality—is integral to the modern consciousness, the knowledge of faith or of love is inherently vulnerable to the skeptical repudiations of this reasoning. The triumph of the Enlightenment, however, is only apparent. For while it may succeed in denigrating the religious symbols to the status of spiritless “things,” it nevertheless fails to do justice to the intuitive knowledge of religion. In taking the symbols literally, it eclipses the knowledge of faith. For faith had a knowledge of the Absolute, of the identity of finite and infinite, self and other, reason and nature, that Enlightenment lacks. This lack now manifests itself in the hostile attitude of Enlightenment toward being, which Hegel sees manifest in the terrors of the French Revolution and the moral philosophy of Kant. In coming to terms with this lack, however, and the contradictions entailed in it, Enlightenment will not turn backwards, to religion, in order to retrieve a deeper knowledge, but inwards, to conscience, as we shall see.

The Idea of Utility

In destroying the content of faith by interpreting it in terms of merely finite attributes, what Enlightenment has left in terms of a positive content is the world around it. But this is now a world of “particularity and limitations” rather than something infinite. The immediacy of objects that confront it in the world have, once again, become its truth (§558/303). This is so because Enlightenment has shown to itself and others the “nothingness of everything that lies beyond sense-certainty” (§558/303). Thus Enlightenment has constructed for itself an immediate, actual world as its reality and a beyond of that world that is a void. Even that void is seen as existing only in relation to consciousness, only as an abstraction of thought, the other of being. Hence both this world and the beyond find their identity and their truth in relation to

consciousness. They *are*, in being *for it*. The true identity of the objective world is thus its “utility.” Or, as Hegel facetiously says, “*everything* exists for his pleasure and delight and, as one who has come from the hand of God, he walks the earth as in a garden planted for him” (§560/304).

In utility, pure insight has extended its idea of itself as the truth of the actual world to the point where it now has widespread acceptance in the philosophy of utilitarianism. By this achievement, insight appears to have fulfilled its imperialistic mission. It has done away with the object of faith as other to it. In doing so it has shown to all self-consciousnesses that they must rely on their own perception and reason (the reason of reflective thought) in order to judge what is true. Furthermore, it has shown that there is no reality that is self-subsistent and independent of itself, but that all reality exists only in relation to it, attains presence and actuality only through its own sense-perception and knowledge. From this it concludes that the truth of reality is the pleasure it can give to man. In eliminating all reality as having an independent existence, in making everything *for it*, an article of utility, Enlightenment would seem to have no more antitheses with which to engage; it appears finally to have become at home with itself in the world, a world that is fully anthropomorphized. And yet, the contradiction of this consciousness is only now about to reveal itself. For it still has not completely realized itself.

The Terror of the French Revolution

There is an enormous social consequence to the Enlightenment. For once individuals grasp its ultimate message—that they are all equal in being able to reflectively consider the world, that they are all “pure selves” (for it is from the position of the pure self that they “rationally” consider the world)—they will no longer accept the place in the hierarchy to which they have been consigned, according to some supposed difference in their being. The resentment and inner rebellion of *Rameau’s Nephew* has here become generalized, and that inner rebellion shows itself to have been the foreshadowing of the actual rebellion of the French Revolution. In their self-knowledge as pure selves, the objective structure in which individuals are placed reflects only their false, inferior status. They have no investment in that structure, the way that Rameau’s nephew did in the vanity of his special knowledge, for it is now a knowledge that they all possess. Thus, they must do away with this structure that defies their real truth.

The abolition of the ancien regime is in itself a joyous event, entailing freedom from an oppressive structure that has shown itself no longer to have any rational validity. It is in the aftermath of this event, however, that we see the contradiction that plagues it.

Once it has abolished the existing structure, this consciousness must create a new kind of social organization, a new division of political power, organization of labor, and so on, that expresses its true nature. But doing so would entail the apportioning of individuals once again to particular spheres. Even if this new structure would be their own creation, and even if the apportioning were done according to the principle of choice, it would mean that the individual would no longer be in the position of the universal self. Individuals would go back to being particular selves, being defined, that is, by their particular jobs, their talents, their social groups, and so on. But they no longer see themselves in this way. They are no longer willing to be defined by any such particularities; they will accept only an objective structure that is a reflection of their pure self. However, an objective structure that is a reflection of their selves is in fact not an object but must be a subject. To find themselves in that structure they must actually be the self of that structure. They must be the will, a government that is the will of all in their truth as pure selves—a “general will.”

But if this general will must always show itself to be the truth of the object it might create, to be the *self* of the object, then it can never abide the *form* of objectivity of the structure. “[I]t lets nothing break loose to become a *free object* standing over against it” (§588/318). For it would then again lose its own self in the object, lose sight of the truth of the object as self; that object would become a self-subsisting reality that would have some power over and resistance to the self. It is only through the negation of objectivity, then, that the general will knows itself as the truth of it. The reality of the general will thus shows itself to be purely negative—“it is merely the fury of destruction” (§589/319). This becomes finally apparent not in the abolition of the old regime but in the terror that follows.

The terror undertaken by the governing faction after the French Revolution is thus regarded by Hegel as a logical culmination of the idea of the pure self in its realization as will. The truth of will is to do away with any objectivity confronting it, in order to realize itself therein. Once it has done away with the existing structures of the regime, it withdraws again into its self-consciousness as will by becoming a government, and the only object that still confronts it is the actual existence of other individuals who have been left out of the governing faction. To show itself the power over this object, the will can only negate it. By this experience, consciousness as general will learns the truth of itself. In the terror of death, it sees that it is the very negation of its own physical existence.

The problem with the pure self in the French Revolution has been that individuals have sought to actualize their truth immediately, by putting their actual selves in the position of universality and relating to being from this position. But this kind of relationship to being by the pure self turns out only

to be a relationship of death. By this terror, consciousness learns the impossibility of the immediate realization of the general will and thus is again willing to submit to social and political structures. But this is not simply a pragmatic retreat and a return to a new cycle of history that will repeat the same dynamic. For consciousness has gained more than this in the experience; it has fully realized its own certainty of itself as negativity, as the other of being. It has reduced being to nothing, seen itself as pure negativity, as death, and retreated back into itself with this knowledge.

The Contradictions of the Kantian Moral Consciousness

We have now before us the “moral consciousness.” While it is now willing to accept being as necessary to its own continued existence, it still accords that being no significance but is concerned only with itself as pure self. It has achieved the full reflection into itself and out of being that was its implicit goal from its beginning as “pure insight.” It no longer needs to be part of a particular faction, or a revolutionary government, or to play the role of an anarchist. It merely needs to look into its own actual self to find its deeper truth. It has reduced the antithesis between its actual self and its pure self to “a transparent form” (§595/323). Its object is now its own certainty of itself, itself as “pure knowing and willing” (§594/323).

The moral consciousness is no longer threatened by the form of being, because it no longer has that being as its object, no longer finds an antithesis between its idea of the truth and that which confronts it. Now, its object is its own certainty of itself as a universal self. It has confirmed its own rejection of itself as determined by nature and continues in the certainty of its own radical freedom. This certainty, because it has traversed the realm of being in order to prove itself, because it has been “purified by absolute negativity,” is now immediately present in it. It is “the intuited pure certainty of itself” (§597/324).²²

This moral consciousness thus recognizes only what it finds in its pure, rational self. It defines itself according to its characteristic as free from all sensuous determination, is guided then only by the *form* of reason or universality in its actions. In Kant this is the “categorical imperative,” the idea that only if one could universalize the maxim of one’s action could the action be morally good. It is thus only this universality of abstract reason, only “pure duty,” that is to be the guide and source of action for the moral consciousness.

The moral consciousness is also a consciousness of being; it is a sense consciousness. But this sensuous self is really the other of its truth, that to which duty is necessarily opposed. For duty finds its very identity in this opposition; it is only when one acts against one’s sensuous being that one can be assured that one is acting in the name of the moral law and not to satisfy particular appetites.

We see here once again the fundamental characteristic of pure self-consciousness—achieved through the disciplinary process of the feudal regime—in the abstraction of itself from all sensuous being and the relating to that being as something over against it. This was true with the Enlightenment concept of utility, with the French Revolution in its activity of terror toward all that stood opposed to its self-conscious position of will, and it is repeated here in the separation of the moral law, as the ultimate object of truth, from sensuous being. And yet while this rational self is the achievement of this consciousness, it is also what binds it in a contradiction. For in abstracting from its sensuous being and positing its rational self as Absolute, it is at the same time conditioned by that sensuous being. The self of the French Revolution had sought an escape from this by retreating into the self of morality, into its inner certainty. But this self of morality must now confront its contradiction head on. And it is in Kant's enumeration of the "postulates of practical reason" in *Critique of Practical Reason* that Hegel sees this confrontation taking place.

A consciousness that takes pure duty as its truth must be driven to embrace the postulates of practical reason outlined by Kant in *Critique of Practical Reason*, according to Hegel. Hence Kant's text is the most logical articulation of this position. And yet a consciousness that is honest with itself will also discover, in the end, that these postulates are what it cannot believe and thus that the position of an abstractly rational morality must be transcended, in a genuine unity of self and being. Thus the Kantian moral self, as Hegel here interprets it, is the final and the highest stage in the journey of the reflective self, and the point at which it must abandon its reflective standpoint and reengage with the realm of being as an essential aspect of its truth—in conscience.

The Kantian postulates, such as the idea of the highest good, the harmony of morality, nature, and happiness, are not the *motive* for the moral will but emerge as the idea of what must be realized by a will that makes the moral law its motive. They are derivative of the moral law. And what they really indicate, says Hegel, is that although the purely moral will seeks to act according to the idea of pure duty, and not from self-interested considerations, it finds that it cannot be indifferent to nature, to the effects that its actions accomplish in the world, and to its own happiness. For example, a consciousness that focuses only on pure duty cannot acknowledge the satisfaction and achievements of moral struggle in the present. For that achievement involves its sensuous being, precisely what it does not want to recognize as important. Its sensuous being is involved in moral action—both negatively in the need to go against inclination for duty to be pure and positively in the cultivation of virtue or conformity of inclinations to the moral law, in seeing concrete results and feeling satisfied, and in assessing what is to be done in each case. The idea that individuals who engage in moral action must postpone their satisfaction

until all evil is eradicated is simply a false attempt to preserve a false purity. And yet this is precisely what the consciousness of pure duty must argue; it cannot acknowledge that it gets anything out of its moral action in the here and now or that its sensuous being is involved in any way in its action. Thus it projects that aspect into the beyond—as future happiness, future perfection, as God. These postulates, however, are merely bad faith, an attempt to evade the reality that nature works in moral action in the here and now and not in some postulated harmony in the remote beyond.

The various contradictions that the moral consciousness gets itself into in trying to deny nature an essential part in moral action are what Hegel outlines in his analysis of the postulates. In reality the postulates reveal the “dissemblance and duplicity” in which a moral consciousness that fixates on pure duty must engage. It makes these postulates in order that it may even begin to try to act from pure duty; the postulates are *practically* necessary beliefs. And yet it discovers that it cannot believe in them, for they undo the very nature of its task in the here and now.

Whether Hegel’s rather lengthy discussion of the “dissemblance and duplicity” in which the pure moral self-consciousness engages is valid may well be questionable. Friedman, for example, argues that Kant’s theory is not “about the emergence of a moral world out of a natural one” (1986:517), but a confrontation with the limits of human knowledge and an attempt to vindicate what we *do* know, and what we *must* do. Seen from this light, however, Kant’s position comes closer to Hegel’s “conscience,” as we shall see. The difference, however, and the essence of Hegel’s critique, is that conscience must seek the content of its moral action in its own sensuous being rather than in the abstraction of pure reason and that it gets satisfaction from moral action in the here and now. The purported collapse of the postulates, then, is not meant to signify the lack of reality of moral action the way some might suggest.²³ Rather it is to force consciousness to acknowledge to itself the presence and necessity of sensuous being in moral action. The moral self must come to recognize that it is fundamentally bound up with nature and cannot evade this fact. When it does so, we have the self as “conscience.”

3

Philosophy of Right

The Final Reconciliation of Love and Reason

THE PHILOSOPHICAL STANDPOINT: FROM INTUITION TO NOTION

THE RECONCILIATION OF THE TWO FIGURES of conscience in *Phenomenology of Spirit* constitutes the recognition of a universal principle in the world, realized in and through the willing and judgment of individuals. For Hegel, this movement reflects the mode by which absolute principles are realized more generally. But it is only with the unfolding of conscience that this realization happens in a self-conscious fashion.

We have already explored the pathway by which consciousness comes to identify its own convictions as the truth. First, consciousness understood its ultimate truth as an external object to which it devoted itself, in state power and wealth. Then, it came to see that it itself was the real truth of things, in “pure insight” and Enlightenment thought. And yet this ‘I’ turned out to be abstract and empty; it could not realize its absolute status in the world except by destructiveness. It is only with conscience that it finds a truth within itself that it can actually assert in the world.

Conscience must assert this inner truth, as we have seen, because there remains an other outside itself that threatens and conditions it. It is impelled to seek the recognition of this other in order to vindicate its inner certainty. And it is in the movement by which its truth is realized—in action, judgment, and forgiveness—that we finally see, according to Hegel in the final chapter of *Phenomenology*, the Absolute realizing itself in a self-conscious form. Now, the object of truth remains throughout in the mode of knowing, rather than

as an external thing.¹ Thus, on the one hand conscience has overcome the idea of the Absolute as external to itself, since it finds it within, in the form of an inner certainty. On the other hand, this is a certainty that is active, which realizes itself in the world.

It is only with conscience, then, that we have the real experience of the Absolute, the self-conscious knowledge of unity with being that we have been seeking all along. In this sense conscience does constitute the “transcendental intuition” of the *Difference* essay, the direct connection with the Absolute in its own self-positing, upon which Hegel had earlier sought to base his philosophical system. The moral will of conscience is the will of the Absolute realizing itself in human history. But the difference we see here is that Hegel no longer thinks this achievement could be an ultimate transcendence of the reflective standpoint and the basis for an immediate connection with the Absolute in all its forms. For in the final chapter of the *Phenomenology*, “Absolute Knowing,” it becomes apparent that it is not conscience per se that can know itself as absolute (although it might assert itself as such), but the philosophical consciousness that stands beyond it and encapsulates retrospectively both the logical trajectory of experience that has brought consciousness there and the inherent rationality of what it achieves in the world.

There are three points to be considered here, in terms of the inadequacy of conscience as a philosophical standpoint. The first is that, without the developmental view of consciousness’ relation to its object, the very idea that conscience contains the truth within it remains merely a subjective assertion. Only we who have been following along with the journey of consciousness can rationally establish what emerges from its experiential movement—the idea that the truth resides within. Second, even when conscience does assert its knowledge and its right, in any one instance the certainty it protests may be subjective and misguided. If it tries to overcome the subjective character of its truth by gaining the recognition of others, it may turn out to be a beautiful soul who actualizes nothing. Or if it acts, it loses the unity of its intuition, as the latter is dichotomized by the other’s views into its universal and particular aspects. Thus, the realization of intuition *in the world* entails its engagement once again with the reflective thinking that it believed itself to have transcended. Indeed, one of the main revelations of the dialectic of conscience is that the intuition can only realize itself through this confrontation and fragmentation, that it is only in and through the particularizing force of the modern will and reflective thought that the Absolute can be actualized in human history.

Yet in the end—and this is the third point to be considered—in the moment of forgiveness and the mutual recognition of a universal realized in the world, reflective thought is once again suspended, as if this recognition implied a moment of grace. Reflective thought is once again left outside and poses a threat to what has been achieved. Because of this, the ultimate stand-

point by which the Absolute is to be cognized cannot be the intuitive knowing of conscience—an intuitive knowing that it cannot even sustain and the rationality of which cannot be immediately comprehended—but a logical knowing, separate from and above actual experience. Only this logical knowing can encapsulate both the movement of consciousness into the intuitive certainty of the moral subject and the rationality of what is achieved in human history through the activity of moral conscience. It is Hegel's philosophical consciousness, the final phenomenological consciousness, that gathers into a totality the movement of knowing that culminates in forgiveness. That totality is "the Notion of will."

The Notion of will contains the idea of the will as the self of the Absolute, as the means by which universal moral principles are realized in the world. And it is the task of the Notion of will to comprehend—retrospectively—the rationality of what conscience realizes in the world. The task of a Notional philosophy must be retrospective because, as I argued in the previous chapter, the truth that is actualized by conscience, and in which the two figures find their substantial unity, is not comprehensible to reflective consciousness looking on. While realized in and through the will, the substance of morality nevertheless ends up being, in the final moment, still *outside* that will, "still *self-less being*" (PS §801/428). It has not yet taken on the shape of selfhood; although intimately present to the two self-consciousnesses in experience, in form it remains still *other* to them, a divine essence set against their reflectively rational selves. And yet this essence is inherently rational, according to Hegel. But it must yet display its rationality in form; it must be actualized in a manner accessible to reflective consciousness. And it is in the chapter "Absolute Knowing," where Hegel articulates the task of the Notion, that we see how this is to come about.

In "Absolute Knowing," Hegel acknowledges that the abstract moments of the unfolding of conscience represent only *one side* of the actualization of the truth. Conscience is the "form of Self" that "accomplishes the life of absolute Spirit" (PS §796/425). It is the activity through which universal principles are posited and realized in the world. We have already come to this through our journey in *Phenomenology*. But the other side of the truth is precisely the content of the will, the substance of justice itself. What Hegel asserts here is that it is through the activity of conscience, or of the will in our understanding of it as the self of spirit, that substance comes to be objectified in the secular world in a manner accessible to reflective consciousness. The will as the self of spirit brings forth its true substantial content in the secular world—in *valid laws and institutions*. Substance must not remain in murky otherworldliness but must be realized *in* the secular realm.

But the substance of will—this other side of the Absolute—is precisely the substance of love, as we examined in the last chapter. It is in the experience of

love that the will finds its truth and foundation. While the Romans did instantiate the idea of the formal principle of the self as fundamental, they conceived this self abstractly and experienced the nothingness of its content when understood as raw desire. They and their laws did not comprehend the self as having any universal content, only a universality of form. The other side of the self—the true content of the will—is experienced in love, which Hegel identifies historically with the message of Christ. It is thus love that is the foundation of the laws and institutions that transcend the standpoint of the Romans, of the abstract ego and abstract right.

What Hegel is asserting, then, is that the activity of human willing in history from the time of Christianity forward is ultimately to be comprehended as the objectification of the knowledge of love *in life, for* reflective consciousness. The will's movement of objectification is at base the movement to objectify and vindicate the knowledge of love. It actualizes the experience of love precisely in order to know it. And this is reflected in history. "Time," says Hegel, is "the destiny and necessity of Spirit that is not yet complete within itself, the necessity . . . to realize and reveal what is at first only inward" (PS §801/429). The striving of the will to know itself is the striving of modern history. And the legal structure that develops and preserves itself in the modern world is the objective instantiation of this inward spirit.²

The task of the Notion of will—which is only articulated in *Phenomenology* but not undertaken there—is thus the retrospective gathering of the logical necessity of the objectification of the will in history. This objectification, viewed according to the logical necessity of the Notion, displays explicitly the rationality intrinsic to love.³ That is, it displays precisely the content of the will that had remained so mysterious at the end of *Phenomenology*. By this, the true content of the will ceases to be mysterious and becomes instead that with which reflective consciousness is fully at home.

To begin this final reconciliation of reason and love, of subject and substance, we must take up the standpoint of the Notion of will, that to which the whole journey of *Phenomenology* has directed us—the idea that the will is the mode of realization of an inner universal, that it contains the knowledge of this universal within itself in the prephilosophical experience of love, and that this knowledge is objectified in the world in a logically necessary manner. With this standpoint we can then go back, to the most abstract form of the will that expressed itself historically in the Roman Empire, and *reread* or *recollect* that historical experience in order to express the real truth of what has gone on there. This is the pathway of *Philosophy of Right*.⁴ There, the will's immanent content, the universality it realizes in the world, is comprehended as "Right"—"[a]n existent of any sort embodying the free will" (§29). If Hegel is right in his Notion of the will, then this tracing of the actualization of the will in terms of its rational necessity promises to provide the ultimate recon-

ciliation of modern, secular consciousness with the truth of love. It shows how an experience from which the will had separated us actually comes to be expressed in secular life, by the activity of will, in a manner by which its intrinsic rationality can now be retrieved.⁵

This understanding of Hegel's philosophy of the Notion may seem anti-climactic, in light of his earlier emphasis on the transcendental intuition as a direct connection with the Absolute. For although with conscience and forgiveness we have an achievement of oneness with an absolute principle in the moment of its existence, the philosophical consciousness of it as such is retrospective. The idea of a philosophy based on an intuitional relationship to nature, to the Absolute's self-positing in nature, seems to be definitively overruled here. The philosophy of the Notion is a process of recollection, of comprehending the rationality of the Absolute after it has already been realized through the conscious willing and recognition of it in human history. There is to be no *submergence* in the Absolute, no ultimate oneness with the divine in its own self-positing. While Hegel had indeed intended, in *Difference*, such a direct connection with the Absolute as the basis of philosophizing, we can see to what extent he has departed from it now.

This conclusion, as already suggested in chapter 1, corroborates the dominant view in the scholarship that emphasizes a dramatic break with intuitionism in the development of Hegel's thought (e.g., Beiser 1993, Harris 1993, Henrich 1997). In order to further appreciate the turn that Hegel has made, we may consider the explicit remarks he made about intuitive philosophy in the wake of his own abandonment of it.

In "preface" to *Phenomenology*, written after the completion of the work, Hegel's hostility to the Schellingian approach to the Absolute is clearly expressed. Instead of satisfying the cognitive impulse, an intuitive philosophy seeks to take us back to the level of mere feeling. Hegel reproaches this view as a weak-willed nostalgia that, in the face of "that lost sense of solid and substantial being" that characterizes the modern world, seeks not to go forward with insight, but to retreat to a superficial form of edification (PS§7/12). "The Spirit shows itself so impoverished that, like a wanderer in the desert craving for a mere mouthful of water, it seems to crave for its refreshment only the bare feeling of the divine in general. By the little which now satisfies Spirit, we can measure the extent of its loss" (§8/13). While one may sympathize with such attempts at edification, says Hegel, the approach fails to capture the depth and richness of actual spiritual existence. Rather than constituting a genuine pathway out, it signifies rather an attempt at escape from a modern existence that appears, to ordinary consciousness, immanently condemned to finitude.

Hegel himself had come to see that the philosophical vindication of the experience of love in the modern world could only be accomplished through

the reflective thought that has, ironically, alienated us from that experience. For it is only by reflective thought that we see the world in all its differences and distinctions. A submergence of self in the being of the divine, a unity with the actual, temporal self-positing of the Absolute, turns its back on reflective, finite consciousness and all the wealth of its distinctions. This is why such an approach to the Absolute ends up as “a night in which all cows are black.” For an older, more sober Hegel, who has come fully to grips with the essentiality of the modern reflective impulse, such is not the pathway forward. Reflective knowing must rather be understood as an essential medium in which the Absolute reveals itself, although it is a revelation that only comes to its full truth in the philosophy of the Notion. From the larger perspective of the Notion it is seen that the distinctions made by reflective thought are ultimately not separate from that which they reveal, that the determinations of thinking are the determinations of the true being of the thing, but that these determinations are only partial truths that supersede their own limits to reveal a larger whole. And this whole process of superseding, reflected in the full light of its immanent logic, is the philosophy of the Notion. Only by the Notion can philosophy hope to address—yet go beyond—the challenge of reflective thought, to vindicate the knowledge of love in the fullness of its realization in the world.

Thus we can see that, in his break with Schellingian intuition and his development of the idea of the Notion, Hegel has definitively overcome the attitude of mere *resignation* to the reality of reflective thought that we witnessed in “Spirit of Christianity” and has fully embraced that thought in its self-realization as Notion. He has confronted the profound loss of spirituality entailed by this thinking and, in the face of it, seeks not to retreat to an intuitive knowing, but to put philosophy on a new and starker path. That path is the path of the Notion—“the cold march of necessity in the thing-itself” (§7/13).

In this outline of a mode of absolute cognition in the medium of conceptual thought, rather than intuition, one may yet foresee a loss. The intensity and immediateness of existence will not be captured by its “elevation” to the Notion. Hegel himself admits that the freshness and immediacy of sensation and imagery is lost in its elevation to representation and to the Notion (Enc. §452R). Hence the experience that Goeschel describes, “a disembodied, weird, ghostlike feeling,” may well capture the nature of the philosophical journey upon which one embarks in studying Hegel’s system (cited in Fackenheim 1967:192–93n.). For while it relies on the lived actuality and is nothing without that, philosophy itself exists in another realm—the purely conceptual and rationally self-moving realm of the Notion, which hovers over the realm of finished actuality in order to reflect the truth embodied therein. Hegel’s philosophy, then, may indeed seem ghostlike. But it is, for him, the

ghost of necessity, the ghost of reflective thought. It was only after a long struggle with the reality of reflective thought that he came to the Notion as the only possibility for philosophic life.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXPERIENCE AND NOTIONAL PHILOSOPHY

In spite of Hegel's retreat from romanticism with his move into the Notion as the basis of philosophizing, the "cold march of necessity" is not one that takes place in abstraction from lived actuality. For while the Notion is indeed a lifting above existence, it nevertheless depends on that existence as the basis of its cognition. Hegel never denies the validity of intuitional, representational, or any form of phenomenal knowledge. These are, for him, genuine modes of human contact with an absolute principle. And he continues to rely on such knowing at the level of life—of willing in history. The problem is that such intuitive knowing cannot, in its immediate form, be vindicated in its truth and significance. Only through the Notion can this be achieved. The task of the Notion is not a separation from these forms of knowing in order to assert instead a one-sided and formal schema as the real truth of things. On the contrary, its labour is the labor of *recollection*, of *rereading* the previous experiences of consciousness, in terms of their logical necessity, in order that they can be won back and preserved in their truth. Actuality is thus the basis, the material, that feeds a cognition that can be nothing without it. The philosophy of the Notion is not a substitute for intuitive knowing, but a different kind of knowing. And both types of knowing are mutually necessary in modernity.

Thus *Philosophy of Right* must be recognized in terms of the two levels going on there—the level of philosophy, which traces the logical unfolding of the idea of will, and the level of experience that is presupposed and that is required in order to explain the movement *in life*. This is important, for a popular misconception is that Hegel is portraying a reconciliation between self and world that is achieved purely through philosophical comprehension.⁶ The view here is that the logic portrayed in the text is based upon a *prephilosophical* experience of reconciliation—the experience of love. For as I have already argued in chapter 2 and as I shall seek to show here, the experience of love constitutes the very drive of the modern will, its unfolding in history and in the life of the individual. We have already witnessed the idea of a will informed by love in the discussion of conscience. The task now is to see how love is presupposed in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and to see how the logic of that text is meant to affirm the knowledge of love.

If the movement of the will portrayed in *Philosophy of Right* presupposes the experience of love, as the argument offered here seeks to demonstrate, not

only does this offset the view that emphasizes the role of philosophy in achieving reconciliation, but it also goes against the ongoing notion that his political thought can be separated from his metaphysics (e.g., Pelczynski 1964, Wood 1990), the idea that his thought can be purely secularized.⁷ Notable here as well are prominent Marxist appropriations of Hegel's thought, such as Kojève and Habermas. Such arguments are flawed in that they cannot adequately explain the drive of the will toward unity with the world around it. It is the desire to see in Hegel's philosophy of the will something purely secular and to deny his larger philosophy of the Absolute Identity, to divorce the mature Hegel altogether from his earlier romanticism, that is the cause of such appropriations.⁸ But understanding love as a source *and a limit* on the will should not be anathema to secular readers. Indeed, in light of the tendency of the Marxist ontology of will to culminate in an extreme pessimism, as in the Frankfurt School, Hegel's notion of a will rooted in love seems to take us in a more promising direction.

This understanding of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* should also help to cast light on the central motive of his mature philosophical system. Unlike the objectification of love in the religious object, the objectification of love in the form of "right," in the valid laws and institutions of the modern political community, is one that can be rationally vindicated and that is not perpetually threatened by the hovering presence of reflective rationality. And it is philosophy, the philosophy of the notion, not religion, that can capture the rationality of this objectification. This philosophy is not bound by the limitations of a narrow, reflective reasoning but is inherently dialectic; it takes up the standpoint of reflective rationality, shows it its own limitations, and transcends that standpoint in the progressive movement toward a higher kind of rational knowing. Only such a philosophy can deal with the threat that reflective reasoning poses to love and to any objectification of the reality of love. And it does so by *incorporating* and *transcending* that reasoning. Thus the great importance that Hegel places in philosophy can be understood not in terms of a desire to find a reconciliation merely in the realm of thought, but in terms of the imperative of protecting and preserving the experience of love—the very basis of the actualization of right in modern history—from the eclipsing effects of the narrow reflective reasoning that has come to dominate the modern spirit.

Based on this interpretive approach to *Philosophy of Right*, the following examination of the actual text itself has two objectives: (1) to reveal just what the actual substance of the will is and how Hegel argues for it (this follows the explicit logic of the text and shows those rights and institutions for which Hegel is arguing); and (2) to reveal just how these rational arguments depend on a level of prereflective knowledge or experience from which they remain separate. When we read *Philosophy of Right* we are taking up this first objec-

tive, which represents the philosophical perspective. But we must also seek as much as possible to reveal the experience upon which this discussion is based and which is often not explicit in the text. The point will not be to capture in full detail the logical justifications for all of the political principles that are articulated in *Philosophy of Right*, for this has already been done adequately by others, (e.g., Houlgate 1991:ch.3, Mitias 1984, Reyburn 1921, Wood 1990) but to highlight some of these and outline the essential arguments that are meant to convince reflective rationality of their truth, while emphasizing how this logical development of the will is also contingent, at the level of the individual's movement, upon the inner certainty that is acquired through the experience of love. In showing this, the discussion below seeks to reveal how Hegel is using the logical arguments in order to affirm the knowledge of love, as it is objectified in right, and thus to reconcile the two principles that have previously been so antagonistic to one another.

LOVE AND LOGIC IN *THE PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT*

The Urge toward Property and the Argument for It

If *Philosophy of Right* begins from the idea of a will that is driven by the inner certainty of love, the certainty that it contains an infinite principle within it, and that the world around it must also reflect that inner truth, this finds its first expression in the assertion of a right to private property. Property, for Hegel, is not fundamentally about the meeting of needs or the right of self-preservation, as Locke construes it. Plenty of peoples have survived quite adequately in history without the institution of private property. The recognition of the right to private property entails rather the recognition of the infinite significance of the individual in modern societies. The very urge to express the self in private property by modern individuals signifies the felt experience of this infinity and the need to gain recognition for it from the world around one. Furthermore, this urge can only be comprehended because of the earlier experience of love, the experience of oneself as indeed containing an infinite principle.

The need to gain recognition for this principle is felt in relationship to the world of nature, which confronts the individual as an apparently independent entity, making the will appear as a subjective truth. Thus the individual tries to appropriate the external world in order to show that the latter "has no end in itself and derives its destiny and soul from his will" (§44). But it is felt also in relationship to the human world, and this is ultimately what contract is about—the achievement of the recognition of others that one is an individual who expresses herself in property (§71).⁹

This may well not be the conscious understanding of the urge toward property. As Hegel says of the making of contracts, for the actual parties involved “all they are conscious of is that they are led to make contracts by need in general, by benevolence, advantage, &c” (§71R). But the real truth is that there is an inner conviction of one’s own importance as an individual and one’s right to express that individuality and gain recognition for it.

Conceptually, or at the level of philosophy, this infinity is captured or justified by the notion of the self as an “abstract ego,”—the capacity of the self to abstract from community and tradition and to assert its own, individual needs and desires (PR §34A). While this idea of the self will reveal itself to be one-sided, it nevertheless contains a partial truth—that an aspect of our universality is contained in our capacity for abstraction. Logically, the right of property follows from the recognition of the abstract ego. For as abstracted from nature, and with the conviction that the ego is the real truth of things, it follows that the world of nature is there for it to appropriate. Historically, this is expressed in the legal and political philosophy of the Roman empire. The rights that we see emerging here all derive from this conviction of the importance of the abstract ego.

The Experience of the Self as Moral and the Argument for This

At the level of experience, the urge to express oneself separately from the community and from one’s social role therein inevitably entails that individuals will do wrong to one another or violate one another’s right to private property. For such individual expression has its immediate source and substance in one’s own, individual nature, one’s desires, tastes, and impulses. But to follow one’s own impulses and desires, even if one is driven by some inner conviction of the importance of this, means that one is in fact a capricious and arbitrary will. For there is nothing inherently moral in the sphere of desire. Thus there is nothing to prevent one from violating the rights of another if it appears to be in one’s interest to do so. Wrong logically follows when we are dealing with individuals who express themselves in terms of their empirical natures, as Hobbes also saw.

It is interesting to note that, in the actual, historical development of this concept of the ‘will’ as Hegel portrays it in *Philosophy of History*, by the time of the emperors in Rome when right is routinely violated and the people are under the thumb of a capricious and arbitrary individual, we do not get beyond the position of crime. The will is indeed nullified in crime, and it is only after the disciplinary experience of feudalism that it again reasserts itself as something absolute and that the idea of the rights of man are asserted, as we saw in the discussion of the Enlightenment. But here, because we already have the standpoint of the Notion of will, the knowledge of the will as the self

of universal principles, we can comprehend the logical necessity for the will to reassert itself against crime. It reasserts itself as something absolute, as something that cannot be nullified this way.

At the level of the phenomenological will or the will in experience, this need to reassert its reality is experienced as the desire for revenge by the injured parties. The impulse to revenge in fact has a positive content, in the necessity to negate crime and restore right. For it is the crime itself that is really the nullity, which goes against the reality of the will: "it is an expression of a will which annuls the expression or determinate existence of a will" (§92).

The problem with revenge, however, is the same as the problem with the original crime; it is "an act of a subjective will" that thus may go too far; as an act of passion it may exceed what the correction of the original wrong requires. With both the experience of crime and revenge, then, the actual, existing will in history comes to a greater consciousness of itself in both its aspects—as an infinite principle that is embodied in a finite self, which can go against its own infinite aspect. It becomes conscious of itself, as Hegel says, as "at once the sublime and the trivial" (§5A). While before it was merely driven by its own impulses, with the inner conviction of the rightness of this, now it is forced to become self-reflective in a deeper way.

Logically, or at the level of philosophy, what the reality of crime and revenge shows is the one-sided nature of conceptualizing the will merely in terms of the abstract ego. For clearly the will, while it does have the capacity to abstract from its nature, is also embodied in the finite self and finds the substance of its will therein. It is a will driven by passion, idiosyncrasy, and self-interested desire. Logically, the reality of crime and revenge turns out to entail the need for an impartial system of judgment in order to reassert right in the face of wrong and to take punishment out of the hands of the injured parties, who cannot adequately control their own passions. But this also entails that we do not see the self merely as an abstract ego who expresses itself in terms of its natural desires, in private property. It entails that we see the self also as moral, as having the capacity to respect the property of others, to carry out contracts in good faith, to be punished if it fails, and to respect a system of institutionalized, impartial justice, instead of taking the law into its own hands. It entails the notion that one is not just driven by passion but that one *can* act according to a principle of right.

Thus property rights, or "abstract right" as Hegel calls it, necessarily entail the idea of the self as moral, the notion that the infinite principle is in fact embodied in a finite individual whose particular impulses might drive it to go against right but who nevertheless has the capacity to take responsibility for what it wills in the world. The essence of the idea of the moral will is that, in spite of being embodied in a singular individual, full of desires and passions, it is nevertheless a universal self that can take responsibility for its own actions.

This is the logical argument for how property and morality are bound up together or how the idea of the self as an abstract ego must be expanded to incorporate the notion of the self as moral. But while we can see the logical necessity of the movement from abstract right, or right based on the idea of the abstract ego, to right based on the idea of the moral self, while we can see how the latter is implicitly entailed in the former, at the level of *experience*, to go beyond crime and revenge and to develop a condition of genuine respect for property rights and for a system of justice that oversees this, entails the experience of love. Individuals must have the capacity to recognize the dignity of all individuals as carriers of the universal, as rights bearers, and must recognize their fundamental commonality with all other human beings in this respect. That love is required in order to make this transition, for Hegel, we have seen clearly in *Philosophy of History* and *Phenomenology*, as discussed in the last chapter. The movement from the Roman Empire through the feudal experience to the reassertion of rights during the Enlightenment presupposes the experience of love, which Hegel interprets to have been brought onto the historical scene in a conscious way with the figure of Christ. The capacity to take a moral action in the world and gain the recognition of others for it in the experience of forgiveness also presupposes love. And as we shall see in our subsequent discussion of the family, the development of the moral consciousness of civil society that takes one beyond a condition of atomism presupposes the experience of love gained in childhood.

That the experiential basis of this movement is not portrayed here, at this moment in *Philosophy of Right*, does not undermine its reality. Instead it points to the specific nature of the task that Hegel's text seeks to address. *Its* task is to vindicate the movement of love at the level of logic, to show the rational basis of the movement of the will. *Philosophy of Right* provides us with an intellectual arsenal with which to validate the position of morality as superior to the position of abstract right.

This entails a whole number of arguments that are of enormous relevance to us at a time when right-wing liberal philosophies based on the position of abstract right have gained ascendancy. We can examine three of the more significant of these, in order to comprehend how Hegel's concept of the moral self provides us with important logical arguments in order to combat the too narrow and limited thinking of abstract right: (1) the argument for a right of distress, which underpins Hegel's whole subsequent argument for a welfare state, (2) the argument for a right of conscience, and (3) the argument for a right of objectivity (the right of objective institutions to balance the subjective right of conscience).¹⁰ But even here the logic is reflecting a basis in experience, as I shall try to show. Hegel was never naïve enough to think that logic would be enough. His work rather presupposes and seeks to vindicate the existential level, in order to protect and preserve the latter.

The Experience of a Right of Distress and the Argument for It

Hegel's attention to the right of distress emerges logically from the two-sided view of the self that we have before us with the moral self. Before, in the abstract ego, we had before us only the capacity to abstract from one's given determinations and to put oneself into something external in order to demonstrate one's freedom. There was no recognition of the actual passions, desires, intentions, and goals orienting people's choices. But here, with the moral view of the self, we have both sides before us—the infinite capacity to abstract and to choose and the background and substance of the self that in fact determines the choosing. This background and substance reveal what in fact the abstract ego concealed—that individuals are not all the same, that they exist in different situations, that some are more privileged, that some come from poverty and other conditions of disadvantage in the marketplace, and that these differences partially determine one's choices and the position in which one ends up. Restricting oneself to the narrower standpoint of the abstract ego ends up logically pushing one to the conclusion that the ultimate division of property and well-being is fundamentally just, a product of those who exercise their capacity for abstraction and choice in a better manner.

Locke makes this mistake when he sees the division of classes that emerged in history as a product of moral character. By virtue of the fact of the division of society into a class of propertied and a class of propertyless, he draws the conclusion that those who achieved property were the “industrious and rational” and that those who did not were “the quarrelsome and contentious” (1980:21–22, Macpherson 1962). What this in fact reveals is that Locke does not have a truly moral perspective at all but restricts himself to the position of the abstract ego. He takes no account of people's beginning points, of the inherited advantages or disadvantages they received, their given qualities and conditions, and the capacity to cultivate these. In abstraction from all this, he nevertheless makes the spurious moral judgment that where people end up is an indication of what they really deserve. But it is only by seeing everything from the standpoint of the abstract ego and eclipsing the larger reality of individuals that he can make such a problematic conclusion.

A genuine morality, as Hegel construes it here, takes into account the person's total situation—her embodied reality—and not just her abstract capacity for right, and judges in terms of that total reality. What this larger view of morality reveals is just how meaningless abstract rights are if they do not take into account the embodied status of the person. Thus, for example, if I must steal in order to eat, this cannot reasonably be considered an ordinary theft. The confrontation with a case of distress reveals just how meaningless rights are as an expression of will if the finite individuals who embody that will do not have a basic livelihood, a basic physical capacity to exercise those

rights. The expression of the truth of the will in rights first *depends* on there being a life. Hence “[t]o refuse to allow a man in jeopardy of his life to take such steps for self-preservation would be to stigmatize him as without rights” (§127A). This also must be considered, and it is the perspective of morality, rather than the perspective of abstract right, that allows us to do it.

Hegel’s argument for a right of distress in terms of the embodied reality of the moral self is significant for us here because it sets the basic logical groundwork for his subsequent argument for a welfare state. In the complete institutional context of a society based on property relations and a division of labor, which Hegel will subsequently depict in his “Ethical Life,” and the development of rich and poor that emerges from this, poverty and socio-economic inequality more generally will become a basic feature of the environment within which people exist. The perspective of morality, or the understanding of the larger reality of the self, thus provides us with the conceptual arsenal with which to address the larger reality we will face there.

As I have said earlier, however, by itself such logical argument is not enough for individuals to transcend the narrow perspective of abstract right. In actual life, what Hegel relies on is the actual recognition by individuals of their own and others’ imbeddedness in finitude, of their own vulnerability. And it is love that constitutes this recognition or that makes it possible. For love *is* the knowledge of the unity of reason and body, of self and other, of an infinite principle that exists in the realm of the finite. While the perspective of abstract right cannot take into account this larger truth, the experience of love can and does provide the foundation by which we can absorb it. It is thus love that allows us, at the level of intuition, to feel the connection to others who are in a situation of poverty and distress, to feel our commonality with them, and to see the injustices of a system that creates such inequality. And it is Hegel’s concept of ‘morality’ and the arguments found therein that help us to justify the response of love. It is not by getting individuals to read Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* that neoconservatism will be overcome. Philosophy only bolsters a deeper moral experience and the actions and policies that flow from it; it cannot substitute for the experience itself.

The Experience of the Right of Conscience and the Argument for It

Hegel’s argument for a right of conscience is developed from his previous arguments that a moral will must logically pursue an idea of the good that includes the good of others, that moral selves are rationally self-determining and must be allowed to determine for themselves what the good is, and that Kant’s categorical imperative is empty, and it is only by turning to their own individual being that individuals can make a judgment on the good. We must

briefly recount these arguments here in order to comprehend how Hegel logically arrives at the right of conscience.

The rights of the moral self emanate from the essential notion of it as a finite self who is self-reflective, who can determine itself in a thoughtful and purposeful way, rather than just being driven by desires and instincts. Hence it contains the right to be recognized as having purposes and to be judged in terms of the intention behind its actions. From the notion that this is a purposeful will, who acts according to ideas, we derive the idea that the moral or self-reflective will is ultimately acting toward its own happiness, which is a general concept that includes its more specific purposes. The pursuit of happiness as an essential aspect of the moral will then entails the recognition of a right to pursue its own welfare. But the recognition of the right of the moral will to pursue its own welfare logically binds it in an obligation to pursue the welfare of others. For welfare is not something that belongs only to the individual as a singular will. On the contrary, it is a universal category, a general idea of happiness or satisfaction that must apply to all. We are dealing here with a will that understands itself as universal and hence that cannot restrict the realization of its truth (its welfare) only to its own self. Rather the discovery that it realizes its truth in terms of the notion of welfare must entail the furthering of welfare generally, and this is reflected in utilitarian theories.

Hegel here recognizes the truth in utilitarian theories, that welfare is a category that must be respected. But he refuses to give it the absolute status that they accord it. For welfare only emerges under the notion of the individual as free and self-determining in the first place. Thus it emerges as attached to the notion of abstract right. Without an idea of individuals as rights bearers, it is not clear why we should care about their welfare at all. Hence the concept of 'welfare' must be *balanced* against the concept of 'rights.' Neither can take priority or be absolute. What this means, for example, is that welfare cannot always be singled out to justify the violation of property rights, such as in the appropriation of land and houses to build a freeway. And property rights must similarly be limited, as in taxation for a welfare state or regulations about the treatment and payment of workers, in order to respect the principle of welfare.

The inseparability of right and welfare, for Hegel, is captured in the notion that the moral will must pursue 'the good,' a larger concept that contains both right and utility and seeks to balance them. The obligation of the moral will to pursue the good is, according to Hegel, paired with its right to decide for itself what the good is, to make a judgment—the "right of insight" (§132). This right of insight is implied because the idea of the good as an end that the moral will must pursue is bound up with the very character of the will as self-determining according to its own rationality. If an idea of the good were to be imposed on it from outside, this would go against the central characteristic of the moral will.

The problem of determining what the good is in any one instance finds its solution for Hegel in conscience. He rejects Kant's notion of specifying the good by means of the moral law as "an empty formalism" that ends up justifying any content at all (§135R). Rather it is conscience, the grasping onto a certainty found within one's own individual being and acting according to that, which succeeds in willing according to an idea of the good. Thus, the right of conscience is the ultimate culmination of a moral will that must act in a self-determining way.

Phenomenologically, we have examined the figure of conscience in chapter 2 in the discussion of conscience. This is the figure who is convinced of its own moral truth as a universal truth and who actualizes that truth in the world in action, judgment, and forgiveness. Hegel here in *Philosophy of Right* is affirming *philosophically* the conviction that conscience has, that it contains within itself the universal, the objective good (PR §140). But while in *Phenomenology*, at the level of experience, the substance of what is realized in the world remains mysterious, in *Philosophy of Right* it becomes clearly concretized. For it is precisely the principles demonstrated according to the logical unfolding of the notion of will that constitute this content. These are the will's implicitly universal contents, which, in the unfolding of the will, become concrete. Up to now these principles include the right to private property, the necessity of punishment, the right to an impartial judge, the rights of self-determination—including the right to be responsible only for what is rationally intended, the right to pursue one's own happiness or welfare, the obligation toward the welfare of others, balanced by the requirement to respect the rights of others and to enjoy that care and respect in return, and finally the right of conscience itself as something held by all individuals in the society.

Thus the actual *experience* of conscience as containing the good within itself, and as having that good recognized in the experience of forgiveness, *here receives its philosophical vindication*. The knowledge of love—in the experience of forgiveness—is *objectified in a manner accessible to reason* as the very substance of the will that is unfolded in *Philosophy of Right*. There is perhaps no other moment that so clearly demonstrates the two levels at play in Hegel's philosophy as these parallel discussions of conscience in *Phenomenology* and *Philosophy of Right*. All of the rights for which Hegel seeks to make an argument in *Philosophy of Right* ultimately presuppose—at the level of experience—the recognition among selves that is found in the moment of forgiveness, a recognition that relies on the knowledge of love. This experiential basis is essential to the enshrinement and the enforcement of rights to private property and the rights of the moral self. And in explicating the implicitly rational basis of such recognition, in showing retrospectively that what is recognized is essentially rational, Hegel is providing for the satisfaction of a skeptical reasoning that might seek to spurn the very experience of mutual recognition.

The Experience of the Right of Objectivity and the Argument for It

The experience of love is not only at the basis of the rights for which Hegel argues in *Philosophy of Right*; it is also at the basis of his argument that the right of conscience—the ultimate right of subjectivity—is not absolute but must be limited by the right of objectivity or the right of actually existing laws and institutions that instantiate the good. In *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel argues that the right of conscience must be limited because conscience is inherently fallible. While it does indeed contain the good within itself implicitly, it comes to its idea of what is good subjectively by grasping onto a found conviction within its own individual being. In so doing, it may actually be willing against the universal or willing evil (PR §140). The mere assertion by conscience that it is willing the good is not enough; it is simply too subjective.

We saw this limitation expressed at the level of experience in the need of the individualistic figure of conscience to find recognition for its own idea of the good. It acts in the world partly in order to achieve this recognition, to overcome its own subjectivist standpoint. And it is in the experience of forgiveness, the mutual recognition by the two selves of a universal that binds them together, that it achieves this overcoming. It is a recognition that takes place in the form of love.

In *Philosophy of Right* this experience of overcoming, of transcending the subjectivist standpoint of conscience, is *mirrored* in the logical transition from conscience to ethical life. Because of its subjectivist standpoint and its possibility for evil, it must be admitted that the right of conscience needs to be limited by the truth of an actual, objective good. What this objective good is we have seen already. It is the rational content of the will that Hegel “deduces” from the notion of will (PR §138A); it includes the very rights we have already examined. Conscience does not have the right to violate these fundamental principles, principles that indeed contain the essential truth of its own self.

Ultimately, for Hegel, what is good and right, what can be rationally vindicated according to the notion of the will, is understood to be actualized in history—in valid laws and institutions. What is truly rational should logically become actual (although in fact, since it depends on conscience, it might not, as shall be discussed later). Philosophy validates these laws and institutions by showing their necessity, and a conscience that adheres to these does so because it finds in them the expression of its deepest truth—the truth of an objective good to which it feels bound. Hegel’s idea of “ethical life” is the logical expression of this higher truth, of a conscience that is limited by laws that have been actualized in history and proven valid by philosophy. His idea of ethical life thus presupposes a society that has recognized and instituted the good, in and through the activities of individual willing, a society that on the one hand

expresses the objective truth of conscience and on the other hand limits the right of conscience to depart from this good.

The transcendence of self that is achieved in forgiveness is thus logically captured in the transcendence of the standpoint of conscience, in favor of the larger notion of ethical life. Hegel defines ethical life as “the truth both of subjectivity and right . . . a subjective disposition, but one imbued with what is inherently right” (§141R). Or in another formulation, it is “the good endowed in self-consciousness with knowing and willing and actualized by self-conscious action” (§142). It is “the concept of freedom developed in the existing world and the nature of self-consciousness” (§142). While on the one hand the objectification of the universal in the laws and institutions of the modern community means that they stand over against the individual as something alien, on the other hand they are not alien, for “his spirit bears witness to them as to its own essence” (§147). In relation to them the individual “lives as in his own element which is not distinguished from himself” (§147). “[T]he ethical order is the actual living soul of self-consciousness” (§147R).

What all of this means is that the moral self, in its culmination as conscience, logically requires a political community that embodies its objective truth and with which it is in harmony. Just as, in the experience of forgiveness, conscience *feels* its indebtedness to something larger than itself, so here the experience is logically captured in the idea that conscience, on its own, cannot validate its truth. For this to happen requires the recognition of others in a political community where the knowledge of conscience can be enshrined as right and be vindicated by philosophy. A community of moral individuals will always feel the inadequacy of a society that does not recognize their truth. While there may be points in history where the world does not reflect the objective good, where laws and institutions are fundamentally corrupted, and where individuals must retreat into their own selves to find the good (§138R), the urge of the moral self is to find its truth actualized and vindicated in the world around it. It is in this sense that Hegel understands ethical life to be a higher standpoint than morality. And this is not because he abandons the right of moral conscience but because he recognizes the right of objectivity—the requirement that a moral principle be proven in the world.¹¹ The idea of a moral will thus logically points beyond itself, to the idea of a political community that embodies the truth of that moral self. Thus, once again, does Hegel seek to vindicate the experience by which the objective good is actualized in the world.

The Institutions of Ethical Life and the Arguments for These

The idea of ethical life as a community in harmony with individual conscience entails, more concretely, particular institutions that enshrine and perpetuate

the principles of right we have already examined. As such, these institutions not only reflect principles of conscience and clarify what the concrete substance of the will is for Hegel; they also provide the environment within which conscience is developed to accord with the good. They attain their justification partly as educative institutions that reflect and foster the good in the subjective lives of individuals. In examining these, we will thus be looking not only at the logical arguments he makes for them, but more essentially at how they *provide for* and *cultivate* the knowledge of love that we have been referring to all along.

The Family. To some extent, Hegel's actual argument for the institution of the family can be found in the logical transition from conscience to ethical life. The idea of ethical life reflectively captures the necessity that conscience acknowledge itself as part of a larger, moral community. The family is an actual institution that can be seen to instantiate the idea of harmony that ethical life connotes. This is because the essential feature of the family is the experience of love, that individuals conceive themselves not as separate individuals but as "members" of a larger whole. In a true experience of love, neither the child nor the marriage partners find the institution of the family to be an alien imposition; rather they experience a harmony therewith. Thus, love is the first experience of the ethical idea in the life of the individual, the first experience of the unity of the subject with an objective institution (§158).

However, as a found institution that embodies the experience of love, this justification of the family remains inadequate. The knowledge that vindicates it at this point in the argument is the knowledge of love experienced by the members themselves, in conjunction with the actual existence of the family as an institution recognized by the society. But love is a subjective experience, and historical recognition is ultimately something different from philosophical vindication. Thus already, in this manifestation of ethical life, there is an inadequacy. The very reflective rationality that plagued love in "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate" is present here also. For while love may achieve objectification in the marriage ceremony, in family capital, and in children, it still leaves outside itself the entire realm of reflective rationality and the world of private property relations that emanate from this rationality—the world of civil society.

We know already that Hegel gives too much credence to the claims of reflective rationality to accept the family as any ultimate embodiment of ethical life. Any such ultimate unity must include the claims of this reason. Indeed it is to the very addressing of these claims, as I have argued, that the text of *Philosophy of Right* is devoted. On the one hand, this means that the true vindication of the experience of love, and thus the institution of the family wherein love is located, still awaits us. On the other hand, it means that, in

the actual life of the individual, the claims of reflective rationality must be given their due. From this, a number of things follow.

First, Hegel is not only making an argument for the family, an argument that still requires its ultimate vindication, he is making an argument for the *nuclear* family as an essential institution in the modern order. This is because any modern order must accommodate the principle of reflective rationality, the principle that underlies the very right of subjectivity. And for this, individuals must be educated to “freedom of personality” (§175). That is, they must be educated to abstract from their immediate impulses and to think for themselves. But this very education itself points to the undermining of the prereflective unity of love. As we saw in chapter 1, the very act of reflection disrupts the unity; individuals begin to look at themselves as separate, with their own ideas and interests that are not necessarily shared with the family. Extended families operate on the principle that individuals remain identified with the family, that they do not develop separate interests and desires that might disrupt the harmony. Thus in a society that embodies the modern principle of freedom, the extended family must ultimately fragment into a plurality of nuclear families. Not only must the family be nuclear, but one of the chief functions of this family must be to educate the child to this standpoint of freedom, to the point where he will leave his own family of origin.¹²

Second, the need to accommodate reflective rationality leads to Hegel’s argument for the sphere of civil society—a sphere where individuals can express themselves from the standpoint of reflective rationality, according to the idea of themselves as separate, with their own desires and interests. In order to do justice to the subjectivity within themselves, to their own reflective reasoning, individuals must go forth into this realm and seek to make their own way.

Yet the argument that the nuclear family must educate the child to reflective freedom is only one side of Hegel’s justification for this institution. The other side is that the family, in providing for the experience of love, lays the essential, experiential basis for the fully developed moral being.

Here, what we have been arguing about, the source of the modern will in Hegel’s thought becomes explicit. As he himself says, besides its “negative” function of educating the individual to the standpoint of reflective rationality, the family also has the positive task “of instilling ethical principles into him in the form of an immediate feeling for which differences are not yet explicit,” (§175). This means that ethical behavior is instilled in the child within a context of “love, trust, and obedience” so that she is habituated to such behavior without having it rationally justified to her (§175). These principles form “the foundation of an ethical life,” (§175), says Hegel. And what this signifies is that, while the individual comes to separate herself from the immediate bond with the family, and to think of herself as an individual, she nevertheless still

carries that love and the ethical principles instilled through that love, forward into civil society. It is through her activities in civil society that she will have to rationally explicate the ethical principles instilled within her. In the words of Hegel, the differences that are not explicit in these principles, their rational justification, must be made explicit; otherwise, the principle must be rejected by the individual. The very basis of ethical autonomy is found in this early childhood education. It is the “foundation” that the individual elaborates and vindicates in his life.

Once again, then, love does not so much disappear as it does become implicit—the implicit basis of the individual in civil society. While the movement through civil society appears, in the presentation of *Philosophy of Right*, to be purely logical, it ultimately relies on the experience of love and is in fact an elaboration and vindication of that principle of love in the life of the individual. Love is the very *seed* of the movement forward.

What should become apparent here is that the whole history of disciplining that phenomenological consciousness went through in order to reestablish its deeper truth, in the modern ethical order is to be achieved within the life cycle of the individual. In the family, the negative side of education is discipline toward “freedom of personality” or reflective rationality. With this, the individual comes no longer merely to dwell in the harmony of love but is separated from it. It is not that the child stops loving the family, but that she feels the division that has emerged within her. This is a parallel development to *Phenomenology*. There, it was the eruption of the principle of personality that broke up the immediate unity of Greek ethical life and that subsequently tore apart the Christian community of love. However, just as the Christian consciousness found that it had merely become estranged from the knowledge of love, and that love was ultimately the basis of its own true willing, so the child becomes separated from the immediacy of the bond of love but carries it within her still, as “the foundation of an ethical life” (§175). The individual is implicitly driven forward on this journey by the *feeling* of unity she has experienced in the family—the spiritual self-consciousness of love—even though she herself is not conscious of this. And just as with conscience, where the knowledge of love must be understood to be developed and objectified in a rationally necessary manner, in order to satisfy reflective rationality, so the child educated to independence must come to terms with her own true substance by expressing it in the social and political world and finding it reflected and rationally upheld there.¹³

One cannot, then, underestimate the significance of the family in laying the experiential foundation of the modern ethical life. For without the experience of love, there is no drive forward in civil society; there is no hope that the extreme individualism that characterizes the reflective standpoint can be transcended. Indeed, if the progress toward identification that Hegel depicts

in civil society could be achieved purely through reflective reasoning, it is not clear why he would place such emphasis on the family at all. It is not clear why the family would be needed, other than as an inferior form of ethical life, one that takes place at the level of feeling. But Hegel does put his discussion of the family here, prior to the depiction of civil society, and I believe this is because he is making explicit the implicit foundation of the will—the knowledge of love.

The Institutions of Civil Society. The institutions of civil society are really a recognition or enshrining of some of the rights we have already examined—the right to private property or to individual expression separate from the community, which we see in Hegel’s argument for a free market or “system of needs” and the rights of the moral self, which we see objectified here partially in the system of administration of justice, and partially in the various measures composing Hegel’s welfare state. We have already covered in essence the logic of some of the principles involved here. We have also examined what I believe to be the implicit role of love in an individual’s coming to embrace these principles—how the recognition of property rights presupposes a prior conviction of the infinite value of the individual, a conviction achieved through love, and how the recognition of a right of distress, here expressed in Hegel’s welfare state measures, depends on a confrontation with our common vulnerability, our condition as embodied beings, which is also known initially through love. What we are further encountering in this section is the way in which the institutions of civil society constitute an environment within which the knowledge of unity can be rationally elaborated and developed in the everyday life of the individual, so that every aspect of our being comes to accord with the universal. We are encountering the social context within which the moral development of the individual is envisioned.

There are three primary institutions that give explicit expression to the unity that implicitly unites individuals in civil society and that are meant to provide an environment in which a cultivation of this knowledge can come about in the life of the individual: (1) the administration of justice; (2) the welfare state; and (3) class organization and representation (the corporation and the estates). The administration of justice enshrines and cultivates the knowledge of abstract right, the idea of a common humanity that unites us at the level of the abstract ego and that is implicitly behind the functioning of the market or the “system of needs” (209). The codification of laws, publicity of cases, and trial by jury all help citizens to come to a rational understanding of and commitment to the universal principle behind right. The welfare state measures that Hegel articulates to try to address the problems of inequality that emerge from a system of private property rights gives expression to another aspect of our unity—the fact that we are all mortal, embodied crea-

tures, subject to chance in terms of where we are born and to whom, what kinds of talents and weaknesses we inherit, how vulnerable we might be in the marketplace, and so on. Hence these institutions give expression to *and cultivate* a rational knowledge of our unity both as abstract, thinking selves and as finite, vulnerable, natural selves.

I do not wish to go again into the detailed justifications that Hegel makes for these institutions. Readers can consult the text itself, as well as other commentaries on it, in order to see the specific nature of the market that he envisions, the system of administration of justice, and the precise measures of the welfare state that he articulates. Nor do I wish to repeat my arguments about how the movements toward unity that we see in civil society presuppose, at the level of individual existence, the knowledge of love. What I would like to do is to examine his argument for a class structure, which we have not encountered before and which helps us to understand how a more extensive experience of unity is developed in the sphere of civil society, one that comes closer to recapturing the richness of love but that incorporates the reason and will that have previously been hostile to love.

Class organization elaborates the knowledge of our unity at the level of nature in a more developed way than does the welfare state—by individuals choosing and working on their desires, interests, and talents in order to accord with a particular sector of the society and coming to an awareness of their unity of interest with that sector. Thus, participation in a class involves not just the awareness that we are finite creatures, the way that the welfare state does, but the active working on and training of our given natures to accord with a particular vocation and lifestyle. This is not of course the initial motivation toward class differentiation. Rather individuals choose a vocation because they must, in order to make a living and meet their needs. But in doing so they implicitly acquire a relationship to others: they must fit themselves into the system of needs; they must acquire the skills necessary to do their job; and they put themselves alongside others who perform a similar function in the economy and who represent similar interests. Thus participation in a class is a natural, organic development in the life of the individual, according to Hegel. It is a cultivation of the natural self—the self that initially appears to be characterized by pure idiosyncrasy—toward a unity with others.

What we have in the choice of a class, however, is not just an abstract willing but a willing that takes into account some essential and interdependent determining factors—namely, one's cultural and class background and one's natural talents and abilities. When Hegel says that the essential, determining factor in what class one ends up in is the will (206), he is not ignoring the sociological factors that would push one into one job or vocation

rather than another. Instead, what I think he is suggesting is that one must self-consciously embrace what one has been given in terms of both one's natural abilities and one's family background. Family background means that there is already a basis of unity with others—in class, ethnicity, and so on. This does not mean that one must follow in one's father's footsteps. It does mean that one has certain ethical obligations to one's origins and that this should influence one's vocational pathway. The liberal notion that one can be anything, that one can climb the social ladder, not only accepts a false hierarchy that views some jobs as more essential than others, namely, those that get the most prestige and money in a capitalist society; it also denies the background of one's choices. It denies the *nature* of who one is and the capacity to build a larger sense of unity upon that nature.

Class is thus the most essential aspect of our identity, for Hegel. Class is meant to supercede and yet incorporate other facets of our identity that have in fact become more prevalent in contemporary existence—ethnicity, language, gender, and religion. He did not believe class would be subject to the same divisiveness as these other bases of identity for two reasons. One, it does not rest on the unreflective embracing of ascriptive characteristics of the self but is a self-conscious embracing and development of these and thus constitutes a truly rational articulation of our natural and social differences. And two, he believed that class divisions are ultimately organic in nature and that together the three classes—agricultural, business, and universal—form a fully functioning whole wherein all essential needs could be met and wherein each class is as integral as the others.

Hegel did not seem to have envisioned the reduction in the size of the agricultural class or its increased involvement with technology and a technological relationship to nature (essentially its absorption into the business class). Nor did he believe that the business class must inevitably be polarized into the separate interests of owners and workers. Instead he believed that there was an implicit identity of interest uniting workers and owners. This identity was to find its articulation in “the corporation.” And the corporation was to provide the environment within which the consciousness of this common interest—class consciousness—was to be achieved.

Hegel's corporation was to organize the division of labor within the business class so that while an individual went about trying to make a living, he ended up doing so as a member of a corporation. According to Heiman (1971:125), Hegel's idea of the corporation referred to “legally recognized, state-sanctioned organizations derived from the usual trade and vocational groupings within the community” and found its basis of recognition in extant aspects of Roman law that recognize groups as legal persons. Its function was to be quite encompassing in the life of the individual, acting as “a second family” in the realm of civil society in that it attends more closely to the particu-

lar needs of its members than the remote “general authority” can (do) (PR §252). The corporation was to promote its own interest in civil society by recruiting the members it needed to function, by protecting members “against particular contingencies,” and by providing “education requisite to fit others to become members,” as in job-training or apprenticeship (§252). Members would receive job security, a stable income, and recognition for their skill and contribution to the whole.

Scholars have rightly pointed to the corporation as constituting Hegel’s real solution to the problems generated by a society dedicated to the principles of the free market (e.g., Houlgate 1992, Walton 1984). The corporation is truly where “particular welfare is present as a right and is actualized” in the life of the individual who is a member of the business class (§255). That is, beyond the actualization of “abstract rights” through the administration of justice and beyond the impersonal system of welfare provided by the state, the corporation was truly to take responsibility for the individual in terms of her particular, embodied needs.

But beyond its role in meeting particular needs, the corporation was also to embody a limited common good in the life of the society as a whole. For it was to meet a genuine category of need with what it produced. Thus members of the corporation would not only realize their physical needs in this role; they would also gain recognition for their contribution to what the corporation realizes in the larger whole. This *status* would liberate the individual from the condition of “mere self-seeking” and from the need “to try to gain recognition for himself by giving external proofs of success” (§253R). That is, the individual would gain an ethical identity and become committed to the limited common good to which she contributes. The desperate pursuit of wealth is the sign of an individual who has no class, who has no sense of contributing to a larger whole and receiving recognition therein.

Thus through the corporation, and class more generally, Hegel envisioned an environment in which rights would be protected and realized, while at the same time individuals would be cultivated toward a more developed unity with the whole, a unity that includes the whole of their natural and cultural selves. But the unity implied by class consciousness is still in itself too limited. For the good of the class with which the individual is to identify is a limited good, which must be balanced against the rights and the needs of the other classes in order to realize a truly common good. It is in Hegel’s idea of the “estates,” or his idea for a corporatist political structure, that this inadequacy is to be overcome. The “estates” are the classes in their political identity. Hegel is advocating a corporate structure to the legislature based on class identity. One would be represented not as an individual, in all of one’s differences and idiosyncrasies, but in terms of one’s already articulated identity as a member of a class. For this is the true identity, wherein

one's interests are truly found, according to Hegel, and not in one's natural, given passions and interests.

In this corporatist system, each class is to delegate representatives to speak in their interest at the state level. In the business class this would happen through the corporations, which would represent the major sectors of manufacturing, trade, and commerce. The coming together of the classes in this political context is essential to the expression of a true general will. Here no one sector is allowed to dominate, but each plays a part in the articulation of the general good, and each ultimately subordinates itself to the larger good which includes but transcends their own.

For an individual who has gained class consciousness, or the knowledge of her unity with her class, the expression of that interest at the political level and its place in the articulation of a more general common good provides for the final and ultimate experience of unity in the life of the individual. Through either participating herself or witnessing the deliberations involved in the articulation of the higher good, she comes to identify herself with that good. She transcends the parochialism of class.

The Experience of Patriotism and How It Differs from Love

What we see throughout the entire section on civil society is the means by which a knowledge of unity with other members of society is cultivated in every aspect of the individual's being—in his entire natural and social being and his rational understanding. The most developed expression of this unity, at the level of subjective experience, is "patriotism." This is the experience of identifying the ends and goals of the community as one's own, as the ultimate expression of one's freedom. This is no sudden and ultimate movement but happens gradually, through the educative influences of the institutions we have examined.

Hegel defines patriotism as "assured conviction with truth as its basis . . . and a volition which has become habitual" (§268). The individual acts consciously and yet spontaneously, on a day-to-day basis, according to the rational ideals and principles of her community. She does not feel this to be in conflict with her own particular interests; the relationship to the community is no longer experienced as a duty or an obligation. Rather, the individual adheres from a unity of mind and body.

Whereas love is a knowledge of unity at the level of feeling and only with one's family, in the unity that develops through the journey of civil society, and that reaches its full development in patriotism, there is a knowledge of one's unity with the entire political community. Furthermore, this latter unity incorporates the principle of reflective rationality and the expression of individualistic desires that are left out of the family. It comes to harmonize these desires

with the rational principles of the state. Hence every aspect of the individual's being is elevated to accord with the knowledge of the universal. The unity we encounter here is a much more developed and complete unity than we had with love.

Thus the notion of patriotism that Hegel outlines in *Philosophy of Right* does indeed take us beyond the experience of love and forgiveness, in terms of elaborating the unity of self and world and in terms of the involvement of reason in developing this unity. For the experience of unity achieved in love is momentary—"a bare condition or single experience" (LPR 194/3:334). The same thing is true for the experience of the *unio mystica*, "the self-feeling of God, the feeling of God's immediate presence within the subject," which he sees as the ultimate achievement of religious training and practice (LPR 479:5/260). Both are moments of transcendence in the individual's life, after which she lapses back into ordinary, mundane, secular existence. The difference of patriotism is that this harmony with the Absolute becomes thoroughly elaborated in the process of the individual's life so that the entirety of her being is elevated to the good and the true. One's particular, subjective personality, the passions and inclinations, which in love achieve a momentary, spontaneous harmony with the universal, in ethical life are disciplined and educated to achieve that harmony in a stable and predictable fashion. Ethical life is the experience of the Absolute in our everyday lives. It is because of this that Hegel says that "ethical life is the most genuine cultus" (LPR 194/3:334).¹⁴ It is the practices and training of ethical life that elevate us, in our subjective particularity, to a knowledge of the Absolute.

The essential substance of the knowledge at both the level of the state and the family *is* identical—the knowledge that we are in fact part of a bigger whole, a whole in which reason and nature are in harmony. What the journey through civil society has done is to incorporate the whole realm of reflective thought—and the expression of differences bound up with this—into that knowledge of unity so that these no longer stand outside and pose a threat, the way that they had done with the unity of the family or the unity achieved in forgiveness. Indeed, we might say that Hegel's civil society and the state are the arena wherein we have the elaboration of the experience of love, in and through reflective thought and the will. This is what Hegel means when he says that religion is at the foundation of the state.¹⁵ In ethical life this foundation, this "in-itself," the substance and true source of the will, becomes "for itself." No longer a momentary intuition, it becomes elaborated in the fullness of secular existence and in reflecting out of that existence this prephilosophical truth is most explicitly affirmed.¹⁶

The more developed unity that we find in patriotism thus not only vindicates the initial experience of love, an experience that was apparently at odds with, and threatened by, reflective reasoning. Beyond this, in his notion

of ethical life as a “genuine cultus,” as the practices by which we are elevated, in our entire sensuous being, to a knowledge of and commitment to the good, Hegel is also articulating a truly modern spirituality. Individuals in whom the principle of reflective thought has become ascendent—modern individuals—are the individuals most in danger of nihilism, most in need of cultic practice. And yet it is these individuals for whom traditional religious practice is unavailable. Hegel’s ethical life is the arena of cultic practice for precisely such an individual and is meant to accommodate the reality of reflective rationality in the modern subjectivity and to overcome its most destructive consequences. It is meant to be a preservation and *development* of the knowledge of love.

But if we never ultimately reach this end point, if this higher ideal of unity is not achieved, if individuals do not “pass over of their own accord into the interest of the universal” (260), what does this signify for Hegel’s whole notion of the will? What does it signify for the whole idea that individuals have an infinite principle within them that implicitly unites them with others, that they can will this truth in the world, and that the world can come to recognize and embody this truth in rational, secular institutions? Indeed, such a historical failure is potentially *devastating*. For in the understanding given here, the very presupposition of the will with which *Philosophy of Right* begins is only ultimately vindicated through the historical establishment of Hegel’s state, including the subjective experience of patriotism. It is only through the expression of the inner knowledge of unity in laws and institutions that the former can be established as rational, and only through the harmony achieved between individual and ethical world that love can finally be vindicated. But if this unity is not realized, if the rift between self and world is not overcome in a manner that satisfies reflective rationality, then this whole notion of the will remains a mere prejudice. It is thus to the crucial question of the realization of ethical life in history that we must now turn our attention.

APPENDIX: HEGEL AND THE WOMAN QUESTION

While Hegel does identify women with emotional knowledge and as the keepers of that knowledge in the family and men with abstract reasoning and with the expression of reason in the public sphere, the view of Hegel that I am promoting here makes it clear that Hegel never meant to keep these two principles inviolably separate. Indeed, as I have tried to argue, the expression of reason and will in the public sphere must in fact be informed by the knowledge of love if we are to see any moral progress. Conversely, as Carole Pateman has noted (1996), the very capacity to choose a partner and to enter into the marriage contract, or to cultivate the bond of love, presupposes the prin-

ciple of personality, a fact that puts Hegel's own views on women into contradiction with his views on marriage. Thus substance and subject, love and will, can and do coexist within a single subject.

In viewing women as incapable of reflective reasoning, Hegel shows himself to be merely bound by the prejudices of his own times. But history has proven him wrong on this point, for women have historically asserted and substantiated their equal capacity for reason and their right to participate in the public sphere. Hence, if he were alive today, Hegel would have to recognize the principle of will and reflective reasoning as operative also in women.

There is a danger that the principle of love that Hegel sees as so foundational to the modern subjectivity can be eclipsed in the embracing of the modern principle of abstract reasoning, and this is where the feminist concern with loss is a genuine one. But as I discuss in chapter 4, this is a danger that Hegel himself was aware of and that his philosophy sought to help prevent. Furthermore, as I discuss in the conclusion to this work, in his attention to the importance of love, and to the role of traditional women in cultivating love, Hegel's philosophy in fact has progressive implications for contemporary women and the family.

4

The Historical “Failure” of Ethical Life

A View from within Hegel

THE HISTORICAL “FAILURE” OF ETHICAL LIFE: THE SPLIT BETWEEN LOVE AND THE WILL

IF HEGEL'S ETHICAL LIFE is meant to describe an arena of deeper moral edification and unity in the life of the modern, secular individual, an elaboration of the knowledge of love at the level of the political, in a manner that can be reconciled with reflective thought and individual freedom, then we must ask what has happened historically to such an existence. For surely Hegel's ethical life, conceived in this sense, has attained only a partial materialization. And we can see this partiality quite clearly at both the level of subjective experience and at the level of objective institutional structures.

The Subjective Level

At the level of subjective experience, of conscience, conviction, and political culture generally, it seems reasonable to suggest that most individuals in Western, liberal democracies have attained a certain level of moral consciousness as Hegel describes it in his discussion of civil society. There is a powerful commitment to the principles of abstract right, the rights of the individual to private property, to choice of their own vocation, to make their way in what Hegel calls the “system of needs” through the power of their own decision. And this is a commitment that individuals hold not only for themselves, out of mere self-interest, but as a strongly held conviction on the basis of all individuals as equal rights bearers. Alongside this is the tremendous respect for and commitment to a system of justice that will safeguard such rights for all.

Beyond this, and in spite of current attacks from the right, there remains a widespread recognition of the need for a welfare state of some sort to prevent individuals from falling into conditions of abject poverty. Thus to a certain point at least we can see the attachment to particular moral principles in the consciousness of the citizens of contemporary Western, liberal democracies.

In spite of what might be seen as a partial realization of Hegelian ethical life at the subjective level, however, the development of modern society has stopped short of Hegel's ideal of unity. Hegel had anticipated that individuals would, in and through the expression of self-interest in the system of needs and the institutions that govern it, gradually come to transcend their individualistic standpoint and develop a deeper sense of how their fates are bound to one another. Historically, however, where individuals feel secure in the preservation of their abstract rights to pursue their own interests, there tends to be an excessive focus on the private and the particular as the chief truth and reality of the individual, rather than on the interests of the community as a whole. The public realm tends to be seen as an arena wherein the fundamentally competitive interests of groups and individuals are played out. Indeed, the very notion of a *common* interest that could unite individuals and transcend the merely private realm seems foreign to the consciousness of many. This has been the chief concern of republican and communitarian critics of liberal culture and thinking.

The swing to the right in so many liberal democratic countries can be seen partly as a symptom of this atomistic way of thinking, a viewing of things according to the idea of individuals as separate and self-interested and in terms of the abstract conception of right rather than in terms of welfare or in terms of a larger notion of the common good. Concomitant with this has been the increasingly prevalent notion that contributing to the community as a whole entails doing "charity work."

There does remain a widespread commitment to the idea of finding one's vocation, which for Hegel implicitly puts one into a class identity that constitutes the essential basis for transcendence of the merely private. But vocation tends to remain an individualistic conception that does not entail any moral and political obligations toward one's fellows. Furthermore, for much of the working class, work continues to be a dehumanizing activity rather than a source of self-realization. Nor does this reality, in North America at least, seem to foster a working-class consciousness. Most individuals tend to remain focused on their own selfish situation and regard their true existence, as Marx suggested one hundred fifty years ago, as outside their working hours (Marx 1978:74). The difficulties of securing meaningful employment, where they might gain an ethical identity, a sense of contributing in any way to a larger good, means that individuals are indeed reduced to "mere self-seeking" and to trying to gain an identity through the pursuit of material goods (PR \$253R).

While much attention has been paid to "new social movements," and while this has expanded our understanding of how individuals are participating in public life, the extent of participation in these movements is still limited to a relative few. The great mass of the population still leads a largely privatized existence, with little sense of how they might contribute to the decisions affecting their lives.

In addition to this is the disturbing conformism that characterizes so much of the citizenry in North America. Hegel had envisioned, in his concept of 'mediating institutions' and his corporatist structure of representation, a public realm founded on the lively influence of conscience and conviction. In this absence of this, a major integrating force has become a "disciplinary reason" that we exercise in relationship to our own selves and lives (Foucault 1979). Individuals determine their own lives, in this view, not by deeply felt moral convictions but by internalizing the objectifying gaze of instrumental rationality, in relationship to their own bodies, actions, and emotions. The effect of this, besides the extreme efficiencies of these well-disciplined countries, is the extraordinary integration of so many individuals in North America, their failure even to feel or to be conscious of a fundamental lack in their lives.¹

Perhaps in the face of the alienating effects of the public realm, it is to the family and to romantic relationships that individuals continue to turn as the arena for a deeper, more satisfying sense of unity. For Hegel, the chief function of the family was to lay the foundation of ethical life, in the experience of love, the experience of oneself as part of a bigger unity. Today, the family and intimate relationships more generally continue to be of great moral significance, having deep roots in the modern identity (Taylor 1991:ch.5). The nuclear family continues to sustain itself, particularly as the arena for raising children in an environment of love. But even here we see limitations in the realization of Hegel's vision. The logic of civil society, the competitive struggle for recognition that pits individuals against one another, has clearly become capable of invading the familial realm and disrupting the bond of love. Divorce rates and the expansion of the psychotherapy industry are just two phenomena that testify to the fact that the family often proves inadequate in providing individuals with the basic experience of loving and being loved.

To the extent that love cannot find an adequate outlet in family or in public existence, it seems likely that the erotic impulse has gone underground. The fact that the notion of the unconscious emerged as such a discussed phenomenon only in the twentieth century is no mere accident. The stripping of ordinary existence of any deeper erotic impulse due to the domination of instrumental rationality has indeed meant that this impulse has become "unconscious." It manifests itself in the desperate attempts at escape from the widespread realities of competition, injustice, materialism, and conformism

characterizing ordinary everyday existence—in drugs and alcohol, in sexual obsessions, and perhaps in certain kinds of ethnic nationalism.

Overall then, the logic of civil society, of an instrumental and atomistic thinking, remains dominant in individual lives and has not been transcended in the manner Hegel had envisioned. This remains true of our relationships to one another, to law and political institutions, and to the nature within our own selves.

The Objective Level

The above limitations—as seen from a Hegelian perspective—in the development of the happiness and the moral consciousness of the members of the society, find their counterpart in the objective structures of the society. Individual rights enjoy powerful constitutional enshrinement in most Western, liberal democracies. But law, politics, and economics tend to fall short by reinforcing the atomistic character of the public consciousness.

Hegel's vision of modern society entailed a determination of the general will where no one class dominated but where—through the “corporation” and corporatist representation—a genuine common interest could be articulated. But the development of capitalism has entailed a ripping apart of the organic, harmonious class structure upon which Hegel's idea of the state was founded and has tended to polarize the “business” class into owners and workers. The “corporation” that was to provide the members of the business class with a “second family,” that was to be the chief “ethical root” and “mediating institution” in the achievement of a higher consciousness, and that was to protect its members against the contingencies inherent in a market society, has clearly failed to materialize. Trade unions and the state have historically emerged as institutions for assuaging the worst excesses of class conflict and together with capital may even be said to have succeeded in articulating a limited common interest in the postwar era in Western, liberal democracies. But most trade unions, even after the achievement of basic security issues for workers, have continued to focus on wages, benefits, and job security, at the expense of principles such as worker democracy. Furthermore, it is clearly the partial interests of capital that are triumphing in the movement toward globalization.

Not only were Hegel's idea of “mediating organizations” between the individual and the state and his notion of a corporatist system of representation meant to group people into a natural basis of representation and prevent the domination of capital, but they were meant to be fundamentally educative institutions. They were to facilitate an atmosphere where genuine dialogue and debate on the question of the common good would go on, which would engage members in their hearts and minds. This entailed that these institutions be structured on a fundamentally democratic model, not in terms of the

mere registering of given desires and opinions, but in the sense of providing for a process of inclusion and dialogue in order to give expression to a genuine common interest.

In our day, the function of "mediating institutions" has been taken over by parties, the electoral system, interest groups, trade unions, social movements, and the media. And while the centrality of these institutions cannot be denied in terms of the health of a democratic society, they have often remained limited both in terms of rationally guaranteeing the articulation of all the most important interests and in terms of cultivating the moral consciousness of the people. Some of the best political science is concerned with documenting the deficiencies of these institutions in terms of fostering genuine democracy. Political parties, for example, have as their chief goal the achieving of political power. This means not only that they are elitist, and that their focus is on being efficient campaigning machines at election time, but that they often cater to the immediate whims and caprices of the electorate, rather than seeking to have a real, educative influence. Furthermore, parties who receive so much of their funding from the corporate sector are clearly compromised in their ability to balance the interests of this sector with larger social concerns. An electoral system that distorts the popular vote and that exaggerates regionalism, the domination of democratic discourse by the language of opinion polls, which simply register the public's feelings rather than engaging people in an educative dialogue, the unequal power of interest groups and their tendency to fragment the public into competing groups, with no institutionalized arena where sectors are brought together and debated in terms of their relationship to one another, the problem of corporate ownership of the media—all of these are well-documented.

Overall then, existing mediating institutions that do exist tend to give inadequate expression to the moral self, or love, or the drive toward unity, however one wants to conceive it, because they themselves are usually modeled on the logic of reflective rationality, on the *efficient* realization of their most immediate goals, rather than on the wider goal of education and development and on the notion of constituents as *consumers* of political goods rather than as active participants and makers. Without a focus on this goal, mediating institutions cut themselves off from the deeper need and wisdom of their constituents and fail in the realization of their chief function. They fall short of the goal of generating an educated and enlivened citizenry.

It seems, then, that while Hegel's ethical life may have been partially achieved in Western societies, these societies have also to a greater or lesser extent fallen short of the higher ideal of harmony, the notion of realizing a true common interest, which Hegel had envisioned. It is as if the memory of love, the striving toward unity at the level of the political, while it reaches a certain level, is then stopped short, dramatically halted. The transcendence of

the atomistic consciousness, the realization of a new form of erotic bond at the level of the political, the Rousseauian general will, is experienced only in rare and fleeting historical moments.²

In its most extreme form, the great synthesis between love and reason that Hegel had envisioned in the idea of “ethical life,” the idea of a “genuine cultus,” a modern spiritual existence, has instead become realized as a *split* between a “totally administered,” rationalized, efficient society, on the one hand, and on the other, the darker strivings of love, seeking whatever outlet in modern existence that it can find. And while in most cases the split has not been so radical and total, while the public realm is not immune to the appeals of love and conscience, and while a space can be found for love and friendship, this is a split that nevertheless finds some partial reality in the lives of most of us.

At the very center of this historical failure, or limitation, looms the genuine possibility that Hegel’s whole Notion of a will that is ultimately driven by the knowledge of love is fundamentally wrongheaded. For, as I suggested at the end of chapter 3, Hegel’s state itself is required for such an ontology of the will to vindicate itself. If the will is indeed the mode of realization of the knowledge of love, and if its ultimate impetus is the impetus to objectify love in the world, in a manner accessible to rational thought, that impetus itself can only be fully vindicated in Hegel’s state, where the unity is experienced and explicated in a fully rational manner. Only there has the objectification of the truth of love—the truth that we are part of a bigger unity that unites reason and emotion, law and being, and self and other—been fully established for reflective consciousness and brought to life in the everyday existence of the modern individual. But if, by the end of the journey, such a rationally articulated unity has not been achieved, then Hegel’s Notion of the will, and hence his whole understanding of modern history as a rational unfolding of the knowledge of love, may be thrown into question.

Furthermore, this historical failure also throws into question the arguments for the rights of property, welfare, conscience, and so on that Hegel has sought to establish through his depiction of the rational unfolding of the will. For the very presupposition of these arguments is that the individual will has an infinite significance and that it has a right to express itself and objectify its individuality and its autonomy because of this infinite significance. Without the knowledge of love that is at the foundation of this conviction, and without the ultimate validation of that knowledge, the logic of these arguments rests on a much weaker foundation.

That the confrontation with history does indeed invalidate Hegel’s Notion of will has been the conclusion of numerous commentators. Charles Taylor has seen, in the historical triumph of instrumental rationality and the eclipse of the romantic view of nature, a falsification of Hegel’s notion of reality as structured

according to the rationality of the "Idea" (1975).³ Marxian analyses have taken Hegel to task for his failure to conceptualize a genuine solution to the problem of poverty that emerges in association with capitalism (Avineri 1980, Cullen 1979, Plant 1983, Stillman 1980, Wood 1990), and Otto Pöggeler links this more deeply to Hegel's flawed conception of the will (1973). For Emil Fackenheim (1967, 1973:154 ff.), the radical shaking of the European self-consciousness, both in terms of its religious self-certainty and its secular self-confidence, is seen to undermine the very idea of "the God within," of a moral will determined by a larger, universal principle that could be realized in the world.⁴ Lacoue-Labarthe makes a similar argument from a Heideggerian perspective, arguing that the event of the Holocaust is the ultimate "truth" of the organic conception of political community that underpins the whole Western tradition, Hegel's included (1990). And Edith Wyschogrod (1985) also argues that Hegel's philosophical framework cannot do justice to the Holocaust. These criticisms cut particularly deep because they are explicitly tied to a fundamental failure in Hegel's ontology of the will. They do not target a merely superficial aspect of Hegel's political philosophy but direct themselves at the very heart of his philosophical understanding of modernity.

While the interpretation offered here does not share the understanding of Hegel's conception of will found in all of the above commentators, it is in accordance that the question of history is a fundamental one for his philosophy of will. The partial failure of ethical life, as depicted above, does indeed constitute a genuine epistemological threat. But rather than rejecting Hegel's idea of the will as an anachronism, as part of a whole misguided tradition of Western metaphysics, it is first necessary to go back, to see what *he* might have had to say about it, how *he* might have interpreted it, and what implications he might have drawn from it, both in terms of his own philosophy and in terms of the modern self and its world. For while Hegel himself may not have come fully to grips with all the negative dynamics that were to play themselves out over the next two centuries, we can nevertheless find, in fragments of his later writings, some dark inklings of the trajectory that the modern world could take and his own understanding of the reasons why this could be so. And thus it is possible to examine, *from within Hegel's own perspective*, why ethical life may have encountered the limitations and failures that it has.

Such an examination, as I shall try to show, reveals that Hegel's thought is not dumbly open to dismissal in the face of history, but that it continues to speak with a voice that is powerful and relevant to our times, that indeed it constitutes an indispensable contribution in terms of the critique of instrumental rationality that has become so prevalent in the past century, in terms of joining forces with democratic thinkers in articulating an alternative spiritual existence that still resides as a possibility for us today and in terms of clarifying the task of philosophy in relationship to political life.

HEGEL'S EXPLANATION OF THE "FAILURE"

At the point where the doctrines of religion [have become] representations, mere factual data, [what is supposedly] required [is] thinking as a reflective activity. It is what causes the secure to waver, dissolves everything dialectically, and leads it back to the subjective, whether it is an empty abstraction of the universal or is reduced to feeling, which it makes the foundation. The [common] people, in which reason remains constantly under pressure, [this] class in whose cultivation the truth can exist only in the form of representation . . . [has been] abandoned by its [theological] teachers. The latter have helped themselves by means of reflection, and have found their satisfaction in finitude, subjectivity, and precisely thereby in vanity; but the [common] people, who form the substantial nucleus [of the population as a whole], cannot find its satisfaction in such things. Instead [of allowing] reason and religion to contradict themselves, [we must] resolve the discord in the manner [appropriate] to us—[namely,] reconciliation in [the form of] philosophy. How the present day is to solve its problems must be left up to it. (LPR III: 160–62/5:96–97)

Hegel's famous expression of despair in the 1821 manuscript of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, his retreat into the realm of philosophy, and his leaving the world to itself may well lead interpreters to construe him as a pessimist, as abandoning altogether his faith in the world,⁵ or as a conservative, as locating this loss of faith ultimately in the loss of positive religion. From such a perspective, with the demise of religion there is no way to retrieve any spiritual meaning in existence for ordinary people, and the world must be abandoned to the course of a narrow, reflective reasoning.

But such an interpretation remains inconsistent with Hegel's whole idea of ethical life as a way of preserving spirituality in and through reflective rationality. Furthermore, his idea that philosophers might remain keepers of the truth while "common people" are left to themselves is by his own admission only "partial" (LPR 111:160–62/5:96–97). For philosophers themselves require a cultic life; philosophy cannot perform the function of elevating subjective feeling to the Absolute. It merely keeps the truth conceptually. Life itself must furnish the filling of that truth. Hence it is to a different interpretation of Hegel's expression of despair that we must turn.⁶

In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, as we have already seen, Hegel describes ethical life as "the most genuine cultus," as the set of practices in everyday life that affirm, at the level of feeling, the individual's contact with the true substance of the self. But in the *Lectures* where Hegel describes ethical life as "the most genuine cultus" he adds a significant caveat. Ethical life is indeed "the most genuine cultus,"—"but consciousness of the divine must be bound up with it" (LPR 194/3:334 [my emphasis]). With this caveat Hegel

opens up a startling possibility that, while ethical life is to be the crucial arena for cultic practice for the modern, reflective individual, those individuals could lose touch with the very consciousness that they are meant to cultivate, the consciousness of the universal at the level of feeling. How this could happen is a further question, and it is in a subsequent statement in the *Lectures* that we find the answer.

Through her experience in civil society the modern individual may indeed come, rationally, to be at home with the laws and institutions that constitute the objectification of her inner substance. But, Hegel says, in a discussion of the realization of religion: "[o]nce the laws of the state are known as *universal* laws, thought attacks the content of God too, requiring that it must stand the test of thought" (LPR III:374/5:289).⁷ I believe that this statement holds the key to Hegel's own understanding of the possibility of failure, for in it he points to the danger that remains at the heart of his project with ethical life and that informs his conviction of the importance of his own philosophy.

Hegel believes that the real source of just laws and ethical institutions is a larger, rational principle that governs all reality. And based on this interpretation it thus must also be the case that, while the human will does indeed produce the truth of things for itself in its historical realization in the world, and come to understand that truth rationally, the substance and source of the will is at the same time something given to it. This was clear in the examination of conscience, where it came to its inner certainty, and found recognition for it, through the experience of grace. Thus the subject must never attack or repudiate that source but must know and acknowledge that its content "is objective, having being in and for itself," that while on the one hand as subject it produces the truth, on the other hand "it recognizes this truth as at the same time not produced, as the truth that subsists in and for itself" (LPR 487/5:267). In other words, it must recognize the otherness of the universal, the real source of its will, which cannot wholly be absorbed into a humanly created law, without once again being lost.

Fackenheim sustains this point against left-wing Hegelians for whom, he suggests, "the secular aspect had so totally appropriated the religious . . . as to produce the death of God and become itself divine—whether in the form of one particular actually existing order or in the form of an actually existing historical movement from one such order to another" (1970:221). For Hegel, he says, "the distinction between the 'true' and the actually existing state remains, as does that between state and religion, even though their root is one . . . [citing Hegel] 'the ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) of the state and religious spirituality are mutually warranting' (*Enz.*, sect. 552, italics added); i.e., the state cannot be 'ethical' if, appropriating the religious dimension, it becomes totalitarian" (1967:221). Thus Fackenheim speaks of a "creative diversity" in Hegel in the relationship between the state and divinity.

What this means at the level of individual experience is that the rational recognition of the truth of law must be informed and sustained by a kind of religious reverence or respect. Reflective thought can come to an abstract sort of understanding of the need for certain kinds of laws and institutions, of the universal principles these embody. But this is a *lifeless* understanding if it does not have an intuitive comprehension alongside it. Furthermore, in gaining its abstract understanding in the first place, abstract rationality is dependent on its concrete history. Through the lived experience of the actual individual of civil society, the reflective rationality that dominates in this realm comes gradually to see the universality of law. But it does so not in abstraction from life, but precisely in and with life, in and with the embodied self in all of its moral experience, as I tried to show in the discussion of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Thus the knowledge of universality is derived from concrete moral subjectivity and remains dependent upon it. And the "cult" of ethical life is meant precisely to bring these two kinds of knowledge—the religious and the rational—together in a mutually sustaining manner.

Nevertheless, reflective rationality by its very nature abstracts from its embodiment and expresses its conclusions in abstract terms. And this separation will inevitably entail, as Hegel suggests, that it will turn its gaze back upon its own self, upon its moral convictions, feelings, and intuitions. For reflective thought is inherently restless, subject to the "bad infinite" that Hegel speaks of in *Logic*. It takes its own categories as given and seeks to conquer the realm beyond their boundaries to infinity. In this case, achieving its abstract universality, it seeks beyond this realm, turning back on its own concrete, moral understandings, those very understandings upon which it had been dependent in coming to its own conclusions. It is this concrete subjectivity to which Hegel refers when he suggests that "thought attacks the content of God too," and it is reflective rationality that does the attacking.

In separating abstract universal principles from intuitive moral knowing and feeling, reflective thought essentially separates the public and the private. Embodied moral knowing comes to be seen as private, as separate from rationality, and in being so regarded is inevitably reduced. For this reduction to "mere subjectivity" is the beginning of the dessication of that moral substance—of "the content of God." Looking *down* on moral intuition and viewing it from an abstract perspective, reflective rationality does precisely the same thing as it had previously done with the emotion of love and as judging conscience had done to acting conscience: it casts it as a merely particular and contingent emotion, as opinion and as mere self-interest.

Thus, ironically, the very achievement of ethical life carries with it the possibility of its own self-destruction. The will in its self-realization, in seeking to realize and grasp its own substance in the transparent realm of secular existence, has the negatively infinite tendency to turn on and attack its very

own source. It turns its abstract, reductionist categories onto that source and cannot do justice to it. It will deny any existence of a universal in life, will reduce anything it encounters to its own, limited framework. And the result of its immanent activity, its "bad infinite" allowed to run unchecked in ethical life, will be the eclipse of the very universal upon which it depends.

This tendency of abstract rationality to separate itself from subjective intuition and knowing and to reduce that knowing finds its expression in the actual political world in the artificial separation of the public from the private realms. On the one hand, subjective knowing is reduced to a merely private and personal affair, having no significance for the public realm, being seen as mere opinion and individual idiosyncrasy. On the other hand, the public realm itself is not seen to be grounded on any absolute principles, other than the most abstract notion of a universal equality.

The effects of this separation of public and private according to the logic of abstract rationality were being felt even in Hegel's own time. In the 1821 manuscript for his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, he speaks of "the so-called signs of the times," comparing the state of modern decadence to the period of the Roman Empire. Then, he said, when all religious truth came to be seen as a merely human projection, when "the universal unity based on religion had disappeared, along with a universal political life," people took refuge in their own private existence. So in our time, he says:

the quest for private welfare and enjoyment [is] the order of the day; moral insight, [the basis] of personal actions, opinions, and convictions, [is] without objective truth, and truth [is] the opposite. I acknowledge only what I believe subjectively . . . the teaching of the philosophers has corresponded . . . : we know and cognize nothing of God, [having] at best a dead and merely historical sort of information. (LPR III:159/5:95)

When individuals can find little that is substantial to knit them together at the level of the public, they will indeed retreat into their own private existence. The privatization that marks our own time is recognized and diagnosed in its origin by the Hegel of 1821, as determined by the reductionist logic of a purely abstract rationality.

The flip side of this privatization and subjectivization can be seen in the character of the public realm. Hegel notes that while the principle of freedom has gained supremacy in places such as France, it has done so only in an abstract manner, by opposing itself to the subjective knowledge of the truth, to conscience and disposition (PH 444–52/526–35; Enc. §552; LPR I: 457–60/5:344–47), which are put on one side as something purely private. The only knowledge of universality that is seen to count is the universality of abstract individualism. Individuals are meant to understand and pay respect to

the law not out of the deeper knowledge of conscience, but merely by consistently observing their abstract rationality.

This tendency to relegate subjective knowing to the realm of the private, as if it were all mere opinion, and to assert abstract principles in the realm of the public, indicates the incapacity of a society that has become dominated by reflective rationality to grasp the deeper truth of the public order. Reflective thought has repudiated any more ultimate basis of existence than that which it can abstractly comprehend. And yet, as we can see in Hegel's critique of Rousseau and of Kant in *Phenomenology of Spirit*,⁸ the knowledge of abstract universality cannot produce anything positive by itself. It ultimately does rely on the concrete realm of particularity for its own articulation, and the positive expression of this is to be found in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. But the particular is precisely what gets reduced and stripped of any spiritual meaning when reflective thought turns its gaze back upon it, and thus the knowledge of universality that has once been achieved in conscience and the journey through civil society, the concrete history out of which it has emerged, is lost. The whole authority of the public order is left to stand upon merely abstract assertions or dominant prejudices.⁹

Furthermore, individuals cannot sustain their truth in something that is purely abstract and intellectual. They must know it at the level of the "determinate and particular"; they must feel it with their being. But reflective thought cannot vindicate this determinate knowing, precisely because it is particular. Hence it also cannot provide an adequate foundation from which to justify the cultivation of such knowing, the foundational principles of citizenship, and the institutions within which cultivation might take place. And if that aspect of individuals that is most their own, their personal feelings and intuitions, is not cultivated and recognized at the public level, then they will indeed express that self in the only way they know how—in "the quest for private welfare and enjoyment."

It is according to this analysis that we may understand Hegel's statement that "you cannot have a revolution without a reformation." It is the deeper, subjective knowledge of conscience that is essential to ethical life but that is not recognized or vindicated by reflective rationality. The true ground of the state is lost to view with its relegation to the realm of the private, and the rule of abstract right sustains itself on an increasingly fragile basis. Thus it is that Hegel speaks of the division between conscience and the political realm as "the problem . . . with which history is now occupied, and whose solution it has to work out in the future" (PH: 452/535), as "the monstrous blunder of our times" (Enc. §552), and as "the contradiction, and the prevalent unawareness of it . . . [that] our age is suffering from" (LPR I:460/3:347).

In *Philosophy of Right* Hegel never contemplates the possibility that individuals could become so alienated from the true source of their will, that they

could so diminish their inner convictions and truth. But in these other moments he confronts it head on, not just as a possibility, but as a present, existing reality. Furthermore, it is clear from Hegel's diagnosis above that the alienation is a *product* of abstract, reflective thought. Thought *has* turned on God, not only in terms of the conflict between the Enlightenment and positive religion, but more significantly, because thought has become capable of repudiating its own subjectively experienced, moral understandings.

Yet we still remain with the question of *why* this experience gets eclipsed, of why people lose touch with the promptings of their conscience, and thus why they fail to realize a larger moral thinking. In Hegel's understanding of the modern subjectivity, there is always the inherent possibility of such an eclipse. As we saw in chapter 1, reflective rationality is fundamentally constitutive of this subjectivity and cannot be denied. And this rationality is what separates us from the initial experience of love. But we also saw that individuals are capable of transcending the purely reflective standpoint and of willing from a standpoint of conscience. Why, then, would individuals repudiate such a foundation of self? Why would they lose touch with the most essential basis of their being as individuals?

Hegel's work, as interpreted here, seems to point us toward three mutually reinforcing causes in explaining such an eclipse: (1) the problem of the inherent difficulties in acting according to conscience, (2) the extent to which the institutions of ethical life fail to nurture and reflect the demands of conscience, and (3) the failure of philosophy to perform its role in justifying the demands of conscience.

The Inherent Difficulties of Acting from Conscience

We explored, in chapter 2, Hegel's discussion of what acting from conscience entails. We saw there that in order to be moral we must not merely have moral convictions; we must live by them; we must act. And in doing so, we must expose ourselves to the world, with all the potential harshness of its judgment and all of the negative consequences that might flow from that. To be moral we must often go against our own material interests; we must put our most essential selves into the light of a potentially negative and dissecting judgment. Acting from conscience, then, entails a significant degree of courage. This in turn entails the firm conviction that we are right in what we do.

Clearly, we are not today in the position of a Socrates or a Christ, where the moral order around us is so disintegrated that, as Hegel says, we must retreat into ourselves to find the good and the right. Those of us who inhabit established liberal democracies do not live in a moral vacuum where basic moral principles are not recognized by the world around us and where every stance is a heroic one. On the contrary, it has often been by appealing to moral

principles that are *already recognized and enshrined* in the society at large, that can be adapted or modified to new situations, that the most significant moral achievements have been made, such as in the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the aboriginal rights movement, and so on. Hence it is not as if there is no guidance in the world around, no external resources to assist us in our struggles and to affirm the rightness of our cause. Nevertheless it is still the case that all such actions, actions which sometimes culminate in whole social movements, are grounded fundamentally in conscience and in the capacity of individuals to act according to conscience. And while we may have plenty of examples of such action around us, it is nevertheless undeniable that acts of conscience always require enormous courage.

It is little wonder, then, that individuals often fail to live up to the promptings of their inner voice. How much easier it is to repudiate that voice, to allow others to determine things for us, to fit ourselves into the dominant order, to quiet our moral passions with a bit of argument or, in the manner of the beautiful soul, to comfort ourselves with the purity of our own beliefs, while refusing to "soil" our hands by action. Indeed, as modern, reflective individuals, we have the tools available to us to engage in such rationalization. And as Rousseau saw, it is the philosophers who are perhaps the most capable of such sophisticated evasions of conscience (1987:55).

But beyond the inherent difficulties of acting according to conscience, and thus the tendency to allow an atomistic thinking to determine us, Hegel's work also points toward the essential role of the institutions of ethical life and of philosophy in nurturing and justifying conscience and hence toward the possibility that their failure adequately to perform these roles in fact *encourages* us in our tendency to repudiate our own inner voices.

The Failure of the Institutions of Ethical Life

"When a father inquired about the best method of educating his son in ethical conduct, a Pythagorean replied: 'Make him a citizen of a state with good laws'" (PR §153R). Hegel's story of the Pythagorean is a pithy encapsulation of his theory of ethical life—that the nature of the political community within which an individual grows up has potentially profound implications for the development of conscience. For the very idea of ethical life is the idea that the objective world around one, the laws and institutions of the society, would reflect and reinforce the essential truth of one's conscience. In this view, there should be little disjunction between the inner truth of oneself and the world around one. Each side must serve to support the other. To put it in Rousseau's terms, Hegel believed that the forces of *amour propre*—the forces of recognition—would come to reflect the forces of *amour de soi*—the forces of one's inner authentic nature. It was this envisioned harmony that would

make the problem of moral conflict within the self less extreme, that would make it less likely that we would have to struggle so profoundly to be conscientious persons.

Clearly, Hegel was overly optimistic in this regard. We have already examined the various limitations of ethical life, as it has emerged historically, particularly the failure of "the corporation" and a corporatist system of representation, as well as the problems with the family. What we need to consider here are the effects of these limitations in terms of the nurturing of moral conscience in individuals. For to the extent that public institutions are structured according to a narrow, reflective thinking that treats citizens as consumers rather than as moral beings, to the extent that their job is seen in terms of registering individual desires and wants rather than in terms of stimulating moral development through involvement, debate, and discussion, that is the extent to which these institutions fail in their essential, educative goal. To the extent that the family is regarded as a largely private affair, that its essential role in the education of the next generation of citizens is inadequately recognized, that policies toward it do not sufficiently recognize the changed role of women, and that the relations among members is penetrated by the logic of civil society, that is the extent to which this crucial institution will fail in its nurturing function. To the extent that the educational system is seen in terms of the acquiring of technical skills and knowledge to be used in the generation of more and more wealth, rather than in terms of the more intangible goals of thinking, listening, and understanding, that is the extent to which it will fail in its role of cultivating genuinely moral and engaged citizens. And to the extent that institutions and practices regard individuals only in atomistic terms, as isolated, self-interested individuals rather than as members of moral communities, that is the extent to which individuals will tend to fail in finding their ethical relationship to others.

The urgings of conscience are not *created* by family and society, but they do require the family and society for their development. According to Hegel, a good society will comprehend these institutions in terms of this essential goal. But if individuals succeed in separating themselves from the knowledge of conscience, from the knowledge of their dignity as individuals and their unity with one another, if they become dominated by a reflective thinking that does not see its own limits, then it becomes more and more likely that the laws that govern these institutions will not reflect this essential, moral goal. Thus the tendency of reflective thinking to dissect and repudiate conscience, and the failure of ethical institutions adequately to nurture conscience, have a mutually reinforcing effect. Conscience cannot be definitively silenced, but it can be reduced, ignored, and deadened. The educative failures of the institutions of ethical life mean that it is all that much easier for individuals to repudiate conscience and for reflective reasoning to extend its determining reach.

Beyond the reciprocal failure of individual moral action and the institutions and environment that would stimulate such action, Hegel's work points in a third direction—toward the failure of philosophy.

The Failure of Philosophy

Philosophy, for Hegel, does not have as its chief task the development or stimulation of moral sentiments—that is the task of the family and the mediating institutions of civil society and the state.¹⁰ Rather, as I have already discussed, the task of philosophy is to vindicate genuine experiences of love and moral conscience, and the actions and laws that flow from them, to rationally justify these experiences and thereby to halt the destructive potential of reflective rationality.¹¹

Both Rousseau and Kant confronted the danger of modern scientific rationality in its capacity to attack the very foundation of moral existence, to totalistically reduce everything to its own narrow, materialist terms. And both sought to address this danger by confronting such a rationality with its own inherent limit, by drawing a line beyond which, by its own standards, it must not go.¹² Hence both thinkers sought to carve out a space where moral conscience could be understood to reside, a space philosophy would protect by providing a rational argument to limit the narrower, technical reasoning that dominated the Enlightenment. Hegel followed in the footsteps of Rousseau and Kant in comprehending the danger that they sought to address. But he repudiated the notion that reason could be limited and that the moral self could reside in a sphere reserved to faith. Rather than limiting Enlightenment reasoning, Hegel sought to show that it had an immanent tendency to destroy its own narrow perspective by transcending that perspective in a higher, more complete understanding. Here is where we find the idea of Hegel's dialectic, his philosophy of the Notion.

Dialectical philosophy, particularly as we can see it in *Philosophy of Right*, seeks to reveal how reflective rationality is immanently driven beyond the abstract category of will with which it begins, toward an increasingly adequate understanding of the self in its moral subjectivity and its larger ethical context. Dialectical philosophy thus reveals how the separation of law and conscience, which has wielded such destructive consequences for the modern political community, is immanently overcome. The very concept of 'ethical life' embodies this overcoming, by refusing to separate the private from the public, conscience from the law, political culture from institutions, emotion from reason, individual from community. It is this very concept of ethical life, and the dialectical way in which Hegel seeks to come to it, that illustrates how Hegel sought to incorporate and transcend the position of reflective rationality and thus to prevent it from turning on the unity of ethical life, of separating once

again the universal principles of the objective order from the subjective knowing of conscience and thereby "attacking the content of God."

Here, in light of Hegel's explanation of the partial failure of ethical life, it becomes even more urgently apparent why the goal of philosophy must be to limit reflective rationality in its reductionist effects on moral conscience and human community. True philosophy must be judged according to its capacity to contribute to this essential task, in an age when we are so capable of rationally repudiating our deepest inner convictions and sentiments.

But the dominant thinking in moral and political philosophy today does not adequately reflect this task. For the most part, it is the narrow thinking of reflective rationality that has predominated and that has totalistically appropriated the title of "reason."

We see this most starkly and consistently in the utilitarian tradition, which views all human experience from the narrow perspective of scientific rationality, reducing all behaviour and life plans to mere subjective preferences.¹³ Yet the tendency to reduce the subjective level is more widely exhibited in the popular adherence to "value relativism" in liberal political cultures, toward nonjudgment of the life ways and moral orientations of others. It is also present in the extremely influential philosophy of John Rawls (1971). For even though Rawls's liberalism is motivated by antiutilitarian concerns, being driven by a fundamental respect for all individuals in their right to self-determination, the source of the "self-determination" or "autonomy" of individuals tends still to be understood in terms of subjective values and preferences. That is, the substance and source of individuals' wills tends still to be seen in purely private and finite terms. These life plans are set resolutely over against the universal and are not to be judged or commented upon but are a matter left purely up to the individuals themselves. There is nothing universal in any one particular choice; the universal resides only in our capacity to treat all choices equally, to accord all individuals the same respect.

The problem with this widespread tendency in popular and political philosophy is that it perpetrates precisely the separation and reduction against which Hegel warns. The subjective level of conscience and individual self-expression are reduced to private opinion and individual taste. There is no basis upon which to validate the distinction between good and bad moral standpoints or individual judgments in a more objective way.¹⁴ While motivated by a genuine concern for freedom and equality, the ironic *effect* of this separation of the universal from the particular, of public from private, is to render banal all choices. Since the ground of one's decision seems ultimately to lie in given preferences and desires, it is not clear why one preference might be better than another.

Because of its relegation of conscience and self-determination more generally to the private and the particular, such a thinking provides individuals

with little guidance or understanding as to why they should care more about one choice than another. Within such a world-view, it seems just as likely, as Allan Bloom suggests with reference to Rawls, that individuals would come to a standpoint of “nihilistic despair or irrational commitment” as they would to the kind of calculated contentment that Rawls seems to envision (Bloom 1975:408). Without providing some answer to the question of how and why an individual chooses, individuals are left with no resources upon which to justify to themselves their own callings. Such a liberal thinking thus fails to provide a self-understanding that can help individuals resist dominant pressures to conform.

The other side of this widespread, utilitarian tendency to reduce all life plans to personal preference and subjective choice is that the substance of the universal itself is reduced. In the liberal procedural view, what unites us is supposed to be a belief in equality and mutual respect. But when the substance of self-determination gets reduced to mere value preferences or rational calculation toward the maximum satisfaction of individual desires, it is not at all clear why we should see one another as equal, why we should respect one another. For the very motivation to respect, and to want to equalize the conditions for the exercise of individual self-determination, depends on there being something in what an individual chooses and does, something in one’s individual life path, that *commands* respect. Under such a vision, it is not at all clear what this would be.

Furthermore, universal principles that are defined through the detachment from particular life paths, in a hands-off approach, foreclose debate at the public level about what an authentic individual choice or a valuable life path might mean and what as a society we might be striving to foster, beyond the principle of mutual respect itself. As Charles Taylor has suggested, because there is the belief that we cannot as a society come to any agreement about what constitutes a good life, beyond the freedom of individuals to choose some vision for themselves, no space is provided for a dialogue on the good, or on the question of “moral horizons” within which individuals form their conception of the good (Taylor 1991:ch.4). In the face of this restriction, the chief function of the state becomes restricted to ensuring the material basis upon which individuals could live their own private lives and express their own personal visions and to redistribute this wealth in such a way that it also benefits the least advantaged. Such a liberalism thus essentially eclipses any larger moral, aesthetic, or ecological ideals that individuals might wish to espouse *as a community*.

Even more, the focus on primary goods such as wealth and the restriction of public dialogue to this, means that the vision of the expansion of comfortable self-preservation is implicitly favored. Certainly material well-being is not something insignificant. But when dialogue on the good life is eclipsed,

and when one of the only things that is seen to count at the level of the common is the expansion of more and more wealth, with debate centering only on how that wealth is to be distributed, liberals do indeed become more and more incapable of standing up in the face of the capitalists who promise such wealth. Hence not only does this strategy of limiting the public level to the principle of equality end up impoverishing that public sphere, but it implicitly favors a power structure where certain visions of the good are privileged. This means even further that certain notions of the good are foreclosed at the level of individual existence, for it is only by their assertion at the level of the public that they could gain a meaningful existence.

The communitarian response to this impoverishment of the public sphere has been to try to elevate the status of "particular" goods (e.g., Taylor 1989). This approach contains the merit of removing the artificial separation of private from public, of conscience and law, and of showing the importance of the subjective level to the public sphere. Furthermore, it comprehends the necessity of providing a philosophical justification for particular moral orientations. Whether in fact it has been able to provide such a justification, however, is questionable. For it tends to rely on the idea of tradition *per se* and thus has repeatedly been open to the charge that it still reduces our most important ideals to the particularity of history (e.g., William 1990). In terms of the philosophical project of protecting moral experiences of the self from the reductionist claims of a skeptical rationality, it is not clear that this work of "historical retrieval," to use Taylor's term, has adequate force. For if the study of history can teach us how we are imbedded in certain principles, as well as show us the richness and multifaceted nature of these traditions, it can as easily teach us to *reject* what one discovers there as to embrace it.

This is precisely what we find in postmodernism. Foucault's attempt "to think one's own history" is precisely the attempt to "free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently" (Foucault 1988). Genealogical analysis is used to repudiate altogether the notion of an authentic truth at the basis of the self (Nietzsche 1989, Foucault 1993: 222). For Foucault, the very notion of such a truth is seen to be bound up with the *production* of a substance of the self with which individuals must act in conformity (1979, 1980).

The "positive" political philosophy that emerges from this kind of critique has tended to be two-fold—either to conceptualize an aesthetic basis of subjectivity that escapes the problems seen to be bound up with a subjectivity rooted in truth (e.g., Foucault 1988:12, 1984, 1993) or to live such truths in an "ironical" manner (e.g., Rorty 1989). Both responses are problematic, in terms of the idea of philosophy being put forth here. In the case of an aesthetic approach to existence, it is not clear what the source of such an aesthetics might be nor, what is more important, how such a thinking could bolster individual

moral commitment. Moreover, purely pragmatic and “ironical” defenses of fundamental moral principles are too weak. Philosophical defenses certainly are not the ultimate determinant of moral action, but in an age where rational legitimation is the norm, and in face of contemporary realities like genocide, poverty, and the arrogance of international capitalism, they clearly have an important role. It seems silly to imply that traditional, rational defenses of principles that seek to combat these problems can be replaced with flippant pragmatic remarks or mere assertion (e.g., Rorty 2000, 1989). This purely historicist approach and the accompanying weakness of the arguments for positive political principles fail adequately to protect genuine moral impulses. Such an approach thus may indeed help to enervate our moral capacities and leave us in a state of mere confusion.

Some of the dominant trends in the philosophy of today thus tend to reinforce a reductionist thinking that cannot adequately reflect or protect our most important moral orientations. What Hegel’s analysis suggests is that, in a truly ethical polity, individuals must believe that there is something more to their choices than mere values or preferences, contingently developed; they must believe in a genuine truth at the source of their choosing, in the face of which they could go wrong, fail, or be inauthentic. The continual disavowal of any fundamental truth to these orientations, or their reduction to mere prejudice, fails to provide individuals with the philosophical resources that they need. And without such resources, individuals become increasingly vulnerable to their own capacity to repudiate the very foundation of their autonomy—the call of conscience.

HEGEL’S EXPLANATION AND THE PROBLEMS OF OUR TIME

The above attempt to comprehend Hegel’s own nascent explanation for the “failure” of ethical life shows that, far from preaching a doctrine of historical inevitability, in his darker moments he clearly confronted the possibility of failure. This analysis suggests that, for Hegel, there was always a danger that lay inherent in the modern will—the danger that the will could lose touch with its very source and substance and that it could thus be largely determined by a narrow, technical reasoning. Furthermore, it shows that the forces that were needed to stave off this possibility of eclipse—the need for individual moral courage and the social and philosophical resources necessary to support such courage and to develop it into a spontaneous disposition shared by all members of society—have failed in certain crucial respects.

The implication of this analysis is that, far from invalidating Hegel’s thought, history subsequent to Hegel can rather be seen and understood from *within* this Hegelian perspective. Hegel himself would have had his own

explanation of precisely those phenomena that are often seen to constitute the basis for a repudiation of his thought—the domination of atomism and the forces of instrumental rationality, the problem of poverty, and the reality of events such as the Holocaust. We must look more specifically now at what the above explanation might have to say in response to these particular historical problems and events.

The Problem of Atomism and Instrumental Rationality

According to Charles Taylor, Hegel failed to recognize that the forces of “dissolution and homogenization” that characterize modern civil society—forces Hegel himself had explicated—would not be contained by men’s “pass[ing] over of their own accord into the interest of the universal” (PR §260), but that these forces themselves would become ascendant. Furthermore, according to Taylor, this reality points to a failure in Hegel’s ontology itself. For if Hegel had been right, “then men would have recognized themselves in the structures of the rational state, and industrial society would not have taken the path it has” (Taylor 1975:543). Instrumental reasoning would have been superceded by Hegel’s larger dialectical thinking in the actual lives of individuals. Individuals would cease to be so purely self-regarding and instead focus on the common good as the place wherein they find their own true interests realized.

The problem of atomism and instrumental rationality is, for Hegel, a problem of the consciousness of the citizen becoming *stuck* at the level of reflective reasoning, the static thinking of the “Understanding.” Hegel describes this kind of consciousness at the beginning of the discussion of civil society as one “in which the particular is to be my primary determining principle, and thus my determinacy by ethical factors has been annulled” (PR §181A). Here the primary thing is the pursuit and satisfaction of one’s own desires, and there is no sense of a connection to one’s fellow citizens in any other than an instrumental way.

But the failure to transcend this consciousness, beyond a commitment to the principles of abstract right and, in a wavering way, to some basic principles of welfare, does not in and of itself speak to a failure of Hegel’s ontology. For as we have seen, it was never *inevitable* for Hegel that individuals would supercede this consciousness, and that Taylor interprets it this way speaks to the particular manner in which he conceptualized the Hegelian ontology, as an immanent movement of logical necessity. Because Hegel’s Absolute is comprehended according to the terms of the *Logic*, there is indeed a necessity about it. But for Hegel, according to the interpretation here, the movement of the individual through civil society does not take place at the level of the logic. Rather as I have repeatedly emphasized, the logic itself depends on a movement in life, which it can map and vindicate.

Thus this getting stuck at the standpoint of reflective rationality points to a failure not necessarily of Hegel's ontology but of our own moral experience, the experience of our fate as bound to the fate of others, the experience of our selves as fundamentally interdependent, as part of something bigger to which we are beholden. This *experience* is something quite different from the rational argument that can be used to make sense of it or to justify policy positions that might flow from it. For example, the recognition that the market can fail large sectors of people and that the society as a whole has an obligation to provide some safeguard for individuals in face of such vulnerability *can* be understood from a position purely of logical coherence. But without the actual moral experience of confronting vulnerability—our own and others—and the reality of our interdependence, no logical argument, however coherent, will have any impact. It is because of the dependence of reason on moral experience as something larger and other than reason itself that there is no inevitability to the movement forward in civil society. The logical arguments that Hegel provides in the section “Civil Society” do not immanently unfold according to the logic of the Idea. For they are profoundly dependent on the moral, existential reality. And if that experience fails us, if the *source* of the movement in life is eclipsed, there is little that the logic can do.

As has been discussed, it is the failure of individual moral courage, the inadequacies and limitations of the family and mediating institutions of ethical life, as well as the limitations of modern and contemporary philosophy, that explain this eclipse of conscience. If the thinking that dominates socioeconomic institutions and rational discourse generally is the thinking of a narrow reflective reasoning, if it does not recognize and seek to nurture conscience and its foundation in love, then individuals will indeed become stuck in an atomistic mindset that privileges instrumental rationality over other kinds of reasoning. That this reality has become a prevalent feature of the contemporary social and political culture was to some extent predicted by Hegel's analysis and can indeed be explained by it.

The Problem of Poverty

To the extent that Hegel provides an argument for the right to private property, he implicates himself in the immanent development of capitalism, as he himself was aware. The excesses of such a system are clearly pointed out in his philosophy,¹⁵ and many of the measures he articulates in the second part of his discussion of civil society and the state are directed at containing precisely these excesses.¹⁶ Yet it is the fact that capitalism has *not* been checked to the extent that Hegel had envisioned, and that the problems associated with it¹⁷ continue to mark our time so fundamentally, that interests us here.

For Hegel, unlike for Marx, this historical failure does not signify the immanent self-destruction of a system rooted in private property, but of a private property that develops in a manner unfettered by moral concerns. There clearly are ways to check capitalism and transform its nature, and these ways emanate out of the logical failures and limitations of capitalism itself and out of the experience of individuals in face of these limitations, as Hegel sought to show. That historically it has not been adequately checked in the ways that Hegel envisioned points not to the failure of Hegel's conception of the will (Pöggeler) nor to the failure of capitalism and our direction beyond it (Marx) but to the failure of our own selves to live up to the principle of the moral will, the higher principle that exists within our own selves, and to take the actions and put in place the measures necessary to checking it.

Yet even to say this seems to put us in danger of ignoring the ways in which we have succeeded historically in waging a moral struggle against the excesses of capitalism. The struggles of the working class and of women to gain the franchise, the strikes of the working class in the post-World War II era for the rights of collective bargaining, for a forty-hour work week, for better wages and safe working conditions, local citizen action against freeway building in North American cities in the 1960s, the struggle of environmental groups in the resource industries, the recent demonstrations against the elite nature of decision making around global capitalism, and so on all come out of the direct historical experience with the limitations of capitalism and the taking up of a moral standpoint in the face of it. They would be vindicated by Hegel as genuine experiences of conscience that contain the possibility of uniting individuals in the pursuit of a common good and that achieve, for a time at least, a transcendence of individualistic consciousness. These struggles stem from the conviction of the dignity of individuals and the sense of injustice and indignation surrounding the inequalities of the system. Furthermore, this *moral* understanding of the struggles to limit capitalism is essential if we are not to reduce the victories that have been attained to mere "epiphenomena," such as the notion that the achievements of the working class in the post-World War II era were merely a salve on class conflict, conceded to by capitalists in order to ensure a peaceful environment for capital accumulation.¹⁸

Victories against the domination of capitalist interests have indeed been partial and problematic.¹⁹ And the current swing to the right makes it clear that previous victories can be drastically rolled back. But Hegel's emphasis on the moral foundation upon which private property must be checked never meant that we could not *regress* to an earlier and more short-sighted way of thinking. Furthermore, his analysis points to some of the institutional and philosophical inadequacies that might help us to comprehend present trends.

It is only if the human will is seen as an abstract, creative principle that imposes its own form onto a supposedly neutral and indifferent world that it

must be either rejected as imperialistic or embraced and pursued to its logical conclusion in communism. But Hegel's conception of the will is *not* abstract; it is informed by a larger intuition of the good, a sense of connection to the larger whole, experienced in love and conscience. It is this *substance* of the will that is key to the possibility of limiting and transforming capitalism and of developing a different relationship to the natural world. And it is the *eclipse* of this substance, to the extent that this has happened, that helps us to understand why the problems associated with capitalism continue to be central to our time.

The Problem of Evil

The idea that Hegel's notion of the will is invalidated by an event such as the Holocaust appears to have two grounds. On the one hand, there is the notion that Hegel's conception of evil is incapable of doing justice to the evil witnessed in the Holocaust and in fact provides a partial justification of such an event (e.g., Wyschogrod 1985). On the other hand, there is the idea, found in thinkers such as Fackenheim and Lacoue-Labarthe, that the notion of a will that seeks to realize its inner truth is fundamentally *implicated* in the crimes of National Socialism. We must examine each of these charges in turn.

It is upon Hegel's notion of experience and of history as a progressive overcoming, as expressed in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* and his *Philosophy of History*, that the charge is made that he cannot do justice to the Holocaust. In this view of Hegel, all experience is seen to be "necessary" in the sense that, however one-sided a viewpoint may be, it is nevertheless something we had to go through in order to learn from it and progress to a higher one. The experience is thus "overcome," but it is also partially justified in that it is what mediates the overcoming. It is a stage on the way to a higher truth, a necessary partial truth, a one-sided manifestation of spirit. The effect of such a view of history and of experience is that it provides a partial justification for evils and injustices—it gives them a meaning as a stage in the learning process from which we can progress to something better.

Yet it is obvious to most people that such cannot be said about atrocities of the twentieth century, such as the Holocaust. For even to suggest this is tantamount to justifying these events, as if the suffering of those who were victimized by them was somehow necessary. Only religious fanatics could believe that the Holocaust was an act of Providence, as if God "meant" something by it. This is true even if the Holocaust is seen, as Fackenheim believes it must be for Hegel, as a "relapse" into tribalism or barbarism (1970). In such a Hegelian view, one could go "backward" to an earlier state of understanding and lose the wisdom of experience. But it would still be from that standpoint that one would again move "forward" to a higher perspective. And this is still

bound up with the idea of overcoming, of attributing a meaning to evil events in history. To put it in Hegelian terms, the Holocaust confronts us with a non-negatable negative. It cannot be "overcome" in the Hegelian sense of the word.

Hegel's notion of experience *is* disturbing if it involves the idea that there is no absolute evil in history but only relative evils necessary to the realization of a larger truth. For it is clear that we simply cannot regard the Holocaust, or other genocides of the past century, in this way. But it is also not the case that Hegel would justify an event such as the Holocaust in this manner. Rather, there are ways of reading his thought that open up the possibility that he would have had his own explanation for the kind of evil witnessed in Germany under National Socialism, and furthermore, that this is an explanation that comes together with the explanations of Fackenheim himself and even more particularly of Hannah Arendt.

For Fackenheim, Nazism was not merely a kind of nationalism, or dictatorship, or a normal human failing. Rather it was a peculiarly modern form of idolatry (Fackenheim 1973:ch.4). The withdrawal of religious feelings from old objects of worship as a result of the demythologizing tendencies of the Enlightenment left individuals still with a will to infinity that became realized in the unthinking attachment to the idea of the Volk. "Idolatry is the literal identification of finiteness and infinitude," as in the worshipping of a statue (1973:189). The modern heir to this could be an agnosticism or atheism that denies all infinities and confines itself to finite affirmations, or it could be an "internalized" divinity, as in German Idealism or the Marxist-humanist notion of a potentially infinite human freedom. In the case of Nazism, it could lead to "the actual, literal identification, within the inward space of the individual or collective self, of finiteness and infinity" (Fackenheim 1973:192). In other words, it could result in a will to infinity that, in light of the vacuum created by the Enlightenment attack on religious objects and the loss of a "God within," historically sought to realize itself in the "demonic compact" between Hitler and the mob. This compact was an attempt to deny the reality of their finitude, and to create something infinite *ex nihilo* in the racist idea of the Volk. "[I]n deadly fear of the finite—something each might be—they are both nothings that seek to become everything in their relation" (1973:194).

But the very backdrop to Fackenheim's discussion of a "modern idolatry" is the idea that the mob became a mob because it had a feeling of its own nothingness and that it wipes out "every vestige of private reserve, every remaining trace of individual personality in order to become an actual infinity through the shout of *Seig Heil*" (1973:194). The unity with the führer is an attempt to "exorcise" the experience of nothingness and to create a sense of divinity out of something purely finite. Hannah Arendt similarly speaks of the experience of nothingness that plagued the German psyche following World War I (1968:ch.1). However, she analyzes it not in terms of a perversion of the

idea of an internalized God but in terms of the *material-psychological conditions of existence under which the Germans were living at that time*. She speaks of “the mass man’s typical feeling of superfluosity” as being “the concomitant of mass unemployment and the population growth of the last 150 years” (1968:9). Furthermore, this feeling was facilitated by the extreme atomization and isolation of individuals, through capitalism and subsequently through the breakdown of the class system in Europe, which had previously organized people into a social and political hierarchy (1968:10–15). In other words, it was facilitated by the breakdown of mediating institutions. And, like Fackenheim, she sees the result of this feeling to be the effacement of all individuality in the unthinking identification with the totalitarian movement.²⁰

It is not difficult to see a parallel between Arendt’s analysis and that of Hegel. For Hegel, the universal substance of the human will is something that can only be realized gradually, through the mediation of individual self-interest and reflective understanding. It is only in and through the expression of individual desire and material self-interest that the universal element can come to be known and recognized as law. We see this in Hegel’s argument for a limited free market, which is an enshrinement of the right of individuals to express their individual desires separately from the community and through which individuals come to a consciousness of their sameness as rights bearers. We see it in his argument for the right of distress and for a welfare state, where individuals come to an awareness of their common vulnerability as members of modern civil society. And we see it in his argument for the right of individuals in a modern state to choose their own vocation, which crystallizes in finding oneself to be a member of a larger class. Thus Hegel’s universal or “divine” is always a mediated universal. It always emerges only in and through the expression of the finite self-interests of individuals and groups. What Fackenheim is claiming is that Hegel’s argument never accounted for the possibility of an “idoltrous” identification of human and divine, of the elimination of a system of mediation that would open up the possibility of such an identification.

But what if, as happened in Nazi Germany, the mediating structures of civil society break down altogether? What if all organizing groups that articulated something beyond the narrowest self-interests of individuals are experienced as irrelevant *to the vast majority of the population*? What if there is mass unemployment, high inflation, a generalized sense of failure as a consequence of military defeat, at the same time as there is still an ideology of individualism that encourages individuals to feel that it is all their own fault? Hegel’s very emphasis on the educating, cultivating effects of the institutions of civil society—codified laws, publicity of trials, trial by jury, public schooling, free press, corporations—and the political expression of the classes in the state, implicitly points to the dangerous state of affairs in a society where

such institutions break down or become corrupted. The development of a mass culture in Germany presupposed just such a breakdown, as Hannah Arendt has argued. "The masses grew out of the fragments of a highly atomized society whose competitive structure and concomitant loneliness of the individual had been held in check only through membership in a class" (1968:15). With the breakdown of that class, the isolation becomes complete. It is then that individuals become susceptible to unthinking identification with a totalitarian movement.

The role of technology and science, put in the service of the most dehumanizing ends under Nazism, can similarly be explained from within this Hegelian perspective. For technology and science are governed by the logic of reflective rationality. For Hegel this logic must always be informed and contained by the deeper substance of the will, by love. But if love is never developed and realized in a rational manner, if the true substance of the will remains a mere potential, a mere urge toward unity and infinity, then technology is indeed cut off from its own deepest source and allowed to run unchecked; it can then be put in the service of whatever insane proposals are put forth.

Hegel's darker ponderings in *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* may not have reached the point of envisioning the kind of identification between a totalitarian movement and its people that we witnessed in the last century, but his analysis is not contradicted by it. On the contrary, in his very notion that individuals have a will to unity, a deep urge toward an identification with something larger than themselves, and in his notion that this will and this urge must be developed and cultivated in and through the mediating structures of civil society and the state, his thought contains all the elements that would point the way toward comprehending what would happen if the mediating structures were to break down. In face of the breakdown of any possibility of mediation and the complete isolation of individuals, the drive toward unity and infinity could indeed become realized in an *immediate* fashion, without engaging the critical intellect of the individual. In the passionate, pathological identification with the führer and the idea of the Volk, the individual could repudiate the sense of his own nothingness and attain a sense of identity. He "may even be willing to help in his own prosecution and frame his own death sentence if only his status as a member of the movement is not touched" (Arendt 1968:5).

In spite of the optimism of his positive political philosophy, then, Hegel was dimly aware that the modern world might stray onto the fatal course that he saw glimmering within it, the atrophy of moral conscience in the face of its relegation to the private realm of opinion, and the founding of the public sphere on the most abstract and anemic notion of equality. Such a condition would not only leave individuals to find their way in an atomistic individualism but in face

of the breakdown of ethical institutions, can explain their susceptibility to demagogic figures who could fill the vacuum of conscience and satisfy the communal longing in no matter how dangerous a fashion.

Not only does Hegel have, within his thought, the resources for comprehending the evils of the Holocaust, but he also has the basis upon which to condemn it. For while his theory does indeed embrace a drive toward infinity in the individual, and actions taken from conscience, such actions must always stand subordinate to the judgment of reason. And his own rational arguments about the “true” substance or infinity of the will could never support the racist ideology of National Socialism. On the contrary, these arguments are meant to support actions and policies that recognize the universality of humankind (e.g., PR §209).

Furthermore, Hegel’s thought does not justify an event such as the Holocaust as a stage on the way toward a higher learning, any more than it justifies the Crusades, or feudalism, or the terrors of the French Revolution, or any other event or period of history in which great crimes and injustices were committed. In his consideration of these latter events and periods, he is portraying how the drive to infinity can be expressed in a horribly perverted or distorted form. He is providing a critique of such events and structures. The fact that in history peoples have expressed the drive to infinity in such manner in no way makes these events necessary or inevitable. We have already seen how, in Hegel’s philosophical presentation in *Philosophy of Right* he gives no place to the excesses of the Roman Empire or to feudalism. Rather the actual philosophical system, of which *Philosophy of Right* forms a part (in distinction from *Phenomenology* and *Philosophy of History*), shows as necessary only the positive and true content of the human will, *not* its historical perversions. While it is indeed true to say that we can learn from these historical experiences, just as we can learn from the Holocaust (and Fackenheim’s, Lacoue-Labarthe’s, and Wyschogrod’s readings of modern theory in light of the Holocaust are precisely such attempts to learn), this in no way justifies such experiences as having been necessary.

Yet the critique of Hegel on this count goes deeper. It is argued that precisely what we do learn from an event such as the Holocaust is that the whole modern, Western ontology of the will, Hegel’s included, is fundamentally *implicated* in the event. Since the Holocaust was brought about, according to Fackenheim, by an idolatrous identification of the human and the divine, in the relationship between the German people and the führer, the very Hegelian notion of an internal “God” is itself implicated in opening up the danger of such an idolatrous identification. The very idea of attempting to realize a universal principle on earth, in the modern state, meant that secular politics can be construed as a religious activity, imbued with infinite significance. Christianity in fact and all of its secular variants set the foundation for this. Then,

in the face of spiritual decay, it opened up the opportunity for the emergence of an "anti-Christ," in the form of Hitler. It is this that shatters Hegel's notion of the modern world as constituted by the identity of the divine and the human, says Fackenheim. Such an identity "can survive anything except an idolatrous identification of the two" (1973:158).

A similar argument is made by Lacoue-Labarthe. The "organic interpretation of the political," according to Lacoue-Labarthe, the notion that a community is grounded in a preexistent identity, which must be developed through *technē* or—as he reads Hegel—through *Bildung*, has as its ultimate "truth" the program of Nation Socialism (1990:77). The very notion that there is a natural or 'physical' determination of the community" such as in Aristotle's notion of the nature of man, or in Hegel and Kant's notion that reason is the true substance of the will, and that this natural basis is revealed through culture, or language, or "*technē*," contains within itself, according to him, the possibility of National Socialism. In his most explicit statement, he says that

there is nothing . . . compelling this political logic to come to be grounded in a biologism and to substitute the race for the nation (or the language community). But it can very easily be taken in that direction once *physis* comes to be interpreted as *bios* on the authority of a 'science'. This is, however, *merely a consequence of the organic interpretation of the political*. (1990:69, [my emphasis])

Not only is the "original attribution of identity," the presupposition of a "subject" whose realization is governed by "the authority of the same" (1990:81–82), the problem here. So too is the idea that this subject gets revealed through *technē*, through a conceptual, grasping, self-creating reason; in Hegelian terms, through reflective rationality. For the racist interpretation of the subject or "physis" went hand in hand "with a massive unleashing of *technē*," which then loses sight of its original foundation and any limits that might be set by it. It is not so much that this idea of the subject and its development is "the cause" of anti-Semitism and Nazism or an "explanation" of it, says Lacoue-Labarthe, so much as it was a "truth" that "entered in a decisive way into the Hitlerian variant of anti-semitism" (1990:102–03).

Thus for both Fackenheim and Lacoue-Labarthe, the event of the Holocaust points to the need to repudiate the Hegelian ontology of will and to conceive the political on another basis. But are Fackenheim and Lacoue-Labarthe right? Does the very possibility that the essence of the human will could be realized in an idolatrous identification with a racist Volk and an insane use of technical reason indict the very *idea* of such a will? Is the very idea of "the God within," as Fackenheim calls it, or "the organic conception of the political," *the* fundamental condition for understanding Nazism, rendering

derivative all of the other material-psychological factors which Arendt points to? It is not at all clear why this must be so.

For Kant, the notion of “the God within” refers to the idea of the human will as guided by an autonomous reason (*Vernunft*). Similarly for Hegel, this reason is the essence, even as he conceives it in a larger sense than does Kant, as imbedded in nature, and elaborates much more clearly the conditions for its realization. But that all of the conditions of life upon which this reason could be realized might fail individuals, and that they could then become susceptible to the unthinking deification of a totalitarian movement, that this in and of itself speaks to a shattering of the Hegelian notion of the will, seems a drastic conclusion. For there are clearly resources within Hegel, and the whole of this tradition for that matter, that allow us to understand and to criticize what happened in Germany, as I have suggested above. Furthermore, it is precisely to the notion of “the God within,” or to the knowledge of love and its development in the modern self, that we might look to find an explanation for the fact that individuals can and did resist the evils of the Holocaust.²¹ And if we can do this from *within* their perspective, can they really be repudiated in the radical manner that Fackenheim and Lacoue-Labarthe purport? Is it really the metaphysical idea itself that can be targeted as the central problem afflicting the German psyche of this time, rather than the nearly complete moral, political, and economic breakdown that was experienced? Is there not something arbitrary about putting this ontology at the very centre of our historical understanding of the Holocaust?

Hegel’s explanation of the historical failures and limitations in the realization of ethical life *can* illuminate the problems of atomism, capitalism, and evil, precisely those problems that have been thought to challenge his ontology of the will. And just as his thought contains a means of critically understanding the problems of our time, so also does it point a way forward.

5

Hegel and the Dual Task of Today

HEGEL'S EXPLANATION OF THE various limitations in the realization of ethical life as he had envisioned it is significant both in its critical and its constructive potential. Critically, the explanation clearly situates him as a participant in what, in the twentieth century, has come to be known as the "critique of instrumental rationality." Hegel's awareness of the dark potential that lay within Enlightenment reasoning, its tendency to turn on and evacuate the very substance of individual autonomy that was supposed to constitute the hallmark of the modern age, brings him into line with subsequent nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinkers who have sought to come to grips with a negative trajectory imbedded within this reasoning. Tocqueville's charting of the relationship between a society founded on the abstract notion of equality and the development on the one hand of an "administrative despotism" and on the other of a mediocritized private life, Nietzsche's analysis of "the last man," Weber's discussion of the "iron cage" and of "disenchantment," Heidegger's fears of the totalistic tendency of thinking as "enframing," Foucault's portrayal of the panopticon, the Frankfurt School's analysis of the self-destructive "dialectic" of Enlightenment, Strauss's critique of the position of mastery implicit in the modern separation of "fact" and "value," Arendt's discussion of the triumph of the *animal laborans* and its connection to the rise of the "mass man," Freud's and Jung's various approaches to the "discontents" of civilization, to list just some of the most prominent analyses, seek to expose this dark and destructive element inherent in Enlightenment rationality.

But Hegel's own response to this darkness, to the tendency of reflective rationality to cut itself off from the source of the will, from the developed moral sentiments and experiences of individuals, and to run unchecked, is not ultimately to retreat to the elite confines of speculative philosophy and to leave the world to its own devices. Rather, with his positive conception of conscience and

reason, and his notion of how these are to be developed and reconciled in the modern person, and the modern world, his thought points us in two directions—towards the task of life and the task of philosophy.

THE TASK OF LIFE

At the level of life, of actual, individual experience in time, the task must be to see how a sense of the universal basis of the will can best be cultivated. The task becomes one of “edification,” a task that, since *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel had explicitly disavowed as the domain of philosophy (PS §9/12). The problem of edification, or moral cultivation, in an era where an abstract and instrumental reasoning attacks and reduces the subjective basis of the political community, is indeed the problem of our time.

It was in ethical life that Hegel himself placed the most hopes for the practices of edification. The moral cultivation of children in the familial environment of love, the practices of commitment entailed in the institution of marriage and the lasting bond that he believed to be its result, the pursuit of one’s own good in civil society and the moral experiences encountered therein, the growing awareness of one’s interdependence with others, the commitment to the principles of justice and social welfare that result, the choice of vocation and the development of class consciousness through participation in that vocation, the identification with the general will that comes with the seeing of one’s class interests expressed politically—these are the crucial bases of edification for the modern individual.

Hegel’s diagnosis of the problems with ethical life in terms of an eclipse of love and conscience point in a number of directions toward reform. In particular, his attention to the essential role of the family and to the laws, practices, and institutions of a healthy civil society in cultivating truly moral and autonomous individuals points us to the failures or inadequacy of such institutions in our own time.

Hegel’s consideration of the family in terms of its fundamental role in laying the foundation for virtue in future citizens, while most evidently tied to an argument for keeping women in the domestic sphere, also lays the basis for a far-reaching critique of the family in contemporary capitalist society. For even while it is tied to his sexist views about women, such a view nevertheless has the fundamental merit of *attending to* the central moral importance of the family in a manner of which liberal feminism has too often been neglectful. Such a recognition of the important role that traditional women played in the health of a modern democracy has significant implications in light of the fact that women have broken with this purely traditional role. With women en masse now participating in the public realm on a level equal with that of men,

what Hegel's analysis points toward is the need of society to *account for* the work that these women traditionally did, in all of its aspects. What this means is that, instead of simply opening the doors of the public to women in a formal manner and expecting them to cope with the double burden of both realms, as a right-wing liberal feminism would do, there must be an attempt by society on the one hand to relieve them of some of the domestic tasks and on the other hand to alter the expectations of the public realm so that there is a recognition of the role that parents are playing at home. More concretely, this means such things as more and better state subsidized daycare, better recognition and pay for childcare workers, better maternity and paternity leave, state-sponsored children's programming, a reduced work week, more part-time work or job-sharing, reduced expectations of professionals in terms of quantity of hours and output, and so on.

This is not an issue merely of the material labor of the household, but more profoundly of its *moral* labor in producing the next generation of citizens. Society must pay profound attention to the *quality* of the relationship between parents and children. And allowing parents the time, energy, and support system that will enable them to better perform their role in developing the character of their children must be a central preoccupation for a society that is truly concerned about democracy in the larger sense of the term, about the capacity of citizens to develop a sense of responsibility toward the larger whole. Far from feeding into the agenda of a religious right, then, Hegel's concern for the role of traditional women in a good society, in face of the reality of women's liberation, points us instead toward progressive policies that strengthen the family by recognizing the importance of both roles that parents are now playing.

Hegel's ideas about the cultivation of conscience through the institutions of civil society also point to the need for development and policies in this arena. His precise institutional prescriptions for incorporating and transcending business interests are of limited value for us today. His notion of the "corporation" as the educating, mediating organization that would bring workers and owners together in the articulation of a common interest is naive, in light of what seems to be an inherent antagonism between workers and owners. And his idea of a legislative system based on corporate representation of different classes rather than in terms of a representative democracy by population may seem anachronistic. Nevertheless, the need for some kind of mediating structure both to incorporate group interests other than those of capital and to foster individuals' experience of interdependence and commonality is clearly articulated by his philosophy. And the responses in history in terms of the trade union movement, public interest groups, political parties, the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the gay rights movement, the environmental movement, the aboriginal rights movement, certain civic nationalist movements, coalitions against

poverty, student movements, independent media, and so on serve to vindicate this aspect of his thought. These movements and structures provide an environment within which the moral conscience of individuals is stimulated and educated. Their function, in Hegel's terms, is their "cultic practice" in a largely secular world, the elevation of the feelings and sentiments of individuals to an identification with a larger good. Furthermore, in countries such as Sweden a model of corporatism has developed that brings the essential class identities together in the articulation of public policy, thus offering some more realistic historical model for the fulfillment of this need.

At the level of individual activity, Hegel's ultimate message is a call for a return to conscience. Individually, it is by virtue of a turn to one's conscience that one can find a basis upon which to stand in face of the dominance of the utilitarian thinking of reflective rationality in one's own life and in one's relationship to the society at large. It is by standing upon conscience that one can gain a greater sense of integrity in one's own being. Conscience provides us with the ground for a relationship to nature different than that which instrumental reason can dispense. This is because conscience is a different experience of our *own* nature, our own bodies. It constitutes a guide that is rooted in sensuous existence, in harmony with reason, rather than an abstract reasoning that imposes itself on nature according to a calculation of efficiency. Collectively, it constitutes the basis for a genuine connection to others at the level of the political. It is through common experiences of injustice and of responses to it that individuals can find a meaningful ground, not through the imposition of a dominating ideology but through a spontaneous coming together in particular and concrete moral struggles toward the betterment of society.

Historically it has been this kind of local and incremental politics that has fostered conscience and achieved genuine change in the world. The struggles of the working class and of women to gain the franchise, the strikes by the working class in the post-World War II era for the rights of collective bargaining, for a forty-hour work week, for better wages and safe working conditions, the civil rights movement in the United States, citizen action against freeway building in the 1960s, the decisions of individual women in the 1960s and 70s to make changes in their own lives and the political struggles that accompanied this, the aboriginal rights movement, the environmental movement, the struggles to render world trade more democratic are all examples of actions from conscience that bring people together to create meaningful change and community.

This is not to say that solutions have been found or that we do not continue to face the problems already articulated above. But what it does say is that Hegel's thought provides the basis for recognizing such struggles, that it offers hope for future resistance in the future, and general prescriptions for institutional reform and civic education that could foster such struggles. Phi-

losophy itself cannot provide the solutions to the problems encountered in history. Rather it is in history that we will find the answer. It is precisely upon the standpoint of conscience that individuals are making the kinds of responses that are necessary. If we are to understand these movements, these actions, and where they represent a genuine moral response and where they may be symptomatic of the deeper failure, such as in ethnic nationalism, they must be understood in terms of a return to conscience.

It may well seem paradoxical to call for a return to conscience in the very face of an argument that conscience has become partially eclipsed and that the mediating organizations that might foster it and integrate individuals into a larger sense of community have failed or been inadequate. But while conscience may be eclipsed, it can never be destroyed. And it is clear that life itself routinely presents us with situations where moral decisions are needed. Even to accept one's own integration into the system, and under what terms, is a moral choice that must be taken by consulting, or denying, one's own conscience. It is by these kinds of individual decisions and self-examinations, furthermore, that organizations and movements, such as the women's movement or the gay rights movement, are brought into being that do provide for resistance and change on a collective level and where a genuine sense of community—however tenuous and fragile—might be forged.

History since the time of Hegel has taken us into uncharted territory—the decline of religion, the ascendance of capitalism, the domination of instrumental reasoning with all its attendant effects. Yet while conscience must be our guide in confrontation with these realities, we are not left to mere individual decisionism, to a mere assertion of our own viewpoint. For actions and movements that do constitute a genuine struggle for freedom and progress can be rationally vindicated. Indeed, many of the most important struggles we have witnessed in the one hundred and seventy years since Hegel's death have been struggles that emanate out of principles of right that are already recognized in principle and enshrined in law or that *become* so recognized, such as welfare and the care of the environment. The extension of the franchise, the rights of workers, the development of the welfare state, the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the movement toward sustainable development, and so on are not the product of an appeal to conscience in abstraction from reason and society. Rather they are emanations of principles already recognized and vindicated, or they constitute rational, incremental responses to situations not previously encountered in history.

We are indeed living in dark times, and it may be necessary for individuals to stake out new and independent standpoints of conscience and to find others with whom they can stand, at a time when the world will not always reflect them. Yet it is unlikely that we will find ourselves in a position of a Socrates or a Christ, in a time when the public order must be so radically

opposed; it is unlikely that the world is so totally corrupted that individuals, as Hegel says, must retreat into themselves to find the right and the good (PR 138R). The foundational moral principles upon which individual and collective struggles for justice draw are in place, even if they sometimes, and even increasingly, find themselves under siege. The darkness of our times confronts us, in Western, liberal democracies, not in the utter disintegration of the public realm or in the failure of fundamental moral principles to find themselves upheld there. Rather it is to be found in the too often failure of individuals to live up to already established principles of freedom, our tendency to sink into passivity and conformism, or a quietist cynicism, the tendency to take our guide from external sources rather than from the counsels of our own conscience. And that philosophy has a significant role to play in helping us to take these stands of conscience is clear from what has gone before.

THE TASK OF PHILOSOPHY

We have already discussed Hegel's views on the task of philosophy in the previous two chapters—the rational vindication of moral principles realized through the activities of conscience and the experiences involved in such action and its recognition by others. We have also examined some of the ways in which some dominant philosophies fail or fall short in this task. It remains to be examined what Hegel's philosophy itself offers us in response to this task.

Hegel's concept of 'ethical life,' of the implicit unity of individual and community, conscience and the law, the ways in which institutions are always bound up with a set of ethical practices that allow them to function, has been perhaps one of the most influential aspects of his thought (e.g., Mitias 1984, Smith 1989, Taylor 1975). And the implications of this concept, from the interpretation of Hegel offered here, are far-reaching in terms of validating individual experiences of being part of a larger community, of having obligations and commitments to that community as well as expectations of it. This concept is also important in terms of providing justifications for policies and institutions that reflect and foster this reality of commonality and interdependence.

But Hegel's philosophy sought to do more than to teach us about the fundamental, reciprocal dependence of individual and community, of conscience and the law. It sought to *prove* that certain modern principles and institutions were fundamentally true and necessary and that they constituted the genuine substance of individual freedom—love and the family, private property, punishment, the rights of moral subjectivity, the welfare state, class identity and representation, and patriotism. Hegel sought to demonstrate these principles, the institutions and laws that embody them, and the conscience that supports them, not as something contingent and culture-bound, not as something

made by merely human hands, but as embodying “the essentially and actually universal and genuine principles of eternal righteousness” (Enc. §552).

Today, the claim of Hegel’s philosophy to constitute a science is not one that is often taken seriously (Dienstag 2001). Yet even if the idea of his system as constituting a rationally impenetrable fortress might be rejected by most, it is nevertheless the case that, alongside his concept of ethical life, certain other of his arguments continue to be extremely influential, and there is an abiding interest in his political philosophy. His arguments for private property and for punishment remain a fundamental reference point for thinking on this topic. His argument for a right of distress and for a welfare state to begin to address the problem of poverty and the general instabilities of capitalist economies turned out to be prophetic, being borne out by the logic of history with the Great Depression and the responses to it in the postwar era of the Western world. His critique of the atomism of democracy still has currency (Stillman 1974), and his idea of mediating institutions has had a far-reaching impact (Macpherson 1977:ch. 5, Nisbet 1990). Even if we must reject the claim of Hegel’s philosophy to constitute a science, then, various of his ideas and arguments go a long way toward vindicating some of our most deeply held ethical convictions and toward promoting policies that reflect and foster such convictions. In providing us with such arguments, Hegel’s analysis helps to bolster individual convictions and moral sentiments. He helps to show us that our moral action is not just a matter of opinion, individual desire, value judgment, or social product but that it is rooted in important principles that can be rationally defended. Thus, he provides us with philosophical resources that can help us in the face of a dominant reasoning that would seek to reduce our moral experiences and the victories that they might achieve.

Perhaps most important in terms of what has been argued here, however, is the significance of Hegel for our understanding of a modern moral subjectivity.¹ His idea of conscience as overcoming the purported abstractness of Kantian morality, the notion of willing from a unity of reason and emotion and out of a concrete situation in the world, and the emphasis on the intuitive knowledge involved in mutual reconciliation (ch. 2) suggests that he may have much to offer to feminist attempts to theorize an embodied subjectivity that pays heed to modes of knowing that have previously been excluded (e.g., Baert 1999, Brown 1988, Keller 1986, Marso 1999, Lloyd 1984, Pateman 1988, Zerilli 1994). It is quite likely, in fact, that his thinking, as understood here, could contribute to the projects of those who have previously seen it as hostile to their aims (O’Brien 1996, Desmond 2001).

More generally, with this understanding of moral subjectivity Hegel can be situated as an ongoing participant in contemporary thinking about the possibilities for democracy today. He remains among those few in the critique of instrumental rationality who, by seeking to articulate an alternative capacity

within the human spirit which resides as a possibility for us today, succumbs to neither a bleak pessimism nor an antimodern nostalgia.²

Hegel's notion of a will rooted in love avoids the pessimism that inheres in the perspectives of Nietzsche, Weber, and the early Frankfurt School. From Hegel's perspective, the apparent culmination of modernity in a reduction of life to comfortable self-preservation, on the one hand, and the domination of the public realm by a narrow, technical rationality, on the other, is *not* a historical inevitability or a clear, logical unfolding unadulterated by other realities. Rather, with his roots in Rousseau and Kant, he sustains the conviction that there is a core element of the human spirit that can *and does* resist the colonizing, reductionist, and eclipsing tendencies of abstract rationality. The larger principle with which we come into contact in authentic experiences of love and conscience is not a principle that can be destroyed, although we may lose our conscious connection with it. Rather, it is a light that continues to shine in the lives of actual individuals and from which we can draw hope and sustenance. It is only by upholding a deeper notion of the modern will that we can comprehend genuine moral action, that we can sustain the courage and the convictions necessary to confront the darkness of our times, and that we can keep alive any hope in the possibility of a genuine humanity.

At the same time, in his commitment to modern, reflective rationality, Hegel resolutely refuses the antimodern nostalgia evident in thinkers such as Heidegger, Strauss, and Arendt. While he was clearly aware of the destructive potential of modern thinking, Hegel also understood it as integral to individual freedom and equality. Thus he remained committed to giving it a central place in modern existence. But this in no way means that human thought would inevitably be reduced by the logic of its own development to the abstract and calculating reasoning of instrumental rationality. Rather it is in his belief that modern abstract reasoning can find its place and yet be limited or transcended in the life of the individual that we find his profound commitment to the modern project.

In light of these two central features of Hegel's idea of the will—his insistence on the genuine foundation of conscience and his incorporation of the principle of reflective rationality—I would argue that he is among those few participants in the critique of instrumental rationality who has adequately conceptualized the basis from which we can and do respond to the realities of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Properly understood, Hegel's thought can help to embolden us in genuine acts of conscience, to recognize and vindicate such actions in others, and can provide guidance in reforming our social and political institutions. He remains a powerful thinker for our times.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. This question of a drive to self-knowledge, and thus to recognition, is, of course, an essentially metaphysical one, which Hobbes seeks to reduce to a primal struggle to survive, but which even in his thought seems to point toward an inherent, human sociability.

2. While Marx certainly has a concept of 'transcendence,' his revolutionary ideal does not fit within this construal of the problem. Alienation for him was indeed tied to the principle of subjectivity, in the sense that it is rooted in the original separation of mental and material labor, and the division into a ruling and producing class tied to that distinction. This division, which began originally in the family between the man and the woman, was the basis of all future exploitation and alienation. But it was a division that began in prehistory, according to him, and all future history is an extension of it. Hence the idea that one can find a sharp dividing line between traditional and modern in the terms discussed here flies in the face of a Marxist analysis. Modern subjectivity was, for him, a product of the modern bourgeois economy, and to comprehend it one must look to its materialist basis, rather than taking it on its own terms.

3. See Harris (1972) and Taylor (1975) for detailed discussions of the intellectual context within which Hegel's concerns were shaped.

4. This is manifest in his "Tubingen fragment," in "The Life of Jesus," and in "The Positivity of the Christian Religion." Both Knox and Kroner (1971) emphasize the Kantian nature of Hegel's thought here, while Harris (1972) and Henrich (1970) paint a picture of undoubtedly much more accurate complexity, referring to the individuality of Hegel's appropriation of Kant and pointing out the influence of other figures such as Mendelssohn, Lessing, Spinoza, Rousseau, and most notably, the young Schelling. Harris, as I indicate, also points to Hegel's concern with the principle of Christian love as having been evident from the beginning, instead of emerging merely with the "Spirit of Christianity" essay as Kroner seems to argue. Nevertheless, what is essential here is that all seem to be in agreement about moral reason as forming the essential core of Hegel's ontology in this period, as the basis for individual autonomy and political community, whether it be in the Kantian sense of subjective moral con-

sciousness or in the Fichtean sense of the individual's participation in a larger moral reason. And all recognize the shift in this conception when Hegel came under the influence of Hölderlin.

5. Kroner (1971) refers to Hegel's existential encounter with the "mystical certainty" of love.

6. Hyppolite (1974) recognizes the mystical element in Hegel's writings, but nevertheless appropriates the latter in a secular manner in his subsequent writings on Hegel. Kroner (1971) also emphasizes this religious or mystical basis of Hegel's thought in the early writings, but believes that he abandons it in his subsequent philosophical development.

7. See especially Fackenheim's discussion of the "crucial assumption" of the Hegelian middle. Copleston concludes that Hegel never actually achieved such a philosophical vindication.

8. Westphal's (1979) interesting analysis of the achievement of mutual recognition in terms of love also has political implications, but as I suggest in chapter two, he seems to restrict these mainly to mutual toleration, rather than developing the more substantive implications of love.

CHAPTER 1

1. Kroner, for example, ranks it with *The Phenomenology of Spirit* as the most important of Hegel's texts.

2. Thus, this early essay by Hegel can be seen to stand in the same relationship to the rest of his philosophy as *The Second Discourse* does to Rousseau's, for in both pieces the authors are seeking to come to terms with the modern individual's alienation from a more primordial knowing due to the development of the modern principle of reflective thought. Both pieces thus represent a point of departure for the thinkers' subsequent philosophical development.

3. And not just in terms of his attempt to come to grips with the modern socio-economic reality, as others have tended to do (e.g., Lukács 1975; Plant 1983). See also Laurence Dickey's (1987) work more generally on this confrontation. It is true that Hegel is examining the clash between love and a world dominated by private property relations, but as I shall discuss, property has its deeper root for him in the rise of reflective rationality that fundamentally characterizes the modern subjectivity.

4. Besides Kroner, Lukács, and Plant already mentioned, Adams (1984), Avineri (1980), Cullen (1979), Harris (1993, 1972), Henrich (1970, 1997), Kaufmann (1965), Marcuse (1960), Mure (1965), Schmitz (1985), and Taylor (1975), all discuss this early text.

5. As reflected in Hegel's *Differenzschrift*.

6. See in particular Harris's discussion of Hegel's "phenomenological crisis" of 1805 (Harris 1993), which constituted Hegel's break with the "transcendental intuition" of the *Differenzschrift* and which gave birth to *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. See also Frederick Beiser (1993) and Dieter Henrich (1997) for the most clear and accurate discussions of these shifts. Kroner runs together the last two phases of Hegel's development, so he cannot adequately account for *Phenomenology*. Avineri's extremely accurate and detailed reading of the early texts nevertheless does not get at the basic question of the ontological shifts in Hegel's thought.

7. Kroner suggests, regretfully, that this seems to be the case. Commentators influenced by Marx's view of Hegel also seem to point in this direction (Cullen, Marcuse, and Plant). Richard Solomon (whose reductionist reading of the shifts in the early Hegel cannot be taken seriously), suggests that love is left behind when he says "The *Phenomenology* has relatively little to say about 'love,'" (1985:144). It is precisely this that I wish to disagree with in the work that follows.

8. For Harris (1984), the breach between nature and spirit is decisive, after which point "substance" cannot be grounded in intuition but in language. Taylor (1975) emphasizes Hegel's move into the self-grounding logical circle. Similarly, Dieter Henrich (1997) sees Hegel as breaking with a Hölderlinian intuition of Being or substance and comprehending love in terms of a relation of opposites. Robert Williams (1992) follows Henrich in this understanding. All of this does indeed shed light on Hegel's mature *philosophical* understanding of love, but it leaves ambiguous the question of what role love continues to play at the level of experience.

9. In *The Mystical Element in Hegel's Early Theological Writings* he suggests that "perhaps the most interesting and significant problem in the interpretation of the Hegelian philosophy, and indeed of all absolute idealisms, is precisely this relation between the two motives of intuition and discursive thought, experience and its intellectual elaboration, mysticism and rationalism" (1984:69). Laurence Dickey is one of the few who gives reference to Adams's work.

10. Nancy (1993), in a slightly different take on this question, argues that aspects of Hegel's system are in fact motivated by a "knowledge of affection" and not by pure logic. But he sees this as a covert knowledge in the system of which Hegel himself was unconscious and which thereby subverts the purely logical structure.

11. Kojève is the most notable here, but we find it also in Marcuse (1960) and Riedel (1984), the last of whom is the major scholarly source for Marxist appropriations of Hegel. Laurence Dickey's *Hegel* is an excellent corrective to this view, arguing that Hegel keeps his earlier idea of *homo religiosus* but tries to comprehend how it could be reconciled with the modern reality of the *homo economicus*. See also Miriam Bienstock, "Hegel's Jena Writings: Recent Trends in Research," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, 11, (1985), 7–15, for another critique of such Marxist appropriations of Hegel from a similar perspective to that offered here.

12. Hegel maintained and strengthened his critique of a politics of abstract right into his mature philosophy, and hence I use *The Philosophy of History* in concert with "The Spirit of Christianity" here to illuminate his criticisms.

13. Hegel's hostile and troubling remarks about the Jews in "The Spirit of Christianity" can be explained as the product of his more general hostility toward the principle of reflective rationality, even though he has not himself clearly sorted out the relationship at this point. "The Spirit of Christianity" is a transitional piece, where he is confronting reflective thought and the world of private property relations as realities that cannot be denied (and in which he sees the Jewish religion as fundamentally implicated), but that at the same time he views as largely negative realities. It is only later that he will incorporate his reasoning and the private property attached to it as an essential aspect of the unfolding of the Absolute. Significantly, his hostile attitude to the Jews also disappears in this later period. See *Philosophy of History* 321/388 for Hegel's mature understanding of the role of the Jews in history. Emil Fackenheim (1973:111 ff.) recognizes that Hegel's real philosophical point about the Jews regards the fundamental otherness of the divine in their religion. Fackenheim, furthermore, acknowledges the element of truth in this view of the historical Jews but says that Hegel ignores the whole Jewish response to divine-human separation from the Middle Ages onward, their own "dialectical" responses that make Judaism still a competitor with the divine-human unity that Hegel understands to have come into being with Christianity.

14. See "The Positivity of the Christian Religion," which Hegel wrote in 1795 and which is translated in Hegel's *Early Theological Writings*.

15. Indeed, in his critique of the Roman empire in the *Philosophy of History* Hegel goes further, tying the principle of abstract right to Rome's immanent decline into empire, corruption, and disintegration (PH 279 ff.).

16. While here Hegel seems to lump Kant together with the narrow, reflective reasoning of the Enlightenment, in the 1801 *Differenzschrift* he clarifies his relationship to Kant, suggesting that the latter had achieved a higher philosophical standpoint in his "Transcendental Deduction" but that he had then proceeded, like Fichte, to conceptualize the unity of the self reflectively, which results in the limitation suggested above.

17. We can see why commentators have pointed to this essay as an early instance of Hegel's dialectic or principle of sublation (*Aufhebung*), e.g., Adams (1984) and Harris (1993:34).

18. A further illustration of how love constitutes an overcoming of the separation of law and being is found in Hegel's discussion of "fate," in "The Spirit of Christianity." This has been well discussed by Adams and others.

19. *Life* is the term that Hegel uses in "Spirit" to refer to the underlying unity of existence, while *love* is the conscious recapturing of that unity. See Harris, (1972:26–27) for a further discussion of this distinction.

20. This realization of the bond of love through the physical act may contain consequences for the community as a whole, as Hegel seems to suggest in his reference to the "community of wives," (SC 280/323).

21. Harris (1993) argues that Hegel intended the “Fragment on Love” as a part of the “Spirit” essay.

22. Lukács and Plant, for example, both emphasize this aspect of the failure. The emphasis on this is also bound to be linked to Hegel’s apparent blaming of the Jews in certain places in the essay. For he seems to attribute to them the responsibility for having despiritualized life to such an extent that love required such withdrawal. But the real explanation is deeper, pointing to the nature of the modern subjectivity itself, as I argue.

23. See Wood (1990) for a version of this latter view.

CHAPTER 2

1. This idea of the Absolute as known through intuition is derived from Fichte’s *Science of Knowledge*. Fichte, following Kant’s “transcendental deduction,” had conceptualized the Absolute Identity as Ego, as a subject that comes to be an object through its own self-positing, and thus as unconditioned by any more fundamental cause. Although for Fichte the Absolute Ego is a primordial subject-object unity and thus is prior to, and the condition of, ordinary consciousness, we do have access to it through what he calls “intellectual intuition,” in the idea we all have that it is we who think and we who act. At the same time this is not an immediate knowledge of ourselves as self-positing subjects, for then the intuition would be an object conditioned by the knowing subject. But the Absolute is the unconditioned. Thus Fichte conceives the intuition not as a consciousness of self as object, or consciousness at all, but as an aspect of the coming to be of consciousness, as the *postulated condition* of self-consciousness. It was this idea of the intuition as a postulate rather than an actual knowledge, as well as the reflective standpoint from which Fichte constructed his system to try and show the truth of that postulate, to which Hegel objected. The “transcendental intuition” reflects what Hegel saw in Schelling as the corrective to Fichte’s defects, as we shall see.

2. The phrase is Rosenkranz’s, and it is Harris (1993) who dates the crisis at 1805.

3. This is most evident in citations Rosenkranz provides in his biography of Hegel from some now lost 1804 lecture notes (Rosenkranz 260).

4. Flay, for example, in his attempt to formalize the dialectic in *Phenomenology*, is forced to bring the “naive consciousness” found at the beginning of *Phenomenology* into a dialogue with reflective consciousness. The “presupposition set” of the naive consciousness is what is articulated “if he ever became reflective” (1982:21). By *why* he would become reflective or strive to find a knowledge that confirms his natural certainty is not explained.

5. See also *Philosophy of History* (311–12/378) for a discussion of this decline.

6. See the transition from “Abstract Right” to “Morality,” as well as the transition from “The Administration of Justice” to “The Police and Corporation” in the section “Civil Society” in *Philosophy of Right*. See *Philosophy of History*, pp. 279 ff., for the portrayal of the immanent disintegration of the Roman Empire.

7. In *Philosophy of Right* the experience of love is found not in the Christian faith but in the nuclear family, which indicates that Hegel’s identification of love with Christianity is of secondary importance. The interesting aspect of his argument is simply that individuals must have an experience of love in their life in order to go beyond the extreme individualism of the standpoint of reflective thought.

8. My more detailed exposition showing the unfolding of the contradiction of Enlightenment consciousness, from its battle with faith to its concept of utility, to the terror of the French Revolution and the contradictions of Kantianism, are provided in an appendix to this chapter. Since the focus of the text here is to highlight the place of love in Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, I move from this brief outline of the one-sidedness of the Enlightenment to Hegel’s positive response in conscience, which ultimately finds its roots in love, as I shall argue.

9. Hegel makes the distinction between true conscience and the merely formal conscience of self-certainty in *Philosophy of Right* (§137).

10. This is somewhat different from the standpoint of conscience we encounter in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, where he does presuppose the existence of fully developed rational institutions to which conscience can refer. Nevertheless, even there Hegel gives legitimacy to the principle of conscience as containing the truth within itself. The difference is that it now *can* find itself in harmony with an existing political community, a community that can validate the principles it espouses, whereas at the time Hegel is writing *Phenomenology* such a structure is very much in the process of being born (or so he believed).

11. Thus it does not even seem necessary to share the same opinions to constitute such a community. For example, academic communities would seem to have this character; individuals may hold different ideological positions, but they all agree to respect one another’s right to their opinion. But such a harmony is only possible if the differences remain at the level of verbal declaration and do not translate themselves into differences in concrete action or ways of living.

12. The most harmful extremities of this tendency to construct an other that one judges negatively, in order to sustain an idea of one’s own truth and purity, is revealed in Hegel’s discussion in *Philosophy of History*. In retreating into their own self to seek the good and the true, the early Lutherans engaged in a “self-tormenting” process of judgment conducted against their own self, in which they constructed a radical separation of good and evil. The latter was conceptualized as “a vast power the sphere of whose malign dominion is the Secular” (PH 425/505). This radical separation between God and the devil, good and evil, grace and the human will is understood by Hegel as part of the general attempt by Christians to confront the question of knowledge of the good in one’s self by defining it against its purported other. For the Lutherans this

entailed a process of “minute and painful introspection” where individuals must “force upon their souls the consciousness of their sinfulness and to know themselves as evil” and subsequently “that man should attain the consciousness that the good Spirit dwells in him—that Divine Grace has found an entrance into his soul” (PH 424–25/504–505). The witch trials of the sixteenth century can be seen as another concrete manifestation of this mode of self-definition (PH 426/506), where the evil is projected onto an other outside of the self. Thus the attempt to prove one’s unity with the divine in this way leads at best to inaction and at worst to the persecution of otherness.

13. This is further substantiated by Hegel’s distinction in *Philosophy of Right* between a “true conscience” which is “the disposition to will what is absolutely good” and merely the formal conscience of self-certainty (PR §137). In other words, he distinguishes between the formal right of conscience “to give recognition only to what it thus knows as good” and a conscience that actually wills the good as its true substance, which makes “the absolutely universal its principle,” “the universal as inner objectivity” (PR 139, 139R).

14. That what is being portrayed here in the section on conscience is the idea of a moral universal that gets realized in and through individual willing, a willing that includes sensuous being, is quite well-recognized in the commentary (e.g., Bernstein 1994, Hyppolite 1974, Taylor 1975). As I shall discuss, the question of the content of the universal and how it is come to by the two figures of conscience seems more ambiguous and controversial.

15. This contradiction is seen by Hegel as essentially self-destructive, as the following pointed comment, supposedly directed at Novalis, suggests: “[T]his ‘beautiful soul,’ then, being conscious of this contradiction in its unreconciled immediacy, is disordered to the point of madness, wastes itself in yearning and pines away in consumption. Thereby it does in fact surrender the *being-for-self* to which it so stubbornly clings; but what it brings forth is only the non-spiritual unity of [mere] being” (§668/360).

16. The question of the substance of the universal really constitutes the nub of Hegel interpretations and hence is the point where commentators become divided. Besides the major tendency, already remarked upon, to construe the substance of the universal in communitarian terms, there is also a more recent tendency to understand what is realized here purely procedurally, in terms of the conditions for a genuine mutual recognition (e.g., Harris 1995:ch.7, Hinchman 1984, Russon 1991, Westphal 1979), in terms of a universal thinking (Jamros 1990), or in terms of a growing awareness of the relativity of substance (Burbridge 1997). Hence the emphasis is on the moment of forgiveness, the mutual toleration of our differences, rather than on the substance of the action. I think this is a tremendous domestication of Hegel’s discussion of conscience, which has so much currency now because it accords with dominant liberal prejudices about how to deal with difference. Hegel’s resolution of the section on conscience is indeed recognition, but not merely the recognition of our mutual differences; it is a coming together on substantive questions of right. Bernstein (1994), in

a remarkable discussion of this part of Hegel, comes closer to my own view in arguing that it is the substance of what conscience wills in the world that counts and not merely the fact of acting and thinking, and he thus gives more recognition to the figure of the acting conscience. Taylor also points to the substance of the universal that is realized. Where I differ from Bernstein, and concur with Fackenheim and Hyppolite, as well as Westphal in this aspect of his argument (1979:178), is that the *experience* by which this universal comes to be recognized by both parties is religious in character or as I would put it, involves the knowledge of love, rather than being come to reflectively. Taylor also seems to point to something like this, in his discussion of Hegel's embodied theory of action (1983).

17. I cannot agree with Harris's assertion that the exchange of forgiveness is an "ordinary experience" (1995:78). Individuals who take committed stands of conscience will not easily recognize other points of view or admit to the relativity of their own. As portrayed in a literature that roots itself in a similar Christian tradition to that of Hegel's, such as Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* when Raskolnikov overcomes his own position at the end of the work, or Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* in the scene where Anna is forgiven by her husband, the moment of forgiveness is *extraordinary* and requires an extraordinary experience of love.

18. Albeit this is a direction in which Hyppolite does not follow, for in his subsequent work on Hegel he shies away from the religious implications of his thought, focusing instead—in keeping with other French thinkers of his generation—on the universal as human awareness of finitude (Hyppolite 1993).

19. This is also what makes Marxists so uncomfortable with Hegel's position on action, for their viewpoint requires the agent to have clearly before her the program of revolutionary action. But Hegel's position is not quietist, as is so commonly inferred. Rather he simply assigns two different roles to philosophy and to the historical actor. Moral action must take place in order to realize the good society. And this is not inevitable, even if it does have an immanent logic. But the actual historical actor who realizes the good and the community that recognizes that action can only be rationally vindicated *retrospectively*.

20. Ed Andrew, in *Conscience and Its Critics*, puts forth a similar idea of conscience as "dumb" or speechless (2001:12,183).

21. Hyppolite points out this problem with the religious consciousness that is the culmination of the experience of forgiveness (1974:568–69). For it, substance has not yet become subject. It must come to see substance as the work of the actions of individuals in community with each other, in order to attain the full identity of human and divine—"a divine humanity which temporally poses an eternal truth" (570). This does indeed lead into Hegel's philosophy of history and politics, as Hyppolite acknowledges, but he sees nowhere in the subsequent philosophy where the perfect community is achieved—"History presents us only with nations which live and die" (570). In contrast, I believe that in *The Philosophy of Right* Hegel seeks to portray such a community, and it is thus to this work that I turn in the next chapter. Hinchman, in contrast to Hyppolite's view and my own, argues that substance and subject have

come together by the end of the dialectic of conscience (1984:183). I think this view is undone by Hegel's statements in the chapter on "Absolute Knowing," as I shall discuss in chapter 3.

22. The reference here is to Fichte's "intellectual intuition" in the second introduction to *The Science of Knowledge*. Here Fichte says that everyone must look into their own self to find this certainty. Hegel is suggesting here that what Kant and Fichte took to be a self-evident inner certainty of freedom is actually a knowledge that presupposes the whole process of historical disciplining that we have witnessed.

23. Walsh (1969), for example, seems to think Hegel is denying moral autonomy a reality. Russon (1991) is better on this.

CHAPTER 3

1. This occurs first with immediate conscience, whose object is its own certainty of what must be done. Second, it acts and opposes itself to another self-consciousness that also exists as a knowing. Here, action is merely the extension of its conviction outward, while the reality of that action remains in the form of conviction. And the other self-consciousness who opposes it has as its object the knowledge of pure duty. They both exist for the other as a knowing. And finally these two overcome their opposition to one another by the recognition of their unity, a unity that exists in the form of their mutual knowing. Granted, the truth they encounter still seems external to them, as a religious substance. And this will be the principal reason why Hegel goes beyond it, to the Notion, as the standpoint for philosophy.

2. One *might* construe, as Burbridge does (1997), some of the truths Hegel unfolds in his philosophy as relative in the sense that they show themselves to be one-sided. Yet there is still an absolute quality to them as principles of right. Furthermore, the farther one gets in the unfolding of Hegel's logical idea of the will, the more complete the idea of the truth becomes. Hence there is an endpoint where substance becomes as Absolute as subject.

3. As George Adams says, with reference to Hegel's early discussion of love: "What Hegel's later philosophy attempts is the working out of the logic of this experience which transcends discursive reason . . . it is a logic of what may fairly be called the experience of mysticism" (1984:96).

4. See *Philosophy of Right* §2: "[T]he science of right . . . has a definite starting-point, i.e., the result and the truth of what has preceded, and it is what has preceded which constitutes the so-called 'proof' of the starting-point. Hence the concept of right, so far as its coming to be is concerned, falls outside the science of right; it is to be taken up here as given and its deduction is presupposed." Its deduction is found in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, as I have argued.

5. Construing the substance of the will in terms of love in no way goes against Hegel's more explicit statements in *Philosophy of Right* that the substance of will is free-

dom. For freedom is the self-conscious grasping and willing of the universal substance of the will. Hence coming to terms with the knowledge of love is coming to know one's freedom.

6. Marx and Kierkegaard are perhaps the most responsible for the perpetration of this view. But even learned Hegel scholars, much more sensitive to the relationship between philosophy and life in Hegel, tend to exaggerate the role of philosophy in reconciliation. Taylor, in spite of a remarkable portrayal of Hegel's notion of *Sittlichkeit*, nevertheless at one point refers to philosophy itself as "a 'cult' which restores our unity to the whole," (1975:546). And Michael Hardimon, who offers a very sensitive and nuanced consideration of the idea of reconciliation in Hegel's thought (see especially chapter 3), nevertheless gives philosophy the ultimate role in reconciliation (1994: 6, 94, 136–38). Similarly, George Armstrong Kelly sees Hegel as bitterly resigning himself to the loss of the experience of unity and emphasizing reflective thought as the mode of integration (in "Social Understanding and Social Therapy in Schiller and Hegel," *Hegel's Retreat from Eleusis*). Against these views, Hegel himself explicitly warns in the introduction to the *Phenomenology* that "philosophy must beware of the wish to be edifying" (§9).

7. See Gillespie (1997) for a discussion and questioning of this recent trend in Hegel scholarship.

8. Laurence Dickey, in a lucid article that draws on Toews' work, situates the historical Hegel with his Christian immanentism against the emergence of this "new-left" Hegelianism that breaks altogether with the notion of substance, in favor of a purely human construction of the social world "governed by a procedural commitment in which the end of human action and the substance of human emancipation emerge out of the collective decision-making process itself" (1993:329).

9. While Hegel explicitly excludes women from the principle of reflective thought and the will, I do not believe that there is anything inherently exclusive of women in his ideas, and hence I am using the feminine pronoun in order to indicate this. I elaborate the logic of this argument about women in the appendix to this chapter.

10. Lampert's (1997) argument that Hegel surpasses or "rids" himself of the category of private property in showing the limitations of this perspective, in favor of a more socialist and communicative perspective, seems overstated. Hegel is indeed not a right-wing proponent of the free market. But his task is to show the validity of the principle of abstract right while showing also that it is one-sided and must coexist alongside other principles. It must be *contained* by a larger moral perspective and ethical order and cannot be allowed to run untrammelled. This is different than "ridding" himself of the category altogether.

11. Dahlstrom (1993) seeks to correct prevalent liberal misinterpretations of Hegel that see him as abandoning the principle of conscience in this transition and thus undermining the rights of subjectivity.

12. Iltting's (1984) argument that Hegel's argument is merely descriptive and presupposes capitalist society without justifying it is not correct. Hegel does presuppose

the modern will and its expression in private property, which, left unchecked, leads to capitalism. But he tries to show, in the section on property, how this expression has a logical necessity.

13. Wood's argument (1990:245) that Hegel definitively separates the principles of substance and subject, of family and civil society, and of female and male, does not seem right from the perspective offered here, for the feminine principle of substance, or love, is *carried forth into* the masculine realm of civil society and essentially drives any moral progress achieved in this realm (see appendix to this chapter).

14. The "cultus," for Hegel is the instruction and set of practices by which the individual comes to experience the universal at the level of *feeling*, at the level of subjective particularity, so that she knows herself "as this individual included in and within God" (LPR 332/332).

15. *Encyclopaedia*, §482.

16. In *Enc.* §552, Hegel asserts that the ethical conscience is the real, developed religious consciousness, what one achieves from having been educated as part of a good state, in a truly ethical environment. By "retiring upon itself out of its empirical actuality," by stepping back from involvement in its everyday concerns and reflecting on the fundamental core of those concerns, the ethical conscience finds "the divine spirit as indwelling in self-consciousness," "the state retracted into its inner heart and substance." See Jaeschke (1981) for a discussion of the *Encyclopedia* passage that constitutes a transcendence of Hegel's earlier dichotomy of church and state, as laid out in *Philosophy of Right*. I believe that this conception of unity is present in *Philosophy of Right*, in Hegel's discussion of patriotism, but it is not as clearly developed as the later *Encyclopedia*.

CHAPTER 4

1. See Bernstein's discussion of Adorno on this question of integration, where it is described in terms of the loss of "experience" (Bernstein 1997).

2. Hannah Arendt's analysis of republicanism in terms of "the lost treasure" (1977:4, 1990:ch.6) highlights this historical failure.

3. See also Fred Dallmayr (1993:254–55) on history as rendering untenable Hegel's conception of the state.

4. I give Fackenheim a lot of attention here because he seeks to repudiate the very Hegel that I am promoting; he cannot be responded to by putting forth a different interpretation of Hegel. Hence he represents a particular challenge to what I am trying to argue.

5. This is Fackenheim's reading of the manuscript, in his conclusion to *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*.

6. See also Walter Jaeschke (1981) who argues against a reliance on the 1821 manuscripts on the grounds that Hegel's thought on the relationship between religion

and the state underwent subsequent development. I believe that Jaesche's analysis in that article as well as in "Hegel's Last Year in Berlin" (1983) supports what I am arguing here about the historical failure of ethical life.

7. The statement is from Strauss's lectures notes from the 1831 lectures, which, in fact, are regarded to have been a paraphrase, however accurate, of Hegel's actual words (see Editors' Intro., LPR I). Whether or not this is a direct quotation from Hegel, I believe it captures the spirit of his concern, as expressed in all three of the 1821, 1824, and 1827 lectures, about the need for the realization of religion in actual life, about the inevitable collision of thought with the content of religion, and the subsequent need of genuine philosophy to reconcile thought with religion (see LPR III, third part of section C).

8. See the appendix to chapter 2.

9. This is evident in the difficulties being confronted by contemporary social contract theories, such as that of Rawls, as I shall discuss further below.

10. See PS §9: "philosophy must beware of the wish to be edifying."

11. This does not mean that philosophical arguments cannot have a stimulating effect on conscience, since they obviously do in more intellectual people. It simply warns against the idea that philosophy itself can create our commitment to these principles or that by itself it is adequate to sustaining these commitments.

12. Kant does this in the third chapter of *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. But the more elaborated and compelling versions of it are found in *The Critique of Pure Reason* and *The Critique of Practical Reason*. Rousseau makes a primitive version of the Kantian argument in "Creed of the Savoyard Priest," book 4 of *Emile*. His more elaborated critique of the limitations of this reasoning in relationship to our inner nature are found in the Creed as well as in *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality among Men*.

13. In Hobbes, for example, conscience is defined merely as a mutual confirmation of empirical sense impressions, as "when two, or more men, know of one and the same fact" (Hobbes 1985:132). The notorious Hobbesian "will" is merely "the last appetite in deliberating" (128). The "good" is defined purely subjectively, as that which satisfies my appetites, while the bad is that to which I have a sensuous aversion. The "worth" and "dignity" of an individual are not absolute, but entirely dependent on the needs and opinions of others (151–52). Reason becomes a mere function of calculation of pleasure and pain, a mere servant of the passions.

14. Mill's attempt to save utilitarianism from this reductionism by making a distinction between "higher" and "lower" pleasures shows merely how impossible such a project can be from within a narrow reflective standpoint. From the empirical standpoint on human beings, what is experienced at the level of the subjective is all mere opinion. There is no basis upon which to validate the distinction in a more objective way. Hence if one individual holds that a life devoted to conspicuous consumption is the highest, better than a life that includes devotion to others and an experience of political community, there is no clear way, within this framework, to dispute him. It becomes a case of mere assertion against assertion.

15. See *Philosophy of Right* § 195, 198, 236, 237, 238, 241, 243, 244. See also Avineri (1980) for a thorough discussion of Hegel's Jena writings, which contain a much more elaborated critique of the dangers of capitalism than we see in his mature *Philosophy of Right*. This shift can be explained, as Walton (1984) suggests, by the fact that Hegel believed that he had worked out the solution to these excesses, in his theory of the corporation.

16. PR § 67, 195, 200, 238, among others. See Walton (1984) for a good discussion of some of these important measures.

17. Examples are poverty at a national and international level, the meaningless nature of so much work, the development of monopolies, and the domination of one class at the expense of the whole.

18. We see this, for example, in the Marxist idea of "the Fordist regime of accumulation," which views the acceptance of unions to represent workers and the high wages and better conditions achieved in the postwar era as occurring not because of the moral power informing the struggle but because it turned out to be functional to capital accumulation.

19. Not least because of the environmental unsustainability of the postwar Keynesian system.

20. This is not to obscure the difference between Fackenheim's and Arendt's analysis of evil. For Arendt, the ultimate result of the breakdown of mediating institutions was the banality of an individual such as Eichmann. She seems to ignore the notion of a motivation toward infinity; Eichmann's motivation was merely career advancement and an obsession with bureaucratic details. For Fackenheim, this focus on banality ignores what he sees as the essentially demonic element in the identification, the boundless hate that fueled it. See chapter 4 of *Encounters*.

21. Fackenheim (1994) argues for the idea of "resistance as an ontological category." But he ultimately understands these particular acts of resistance during the Holocaust according to the Jewish theological notion of *Teshuva*—"a divine-human turning-towards-each-other" (141), "an impulse from below that calls forth an impulse from above (253). Yet a case might just as plausibly be made for understanding them in terms of the notion of conscience. See Gregory Baum's article in Greenspan and Nicholson (1992).

CHAPTER 5

1. I am not alone in thinking that Hegel's theory of conscience is important for us today. See also Bernstein (1994), Jaeschke (1981), Shanks (1991), and Walton (1983).

2. Others here include Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor.

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