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Cover image: extract from Paul Valéry's *La Pythie*, as cited by Jean Hyppolite in *Logic and Existence*

Jean Hyppolite

Contents

REVIEWS

Jean Hyppolite (1907-1968)*

GEORGES CANGUILHEM and MICHEL FOUCAULT

Translated by Frank Chouraqui and Richard Lambert

A few weeks ago, the death of Jean Hyppolite left us dumbstruck. Today, we attempt to put into words who our colleague and friend was, through who he was for us.

For my part, I first met Hyppolite forty-three years ago, but it was only after we became colleagues at the Faculté de Lettres at Strasbourg, twenty-three years ago, that I really came to know him. In the meantime, my reading of his works had so changed my memories of our relations at the École Normale Supérieure that, on our reunion in 1945, it was he who had to remind me that in the École's revue of 1926 I had given an impersonation of him. I had played the part of an inquirer, of a man who indefatigably questions and questions himself [*demande et se demande*]. What struck us all when he started at the École was his capacity for inquiry, for continually putting things into question anew, for renewal. At the time of his death this hadn't changed, but he had long since acquired a mastery in it. To acquire a mastery in this domain is not only to develop a method to the highest level of effectiveness, but to have learnt its

* The following texts are translations of: 'Jean Hyppolite (1907 – 1968)' by Georges Canguilhem and Michel Foucault, Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, © PUF, April – June 1969. Michel Foucault's text, 'Jean Hyppolite. 1907 – 1968' was also reprinted in his *Dits et écrits,* © Editions GALLIMARD, Paris, 1994. The editors would like to thank the Presses Universitaires de France and Gallimard for permission to reprint these texts in English translation.

In their original publication in the Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, the texts were preceded by the following editorial note: 'we are pleased and proud to publish here, in the form of a homage, the two speeches given by MM. G. Canguilhem and M. Foucault at the memorial service for Jean Hyppolite at the École Normale Supérieure on January 19th 1969.'

economy, to have acquired a disposition for it. That's why Jean Hyppolite's philosophical inventiveness in no way amounted to a form of dispersal. He continually returned to the themes that had always been closest to him, such as mathematics and language, continually re-examined and re-evaluated authors such as, most obviously, Hegel and Marx, but also Bergson and Bachelard. No philosopher of his time remained as faithful to the initial orientations of his thinking, while being so non-systematic.

It is not for me to say what the work of Jean Hyppolite changed in French philosophy. That will be better said by two young philosophers whose careers and works I know he did not cease to follow and approve of, as they know better than I how to draw out the difference [*faire la différence*]. As a contemporary and friend of Hyppolite, I was transformed [*reformé*] by our acquaintance rather than formed through the study of his works. But if I had to say in a few words what we owe to him, I would say that it was under his influence, along with that of Cavaillès in another domain, that French philosophy began to lose consciousness of what it had hitherto regarded as Consciousness.

But what I wish to say, what I must say, is how, after so many years of exchanges with him, I admired Hyppolite for his style of working, for his manner of taking up and leading philosophical labour.

In our day, a brisk intelligence is found up and down the philosophical city, and it can happen that, in order to move faster and so arrive at its destination more quickly, it rids itself of some of the impediments constituted by generosity and probity. Although kindness and generosity often only express indolence, Hyppolite's anxious and vital intelligence consented to lose a great deal of time in order to be supportive and fraternal. He also insisted on never concealing his debts, on never taking credit for more than he was owed. What could be more simple – but how rare at the time – than this declaration in the Preface to the translation of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* – 'It was in composing a study of the whole of the *Phenomenology* that we were led to prepare this translation'. Hyppolite translates the text on which he aims to produce a commentary and publishes the translation before the commentary, thereby putting anyone in a position to measure the commentary against the text. Probity, in philosophy as elsewhere, consists in exposing one's reasoning to potential criticism. Hyppolite did

not draw his originality from the fact that the breath of spirit is blown across the earth in many languages.

With Hyppolite, generosity and probity were no barrier to irony. His tireless pursuit of ideas did not make him distant; where people were concerned, he had both an eye and a memory. His philosophical passion did not render him incapable of the responsibilities of action. Not having sought tranquillity, he did not know it. One morning, misfortune shattered his strength, without causing him to lose sight of his duties. For such a sensitive individual, so concerned with revisions and renewals, only one form of peace was possible – not that of victory, but of a folding back over [*repli*], such that death offers to life to obliterate its strife.

Georges Canguilhem

* * *

Those who were in *kâgne*[1] shortly after the war will recall M. Hyppolite's classes on the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In his speech, which would continually pause and recommence as though it were reflecting within its very movement, we heard not only the voice of a teacher; we heard something of Hegel's voice, and perhaps even the voice of philosophy itself. I don't believe that one could forget the force of that presence, nor the proximity that he patiently solicited.

May the memory of that encounter allow me to speak in the name of those who shared it with me and who have put it to better use.

He did not describe himself as a historian of philosophy. He spoke more readily, and more exactly, of a history of philosophical thought. Indeed, it was in this difference that the singularity and scope of his undertaking resided.

By philosophical thought, M. Hyppolite understood that which in any system – however accomplished it appears – overflows and exceeds it, and puts it in a relation of exchange with and indebtedness to

1 An informal term for the literary and humanities classe préparatoires aux grandes écoles (in particular, for the second year of this programme), which prepares high-school graduates for the entrance examination to the Ecoles normales supérieures, and which Hyppolite taught at the Lycée Henri IV from 1941-1945 – trans.

philosophy itself; for him philosophical thought was not the initial intuition of a system, its unexpressed intimacy; it was its incompleteness, the debt that it never manages to repay, the blank space that none of its propositions will ever blot out; that by virtue of which, however far it is pushed, the system still falls short of philosophy. By philosophical thought, he also understood that moment that is so difficult to grasp, covered over as soon as it appears, in which philosophical discourse acquires determination [*se décide*], breaks its silence, and distances itself from that which will henceforth appear as non-philosophy: philosophical thought is then less the obscure and pre-given determination of a system than the sudden and continually recommenced division through which it is established. Finally, by philosophical thought, I believe that M. Hyppolite understood that torsion and doubling, that surging forth and regaining of itself through which philosophical discourse says what it is, justifies itself and, in distancing itself from its immediate form, manifests that which might ground it and set its limits.

Thus conceived, philosophical thought holds the discourse of the philosopher within the authority of an indefinite vibration, making it resonate beyond all death; it assures the excess of philosophy over any particular philosophy – the light which kept vigil even prior to any discourse, the ray which shines forth again after fading.

In taking up philosophical thought as a theme, M. Hyppolite surely wished to express that philosophy is never actualised or present in any discourse or any text; that in truth philosophy does not exist; that it rather hollows out all philosophies by its perpetual absence, that it inscribes in them the lack within which they are ceaselessly developed, pushed forward, then disappear and are succeeded, and remain for the historian in the state of suspension in which he must take them up again.

What, then, does the analysis of philosophical thought do? M. Hyppolite did not wish to describe the movement of those ideas – scientific, political, moral – which little by little and in a piecemeal fashion have penetrated philosophy, and have become established and gained a new systematicity there. He wished to describe the manner in which all philosophies take back into themselves an immediacy that they have already ceased to be; the manner in which they aim at an absolute that they never reach; the manner in which they fix limits that they continually transgress. It was a matter of following philosophies through

this play of light and shade, wherein their distance from philosophy manifests itself and vanishes.

The problem that M. Hyppolite did not cease to address was perhaps this: what is then this limitation proper to philosophical discourse that lets it, or rather makes it, appear as the speech of philosophy itself? In a word: *what is philosophical finitude?*

And if it is true that, since Kant, philosophical discourse has been the discourse of finitude rather than of the absolute, perhaps one could say that the work of M. Hyppolite – and this was the nexus of his originality and of his decisive gesture – amounted to a doubling of the question: of this philosophical discourse which spoke of the finitude of man, the limits of knowledge or the determinations of liberty, he demanded an account of its own finitude. A philosophical question posed at the limits of philosophy.

The natural consequence of this question – rather than an initial choice – was the undertaking of the historical analysis of philosophical *oeuvres* – of their beginnings and their perpetual resumptions, of their always unachieved ends. Is not history the privileged site in which the finitude of philosophy may appear?

But history, for M. Hyppolite, did not consist in researching those singularities or those determinations which might have marked the birth of an *oeuvre*; neither did it consist in showing how such a monument testified to the age in which it emerged, to those who conceived it, or the civilisations which imposed their values upon it. More precisely still, to speak of a philosophical *oeuvre* was not, for him, to describe an object, to delimit it, to enclose it within its contours, but rather to open it, to locate its points of rupture, its displacements, its blank spaces, to establish it in its irruption and its suspension, to unfold it in the lack or the unsaid through which philosophy itself speaks. Hence his position as a historian not outside of, but within the space of the philosophy of which he spoke, and the systematic effacement of his own subjectivity.

M. Hyppolite liked to quote Hegel's remark about the modesty of the philosopher who loses all singularity. All those who have heard M. Hyppolite will remember the solemn modesty of his speech; all those who have read him will know how his expansive writing is never rent by the indiscretion of the first person. His was a modesty which was in no way neutrality or a form of self-oppression, but one which allowed him to let resound more fully in what he said a voice that was not his own.

And in his texts which flowed smoothly from quotation to commentary and from reference to analysis, almost without the need for quotation marks, philosophy continued to be written. The prose of thought: more muted and more insistent than all that men have been able to think individually.

On several occasions, M. Hyppolite returned to the Bergsonian analysis of memory. Perhaps I am mistaken in supposing that he saw in it, even more than a truth, a model for the history of thought: for him, thought's present was not ontologically separate from its past, and the historian's attention had to form only the apex, present [*actuelle*] and free, of a past which hadn't lost any of its being. And just as for Bergson the present sometimes succeeds in grasping its shadow by a sort of twisting around itself, the historian, for M. Hyppolite – the historian that he himself was – marks the turning point from which philosophy can and must grasp the shadow which both dissects it at each instant but also connects it to its invincible continuity.

It was from within philosophy that M. Hyppolite examined various philosophies. He questioned them in their relation to philosophy, an ever fugitive, though never broken relation. He wished to grasp them at that point at which they begin, and at that other point at which they are brought to completion and circumscribed as a coherent system. In each *oeuvre*, he wished to take hold anew of the relation, never entirely established, never entirely mastered, between an experience and a rigour, an immediacy and a form, the tension between the barely visible glimmer of a new beginning and the exactitude of an architecture.

M. Hyppolite willingly compared his own undertaking to two great projects contemporary with it, each of which he paid homage to in his inaugural address at the Collège de France: Merleau-Ponty's search for the originary articulation of sense and existence; and M. Guéroult's axiomatic analysis of philosophical coherences and structures. Situated between these two landmarks, M. Hyppolite's project had from the beginning always been to name and to make appear – in a discourse that was both philosophical and historical – the point where the tragic in life takes on sense within a Logos, where the genesis of a thought becomes the structure of a system, where existence itself is articulated in a Logic. Between a phenomenology of pre-discursive experience – in the manner of Merleau-Ponty – and an epistemology of philosophical systems – as in M. Guéroult – M. Hyppolite's project can equally well be read as a

phenomenology of philosophical rigour or as an epistemology of philosophically reflected existence.

What relation does philosophy have to that which is not it, but without which it could not be? In replying to this question, M. Hyppolite refused to adopt either of two familiar attitudes: one which holds that philosophy should reflect on exterior objects, be these the sciences or everyday life, religion or law, desire or death; another which holds that philosophy ought to question all those various naiveties, discover the significations hidden within them, disturb their mute positivity and demand an account of their possible grounds. For him, philosophy is neither reflective nor foundational with respect to what is not it; but it must grasp both the interiority whereby it already tacitly inhabits all that is not it (it is already there in the activity of the mathematician, as in the innocence of the beautiful soul) and the exteriority according to which it is never necessarily implicated in a science or a praxis. It is this relation of interiority and exteriority, of proximity and distance, that philosophy must take back within itself.

From that perspective, I believe it is possible to understand certain characteristic traits of M. Hyppolite's oeuvre.

I think first of his relation to Hegel – because Hegel, for him, marked the moment when philosophical discourse posed, in the interiority of itself, the problem of its beginning and its end: the moment when philosophical thought gives itself the limitless task of expressing the total field of non-philosophy, and aims to succeed, in all sovereignty, in accounting for its own end. Hegel, for M. Hyppolite, is the moment when western philosophy takes up again the task of speaking being in a logic, sets out to discover the significations of existence in a phenomenology, and attempts to reflect on itself [*se réfléchir*] as the completion and terminus of philosophy. Hegelian philosophy marks in this manner the moment when philosophy has, within its own discourse, come into possession of the problem of its beginning and its completion, the moment when, pushing itself to its very limits, it has become the question of the immediate and the absolute – of this immediate from which it cannot liberate itself, although it mediates it, and of the absolute that philosophy can only realise at the cost of its own disappearance. With Hegel, philosophy, which at least since Descartes had been indelibly marked by a relation to non-philosophy, became not just conscious of this relation, but the very discourse on it: the serious setting

to work of the play of philosophy and non-philosophy. So while others saw in Hegelian thought the folding over of philosophy on itself, and the moment when it becomes a recounting of its own history, M. Hyppolite saw in it the moment when philosophy transgresses its own limits in order to become philosophy of the non-philosophical, or perhaps non-philosophy of philosophy itself.

But this theme which haunted his studies on Hegel also greatly overflowed the bounds of the latter and carried his interest into other domains. He saw the relation between philosophy and non-philosophy consummated [*effectué*] in Marx – whose thought was, for him, both the fulfilment and the overturning [*renversement*] of Hegelian philosophy, the critique of all philosophy in its idealism, the injunction to the world to become philosophy, and to philosophy to become world. He also saw it increasingly, in the course of the last years, in the relation to science. He thereby rediscovered the concerns of his youth and of the graduation thesis [*diplôme*] he composed on mathematical method and Descartes' philosophical development. He thus came closer to the work of two men for whom he felt the same admiration and unrivalled fidelity, two who are for us the great philosophers of, respectively, physical and biological rationality.

Such became the fields of his reflection: on the one hand Fichte and the possibility of a philosophical discourse on science that would be entirely rigorous and demonstrative; and on the other hand the theory of information which would allow the structure of the message to be discovered in the density of natural processes and the exchanges between living beings. With Fichte he posed the epistemological problem of the possibility of a scientific discourse on science, and of whether, starting from purely formal thought, it is possible to recover access to the real content of knowledge. Conversely, the theory of information presented him with the following problem: what status ought one to accord, in sciences such as biology or genetics, to those texts which have not been spoken by anyone or written by any hand?

Around these questions many themes arranged themselves, many avenues of research opened up: with regard to Freud, the analysis of the effect, within desire, of the formal moment of denial [*dénégation*]; with regard to Mallarmé, reflection on the play of the necessary and the improbable within a work; with regard to Lapoujade, the analysis of the

manner in which painting can paint itself in the naked and originary form of its elements.

Let us make no mistake about it: all of the problems which are ours – we who are his past or present students – all of these problems have been established for us by him; it is he who intoned them in a voice that was powerful and solemn without ceasing to be amiable; it is he who formulated them in *Logic and Existence*, which is one of the great books of our time. In the shadow of the war he taught us to think the relations between violence and discourse; later he taught us the relations between logic and existence; and just recently he invited us to think the relations between the content of knowledge and formal necessity. In the end, he taught us that philosophical thinking is an unceasing praxis; that it is a certain manner of setting non-philosophy to work [*mettre en oeuvre la non-philosophie*] while remaining as close as possible to it, at the point where it is tied to existence. With him, we must continually remind ourselves that 'if theory is grey, the golden tree of life is green'.

Michel Foucault

Language and Being; Language and Thought*

JEAN HYPPOLITE

Translated by Emilio Comay del Junco

It is not by accident that these two themes have been brought together: language [*langage*][1] and thought, language and being. Thought is inextricably tied to language. It is through language and by language that we think the world and ourselves. We reflect on language only through language, and this reflection necessarily leads us to the whole range of questions of meaning, above all to that of the meaning of being, of the relationship between language and the world, between being-said [*l'être-dit*] and being.

* The following is a translation of 'Langage et être. Langage et pensée', in *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, vol. II, (© Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1971), pp. 920 – 927 (originally published in the Actes du XIIIe Congrès des Sociétés de Philosophie de Langue française (1966)). The editors would like to thank the Presses Universitaires de France, the Association des Sociétés de Philosphie de Langue Françaises, and Palgrave MacMillan for permission to reproduce this text in English translation.

1 Trans. note: Throughout the essay, Hyppolite discusses both *langage* and *langue*, which roughly correspond to, respectively, language-as-(sign-)system and spoken/used language, echoing the Saussurian distinction between *langue* and *parole* or *ergon* vs. *energeia*. Hyppolite does not, however, make a thoroughgoing distinction between the two; as such, I have rendered both simply as 'language.' I have included the original term wherever there is ambiguity, particularly when both French terms are used in close proximity. Where this is not the case, the French term is given after the first instance of the word 'language' in the passage, and the following instances can be assumed to refer to the same.

Language has become the centre of all philosophical problems today. Undoubtedly it was always thus, but it is only today that we can become truly aware of it and attempt to formulate with greater precision questions regarding the structure and form of language, through which thought is expressed and communicated. The very concept of language [*langage*] has become clearer for us. This is due to the progress in linguistics since Saussure, to the various results achieved by linguists treating languages as systems in which each element is linked to the others, such that a partial modification resonates throughout the totality. The double articulation of human language, the combination of phonemes on the one hand and monemes[2] on the other, of phonetic and semantic units, is a result that has been obtained and the point of departure for all research. The sign system which allows us to speak and to write, to express thought and to transmit and conserve it, has become a positive object of science. We have passed the stage of empirical description and historical derivation: We have attempted to reach the elements of expression, to discover what Hjelmslev calls the general secret of the construction of language [*langue*], 'the possibility of forming new signs simply by putting together in a new way the same familiar elements according to the same familiar rules, the elements and the rules being few and quickly learned'.[3] We have thus arrived at the problematic of the types of linguistic structure, much as the mathematician has arrived at the notion of algebraic or topological structures. We are seeking to distinguish the constant structure underlying the variable realisations of language [*langue*] from the realisations themselves, and, if we dare to employ a vocabulary which indicates the generality of this problem, we are distinguishing the 'genotype' of language from its 'phenotype'.

But this object of linguists' study is at the same time an object as close to ourselves as is possible. The treasure of language [*langue*] is mine. It is me – at least it seems so – who speaks, who expresses myself.

2 Trans. note: a term used by the French linguist André Martinet to denote the smallest meaning-bearing linguistic unit – roughly equivalent to the more commonly used termed morpheme.

3 Louis Hjelmslev, *Language*. Trans. by Francis J. Whitfield. (University of Wisconsin Press, 1970) p. 39, translation slightly modified.

I use all the resources of language. I sometimes manage, as Merleau-Ponty said, to make words mean what they have never meant before. There is, however, no pure interior thought which precedes its expression. It is in moving and living expression that I manage little by little to think. Progress of thought is always in solidarity with progress of expression; an incomplete discourse is thought that is still looking for itself, and, if there is silence in speech, this silence is still an intention of speech. Following Søren Kierkegaard, it must be said of everyday language [*langage quotidien*] that it may busy itself with the ineffable until it is expressed. This, adds Hjelmslev, is the 'advantage and the mystery of everyday language'. This is why the Polish logician Tarski rightly says that everyday languages [*langues quotidiennes*], in contrast with other languages, are characterised by their universalism.[4]

I spoke earlier about the system of language [*langue*] as it is studied by linguists and I almost opposed it to the usage of language, to the living speech that is my own and by which thought is expressed for me and for others. But there is no primal speech, no creative speech separable from its context, and in particular from a language that is already a way of organising the world. I said that it was me who was speaking by making use of language, but is this really certain, or at least can it be affirmed without reservation? I speak, but I use a language older than me. Though the individual signs may be arbitrary, they are not arbitrary for me, who is continuing a tradition, nor are they arbitrary when considering their relations. It was not me who created this vocabulary, this lexicon whose terms hold together, nor these inflections that modify the meaning of what I say, nor this syntax that determines

4 Trans. note: The sentence above referring to Kierkegaard is a paraphrase of Hjelmslev, from whom both of the sentences that follow are direct quotations. Hjelmslev's version reads: 'In everyday language, as Søren Kierkegaard has said, one can "work over the inexpressible until it is expressed."' This is the advantage of everyday language and its mystery. And this is why the Polish logician Tarski (who reached the same conclusion independently of the present author) rightly says that everyday languages are characterised in contrast to other languages by their "universalism"' (Hjelmslev, *Language*, p. 105). The quotation marks appear here as they are in the original.

possible connections. When I speak, I can therefore still examine myself and ask: who is speaking in me? Without a doubt, at every moment along the chain of speech, I choose, or at the least I can choose, this or that expression, but not any which one; there are rules of the game, syntactic rules that I must observe at risk of non-sense [*nonsens*], just as there are rules of logic necessary to avoid anti-sense [*contre-sens*], contradiction. Thought, my thought, passes through the opacity of the language [*langue*] that I learned as a child. This language is a system that imposes itself on me and which at the same time is so natural for me that it constitutes me. Nonetheless the mechanism of its usage – sometimes detectable in cases of of aphasia – is also beyond me. If there is only space for one sole expression in the linear series of speech or writing, there are others lying beneath it, and they sometimes substitute themselves without my knowledge in place of those that I have consciously chosen. The linear horizontal series is reflected in vertical series containing similar, but excluded, expressions. Thus the general problematic of language [*langage*] (languages [*langue*], speech, writing, mechanism of usage and expression of thought) presents itself to us as the problematic of linking that which is at once the furthest from and closest to us. But – and this point is essential – it is still by using language [*langage*] that we reflect on this problem. Language, which is our natural habitat, becomes the instrument that we use to think about language itself.

It is necessary to pause for a moment to consider this duality (natural habitat and instrument). We know well all the uncertainty, all the ambiguities, all the shifts in meaning that belong to the natural language [*langue naturelle*] that I speak (everyday language [*langage quotidien*]). This is why people have always tried to remedy these defects. Their reflection on language led them to a conception of a purer language [*langage*]. Mathematics, the language [*langue*] of calculation, is no different. It is a matter of fixing signs once and for all in order that their meanings be univocal and their relations determined by precise rules. We can thus construct artificial languages just as the mathematician has constructed formal systems. We determine the code fixing these signs and the rules of their use, but we do so using a more powerful language, a

metalanguage [*metalangue*] that can itself be codified. We thus risk an infinite regression from a language to the metalanguage that describes it. In fact, in the last instance we always return to natural language [*langue naturelle*], to that which we speak every day, to the everyday language [*langue quotidienne*] into which every other language can be translated, but which itself cannot be translated into any artificial and well-constructed language. We can thus return to what was said earlier and define everyday language following Hjelmslev.

> By an everyday language is meant a language into which all other languages can be translated [such as French, English, German etc.[5]]. Every game of chess can be translated into – reformulated in – an everyday language, but not vice versa. In general, an everyday language differs from all other kinds of language (e.g. the mathematician's symbolic language or the chemist's language of formulae) by not being made especially for particular purposes but being of use for all purposes; in everyday language, we can, if necessary through detours, and with sufficient effort, formulate anything. Any piece of program music, even, will be translatable into a piece of everyday language, but not vice versa.[6]

An everyday language is thus the metalanguage of all the languages we fashion from it using particular codes. It is also necessary to add that it is its own metalanguage: it speaks and speaks about its own speech. Its grammar and lexicon are a discourse on discourse. If a science is a well-made language [*langue*], then all the sciences have their specific languages and find their original source in everyday language. This must be the point of departure and of arrival. For me, this arrival and return are not far from defining philosophical thought, to the extent that such thought is a lucid realisation of the double movement that constitutes all epistemology.

5 Trans. note: This precision of the sense of 'ordinary language' occurs in the previous sentence of the Hjelmslev text quoted by Hyppolite.

6 Hjelmslev, *Language,* p. 104. (trans. note: The clause beginning 'in everyday language' does not appear in the English translation of Hjelmslev's text).

However, is everyday language [*langue quotidienne*] not also a code that we apply when we talk or write? Doubtless, but this code can never be perfectly formulated. We thus find in everyday language the transcendence [*dépassement*][7] of instrumentality, of technicality, which taught Hegel that language [*langage*] was as much the child of intelligence as its instrument. There are a multitude of languages, and linguists, as we have seen, look not only for families, but also types of structures that would allow the classification of languages – taking into consideration, for example, on both levels of articulation, constitutive and characteristic elements. They treat the languages that are their objects of study as systems, but these systems, these generative grammars, or semantic combinations, never adequately take into account [*recouvrent*] the human language [*langage*], which, it must be said, is a subject-object or an object-subject. Linguists themselves recognise that semantic typology is significantly more difficult than phonetic typology. Language [*langage*] effectively signifies the world itself that surrounds us. In the concrete process of signification (which Husserl so profoundly began to study in the *Logical Investigations*), in the global reference of language to the world through this process of signification (for the object spoken about and the signification allowing it to be spoken about must be distinguished), and finally in intersubjective communication, there is a transcendence [*dépassement*] of any closed system of such an order that we might think that scientific linguistics will always be the neighbour of philosophical linguistics, just as philosophy will never be able to detach itself from natural language, to reach being other than through being-said [*l'être-dit*]. The constituted system, the structure, turns back into an exegesis, and this once again to a structure. It is the incompletion of the total system, of the in-itself, that brings about the emergence of sense for-itself. It is true that each particular everyday language is a particular manner of articulating and dividing up the world; we only perceive and only think the world though the opacity of this language which is our own [*le notre*] without coming from us [*être de nous*]. We think a universe,

7 Hyppolite uses *dépassement* for the German *Aufhebung* (sublation, overcoming, transcendence) in his translation of Hegel.

Benveniste said, that our language [*langue*] has already modelled. But as we are able to *translate* one human language into another, as we can decrypt and decode unknown or extinct languages, ultimately all human languages – that is to say human language in its entirety – involve a fundamental relationship to being and to the world that we are never able to finish probing, a relationship that is speculative as well as pragmatic.

What has just been said about philosophy and everyday language [*langage quotidien*] should not give the impression that we are turning away from the remarkable results of contemporary science concerning language, information, and communication. We simply wished to emphasise the fundamental and inexhaustible character of everyday language. But this is not to take refuge in subjective exegesis. The construction of formal systems, the project of a language [*langue*] of logic can only help us in understanding the logic of other languages. Thanks to these constructions we can ask the question of language [*langage*] in its universality, but we must not forget that it is the concrete universal that is first and foremost of interest to the philosopher. The study of communication, of the sending and reception of messages, of the transmission of information, eventually leads us to generalisations regarding the notion of language that have a scientific and philosophical value. Biology, in particularly genetics, makes use of this extension of meaning [*sens*]. Thus we understand this passage of Canguilhem's:

> If, in principle, organisation is a kind of language, the genetically determined disease is no longer a mischievous curse but a misunderstanding. There are bad readings of haemoglobin just as there are bad readings of a manuscript. But here we are dealing with a word which comes from no mouth, with a writing which comes from no hand. There is then no ill-will behind the ill fate.[8]

The last part of this quote evokes the difference that still subsists between a philosophy of nature which employs the notion of information, and a philosophy of thought that cannot do without the notion of meaning

8 Georges Canguilhem, *On the Normal and the Pathological*. Trans. by Carolyn R. Fawcett (Dordrecht/Boston: D. Reidel), 1978, p. 173

[*sens*]. In natural information there can certainly be misinterpretation [*malentendu*]; can there also be intention and intimation [*sous-entendu*]? A young philosopher, Michel Serres, has tried, in an as yet unpublished work,[9] to interpret the problem of communication and the inscription of messages in its most general form, an interpretation that has led him to the edge of an authentic metaphysics. Even assuming the good intentions of those who communicate, there is external noise and obstacles to communication which constitute a third term that also has to be taken into account, which disturbs the message, falsifies it, or even misdirects it and disperses it forever. The message sometimes never reaches its intended recipient. One can thus reflect on language in its universal role of communication, as much as in its role of expression of properly speculative thought (which Husserl attempted) or in its poetic role (as did Mallarmé). But it is the relation between the various roles of language and the question of their unity or that which makes it possible to conceive one of these functions by starting from an other that is strictly speaking interesting to the philosopher when he asks about the essence of language and human speech.

9 Trans. note: Hyppolite seems to be referring to Serres's *Hermès I. La communication* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1968).

A New Perspective on Marx and Marxism*

JEAN HYPPOLITE

Translated by William M. Burton[1]

Marx's Epistemology

Marx had neither the time nor the leisure to formulate a theory of his own theoretical practice. He could not even finish his fundamental work. The last books of *Capital* appeared after his death, care of Engels and based on his manuscripts, but the chapter in which Marx planned to study the classes of developed capitalist society and the class struggle necessarily implied by this organisation, and to show that this was the effective and real result of the capitalist period, was missing. This lacuna is particularly regrettable, for by examining social classes, as he wished to do, Marx would doubtless have helped us avoid the misunderstanding that made his theoretical work into a work of pure economics. *Capital* is the exposition of a region of historical materialism and cannot be reduced to a mere study of economy, in the strict sense of the term.

Historical materialism for Marx is a science, the constitutive concepts of which he believed he had formulated. A propos the production of these concepts, we are not reduced to conjectures alone. The origin of *Capital* goes back to 1859, when Marx wrote a *Critique of Political Economy*, preceded by a methodological introduction which

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was only published after his death. And while Marx invokes the chemistry or the biology of his time, he continues to invoke Hegel as well. Perhaps it is useful to reproduce the text of the 1872 preface to the second edition of *Capital*:

> My dialectical method is, in its foundations, not only different from the Hegelian, but exactly opposite to it. For Hegel, the process of thinking, which he even transforms into an independent subject, under the name of 'the Idea', is the creator of the real world, and the real world is only the external appearance of the idea. With me the reverse is true: the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought.
>
> I criticised the mystificatory side of the Hegelian dialectic nearly thirty years ago, at a time when it was still the fashion. But just when I was working at the first volume of Capital, the ill-humoured, arrogant and mediocre epigones who now talk large in educated German circles began to take pleasure in treating Hegel in the same way as the good Moses Mendelssohn treated Spinoza in Lessing's time, namely as a 'dead dog'. I therefore openly avowed myself the pupil of that mighty thinker, and even, here and there in the chapter on the theory of value, coquetted with the mode of expression peculiar to him. The mystification from which the dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general forms of motion in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be inverted, in order to discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.[2]

These texts raise difficult questions. How can we reconcile Marxist science with the Hegelian dialectic? What could be the meaning of this metaphor—'to invert the Hegelian dialectic', 'to discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell'? Perhaps we ought not to take them literally; if, as Marx says, the subject in his work is no longer the spiritual subject, but pre-given reality, can the dialectic remain in the same form when the totality is no longer that of spirit [*celle d'un esprit*]? Is it enough, as certain Marxists have believed, to add to the science a few general dialectical laws in order to demonstrate dialectical

2 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. by Ben Fowkes, (London: New York, N.Y: Penguin Books in association with New Left Review, 1990), pp. 102–103.

materialism and historical materialism? Each time the natural sciences have encountered theoretical problems, Marxists have spoken of the dialectic, but later developments in those sciences have hardly demonstrated the usefulness of this rather formal dialectic. Engels' *Dialectics of Nature* does not comply with the demands of contemporary science.

Until now, the interpreters of Marxism have shuttled between two poles: The first, which we could call 'totalitarian Marxism', emphasises the positive sciences, while claiming to be materialism since it adds the dialectic to these sciences. The second, which we could call 'fundamental Marxism', drawing on the works of the young Marx and the influence of Hegel and Feuerbach on them, becomes a philosophical anthropology.[3] The central theme of the latter interpretation is *alienation*. It is no longer a matter, as it is in Hegel, of the alienation of absolute spirit, but of an alienation of humanity, which has collectively become the subject of history. Capitalism, then, is the monumental alienation that humanity must overcome. This interpretation relies on the writings of the young Marx, in particular the article 'Political Economy and Philosophy' from 1844. But in 1857, Marx broke away from ideologies. In *The German Ideology*, he attempted to explain ideologies through real history. What becomes then of this science, historical materialism, of which *Capital* marks the beginning of its creation, and of the reflection on the conditions of the science that dialectical materialism should be? Our study here seeks only to show how a new interpretation of Marxism becomes possible within this problematic.[4] This interpretation comes about in the contemporary context of world history, which implies a peaceful coexistence and its concomitant difficulties, the opposition of developed peoples and developing peoples, the diversity (to say the least) of the capitalist world, and also that of the communist world. Marxism is not just another philosophical doctrine, since it has ceaselessly been developed within the advent of communism and commentaries on the works. This is why a new way of thinking about Marxist epistemology and its relationship to Hegelianism will be of interest not only to

3 The expressions 'totalitarian Marxism' and 'fundamental Marxism' are borrowed from Alain Badiou, 'Le (re)commencement du matérialisme dialectique', *Critique*, 1967, 438–467.

4 This interpretation is that of L. Althusser and his students. Our goal is only to present it—with reference to Marx—and to clarify a particular problematic.

historians of thought. This new way of thinking emerges precisely when there appears what we must call a sort of watering-down of totalitarian Marxism and fundamental Marxism, of 19th century scientism (even when injected with dialectic) and a humanist ideology in which the term 'alienation' has become so over-used that it has lost its meaning. While theory, understood this way, has stalled, and humanism is heralded throughout a world that is hardly humane, the general situation offers a striking contrast with the watering-down of totalitarian and fundamental Marxism. Hence this reflection, even with its limitations, might be meaningful (in a way that remains unpredictable).

That *Capital*, for Marx, was a scientific work, and not an ideology, cannot be doubted. But the scientific epistemology of Marx's time is not ours. He seems to be referring to a kind of empiricism when he says that 'the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought'.[5] Is science not therefore the reflection of its object? Is it enough to read the real—here, human history—in order to formulate its concept? Thanks to the history of science, to the new scientific spirit, the generative activity of which G. Bachelard has described both in the realm of theory and in the laboratory where phenomena are created ('phenomenotechnique'), we know today that science is a theoretical practice. But Marx knew this as well, and what he calls transposition (or translation) appears, in the 1857-1859 introduction, to be an elaboration of abstract concepts that together constitute a science as science. He tells us so:

> It would seem to be the proper thing to start with the real and concrete elements [...]. Closer considering shows, however, that this is wrong. [...] The concrete concept is concrete because it is a synthesis of many definitions [...]. It appears therefore in reasoning as a summing-up, a result, and not the starting point [...].[6]

5 Marx, *Capital*, p. 102.

6 For these introductory texts by Marx, written for the *Critique of Political Economy*, I have consulted the German edition, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, vol. 3, chapter 13, 615-642. [English quotations taken from: Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, ed. by Maurice Dobbs, trans. by S. W. Ryazanskaya, (New York: International Publishers, 1970), pp. 205–206. (trans.)]

The construction of the object of knowledge through abstractions and concepts is necessary for science, but this genesis of the thought object is not the genesis of the object itself.

This is not at all the process by which the concrete is generated.

> Thus to consciousness—and this comprises philosophical consciousness—which regards the comprehending mind as the real man, and hence the comprehended world as such as the only real world; to consciousness, therefore, the evolution of categories appears as the actual process of production—which unfortunately is given an impulse from outside—whose result is the world; and this [...] is true in so far as the concrete totality regarded as a conceptual totality, as a mental fact, is indeed a product of thinking, of comprehension; but it is by no means a product of the idea which evolves spontaneously [...].[7]

This long quotation is necessary to show, first, that for Marx, scientific conceptualisation is not an empirical reading of a given world (it is perhaps for this reason that he insists on recalling Hegel); and second, to show that the production of an object of thought that is a part of the world is not a production that exists in things, that would be the production of the world itself (it is certainly here that he distinguishes himself, and perhaps more than he knows, from Hegel).

> The totality as a conceptual entity seen by the intellect is a product of the thinking intellect which assimilates the world in the only way open to it, a way which differs from the artistic, religious and practically intelligent assimilation of this world. The concrete subject remains outside the intellect and independent of it—that is so long as the intellect adopts a purely speculative, purely theoretical attitude.[8]

We are rather far here from a confusion between thinking and changing the world, between the theoretical production of concepts and social or political practice (which has, in any case, the former as its condition). But the difference from Hegel is also very characteristic. Hegel was attempting to find a dialectic of thought that would emerge from the things themselves (and this is why he was opposed to mathematics as a

7 Marx, *Critique*, pp. 206–207.
8 Marx, *Critique*, p. 207.

knowledge that is exterior to its object). For Marx, Hegel placed the concept and its development within things, rather than seeing them as a product of a 'thinking brain'.

> Hegel accordingly conceived the illusory idea that the real world is the result of thinking which *causes its own synthesis, its own deepening and its own movement*; whereas the method of advancing from the abstract to the concrete is simply the way in which thinking assimilates the concrete and reproduces it as a concrete mental category. This is, however, by no means the process of evolution of the concrete world itself.[9]

In these conditions, can we still speak—even metaphorically—of an *inversion*? Can the real object that remains unchanged by the thought which thinks it be a totality of the same nature as a thought that 'causes its own synthesis, its own deepening and its own movement'? With these expressions, Marx describes the movement of a consciousness that reflects itself and becomes self-consciousness, and for Hegel, this reflection is immanent to the object which in-itself is already virtually for-itself. In the material object, however, there cannot be any such thing: that is to say, for Marx, the totality—nature, history, society—cannot be of the same order as a totality whose essence is to think itself, to reflect itself.

Of course, we are simplifying both Marx and Hegel here. Hegel is not a prisoner of this self-knowledge; the richness of the content of Hegelian thought surpasses the notion of self-realisation and self-knowledge. His conceptual elaboration—what he calls 'the strenuous effort of the concept'—does not amount to a reduction to a subjective process. And while we might speak of the rational kernel of the dialectic, we must look for it where it does not appear as a system. For his part, Marx knows the importance of self-realisation, even if he does not make it the single motor of history; and he can also recognise the possible conjunctions of moments of the thought object and the real object, but in a form that is no longer that of Hegelian systematics.

What results from this new perspective on Marxist epistemology is that, for Marx, the real thing can be neither the totality, nor the ontological negativity, of Hegel. If it were otherwise, Marxism would be

9 Marx, *Critique*, p. 205. My emphasis.

either an onto-theology that refuses to acknowledge itself, or a self-generating anthropology in the style of Feuerbach.

Totality in Hegel and in Marx

The expressions 'inverting Hegelianism' and 'putting the Hegelian system back on its feet' should be understood with a great deal of reservation then. They describe Feuerbach better than Marx, for it was Feuerbach who formulated an anthropological translation of Hegelian alienation, Feuerbach who saw in Hegel's *absolute idea* a representation of humanity estranged from its creator. Must we then say that Marx continues and extends Feuerbach? This would mean admitting that *Capital*, and indeed 1859's *Critique of Political Economy*, are developments of the 1844 study *Political Economy and Philosophy*. On this reading, Marx would only have deepened and justified the humanism of his earlier work. This is in fact Lukács's interpretation, as well as the interpretation that in part inspired my first investigations of *Capital*. Great is the temptation to see in *Capital* the expression of the alienation of human labour in history, and in the formation and development of the working class, the means by which this alienation might be overcome, by which the generic person, who would have lost and almost perverted their essence in the production and unconscious reproduction of the self that constitute the capitalist world, might be found again. The discovery of the works of the young Marx can only favour this interpretation, which we have called 'fundamental Marxism'. If we cannot completely disregard this interpretation, as I believe we cannot, we must however admit that it is more ideological than scientific.[10]

The *Critique of Political Economy* and *Capital* see things otherwise. In writing *The German Ideology*, Marx formulated a new critique of ideologies. They are to be explained primarily by real history; they may stand centre-stage, but they refer to conditions that they do not

10 Without insisting on this point, I am not sure that we can completely disregard this interpretation insofar as Marxism remains a philosophy, dialectical materialism, in which the ideological and the scientific must at the same time distinguish themselves from each other and meet each other. Dialectical materialism is the place where the diversity of practices—including theoretical practice—is considered as such.

translate immediately; in this way, they contain something illusory; in order to understand them, one must consider them more as symptoms than as texts that one might read directly. One must then go from ideology to science, via a 'break', via what G. Bachelard has thought as an 'epistemological break'. In 1859, Marx experienced the political radicalism of the French working class and came to know, by the intermediary of Engels, English capitalism. For him, it now became important to understand the field of history, the historical totality of which capitalism was an illustration. The method must be adequate to its object, and the totality which was his starting point could only be a pre-given totality. And while this totality is not, as in Hegel, the *concept*, while it is anterior to his conceptual reflection, which leaves the totality itself unchanged, nevertheless this totality must necessarily be different from a subject. Marx did not thematise this difference; it only appears in the way that he treats the problem (of historical materialism), and it ought to have found its way into Marxist philosophy proper: that is to say, into *dialectical materialism*. This is why the new perspective on Marxist epistemology that I am examining here, and its relationship to Hegel, can only be supported by a few texts, and by reflections based on Marx's last work—*Capital*.

Breaking with ideology means breaking with the theme of a self-consciousness immanent to natural being or even to historical being. In Hegel, religion is already self-consciousness of the spirit, and the movement from religion to absolute knowledge is the progress of that which is still only representation to a conceptualisation. Real self-consciousness is the truth of a self-consciousness that represents itself instead of thinking itself. There is nothing like this in Marx. If the absolute is the subject in Hegel, this is because the absolute, through its development, its contradictions, thinks itself, reflects itself. I would emphasise these reflexive pronouns. They mark the difference between Hegel and Marx. The return to self through an internal opposition is the motor of the Hegelian dialectic. This explains how one moment can be the truth of another through sublation, negation of the negation; or how the whole movement can tend toward a self-knowledge that is somehow implicated in the first stirrings. Certainly, Hegelian thought is much more complex and much deeper than the summary I am giving here, than the summary Hegel himself explicitly gives; but if we want to clarify the difference between Marxist science and Hegelian thought, this is how we

must proceed. The Marxist dialectic can no longer be an affirmation, an internal contradiction, a holistic retaking of the self, because there is no Self; the historical totality might have moments that oppose one another, relationships that are likely to evolve, and thus a certain dialectic, but it is no longer the dialectic of the Hegelian subject that posits itself, contradicts itself and resolves its contradiction through a reaffirmation of itself in a higher form.

This difference was understood by Lenin. Lenin was not a philosopher (doubtless he had other things to do), but he attributed great importance to theory; he knew what Marx said he owed to Hegel, and during Lenin's time in prison and exile, he read and annotated Hegel's *Logic*. Often he copied Hegel's text: he indicated what might lead the latter in the direction of historical, or dialectical, materialism. He also noted passages that appeared to him more meaningful than others. Thus in the logic of essence, in which Hegel opposes the essential to the inessential, the essence to the appearance, only to often reverse the terms of this opposition, Lenin insists on the importance of the inessential and the apparent, for it is often in the surface agitations that we can best see the real opposition. For example, 'the movement of a river—the foam above and the deep currents below. *But even the foam* is an expression of essence!'[11] When one knows the explanation that he gave for the Russian Revolution—the weakest link—these notes take on their full meaning. In fact, communist revolutions have never been achieved according to a simplistic economic dialectic; they appeared in forms that were considered exceptional. But when the exception becomes the rule, it is necessary to reconsider and understand the complexity of developments in another way. We know that according to Lenin, the error was to wait for the revolution to emerge out of an automatic development of the economy. There are other aspects, other instances, where the struggle attains its culmination, which does not mean that the relations of production are not decisive, but that they are so in a way that cannot manifest itself as a pure and simple expression. Thus in our life and even in our dreams, a decisive opposition disguises itself and is displaced. The field of history could be constituted in such a way that these displacements, these condensations, these transpositions are in fact the

11 Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Philosophical Notebooks*, translator unknown, Collected Works (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), XXXVIII, p. 130.

rule. Nevertheless, these metaphors, which L. Althusser borrows from psychoanalysis, remain inadequate. But then it is necessary to think this totality otherwise than as the expression of a subjectivity. This too was noted by Lenin apropos of the concept, which, in Hegel, is the *subject*. This is still, he writes, 'a tribute to mysticism = idealism'.[12] 'Subjectivity (or the Notion) and the object—*are the same* and *not the same*'.[13] Nevertheless, Lenin sought a refutation of subjective idealism in Hegel's logic, and also sought and discovered in Hegel's work the conditions for a living history and for a practical, human activity; he therefore does not push his criticism of the concept as subject to its endpoint. He did not understand that dialectical materialism could no longer accommodate the Hegelian ideas of *totality* and *negativity*. It has been, in my opinion, L. Althusser's great virtue to have emphasised this necessity. Indeed, we must here say a little bit more than Marx himself said, for in the exposition of *Capital*, he practised a method whose characteristics he did not describe completely. If the field of history, envisioned both at a certain period and in the succession of periods (synchronically and diachronically), is a totality, characterised by a structure, and even a structure of structures, that structure could not be deduced from putting Hegelianism back on its feet.[14] Marx starts with a pre-given field that he reconstitutes in thought; that is to say, with abstractions that are not, in principle, moments of the real (the field remains unchanged after, as before, this reconstruction). Each moment is not an image of a moment of the real. In the structure that thought reconstitutes, the instances—that is to say, the particular practices articulated one on top of the other—are not expressions of a subject (which Leibniz would call a *pars totalis* or monad), but neither are they terms or particular structures exterior to one another, as in a mechanical sequence in which there are only things and relationships of exteriority. This is why we can, if we want—and Marx did so himself—speak of dialectic, but it is necessary to replace the interiority of the terms, or the exteriority of the elements, with a causality of another order that would be neither the expression (as a painting representing a person expresses the unity of a character or a way of being —only a spiritual subject expresses itself), nor the mechanism of an exteriority. We must conceive a structural causality that would govern the

12 Lenin, XXXVIII, p. 177.
13 Lenin, XXXVIII, p. 184.
14 The term structure has long been used to translate Marx's German term *Bau*.

various instances; each of these would not be the expression of the Whole, but neither would it be one of several components, of which the whole would be the result. There might well be a dominant instance that does not exclude determination by the relations of production; but this determination does not manifest itself as such in the instances that occupy the field of history in a given time period. The dominant instance might be political, religious (as was the case in the 18th century), etc. Let us recognise that the study L. Althusser gave of this structure is not to be found as such in Marx's works. It is nevertheless towards a structure of this order that we must orient ourselves if we want to think both determination by the relations of production and the diversity of instances that present themselves within this historical totality.

Some have attempted to think of Marx as if he had only added history to political economy, pointing out the mistake of economists who mistook that which was in fact a product of history for eternal conditions. Thus, Marxism has often been reduced to a historicism. But Marx himself explains, as we shall see, that he is not referring to historical events in the banal sense of the word—wars of conquest, or the reduction of one group of human beings to slavery by another. There is truly a structure of history, in which the relations of production are tightly bound to the forces and modes of production that Marx wants to think. This is neither pure historicism, nor an *a priori* concept in the Hegelian sense. The field of history—the historical totality, with all of the instances that manifest themselves therein, the political, the juridical and the ideological—is doubtless determined by the relations and modes of production, but this underlying determination (which can also be *represented* by a particular economic instance) is not present as such; it is neither a subject that expresses itself, nor an external cause.

It is the interest of L. Althusser's study to have attempted to think through this causality: certainly, Marx asked the Hegelian notion to play this role, but at the same time refused it the characteristics given to it by Hegel: its *subjectivity* and its *expressive* form, which here lose their meaning. L. Althusser too insisted on Marx's rationalism, drawing him closer to contemporary epistemology. He rightly opposed the 'reconstruction by the thinking brain by means of constructed abstractions' to the empiricism that claims to read experience directly and receive all of the elements of its construction from the outside. We accept this thesis, on the condition that it be extended by the following remark:

Contemporary science produces its theories and constructs its phenomena in laboratories, but it still finds them in nature. The laboratory is also a part of nature, and in a certain sense, nature is a laboratory. While it is true that the Marxist idea of labour in its most general and abstract form is an element of thought which aids comprehension, it is also an element that can be found accomplished in certain forms of economy.

Marx writes:

> The most general abstractions arise on the whole only when concrete development is most profuse, so that a specific quality is seen to be common to many phenomena, or common to all. Then it is no longer perceived solely in a particular form. This abstraction of labour is, on the other hand, by no means simply the conceptual resultant of a variety of concrete types of labour. The fact that the particular kind of labour employed is immaterial is appropriate to a form of society in which individuals easily pass from one type of labour to another, the particular type of labour being accidental to them and therefore irrelevant. Labour, not only as a category but in reality, has become a means to create wealth in general, and has ceased to be tied as an attribute to a particular individual. This state of affairs is most pronounced in the United States, the most modern form of bourgeois society. The abstract category 'labour', 'labour as such', labour *sans phrase*, the point of departure of modern economics, thus becomes a practical fact only there. The simplest abstraction, which plays a decisive role in modern political economy, an abstraction which expresses an ancient relation existing in all social formations, nevertheless appears to be actually true in this abstract form only as a category of the most modern society.[15]

Thus moments of thought construction can indeed be found in experience as well; it is true that one discovers them only when the elaboration has already been completed. Rare or unstable elements, which are nonetheless essential to materiality and which the laboratory was able to produce, are thereafter found in interstellar space. But this secondary empiricism, if I may call it that, does not allow us to link the development of categories in thought to their development in reality, as Hegel thought. As for this overall causality which governs historical

15 Marx, *Critique*, p. 210.

structure and justifies the name of historical materialism as a new method of explanation, Marx foresaw its originality and tried to register it with an eloquent metaphor:

> There is in every social formation a particular branch of production which determines the position and importance of all the others, and the relations obtaining in this branch accordingly determine the relations of all other branches as well. It is as though light of a particular hue were cast upon everything, tingeing all other colours and modifying their specific features; or as if a special ether determined the specific gravity of everything found in it.[16]

We must of course recognise that the problematic opened here by Marx is not closed; the theme of this determination of positions within the determined conjuncture remains to be deepened by that which Marx calls, without separating the terms, 'a particular branch of production [...] and the relations obtaining in this branch'.[17] A similar determinate causality has raised difficult questions for all interpreters of Marxism, some returning to a non-dialectical materialism and to a simplistic and obviously illusory explanation of historical totality, others returning to a relationship of expression, as Hegel frequently understood it. I say frequently because Hegelian thought does not allow itself to be confined to this term 'expression', which belongs most clearly to art and religion. One might even say that in Hegel, the subject is an infinite process, a mediation or a becoming, but there is always in his work an understanding of the return, of the circle, that we cannot easily eliminate from his dialectic; there is also in Hegel's work a totality all of whose parts seem to be images of the whole itself; thus we might, on the contrary, think that these parts, these instances of the historical field, do not have in Marx the same rhythm of temporal development, but even then, can we not find in Hegel different temporal rhythms that cannot be so easily reduced to the evolution of a single totality? The more one reflects on these nuances, the more one is led to think of the originality

16 Marx, *Critique*, p. 212.

17 [In the French translation that Hyppolite quotes, the terms are not separated: 'une production déterminée et les rapports engendrés par elle [...] assignent à toutes les autres productions et aux rapports engendrés par celles-ci leur rang et leur importance' (trans.)]

of the Marxist explanation, but by a sort of hindsight, one is also led to take up reading Hegel again. What speaks volumes is that Marx, in his preface to *Capital*, no longer refers to Feuerbach, but to Hegel; he refers to the one who reflected on conceptual elaboration as such. The 'inversion' of Hegel does not, then, have the literal meaning we might give to it; but the reference to Hegel nevertheless retains a deep meaning, when we exclude from it what derives from ideological 'expression'.

Historical Materialism and Political Economy

What is the relationship between historical materialism and political economy, as it evolved from Adam Smith to Ricardo? The very title of the 1859 work is meaningful: Marx speaks of a *Critique of Political Economy*. His understanding of society and its existence, if we take this term in its fullest extension, derives from a reflection on political economy. He says that he owes much to economists, particularly to Ricardo, but the precise criticisms that he formulates (the confusion of constant capital with variable capital, misunderstanding of the common source of annuities, interest and profit in surplus-value, substitution of labour force for work actually performed)—all of these criticisms translate a different way of understanding the historical object; this new way of understanding things has not always been noticed. Many have not seen that the object of *Capital* is neither that of political economy, nor that of history. For it is in the elaboration of the concepts of production, distribution, exchange and consumption that the epistemological *break* becomes manifest, the break which exposes political economy as being merely ideology. Louis Althusser has rightly insisted on this subject of *Capital*, although he has perhaps misunderstood to some extent how much Marx owed to Hegel, even here. To see this, it does not suffice to evoke the Hegelian schema of the four-term syllogism (there are often four terms in Hegel, the particular being divided in its double relationship to the universal and the singular). Marx speaks, with a little humour, about this Hegelian syllogism to which we might compare the chain: production – distribution – exchange – consumption.

But this reference remains significant. It refuses the purely logical dialectic, but it borrows Hegel's conceptual construction, the only one that he could oppose to the horizontal exposition of political economy. Doubtless, it is also from Hegel that Marx borrowed the construction that

integrates content to form, and this even in the analysis of civil or bourgeois society. Hegel understood that his State suffered from the discordances of civil society; hence the necessity of a new way of thinking about the historical object that Hegel, according to Marx, did not formulate himself. The core of the Marxist construction is to detect the multiple implications of the four terms, one among the four being the deciding term, being the universal, as it almost already is in Ricardo. It is production. But this construction deals more with content, when it integrates the relations of production into production itself; then history becomes tied to economy, as economy to history, but by a reconstruction of thought which does not add from the outside the historical to the economic. Marx has no trouble in the beginning demonstrating that in certain ways, production is already a consumption of vital forces or of the means of production, and that, in its turn, consumption is productive, or, as he puts it, reproductive, of life and human existence in a given milieu, but this immediate identity is also a mediation. Consumption—use value—is the endpoint of production; it is in consumption that the product truly becomes a product: 'a dress becomes really a dress only by being worn, a house which is uninhabited is indeed not really a house',[18] and a railway line that no-one uses would lose its meaning. But this endpoint also plays the role of motor: it determines the production and is in turn determined by production. Without need, no production; but consumption reproduces need, and production in turn creates new needs. Economists have recognised this productive consumption, but they make a more particular distinction between distribution and production.

It sometimes even happens that distribution is used to define political economy, as in this definition taken from a glossary of philosophical terms: 'Science, whose object is knowledge of the phenomena and the determination of the laws that concern distribution of wealth, as well as the production and consumption of wealth, insofar as these phenomena are linked to those of distribution'.[19]

Distribution is the first division of products, the first particularisation, that which furnishes, for example, salaries, annuities, profits. Exchange is the adaptation of these products to individual consumption.

18 Marx, *Critique*, p. 196.

19 Élie Halévy, 'Économie politique', *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1951), p. 261.

> Production creates articles corresponding to requirements; distribution allocates them according to social laws; exchange in its turn distributes the goods, which have already been allocated, in conformity with individual needs; finally, in consumption the product leaves this social movement, it becomes the direct object and servant of an individual need, which its use satisfies.[20]

But this clear-cut separation between distribution and production is precisely what Marx contests. This is the *crux* of the question for him. Distribution is already implicated in the mode and form of production.

The relations of production—slavery or wage labour, for example—are implicit in production. 'The structure of distribution is entirely determined by the structure of production. Distribution itself is a product of production [...]'.[21] This intertwining of the two structures is the concept that must be thought, and by which Marx criticises political economy and constructs a science.

When one says that Marx adds history to political economy, one must understand that this is a new notion.

> Economists like Ricardo who are mainly accused of having paid exclusive attention to production, have accordingly regarded distribution as the exclusive object of political economy, for they have instinctively treated the forms of distribution as the most precise expression in which factors of production manifest themselves in a given society.[22]

For the isolated individual—the slave, the serf, the proletarian—distribution looks like a social law that determines their function within the process of production. As soon as they are born, they are reduced to wage labour by social distribution. But the fact that they are reduced to that condition is the result of the existence of capital, of landed property, as independent agents of production. One must not believe that history in the form of wars or revolutions precedes production, by some sort of originary distribution that would be alien to the process of production; for before the distribution of products, there was a distribution of the instruments of production, and the distribution of members of society

20 Marx, *Critique*, p. 194.
21 Marx, *Critique*, p. 200.
22 Marx, *Critique*, p. 201. [Translation slightly modified (trans.)]

among different types of production; and, if one insists that we must, at any cost, start with natural givens, we must conclude that

> [i]n the course of production [...] [natural givens?] are transformed from naturally evolved factors into historical ones, and although they may appear as natural pre-conditions for any one period, they are the historical result of another period. They are continuously changed by the process of production itself. For example, the employment of machinery led to changes in the distribution of both the means of production and the product.[23]

Starting from this point, we can understand everything in *Capital* that concerns population and the development of wage labour.

Marx also shows that exchange is linked to production and is, in turn, also a productive activity, for there is no exchange without a division of labour. Private exchange presupposes private production, and the intensity of exchange and its mode are determined by the development and structure of production. Marx writes that the result this leads to, in what must indeed be called a dialectic, is not the identity of the four terms, but the fact that they are all elements of a totality, differentiations within a structure. It is a matter of truly understanding the object of history, and not of reflecting the sequence of these terms as though it were a logical sequence. Marx speaks simultaneously of cycles and of irreversibility, insofar as the sequence of the cycles transforms the starting conditions, without forgetting *the other conditions which are linked to the former*.

We cannot speak of juridical relations without considering that any form of production will engender its own juridical relations, its own form of the State: 'It is a sign of crudity and lack of comprehension', Marx writes, 'that organically coherent factors are brought into haphazard relation with one another in a mere relationship of reflection',[24] that is to say, an external link that is not a part of a structure, of an organic totality. We have already insisted on the specific character of this structure, of this totality, which is not the totality of a subject. The difficulty here is thinking through the mutual actions and reactions of the terms, insofar as they are not properly speaking the expressions of a whole. 'While the social conditions appropriate to a particular stage of production are either

23 Marx, *Critique*, p. 202.
24 Marx, *Critique*, p. 193. [Translation modified (trans.)]

still in the course of evolution or already in a state of dissolution, disturbances naturally occur in the process of production, although these may be of varying degree and extent'.[25] Marx says very explicitly that this structure does not behave as a singular subject: 'nothing is simpler for a Hegelian than to assume that production and consumption are identical. [... I]f one considers a nation – or mankind *in abstracto* – then its production *is* its consumption'.[26] But this means forgetting the creation of the means of production; it especially means forgetting the specific character of the relations of production that to a greater or a lesser extent oppose individuals; therefore, it doubtless means forgetting social classes. On this point, in an overall assessment, economy, just as much as a logical subject, erases the divergences as well as the convergences that conceptual reflection reveals. The conception of the total structure is not that of a whole that thinks itself; furthermore, it could not be a calculus that substitutes itself for the concept and precedes it, rather than following it. 'It is moreover wrong to consider society as a single subject, for this is a speculative approach. [...] [I]n society, the relation of the producer to the product after its completion is extrinsic, and the return of the product to the subject depends on his relations to other individuals'.[27]

All of this analysis seemed necessary in order to understand the difference between political economy and historical materialism, in which economy is rethought, developed in its concepts, which are those of the conditions of human history, without thereby being inspired by humanist ideology, which is of another order. Starting with this difference, we understand the criticisms Marx makes of the economists, the way in which he reads them, the lacks, as L. Althusser calls them, that he perceives in their texts. Ricardo, who returned all the way to the notion of abstract labour, nevertheless did not see, according to Marx, the common source, the concept from which one must think annuities, profits, interest. Ricardo allowed the three of them to persist in their diversity, because he had not understood the original surplus-value. The latter is not the observation of an economic fact, but rather that alone which makes possible the ruses of the capitalist economy. It is the same for the slippage of labour theory of value into labour power. The economist substituted—without appropriate wariness regarding the

25 Marx, *Critique*, p. 193.
26 Marx, *Critique*, p. 198.
27 Marx, *Critique*, p. 199.

possible confusion of domains—the means of reproducing labour power for work actually performed. Thus, for Marx, classical political economy or the vulgar economy that followed it, appear, in light of historical materialism, to be ideology. In *Capital*, Marx gave only a partial presentation of this science. A situation, an historical conjuncture, is of course determined by economic practice; but this determination is not simple, for it is not simply a mechanical expression or effect. The visible field is occupied by various practices—political, ideological, etc.—and the economic practice that determines conjunctural changes is therein merely represented. L. Althusser's new perspective on Marxism allows us to distinguish the dominant instances of an historical situation (which might be diverse and not solely economic) from determination by economic practice, which constitutes historical materialism as such. But this determination and its causality are not immediately visible. If 'historical materialism' is the science of this determination of a complex structure, we must separate this science of ideologies, or rather we must reflect on this difference, rethink it within a 'dialectical materialism', which is the proper philosophy of Marxism.

Science and Ideology

'The truth of history cannot be read in its manifest discourse, because the text of history is not a text in which a voice (the Logos) speaks, but the inaudible and illegible notation of the effects of a structure of structures'.[28] The sector that *represents* economic practice in a given historical situation needs itself to be conceived of in relationship to the other sectors, and this conceptualisation is not simple, since 'while, as Marx often says, what is hidden in capitalist society is plainly visible in feudal society or in the primitive community, we can plainly see in the latter societies that *the economic is not directly and plainly visible*'.[29]
The entirety of the new perspective that we are studying here depends upon the distinction between the ideological and the scientific; it leads first of all to a clarification of these two terms.

We already mentioned the notion of 'epistemological break' borrowed from G. Bachelard. There is a moment in which a truly scientific concept

28 Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, trans. by Ben Brewster, 1st American ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971), p. 17.
29 Althusser and Balibar, p. 178.

will free itself from an experience that we might call lived or immediate, in order to construct itself, to produce itself theoretically; we might think of the science of heat, for the scientist, and of all that preceded that science in the human imagination, but we must not simply say *preceded*, for even afterwards the ideological remains. If the physical science reveals ideology in what preceded it, it does not thereby do away with ideology. Louis Althusser extends Marx here, characterising ideology 'as a system of representations [... in which] the practico-social function is more important [than the theoretical function] (function as knowledge)'.[30] Henceforth, the ideological never disappears to the extent that it brings together inextricably *the real relation and the imaginary relation that human beings have to the world*: the ideological is the unconscious of consciousness, of 'lived' experience; it '*expresses* a *will* [....], a hope or a nostalgia, rather than describing a reality'.[31] What appears condemned here is the return to things themselves, the ideology of a philosophy of immediacy.

The consequences of this clarification are multiple and far-reaching. The ideological is not a mystification; it is not to be devalorised for itself, since it is the very function that allows the subject to take its place in the world, to play its role; and this is why L. Althusser can say, which Marx did not say explicitly (he even at times seems to say the opposite) that 'it is not conceivable that communism, a new mode of production implying determinate forces of production and relations of production, could do without a social organisation of production, and corresponding ideological forms'.[32] We can see that ideologies persist in the countries of the East and it could not be otherwise; but we must know to what real conditions they correspond and, therefore, what effective situations they translate into their own imaginaries. The comprehension of ideology cannot be made to happen without leaving the level of ideology; as Marx writes in *The German Ideology*, we must go back from ideologies to their real conditions, and only change in those conditions can modify ideologies.

This is why, while communism inevitably allows ideology to persist —and in some cases, humanist ideology—Marxist science itself is not what we might confuse with an ideology, in particular with humanist ideology. Nevertheless, while L. Althusser's new perspective seems to clarify the

30 Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. by Ben Brewster (NLB, 1977), p. 231.
31 Althusser, p. 234; emphasis Althusser's.
32 Althusser, p. 232.

difference between science and ideology, it does not fail to encounter some kind of impurity in this difference.

Althusser seems to single out one ideology as more worthy than others when he speaks of

> [t]his 'break' between the old religions or ideologies, even the 'organic' ones, and Marxism, *which is a science*, and which must become the 'organic' ideology of human history by producing a *new* form of ideology in the masses (an ideology which will depend on a science this time—*which has never been the case before*).[33]

This new form of ideology raises questions, as, for Marx, does the persistence of certain kinds of art when their objective conditions have disappeared: 'The difficulty we are confronted with is not, however, that of understanding how Greek art and epic poetry are associated with certain forms of social development. The difficulty is that they still give us aesthetic pleasure and are in certain respects regarded as a standard and unattainable ideal'.[34] The questions raised both by the possibility of a new ideology and by the permanence of certain older forms are not of the same order, but they have the virtue of making us reflect on the nature of ideology as such and its role in lived experience. Ultimately, we must recognise that in L. Althusser's perspective, dialectical materialism—that is to say, Marx's philosophy—has a primordial status. It determines the scientificity of science, which raises the most difficult questions concerning the human sciences; it reflects, in a history of science, the breaks that detach a particular science from the ideologies that blocked its way; it is also the only knowledge that can determine itself [*décide de lui-même*], and reflects its own difference. It would not be absurd therefore to compare it, with all necessary reservations, with what Hegel called absolute knowledge. The science-ideology difference, which *at first* appeared clarified, in this philosophy *yet* retains a certain impurity. Perhaps this indicates a certain necessity, insofar as there remains a philosophy—even that of dialectical materialism—next to the sciences.

All I have wished to do in this text was to present this new perspective in light of those texts of Marx's which might justify it, without concealing the difficulties it encounters, and without wanting to close off the

33 Althusser and Balibar, p. 331.
34 Marx, *Critique*, p. 216.

problematic that it opens. It is moreover certain that this problematic is located within the context of the historical situation in which we live, and that its importance is linked to the historical development of communism itself.

Jean Hyppolite and the French Kierkegaard

BRUCE BAUGH

1. Introduction

Jean Hyppolite is well known as one of the most important *passeurs* of Hegel's philosophy in France. His translation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, with its detailed notes and commentary,[1] along with his two major studies, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*[2] and *Logic and Existence*,[3] influenced everyone from contemporaries like Simone de Beauvoir (who read Hyppolite's translation of the *Phenomenology* during the Second World War),[4] Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jean-Paul Sartre, to the generation of

1 G. W. F. Hegel, *La Phénoménologie de l'esprit*, 2 vols., trans. by Jean Hyppolite (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1939 and 1941).

2 Jean Hyppolite, *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel* (Paris: Aubier, 1946); trans. by Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

3 Jean Hyppolite, *Logique et existence: essai sur la 'Logique' de Hegel* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953); trans. by Leonard Lawlor and Amit Sen, *Logic and Existence* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997).

4 Beauvoir read Hegel in Hyppolite's translation, with the aid of Wahl's *Le Malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* 'and some English commentators': Simone de Beauvoir, *Letters to Sartre*, trans. by Quintin Hoare (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1993), p. 326, letter of 13 July 1940; *Lettres à Sartre*, ed. by Sylvie Le Bon de Beauvoir (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), vol. 2, p. 171; see also her *Journal de guerre*: septembre 1939-janvier 1941 (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), p. 343 and *La force de l'âge* (Paris: Gallimard [Folio], 1988), pp. 537-38. Sartre did not read Hyppolite's translation until after he had written *L'être et le néant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943); all of Sartre's references to Hegel in that work are taken from Henri Lefebvre and Norbert Guterman's translation of excerpts from Hegel, *Morceaux choisis de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1939); see my *French Hegel: From Surrealism to Postmodernism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), p. 200 n 13.

philosophers who came to prominence in the 1960s: Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida among them.[5] Hyppolite in turn was always quick to acknowledge the influence on his work of Jean Wahl, whose *Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* (1929)[6] made the 'unhappy consciousness' the centre and turning point of the Hegelian dialectic.[7] Yet, Wahl is equally celebrated as perhaps the most important commentator on Kierkegaard during Kierkegaard's great vogue in France in the 1930s, most notably in the writings collected in Wahl's massive *Études kierkegaardiennes*.[8] As Hyppolite pointed out, then, Hegel's *Phenomenology* and other early works were being translated and introduced into France at the same time as Kierkegaard's, and both mediated through Wahl's commentaries, such that scholars of his generation

> sometimes found that Hegel was already Kierkegaardian before becoming systematic and that Kierkegaard was still Hegelian even when he substituted the Paradox for mediation, because Kierkegaard took seriously "the labour, the pain and the patience of the negative" that Hegel demanded. We even wondered whether Kierkegaard did not have his place in the Hegelian itinerary [of Absolute Spirit's development], that of the unhappy consciousness or the beautiful soul.[9]

5 See Gary Gutting, *Thinking the Impossible. French Philosophy Since 1960* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

6 Jean Wahl, *Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* (Paris: Rieder, 1929).

7 On Hyppolite's debt to Wahl, see *French Hegel*, pp. 28-32; see Hyppolite, 'Discours d'introduction', *Hegel-Studien Beiheft* 3 (1966): p. 11; *Introduction à la philosophie de l'histoire de Hegel* (Paris: Seuil, 1983 [1948]), 12n, pp. 31-39; *Genèse et structure*, 190/ *Genesis and Structure*, p. 184; 'Hegel et Kierkegaard dans la pensée française contemporaine', in *Hyppolite, Figures de la pensée philosophique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), vol. 1, pp. 196-208; 'Hegel à l'ouest', in *Figures*, vol. 1, pp. 262-74; 'La Phénoménologie de Hegel et la pensée française contemporaine', in *Figures*, vol. 1, pp. 231-41, especially p. 233; 'The Concept of Existence in the Hegelian Phenomenology', in *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, trans. by John O'Neill (New York: Basic Books, 1969), pp. 22-32, especially pp. 23-24; *Phénoménologie de l'esprit*, vol. 1, v, p. 176, 181.

8 Jean Wahl, *Études kierkegaardiennes* (Paris: Aubier, 1938).

9 Hyppolite, 'Hegel et Kierkegaard dans la pensée française contemporaine', p. 198. Hyppolite takes this point from Jean Wahl. See Wahl, 'Hegel et Kierkegaard', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*,111-112 (1931): 321-80; 'No doubt the Hegelian will say that Hegel studied the state of Kierkegaard's soul in advance and gave it a name, that of the unhappy consciousness.... Kierkegaard's

'By a strange paradox', then, 'Hegel came to be associated with an existentialist movement whose precursors were adversaries of the Hegelian system', notably Kierkegaard and Marx.[10]

It is Hyppolite's role in the reception of Kierkegaard in France, and especially the connection between Kierkegaard and Marx, which forms the focus of this paper. In addition, I will also consider Wahl's role with respect to the introduction of Kierkegaard's thought in France. Concerning the first point, the connection between Marx and Kierkegaard as opponents of Hegel's System was, as is well known, later taken up by Sartre in his 1958 *Search for a Method*,[11] but had already been made in the 1930s, and in French, by Karl Löwith, who tries to effect a *rapprochement* of Kierkegaard and Marx, and by Henri Lefebvre, who opposes Marx's *rational concrete* to Kierkegaard's *irrational* one. Löwith's and Lefebvre's roles in the introduction of Kierkegaard's thought in France have been largely, if not entirely, forgotten. Hyppolite, because of his respect and enthusiasm for Wahl's work on Hegel and Kierkegaard, effectively ignores the entire polemic around Kierkegaard which raged in France in the 1930s. This controversy pitted religious Kierkegaardians such as Lev Shestov and Benjamin Fondane against securalists such as Wahl; it set 'existential' Jews (Shestov and Fondane) against Christian Kierkegaardians such as the Protestant Denis de Rougemont. Using Hyppolite's writings on Kierkegaard as my guide, I will try to rescue some of the rich and complex history of Kierkegaard's reception in France from its relative oblivion.

thought is the protest of that unhappy consciousness that Hegel considered to be a transcended moment of evolution' (pp. 361-62).

10 Hyppolite, 'Hegel à l'ouest', p. 262. Hyppolite says the same thing in his 'Preface to the English Edition' of his *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, trans. by John O'Neill (New York: Basic Books, 1969), pp. v-vi. See also Hyppolite, 'La Phénoménologie de Hegel et la pensée française contemporaine', pp. 234-35 on how Hegelianism became known in France through existentialism and Marxism, as well as 'Alienation and Objectification: Commentary on G. Lukacs' The Young Hegel', in *Studies On Marx and Hegel*, pp. 81-87, on the relation of the Marxian idea of alienation to Hegel's 'unhappy consciousness'.

11 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method*, trans. by Hazel Barnes (New York: Vintage, 1968); originally 'Questions de méthode', in Sartre, *Critique de la raison dialectique. Vol. 1, Théorie des ensembles* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960).

2. Kierkegaard, Marx and Existence

Hyppolite's first articles comparing Kierkegaard to Hegel were written in the first flush of the existentialist vogue in post-war France: 'The Concept of Existence in the Hegelian Phenomenology' (1946)[12] and 'The Human Situation in the Hegelian Phenomenology' (1947), the latter appearing, not at all coincidentally, in the 'house organ' of Parisian existentialism, *Les temps modernes*,[13] the former the object of a very sympathetic account by one of *Les temps modernes'* editors, Merleau-Ponty.[14] It was a matter of situating Hegel in relation to existentialism, and more particularly, in relation to Kierkegaard. Hyppolite begins by crediting Kierkegaard for introducing the term 'existence' into philosophy and noting that Kierkegaard's criticism of Hegel's system was that it had no place for existence, but rather 'reflects the disappearance of the very notion of *existence*'. Against Hegel's system, Kierkegaard, through his passion and his paradoxes, insists on the originality and irreducibility of individual existence. Indeed, Hyppolite goes so far as to concede that in this respect, 'there is little doubt that Kierkegaard is right against Hegel' (CE 22).

Yet that is not the whole story. Citing Wahl's *Le malheur de la conscience*, Hyppolite states that Wahl's book admirably demonstrates 'the concrete and existential character of Hegel's early works', which 'all lead up to the chapter in the *Phenomenology* on the 'unhappy consciousness" (CE 23). In short, before the Hegel of the system, there was an existentialist Hegel, Kierkegaardian *avant la lettre*, and on the other hand, Hegel had already anticipated Kierkegaard's position in his chapter on the unhappy consciousness—as Wahl had earlier pointed out[15] —with the result that the Hegel of the *Phenomenology* was 'much closer

12 Hyppolite, 'L'Existence dans la Phénoménologie de Hegel', *Études germaniques* 2 (April-June 1946), 132-45, translated as 'The Concept of Existence in the Hegelian Phenomenology', in *Studies On Marx and Hegel*, pp. 22-32; hereafter referred to parenthetically as CE.

13 Hyppolite, 'Situation de l'homme dans la Phénoménologie hégélienne', *Les temps modernes* 19 (March 1947); *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, pp. 153-68.

14 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'L'existentialisme chez Hegel (à propos d'une conférence de J. Hyppolite)', in Merleau-Ponty, *Sens et Non-sens* (Paris: Nagel, 1966), pp. 109-21.

15 Jean Wahl, 'Hegel et Kierkegaard', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 111-112 (1931), 321-80.

to Kierkegaard than might seem credible' (CE 23).[16] For Hyppolite, what unites Kierkegaard's thought with that of the early Hegel is the tragic conflict between the universal and the individual as expressed in the unhappy consciousness, the form of Spirit which 'best illustrates the conception which Hegel had of human existence' (CE 24).

As Hyppolite explains, this conflict begins in consciousness of life as 'knowledge of *the Whole of Life* as the negation of all particular forms, the knowledge of 'real life', but at the same time knowledge that 'real life is absent', even though the individual discovers this real and universal life within himself (CE 24; altered).[17] But this universal life, insofar as it is *universal*, transcends and negates the individual in his particularity, and so confronts him with the consciousness of his own mortality. It is this existing in the face of death, in which the individual attains authentic self-consciousness, which is properly called 'existence' (CE 24). At the same time, authentic existence is an awareness of 'the tragic opposition between the finite and the infinite', between the individual and the absolute (CE 23), or as Wahl puts it, between the mutable and the immutable, the particular and the universal, grasped in a divided consciousness which 'takes the immutable into account in order to oppose itself to it and to be reborn out of this very opposition as particular'.[18] This divided and unhappy consciousness is exemplified in the figure of Abraham, who 'alienates himself from all particular forms of life' and attaches himself to an infinite God 'beyond all determinate living creatures', a God of absolute transcendence (CE 25). It is precisely this God, the absolute who is 'wholly Other', which Kierkegaard celebrates in *Fear and Trembling*, where Kierkegaard makes the case that 'without transcendence, without this vertical relation, man sinks into the banality of everyday social relations'.[19]

16 See also Hyppolite, 'La Phénoménologie de Hegel et la pensée française contemporaine', *Figures*, vol. 1, pp. 231-41; see p. 233.

17 Hyppolite's phrase 'real life is absent'—la vraie vie est absente—is an allusion to Rimbaud, *A Season in Hell*; see Arthur Rimbaud, *Collected Poems*, trans. by Martin Sorrell (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2001).

18 Wahl, 'Hegel et Kierkegaard,' p. 361.

19 Hyppolite, 'Hegel et Kierkegaard dans la pensée française contemporaine', p. 206. On God as the absolute and transcendent Other, see Wahl, *Existence humaine et transcendence* (Neuchâtel, Switzerland: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1944), pp. 29-29, 2-43, 90. This was originally given as a lecture in 1937 before the Société française de la philosophie and followed by a discussion including Emmanuel Levinas, Denis de Rougemont and others; see 'Subjectivité et transcendance', *Bulletin de la société française de la philosophie* 37, no. 5 (October-December 1937), 161-211. Henri Corbin, 'La théologie dialectique et l'histoire', *Recherches philosophiques* 3 (1933),250-84, also argues that the transcendent Other, 'which is forever outside history' is 'the foundation of every concrete individuality' (p. 252). Corbin went on to produce the influential translation of Heidegger, *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938), which contained, as well as Heidegger's essay, 'What is metaphysics?', key excerpts from *Being and Time* on anxiety and historicity and from *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* on human finitude, in addition to the essays 'On the essence of grounds' (Vom Wesen des Grundes) and 'Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry'. The connection between Kierkegaard and Heidegger was established early by Wahl in *Vers le concret* (Paris: Vrin, 1932) and in his article 'Heidegger et Kierkegaard. Recherche des elements originaux de la philosophie de Heidegger', *Recherches Philosophiques,* 2 (1932-1933), 349-70.

From here, however, one can proceed in two contrary directions. For Kierkegaard, according to Wahl, these antinomies are not resolved through the conceptual mediations of the System but through paradox, passion and a resolute decision which holds together the opposition between finite and infinite without abolishing it.[20] By contrast, Hyppolite opts for a Hegelian solution, in which human 'existence' becomes possible through the consciousness of death which internalises death as 'the act of transcendence or surpassing of every limited situation' and as an 'anxiety in the face of death' which makes man a free 'being-for-self' who 'negates every determination of being within and beyond himself' (CE 28-30). In short, whereas Kierkegaard seeks to restore the individual *beyond* the global or the universal,[21] Hegel dissolves individuality in the universality of Spirit negating its particular forms on the way to absolute self-knowledge, reconciling contradictions in thought, but not in reality.[22] It would appear that Hyppolite's 'existential' Hegel—with the emphasis on anxiety and being-towards-death—attempts to reconcile Kierkegaard's 'existence' with Hegel's 'Spirit', but does so in a *Hegelian* way, at the expense of Kierkegaard.

However, such an interpretation would be too hasty. Hyppolite himself is very aware of the difference between a reconciliation of oppositions in *thought* and their reconciliation *in reality*. Indeed, in an essay on 'Marx and philosophy' contemporaneous with 'The Concept of Existence', Hyppolite brings together Marx and Kierkegaard as critics of

20 Wahl, 'Hegel et Kierkegaard,' pp. 367-70.

21 Wahl, 'Hegel et Kierkegaard,' p. 379.

22 Wahl, 'Hegel et Kierkegaard,' pp. 379, 341.

Hegel's idealism,[23] a strategy he will maintain over the years, although towards the end, he comes to favour Marx over Kierkegaard as he comes to favour Structuralism over subjective philosophies of consciousness.[24] The comparison of Kierkegaard and Marx, writes Hyppolite in 1946, 'is not really as strange as it might seem at first' (MP 97); both Marx and Kierkegaard affirm the reality of the individual and historical humanity, who both 'disappeared' as 'vanishing moments' of the Absolute's progressive self-realisation in Hegel.[25] Existential thought laid claim to both Marx and Kierkegaard in order to vindicate 'the rights of existence, the freedom of man in situation, involved in a history whose meaning is ambiguous and is not guaranteed once and for all, despite all the calculations of the risks'.[26]

For both Marx and Kierkegaard, the main critique of Hegel comes down to his confusion between thought and reality: Marx, like Kierkegaard, contends that Hegel only suppresses alienation *in thought* while the contradiction reappears between man's *actual condition* and philosophy as a *system of ideas*. Kierkegaard writes that 'the philosopher has built a palace out of ideas but lives in a hovel,' and by the same token, Marx argues that since Hegel only grasped labour, 'the activity through which man produces himself,' *in idea*, he could only overcome the alienation of labour *in thought*, such that Hegel's palace of ideas 'left standing the hovels of the everyday world' (MP 100). This comparison of Marx and Kierkegaard, invoking Kierkegaard's contrast between the palace of ideas and the hovels of reality, appears as a *leitmotif* in Hyppolite's writings.[27] Both Kierkegaard and Marx, argues Hyppolite,

23 Hyppolite, 'Marxisme et philosophie', *La Revue socialiste,* 5 (1946): 540-49; 'Marx and Philosophy', in *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, pp. 93-105; hereafter MP.

24 See Hyppolite's 1966 essay, 'Essai d'interprétation de la Préface de la Phénoménologie', in *Figures*, vol. 1, pp. 375-308; see especially pp. 294-95 and 306.

25 Hyppolite, 'Hegel à l'ouest', pp. 262-63.

26 'Hegel à l'ouest', p. 263.

27 See Hyppolite, 'La conception hégélienne de l'état et sa critique par Karl Marx', *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie,* 2 (1946): 142-61, translated as 'Marx's Critique of the Hegelian Concept of the State,' *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, p. 117: Marx is at his best in opposing 'the hovels of reality' to 'the philosopher's palace of ideas'. A similar passage occurs in 'De la structure du Capital et de quelques présuppositions de l'œuvre de Marx,' *Bulletin de la Société Française de Philosophie,* 6 (1948), translated as 'On the Structure and Presuppositions of Marx's Capital', *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, pp. 126-149 (see p. 134) as well as in 'Alienation and Objectification,' *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, p. 82.

oppose the 'contemplative reduction' of the world to thought (MP 101) and the merely *speculative* resolution of alienation in the name of the real alienation which persists for really existing individuals. It was this insistence on the irreducibility of existence to thought which was decisive for post-war French thought: 'Kierkegaard's affirmation of existence against the thinker who forgets himself, his reliance on certainty against objectivity, his thoughts on anxiety…: all of this is so well integrated into our contemporary philosophy that orthodox Hegelianism no longer has any place in it'.[28]

The *rapprochement* of the Christian Kierkegaard and the atheist Marx had already been prepared during the reception of Hegel, Kierkegaard and Marx in the 1930s. As noted at the outset of this essay, because his generation was introduced to Hegel by Wahl, who emphasised the young, 'Romantic' Hegel of the early theological writings and the 'unhappy consciousness', and because Wahl was also, in Hyppolite's view, the philosopher who made Kierkegaard known in France,[29] Kierkegaard was read through Hegel and Hegel through Kierkegaard. During the same period, Henri Lefebvre was publishing his Hegelian interpretations of Marx, such as *Le matérialisme dialectique*,[30] and his Marxist interpretations of Hegel, such as his commentary on his translation of Lenin's notebooks on Hegel's logic,[31] so that Marx and Hegel were read in terms of each other. And so it was that Hegel became known in France through his adversaries, existentialism and Marxism, Kierkegaard and Marx, with alienation and its overcoming as the central problematic.[32]

28 Hyppolite, 'Hegel et Kierkegaard dans la pensée française contemporaine', p. 198. The date of Hyppolite's article is 1955. Compare Wahl, 'Hegel et Kierkegaard', pp. 348-50: 'the problems of existence are not logical problems,' as one never fully transcends or cancels existence in thought, a condition which would amount to a state of total self-forgetfulness and 'distraction.'

29 Hyppolite, 'Du Bergsonisme à l'existentialisme', in *Figures*, vol. 1, pp. 443-458; see p. 444. Originally published in the *Mercure de France* no. 1031 (1st July 1949). See also 'La Phénoménologie de Hegel et la pensée française contemporaine', p. 233.

30 Henri Lefebvre, *Le matérialisme dialectique* (Paris: Alcan, 1939).

31 Henri Lefebvre and Norbert Guterman, trans. with an Introduction, V. I. Lenin, *Cahiers sur la dialectique de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1938); hereafter CDH.

32 Hyppolite, 'La Phénoménologie de Hegel et la pensée française contemporaine', p. 234; 'Hegel à l'ouest', pp. 262-65.

3. Kierkegaard, Marx and Alienation in the 1930s: Löwith and Lefebvre

Hyppolite's linking of Kierkegaard with Marx, his bringing together the themes of the unhappy consciousness and alienation, had already been anticipated in the French reception of Hegel, Kierkegaard and Marx in the 1930s. On the one side, very much like Hyppolite in the 1946-1955 period, Löwith sees Kierkegaard and Marx as allies in their critique of Hegel's idealism, however far apart they are in other respects. On the other side, the Marxist philosophers and French Communist Party intellectuals, Norbert Guterman and Lefebvre, contrast Marx and Kierkegaard, seeing in Marxism a rational and realistic method for diagnosing and overcoming alienation, as opposed to the irrationalism of Kierkegaard and existentialism.[33]

Löwith, who had been one of Heidegger's star students at Freiburg before being forced into exile after the Nazi take-over of 1933,[34] published two articles on Kierkegaard and Marx in relation to Hegel in the short-lived (1931-1937) but remarkable French journal, *Recherches Philosophiques*,[35] a journal which at various time included articles by Jean Wahl, Jacques Lacan, Gabriel Marcel, Emmanuel Levinas, Alexandre Kojève and Jean-Paul Sartre. Löwith argues that whereas Hegel's philosophy aimed to overcome and reconcile divisions both in thought and reality, Kierkegaard and Marx overturn Hegel's reconciliation of reason and reality—summed up in the famous phrase

33 On Lefebvre and Guterman, see *French Hegel*, chapter 4; on Lefebvre and Guterman's critique of Kierkegaardian existentialism, see also Baugh, 'Ambiguïtés autour de Kierkegaard en France dans les années trente', *Europe: revue mensuelle littéraire,* no. 972 (April 2010), 209-20.

34 See Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children*: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas and Herbert Marcuse (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), chapter 4.

35 Karl Löwith, 'L'achèvement de la philosophie classique par Hegel et sa dissolution par Marx et Kierkegaard', *Recherches Philosophiques,* 4 (1934-1935): 232-67; 'La conciliation hégélienne,' *Recherches Philosophiques,* 5 (1935-1936): pp. 393-404. Both these studies are incorporated into Löwith's *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche: Der revolutionäre Bruch in Denken des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Zurich: Europa Verlag, 1939); trans. by David E. Green, *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991). See pages 137-173 of Green's translation.

from Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* that 'Whatever is rational is real and whatever is real is rational'—and reinstate the separation between essence and existence, idea and reality, subjective and objective, heaven and earth, man and world, each insisting on an essential difference between Hegel's speculative system of ideas and, on the one hand, the internal and ethical existence of the individual (Kierkegaard) and, on the other hand, the external, real economic existence of the masses (Marx).[36] For this reason, Löwith argues that the comparison of Kierkegaard with Marx is more revelatory and significant than the usual one between Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.[37]

Philosophically, says Löwith, Hegel sees a reconciliation between thought and reality through the progressive philosophical understanding of the world by universal Spirit, which in knowing the world removes its strange and objective character (APC 238-39); politically, for Hegel, Spirit is reconciled with itself in reality with the advent of the modern, rational and bureaucratic State (APC 240). In effect, Spirit has come to earth and impregnates the spirit of the age, completing the reconciliation of God and man already effected by Christ, making Hegel's philosophy essentially theological, right up to its three-fold dialectic of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, which corresponds to the triune God of Christianity (APC 242-44). Against this theological-speculative dissolution of oppositions, Kierkegaard insists on an absolute distance between God and man; Marx, apparently more radically, expels God from the world altogether (APC 244).

The chief difference between Marx and Kierkegaard, however, is that whereas Marx argues that Hegel's conclusions are unfaithful to his principles, Kierkegaard rejects Hegel's principles themselves. For Marx, the unity of reason and reality is not *in fact* achieved in a State in which the bureaucracy is *in theory* a universal social class devoted to the interests of the State but *in fact* is a particular class of self-interested officials (APC 254-55), making Hegel's reconciliation of reason and

36 Löwith, 'L'achèvement de la philosophie classique', pp. 232-34, hereafter APC; *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, pp. 137-41, hereafter HN.

37 See HN p. 417 n 37: 'The following comparison between Marx and Kierkegaard is also intended as a corrective to the comparison of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, which up to the present [1939] has been considered the only meaningful and fruitful comparison.' Löwith then cites his own *Kierkegaard und Nietzsche* (Frankfurt, 1933), Karl Jaspers' *Vernunft und Existenz* (Groningen, 1935) and Wahl's *Études kierkegaardiennes*.

reality something which occurs merely abstractly and in thought, and not in historical reality (APC 249). Yet Marx maintains Hegel's *ideal* of reconciling reality with reason, merely secularising it and arguing that when this reconciliation is brought about through a social revolution, theory and practice will be unified in both society and the individual, leaving both philosophy and the State to wither away (APC 251-53). For Kierkegaard, however, there simply can be no *concept* [*Begriff*] of *existence*, 'existence' being 'the fact of really being there, and in particular, your or my individual existence' (APC 256). Neither can there be any reconciliation of religion with the world, as in the nonsensical 'Christian State' and its 'mediocre Protestants'; one can only be a Christian *polemically*, in opposition to Others and to the world, through a desperate and resolute *faith* which clings to paradoxes instead of trying to dissolve them in thought (APC 256-62, 244-45). In that respect, whereas Marx remains Hegelian in his premises, Kierkegaard disputes the very basis of Hegel's enterprise, the attempt to capture real *existence* in thought or ideas (HN 148-49).

Yet despite this fundamental difference, both Marx and Kierkegaard agree in rejecting Hegel's view of the world as reasonable, along with his corresponding view of 'existence' as the outward emergence and expression of an inner being with which outward reality is in accord (APC 264-65). Whereas Hegel could reconcile being a philosopher with being 'something' in the bourgeois world—the state-appointed professor (*professor publicus ordinarius*)—Kierkegaard and Marx, like Nietzsche, were 'consciously *outsiders*',[38] without profession (APC 266-67). Hegel maintained that divisions existed only in order to be overcome, and that man must 'acclimatise himself to what is foreign and other than him' through philosophy, such that one finds in the world one's homeland and is at home there in one's spirit. By contrast, Marx and Kierkegaard were no longer 'at home' in a world grown foreign to them, and pushed their disaccord with the existing world to the limit.[39]

So it is that Löwith, Marx and Kierkegaard, despite their differences, represent 'two aspects of a common destruction of the bourgeois-Christian world', 'Marx's target [being] the alienation of man from himself produced by capitalism, Kierkegaard's [being] the alienation of the Christian from himself produced by Christianity' (HN

38 The word 'outsiders' is in English in Löwith's French text.

39 Löwith, 'La conciliation hégélienne', pp. 400-404; see HN pp. 162-73.

151-52). 'Marx's economic analysis and Kierkegaard's experimental psychology belong together conceptually and historically: they comprise *one* antithesis to Hegel', a rejection both of Hegel's reconciliation of reason and reality and of an alienated world of 'merchandise and money… and the 'drudgery' of boredom' (HN 161).

At the same time as Löwith brought together Marx and Kierkegaard, the Marxists Lefebvre and Guterman argued against the assimilation of Marx's anti-idealism to Kierkegaard's anti-Hegelianism, and inveighed against the Kierkegaardian 'irrationalism' of Wahl and Heidegger.[40] They argued that it is Marxism, not Kierkegaard, which provides an effective defence of individual existence.[41] It is not that they believed Hegel's claim that 'the real is rational and the rational is real'. Lefebvre and Guterman do not deny the 'living fact' of alienation, which is 'attested to at each hour of the day by all of us. This solitude in the midst of the crowd is alienation. That ignorance of self, that lucidity without content, that abstraction without matter, this instinct without thought and thought without instinct, this despair, is the alienation of the human'.[42] But they rather acerbically note that 'if Kierkegaard cures us of Hegel, Hegel cures us of Kierkegaard'.[43]

> Kierkegaard presents us with all the claims of the individual—all of them, including the craziest. The individual wants everything and wants it right away… Impatience wants the impossible and does not worry about the steps, Hegel says somewhere… Is not religiosity precisely the impatience, the greedy haste of the slave in his prison or recently freed? (MCH 17; see MCH 223).

40 See Lefebvre and Guterman's 'Introduction' to Lenin's *Cahiers sur la dialectique de Hegel*, pp. 95-96; hereafter CDH.

41 Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, vol. 1 (Paris: Grasset, 1947), pp. 64-70. Lefebvre and Guterman's critique of existentialism for its 'obscurantism' and 'irrationalism' is rather mild when compared to that of their fellow Communist, Georges Politzer; see Politzer, 'Dans la cave de l'aveugle. Chronique de l'obscurantisme contemporain,=', *La Pensée,* 2 (July-September 1939); cited in Margaret Teboul, 'Repères chronologiques. Les philosophies de l'existence', in *Europe: revue littéraire mensuelle,* no. 972 (April 2010), 266-73.

42 Henri Lefebvre and Norbert Guterman, *La conscience mystifiée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1936), p. 148. Hereafter CM.

43 Henri Lefebvre and Norbert Guterman, 'Introduction,' *Morceaux choisis de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1939), p. 17; hereafter MCH.

Marx provides a 'positive critique' of Hegel; Kierkegaard's critique is, quite literally, a 'reduction to the absurd' (MCH 18). Marx's rational critique indicates concretely how alienation is to be overcome: through a socialist revolution which will return to man his full being and full powers and put an end to the alienation of the human under capitalism which makes human beings into 'products of their products', determined by the commodities they produce instead of freely determining themselves (CDH 25-27, 62, 98; CM 180-93). 'The critique of the bourgeois world and of all human 'alienation' can only cease with their practical elimination'[44] in a new social organisation which makes possible 'the free individual in a free community.'[45] Kierkegaard, on the other hand, rather than overcoming the contradictions between the bourgeois world and the demands of individual existence, fixes them in place (CM 53).[46] 'Full of regrets for lost absolutes', the existentialist finally 'finds an absolute in the absurd' and flees reality (CM 18), leaving the contradictions of existence intact.

4. The 'existentials' and their Quarrels

Lefebvre and Guterman's critiques were aimed not so much at Kierkegaard himself as his French expositors of the 1930s: Wahl, certainly, but also Lev Shestov (Léon Chestov) and his follower, Benjamin Fondane (see MCH 17-18). They cite in particular Shestov's essay, '*Job ou Hegel? A propos de la philosophie existentielle de Kierkegaard*',[47] Shestov's book-length study, *Kierkegaard et la philosophie existentielle*[48] and Benjamin Fondane's *La conscience malheureuse* (*The Unhappy Consciousness*).[49] More generally, they were no doubt worried about the great influence enjoyed by Kierkegaard's thought in the 1930s which made it and the existential thought it inspired

44 Henri Lefebvre and Norbert Guterman, 'Introduction,' *Morceaux choisis de Karl Marx* (Paris: Gallimard, 1936), p. 25; hereafter MCM.

45 Henri Lefebvre, *Le matérialisme dialectique* (Paris: Alcan, 1939), p. 58; hereafter MD.

46 See also *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, vol. 1, pp. 64-68.

47 Léon Chestov, 'Job ou Hegel? A propos de la philosophie existentielle de Kierkegaard', *La Nouvelle Revue Française,* vol. 23, no. 260 (1 May 1935), 755-62.

48 Paris: *Les Amis de Léon Chestov* Vrin, 1936; hereafter KPE.

49 Paris: *Denoël et Steele*, 1936; hereafter LCM.

(Heidegger, Jaspers, Karl Barth and Franz Rosenzweig in Germany; Wahl and Marcel in France) a formidable rival to Marxism.[50]

Shestov and Fondane, together with Shestov's one-time follower Rachel Bespaloff, formed a counter-current of Kierkegaard interpretation in France during the 1930s, opposed to Marxism and in some senses opposed to Wahl's more 'academic' approach. All three were Jewish emigrés, Shestov from Russia, Bespaloff from Ukraine, and Fondane from Romania, and all, to varying degrees, embraced Kierkegaard precisely on account of the 'irrationalism' which Lefebvre and Guterman condemned in him. Together with Christian interpreters of Kierkegaard, such as Denis de Rougemont, they espoused an explicitly religious understanding of Kierkegaard against the secularising tendencies of Heidegger, Jaspers and Wahl. This 'existential' interpretation of Kierkegaard, particularly Shestov's, would go on to influence Camus' *Myth of Sisyphus* and his conception of the absurd.[51]

Against academic interpreters such as Wahl and Löwith, the 'existentials' insist on a personal and *engaged* interpretation of Kierkegaard. In Fondane's words, in existential thought, 'Kierkegaard has not become an object of curiosity, a historical form of thought to be classified among already lived forms of thought; it is his passion itself which, lived anew, comes back alive into the living' (*rentre dans le vivant, vivante*).[52] Fondane, in particular, argues that the only way of understanding Kierkegaard is through a personal involvement in his

50 On 'the rare good fortune' of Kierkegaard's thought in the 1920s and 30s, see Emmanuel Levinas' book review of Chestov's *Kierkegaard et la philosophie existentielle* in the *Revue des études juives,* vol. 2, no. 3 (July-December 1937): pp. 139-141. Karl Barth is absent from Levinas' list. See Karl Barth, *Parole de dieu, parole humaine*, trans. by Pierre Maury and Auguste Lavanchy (Paris: Je Sers, 1933), which included translations of excerpts from Kierkegaard's works. Barth's book was favourably reviewed by one of the 'existentials,' Benjamin Fondane, in the *Cahiers du Sud* 11, no. 163 (July 1934),492-95.

51 Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. by Justin O'Brien (London and New York: Penguin Books, 2000), pp. 29-30, 36-43. Camus groups Shestov and Kierkegaard together as philosophers of the absurd. Even though Camus disagreed with Shestov and Kierkegaard, he regarded himself as closer to what he called 'the existentials' than to Sartre and the existentialists. See Olivier Todd, *Camus: A Life*, trans. by Benjamin Ivry (New York: Knopf, 1997).

52 Benjamin Fondane, 'A propos du livre de Léon Chestov: Kierkegaard et la philosophie existentielle', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger,* 37 (1937),381-414; see p. 386.Hereafter LC.

thought,[53] but Rougemont likewise sees the translation of Kierkegaard into French as responding to 'one of the necessities of our spiritual state',[54] just as Shestov emphasises that Kierkegaard is 'among all thinkers the one who is most necessary today'[55]—necessary, that is, to the individual who can internalise Kierkegaard's thought and passion. In Fondane's words, because 'Kierkegaard's truth is strictly personal; the individual is alone before the truth, alone before God,' it can be neither shared nor communicated in any direct way or as some sort of doctrine.[56] For that reason, any interpretation which does not place the interpreter himself in question falls wide of the mark (HP 767). This is aptly captured in Rougemont's quip: 'One does not study Kierkegaard. One catches him like a sickness'[57]—the *Sickness Unto Death* being the first major work by Kierkegaard to be translated into French.[58] One either catches Kierkegaard fever or one does not, but there is no possibility of being lukewarm and dispassionate towards a philosophy of passion (HP 757-58) which presents itself 'in fever and in passion' (LCM 209). Indeed, because Kierkegaard's thought 'is passionately *for* or passionately *against*' (LCM 212), it was not a matter of being simply *for* or *against* Kierkegaard, but, as Jean Grenier noted, of being *for* or *against* this or that interpretation as representing the '*true* face of Kierkegaard':[59] the

53 Benjamin Fondane, 'Héraclite le pauvre, ou nécessité de Kierkegaard' *Les Cahiers du Sud,* vol. 13, no. 177 (November 1935),757-770; see pp. 767, 770. Hereafter HP.

54 Denis de Rougemont, 'Kierkegaard en France', *La Nouvelle Revue Française,* vol 24, no. 273 (1 June 1936) 971-76, quote on p. 971.

55 Chestov, 'Job ou Hegel,' p. 755.

56 Benjamin Fondane, review of Kierkegaard, *Traité du désespoir*, in the *Cahiers du Sud,* vol. 20, no. 134 (January 1933),43-51; see p. 48.

57 Denis de Rougemont, *Les personnes du drame* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), p. 47; hereafter PD. This chapter of *Les personnes du drame* originally appeared in an article, 'Nécessité de Kierkegaard,' in a special Kierkegaard issue of the Protestant journal, *Foi et Vie: Revue de culture protestante* (August-September 1934).

58 Kiekegaard, *Traité du désespoir*, trans. by Knud Ferlov and J.-J. Gateau (Paris: Gallimard, 1932). The title itself was misleading, as it gave rise to the impression that Kierkegaard was some sort of advocate for despair, rather than for its remedy, faith. Fondane and Rougemont both pointed this out, Fondane noting that in his despair, Kierkegaard is like all of us, and that it Kierkegaard's absurd hope (espoir) which is distinctive (HP 769). See also André Babélon's book review in *La Nouvelle Revue Française,* vol 20, no. 228 (1 September 1932), 460-65.

59 This was the title of a book by Pierre Mesnard, *Le vrai visage de Kierkegaard* (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1948).

truth of Kierkegaard's personal and subjective truth *for us*.[60] A 'concrete, tensed, passionate and assiduous *thought*' (LC 405-6) 'only opens up when our own experience is shaken up and is directly interested in the solution being sought' (LC 386); it cannot be the object of a disinterested appraisal.

On this point, the existential Jewish and Christian interpreters were in agreement, including even the Catholic Maurice de Gandillac who remarked,

> One would have to be as naïve as a Danish bishop to think that *existence* can be taught from the outside; it is up to each person to find it, if he can, in his most intimate self.... The distinctive merit of the Danish philosopher is to have brought into plain view the value of human choice, of that free decision whereby we affirm ourselves and take full responsibility for our own existence. [61]

Kierkegaard's thought, born of an immense struggle within himself and against Hegel, installs that struggle within us, says Fondane, and its *violence* is such that it forces us to take sides; 'it is a real drama taking place before our eyes, in the street, and we find ourselves forced to join in ourselves... we are not allowed to remain spectators', but must respond with either a commitment or a refusal (HP 758). *Either-Or!*—one had to choose, in a choice that engaged one's very being.

If the first of the *either-or* choices facing the religious existentialists was 'Hegel or Kierkegaard,' their choice was clearly in favour of Kierkegaard and against Hegel, for the believer and against the philosopher, for the irrationalist man of contradictions and against the rationalist man of the system, for existence and against the idea (PD 100-103).[62] But this was just the starting point. One had to decide in favour of

60 Jean Grenier, review of Léon Chestov's *Kierkegaard et la philosophie existentielle*, in *La Nouvelle Revue Française* (November 1936), 906-908.

61 Maurice de Gandillac, 'Kierkegaard, le Pascal du Nord', in *La Revue Universelle,* 59, no. 15 (1934), 371-76; see pp. 372, 375. Gandillac, however, is not himself an existential philosopher: 'It is evident that existential philosophy, because it has refused any consideration of order or essence, transforms itself by imperceptible degrees into a nihilist philosophy', such as that of the 'lumberjack' (bûcheron) Heidegger (pp. 376, 371).

62 Grenier, art. cit., and Gandillac, 'Kierkegaard, le Pascal du Nord', p. 373; see Henri Delacroix, *La Religion et la foi* (Paris: Alcan, 1922), pp. 180-82 and 'Soeren Kierkegaard. Le christianisme absolu à travers le paradox et le désespoir', *Revue de*

the secular and academic Kierkegaard (Heidegger, Jaspers, Wahl) or the religious-existential one, and for or against a specifically Christian Kierkegaard.

Against more 'reasonable' academic interpretations, Shestov, Fondane and Rougemont find in Kierkegaard's thought a weapon against the omnipotence of the claims of rationalism (PD 100-102), reason and logical Necessity (PD 71), 'a desperate struggle against reason which struggles like a madwoman for the possible' (LCM 204) and against 'the all-powerful principle of contradiction' (LC 399). In this struggle against reason, the existential interpreters of Kierkegaard emphasise Kierkegaard's anxiety (*angoisse*) as 'Kierkegaard's acute, irrational point', which places us before that Nothing which causes the world of self-evident truths of reason to crumble because it reveals a Nothing prior to the logical operation of negation and a freedom prior to logical necessity (LCM 176-78). At this moment, says Rougemont, 'all philosophical systems vanish in the face of the terror (*l'effroi*) of concrete choice' (PD 103). As Bespaloff puts it, 'Kierkegaard's thought maintains itself at the extreme limits of its domain, where contraries cannot be reconciled and where philosophy, seized by panic, rears up and retreats', leaving systematic thought in ruins.[63] Of course, this anti-philosophical philosophy was a precarious and difficult position to maintain.[64] Its anti-

métaphysique et de morale 8, no. 4 (1900): pp. 451-84, as well as Victor Basch, 'Un individualiste religieux, Soeren Kierkegaard', *La Grande Revue* (1903), 281-320. Delacroix's and Basch's articles were the first on Kierkegaard to appear in France.

63 Rachel Bespaloff, 'Notes sur La Répétition de Kierkegaard', in *Cheminements et Carrefours* (Paris: Vrin, 2004 [1938]), pp. 119-59; see p. 154. Hereafter CC. Bespaloff's article first appeared in the *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* in January 1934. Bespaloff's article is in response to Paul-Henri Tisseau's translation of Kierkegaard's *La Répétition* (Paris: Alcan, 1933). In the 1930s, Tisseau, a Protestant, also translated *The Concept of Anxiety—Le concept de l'angoisse* (Paris: Alcan, 1935), *Fear and Trembling—Crainte et tremblement* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1935), and a part of *Stages on Life's Way,* 'In vino veritas'—*Le Banquet* (Paris: Alcan, 1933). The haphazard translation and publication of Kierkegaard in France led to Kierkegaard's works being read in isolation from one another, often resulting in very distorted interpretations; see Hélène Politis, *Kierkegaard en France au XXe siècle: archéologie d'une reception* (Paris: Kimé, 2005) and Patricia Desroches and Hélène Politis, 'Trompeur en vue de vrai: entretien avec Hélène Politis', *Europe: revue mensuelle littéraire,* no. 972 (April 2010), 66-79.

64 See Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent. An Essay on Christian Existentialism*, trans. by Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Image Books, 1956), pp. 13,

rationalism was opposed to Heidegger and Jaspers, whom they accused of taming and domesticating Kierkegaard's thought, and of betraying *existence* in favour of *philosophy*, reducing anxiety's significance to that of 'shining a light on Being' (see LCM 178), and so forcing this primordial experience to conform to the demands of knowledge, instead of grasping anxiety as 'abolishing forever *the very possibility of any knowledge*' based on logical categories (LCM 243).[65]

The differing interpretations of Kierkegaardian anxiety are revelatory in this respect. Christian and existentialist interpreters all agree that anxiety is anxiety before 'Nothing' (*Néant*), in the face of freedom's 'possibility of possibility' (KPE 131-33), and that it is a 'sudden' emotion, without any definite object or cause (see KPE 144). The disagreement concerns the status of this 'nothing'. For Shestov, Fondane and Bespaloff, anxiety before Nothing changes 'the possibility of freedom into a possibility *of* Nothing', an 'abyss of possibility' (CC 155, 186), a 'fainting fit' (*syncope*) of freedom (LE 32) in which freedom succumbs to sin, such that the Nothing *becomes* sin, sin being a Nothingness *within* the individual, a fascinating and crushing force which imprisons human freedom (KPE 146, 182, 257, 304, 309; LE 31-32). This is why 'anxiety no doubt

69, 129-32, 136-39, 148-50; see in particular pp. 131-32: 'The existentialism of Kierkegaard, of Kafka, of Chestov, of Fondane, was an essentially religious irruption and claim, an agony of faith, the cry of subjectivity towards its God. It was both the revelation of the person and of his anxiety in the face of the Nothing which is the non-being in the existent, the 'crack in the existent'. But… it was the misfortune (malheur) of this existentialism to arise and develop within philosophy…. It was a religious protest in the guise of a philosophy—a philosophy directed against the professionals of philosophy…. It was a philosophy against philosophy'. Maritain's internal quotation regarding 'the Nothing in the existent… a crack [fêlure] in the existent' is taken from Benjamin Fondane, *Le lundi existentiel et le dimanche de l'histoire* (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 1990), 31-32, hereafter LE; originally in *L'Existence*, ed. Jean Grenier (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), a collection which also contained essays by Camus, Maurice de Gandillac and Etienne Gilson among others.

65 See Fondane's 'Le lundi existentiel', especially LE pp. 20-25, 28-29, 31-34, 38-41, 60-62. From the opposite side, Georges Gurvitch, in *Les Tendances actuelles de la philosophie allemande* (Paris: Vrin, 1930), calls Heidegger's philosophy 'an existential phenomenology' (p. 24) or an 'existentialism' (p. 218), a synthesis of irrationalism and dialectics based on Schelling and Kierkegaard (p. 228) which did not fit very well with the fundamental rationalism of Husserl's phenomenology. Both Gurvitch and Fondane, from opposite perspectives, argue for the incompatibility of Kierkegaard's existential thought with phenomenology.

reveals the Nothing to us, but also the nothingness of this Nothing [*le néant de ce néant*]' (LE 28). On this interpretation, the Nothing which holds human freedom in bondage (sin) is to be combated and *overcome* (LE 153),[66] as it leads to despair, a form of powerlessness (KPE 120) which 'deprives the individual of his sovereignty and plunges him into death' (CC 187). On this reading, the Nothingness which certain metaphysicians (Heidegger, Jaspers) claim to find in Kierkegaard as a ground of authentic existence, says Rougemont, is precisely what Kierkegaard *denounces*.[67] At the same time, this interpretation moves Kierkegaard closer to his Catholic critics than they might think, insofar as he too regards anxiety as something *preparatory* to faith and to be overcome through faith.[68]

Wahl, on the other hand, takes a much more Heideggerian line. Contrary to Rougemont and Shestov's followers, for Wahl, Kierkegaard is 'above all else' a metaphysician who offers a new theory of subjectivity and temporality rather than a religious thinker (EK 140-41). 'In the phenomenon of anxiety', he writes, 'the power of nothing [*rien*], the positivity of a Nothing [*néant*] which attracts, is revealed' (EK 221). This Nothing, far from enslaving or ensnaring human freedom, 'is the possibility of something which both *is* and *is not*', it is the 'anxiety-inducing [*angoissante*] possibility of being-able [*pourvoir*]' without one's knowing just what this being-able means; that is to say, it is freedom (EK 220). Anxiety is 'the vertigo of freedom' in which freedom awakes (EK 220) and becomes conscious of the future as the individual's own possibility (EK 221). As with Heidegger, anxiety thus *individualises* the individual and tears her away from the anonymous 'one' [*das Man*] of everyday existence—a point which Fondane readily concedes,[69] but with

66 Originally, Benjamin Fondane, book review of Heidegger, *Qu'est-ce que la métaphysique?*, trans. by Henri Corbin (Paris: Gallimard, 1938) in the *Cahiers du Sud,* 18 (1939), 603-6.

67 Rougemont, 'Kierkegaard en France,' p. 972. See Margaret Teboul's very rich study, 'La réception de Kierkegaard en France 1930-1960', in the *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, no. 89 (2005), 315-36; on the existentials' opposition to the secularisation of Kierkegaard by Heidegger and Jaspers, see p. 322.

68 See Maurice de Gandillac, 'Le Pascal du Nord,' p. 376 and his reference to Jacques Maritain, *Sept leçons sur l'être et les premiers principes de la raison spéculative* (Paris: P. Téqui, 1932-1933), pp. 57-60.

69 Fondane, review of *Traité du désespoir*, in *Cahiers du Sud*, loc. cit., p. 50 n 1.

the proviso that anxiety only places one on the threshold of 'truth'.[70] For Wahl, though, 'courage for anxiety before death' is already authenticity. Anxiety is not to be overcome; it is to be retained and dwelt with in 'anticipatory resoluteness' before death.

Needless to say, it was Wahl's Heideggerian interpretation of Kierkegaard which prevailed, most obviously in Sartre, who follows Wahl in reconciling Kierkegaardian anxiety before freedom with Heidegger's anxiety before Nothing, and in describing anxiety before freedom through the experience of vertigo, which for Sartre reveals the nothingness *of* Dasein's own being[71]—rather than a nothingness *in* one's being, as the religious Kierkegaardians maintained. However, if Kierkegaardian anxiety was the focal point of what was already termed 'the crisis of existentialism',[72] the issue of personal engagement was paramount. Criticism of Wahl's *Études kierkegaardiennes*, while full of admiration for this 'feast of erudition',[73] complain of Wahl's excessively *objective* approach to the *subjective* thinker par excellence (LE 9-100). Pierre Mesnard observes: 'It is surprising to see Wahl give us what amounts to an eminently 'classical' perspective in which Kierkegaard occupies precisely 'the paragraph'—something he did not want at any price—between Hegel and Jaspers.'[74] Fondane, while noting that everything in Wahl's interpretation is exact, precise, considered and judicious (HP 764), regrets that Wahl places himself *outside* of Kierkegaard's thought instead of understanding Kierkegaard's experience through his own, 'through an identification with what is *lived* in this thought, a vital act which is therefore indivisible, irreducible' (LE 99). The only way to understand Kierkegaard, according to Fondane, is the way in which Kierkegaard tried to understand Abraham, namely, to realise that 'each of us carries his Isaac within himself' (LC 406). Even Bespaloff, who had a deep friendship with Wahl which extended from

70 Fondane, review of *Traité du désespoir*, p. 48.

71 Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'être et le néant*, new edition established and corrected by Arlette Elkaïm-Sartre (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), pp. 63-79; *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel Barnes (New York: Washington Square Press, 1992), pp. 65-85.

72 See Sylvain de Coster, 'La crise de l'existentialisme: à propos des Études kierkegaardiennes de Jean Wahl', *Revue internationale de philosophie,* 1, no. 2 (1938-1939), 398-402.

73 Benjamin Fondane, book review of *Études kierkegaardiennes*, in the *Cahiers du Sud,* 18 (1939), 169-71; reprinted LE pp. 95-100.

74 Mesnard, *Le vrai visage de Kierkegaard*, p. 21.

the 1930s to their time together in exile at Mount Holyoke College during the Second World War,[75] reproached Wahl for his disengaged approach.[76] 'One wonders whether the absolute reserve which Wahl adopts does not constitute in certain respects a hindrance rather than a help' (NEK 301). 'An intellectual by race and vocation', Wahl 'will not accept, for himself, the torments and mutilations that the faith of Kierkegaard or the hope of Nietzsche inflict and wish to inflict on man' (NEK 322), and for that reason, he remains a stranger to Kierkegaard's thought: 'There is a point, very difficult to determine, at which in order to follow Kierkegaard—or, I would say, even to understand him fully—one would have to imitate him, and to pass from imitation to participation' (NEK 323).[77] As for Bespaloff herself, one has only to read her accounts

75 See the correspondence collected in Monique Jutrin, ed., *Lettres de Jean Wahl à Rachel Bespaloff* (1937-1947). *Sur le fond le plus déchiqueté de l'histoire* (Paris: Éditions Claire Paulhan, 2003) as well as Jutrin's introduction to this volume.

76 Rachel Bespaloff, 'Notes sur les Études kierkegaardiennes de Jean Wahl,' *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger,* 39 (June-July 1939), 301-323, hereafter NEK; see p. 301.

77 It is remarkable that Bespaloff, Wahl, Fondane and Shestov were all Jews, and so all would be regarded by the followers of Maurice Barrès and 'nativist' antisemites as 'intellectuals by race,' the intellectual being, according to this ideology, a type of *déraciné*, someone without roots in the native soil of France. See Samuel Moyn, *Origins of the Other: Emannuel Levinas Between Revelation and Ethics* (Ithaca, NY and London, UK: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 188: 'The number of philosophers of Jewish origin—Bespaloff, Shestov, Fondane, Wahl, was well as Levinas—whose turn to Kierkegaard's Christian philosophy took place in this decade of European upheaval [the 1930s] is surely striking.' Moyn's book provides an interesting account of the French reception of Kierkegaard in the 1930s, but it is biased in favour of Wahl and against Shestov and Fondane, such as when he describes Fondane's 'Héraclite le pauvre' (1935) as a 'remarkably malicious' and 'unprovoked' attack on Wahl's 1938 *Études kierkegaardiennes* (181)—which would have made Fondane's attack remarkably prescient as well. In fact, Fondane was responding to Wahl's preface to Tisseau's translation of *Fear and Trembling—Crainte et tremblement* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1935), the preface later being incorporated into *Études kierkegaardiennes*. In a later essay, Moyn provides the 'provocation' for Fondane's attack—Wahl's statement that 'even if we think that the religious stage of existence Kierkegaard describes does not correspond to any reality, it nevertheless remains the case that he made present to us the conflicts and the tension which formed the depths of his being' (EK 209); Moyn, 'Anxiety and Secularisation. Soeren Kierkegaard and the Twentieth-Century Invention of Existentialism,' in Jonathan Judaken and Robert Bernasconi, eds. *Situating Existentialism: Key Texts in Context* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 279-304. Nonetheless, even his later account remains partial in both senses of the term.

of *Fear and Trembling* and *Repetition* on faith as 'the absolute risk of being deceived forever without us being offered the slightest assurance in exchange' (CC 185), 'the risk of an insane hope' without the precautions of mistrust (CC 147), and on 'the resurrection of love in suffering transformed into an ordeal [*épreuve*]' (CC 147) to see that when she states that 'a *lived truth* can never be transformed into a *known truth*' (CC 163), she speaks from the engaged perspective of personal experience.

Rougemont, while agreeing on the necessity of an engaged approach, nevertheless thought that the whole debate rested on a false premise. Subjectivity is indeed the essential thing, but 'subjectivity consists in the fact of becoming a *subject* of truth' through total subjection to God (PD 104). As Rougemont puts it in the discussion following Wahl's 1937 lecture on 'Subjectivity and Transcendence', 'I cannot conceive of any concrete relation with transcendence which lacked the touch of the divine or the sacred'.[78] More specifically, the only genuine 'absurd' for Kierkegaard is 'the unthinkable paradox, the historical Incarnation of God' (PD 74). When Kierkegaard speaks of faith 'in virtue of the absurd' overcoming despair, the 'absurd' refers to the Incarnation, and not to some general anti-rationalism (PD 57). If Fondane and Bespaloff indeed favour an engaged and personal approach to Kierkegaard, well, then, 'the only way to engage the whole person in following Kierkegaard' is to follow him in the task of 'becoming Christian' (PD 70), and 'the rest is nonsense' (*tout le reste est littérature*).[79]

Of course, for a Jew (however unorthodox) such as Fondane, this is a non-starter:

> If Kierkegaard is only *above all* a Christian… if he fights against Hegel out of Christian *duty*, then Kierkegaard is lost, and I don't see how we others (*nous autres*) could have any need of him. If Kierkegaard touches us, it is because his way of thinking is more suited than anyone else's to propelling our own; it consists in desiring freedom because we are suffocating within the walls of reality, and not in declaring that we have to suffocate because Christianity demands it (HP 765).

78 'Subjectivité et transcendance', p. 204.

79 Rougemont, 'Kierkegaard en France', p. 976.

No doubt Fondane would have agreed with Jeanne Hersch's statement much later, during the 1964 UNESCO conference in Paris commemorating the 150th anniversary of Kierkegaard's birth, that what counts in Kierkegaard is his struggle *against* organised Christianity, 'and it is the 'how' of the conflict which counts, the quality of the confrontation' and revolt; it is this revolt and its quality which allow non-Christians to experience 'the feeling of understanding Kierkegaard by breaking and entering, by a sort of theft', and by the same token make so annoying the Christian claims of 'a sort of exclusive possibility of understanding and reading Kierkegaard'.[80]

5. Hyppolite and Kierkegaard

I have dwelt at some length on the debate among the existential interpreters of Kierkegaard in 1930s France in part because Hyppolite himself ignores it (he discusses only Wahl) and in part because this is an episode which has been almost entirely ignored in English-language accounts.[81] In some respects, this silence is puzzling, especially in Hyppolite's case, given that Hyppolite came of age intellectually in the 1930s, but it can perhaps be best explained by the overwhelming triumph of Sartrean existentialism after 1945 and the consequent oblivion into which pre-war existential thought fell, Camus' *Myth of Sispyphus* notwithstanding, not to mention the aggravating factor of the non-academic and even anti-academic style of thinkers such as Shestov and Berdyaev. Of the religious existential thinkers of the interwar period, only Marcel continued to be a presence after the war, aided by his friendships with Wahl and Paul Ricoeur, both philosophers within the academy.[82] Shestov died in 1938; Fondane was gassed at Auschwitz-

80 Jeanne Hersch, in 'Colloque Kierkegaard: groupe de discussion', in *Kierkegaard Vivant* (Paris: Gallimard, Idées, 1966), pp. 249-50; hereafter KV.

81 Moyn is the exception, but even he barely mentions Rougemont, and his account of Shestov, Bespaloff and Fondane is misleading and inaccurate.

82 On Wahl and Marcel, see Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Levinas and Xavier Tillette, Jean Wahl et Gabriel Marcel, introduction by Jeanne Hersch (Paris: Beauchesne, 1997) as well as Mathias Girel, 'Avant-propos' to Wahl's *Vers le concret* (Paris: Vrin, 2004), pp. 5-26. See also Margaret Teboul, 'Naissance du paradigme de l'existence. Philosophie et religion dans les années trente,' in *Europe: revue mensuelle littéraire,* no. 972 (April 2010), 151-69.

Birkenau in 1944; Bespaloff, in despair and exile, committed suicide in 1949. Camus, who personally knew both Fondane and Bespaloff, moved away from 'the absurd' toward a philosophy of revolt, leaving Kierkegaard and Shestov behind. Sartrean existentialism, bolstered by Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty, was the uncontested champion. When Hyppolite refers to Kierkegaard's importance for existential thought, then, and when he links Kierkegaardian 'existence' to Marx's criticism of Hegel's idealism, he is operating within the framework of Sartrean existentialism. When he moves away from Sartrean existentialism, it is toward the Heidegger of the 'Letter on Humanism' and the structuralist Marx of Althusser's school.

Nevertheless, even in the mid-1950s, Hyppolite offers a reading of Kierkegaard that is sensitive and nuanced, and singles out Kierkegaard's three key works as being *Fear and Trembling*, *Repetition* and *The Concept of Anxiety*: the works which, together with *The Sickness Unto Death*, held the greatest significance for Shestov, Bespaloff, Fondane and Wahl, far more than *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript* or the *Philosophical Fragments*, or even *The Present Age*. Indeed, Hyppolite emphasises how Kierkegaard's three key works fit together and support each other.

The main thematic links between these works are Kierkegaard's category of 'the exception' and transcendence towards God. As Hyppolite notes, Kierkegaard can be regarded as 'an exceptional case… an existence who isolates himself and is perhaps stuck in a face-to-face with transcendence, an exceptional being undergoing an ordeal [*épreuve*] from God'. [83] Kierkegaard, like Abraham in *Fear and Trembling*, is isolated by a secret, 'the mystery of a singular being' which cannot be directly communicated with another human being or with any collective organisation, be it Church or State (200). Through pseudonymous, indirect communication, adopting the personae of Johannes de Silentio (John of Silence), Constantin Constantius (Constantly Constant) and Vigilius Haufniensis (the harbour watchman), Kierkegaard 'communicates', but it is not a real communication. Instead, he sacrifices reality in order to be certain of being authentic, which amounts to abandoning the 'ethical stage' devoted to universal duties and being-with-others 'in order to become more and more religious, extraordinary,

83 'Hegel et Kierkegaard dans la pensée française contemporaine', p. 198. Further references to this article given in parentheses in the text.

unique' (202). The danger is that by guarding the mystery, the secret of his existence, through indirect communication, Kierkegaard risks ending up with a refusal of communication and the abstraction of solitude, the position of Hegel's 'beautiful soul' who 'lacks reality' and cannot communicate concretely or effectively (203-4).

Yet that is not the case, says Hyppolite. Kierkegaard cannot be reduced to the figure of the 'beautiful soul' or the 'unhappy consciousness', for in his rebellion of the part against the whole, 'it is the Hegelian whole, the system of knowledge, which is henceforth impossible' (208). In the first place, the Hegelian *Aufhebung*—the dialectical surpassing which preserves what it annuls and in which the particular is mediated by the whole—is replaced by *repetition*, an expression of Christian hope and a relation of the individual to God without the mediation of universals (206). Abraham, at the moment when it seems that he has lost everything and must sacrifice Isaac, gets Isaac back again 'in virtue of the absurd', Job, who loses all, regains everything, contrary to all human probability. The sufferings and unhappiness of Abraham and Job, who are correlative and complementary figures (207 n 1), are *ordeals* (*épreuves*), and as such can only be understood through the individual's unmediated and absolute relation to the God who puts that individual to the test. In such an ordeal, anxiety arises as a self-questioning and restlessness in the soul. 'The anxiety of innocence is the anxiety of freedom in the face of itself, in the face of its own being-able [*son proper pouvoir*]', as Heidegger and Sartre will later say (205). This is anxiety in the face of one's own future, but the 'future' possibility about which one is anxious is, in Kierkegaard, 'the incognito of eternity', 'the form in which eternity presents itself within the temporal' in the 'moment of decision' (207 n 2). Rather than the future being a continuation of the present on a plane of immanence, the future revealed in anxiety is eternity breaking through into time, the transcendent breaking into the immanence of subjectivity, constituting a new form of subjectivity and thought (207-8). In short, 'existence and transcendence: a new dimension of the problem of Being' (208). At the same time, the transcendence of the individual towards God, correlative to God's testing of the individual (Abraham, Job), makes the individual an exception placed outside of the universal, 'suspending' ethics and language, and setting the individual higher than the species, 'the individual against the mass', authentic and alone, outside and against history (206, 208 n 2, 207 n 2).

Hyppolite's 1955 text on Kierkegaard is by far his most detailed and sympathetic reading of the Danish 'exception', and it is not surprising that it is the text of a talk which Hyppolite gave in Copenhagen at a conference marking the centenary of Kierkegaard's death (196). By 1966, with existentialism in eclipse and structuralism (Althusser, Lévi-Strauss, Lacan) in the ascendant, Hyppolite's tone shifts drastically. At this point, rather than agreeing with Kierkegaard's metaphor of Hegel as the builder of a palace of ideas who lives in a hovel, Hyppolite writes that 'Hegel was *stigmatised* as an essentialist, a professor building a system which bore no relation to real existence'.[84] But 'Kierkegaard's attacks are not based on a genuine reading of Hegel, but on the old Schelling', 'whose critiques of Hegel provided Kierkegaard with his point of departure (far more than a reading of Hegel himself)' (294). Now, not only is Kierkegaard's attack on Hegel misguided, but Kierkegaard *has no real knowledge of Hegel* (a contention entirely without factual basis, but in keeping with the prevailing anti-existentialist mood in France).

Whereas in the 1940s, Hyppolite had agreed with Kierkegaard that 'the system reflects the disappearance of the very notion of *existence*' and its paradoxes (CE 22), he now writes, in a completely Hegelian way, that although 'the true is *subject*', the subject is Spirit, 'the indivisible, differentiated self which *is* through its self-transcending, the transcending [*dépassement*] of the self in each of its concrete determinations, the *whole* of its movement' (305): that is, precisely that whole of Spirit's self-development in which the existing individual is reduced to a 'vanishing moment' and what is reconciled with Spirit is not the existing individual but generic 'humanity'. But seemingly insouciant about this complete *volte-face*, Hyppolite goes on to make the claim that Kierkegaard remains at the stage of 'immediacy', prior to dialectical development, because 'for him, Christianity is an immediate truth, but which can only be possessed through subjectivity's deep commitment (*adhesion*) to it' (306). This is an absolutely astonishing remark given Kierkegaard's insistence, from *Fear and Trembling* onward, that faith is not 'immediacy' but a 'second immediacy' which comes into place only after immediate experience has been mediated through ethical, linguistic

84 Hyppolite, 'Essai d'interprétation de la Préface de la Phénoménologie,' *Figures*, vol. 1, pp. 275-308; see p. 294. Further references in parentheses in the text.

and logical universals—not to mention the fact that Christianity, in particular, as the religion of the Paradox, cannot be grasped in simple immediacy, but only through what Kierkegaard terms the highest 'dialectical tension', which results from grasping, intellectually, that the Paradox cannot be rationally intelligible or subject to logical mediation.[85] Conceding that Kierkegaard is right insofar as the truth 'is not without the self, the movement of lived experience,' Hyppolite says that Hegel agrees that 'truth is experienced [*expérimentée*], lived,' but that 'this is only part of what Hegel means… He also and most importantly means that each of these world-views is inhabited by the haunting [*hantise*] or the movement of its own transcending and is gnawed away at from the inside by the movement which will cause another world-view to appear and which will contain within it and sublimate the previous one. Kierkegaard would no doubt not grant that' (306).

Indeed! Kierkegaard—and Hyppolite, in the 1940s—would not grant the reduction of singular individuals to the status of placeholders for world-views, or the idealisation (Kierkegaard would say: 'volatilisation') of existential conflicts within the existing individual into the dialectical conflicts which are the motor of Spirit's development. Kierkegaard speaks ironically of Hegel as the dialectical thinker who so thoroughly confuses himself with the universal that, in a fit of absent-mindedness, he forgets that he exists. It seems that Hyppolite forgot to remember this forgetfulness. In any case, he seems to have 'forgotten' what he had written about Kierkegaard in the aftermath of the Second World War, during the first flush of French existentialism, and even in the mid-1950s.

Yet, only two years previously, during the conference marking the 150th anniversary of Kierkegaard's birth, Hyppolite's attitude was more ambivalent. He admits that he had read Kierkegaard 'with passion' and felt great admiration for him, but at the same time expresses his 'gnawing irritation' at this 'profound mystifier' who, like the Christian God, had to disguise himself in history, and so in a sense mistook himself for God (KV 218). The question, then, says Hyppolite, is 'what can one do with Kierkegaard in existence if one is not religious', if one is not capable of

85 This is the theme developed at length in the later parts of Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. As Jean Wahl put it during the round-table discussion during the 'Kierekgaard Vivant' colloquium, the idea of being 'immediately Christian' is 'contradictory;' KV 247.

passing beyond the ethical stage to the religious stage? (KV 218-19). His answer is that in Kierkegaard, there is something 'which interests all of us, believers or non-believers, and that is precisely the character of subjectivity and the possibility that it has of disappearing not only into history but into institutions' (KV 219). Inside the constituted institutions (the Church, the Communist Party) which are necessary to history, 'there is a protest [*revendication*] of the exceptional, and that protest remains, despite everything, the salt of the earth; we must not lose it' (RV 219).

Hyppolite notes the 'paradox' of the UNESCO conference itself, during which 'universal history pays homage' to a person who wanted to have nothing to do with it. As someone who is not himself an 'exception,' Hyppolite can only 'bring this exceptional [subjectivity] to history' in order to 'register something which I think must be preserved even in the excesses' and unfairness of its protests and attacks on Hegel, universal history and organised Christianity (KV 219-20). It is not just that subjectivity is irreducible, but that Kierkegaardian 'existence' is that of *the exception* who cannot and will not be mediated by ethical universals and 'recognised'—and it is this claim to being 'an exception' which Hyppolite finds both irritating and essential in Kierkegaard (KV 223). In short, the importance of Kierkegaard lies precisely in what Hyppolite finds irritating: that within history, Kierkegaard, like the Incarnated God of Christianity, insists on remaining outside of and beyond history. By 1966, this 'muted irritation' had developed into such an aggravated impatience with Kierkegaardian subjectivity that Hyppolite managed to forget that individual existence, against and outside history, is 'the salt of the earth' which 'must not be lost'.

6. Conclusion: Hyppolite and the French Kierkegaard

Hyppolite certainly ended up agreeing with Levinas' contention, in 1963, that 'after one hundred years of Kierkegaardian protest, one would like to get beyond that pathos', but he would no doubt also agree that 'Kierkegaard's philosophy has marked contemporary thought so deeply that even the rejections it may elicit are still forms of that influence'.[86] Hyppolite's own interpretation of Kierkegaard was decisively marked by

86 Emmanuel Levinas, 'Kierkegaard: Existence and Ethics', in *Proper Names*, trans. by Michael B. Smith (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 66-74; p. 71. Originally published in the *Schweizer Monatshefte* 43 (1963).

Wahl, both *Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* and *Études kierkegaardiennes*, to the point that Hyppolite seems unaware of the competing interpretations and of the polemic which raged around Kierkegaard in the 1930s. The evolution of his thoughts on Kierkegaard, from his initial enthusiasm which found Kierkegaard and Marx allied as partisans of concrete existence against idealism and abstraction, to his growing irritation with Kierkegaard, and finally his dismissal of Kierkegaaardian subjectivity as a transcended moment of the dialectic, reflects the changes in the preoccupations and dominant modes of philosophy in France from 1945 to 1966. As philosopher of 'the history of systems of thought' and as a Hegelian, Hyppolite would no doubt be pleased that his changing attitudes toward Kierkegaard in large measure reflect the changing historical context, from post-war existentialism, to the Heideggerian concern with Being, to Structuralism. In that respect, Hyppolite was not (as he himself admitted) an 'exception', but very much an individual representative of a universal world-view. As such a representative individual, Hyppolite, in what he says and does not say about Kierkegaard at different times, in what he remembers of Kierkegaard's reception in France and what he forgets, is revelatory of the age in which he lived.

Jacobi, Hyppolite and Difference

THOMAS EBKE

It is the aim of this essay to bring to bear the philosophical heritage of Jean Hyppolite under the banner of a 'metaphysics of difference'. This means, Hyppolite's critical framework is reconstructed here as an attempt to do justice to both of the movements that require elaboration in the aftermath of Hegel's system: On the one hand, Hyppolite's approach is a *metaphysics* of difference inasmuch as he champions the primacy of logic over phenomenology. On the other hand, it represents a metaphysics of *difference* with its emphasis on the non-coincidence between 'sense' and 'expression'. Finally, the paper links Hyppolite's position to Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's idea of *salto mortale*, trying to understand this figure as a crucial complement to Hyppolite's conception.

Metaphysics of Difference. Hyppolite and/with Jacobi on How to *Exist* in *Truth*

It is the central aim of the following considerations to explore the legacy of Jean Hyppolite with a focus on his invaluable reading of Hegel's philosophical project in its immanent consistency. My perspective on Hyppolite in this essay will engage with a discussion of his approach as *one* pertinent source (flanked by only a handful of others) of a type of philosophical speculation that I wish to propound under the label of a 'metaphysics of difference'. Thus, before engaging with Hyppolite in detail, I should like to elucidate the problem that a *metaphysics of difference* is supposed to express and to respond to.

For the last two centuries, the famous concluding image outlined by Hegel in his *Science of Logic* has constituted a vexation for its commentators, all the more so because an appraisal of the Hegelian

system in its entirety seems to hinge upon the reading of this specific movement within the sequence of Hegel's argument. What is at stake in that enigmatic passage? In the finishing line of his conceptual trajectory, Hegel makes the following peculiar turn:

> The idea, namely, in positing itself as the absolute *unity* of the pure concept and its reality and thus collecting itself in the immediacy of *being*, is in this form as *totality – nature*. [...] The pure idea into which the determinateness or reality of the concept is itself raised into concept is rather an absolute *liberation* for which there is no longer an immediate determination which is not equally *posited* and is not concept; in this freedom, therefore, there is no transition that takes place; the simple being to which the idea determines itself remains perfectly transparent to it: it is the idea that in its determination remains with itself. The transition is to be grasped, therefore, in the sense that the idea *freely discharges* itself, absolutely certain of itself and internally at rest. [...] But what is posited by this first resolve of the pure idea to determine itself as external idea is only the mediation out of which the concept, as free concrete existence that from externality has come to itself, raises itself up, completes this self-liberation *in the science of spirit*, and in the science of logic finds the highest concept of itself, the pure concept conceptually comprehending itself. [1]

Something radically peculiar shines through in the quotation just presented. As opposed to all the conceptual self-differentiations which the *Science of Logic* had passed in its previous course, this emphatically final step, expounded by Hegel as the realisation of the pristine unity of being and concept and, simultaneously, as the closure of the *Logic* itself, cannot equally be a 'determination that *has become*, (...) a *transition*, as was the case above when the subjective concept in its totality *becomes objectivity*, or the *subjective purpose becomes life*'.[2] If, in the end, the absolute fuses with itself in such a way that it illuminates the systematic movement of the concept as its very own mode of development and accomplishment, that which emerges is an utmost positivity that can no longer be contrasted with any immediate determination and that will not

1 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. by George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 752 (italics in the original).

2 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, p. 752 (italics in the original).

be implicated into the dialectical progress any further.[3] The absolute idea which guarantees the unity of 'the thing itself' ('die Sache selbst') with the system of the pure determinations of thought, such as it is identified in the *Science of Logic*, is itself the result of the fully accomplished course of determinate negations.

Yet, *as* the result, the absolute idea represents anything but a methodological meta-reflection independent of any empirical content. It constitutes, as Hegel explicitly points out, a (mediated) *immediacy*, a *being*. Hence, Hegel precisely does *not* conclude his project by claiming that the *Science of Logic*, as the auto-explication of being in terms of the systematic categories of thought, is finally crowned by some complex immediacy which brooks no determination that would constitute its opposite or exterior. Rather, one may be justified in maintaining that this image of perfection, in which the play of negativity seemed to have exhausted itself, takes a fresh turn thanks to a new and innovative transition which does not derive from all the differentiations that preceded and entered it. The absolute idea knows itself to be identical with everything that is, to the extent that it '*freely discharges* itself, absolutely certain of itself and internally at rest'.[4]

What needs to be underscored here is Hegel's strange heightening (which is at the same time the definite closure) of the process by which the logical realises itself throughout the finite as the very *truth* of the finite. In the end, the absolute idea, which can no longer be counterposed to anything external, posits nature as its absolute other. In other words: The idea *discharges* itself, in an articulation introduced by Hegel as a *free* expression, into a reality that it continually keeps on pervading as 'its' own reality; it opens up into a totality which may then be appropriately characterised by claiming that, ontologically speaking, it constantly lags behind its 'truth' (namely the absolute idea) in the same way as it is only grounded in the light of this truth.

In the transition from the *Science of Logic* to the philosophy of the real, Hegel thus exposes an indelible distance which the concept preserves towards itself – towards itself, that is, in the shape of nature and the finite. Seen in this light, the problem that gathers form within

3 Cf. Walter Jaeschke, *Hegel-Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Wirkung* (Stuttgart: Metzler Verlag, 2010), p. 253.

4 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. by George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 753 (italics in the original).

Hegel's late turn into the real might be narrowed down to the alternative between an 'internal, centred negativity' and an 'external, decentred negativity':[5] While the former insists on the inclusion of difference and its elimination in favour of the self-totalisation of the absolute, the latter is 'revoked into the state of irresolvable and impregnable incompleteness and, as a result, finitude'.[6] Following this second line, the paradigm of the 'subject' inaugurated by Hegel in his *Science of Logic* – that is, the subjectivity of the concept – seems to persist only insofar as it (that is, the *subject as concept* or the *concept as subject*) distinguishes from itself an alterity, a being (*Sein*) which retains an irreducible otherness or rest in relation to the state of absolute ontological and epistemological convergence between thought and reality. The challenge that lurks in the background of this distinction consists not only in modeling a new configuration between the finite and the infinite, but also in bypassing the short circuits that threaten to suppress the real systematic impact which is at stake here: Namely on the one hand the *eliminatory internalisation* of difference and on the other hand its *anthropological reduction.*[7]

We have now advanced far enough to reiterate the claim that there is a strand within Hegel's systematic project which the traditional discussion has failed to live up to, and to specify the thesis that a conception which would finally confront the question that Hegel has bequeathed to modern philosophy might justly be defined as a 'metaphysics of difference'. If one were to pursue such a thought, one would have to engage with the structure of the real and the problem of finitude as that which emerges *in* and *after* the act of the free discharge of the absolute idea: in explicating the role of the *logos* (or the absolute idea) in the genesis of the field of the real/finitude, the theory in question represents a *metaphysics* of difference. But to the extent that it vindicates

5 At this juncture, I take the liberty of citing the categories employed by Klaus-Erich Kaehler in his study on the metamorphosis of the classical conception of reflective subjectivity, a trajectory that culminates in Hegel's transformation of this principle in terms of the subjectivity of the absolute concept. Cf. Klaus-Erich Kaehler, *Das Prinzip Subjekt und seine Krisen. Selbstvollendung und Dezentrierung* (Freiburg im Breisgau/München: Alber Verlag, 2010), p. 738.

6 Klaus-Erich Kaehler, *Das Prinzip Subjekt und seine Krisen. Selbstvollendung und Dezentrierung* (Freiburg im Breisgau/München: Alber Verlag, 2010), p. 738 (my translation).

7 What these two extremes actually mean will be unfurled in the course of this paper.

the differential 'otherness' of finitude, instead of reproducing the idealistic reduction which treats it as the mere mirror of the absolute and as an imperfection that has yet to be sublated by its true concept, such a model merits the title of a metaphysics of *difference*.

A dialectics of the type that was just outlined has not yet been adequately conceptualised in response to Hegel. However, quite a few of the crucial implications that are at stake with regard to such a transformation are noticeable in the philosophical work of Jean Hyppolite, most prominently on the level of his distinction between the reflexive manifestation of an epistemic 'sense' ('*sens*', to use the French term) and the historical structures of human expression. My attempt to update Hyppolite's critical legacy, therefore, is at the same time an effort to spell out the fabric of a metaphysics of difference. Yet, my comments on Hyppolite will also try to demonstrate in what sense his original construction, which is tightly linked to his reading of Hegel, still requires some further elaboration – an elaboration which, in the last part of my paper, I will try to achieve by cross-linking it with the intervention of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi.

'An Always Future Hollow'. The Logic of Sense According to Jean Hyppolite

Most overviews of the Hegelian renaissance in French philosophy in the 20th century emphasise the critical rivalry between the readings of Alexandre Kojève and Jean Hyppolite but tend to underestimate, at least outside France, the genealogy that preceded their debate and set the tone for it. In our present context, it is not so much Jean Wahl's existentialist reflection on *Le malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* (1929) that shall be thematised in further detail, but rather Alexandre Koyré's by now classic essay *Hegel à Iéna* from 1934. Koyré's chief observation in this work concerns the problem of an internal bifurcation of Hegel's dialectics: Whereas the *Phenomenology of Spirit* elaborates a 'dialectics of time which alone renders possible a philosophy of history',[8]

8 Alexandre Koyré, 'Hegel à Iéna (1934)', in *Études d'histoire de la pensée philosophique* (Paris: Vrin, 1961), pp. 147-189 (p. 189). In the absence of an English translation of this text, I will provide my own translations in the following while referring to the pages of the aforementioned French edition.

the *Science of Logic re-institutes* a 'primacy of the past'[9] to the extent that the entire project of the self-realisation of the absolute concept is moulded, according to Koyré, after the scheme of the Christian trinity. Thus, at the level of the *Logic* Hegel transcends (and betrays) the vital phenomenology of finitude, temporality and history which he had reconstructed in his orientation towards the experiences of consciousness.

From Koyré's point of view, the kernel of the Hegelian conception is an anthropology[10] that deciphers man as a figure existing in a perpetual experience of *difference*: in the temporal anticipation of his future, man transcends the contingencies of his historical position and pre-empts the act of his self-identification which remains, however, constantly belated. While, as Koyré argues, Hegel's phenomenological anthropology is still committed both to the indeterminate, temporally open character of the structure of history and to the experiential situation of man, the *Logic* loses sight of this important discovery by designing a self-referential genesis of the concept that excludes time,[11] since 'in the *nunc aeternitatis* everything is already realised'.[12]

This particular reading of the relationship between Hegel's phenomenology and his logic already foreshadows the central issue that Jean Hyppolite addresses in his comments on the Hegelian system. Indeed, in his major study *Logique et Existence* Hyppolite takes a stance that diverges from Koyré's, even as he keeps alive the focal point of Koyré's interpretation with its emphasis on how the *gap* between the

9 Alexandre Koyré, 'Hegel à Iéna (1934)', p. 160. This position is fleshed out in greater detail on pp. 175-178.

10 Alexandre Koyré, 'Hegel à Iéna (1934)', p. 179: 'We insist upon the term *human*. Because, once again, properly understood, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is an anthropology'. (italics in the original). 'Nous insistons sur le terme *humain*. Car encore une fois, bien comprise, la *Phénoménologie de l'esprit* est une anthropologie'.

11 In her well-informed history of the reception of Hegel in French philosophy in the 20th century, Angelika Pillen succeeds in showing that Koyré seeks to define the concrete temporal moment as a mediation of the 'dialectics of history' and the 'theological dialectics' which, according to him, present themselves side by side within Hegel's system. See Angelika Pillen, *Hegel in Frankreich. Vom unglücklichen Bewusstsein zur Unvernunft* (Freiburg im Breisgau/München: Alber Verlag, 2003), p. 86.

12 Alexandre Koyré, 'Hegel à Iéna (1934)', p. 179 ('puisque dans le *nunc aeternitatis* tout est déjà réalisé').

temporal and the absolute, the non-coincidence of history and eternity might be conceptualised. As opposed to Koyré, however, Hyppolite holds the view that Hegel's attempt at elaborating the reflection or recovery of the finite in a circular process in which the eternal (the absolute) gains full transparency of its own truth does not fall back into dogmatism, but achieves, much to the contrary, the foundation of philosophy's activity par excellence. In other words, Hyppolite supports the very twist which allows Hegel to incorporate human consciousness into a more complex type of subjectivity – that is, into a movement in which the substance *becomes* the subject, thereby liquefying the structure of subjectivity altogether to the extent that the genesis of the subject implies 'an inevitable opening onto an outside' ('une ouverture obligatoire sur un dehors'):[13]

> Self-consciousness reduced to itself is not the subject, the vital effectivity. The latter presupposes *in itself* a loss and a radical alteration of the self, a sort of 'giving oneself over to absolute difference', inasmuch as it is but 'the reflection-in-itself in being-other' which gives that which is true – as opposed to an original unity as such or an immediate unity as such. It is – and probably this has not been sufficiently grasped yet – this conception from which the knowledge as *system* springs.[14]

What needs to be underscored here is Hyppolite's insistence that one would misconstrue the self-realisation of the absolute if one were to plot it as the pristine transcendence of that which remains irreducibly alien and external to the absolute. Instead, one has to draw attention to the fact that, for Hegel, there can be no speculative unity in which, once and for all, the state of alienation would be left behind in the name of the fully-mediated identity of the absolute. It is here that Hyppolite's reservations against the Marxist critique of Hegel – whose most prominent

13 Jean Hyppolite, *Figures de la pensée philosophique, Tome I* (Paris: Quadrige/Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), p. 336.

14 Jean Hyppolite, *Figures de la pensée philosophique, Tome I*, p. 336 (italics in the original). 'La conscience de soi réduite à elle-même n'est pas le sujet, l'effectivité vivante. Celle-ci suppose *en elle-même* une perte et une altération radicale de soi, un 'se confier à la différence absolue' de sorte que ce soit 'la réflexion en soi-même dans l'être-autre' qui donne seul le vrai – et non une unité originaire comme telle ou une unité immédiate comme telle. C'est de cette conception que découle – on ne l'a peut-être pas assez remarqué – le savoir comme *système*.'

mouthpiece in Hyppolite's own time was Alexandre Kojève – become palpable: In Hyppolite's view, the Marxist transformation of philosophy into the science of history, along with the suspension of the Hegelian absolute in the name of, and in favour of subjective spirit, represents an absolutisation of finitude that turns human history into the site of the Last Judgment. What the Marxist tradition fails to register, then, is the inevitable differentiality (the negativity) of the totality, whose self-reflection already and persistently requires the position (that is: the negation) of an 'otherness, an 'être-autre' that remains to be interiorised by the absolute.

Hyppolite delineates a relationship between the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*, between the historicity of man (or finite consciousness) and the logicity of the absolute, between immanence and transcendence in which the former pole is inscribed into the latter, thus indicating their 'unstable equilibrium':[15]

> Object and subject finally transcend themselves as such in the authentic language of being, in the Hegelian ontology. This language appears as the existence of the essence, and dialectical discourse appears as the becoming of sense. However, within natural language, how is this language, which is no longer that of anyone, which is being's universal self-consciousness, to be distinguished from human, all-too-human, language? In other words, how does the passage from the Phenomenology to absolute Knowledge work? This question is the Hegelian question *par excellence* (...)[16]

The pivotal category that drives Hyppolite's reading is the concept of '*sens*'.[17] Deviating from the hermeneutic tradition, Hyppolite conceives of *sens* as the reflection of being within language, as a movement in which

15 Jean Hyppolite, *Figures de la pensée philosophique, Tome I*, p. 149. équilibre instable

16 Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, translated by Leonard Lawlor and Amit Sen (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), p. 26f.

17 See Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 176: 'Sense is the essence that comprehends itself by positing itself as essence. In relation to sense, essence is what being was in relation to essence. Being was essence in itself; essence is sense in itself (...) The concept is at first the medium of sense in general, the medium of every comprehensive genesis. The concept is the universal sense that always remains universal in every particular sense, sublating itself, as in the word, and this sublation is there.'

being uncoils as it comprehends itself.[18] It is true that this process can be characterised as an *expressive* movement, although it has to be added that the principle which articulates itself here is not located on the level of consciousness. Rather, Hyppolite's use of the term '*sens*' denotes the way in which the absolute *exists*, namely in gaining its appearance through man. This is the very impact of Hyppolite's distinction between *sens* and 'expression', as Christian Kerslake explains in his invaluable book on Deleuze:

> Hyppolite identifies [the] articulation of the structure of self-differentiation as *sense*, while the movement itself is *expression*. Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence* is built on the claim that Hegel has found the correct – and, explicitly, the most *immanent* – way to *express the sense* or meaning of the Absolute, that is the logic of its own self-differentiating genesis.[19]

Kerslake's lucid observation neatly buttresses Hyppolite's own remark that *two intertwining movements* are involved in the dialectical passage from the sensible to sense [*sens*]. This passage, as it were, operates both ways: As an opening of the phenomenological horizon onto the conceptual self-genesis of the *logos* (which carries with it the insight into the strictly mediated/negative deep structure of what appeared to be sheer immediacy), but also as the self-expression (the discharge) of the *logos* into the sphere of finitude which it posits as the very difference that then channels the self-reflection of the *logos*.[20]

18 At least as far as the German research context is concerned, the only profound account of Hyppolite's position, apart from Angelika Pillen's observations in her valuable book, is given by Sabina Hoth, 'Jean Hyppolite: Logique et existence', in *Der französische Hegel*, ed. by Ulrich Johannes Schneider (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007), pp. 91-104.

19 Christian Kerslake, *Immanence and the Vertigo of Philosophy: From Kant to Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 28 [italics in the original]. What remains to be adequately specified, however, is Hyppolite's positive conception of immanence as opposed to the reduction of transcendence which occurs in a philosophy that charges the finite with the metaphysical burdens of the absolute. I will return to the treatment of this question on the following pages.

20 See Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 31: 'It is indeed this mediation which appears in the passage from the sensible to sense, from immediate intuition to thought signification. But it also appears in the reverse passage from thought to its own alienation, to its Dasein, language. These two movements coincide.'

At this juncture, it is prudent to repeat the salient point in all of this. It consists in Hyppolite's twofold dialectical correction of the modern 'anthropological critique' leveled against Hegel: The first misunderstanding that mars this humanism, according to Hyppolite, is related to an inappropriate conception of what 'negativity' really means in Hegel's system. It is not the case, Hyppolite insists, that Hegel envisages the ulterior abolition of difference. Such an interpretation would confuse the highest *speculative* unity with an *abstract* totality, projecting the latter as a pristine state in which the work of the negative (and the presence of alienation, for that matter) is imagined to be eventually outstripped. Thus, for Hyppolite, Hegel's secular opponents who reproach him for an abstract idealism themselves inscribe into his project the very spectre which they come to denounce as a metaphysical figment that haunts his dialectics. It is in criticism of such a reading that Hyppolite insists so ardently upon his thesis that the absolute is, as it were, 'always already' alienated,[21] that it implies its own alienation precisely on account of its '*être-là*', on account of the fact that it *exists*.

Secondly, and more gravely, this misconception of the way in which Hegel allegedly conceptualises the problem of 'alienation' happens to affirm its own authentic 'positivity' just as it debunks the option of abstract idealism which it erroneously projects onto Hegelian dialectics. What happens in this secularism is a shift of focus from the absolute spirit or *logos*, which is dislocated as the emblem of Hegel's idealistic vision of a redemption from alienation, to man in his material finitude, whose future emancipation and self-identity now comes to be licensed as the true *telos* in the light of which alienation will one day be overcome (Feuerbach, Marx, Sartre). This reading transfigures the realm of finitude into a misconceived infinity (*schlechte Unendlichkeit*, to use Hegel's prominent terminology) by undercutting the role of a *sens* that transcends and breaks into the immanence of human nature and history[22]. One of the truly great merits of Hyppolite's philosophical construction reveals itself

21 This perspective in Hyppolite, which clearly entails a strong antithesis to anthropological Marxism, is also addressed convincingly by Jérôme Lèbre in his recognition that, according to Hyppolite, alienation constitutes the very 'possibility of being' ['la possibilité de l'être']. Jérôme Lèbre, Un hégélianisme sans refuge: la pensée de l'aliénation chez Jean Hyppolite, in *Jean Hyppolite, entre structure et existence*, ed. by Giuseppe Bianco (Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2013), pp. 63-82, p. 73. It is particularly helpful that Lèbre calls to mind Hyppolite's deployment of the term 'alienation' to capture both Hegel's 'Entäußerung' and 'Entfremdung' (p. 64).

at this point: Hyppolite is not a thinker of the alienation of the putatively authentic human *self from itself*, he is not a champion of a theory of the subject. He is much rather the philosopher of an irreducible externalism.[23] There is no end to the reality of alienation and negativity: Instead, the absolute can only exist to the degree that it expresses itself – or, more strictly speaking: that it has *always already* expressed itself – in a reality that is at the same time implicated in and set free from the *logos*.

We can now restate our original thesis: Jean Hyppolite's position in philosophy can be adequately described as a *metaphysics of difference*

22 Jean Hyppolite, *Figures de la pensée philosophique, Tome I*, pp. 148: 'We take the word humanism in this current meaning – a philosophy of immanence as opposed to a philosophy of transcendence, a philosophy of man and humanity as opposed either to a philosophy of the one and only nature devouring man or to a religious philosophy referring human life to a nether world and, through the experience of sin, condemning its status as *merely* human life (...) Hegel senses perpetually, as we have tried to show, that the complete reduction of transcendence to immanence, of the divine to the human would end in the very devaluation of humanity. If God is dead, it is man that has to rise up to God and to realise in himself the divine' [italics in the original]. 'Nous prendrons le mot humanisme dans cette signification actuelle – une philosophie de l'immanence par opposition à une philosophie de la transcendence, une philosophie de l'homme et de l'humanité, par opposition soit à une philosophie de la seule nature, qui engloutit l'homme, soit à une philosophie religieuse, qui réfère la vie humaine à un au-delà et, par l'expérience du péché, la condamne en tant que vie *seulement* humaine (...) Hegel sent perpétuellement, comme nous essayerons de la montrer, que la réduction complète de la transcendence à l'immanence, du divin à l'humain, aboutirait à une dévalorisation même de l'humanité. Si Dieu est mort, il faut que l'homme s'élève à Dieu et réalise en soi le divin' [italics in the original]. This passage captures the subtlety that prevails in Hyppolite's transformation of Hegel: One has to take sides with the immanence of humanism against a transcendence that is propagated in the name of the one and only truth, an identity principle that is bound to devour ['engloutir'] the place of man. Hyppolite makes this point in order to underscore the difficulties that accompany Hegel's philosophical rationalization of Christianity, but one is certainly justified to extend this critique to the political totalitarianisms of the 20th (or any other) century. However, this argument does not coincide with the transfiguration of immanence, that is to say with a conception which allows finitude itself to constitute 'a philosophy of the one and only nature': Surprisingly, and against the main thrust of modern anthropology, Hyppolite considers this epistemological and practical situation, in which man sets himself up as a (little) god after the death of God, not as the emancipation from, but only as the reverse side of the totalitarian transcendence which he had already discarded in his critique of Marxist anthropology. Thus, in Hyppolite's modest remark according to which he merely wishes to explain 'the ambiguity of Hegel's position' (149), we come

because it offers a dialectical integration of finitude within the movement of the infinite, without, however, absolutising either one of these poles.[24] The structure of finitude is neither absorbed into an abstract identity of the absolute, nor is it wholly detached from its dialectical interrelation with a sense (*sens*) which defies its dissolution into immanence. Although Hyppolite does not adopt from Alexandre Koyré the primacy of anthropology, he shares the latter's concern for the situation of man in the context of this dialectics. In a formula that brings to mind Koyré's arguments, Hyppolite, commenting Hegel, speaks of man as 'an always future hollow' (*'un creux toujours futur'*),[25] a constantly postponed lacuna.

This phrase certainly merits closer attention. For if the role of philosophy within the pages of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* can only be located in the rearguard, as a belated reconstruction of the already accomplished course of the self-realisation of the absolute, then, it is true, the major challenge that confronts the philosopher presents itself in an epistemology that must be able to continually sever the moments of the *sens* from the externalities and contingencies with which they are mingled.[26] In fact, and still in fidelity to Hegel, the very movement by which the absolute warrants its truth is the process of a return, a reiteration, a re-flection.[27] However, on the basis of Hyppolite's approach to Hegel, one would have to add that the way in which the absolute incessantly retrieves its own history, thereby 'making sense' of itself, is never invariably one and the same. It is prone to modifications and inaccuracies inasmuch as the absolute's epistemological and ontological recurrence implies no teleology guaranteeing a situation in which, one day, the full identity of being and thought can *actually* be made explicit

across a most critical reflection on the relationship between the discourse of philosophical anthropology and the foundations on which it constitutes itself.

23 The singularity of Hyppolite's conception does not seem to me to be aptly skewered whenever his position is reduced to a negative anthropology, as is the case in the book by Stephanos Geroulanos, *An Atheism that is not Humanist Emerges in French Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010).

24 In other words, Hyppolite undermines both the 'eliminatory internalization' and the 'anthropological reduction' of difference.

25 Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 184.

26 This significant fact is subtly registered by Angelika Pillen, *Hegel in Frankreich. Vom unglücklichen Bewusstsein zur Unvernunft*, pp. 148.

27 See Angelika Pillen, *Hegel in Frankreich. Vom unglücklichen Bewusstsein zur Unvernunft*, p. 146.

by discursive/reflexive means that are themselves finite. And this, in turn, is the reason why man, according to Hyppolite, faces the challenge of constantly having to reconfigure his own existence in terms of the search for the truth, for that which reiterates itself in the contingencies of sensual experience.

'Repeated contacts with non-philosophy': The heritage of Hyppolite in Deleuze and Foucault

Jean Hyppolite's philosophical undertaking represents a *metaphysics* of difference to the extent that it rethinks the ontological status of the finite as the very expression of the self-mediation (self-realisation) of the infinite. Simultaneously, however, it constitutes itself as a metaphysics of *difference* as it insists on the epistemological and temporal delay (or gap) between the expressive movement of the absolute and the reflective motion in which this expression gains full self-transparency. In a nutshell, then, and circumnavigating back to a formula that Michel Foucault once introduced in the wake of Georges Canguilhem, one could assert that Hyppolite elaborates what it might signify to be or to *exist* in truth (*être-dans-le-vrai*).[28]

On closer inspection, however, it is hard to avoid the impression that Hyppolite's evocation of 'the ambiguity of Hegel's position'[29] with regard to the place of the transcendent within immanence muffles a certain emptiness within his own position. As we have seen, Hyppolite reserves for philosophy the role of an epistemology that commits itself to the constant operation of reconstructing the traces of the '*sens*' in the sphere of finitude. The second task, however, consists in conceptualising the existence of man as the 'always future hollow' which the '*sens*' traverses in order to facilitate its epistemic self-reflection. It is interesting to see that Hyppolite's widely prominent 'students' in the French discussion have emphasised diverse aspects of his legacy rather than living up to the full significance of a *metaphysics of difference*.

This can be illuminated by looking at Gilles Deleuze's '*compte-rendu*' of *Logique et Existence* published by the *Revue philosophique de France et de l'étranger* in 1954. In this brief but highly intricate piece, Deleuze argues that the core of Hyppolite's Hegelianism was 'a question

28 See Michel Foucault, *L'ordre du discours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 36.

29 Jean Hyppolite, *Figures de la pensée philosophique, Tome I*, p. 149.

of 'reducing' anthropology, of 'removing the obstacle' of a knowledge whose source is foreign'.[30] Starting from this interpretation, Deleuze raises the following questions:

> In the wake of this fruitful book by Jean Hyppolite, one might ask whether an ontology of difference couldn't be created that would not go all the way to contradiction, since contradiction would be less and not more than difference. Hyppolite says that an ontology of pure difference would restore us to a purely formal and exterior reflection, and would in the end reveal itself to be an ontology of essence. However, the same question could be asked in another way: is it the same thing to say that Being expresses itself and that Being contradicts itself? While it is true that the second and third parts of Hyppolite's book establish a theory of contradiction in Being, where contradiction itself is the absolute of difference, on the other hand, in the first part (the theory of language) and throughout the book (allusions to forgetting, remembering, lost meaning), does not Hyppolite establish a theory of expression, where difference is expression itself, and contradiction, that aspect which is only phenomenal?[31]

As opposed to Hegel's speculative dialectics, driven by contradiction and mediation, Hyppolite, according to Deleuze, has laid the foundations for a theory of expression in which difference continually precedes contradiction which, in turn, appears to be nothing but the 'phenomenal aspect' of difference. Deleuze finds in Hyppolite the idea of a pre-reflexive expressivity – or at least, if one wanted to locate the problem on the level of the immanence of reflection, the idea of a primacy of difference over and against contradiction. Seen in the light of what has been argued before, the problem of the reading offered by Deleuze relates to its undervaluation of the *incorporated* character of difference: instead of thinking, as Hyppolite does, the differentiality of the *logos*, Deleuze tends to consider the realm of difference as being emancipated from its implication into the infinite. Such a project would amount to the transfiguration of finitude, whereas, as we noted, Hyppolite is interested in a new dialectics of the finite and/in the infinite.

While Deleuze disentangles the pole of existence from the pole of logic, one can find the converse movement in Michel Foucault's homage

30 Gilles Deleuze, 'Jean Hyppolite's Logic and Existence', in *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953-1974* (New York: Semiotext[e], 2004), pp. 15-18, p. 16.

31 Gilles Deleuze, 'Jean Hyppolite's Logic and Existence', p. 18.

to Hyppolite, rendered in his inaugural lecture at the *Collège de France* in 1970. In this text, Foucault sketches a definition of philosophy which, as he points out, draws its major inspiration from the work of Jean Hyppolite. Foucault agrees with Hyppolite's transformation of philosophy into the specific practice of an indeterminate epistemology:

> Instead of conceiving philosophy as the totality at last capable of thinking itself and grasping itself in the movement of the concept, Jean Hyppolite made it into a task without end set against an infinite horizon: always up early, his philosophy was never ready to finish itself. A task without end, and consequently a task forever re-commenced, given over to the form and the paradox of repetition: philosophy as the inaccessible thought of the totality was for Jean Hyppolite the most repeatable thing in the extreme irregularity of experience; it was what is given and taken away as a question endlessly taken up again in life, in death, in memory. In this way he transformed the Hegelian theme of the closure on to the consciousness of self into a theme of repetitive interrogation. But philosophy, being repetition, was not ulterior to the concept; [...] [i]t had to approach most closely not the thing that completes it but the thing that precedes it, that is not yet awakened to its disquiet. [...] Thus there appears the theme of a philosophy that is present, disquieted, mobile all along its line of contact with non-philosophy, yet existing only by means of non-philosophy and revealing the meaning it has for us. If philosophy is in this repeated contact with non-philosophy, what is the beginning of philosophy? [32]

The lesson that Foucault draws from Hyppolite[33] is grounded on a conception of philosophy as an 'open horizon' in which discursive formations and truth values intersect and collide. Foucault is keenly aware of Hyppolite's suggestion that the specificity of philosophy is an epistemological operation which thinks through the 'repetitions' of a

32 Michel Foucault, 'the Order of Discourse', in Robert Young (ed.), *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) p.75.

33 Giuseppe Bianco has recently elucidated another connection between these two figures, one that certainly complements the one that I focus on in this paper, namely their joint critique of the 'anthropological apparatus' ['dispositif anthropologique']. See Giuseppe Bianco, 'La dialectique bavarde et le cercle anthropologique', in Jean Hyppolite, *Entre Structure et Existence*, ed. by Giuseppe Bianco (Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2013), pp. 107-132, p. 124; reprinted above as "Verbose Dialectics' and the Anthropological Circle: Michel Foucault and Jean Hyppolite', pp.145-166.

'*sens*' that has always-already manifested itself and whose reconstruction can only be attained retroactively. What Foucault doesn't develop, though, is the form of *existence* which persists in and is traversed by this reflexive movement: his focus rests firmly on the process in which the discourse of philosophy repeats the division of the '*sens*' from that which is external to it. The problem with this picture is that it gives no clue as to how the dimension of existential finitude participates in the expression of the '*sens*'.[34]

The question, then, that Hyppolite (and Foucault in his footsteps) left unanswered, and was discovered by Deleuze, though he proceeded to tackle it on the inadequate level of a reversed Platonism, is the following: How can we conceptualise finitude in such a way that it reflects its own implication in the infinite, while retaining its differential character towards it? Here, I can only allude to a type of thinking which may provide the specific amendment to Hyppolite's project. One might be surprised to find it in the writings of one of the most ill-famed figures of German idealism, namely in the work of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819).

'Substantive Reason': Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's Contribution to a Differential Metaphysics

Jacobi's prominence in the history of German philosophy is rooted in his poignant thesis that Spinoza's metaphysics of radical immanence, if pushed to its limits, culminates in fatal nihilism: The original defect of Spinoza's conception, according to Jacobi, is its rationalistic usurpation of the relations of finitude which come to be construed as modifications of the monistic substance's attributes. It is in the Seventh Supplement of his book on the *Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Mr. Moses Mendelssohn* that Jacobi sketches the dialectical reversal of this confusion which, as he argues, overshadows the entire field of German idealism:

> If we understand by 'reason' the soul of man *only in so far as* it has distinct concepts, passes judgments, and draws inferences with them, and goes on building new concepts or ideas, then reason is a characteristic of man which he acquires progressively, an instrument of which he makes use. In this sense, *reason belongs to him*. But if by 'reason' we mean the principle of cognition in general, then reason is the spirit of which the whole living nature of man is made up; man *consists* of it. In this sense man is a form which reason has assumed.[35]

34 It is well-known that Foucault found a way to address questions of (the finitude of) 'existence' only later, in his writings on The History of Sexuality.

The rationalist usurpation of the totality of being cannot be undone in the light of the very same '*ratio*' mobilised by Spinoza in his metaphysics *de more geometrico*. Thus, what Jacobi evokes at this point is a different *type* of reason: A reason which is no longer an instrument in man's rationalistic endeavour, but a reason that 'implicates' man to the extent that it allows him to distinguish that which is irreducibly and spontaneously given to him from that which he himself can generate on the basis of the mediations rendered possible by discursive rationality.[36] That which is finite and conditional (in other words, nature including man) depends upon an originary source which is not itself an element in the immanence of nature. Quite the reverse: The infinite presents itself as an absolutely immediate origin which opens up 'the temporal world' in an activity that rests beyond the grasp of natural reason. Ten years after the publication of his supplements to his *Letters Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza*, Jacobi, in his *Letter to Fichte*, introduces a major opposition which is decisive for our present purposes:

35 Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, 'Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Moses Mendelssohn (1789), excerpts', in *Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, trans. by George di Giovanni (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), pp. 370-378 (p. 375).

36 See Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, 'Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Moses Mendelssohn (1789), excerpts', p. 373: 'After these explanations, it should no longer seem strange to hear me claim that the actual existence of a temporal world made up of individual finite things producing and destroying one another in succession, can *in no way* be conceptualised, which is to say it is not *naturally* explicable. For if I want to think of the series of these things as actually infinite, I run up against the absurd concept of an *eternal time*, and no mathematical construction can get rid of this difficulty. If I want the series to have a beginning instead, I lack anything from which any such beginning could be derived. (...) But reason need not despair because of this incomprehensibility, for knowledge forces itself upon it, so to speak; namely, the knowledge that the condition of the *possibility of the existence of a temporal world* lies outside the region of its concepts, that is to say, outside the complex of conditioned beings which is nature.'

> *'Does man possess reason, or does reason possess man*?' This strange sounding question that I raised ten years ago in Supplement VII of the *Letters Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza* has been subsequently given different turns by others, or rather, its turn has been used by them differently (...) The distinction adumbrated in the question, namely between a *substantive* reason, or *the very spirit of man*, and an *objective* one that is not a being *per se* but only the property and constitution of a being – this distinction must in my opinion be laid at the foundation of the doctrine of freedom, or otherwise this doctrine will only display an idle web of deceptive words and images unable to withstand close inspection.[37]

For Jacobi, the passage between the two types of reason he addresses cannot itself be mediated and synthesised. In fact, the only truly 'reasonable' articulation of the dialectical inscription of finitude into the substantial spirit which surpasses it would be one that precisely reaffirms the rupture, dualism and incommensurability between these two *logoi*. In this light, the really singular move that shapes Jacobi's position consists in his point that the operation which absolutises the groundless ground of human reason (and, in so doing, recasts the dualism) would not be acceptably described (or even performed, for that matter) if it were reduced to a plain irrationalist secession from rational discourse. Neither does Jacobi posit an internal dialectic mediation of the finite and the infinite, a speculative unity that would sublate their dualism, nor does the re-establishment of the dualism propagate a sheer fideism of 'the real' whose positivity always already eludes the grasp of reason.

It is important to register that such a reading of Jacobi deviates drastically from the canonical assessment of his project which, in turn, can be traced back to Hegel's scathing dismissal of Jacobi's leap (from 'philosophy') into faith. The strategy that I wish to bring into play would indeed be unacceptable if two points went unnoticed: Firstly, that Hegel himself was intensely preoccupied with a discussion of Jacobi's disavowal of 'reason' in favour of 'faith';[38] and secondly, that Jacobi even

37 Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, 'Jacobi to Fichte', in *Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, trans. by George di Giovanni (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), pp. 497-590 (pp. 528).

38 Apart from Hegel's extensive reading of Jacobi in *Faith and Knowledge*, one finds a plethora of instructive comments on Jacobi in Hegel's writings, notably in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* and in *The Science of Logic*.

figures at a very early stage in Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence*, at a point where Hyppolite sides with Hegel's renunciation of Jacobi's insistence on the 'ineffable' that is assumed to elude discursive conceptualisation altogether.[39] There will be no space for me here to unpack the systematic reasons why this classical reading of Jacobi (which on the whole corresponds to the Hegelian reading) might be considered questionable and reductive.[40] In general, however, the manoeuvre that I wish to perform in this paper aims at releasing Jacobi's category of faith from the 'beautiful subjectivity of Protestantism'[41] which Hegel, in a wonderfully ironic phrase, saw at work in it.

What constitutes the centrepiece of Hegel's famous critique of Jacobi is his claim that Jacobi's realism, in trying to evacuate the immediacy of the given from reflexive mediation, is lost (as, ironically, is Kant's transcendental limitation of reason) in the absolute dualism of finitude and the infinite, the divine and the human, thereby perpetuating, according to Hegel, the eudaimonism of the Enlightenment with its radical emancipation of subjectivity from the yoke of realist metaphysics. If Jacobi – by comparison with Kant who nevertheless participates in the same tradition – exacerbates the eudaimonism, it is because he not only declares the dualism (the infinite vs. finitude) to be irreducible, but also ties subjectivity back to a pre-reflexive, 'irrational' ecstasy that gets in touch with what transcends it in the mode of faith alone.[42]

39 Jean Hyppolite, Logic and Existence, pp. 8-12.

40 All I can do at this point is allude to recent strands of research on Jacobi in the German discussion which tend to underline that Hegel (incidentally or intentionally) downplayed Jacobi's elaboration of finitude as a 'mediated immediacy' (*vermittelte Unmittelbarkeit*), that is to say: a reflexive realism which indeed has more to offer than a blunt exclusion of discursive reflexivity. In fact, the seventh supplement of Jacobi's writings about Spinoza makes it quite plain that the self-limitation of man's discursive and analytic reason does not appeal to a numinous substance, but to a 'substantive' reason which implicates the 'instrumental' reason in the hands of man whose absolutization, in turn, would be 'irrational'. See above all the works of Birgit Sandkaulen, *Grund und Ursache. Die Vernunftkritik Jacobis* (München: Fink Verlag, 2000) and Stefan Schick, *Vermittelte Unmittelbarkeit. Jacobis »Salto mortale« als Konzept zur Aufhebung des Gegensatzes von Glaube und Spekulation in der intellektuellen Anschauung der Vernunft* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2006).

41 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, translated by Walter Cerf and H.S. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), p. 186.

42 Hyppolite, reconstructing Hegel's train of thought in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, simply adopts Hegel's dismissal of Jacobi, although it is interesting to take into

Vis-à-vis this potent but negative reading, my suggestion would be to implant Jacobi's pre-Hegelian realism into a late (or post-) Hegelian scenario.[43] For the question still lingers as to what to make of the problem according to which, at the end of *The Science of Logic*, once the self-genesis of the absolute idea has come full circle, the process of speculative dialectics indeed does *not* come to a halt, thereby terminating the work of and the need for dialectical movement, but initiates a new reality that will now have to recast, on its own terms, the journey of its conceptual self-interiorisation. And my humble suggestion is that, in this dialectics, the self-reflection of finitude would have to perform some 'leap' into the full transparency of the absolute unity of being and thought from which it was set free in the first place. It would have to determine itself as being borne by and embedded into a speculative unity which *per se* remains transcendent and which awaits its re-actualisation.[44] On this reading, then, Jacobi's return to 'the primary silence, the immediate contact with being'[45] would point to a situation that, instead of occurring *before* and *outside* philosophy, presents itself *after* the self-fulfillment of the concept and on the very grounds of philosophical discourse.

account that he addresses Jacobi's famous question 'Doesn't the greatest attainment of an investigator lie in the unveiling and presentation of existence?' as 'a formula which has a contemporary ring to it'. See Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 9. One might sense a certain ambivalence in this comment, especially if one takes seriously Giuseppe Bianco's remark that Hyppolite aimed at a connection of structuralism with 'the exploration of lived experience, preflexive, open to non-philosophy, as it was pursued, after Bergson, by Merleau-Ponty'. Giuseppe Bianco, 'Introduction: Jean Hyppolite, intellectual-constellation', in *Jean Hyppolite, Entre Structure et Existence*, ed. by Giuseppe Bianco (Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2013), pp. 9-29, p. 18 (my translation from the French original).

43 Initiatives that appreciate Jacobi's thought in a post-metaphysical vein are in short supply, not to mention readings that link his intuitions with the often far-fetched field of contemporary French philosophy. All the more remarkable, then, is the book by Beth Lord, *Kant and Spinozism: Transcendental Idealism and Immanence from Jacobi to Deleuze* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

44 See Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 175: 'Being is a *lost sense*; it is a *forgotten sense*, since sense is the interiority of memory taken back into being. In the field of knowledge, forgetfulness and memory correspond to this dialectical distinction of being and sense, insofar as one does not make memory congeal into an in-itself (this would be essence); one has to see in memory the movement of recollection, the comprehensive genesis that constitutes the past.' [italics in the original]

45 Jean Hyppolite, Logic and Existence, p. 10.

Along these lines, we might finally grasp more clearly in what way Jacobi's intervention into the major controversies of German idealism might represent an illuminating 'missing link' which connects the two dialectics that are at stake in Jean Hyppolite's *metaphysics of difference*. Before this systematic bridge can be built, it is unavoidable, however, to recap the essentials of the proposal that I have sought to set out in the preceding. In Hyppolite's reading of Hegel, it is indeed the self-expressive discourse of the absolute that grounds the expressive practices of man, but the argument which continues to be pivotal for him is the insight that the absolute is in itself *differential*, external to itself. It is precisely this thesis that shapes the question of what it might signify to *exist* in *truth*:[46] because on this view, the irreducible difference and the arrears between '*sens*' and 'expression', the permanent non-coincidence that separates the numinous structure of the *logos* from the very movement of its own actualisation is itself the (only) form or mode in which the self-reflection of '*sens*' can come to pass.

If the practices of man cannot but make explicit the endless discrepancy between the logical and the phenomenological, between the universal and the temporal or, *a fortiori*, between the infinite and finitude, then this rupture is itself the expression and passage of the integral movement pertaining to a *logos* which is always already different from/exterior to itself. The position of man as an 'always future hollow' is such that it, in turn, renders the gap between the reflexive universality of the *logos* and its finite actualisation in time explicit. It is the expression of the irreducible negativity that continually distances the '*sens*' from the 'expression': metaphysics of difference.

On such a reading, to *exist* in *truth* would mean to be embedded into something like a hazardous immanence of reason: on the one hand, this existence would reflect its own status as being carried, but at the same time also transcended by a speculative structure which implicates the humanly possible, essentially finite registers of reason without restricting itself to them. Yet, on the other hand, the most prominent trait integral to this type of existence in question would have to consist in its performing an operation by means of which it actively expresses *both* its

46 Giuseppe Bianco has helpfully shown that Hyppolite himself (and not only Foucault in his homage to Hyppolite) concentrated his project expressly around the formula of an 'existence in truth', seeking generally to 'repair the fracture between Lévi-Strauss and Sartre' (my translation). See Giuseppe Bianco, 'Introduction: Jean Hyppolite, intellectual-constellation', p. 18.

dialectical dependence on, *and* its exteriority towards the immanence of the absolute (the *logos*). What needs to be rendered explicit within the very sphere of finitude is its twofold reconnection with the infinite: to determine the finite world as being the site of the re-actualisation of the *logos*, then, means to conceptualise it as the passage in which the intelligible workings of '*sens*' (Hyppolite) remain to be incessantly repeated and rehearsed. As we have seen, it was Foucault who grasped very sensitively that this epistemological adventure, this adventurous epistemology, in the very process of recasting the distinctions between the conceptual and the contingent, the philosophical and the non-philosophical – that is: in repeating the rise of 'sens' – does not stand on the solid ground of any positive absolute knowledge. Rather, it acts within a reflexive movement whose totality remains radically out of range.

Now, what Jacobi has to offer, once we cease to equate his project with a full-blown 'irrationalism' and pietist Counter-Enlightenment, is a much-needed phenomenology of how the reflexive articulation of the '*sens*' within existence may itself be articulated from within the boundaries of existence/finitude. The salient point that characterises Jacobi's idea of the somersault into 'the real' is that this leap constitutes the moment and the operation of a dualistic *choice*. *Tertium non datur*: *Either* we cling to the discourse of an *objective reason*, a rationality that we dispose of as our instrument to parse nature *de more geometrico* (Spinoza's metaphysics of immanence); *or* we actively inscribe our rational practices into a *substantive reason*, a *logos* that eludes us but that also grounds and implicates the modes of rationality that are at our disposal.[47] Choosing this second option does not mean to forsake rational

47 This last observation reinforces the important circumstance that Jacobi precisely does not juxtapose 'reason' over and against a transcendent otherness that thwarts any rational discourse altogether and instead requires 'blind faith'. Rather, what he envisages amounts to a transformation of the structure of reason in general: He who leaps from within the universe of metaphysical immanence to substantial 'truth' is not catapulted into the ecstasy of a unity that strides over all rational determination, but, according to Jacobi's account, lands on his feet again within the boundaries of the very world from which he took off in the first place. The import of the leap, then, does indeed consist in the (re-) production of the dualism that separates the infinite from the finite, but instead of positing a blunt opposition between 'reason' and 'faith', Jacobi specifies a distinction between two registers of reason that are dialectically intertwined in such a way that finitude may be determined as being both speculatively incorporated into and radically distinct from the infinite.

discourse *tout court* – it means, on the contrary, to make explicit, from the interior of these restricted discourses, the epistemic exigencies with which they are faced in the wake of their dialectical dependence on 'substantive' reason.

For Jacobi, the performance of the somersault is, in turn, an act of freedom – a gesture which can only be emphatically carried out in order to forsake the reign of rationalist metaphysics. In a certain perspective, allowing this motif of Jacobi's to enter the picture comes down to linking (but also modifying) the intuitions voiced by Deleuze and Foucault, respectively, in their divergent reactions to their teacher's Hegelianism. Whereas Deleuze, reading Hyppolite, sought to accentuate the force of an expressivity that is not yet or no longer the self-expression of the dialectical mediation of contradictions, Foucault emphasised the prospects of an epistemology that would rework and repeat the distinctions produced by the genesis of a '*sens*' whose totality, however, remains forever unfinishable. Following the path opened up by Jacobi would permit us to strengthen both of these axes at the same time: a Deleuzian 'axis of existence' that emancipates the finite and temporal world we live in from a rationalistic universe and that insists upon the spontaneous and irreducible choices that we as active forces situated in this world are both able and obliged to make;[48] but also a Foucauldian 'axis of truth' arguing, for instance, that the episteme of anthropology is not an unchanging discourse, but that, instead, 'man is a form which reason has assumed'[49].

48 For Jacobi, this freedom (which is also a risk, an exposure) presses home that our actions are everything but the causally determined modifications of attributes pertaining to the one and only substance (Spinoza). See Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, 'Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Moses Mendelssohn (1789), excerpts', p. 345: 'Absolutely autonomous activity excludes mediation; it is impossible that we should somehow cognise its inner being distinctly. (…) Hence the possibility of absolutely autonomous activity cannot be known; its actuality can be known, however, for it is immediately displayed in consciousness, and is demonstrated by the deed. This autonomous activity is called 'freedom' inasmuch as it can be opposed to, and can prevail over, the mechanism that constitutes the sensible existence of an individual being' italics in the original).

49 Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, 'Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Moses Mendelssohn (1789), excerpts', p. 375. It goes without saying that Foucault would, of course, avoid Jacobi's appeal to a 'substantive reason' and speak instead of historical a prioris that render regional epistemic distinctions possible in the first

Contours of a 'metaphysics of difference' that would draw on both Jean Hyppolite and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi are noticeable in the theoretical framework of another one of Hyppolite's students, namely Alain Badiou. Even though this reference cannot here be unpacked (as it should be) in further detail, it is interesting to note that Badiou's 'novel meta-ontology'[50] tends to be reconstructed as an 'innovative combination of the non-foundational foundation of the existentialist wager (...) with the form of mathematical rationality *à la* philosophically systematic structures'.[51] For Badiou, the set-theoretical axiomatisation of ontology hinges upon a series of fundamental decisions, of existential 'choices' that launch the systematic elaboration of his project but cannot themselves be grounded in a rational meta-argument[52]. Hence, to embark upon a procedure whose ultimate target is the rationalisation of being in its full generality means to 'take risks', to formulate constructive stakes that, as they originate the very process from which they could retroactively obtain their epistemological justification, always keep alive the perspective of their future falsification. A discussion of the questionable elements that accompany this thesis of Badiou's must be skipped at this point.[53] However, this brief allusion to his position helps

place. From a Hegelian perspective, though, it would be interesting to wonder whether Foucault's genealogical depiction of knowledge formations, even if their history is conceptualised in terms of epistemological ruptures (and not continuities), does not in fact rest upon an equivalent to Hegel's figure of the absolute spirit explicating itself in history. No doubt, in Foucault, this totality appears to be an inherently negative logos, an unreason ('déraison') whose reflexive genesis throughout history can in no way be connected to a teleological idealism. But if this point plausibly marks the difference that separates Foucault from Hegel, one can still envisage Foucault's conception as an inverted transcendentalism. Besides, Foucault's reading of and recourse to Hyppolite would clearly back such an assessment of Foucault's epistemological approach.

50 Adrian Johnston, 'Hume's Revenge: À Dieu, Meillassoux?', in *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, ed. by Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman (Melbourne: Re. Press, 2011), pp. 92-113 (p. 106).

51 Adrian Johnston, 'Hume's Revenge: À Dieu, Meillassoux?', p. 107.

52 Cf. Adrian Johnston, 'Hume's Revenge: À Dieu, Meillassoux?', p. 106.

53 In a certain perspective, Badiou's Platonism of universalistic 'truth events' intervening into the contingent existence of individuals (thereby converting them into 'subjects' in the first place) represents less a variant of a metaphysics of difference but rather its neo-idealistic closure. For instance, it is not clear in what way Badiou's politics of a 'loyalty to truth' can still permit room for an unbundling of the 'logical' and 'existential', the infinite and finite constituents that are at stake

us to circumnavigate back to the epistemological and ontological stake that was formulated at the beginning of this article with regard to the finale of Hegel's *Science of Logic*.

For if, as we saw, the absolute idea, once it has come full circle in engendering its own identity with being *per se*, *discharges* itself again *freely* into nature, the question arises what a systematic rationalisation of nature might look like *after* the full unification of thought and being – an absolute identity that now differentiates itself anew by exteriorising itself into the world of nature. An answer can only be anticipated here: the epistemological mission which is up for discussion here could consist in the practice of scientific discourses that would constitute themselves as a rationalisation of the real which is *both embedded into and detached from* the absolute. It would consist in the re-actualisation of the '*sens*' from within the field of finite 'expression'; and it would imply, at the same time, an ungroundable somersault which actively re-enacts the dualism between 'objective' and 'substantive' reason, between the finite and the infinite, between logic and existence.

In a final move, I would like to locate the original seed of a differential metaphysics at the heart of the Hegelian system itself. It is on the first pages of 'With what must the science begin?', a little preamble which, in the *Science of Logic*, precedes the first section (on 'Determinateness') of the first book ('The Doctrine of Being'), that we find the following meditation:

> Just as *pure* knowledge should mean nothing but knowledge as such, so also pure being should mean nothing but *being* in general; *being*, and nothing else, without further determination and filling. (...) Being is what makes the beginning here; it is presented indeed as originating through mediation, but a mediation which at the same time sublates

in his onto-logy. The structure of loyalty, as conceptualised by Badiou, is quite reminiscent of a Heideggerian obedience to the 'event', failing to evacuate finitude as finitude and interiorising it instead into the transcendence of that which it eludes immanent determination. See above all Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. by Peter Hallward (New York: Verso, 2000). However, the precise impact of Badiou's reception of Hyppolite is a question that would merit closer attention than it has hitherto attracted. See also the recent re-publication of Jean Hyppolite/Alain Badiou, 'La philosophie et son histoire: entretien entre Jean Hyppolite et Alain Badiou', in *Jean Hyppolite, entre structure et existence*, ed. by Giuseppe Bianco (Paris: Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 2013), pp. 259-270.

> itself, and the presupposition is of a pure knowledge which is the result of finite knowledge, of consciousness. But if no presupposition is to be made, if the beginning is itself to be taken *immediately*, then the only determination of this beginning is that it is to be the beginning of logic, of thought as such. There is only present the resolve, which can also be viewed as arbitrary, of considering *thinking as such*.[54]

For the egregious machinery of the absolute concept's self-movement (which, in its last instance, will have engendered the full identity of thought and being) to get going, everything depends upon an initial 'resolve, which can also be viewed as arbitrary'. In this light, it is crucial, then, that the 'beginning of science' be *made*: That process which, once it is left to its own resources, will found itself right through to the very last, pristine unity, hinges in its essence upon a deed which, in turn, remains irreducible. What occurs at the heart of logical immanence is a leap, a vital 'causation' in Jacobi's sense, which, once thinking has gotten underway, will be unable to repeat itself.

54 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, p. 47f. (italics in the original)

Michel Henry and His Master Jean Hyppolite

JOAQUIM HERNANDEZ-DISPAUX

Translated by Philippe Lynes

'Your work, to which I owe everything'

Did Michel Henry have a master? While the answer to this question is not obvious,[1] it is nevertheless possible to assert that its philosophical

1 Anne Henry elaborates the following in an interview: 'Does he really have what we call a master? I don't believe so, even if in his 'classe préparatoire', he was skipping a silly philosophy course to attend one offered by Jean Hyppolite. Michel venerated this great thinker: demanding, upright, a magnificent exegete of Hegel, co-director of his thesis with Jean Wahl. The most intimate bonds between the two were woven shortly after, but were ruptured with his premature death in September 1968 to our great sorrow.' In Henry, Anne. 'Vivre avec Michel Henry: Entretien avec Anne Henry.' in Michel Henry, *Autodonation: Entretiens et Conférences* (Paris: Beauchesne,Collection Prétentaine), p. 247. This testimony is confirmed with the recent discovery of correspondence between Michel Henry and Jean Hyppolite in the Fonds Hyppolite. Having defended his thesis in 1964, Henry allows himself to confide the following to the co-director of his thesis: 'I am quite clumsy in expressing what I am feeling, and the words of gratitude which come to me are quite derisory with respect to my debt. This debt, moreover, is not limited to the support you have given me throughout my research and which assumed such a brilliant form last Saturday, it also includes, and perhaps more, *your work, to which I owe everything*, as is quite obvious, I believe. And since you have wished to confide in me, I can, perhaps, after much uneasiness, do the same to you: When I was in my 'première supérieure' year at the lycée Henri IV, I used to secretly attend your lectures on Kant and Heidegger in the neighbouring room, until the day when my own professor caught me escaping red-handed, and forced me to attend his lectures'. In Henry, Michel. 'Lettre datée du 20 mars 1964'. Correspondance Jean Hyppolite/Michel Henry, Fonds Jean Hyppolite, Paris, École Normale Supérieure. Awaiting Classification (emphasis ours). Let us also recall for the biographical record that *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body*, Michel Henry's secondary thesis devoted to Maine de Biran, was dedicated to Jean Hyppolite. Cf. Michel Henry *Philosophy and Phenomenology of the Body,* trans. By Girard Etzkorn. The

gesture reflects, in a certain sense, the intellectual setting within which Henry's thought was developed. In 1964, Michel Henry defended a doctoral thesis eventually entitled *The Essence of Manifestation*.[2] The work completed on this occasion was colossal, its bulk attesting to a labour which lasted no less than eighteen years. A report from the CNRS shows that this work was successively entitled 'Elements for a Religious Aesthetics', 'Knowledge of the Self and Knowledge of the Other', and 'The Essence of Revelation'. Such variations express a certain anxiety, which Michel Henry later admitted thoroughly overflowed him during its composition. The author, not without a certain irony, did not hesitate to acquiesce to this situation: 'it is without doubt for the best'.[3] These words, tragic at the very least, were addressed to the director of his secondary thesis, Jean Hyppolite (1907-1968). Jean Wahl (1888-1974) had supervised the principal thesis. Reading the important correspondence between the two men, one would be justified in thinking that the successful completion and publication of *L'essence* essentially attests to the good will of Jean Hyppolite and to the profound respect he bore for his student. Despite the numerous reports concerning the defence of this

Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975) and Michel Henry, *Philosophie et phenomenologie du corps: essai sur l'ontologie binaire, (*Paris: PUF, Collection Épiméthée). We permit ourselves the opportunity here to thank Gregori Jean, Jean Leclercq and Madame Dauphragne for their invaluable assistance in completing this work. More personally, we dedicate this piece to Jean-Paul Dispaux.

2 Michel Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation, t*rans. By Girard Etzkorn (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973). Hereafter *EME*. Michel Henry,. *L'Essence de la manifestation.* (Paris: PUF,, 1963.Herafter *EMF.*

3 In an appendix to this study, with the kind permission of Madame Claude Chippaux-Hyppolite, we are publishing a series of important letters detailing the relationship between Michel Henry and Jean Hyppolite. Here is what Michel Henry wrote the latter: 'I still owe you a few words on the subject of my work this year: since the beginning of December, the time at which I began to write again, I have already written 120 pages, typed. My delay is not only due to the difficult circumstances of a now ended winter, but also to the fact that if my writing follows its plan, the developments which I have been led to make excessively surpass what I had expected. Thus, to speak only of what I have been doing most recently, I had initially expected 10 to 15 pages on the problem of the unity of the essence of manifestation and have just written 45 or 50 pages on this topic. *For a long time now, I have no longer been doing what I want, and it is without doubt for the best.*' In Henry, Michel. 'Lettre datée du 31 mars 1956'. Correspondance Jean Hyppolite/Michel Henry, Fonds Jean Hyppolite, Paris, École Normale Supérieure . Awaiting Classification (emphasis ours).

thesis, Hyppolite never questioned Michel Henry's capability to conclude a project of which he emphasised that 'the philosophical interest appeared to me to surpass the majority of the works I had hitherto had the opportunity to evaluate'.[4] At this time, Jean Hyppolite was the director of the *École Normale Supérieure*, and his influence on philosophers of Michel Henry's generation – notably A. Badiou and J. Derrida – was decisive. Whatever their own relations to one another may be, this group of implicated parties has offered its homage to Hyppolite unanimously, which allows us to gain a sense of the central and charismatic character of this major figure of the French 'Hegel-renaissance' to be felt. Michel Henry is no exception to this movement. Granted, the statement 'your work to which I owe everything'[5] was undoubtedly expressed under the sway of emotion. Nevertheless, from a strictly conceptual standpoint, the influence of Jean Hyppolite is quite palpable at many key moments in the development of what will progressively come to be called 'material' phenomenology.

The present article takes up the task of addressing this intellectual complicity which we can for now summarise along three fundamental axes. First, the work of Jean Hyppolite allows us a better understanding of the Henryan interpretation of Hegelianism beginning with *The Essence*. Secondly, Hyppolite's texts must be taken into account insofar as they constitute one of the origins, among others, of what we can call the anti-systematic vocation of the 'phenomenology of life'. Finally, while we can only approach the following schematically, it is undeniable that this filiation is equally recognisable in the Henryan reading of Marx and the critique of Alexandre Kojève which accompanies it.

4 'Michel Henry has accepted a difficult life in order to be able to pursue his research. His principal thesis is now almost complete. He is certain to be able to finish it in March 1957, and I am certain that if we can grant him the year he requests, he will make the most of it. I am not in the habit of insisting; however in this case I allow myself to do so as he has presented me with a work of which the philosophical interest appears to me to surpass the majority of those I had hitherto had the opportunity to evaluate'. (Henry, Michel. Letter dated 5th April 1956 in Correspondance Jean Hyppolite/Michel Henry, Fonds Jean Hyppolite, Paris, Ecole Normale Supérieure, awaiting classification.)

5 We refer the reader to note 1 of the current study.

Hegel the Realist

If there is one thing that stands out in *The Essence*, it is the omnipresence of Hegel. The latter is unfailingly critiqued, and understandably so, as Henry's project, according to the very title of his 'Appendix', consists in bringing to light the concept of originary revelation in opposition to the Hegelian concept of manifestation. Since material phenomenology assigns itself the fundamental task of elaborating a phenomenological ontology with the goal of 'discovering subjectivity'[6]—as opposed to an ontology of the subject deemed incapable of accomplishing this task—we understand why Hegelianism can indeed operate as a foil: while the latter constitutes an ontology of the subject,[7] in contrast, 'in Hegel, there is no ontology of subjectivity'.[8] However, such an opposition to Hegel is only understandable in light of the different paths through which Henry receives Hegelianism[9] – and notably that opened up by Jean Hyppolite. Not only as it is his translation of the *Phenomenology*[10] which is cited in

6 Cf. Université Catholique de Louvain, Plate-Forme technologique « Fonds Alpha », Fonds Michel Henry, MS A 5-7-2919.

7 Thus, for example: 'Negativity is the essence of the Subject... The Absolute, says Hegel, is not merely substance but also Subject... Because negativity takes place at the heart of the absolute, the latter engenders the dialectical movement... The dialectic has an ontological meaning. The structure of the dialectic is nothing other than the eidetic structure of the phenomenon' (*EME* 693-694. *EMF* 867-868).

8 *EME* 702 *EMF* 875.

9 It is in the appendix to the *Essence of Manifestation,* which over seven paragraphs gathers together the theses of the young Michel Henry on Hegel, that the influence of the great readers of Hegel is most obvious. Other than Jean Hyppolite and his work *Genesis and Structure in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* – on which our study focuses exclusively – we find, albeit tacitly, the influence of all the great readers of Hegel. Let us note in passing, though with no less surety, the principle sources of Michel Henry's Hegelianism: Martin Heidegger, more precisely his 'Hegel's Concept of Experience' in Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002); as concerns the French *Hegel-renaissance*, Jean Wahl, *Etudes kierkegaardiennes* (Paris: Vrin, 1938) ; , Alexandre Koyré, *La philosophie de Jacob Böhme* (Paris: Vrin, 1929) ; , Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit,*trans by James H. Nichols (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980), In a more discreet, although no less pertinent manner, Henry Niel, *De la médiation dans la philosophie de Hegel* (Paris: Aubier, , 1945).

10 Jean Hyppolite's translation was published in two volumes; the first in 1939, the second in 1942.

The Essence, but also insofar as in the preparatory notes to this work, we find a close reading of *Genesis and Structure.*[11] While it might pass us by unnoticed, one of the signs of Jean Hyppolite's influence on Michel Henry can be seen in that the latter essentially restrains his examination of the Hegelian corpus to the *Phenomenology of Spirit.*[12] Henry's almost exclusive focus on this text seems to us to derive directly from the 'non-Hegelian'[13] privilege accorded to it by Hyppolite. For the figure of Hegelianism Hyppolite introduces in France in the 1930s is no longer

11 Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit.*, trans. by Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974) Hereafter *GSE*. Jean Hyppolite *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel* (Paris, Aubier, 1946), Hereafter *GSF*. Beyond this work, which was the thesis Jean Hyppolite defended at the Sorbonne in 1946, (cf. Jean Hyppolite, *Figures de la pensée philosophique. Ecrits 1931-1938. I.* (Paris: PUF, 1971), p. 236) we find in certain manuscripts of Michel Henry, which are published in the appendix to this study, the presence of two occurrences in the published text of *The Essence*, at two strategic points, both of which concern Hegel without exception. A first citation in section 20 dedicated to the concept of experience in Hegel: 'To the question of knowing 'how an atemporal knowledge of self, an absolute knowledge, have temporal conditions in the existence and becoming of a humanity', we must answer that such a knowledge, if it is absolute, actually has no historical condition' (*EME* 167; *EMF* 204). At issue here is the fundamental problem of the articulation between the universal and the particular. This passage refers to Jean Hyppolite's text, which it is enough to recall in order to shed a new light on Henry's text. 'The problem of the link between the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic* [is posed] in the following form: how can a knowledge, which of itself is atemporal, an absolute knowledge, have temporal conditions in the existence and development of a humanity? There is not in Hegelianism a clear solution to these problems' *GSE* 596; *GSF 575*). The other explicit reference Henry makes to Hyppolite is the following: 'The "colossal joke", says Hegel, "is that things are as they are... we need only take them in their phenomenality... the essence of the essence is to manifest itself" (*EME* 689; *EMF* 863). Let us examine this passage as we find it in Hyppolite. 'The great joke, Hegel wrote in a personal note, is that things are what they are. There is no reason to go beyond them; they are simply to be taken in their phenomenality instead of being posed as things-in-themselves. The essence of essence is to manifest itself; manifestation is the manifestation of essence' (*GSE* 125; *GSF op. cit.*, p. 122).

12 Along with these numerous references to the *Phenomenology*, we also find numerous references to the 'young Hegel', notably to *The Spirit of Christianity and its Destiny.* (trad. by Martin (Paris: Vrin, 1948)). But Henry's interest in the early Hegel here seems to us to be more indebted to his readings of Jean Wahl. While it is not certain that Henry had read *Le malheur de la conscience chez Hegel*, a key

that of the System,[14] where knowledge is engendered in abstraction, but that of 1807: of a phenomenology which attempts 'to describe rather than to construct, to present the spontaneous development of an experience as it offers itself to consciousness'.[15] This indeed allows Hyppolite to bring Hegel closer to Husserl: 'It is truly by going 'to the things themselves,' by considering consciousness as it presents itself directly, that Hegel wishes to lead us from empirical to philosophical knowledge, from sensuous certainty to absolute knowledge'.[16]

If these remarks exemplify Hyppolite's initial project of seeing in Hegel a thinker capable of seizing the becoming of consciousness and of rediscovering the manner in which he posits the experience of consciousness on a level prior to absolute knowledge—consequently a 'realist' thinker, capable of preserving the presence of the particular in experience while not neglecting its logical and speculative character—such an attempt is nonetheless only possible at the cost of placing the *Phenomenology* and the System in tension. And if Jean Hyppolite recognises that along the development of Hegel's oeuvre,[17] the 1807 text

text among the re-readings of Hegel from the perspective of his early works, he was obviously acquainted with the *Etudes Kierkegaardiennes* (Paris: Vrin, 1938) – a text within which Wahl evokes a bringing together of the young Hegel with Kierkegaard.

13 See one of the few articles dedicated to Jean Hyppolite's reading of Hegel: Bernard Bourgeois, 'Jean Hyppolite et Hegel', in *Les Etudes Philosophiques*, n°2 (1993), pp. 145-159.

14 On the general evolution of Hegelianism in France and the decisive rupture introduced by the 'Hegelian laboratories of the 30s', to wit Wahl, Kojève, Koyré and Hyppolite, we refer the reader to Andrea Bellantone's exemplary study, *Hegel en France. Volume 2. De Vera à Hyppolite* (trad. by V. Gaugey), Paris, Hermann, 2011, pp. 121-286.

15 *GSE* 10; *GSF* 15 Here is another example of the privilege Hyppolite accords to the *Phenomenology*: 'We have translated *The Phenomenology of Spirit* into French for the first time and attempted a historical commentary of this strange work which *describes* the saga of the human spirit as a terrestrial reprise of Dante's Divine Comedy. The work undoubtedly concludes with absolute knowledge, which appears to close off existence, but its value lies in in the concrete detail and sinuosities of the itinerary of individual consciousness in nature and especially with the consciousnesses of other individuals. *It describes much more than it deduces* the concrete bases of a history (…)'(*Figures de la pensée philosophique*, *op. cit.*, p. 264; emphasis ours).

16 *GSE* 10; *GSF* 15

17 'The Phenomenology, the general introduction to the Whole system of absolute knowledge, becomes a specific moment of the system, the moment of consciousness, while at the same time it loses part of its content' (*GSE* 62; *GSF* 65).

18 *GSE* 62; *GSF* 65.

19 *Ibid.*

20 *GSE* 577; *GSF* 556.

21 *GSE* 589; *GSF* 562.

becomes a simple part of the System, he is careful to stress that 'the *Phenomenology* [is] more than a particular moment of the system'.[18] Correcting the architectonic of the Hegelian project, this affirmation takes place on the grounds of an opposition, with the allure of a demand, between absolute knowledge and the becoming of consciousness, the initial goal of which is to preserve the incompletion of consciousness against the idea of a *completed* system of truth:

> It is clear to us that there is an opposition between the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which is the becoming of spirit for consciousness, and which is in fact unfinished, since the movement of transcending is essential to consciousness, and a finished system of truth, an absolute knowledge, in which consciousness is actually transcended.[19]

This programmatic remark refers to the distinction between the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*. In the case of the former, according to Jean Hyppolite, the life of consciousness is an experience in that it maintains the opposition, internal to the concept, between the 'for itself' and the 'in itself', 'subject' and 'object' of consciousness. It thus constitutes consciousness itself, insofar as it bears an internal demand of the Self, which only exists in this scission: 'the self exists only by opposing itself; life is self only because it appears to itself as other than itself'.[20] In contrast, the *Logic* designates the moment where the Logos thinks itself as absolute reason; the element of the separation of knowledge and truth is thereby surmounted and, as Jean Hyppolite specifies, 'it is at this moment that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is finished'.[21] We therefore pass from a phenomenology to a speculative logic. However, is this *identity* deprived of all movement to the point that we would depart from experience and fall back into a form of Eleatic immobilism? Just the opposite; the entire reading of Hegel proposed by Jean Hyppolite consists in showing that a difference subsists within this identity which refutes the idea of a purely idealist Hegelianism and rethinks it as a realism, that is to say as a process which is anxious to

establish a speculative logic which, far from excluding experience, founds it, without for all that depriving it of its movement. Because such a realism just as soon manifests an *inadequation* between the immediately given being and the knowledge of this being,[22] Hyppolite will attempt to recover it at that point, albeit through different methods, in the *Phenomenology* and in the *Logic*,[23] in order to reconcile experience with speculative logic – which invites the thought that behind the 'non-Hegelian' privilege accorded to the *Phenomenology* is nevertheless concealed a typically Hegelian demand, of which Hyppolite was aware: 'It is here that we feel the entire problem of the Hegelian system in general lies'.[24]

The fact that difference is one of the fundamental traits of the *Phenomenology* poses no problem, since consciousness is always consciousness of an object which differentiates itself from its truth and appears as estranged, as other than itself. Furthermore, this consciousness is consciousness of its knowledge, in other words, of its truth. Its knowledge doubles itself in a knowledge of its knowledge, of a subjective reflection which precisely designates the relation of the self to being, that is to say its substance. It is in the disparity of these two moments that the phenomenological development lies and in this sense, Jean Hyppolite notes, 'it is the mainspring of what is called "experience"'.[25] In regard to the *Logic*, on the other hand, things are more complicated, and Jean Hyppolite's demonstration unveils its Fichtean foundations, constituting a specific and directed re-reading of Hegelian philosophy. The *Logic* is identity, the moment where substance becomes subject, and where nothing distinguishes them any longer. And *Genesis and Structure* takes up the Hegelian project as an attempt to reconcile the

22 *GSE* 589; *GSF* 562. Translator's note: the translator of *Genesis and Structure* renders 'inadequation' with 'discrepancy'

23 '[in] *The Logic* (...)opposition, the essential difference, abstraction, and mediation will not be absent from this thought, from the thought that at the same time is the thought of being. We no longer find the internal opposition of the concept, that of knowledge and being, but rather the opposition within content which will be presented in another form. Be that as it may, we may still have to show the originality of Hegel's *Logic* by justifying its dialectical character and by insisting on the difference between this dialectic and the one proper to the *Phenomenology,* which rests on the difference between knowledge and being' (GSE 578;*GSF* 557-558).

24 *GSE* 587; *GSF* 566.

25 *GSE* 576; *GSF* 555.

ontologism of Schelling – the idea of an absolute as substance, perfectly identical to itself and presenting itself above and beyond consciousness – and the philosophy of reflection of Fichte, that is to say a theory of knowledge. Hegel's thesis will be that reflection is not outside the absolute, but that the absolute is reflection, in other words Subject. A place for dialectics would therefore subsist at the heart of the absolute, and the *Logic* would express this unity of identity and contradiction, a contradictory Identity where being is the self, auto-movement of thought differentiating itself. This is why Jean Hyppolite claims that 'we find in absolute knowledge, just as in the *Phenomenology,* difference and mediation',[26] and such is the key to a veritable reconciliation of the logical and phenomenological aspects of Hegelian thought: 'The *Phenomenology* deals with the problem of experience according to the speculative method. Reciprocally, the *Logic* or speculative philosophy is not without its phenomenological aspect'.[27] Such is the realism of Hegel: speculative thought accompanies the phenomenological development of consciousness without reducing it to an identity which would put an end to its experience, and reciprocally, absolute knowledge remains open to experience and does not close in upon itself at any moment.

Anxiety, Despair and 'Profound Defects'

Michel Henry had clearly been in contact with this very specific reading of Hegel, and this is confirmed in a note in his *Marx* in which he evokes 'the realism of Hegel upon which Jean Hyppolite so often insisted'.[28]

26 *GSE* 586; *GSF* 565.

27 *GSE* 587; *GSF* 567.

28 Here is the entirety of the passage in which Michel Henry makes a very clear allusion to the Hyppolitian reading of Hegel: 'We have been speaking of 'Marx's hyper-Hegelianism.' For Hegel himself was more realistic. Hegel's realism, [Note 49. this was frequently pointed out by Jean Hyppolite] in the case we are considering, consists in this – that although the concrete spheres of civil society are posited by the movement of the Idea which is objectified and are thus given as 'Ideal,' they nonetheless preserve a specific character which lies in the opacity of natural instincts and in the arbitrary character of individual will. Despite the fact that it is permeated with the universal, which secretly animates it, Hegel's civil society conforms to the description of the English moralists and economists. This is why there is, at the very least, a problem with respect to the homogeneity of civil society and the state, with respect to the reduction of the particular to the universal. The Hegelian conception of the state concerns, precisely, the means by which this

Furthermore, in the preparatory notes to *The Essence*, we find an allusion to the theory which subtends this very realism: 'The entire *Phenomenology of Spirit* rests upon and is posed from an inadequation'.[29] But if Henry claims to adhere to a certain 'anti-hegelianism', it is by following another path – that of a thought of existence, which, as an anecdote relates, was quite early on at the very heart of the Henryan project: 'He had promised himself to 'write a thesis on the premises of existence', 'existence' being understood by him as a philosophical category introduced by Kierkegaard'.[30] Of course, at this period, Kierkegaard's opposition to the System was one of the common themes of his French reception,[31] and it is in this sense that the Henryan 'counter-Hegel'[32] inscribes itself in the tradition of the famous chapter of J. Wahl's

homogeneity is to be established, the whole set of mediations through which the particular is carried back to the universal as to its true, albeit hidden, essence. And Marx's critique of the Hegelian conception of the State is precisely the *critique of mediations*.' Michel Henry, *Marx: A Philosophy of Human Reality,* trans. by Kathleen McLaughlin Indianapolis, Indiana UP), p. 35.

29 Ms A-21-4303/4304. 'C'est l'inadéquation (…) qui repose et pose toute *La Phénoménologie de l'esprit'*. 'The entire *Phenomenology of Spirit* rests and is posed on inadequation'. This remark alludes to the following passage in *Genesis and Structure*: 'Since conviction is in-itself universal, all others should recognise themselves in this knowledge of the I. However, things don't happen this way, and in fact the supposed congruence is disparate. Indeed, once it has been accomplished, the act is no longer self-knowledge, but 'a determinate act which is not congruent with the element of self-consciousness in everyone and which is thus not necessarily recognised. Both sides, acting Gewissen and universal consciousness which recognises this action as duty, are equally free from the determinateness of this action'. That is why recognition appears to be impossible here. On the contrary, what is striking is the discrepancy [rendered in the present article as 'inadequation' -trans.]) between action and the universality of conviction'. *GSE* 510; *GSF* 493

30 Anne Henry and Jean Leclercq: 'Michel Henry (1922-2002). Entretien en manière de biographie', in Jean Leclercq. (ed.) *Michel Henry* (Lausanne, L'Âge d'homme , 2009), p. 8.

31 Let us note in passing that this theme of opposing existence to the system, 'too well-worn' as he then claimed, was treated by Jean Hyppolite in *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, *op. cit.*, p. 198; we will return to this text.

32 Thus, for example, in a hand-written note: 'Against Hegel. The idealism (he represents) explains everything. Finds meaning in all concrete, existential attitudes, in all intentionalities. But this intelligibility is [illegible] and in fact falsifies the concrete experiences it wishes to explain (Kierkegaard was correct on this point) because the meaning it finds is external to these consciousnesses and consequently

Etudes kierkegaardiennes, precisely entitled *'La lutte contre le hégélianisme'*.[33] Moreover, that there is an anti-systematic vocation in the phenomenology of life is without doubt, since Michel Henry intends to defend the theory that existing subjectivity is an adequate mode of manifestation,[34] while in contrast the Subject, or the Concept, is a totally inadequate mode of manifestation. But we would be wrong to believe that this thesis of Henry's can at any point be reduced to the manner in which Kierkegaard himself pleads for a reintroduction of subjectivity against philosophies of the subject, whether those of Hegel or, more generally, any kind of philosophy of reflection. Therefore – such is our hypothesis – what is at issue here is the contrast between the Hegelianism which the Danish thinker targets and that against which Michel Henry 'struggles'; a contrast which refers precisely to the two figures of Hegelianism we have explored: an idealist figure and a realist figure.

the experience it claims to describe (experience and not meaning) is not that which is lived by the consciousness of which we claim to describe the experience' (Ms A-24-4927). 'Contre Hegel. L'idéalisme (il le représente) explique tout. Trouve du sens dans toutes les attitudes concrètes, existentielles, dans toutes les intentionnalités. Mais cette intelligibilité est [illisible] et travestit en fait ces expériences concrètes qu'elle veut expliquer (Kierkegaard a raison sur ce point) parce que le sens qu'elle trouve est extérieur à ces consciences et par suite l'expérience qu'elle prétend décrire (expérience et non sens) n'est pas celle qui est vécue par la conscience dont on prétend décrire l'expérience' (Ms A-24-4927).

33 Jean Wahl. *Etudes kierkegaardiennes* (Paris: Vrin, , 1938, 1967), p. 86-158.

34 *EME* 655-685; *EMF* 823-862.

Michel Henry is highly attentive to the ideas of Jean Wahl,[35] notably where the cardinal opposition between thought and existence is concerned. While 'Hegelianism and anti-Hegelianism [are] inextricably united in several passages [of the Kierkegaardian oeuvre]',[36] Wahl nonetheless returns to one of Kierkegaard's more violent theses concerning systematic thought. In the end, notably in the *Postscript*, the latter claims: 'The philosophical proposition of the identity of thought and being is precisely the opposite of what it seems; it expresses the fact that thought has abandoned existence altogether'.[37] The System, explains Jean Wahl, wills the identical and its eternal expression, 'nothing becomes, everything is' is the highest expression of thought and is therefore a tautology. Following this, taking up a claim of the most radical Kierkegaardianism, he adds 'logic is Eleatic'.[38] In contrast, existence separates thought from being; it is movement. From this perspective, against any type of systematic thought, one must experience the difference of the real and of thought, or of thought and the real. We

35 Even if we only find a single explicit reference to Jean Wahl in *The Essence of Manifestation*, the heuristic work in which we are engaged on the preparatory notes to this work reveal the occurrence of a hundred or so direct references to the *Études kierkegardiennes*. Moreover, it is always in reference to this work that Michel Henry broaches the texts of Kierkegaard themselves. In addition, we can note the rather slight proportion of direct citations from this Danish thinker. At the time he is writing his thesis, Michel Henry only reads *Fear and Trembling, Philosophical Fragments, The Concept of Anxiety, the Treaty of Despair,* that is to say *A Sickness unto Death* and certain passages from the *Lily of the Fields*. As concerns the remainder of this work, notably the *Post-Scriptum*, Henry only refers to the citations given by Jean Wahl. Michel Henry therefore essentially reads a 'second-hand' Kierkegaard, which is not only anecdotal since Wahl, under the guise of presenting the thought of existence, was leading a fully-fledged philosophical project. On this point, see the remarks of Hélène Politis: 'The identity, or at least the analogy between the author and his interpreter was so profoundly accepted by the readers of the *Etudes kierkegaardiennes* that the method and postulations of Jean Wahl were confused by many readers for the method and postulations of Kierkegaard'. in Hélène Politis, *Kierkegaard en France au XXe siècle* (Paris: Kimé, 2005), p. 117. Concerning the direct reference Michel Henry makes to Wahl in *The Essence*, this attests to the manner in which Michel Henry reads Kierkegaard. 'Kierkegaard, *cited by*. J. Wahl in *Etudes kierkegaardiennes*, *op. cit.*, p. 563; emphasis ours.

36 Jean Wahl, *Etudes kierkegaardiennes*, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

37 Cited by Wahl, p. 115. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript,* trans. by Alistair Hannay (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009). p. 277

38 Jean Wahl. *Etudes kierkegaardiennes*, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

are then justified in asking ourselves if the Hegelianism confronted by Michel Henry has not *already* retained the lessons of Kierkegaard.[39] Has Jean Hyppolite not, in his own way, precisely reintroduced difference and inadequation everywhere, in Hegel, where the spectre of identity loomed? Let us not forget that Jean Wahl, while unanimously recognised as the historical initiator of the thought of existence in the French world, is nevertheless not the only figure who participated in this movement. Jean Hyppolite took part in this vast undertaking in equal measure, as he decisively recalls in the following: 'I have participated in an entire movement of thought in France which experienced the double and antithetical influence of Hegel and Kierkegaard'.[40] In this sense, the position of *Genesis and Structure* on the relation between systematic thought and the thought of existence seems to us to be one of extreme equilibrium. Without wanting to claim victory for either party, which would be, in his own words, 'a mark of vulgarity'[41] in philosophy, Hyppolite commits himself to proposing rather than imposing several, sometimes polemical, points of contact between these two traditionally

39 In this regard, we cannot neglect to mention Jean Hyppolite's general position regarding Kierkegaard. Under the influence of Jean Wahl, Hyppolite works to bring together Hegel and Kierkegaard and, in a certain sense, it is this appeasement of the conflict between the thought of existence and the System which contributes to edifying the thesis of an essentially realist Hegel: 'The contrast between Kierkegaard and Hegel is too well known for us to dwell upon it once more. Moreover, there is little doubt that in general Kierkegaard is right against Hegel, and it is not our purpose here to enter a defence of the Hegelian system against Kierkegaard's attack. What interests us is to reveal in Hegel, as we find him in his early works and in the *Phenomenology*, a philosopher much closer to Kierkegaard than might seem credible. The concrete and existential character of Hegel's early works has been admirably demonstrated by Jean Wahl in his work on *The Unhappy Consciousness in Hegel's Philosophy*. (...) We shall ignore the fact that the *Phenomenology*, which describes the itinerary of consciousness, or the cultural adventure of human consciousness in search of a final concord and reconciliation, culminates in Absolute Knowledge, that is to say, in a system which transcends diverse world visions. Instead we shall inquire whether there is not in this work a conception of existence which is kin to certain contemporary existentialist notions'. In Jean Hyppolite, *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, trans. by John O'Neill (New York: Harper Torchbooks), pp. 22-23. Jean Hyppolite. *Etudes sur Marx et Hegel*, Paris, Editions Marcel Rivière, 1955, p. 31, Taken up again in Jean Hyppolite,. *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

40 Jean Hyppolite,. *Figures de la pensée philosophique, op. cit.*, p. 196.

41 *Ibid.* p. 199.

opposed currents of thought – all without exception drawn from *The Phenomenology.*[42] We witness again the resurgence of a need for reconciliation, even though it at times proves quite difficult to establish. Let us keep in mind two fundamental approaches which are decisive in understanding Michel Henry's ideas concerning the thought of existence. First, two concepts emblematic of the thought of existence – despair and anxiety – are brought closer to the phenomenological aspect of Hegelian thought, and this by the very manoeuvres through which Hyppolite converts Hegel into a realist thinker, anxious to preserve the movement of the life of consciousness against the immobility of identity. Hegel is reincarnated as an 'existential' thinker through a very specific reading of natural consciousness. Along the course of its movement, natural consciousness takes as necessary that which, in reality, reveals itself to be illusory. Consequently, it passes from one conviction to another, and so on up to absolute knowledge. If everything begins with doubt, it is not a Cartesian doubt upon which the subject could decide, but the concrete evolution of consciousness which learns to doubt what it takes to be true – not the resolution of the philosopher, but the path of consciousness. Therefore, 'it is not simply a matter of doubt, specifies Jean Hyppolite, but indeed of an actual *despair*'.[43] At the cusp of this rapprochement between Hegelian *Verzweiflung* and Kierkegaardian despair, real consciousness – the necessity of the movement of natural consciousness – also finds itself brought closer to another key concept in the thought of existence: that of anxiety. Insofar as it is not a thing, consciousness in fact designates the movement of transcending itself, which expresses its anxiety: 'This anxiety which possesses human consciousness and ever drives it before itself, until it (...) reaches absolute knowledge, which is at once knowledge of the object and self-knowledge, is an existential anxiety'.[44]

42 Here are the 'moments' of the life of consciousness within which Jean Hyppolite brings together Hegel and Kierkegaard: sensuous certainty, unhappy consciousness (under the influence of Wahl), the beautiful soul, and in a certain sense which we will explain below, at the very heart of the method of phenomenological development in general.

43 *GSE* 13; *GSF* 18.

44 *GSE* 18; *GSF* 23 (TN: Translation modified. In keeping with the author's intentions, I have rendered the original translation of 'anguish' as 'anxiety'). Without lingering on the sources of such a reading of consciousness from these two angles, we must not forget to note, albeit in different forms, the influence of Heidegger. Is it not Heidegger who, in his commentary on the preface of the *Phenomenology* entitled 'Hegel's Concept of Experience', stresses that '*En route,* natural consciousness loses definitively that which had been its truth, but it never loses its own self in the process. Instead, it establishes itself in its old way in the new truth. From the point of view of the science of phenomenal knowledge, the way of presentation is the way of despair for natural consciousness, though such consciousness does not know it. Natural consciousness itself, however, never despairs. Doubt [*Zweifeln*] in the sense of despair [*Verzweiflung*] is the matter for the presentation, i.e., for absolute knowledge. However, the presentation also despairs on this path, not of itself, but of natural consciousness, because such consciousness has no intention of realising what it is, constantly – the mere concept of knowledge; and yet it never ceases to claim for itself the truth of knowledge and to pretend to be the only norm for knowledge'. Martin Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), p. 114. Later in this text, he also insists on the 'concerned' character of consciousness in general: 'consciousness itself is neither only natural consciousness nor only real consciousness. Nor is it just the coupling of the two. Consciousness itself is the originary unity of the two... The two are distinguished in consciousness. How? The distinction prevails as the restlessness of the natural against the real and the real against the natural. Consciousness itself is intrinsically this restlessness of the self-distinguishing between natural and real knowledge'. Ibid, p.. 119

Despair and anxiety thus designate the phenomenological dimension of consciousness, in other words, its experience. However, Jean Hyppolite is not content with exclusively situating the thought of existence at this point – far from it. A remark, discreetly hidden in a footnote, keenly demonstrates his concern in thinking the articulation between Hegel and Kierkegaard, but also to what, in his view, perhaps constitutes the unsurpassable limit of such an undertaking. Already from the inaugural stage of the life of consciousness, sensuous certainty, 'one of the profound defects of Hegel's thought'[45] would reveal itself: its manner of apprehending the massive opposition between the 'universal subject' and 'singular existent'. Indeed, in sensuous certainty, consciousness experiences its first relation to being in its claim to be certainty of the immediate, because it aims at a singular being which is at the same time ineffable – such is its great naivety. In this context, the *alogon* is aimed at but never attained. Due to this absence of Logos, that which is experienced is not truth. It is to this state of affairs that Hegel opposes the necessity of language: the speech on sensuous certainty never matches the manner in which the latter is aimed at. In the end, the singular ineluctably transforms itself into the universal, the unique being

45 *GSE* 86; *GSF* 87.

is nothingness and, correlatively, sensuous certainty is abstract – in the Hegelian sense of the term. It is thus in this regard that Hyppolite asks in *Logic and Existence*: 'However, is it not the case that for myself I – certainty's subject – am an immediate evidence prior to all reflection?'[46] This question is echoed in another poignant remark, in the note from *Genesis and Structure* discussed above, of which the Kierkegaardian foundation, albeit tacit, is no less undeniable.

> *One of the profound defects in Hegel's thought* is revealed perhaps in his philosophy of language and his conception of specificity, which banished 'specific souls' because they are ineffable. For Hegel, specificity is a negation rather than an irreducible originality; it either manifests itself through a determination which is a negation or, qua genuine specificity, it is the negation of negation, an internal negation – which may indeed lead us to a universal subject but tends to eliminate specific existents.[47]

Two conceptions of singularity are radically opposed here. His Hegelian version corresponds to the overcoming of sensuous certainty in language. In contrast, his Kierkegaardian version would designate consciousness experiencing the certainty of the immediate in its first relation to being. On the one hand, singularity as 'negation', on the other, singularity as an 'irreducible originality'. And, following Jean Hyppolite, the profound defect of Hegelianism would consist in putting this pre-reflective certainty – equated here with the existing subject – out of play, in a language which in fact constitutes the path towards the universal subject, that is, the site of absolute knowledge. Such a 'defect' thus corresponds to that of Science as the movement by which thought becomes concrete – in the Hegelian sense of the term – sensuous certainty being dismissed, as we have seen, as an abstraction. For Kierkegaard, in contrast, the terms are reversed, since according to the thought of existence, it is the universal subject, the 'pure man' which is an abstraction, while only the 'particular man', in other words the existing subject, has access to the concrete.[48] We will not inquire into the

46 Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence* trans. by Leonard Lawlor and Amit Sen (SUNY Press: 1997), p. 14. Hereafter *LEE*. Jean Hyppolite. *Logique et existence* (Paris: PUF,2012 [1952]), p. 16. Hereafter *LEF*.

47 *GSE* 86; *GSF* 87; emphasis ours.

48 Allow us to give an example among so many others of this situation in the work of Kierkegaard himself. Evoking the process of speculation, he notes: 'What is this same subject? Not, surely, an individual existing human but the abstract definition of pure human being. There is nothing else for the scientific approach to deal with, and in dealing with it science is of course fully within its rights. But here too we often play with words. It is said over and over again that thinking becomes concrete. But how does it become concrete? Not, surely, in the sense in which one talks of a definite existing something? This means that it is *within* the category of the abstract that thinking becomes concrete, that is, it stays essentially abstract; for concretion means to exist, and existing corresponds to the particular which thinking disregards. It can be quite in order for a thinker *qua* thinker to think pure human being; but *qua* existing individual he is ethically forbidden to forget himself, that he is an existing human being' (Søren Kierkegaard. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript,* trans. by Alistair Hannay (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009), p. 288 note j.

legitimacy of this rapprochement between sensuous certainty and the singular existent – as such a move would in any case reduce the ethical reality of the subject to very little. On the other hand, considering the movement of the life of consciousness as a 'defect' is decidedly Kierkegaardian, even if Jean Hyppolite eventually turns to Hegel, mobilising the contradiction of sensuous certainty, in a passage with strong Heideggerian overtones, to cast aside the Kierkegaardian category of the Unique:

> This 'I,' originary and original, is in its ground only a universal, since language states it. It is not unique insofar as it says 'I'; it merely believes itself to be unique... The 'I' who intends itself as unique is really more of a 'They' (*On*), who constitutes the abstract medium of experience, just as abstract being constituted the medium of the felt.[49]

It is clear that Jean Hyppolite has a tendency to take the side of Hegel, all the while remaining open to the thought of existence. On the interpretation of Hegel as a realist thinker, it is imperative that the experience of consciousness and speculative logic must go hand in hand: the latter accompanies the former and founds it without altering its movement. What is then meant by the naivety of consciousness? The author of *Genesis and Structure* is crystal clear on this point: 'the philosopher who says 'we' in the *Phenomenology*, and sets himself apart from consciousness enmeshed in experience, perceives the speculative

49 *LEE* 14; *LEF* 17. TN Translation modified. In keeping with the author's intention, I have rendered the original 'One' as 'They' on the basis of certain other translations of Heidegger's Das Man.

necessity for the progression of consciousness, a necessity which is not seen by the naive consciousness'.[50] Hence, we are in a better position to understand that if existing subjectivity is this consciousness extracted from the Logos, it irremediably designates that which, for this very reason, knows nothing of the speculative necessity of its progression, and thus severs itself from the movement of experience because of its singularity. Yet if we have here, as we have seen, but one of Jean Hyppolite's positions regarding the thought of existence, – since he also, from another perspective, situates existing subjectivity at the heart of the movement of consciousness as despair and anxiety – it is perhaps in maintaining these diametrically opposed positions together that we must perhaps search for the key to the complete return of Hegelian realism attempted by Michel Henry, and of what we will call the anti-systematic vocation of his phenomenology of life.

Outline Of The Anti-Systematic Vocation Of The Phenomenology Of Life

Like Hyppolite, Henry will not simply take one position or the other, but will attempt to articulate the one *with* the other, in light of the idea that *the profound defect of Hegelianism resides in inadequation*. Indeed, in the preparatory notes to *The Essence of Manifestation*, Henry maintains that on the one hand 'there is inadequation within monism, but not in the philosophy of the originary *Wie*, in which, on the contrary, there is adequation'.[51] On the other hand, it is this adequation which resolves the problem of singularity: 'the authentic singularity of singular subjectivity signifies its ipseity, *signifies the originary ontological relation* [*lien*], *Wie originary-ipseity*'.[52] Behind this *Wie*, behind this originary 'how' –

50 *GSE* 587; *GSF* 566-567.

51 Ms A-21-4303/4304. 'il y a inadéquation dans [le] monisme mais non dans [la] philosophie [du] *Wie* originaire, où au contraire il y a adéquation'.

52 Ms A-21-4305/4306. 'la singularité authentique de la subjectivité singulière, signifie son ipséité, *signifie* [*le*] *lien ontologique originaire, Wie originaire-ipséité'.*

while we cannot yet grasp the full reach of this term – is hidden the thought of existence in a way that refers directly to the problem of identity and its necessary refutation through adequation, without, however, implying the restoration of an idealist reading of Hegel. It is moreover against this misinterpretation that the following note cautions: 'WKK 25[53] I, abstract non identity but relation with self makes it such that there is such a relation between [illegible] the self (+ [favourable] but if the 'relation' is not such: it is the very essence or life; but more for 'makes' since it defines the I by the *Wie* (...)'.[54] This passage echoes Jean Wahl's *Etudes*, repeating the Kierkegaardian critique of Hegel as a thinker of identity. 'The I (1) is not in fact an abstract identity, it is essentially relation, relation with the I (IV, p. 133 ; VII, p. 127). It is the very fact that there is a relation between self and self (VII, p. 10)'.[55]

As we have seen, Jean Hyppolite's own attempt to provide a realist reading of Hegel consists in defending the idea that the logical and speculative necessity of the development of the life of consciousness

53 A-14-2542. The abbreviation 'WKK' is used by Michel Henry in his study notes to designate the *Kierkegaardian Studies* of Jean Wahl.

54 'WKK 25 moi non identité abstraite mais relation avec soi fait qu'il y a un tel rapport entre [illisible] lui (+ [favourable] mais si 'rapport' n'en est pas un: c'est l'essence même ou la vie; mais plus pour 'fait' car c'est définir le moi par le *Wie* (...)' Here is the incriminating passage for Michel Henry: '1. The Choice – the I (1) is not in fact an abstract identity, it is essentially relation, relation with the I (IV, p. 133; VII, p. 127) It is the very fact that there is such a relation between self and self (VII, p. 10). To define the 'I', Kierkegaard often uses Hegelian formulas (VIII, p. 26); but more importantly, in his definitions of the I, is this idea of the internal reciprocal relation, not contemplated as in Hegelianism (at least as he understands it) but lived in an intense way, this idea of a living relation with oneself, wholly different from a synthesis (1), but which envelops the synthesis, the totality of the soul and the body'. (in Wahl, Jean. *Etudes kierkegaardiennes*, *op. cit.*, p. 260-261). This passage refers to the eighth chapter, within which Wahl outlines, through Kierkegaard, a 'theory of existence' from which he reviews certain Kierkegaardian categories such as existence, the isolated individual, subjective thought, as well as the indirect method. It is also interesting to note that in the passage most precisely dedicated to existence, and taken up by Michel Henry, Jean Wahl notably cites, from the German translation, the *Philosophical Fragments* and the *Sickness unto Death*. The latter text, as we will show, plays a fundamental role in *The Essence of Manifestation*, since in § 70, entitled 'The Essence of Affectivity', the structure of being is defined as despair (*EME* 676; *EMF* 851). Finally, to return to the hand-written note quoted above, it is notable that Henry discreetly but certainly distances himself from the Wahlian reading of Kierkegaard.

55 Jean Wahl, *Etudes kierkegaardiennes*, *op. cit.*, p. 260-261. See previous footnote.

must not hinder its movement insofar as it founds itself in inadequation. However, this incompleteness of the life of consciousness and, correlatively, the refusal of its fulfilment in absolute knowledge and as an identity that ends in an Eleatic immobilism, is only effectively preserved on the condition of considering the absolute as subject and never as substance. If such is the case, the experience of consciousness is maintained, and logic no longer contradicts existence: a place for difference and eventually mediation subsists in logic, and this mediation founds the mobility of existence. Now, if Michel Henry is still unsatisfied with this reading, it is not, as we have suggested, in the name of a return to identity. Rather, what is in question is the *mediation* which makes inadequation possible, the difference which permits a harmony between the logical and phenomenological aspects of Hegelianism. Once again, let us note that the shadow of Kierkegaard looms over this suspicion: 'WKK 21. There is no mediation of the individual; to mediate is to generalise, and the individual is uniquely the individual (to give ontological meaning)'.[56]

In his reading of *Genesis and Structure*, Henry identifies inadequation as one of the expressions of this 'ontological monism' which we will attempt to circumscribe through this double thesis. On the one hand, one single essence exists, and being historialises itself through a negativity, understood as the act through which being pushes itself outside of itself in producing a phenomenological distance which allows it to appear to itself. Henry calls this 'transcendental being'. On the other hand, if negativity belongs to essence, if it discloses in transcendence, transcendental being conceals the operation through which it comes about as transcendental being, that is to say as phenomenon. And such is the critique Michel Henry formulates against 'Hegel': the mode of phenomenalisation does not appear, appearing does not appear. Hence the idea that negativity, if it belongs to the structure of being, is not of a phenomenal essence, does not appear. Negativity is thus the being of the

56 'There is no mediation (in the Hegelian sense of the term) of the individual; to mediate is to generalise (III, p. 53), the individual is uniquely the individual (VII, p. 67). There is no mediation of existence, since existence is interiority enclosed upon itself (VII, p. 92) As we have said, there is no mediation when it is a question of the absolute end. The relation with God as understood by Kierkegaard is something which cannot be mediated'. (*Etudes kierkegaardiennes*, *op. cit.*, p. 130). This passage once again makes reference to the 'struggle against Hegelianism'.

Subject, 'its subjectivity'.[57] That the subject, in other words the Concept, and in the end 'the pure I', dissimulates itself in the very act by which it appears, means for Henry that it fails in its mission to manifest reality absolutely. But we would be wrong to believe that absolute knowledge could be reduced solely to this interpretation of it as the inadequate manifestation of essence: it would be to forget that it in fact founds itself upon inadequation as understood by Jean Hyppolite when he attempts to make a 'realist' thinker out of Hegel. Although, on this point, Henry is essentially entering into debate with Heidegger and his interpretation of natural consciousness as 'ontic consciousness', we cannot ignore the implicit theses of Henry's master: the inadequation which makes the essence of manifestation inadequate, such is the 'profound defect' that must be challenged – which is particularly clear in the case of language, as soon as it designates the I as dissimulating itself to its very manifestation.[58]

However, it is in the solution Michel Henry proposes to this problem that the anti-systematic vocation of the phenomenology of life clearly appears. It is not a matter of reintroducing existing subjectivity as naive consciousness extracted from the speculative necessity of its progression, but to reinvest singularity, in the Kierkegaardian sense, at the very point of the phenomenological aporia which gives rise to the logic subtending its experience. In this sense, it is a matter of re-establishing the one adequation – which is not, once again, an identity – at the very point where Jean Hyppolite, in order to safeguard the unity of the logical and phenomenological characteristics of Hegelianism, attempted to maintain an inadequation. This leads us directly to Henry's use of *Sickness Unto Death*. Let us recall that for Kierkegaard, despair essentially refers to the fact that 'the relation to himself a man cannot get rid of, any more than he can get rid of himself (...)'.[59] To despair means the impossibility of undoing oneself from oneself. Thus, in this important passage from Kierkegaard's so-called late works, Henry sees the very definition of experience: '*The incapability of the ego... of breaking the relationship to self which constitutes it... is in despair that which makes of it an* experience'.[60] It is therefore no longer inadequation which counts

57 *EME* 698 *EMF* 872-873.
58 *EME* 717 *EMF* 889.
59 Søren Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death* (Radford, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008), p. 12
60 *EME* 678; *EMF* 853; emphasis ours

as the necessity of the movement of the life of consciousness, but rather unity with oneself, adequation insofar as it is capable of constituting an adequate mode of manifestation – the originary *Wie*. If we find the eruption of an auto-dissimulation of the pure I within the framework of inadequation, on the other hand, being 'transfixed' ['*rivé*'] to oneself, to not know any phenomenological distance concerning oneself is what constitutes the appearing of appearing for Michel Henry – an absolute singularity, understood as affectivity, which reveals absolutely. Quite paradoxically, a project is thus accomplished which Hegel himself could not carry out: that of an absolute knowledge. The project of discovering subjectivity is therefore no longer carried out at the margins of experience, but at the very site of its essence.

Conclusion and Perspectives: The Critique Of Kojève and The Rereading Of Marx

Jean Hyppolite's influence on Michel Henry cannot be reduced to the correspondence, and, in a certain sense, to the friendship[61] between them. While we have attempted here above all to bring to light the affinities and distances in their readings of the relations between Hegel and Kierkegaard, this same complicity provides a fruitful approach to other aspects of the phenomenology of life, which we must content ourselves with simply mentioning here. First, concerning the understanding of what Michel Henry calls 'ontological monism', the critical relation Jean Hyppolite maintained towards another eminent member of the French Hegel-renaissance, Alexandre Kojève, is particularly illuminating. Kojève reproached Hegel for not being enough of a 'dualist', for not proposing two ontologies, one of nature and one of man; and followed Heidegger in pleading for such a duality. Hyppolite reacted quite severely to the idea that *The Phenomenology* could be considered an 'absolute anthropology', denouncing a misreading of the

61 Another sign of this 'friendship' can be read in Henry's contribution, notably along with Georges Canguilhem and Michel Foucault, to a collection of texts in tribute to Jean Hyppolite. Here is what can be read in the promotional text for this work: 'Some friends and closest students of Jean Hyppolite wished to compose this tome in his memory. They hoped their homage would bring a contribution to the various domains (…) to which he had tirelessly brought the effort of his thought, and where his mark can still be felt today'. (*Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*, ed. by Suzanne Bachelard (Paris: PUF, 1971.)

work by Heidegger himself – a nonetheless fruitful misreading since it made possible Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. Therefore, directly echoing this critique of Hegelian monism – which does not properly speaking come down to ontological monism – Michel Henry also positions himself concerning this anthropological reading of Hegel.

> Hegel has often been reproached for having extended his dialectic to the sphere of nature and natural Being... In order to reduce these claims to this Hegelian 'monism', it would be necessary to oppose to it a 'dualism' which would reserve the dialectical essence to an interpretation of the human Being and to the understanding of his relationships with the world. [Note: This is the interpretation of A. Kojève (...)]. It is to commit a complete reversal of Hegelian ontology to pretend to interpret the Being of human reality by beginning with negativity understood as an essence.[62]

Another path, more vast than the latter, also deserves to be taken, namely, Hyppolite's decisive influence on the critique of Marxism proposed by Michel Henry in his two volumes dedicated to Marx,[63] of which the first bears the subtitle 'A Philosophy of Reality'. Should we read here a cryptic homage to his master, and to his 'realist' reading of Hegel? At the very least, the Marx/Hegel relationships constituted an important field of research for Jean Hyppolite – we are thinking here of the 1955 *Studies on Marx and Hegel*.[64] No doubt this interest in the thought of Marx will have contributed to the inflection Michel Henry's work took in the 1970s. Michel Henry stressed that he owed 'everything' to the work of Jean Hyppolite; we hope to have shown how this attachment showed itself in its effects on his thought, adding for our part that, if he did not owe him 'everything', he at least owed him 'a great deal'.

62 *EME* 697-698; *EMF* 871. Translation modified.

63 Michel Henry *Marx: A Philosophy of Human Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1983). Michel Henry, *Marx*. I. *Une philosophie de la réalité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976) et Michel Henry, *Marx*. II. *Une philosophie de l'économie* (Paris, Gallimard, 1976).

64 Jean Hyppolite., *Studies on Marx and Hegel,* trans. by John O'Neill (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1973). Jean Hyppolite, *Etudes sur Marx et Hegel* (Paris: Editions Marcel Rivière, 1955).

Appendix: Correspondence

JEAN HYPPOLITE and MICHEL HENRY

Translated by Philippe Lynes

Letter n°6

La Ciotat 13 March, 1956*

Dear Sir,[1]

Please allow me to apologise for the delay in responding to you. I was going through a difficult period in my work at the time I received your letter. The winter, in a general sense, has been quite arduous for me here. The cold against which one is not protected in this land has somewhat disrupted life at the Rustique Olivette; communal life in this time has abruptly grown heavy, and I have had health troubles brought about by this absurd medicinal food. All of this has brought on new delays in my work, which I now know will not be completed by the end of next summer. This is why I am presently quite uncertain regarding the future. I no longer have the material means to work another year without a salary, and I also fear that returning to teaching will not allow me to respect the June 1957 date I had set for the thesis defence: I will indeed require another 3 or 4 months after 1 October to finish writing my principal thesis, which would be impossible to cut off before the end of my chapter on Hegel without taking away the unity of my book. If I teach, I will need the whole year. Since after finishing the writing I will have a long and heavy period ahead of me for the revision of the text – especially the sourcing and verification of references – the date of the

1 We would like to thank here Madame Claude Chippaux-Hyppolite for granting us the right to publish this part of the correspondence between Jean Hyppolite and Michel Henry. These documents would not have been available without the valued assistance of Madame Dauphragne, responsible for managing the Fonds Jean Hyppolite at the École Normale Supérieure. We would also like to thank Joaquim Hernandez-Dispaux for his selection of the letters that follow.

defence would effectively be set back by a year. The only solution I can think of – which is but a fragile hope – is the CNRS; We will unfortunately have to go through M. Wahl: Do you think it would be possible at least to ask him? I do not dare to do so myself, fearing to inconvenience him once again. And do you think it would even be possible to ask for a year after having already benefited from an allowance over 4 years? As concerns the small bursary I have this year, I could surely refrain from mentioning it.

The publication of my books obviously depends on the date of the defence. On this subject, I give you here my firm and definitive consent for the publication of my book on the body with the Presses Universitaires. Given the uncertainty within which I presently find myself regarding when I will be able to finish writing my principal thesis, I have as of yet not spoken with Gallimard. I will have to take a decision on this subject at the end of the month.

Please forgive me, dear Sir, for writing to you in this manner regarding the troubles with which I am preoccupied, and for bothering you with them once again. I do not need to tell you that I would completely understand should you deem it futile for me to hope for the CNRS for next year.

I hope that what you will be able to see of my work will not disappoint you too much. Allow me, at the very least, to express here my profound gratitude for the attention you will bring to it. In thanking you again, dear Sir, please allow me to express my feelings of respect and appreciation.

Michel Henry

*[In the margin, Jean Hyppolite writes :] Rustique Olivette[2]

2 Rustique Olivette is a villa located in the hills near La Ciotat, a village adjoining the French Mediterranean coast.

Letter n°14
Paris 24 March 1957

Dear Sir,

I am writing to provide you with the information you requested concerning the allowance renewal application I have submitted to the Research Centre.

After recalling that in 1950, I finished writing my secondary thesis devoted to Maine de Biran and the problem of the body, of which the typed manuscript totalled approximately 450 pages, I explain, concerning the topic of my principal thesis, that I wish to show that a certain conception of the essence of manifestation dominates the totality of the development of philosophical thought, while remaining unilateral and unfounded. This is why my work at first takes on the form of a vast critique, which can only find its balance and its justification in a positive section, where the existence of an originary mode of revelation will be brought to light, in opposition to that to which philosophy has adhered since the Greeks up to and including Heidegger, and which at the same time founds it for the first time.

I indicate that it is upon the elaboration of this positive part that I am presently engaged, and that it is in order to give it its full development that I allow myself to ask for one last year.

I add that it would be possible to finish my thesis this year, but that this would be to the detriment of its balance and, if it should have one, its importance.

I further note the quantitative weight of my work, of which the following information can in part explain the time that will have been necessary for its completion: my principal thesis currently (on 12 March 57) contains *900 typed pages* (to which are added the 450 pages of the secondary thesis). I point out that in the reports on my work I had given the number of 600 pages, but after further verification, it is indeed a matter of 900 pages, and this only with respect to the principal thesis.

Here, dear Sir, is the information I have submitted in my letter of request. It would indeed be quite important for me to be able to fully develop the positive section devoted to the study of immanence considered in itself and to its interpretation as the essence of affectivity. This will be the most interesting and perhaps the most original part of my work, at any rate, that which would avoid the reproach one could direct at it for being especially critical and negative.

This is why I am infinitely grateful to you for giving your support to my candidacy, the importance of which I know cannot be underestimated.

In thanking you again for everything you do for my work and for the attention you bring to it, please allow me to express, dear Sir, my most respectful sentiments.

Michel Henry

Letter n°15
[from Jean Hyppolite, to:
Monsieur John Marshall
Associate Director
The Rockefeller Foundation
49 West 49th Street
New-York 20]
Paris, 14.4.1958

Dear Sir,

I thank you for your letter dated 8 April. I am aware that you do not generally support students preparing a thesis for our state doctorate, but the case of M. Michel Henry appears to me to be sufficiently exceptional to merit your attention.

M. Michel Henry has already benefited from the C.N.R.S., and if it were simply a question of passing his thesis, I myself would have recommended that he add nothing to the manuscript of which I am already in possession. However, I believe his work is important enough that we ought to grant him another year of freedom. M. Michel Henry is

extremely selfless, and has often lived in difficult situations to dedicate himself entirely to his research.

I am in possession of a completed work by him on the philosophy of Maine de Biran; it is more than a historical study, as he endeavours to show how the thought of Biran completes and extends that of the contemporary philosopher, Husserl. The other manuscript, which constitutes his principal thesis, is in the process of being completed. It is a work which appears to me to be of a truly international importance, constituting an extremely precise and penetrating study on the presuppositions of the great contemporary philosophers: Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre. The study of these presuppositions is already complete, and M. Michel Henry opposes to these an idea which appears to me to be truly original. This work surpasses the usual expectations for doctoral theses. I am of course giving you my personal opinion, and I must tell you that I have rarely read a text from among my students so penetrating and which manifests such philosophical originality. It is for this reason that I am writing to you to ask if we can do something for M. Michel Henry. This philosopher also demonstrates literary prowess, having published the novel 'The Young Officer' a few years ago with Editions Gallimard which, without being as original as his philosophical work, no less attests the elegance and purity of his thought.

Yours sincerely,

J. Hyppolite

Letter n°31

Montpellier 13 November 1963*

Dear Sir,

I thank you for your kind letter and for the intervention you have agreed to undertake regarding the organisation of the defence of my thesis and the composition of its committee.

I have just received a letter from M. Wahl, who has approved the participation of M. Gouhier, and proposes a second reader for the principal thesis – M. Ricoeur – and finally, as a last member, the participation of M. Alquié.

M. Wahl has again informed me that he will be ready for the defence around 15 or 20 February and suggests, should this date appear too distant, yielding his place to someone else.

I believe you will agree that this last suggestion must be ruled out – as friendly as M. Wahl's letter is -, but that it is certainly advisable to accept the suggestion concerning the participation of M. Alquié.

I am writing to Mademoiselle Guibert at the secretarial office of the Sorbonne to share M. Wahl's suggestions, the latter having himself informed me of having written to her on these points. I have asked Mademoiselle Guibert to kindly contact the Professors on the committee in order to obtain their agreement, as I do not feel I am in a position to ask them myself. It is only once their agreement to participate has been officially communicated to me by the Sorbonne that I believe I will be able to enter into contact with them and introduce myself to them.

Before answering M. Wahl and accepting all his suggestions, I would nonetheless be very glad to have your agreement, notably on the subject of M. Alquié's participation since, concerning the other professors, the list proposed by M. Wahl corresponds to the one you kindly sent me.

The date of the second half of February for the defence appears reasonable to me. I was not impatient, properly speaking, but merely concerned regarding the uncertainty which has until now weighed upon

the organisation of this defence, and I am happy to know that things will now be able to take a more favourable turn.

In once again conveying all my gratitude to you, I ask you to accept, dear Sir, my sentiments of respect.

Michel Henry

*[In the margin:] Enc. Fermaud Montpellier. R.

Letter n°32
Montpellier 20 March 1964*

Dear Sir,

I do not wish to delay any longer in telling you how much I was moved by the words you spoke during my defence. They will remain engraved in my mind. Of course, they were also addressed to the committee and the public and, in this respect, the impact they made resonated for the remainder of the defence.

But I also know that it was to me that you were speaking and, in comparing me to a young hero I had dreamed of in the past, while neither thinking nor daring to identify myself with him, you have deeply touched me.

I am quite clumsy in expressing what I am feeling, and the words of gratitude which come to me are quite derisory with respect to my debt. This debt, moreover, is not limited to the support you have given me throughout my research and which assumed such a brilliant form last Saturday, it also includes, and even more so, your work, to which I owe everything, as is quite obvious, I believe. And since you have wished to confide in me, I can, perhaps, after much uneasiness, do the same to you; When I was in my *première supérieure* year at the lycée Henri IV, I used to secretly attend your lectures on Kant and Heidegger in the neighbouring room, until the day when my own professor caught me escaping red-handed, and forced me to attend his own lectures.

But I haven't managed to convey to you exactly what I wanted to, nor the profound significance which the trust you placed in me throughout all these years has had for me. This is why, if you will allow

me to do so, I would be very glad to express this to you in person on my next trip to Paris.

In asking you to please convey my regards to Madame Hyppolite, please accept, dear Sir, my respectful affection.

Michel Henry

*[In the margin:] Answered

A Desire Without Sense: Derrida and Hyppolite on Singularity and Recognition

MAURO SENATORE

> *Mais il n'existe pas, lui, le Juif, avant de s'être médusé.*
> *Ça s'est donc médusé avant lui.*
> (J. Derrida, *Glas*)

Almost in the middle of *Glas*, in the left column dedicated to Hegel, when commenting on the exposition of the struggle to death for recognition developed in Hegel's *First Philosophy of Spirit* (1803/4), Derrida announces the absolute irreducibility of singularity to the universality of recognition. In the present essay, I emphasise the thought of this irreducibility by staging a close confrontation between Derrida's reading of the Hegelian text and Hyppolite's elaboration of the recognition of singularity in Chapter I of *Logic and Existence* ('The Ineffable'). At stake here, among other things, is what Hyppolite considers to be 'the *Phenomenology*'s essential thesis', that is, 'the establishment of absolute knowledge on the basis of the whole of human experience', of which 'the movement of mutual recognition is the element'.[1]

Let me sketch the framework of Derrida's text. He is following the exposition of the constitution of family as the third potency (*Potenz*, *puissance*) of consciousness and of its dissolution in the spirit of the people in the Jena *Philosophy of Spirit* of 1803/4. The struggle for recognition takes place within this trajectory between *familial* consciousnesses. 'At the point where we are, the struggle for recognition opposes consciousnesses, but consciousnesses that the family-process has constituted as totalities. The individual who engages in the war is an

1 Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, trans. by Leonard Lawlor and Amit Sen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997) pp. 10-11.

individual-family'.[2] Derrida explains that 'the family structure' ('with all the powers Hegel implies therein') is an 'essential' moment of consciousness, such that any attempt to describe a phenomenology of spirit as the 'experience of consciousness' must take it into account. Here he finds the principle of a critique of transcendental consciousness as an abstract and formal concept of consciousness resulting from the 'reduction' of the 'familiar kernel'.[3] Let me anticipate with respect to Derrida's text the Hegelian exposition of the movement of mutual recognition:

> It is absolutely necessary that the totality which consciousness has reached in the family can recognize itself as the totality it is in another such totality of consciousness. In this recognition, each is for the other immediately an absolute singular [*ein absolut Einzelner*]; each posits itself [*setzt sich*] in the consciousness of the other, relieves [*hebt ... auf*] the singularity of the other, or each posits the other as an absolute singularity of consciousness.[4]

Derrida stops artificially at the very beginning of the process. There is a confrontation of two totalities ('standing up face to face'[5], two erections, in the terminology of *Glas*. This confrontation accounts for what Derrida later calls the relationship with the other. It is, by definition, an absolute contradiction that there are two totalities or that each totality is a singular

2 Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. by John P. Leavey Jr (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), p. 135. For a reading of this text within the general frame of *Glas* see Francesco Vitale, 'Hegel: la famiglia e il sistema. Derrida interprete di Hegel (II)', *Atti dell'Accademia di Scienze Morali e Politiche*, CXI (2000), 117-158.

3 Cf. Derrida, *Glas*, pp. 135-6: 'Here is situated the principle of a critique of transcendental consciousness as the formal *I think* (thinking is always said of a member of a family), but also a critique of concrete transcendental consciousness in the style of Husserlian phenomenology. Not only is there no monadic consciousness, no sphere to which the ego properly belongs, but it is impossible to 'reduce' the family structure as a common empirico-anthropological addition of transcendental subjectivity. Transcendental intersubjectivity would be abstract and formal.' As I aim to demonstrate here, this critical perspective is what allows Derrida to look into the irreducibility of singularity to universality, into a certain Jewish spirit.

4 Cf. Ibid., p.137 and G. W. F. Hegel, 'First Philosophy of Spirit', trans. by Henry S. Harris, in *System of Morality and First Philosophy of Spirit* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979), p. 236.

5 Derrida, *Glas*, pp. 135-136.

one. Derrida writes, 'singular totalities, since they also make two, are two: absolute, insoluble contradiction, impossible to live with'.[6] This is the very contradiction, the non-livability of the relationship with the other. It leads necessarily to death, as we will see; or rather, to extermination.[7] As Derrida remarks, 'the relationship can only be violent'.[8] The totalities cannot stand forever at the initial moment of confrontation and contradiction. Somehow, they have always already been at war with one another. As singular totalities, they have already precipitated towards the war between them. This implication brings Derrida to the second formulation of the contradiction related to the notion of singular totality. The recognition of one totality requires the other and, at the same time, its suppression (the *Aufhebung* of the other's singularity). Therefore, Derrida will conclude later, recognition is necessarily the *Aufhebung* of itself. 'The two consciousnesses structurally need each other, but they can get themselves recognized only in abolishing [*supprimant*], or at least in relieving, the singularity of the other – which excludes it'.[9] At this point, Derrida proposes a third formulation of the contradiction, as the opposition of knowledge and consciousness, universality and singularity. It says the impossibility of the singularity of consciousness reaching the universality of knowledge (of the acknowledgment of the other). 'The contradiction, although not explicit here under this form, opposes more precisely knowing (the *kennen* of *erkennen*), which can deal only with universal ideality, and the singularity of the totality 'consciousness".[10]

In the following, I propose to measure Derrida's remarks on the absolute contradiction of singular totalities and on the original war between them against Hyppolite's commentary on the struggle for recognition. In particular, I refer to 'The Concept of Existence in the Hegelian Phenomenology', in which Hyppolite reads the *Phenomenology*'s version of the struggle for recognition.[11] In his account,

6 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 136.
7 Cf. Ibid., p. 154: 'exterminating violence'.
8 Ibid., p. 136.
9 Ibid., p. 136.
10 Ibid., p. 136.
11 On Derrida's proposal to read 'phenomenology' as a thought of the structural war among finite totalities (or ipseities), in the wake of Hyppolite's reconsideration of the Hegelian notion of war, see my '*Il y a la guerre*. Derrida and Lévinas's Anti-Hegelianism' forthcoming in the proceedings of the colloquium *L'a-venire di Derrida* (Milan, October 2012).

he supposes to arrest the development just before the struggle takes place. The moment of confrontation between two self-consciousnesses is described as the conflict between being-for-itself and its appearing to the other. 'It is in the conflict between these two [*being-for-itself* and *being-for-another*] that human self-consciousness arises'.[12] Now, this being-for-another is an irreducible condition of self-consciousness, of the 'self's being-in-the-world'. Hyppolite determines it as 'unsupportable' and 'unbearable'. Sooner or later, self-consciousness needs to suppress this condition ('his limited representation to the other')[13] by seeking the death of the other. In this way, it unleashes the struggle for recognition, in order to be recognised as being oneself or being-for-itself. 'This is why consciousness intends the death of the Other, which means simply that it tends to suppress or negate the estranged mode of existence in which it appears to itself as other'.[14] Therefore, the struggle as the intention to bring about the death of the Other is the structural precipitation of the initial conflict, of the unbearableness of the being-for-another. One could say that self-consciousness has always been engaged in the struggle for recognition.[15]

As his commentary on the quoted Hegelian text develops, Derrida supposes that the struggle-machine - because what is at stake is a device, an unstoppable device of extermination - 'is triggered [*se déclenche*] between two stances', between death and *Aufhebung*. These concepts can be understood as the conditions which set the struggle in motion and, therefore, the very conditions of the totality of consciousness as already engaged in the struggle itself. They refer to the process according to which a totality relieves the singularity of the other (or its own). The first condition, death, accounts for the destruction or annihilation of all traits of singularity, as a certain hounding of singularity. 'Death ... destroys singularity, relentlessly hounds (*s'acharne*) what in the other

12 Jean Hyppolite, *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, trans. by John O'Neill (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 27.
13 Ibid., p. 28
14 Ibid., pp. 27-28
15 On the notion of individuality as oneness and exclusion and of the structural necessity of war see also Hyppolite's commentary on the Jena 'Article on Natural Law' in Jean Hyppolite, *Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of History*, trans. by Bond Harris and Jacqueline Bouchard Spurlock (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1996), pp. 52-54.

consciousness-family remains singular'.[16] Now, Derrida observes, the triggered machine is such that death affects both singularities. The singularity left behind destroys recognition at the very moment it destroys the singularity of the other and, thus, cannot ever raise itself to universality. In other words, either destroying the singularity of the other or being destroyed in its own singularity, each totality precipitates itself to death. 'But what is present, what *is* as such when there is only singularity? Nothing'.[17] Now, this machine of extermination is not an option. It starts its work since there has been a familial consciousness and, thus, a relationship with the other. Derrida suggests that the annihilation of all traits of singularity is the truth of the Hegelian exposition of the process of recognition, a necessity that imposes itself on this exposition. He speaks of an 'intention hidden in the shadow of the Hegelian discourse'.[18] According to Derrida, the Hegelian discourse testifies to that which it cannot admit: that this process leads to nothing, that the annihilation of singularity concerns both totalities and that recognition and, thus, universality cannot ever be established. 'This intention cannot be said as such, since discourse is precisely what makes the universal pass for something, gives the impression that the universal remains something, that something remains, when every singularity has been engulfed.'[19] Derrida imagines this truth of the Hegelian discourse as the mythological figure that Hegel himself conjures up in order to account for the Jew, the Gorgon's head. If the confrontation between singular totalities, that is, the relationship with the other, is the very structure of desire, then the truth announced by the Gorgon's head that haunts Hegel's text is the structural link between desire and death. It speaks of desire as a machine of extermination and, thus, as irreducible to universality. 'Medusa's face watching over the Hegelian text in the penumbra that binds desire to death that reads desire as the desire of, the desire for, death'.[20] But we will return to this kind of death drive later on.

Much earlier, in *Glas*, Derrida draws attention to the Gorgon's head invoked by Hegel, between hyphens, in a passage from the early *Spirit of Christianity* (1799), in which he recalls the vengeance of the sons of Jacob following the abduction of their sister. 'The Gorgon's head

16 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 136.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.

turned everything to stone', Hegel writes, suggesting the identification of this figure with that of the Jew.[21] As Derrida explains, this identification means that the Jew is a petrifying stone. 'The Jew can secure himself mastery and carry death everywhere in the world only in petrifying the other by becoming stone himself.' In fact, the petrifying stone is the truth of the Jew: 'he does not exist ... before having become Medusa to himself [*avant de s'être médusé*].'[22] Now, the being-Medusa of the Jew describes a certain operation of mastery, which goes back to the ideal-historical origin of human society, that is, the tradition of the flood as 'the loss of the state of nature'.[23] Following Hegel's rewriting of the biblical narration of the catastrophic event, Derrida explains that the flood marks the division between man and mother nature which 'had sheltered, protected, nourished him' up to that moment. Man confronts a hostile nature and is from now on responsible for his own shelter, protection and nourishment. Here, Derrida observes, the Jewish Noah 'conceives his plan to master', that is, he conceives *tout court*.[24] In other words, he decides 'to gather together the world torn apart, the divided world, to reconstitute in sum the *Gleichgewicht* in the being-thought'.[25] As Derrida points out by paraphrasing Hegel's text, Noah reduces the hostile forces of nature to the thoughts of a Being, namely, God, that 'promised to place them under his service ... so that no flood could come to submerge mankind'.[26] Therefore, the confrontation with nature is resolved into the *promised* mastery of man over nature, into a mastery that, in principle, can be *re*affirmed. In fact, Hegel speaks of 'a forced peace [*paix de necessité*]' which renews the original division: 'the split', Derrida remarks, 'reproduces the cleavage by which nature, promising maternal protection and in truth unfolding the worst threat, is separated from

21 G. F. W. Hegel, 'The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate', trans. by Thomas M. Knox, in *On Christianity. Early theological Writings* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1948), p. 188.
22 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 47.
23 Ibid., p. 37.
24 Ibid., p. 37.
25 Ibid., p. 38. See also Hegel, 'The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate', p.183: 'It was in a thought-product that Noah built the distracted world together again; his thought-produced ideal he turned into a [real] Being and then set everything else over against it, so that in this opposition realities were reduced to thoughts, i.e., to something mastered.'
26 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 38.

itself'.[27] Finally, the Jew accounts for a certain resolution of the confrontation with nature: he does not exist before this solution, this forced peace, this promise of mastery, etc. Now, returning to the conjuration of the Gorgon's head in the commentary on the struggle for recognition, I wonder whether Derrida is bringing to light a Jewish truth in the Hegelian exposition and, more generally, whether a Jewish necessity imposes itself within the account of desire and of the relationship with the other. But let me go on with my reading of Derrida's reading of Hegel.

The other condition of the struggle for recognition is, according to Derrida, *Aufhebung*. The unavoidable precipitation of one's relationship with the other into the destruction of one's own singularity or of that of the other reproduces a certain effect of ideality, or mastery. 'The death of a singularity is always an *Aufhebung*', Derrida writes, to the extent that 'it suppresses the pure and simple suppression'.[28] According to Hegel's text, the *Aufhebung* of (the death of) singularity unfolds as its very interiorisation in the absolute singularity of consciousness (an idealisation). As Derrida suggests 'putting to death implies here speculative dialectic's whole chain of essential concepts (relief, posit(ion)ing as passage to the opposite, ideality as the product of negativity, and so on)'.[29] And yet we know that what remains of this process is singularity, which means nothing. In other words, we know that the machine of extermination has already been triggered, that the Gorgon's head has always already been there, in the shadow of the Hegelian discourse. Hegel states explicitly that, if singularity is a consciousness insofar as its possessions and its being are 'bound up with his whole essence' and are 'posited' as singularity himself, then the *Aufhebung* of singularity requires the destruction of all his moments, an absolute destruction. 'The injuring of any one of his single aspects is therefore infinite, it is an absolute offense, and offense against his integrity, an offense to his honor; and the collision about any single point is a struggle for the whole.'[30] Derrida explains that 'the destruction of

27 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 39. See also Hegel, 'The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate', p. 184: 'Both made a peace of necessity with the foe and thus perpetuated the hostility.'
28 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 137; my translation.
29 Ibid.
30 Hegel, 'First Philosophy of Spirit', p. 236.

singularity must leave no remain(s)'.[31] Moreover, he returns to the initial moment of the confrontation with the other, which is also the moment of desire. This moment carries with itself the knowledge of the absolute alterity of the other, of absolute exposure to it, of the risk of death.

As this collision, this violation is reciprocal, the project of mastery, of getting-oneself-recognised must in the same stroke engage infinite desire in a risk of absolute non-mastery: the subject must admit to itself that it no longer dominates its relation to the other. There, it desires. It posits its desire only in risking death.[32]

There would not be desire without a certain knowledge. Desire is the very beginning of the relationship with the other, what precipitates towards violence or war (and, finally, towards extermination). Here Derrida supposes to suspend desire and the relation with the other before they are necessarily resolved into death and extermination.

As the very definition of the singularity of consciousness makes clear, Hegel points out that recognition cannot be reached in language (that is, 'through words, assurances, threats, or promises') insofar as 'language is only the ideal existence of consciousness' whereas 'here there are actual consciousnesses' engaged in a 'practical' or 'actual' relation and, thus, 'the middle of their recognition must itself be actual'.[33] When speaking of 'absolutely opposed absolute beings for themselves in opposition', the Hegelian text remarks a certain primordiality of this opposition with respect to the ideal element of language.[34] Certainly, Derrida outlines this point to the extent that, as I indicated earlier, at stake here is an absolute contradiction which leads to extermination and, thus, resists all dissolution (*Aufhebung*) into the supposed universality of language. His remarks on the Hegelian text read: 'the linguistic element implies an element that can only be the *effect* of the destruction of empiric singularities, an effect and not a middle of the struggle'.[35] Therefore, the struggle must affect everything that carries the mark of the singularity of consciousness: body and possessions. Somehow, as Derrida suggests, it puts at stake, among all possessions, the very 'disposition … of language' of each singularity.[36] Finally, Hegel gathers

31 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 137.
32 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 137.
33 Hegel, 'First Philosophy of Spirit', pp. 237-238.
34 Hegel, 'First Philosophy of Spirit', p. 237.
35 Derrida, *Glas*, pp. 137-138.
36 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 138.

up the possible developments of this practical and actual struggle in the term '*Beleidigung*': '*Hence they must injure one another*. ... the offence [*Beleidigung*: Derrida translates it as '*violation*'] is necessary.'[37] Derrida explains that no desire could '*posit itself*' without this *Beleidigung*, where 'positing' already refers to the position of the absolute singularity in the other's consciousness and, thus, to the recognition of desire.[38] In other words, he does not allude to desire as the initial moment of confrontation, but as already engaged in war, in the work of extermination. In fact, as we know, the two singularities cannot be suspended forever at the opening of the absolute contradiction, of desire, of the exposure to the other. Therefore, war is necessary ('and war there is!', as Derrida announces in 'Violence and Metaphysics')[39] to the extent that the relationship with the other has always already been war. Derrida observes that the violation 'does not come down to a singular initiative, to the decision of a freedom' but it 'is engendered by a contradiction'. The contradiction is the fact that no singularity can posit itself as the absolute singularity of consciousness, that is, be recognized, without suppressing the other (and, thus, the very possibility of its recognition). From this perspective, desire is *necessarily* linked to death, it is *necessarily* desire of/for death. Singularity is always already a certain work of extermination that does not release any universality. According to Hegel, singularity, as primordially engaged in war, is 'exclusivity': I posit myself in the consciousness of the other as 'a totality of excluding' to the extent that 'I go for his death'.[40] As we remarked, the initial moment of contradiction brings about a certain knowledge about the risk of death. From this perspective, Derrida observes that the singularity's positing itself in the consciousness of the other, the '*sich setzen*', 'supposes exposure to death'.[41] In other words, singularity always implies a certain risk of death that has already passed over into war and extermination. The Hegelian text quoted by Derrida reads: 'when I go for his death, I already expose myself to death, I risk my own life'.[42] Certainly, this

37 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 138 and Hegel, 'First Philosophy of Spirit', p. 238.
38 Ibid.
39 Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 119.
40 Hegel, 'First Philosophy of Spirit', p. 239. On Hyppolite's remarks on the question of 'excluding' see above note 4.
41 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 139.
42 Hegel, 'First Philosophy of Spirit', p. 239.

putting life at stake is an irreducible condition of the process of recognition in which singularity consists. It could be understood, as Derrida suggests, as an 'investment' *in view* of recognition.[43] From another perspective, one could say that singularity already amortises a certain exposure to death and to the other by positing itself in the other. In fact, singularity must strike; it must posit itself; it must rush the initial moment of confrontation and exposure into war and extermination. 'Life cannot stay in the incessant imminence of death', Derrida outlines.[44] However, there is no amortisation of the initial risk since there is no solution of the initial contradiction. In fact, singularity must violate the other which alone can grant recognition to it. This is another sense of extermination: in any case singularity cannot safeguard the life that was at stake from the initial moment of the confrontation. Indeed, there will be no amortisation of the initial risk. This is, for Derrida, the 'supreme contradiction' brought to light in the most direct way from this early exposition of the struggle for recognition: 'I lose every time, with every blow, with every throw [*je perds donc à tous les coups*]'.[45]

It is the time of the accomplishment of the supreme contradiction that singularity has always already been or towards which it has always already precipitated. This accomplishment, Hegel explains, consists in the passing over of the position of singularity into the opposite of its sacrifice [*Aufopferung*] or *Aufhebung*. As we know, there exists no singularity before or after this movement of contradiction. Hegel writes:

> I perpetrate the contradiction of wanting to affirm the singularity of my being and my property; and this affirmation passes over into its contrary; that I offer up everything I possess, and the very possibility of all possession and enjoyment, my life itself; in that I posit myself as totality of singularity, I suspend myself as totality of singularity.[46]

Derrida observes that here Hegel accounts for 'a desire and a pleasure that have no sense' and, therefore, cannot be encompassed by any philosophical concept or philosopheme.[47] Indeed, this desire necessarily leads to extermination. It is already bound to death, desire of/for mort.

43 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 139.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Hegel, 'First Philosophy of Spirit', p. 239.
47 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 139.

How can a philosophical proposition speak of this desire without sense? Derrida suggests that one cannot say more than what is said at Jena: that singularity always accomplishes the inescapable contradiction of positing and relieving itself. 'The blow to the other is the *fatal* contradiction of a suicide.'[48] At this point, Hegel concludes that the very process of recognition is the absolute contradiction in itself to the extent that its effectivity is its non-effectivity or, in other words, that the process is the *Aufhebung* of itself. Ultimately, it leads necessarily to the death of the singularity that fulfils it: for recognition is the death of singularity itself. By definition, singularity has already been rushing towards its death. The key-passage of the Hegelian exposition reads:

> This recognition of the *singularity* of the totality *thus brings* the nothing of death ... This recognition of the singular consciousness is thus an absolute internal contradiction; the recognition is just the being of consciousness as a totality in another consciousness, but as far as it is actually achieved, it cancels the other consciousness, and thereby the recognition is suspended too ... Yet consciousness only is the gaining of recognition from another at the same time as it is only the absolute numerical unity, and that is what it must be recognized as; but that is to say that it must go for the other's death, and for its own; and it only *is* the actuality of death.[49]

According to Derrida, it is possible to imagine the instant before the blow or before the positing (or *Aufhebung*) of singularity. The confrontation of two consciousnesses becomes the suspension of 'two bodies, gripped by one another, on the edge of a cliff'. Now, the one who 'presses' (*pousse*) the other perpetrates the contradiction of pressing: pressing is the contradiction of 'being *drawn* by the void'. From this perspective, pressure (*poussée*) is the very desire of/for death, what escapes any philosophical grasp. As Derrida remarks, 'he desires this fall (his desire is the pressure of this fall)', pressing and being drawn at the same time, the very movement into which singularity has already developed.[50] The initial moment of the relation between two singularities is the very 'suspense' (the condition of suspension) of *Aufhebung*, Derrida suggests, at the edge of contradiction. The positing of singularity

48 Ibid., my emphasis.
49 Hegel, 'First Philosophy of Spirit', p. 240.
50 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 140.

reverts to the *Aufhebung* of singularity itself, it is the contradiction of its *Aufhebung*; recognition relieves itself. At this edge, any act of singularity is resolved into its opposite, is the contradiction of its opposite, perpetrates the contradiction. And, as we said, singularity does not exist before or after this contradiction, but always already perpetrates it. It has already precipitated the suspense of *Aufhebung* into death and extermination. As Derrida observes, 'the suspense of the *Aufhebung* is these singularities, that it holds in the air in the absolute contradiction or equivalence of the contraries, that is also to say, in indifference'.[51] This is the moment *before* precipitation or pressure, the moment of desire and pleasure (indeed of 'suspense'), which has always rushed into death. To the extent that recognition requires the position of singularity as absolute totality and, thus, the annihilation of all marks of singularity, at the edge of contradiction there is the equivalence of contraries as well as of degrees (greater or lesser violation, greater or lesser love, etc.). Derrida remarks the moment of the suspension of the difference of contraries and degrees by commenting on Hegel's text: 'every form between absolute singulars is an equivalent form; for it makes no difference whether one makes another a present, or one robs him and strikes him dead; and there is no border between the greatest and the least outrage'.[52]

At this point, Derrida wonders how there can be an exit from this absolute contradiction, from the necessary reversal of the self-positing of singularity into its contrary, from the *Aufhebung* of recognition, from precipitation, extermination, etc. Or rather, how does Hegel get to universality? *Simply*: by supposing that the *Aufhebung*, into which the self-positing of singularity has already reverted, that is, the structural *Aufhebung* of self-positing singularity, occurs *in* the absolutely universal consciousness of the spirit of the people. In other words, by supposing that singularity relieves itself *in* universality. 'Absolute contradiction', Derrida anticipates, 'is gone out of only in relieving singularity in(-to) the universal.'[53] Hegel argues that the being of singularity, that is, its being relieved in positing itself, is (in) an absolutely universal consciousness. 'It can only be itself as a superseded state [...] This being of the supersededness of the single totality is the totality as absolutely universal, or as absolute *spirit*; it is the spirit, as absolutely real

51 Ibid.
52 Ibid. and Hegel, 'First Philosophy of Spirit', p. 235.
53 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 141.

consciousness.'[54] In this universal consciousness or spirit, a singular totality remains what it is, with its possessions and being, with its familiar structure, but as relieved, 'in such a way that this relation is itself an ideal one and proves itself in its self-sacrifice'.[55] In this way, Derrida outlines, singularity is "saved' at the same time as lost'[56]. Here, in this 'at the same time', it is precisely the exit from the absolute contradiction of singularity, from the equivalence of self-positing and self-relieving: thinking of the *Aufhebung* of singularity *in* the universal consciousness, *as* interiorisation or idealisation of singularity itself. Hegel observes that, in the universal consciousness, every singularity is *recognised* as such, that is, as relieved and ideal, by every other singularity. 'In every other consciousness it is immediately what it immediately is for itself, [and] in that it is [for itself] a cancelled consciousness in another, its singularity is thereby absolutely saved.'[57] Therefore, the *Aufhebung in* (or, as Derrida suggests, 'the passage *to* [my italics]') the spirit of the people ensures the very *Aufhebung* of the absolute contradiction in which singularity is already entrapped. 'Death, suicide, loss … amortize themselves in the political', Derrida remarks.[58] In fact, Hegel conceives of the essence of spirit, of the universal consciousness, such that 'the antithesis' that singularity already *is*, that is, the immediate reversal of self-positing into its contrary, the self-relieving of recognition, etc., 'cancels itself immediately'.[59] Therefore, from the perspective of Derrida's commentary, what he calls 'the political', namely, the Hegelian spirit of the people, is the concept or the philosopheme *by means of which* Hegel transgresses the structural irreducibility of singularity to universality. It accounts for the *passage* of singularity, with its structural, supreme contradiction, *to* the universal consciousness of the people and, thus, for the very process of idealization.

In this text Derrida sheds light on a specific articulation of the history of spirit: the *Aufhebung* of the singularity of consciousness in the universal consciousness of spirit. Countersigning Derrida's earlier warning about what it means to take Hegel seriously, I intend neither to extract this articulation from the system nor to look at the effects of its

54 Hegel, 'First Philosophy of Spirit', p. 235.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 141.
59 Hegel,'First Philosophy of Spirit', p. 241.

isolation.[60] Rather, my aim is to put into relief the formulation of the process of recognition as the absolute contradiction between singularity and the universality of recognition. From this perspective, I intend to reconsider Hyppolite's elaboration of the twofold notion of singularity at the very foundation of *Logic and Existence*. In my view, Derrida's reading of the early version of the struggle for recognition can be taken as an attempt to account for the irreducible premises of a certain elaboration of recognition. On the final page of his reading, Derrida explains that within the limits of singularity one finds the absolute equivalence of contraries, the indifference between self-positing and self-relieving, violation and suicide, pressing and being drawn, etc. 'In the absolute contraction [*resserrement*] of singularity, giving is taking, giving as a present steals, presenting hides, loving is the deathstrike.'[61] From this perspective, singularity is originally inscribed in the process in which recognition relieves itself and, thus, has already been pressed by a certain death drive. This notion of singularity resonates with that of 'self-enclosing singularity' which plays a fundamental role in Chapter I of Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence*. Here I observe that Hyppolite demarcates 'self-enclosing singularity', as a singularity bound to nothingness and dissolution, from 'self-consciousness', which is a singularity relieved which, thus, comes into existence and recognition *in* language: 'it has to be the case that self-consciousness not be an ineffable singularity enclosed in its own intuition'.[62] Let me follow the development of Hyppolite's text in order to reckon with this systematic demarcation.

In the Introduction to *Logic and Existence* Hyppolite explains that the point of departure of 'speculative logic' is 'absolute knowledge', that is, 'the in principle elimination of non-knowledge […] of a transcendence essentially irreducible to our knowledge'.[63] He finds in this elimination the very task of the *Erinnerung* of human experience unfolded in the *Phenomenology*: 'to demonstrate concretely that knowledge and the Absolute coincide'.[64] Now, human language, Hyppolite suggests, accomplishes that elimination absolute knowledge consists in: 'human

60 See the introductory remarks on Bataille's reading of the Hegelian notion of mastery in Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* p. 253.
61 Derrida, *Glas*, p. 143.
62 Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 10.
63 Ibid., p. 3.
64 Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 4.

language, the Logos, is this reflection of being into itself ... which always closes back on itself indefinitely, without ever positing or postulating a transcendence distinct from this internal reflection'.[65] Here, Hyppolite seems to understand human language as the sphere or the movement of universal consciousness, which therefore encompasses a specific passage or *Aufhebung* of singularity, 'the penetration into the structure of this universal consciousness at the heart of which being says itself '.[66] To this extent, a so-called 'primordial' question envelops this Introduction, announcing the elaboration of self-enclosing singularity: 'how can being saying itself in man and man become universal consciousness of being through language?' In other words, there must be a certain *Aufhebung* of singularity *in* human language and universal self-consciousness. In fact, Hyppolite calls for the necessity of 'exorcising' or conjuring away a certain phantasmatic irreducibility with respect to the movement of universal self-consciousness and absolute knowledge: as the text reads, 'the phantom of non-knowledge and the phantom of the ineffable'.[67] As anticipated here, the first chapter on 'the ineffable' is concerned with the 'exorcism' of what does not pass into universal self-consciousness, namely, a self-enclosing singularity, and, thus, with the *Aufhebung* of singularity *in* that consciousness.

'The Ineffable' begins by commenting on the passage of the *Phenomenology*'s Preface in which Hegel affirms that 'the man of common sense', who 'makes his appeal to feeling', stays *on this side of* a certain sphere of 'humanity' insofar as he interrupts any mediation (linguistic and not) with others. 'It is the nature of humanity', Hegel explains, 'to press onward to agreement with others; human nature only really exists in an instituted community of consciousnesses'.[68] Hyppolite understands 'the sphere of the sensible' as the trope of the (self-enclosing) singularity which does not reach the universal consciousness of language and community. In this case, one could speak of the categories of singularity and of the spirit of the people (namely, the

65 Ibid., p. 5.

66 Ibid., p. 6.

67 Ibid., p. 7: 'In order to respond to this primordial question, one has to exorcize the phantom of non-knowledge and the phantom of the ineffable. One has to show how human language is constituted as the *Dasein* of spirit and the sense of being.'

68 Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 8 and G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by Arthur V. Miller (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 43.

political). Hyppolite writes: 'Sensible being, as pure singularity or pleasure, is ineffable. Let us assume that singular things and souls exist in themselves. We would be able neither to conceive nor to name them, since conception and language move within the universal'.[69] The general determinations of thought and language establish the very community of consciousness evoked by Hegel in the text, that is, a certain universal consciousness. Furthermore, by recalling the Hegelian criticism of the heroes of Jacobi's novel, Hyppolite accounts for the self-enclosure of singularity. Hegel speaks of 'a conscious lack of objectivity' and of a 'subjectivity attached to itself'. These traits of singularity are explained as a certain inability to go out beyond oneself and as a form of constant reflection upon oneself. 'These are beautiful souls', Hyppolite observes, 'incapable of forgetting themselves [...] of renouncing the perpetual return of reflection upon the subject.' At this point, from the perspective of the *Phenomenology*, that is, of absolute knowledge, according to Hyppolite, a certain *Aufhebung* of singularity *in* language or *in* the community of consciousnesses (a universal self-consciousness, as we will see) is required. He calls 'self-consciousness' the singularity relieved in language. 'It has to be the case that self-consciousness not be an ineffable singularity enclosed in its intuition.' Indeed, language institutes the communication between I and I or the community of the I's as self-consciousnesses, that is, as singularities relieved in the universality of language and community. To this extent, Hyppolite concludes that language is 'the instrument of mutual recognition', that is, the sphere in which, in Hegel's terms, the I is 'this particular I – but equally the universal I'.[70] Mutual recognition is granted only to self-consciousness as the *Aufhebung* of singularity in language. Hyppolite thinks of the universality of language, of the universal I evoked by Hegel, in terms of 'universal knowledge' or 'universal self-consciousness'.[71] This universality (language, community of consciousnesses, universal self-consciousness, mutual recognition, etc.) is the very sphere, element or

69 Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p.8.

70 Ibid., p. 10 and Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 308.

71 Ibid., p. 18: 'It is such a discourse already insofar as it is language, as it presupposes an established communication between singular consciousnesses who, in language, mutually recognize one another and aspire to this recognition. This recognition is the fundamental element of absolute knowledge, but language is itself this recognition and this connection of the singular and the universal which defines for Hegel the concept or sense.'

Dasein of absolute knowledge *qua* the in principle elimination of all transcendence (ineffability, non-knowledge, etc.). Hyppolite insists on the fact that singularity is recognised as such only insofar as it is relieved in universality, that is, only if it is self-consciousness, if it is 'equally' or 'at the same time' universal self-consciousness: '... a universal self-consciousness, in which singularity is at the same time universal, a subject which expresses itself and is constituted determination by determination'.[72] Moreover, self-enclosing singularity, which 'rejects communication' and 'claims to reach an absolute on this side of or beyond expression', that is, which remains 'on this side' of the universal (and of its multiple forms), is 'a presentation of the Absolute as pure nothingness or dissolution'[73]. In other words, it relieves itself in positing itself, it precipitates itself into the nothingness of death. The *Aufhebung* of self-enclosing singularity does not occur *in* the element of universality. This singularity is already entrapped in this absolute contradiction, in the equivalence or indifference of self-positing and self-relieving. By saying that 'human life is always language' Hyppolite attempts to exorcize self-enclosing singularity (and a certain account of the struggle for recognition) and, yet, at the same time, acknowledges its structural irreducibility to the universal.[74] Paraphrasing Derrida's reading of Hegel, I would say that a Gorgon's head already haunts Hyppolite's discourse.

In singularity's self-enclosure, that is, in its remaining on this side of the universal, as the discourse remarks, *Aufhebung* is the contradiction of self-positing, there is an absolute contradiction or equivalence of the contraries. Singularity necessarily unfolds as a movement of failure, dissolution or annihilation. 'The consciousness which claims to live in pure singularity without thinking or signifying it can in fact only be dissolved ... if it stubbornly rejects language, this consciousness can only get lost, dissolved.'[75] Hyppolite observes that the sinking of singularity into death appears to singularity itself as 'necessity and enigma', as 'fate'. Singularity is unable to explain it to the extent that, according to the Hegelian definition of fate, it stands before it as 'the absolute pure concept itself viewed as being'. The fate of self-enclosing

72 Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 11.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid., p. 11.
75 Ibid., p. 12. See also p. 15: 'Immediate singularity, which would be ineffable intuition, the 'what will never be twice' is therefore the worst of banalities. If we posit it we see it dissolve immediately.'

singularity is without sense or amortisation: it stays on this side of the universality of language which is the very movement of sense and concept.[76] In this chapter, Hyppolite takes up the analysis of deliberate self-enclosure developed by Hegel in the *Phenomenology*'s sections 360-363 in relation to the case of Faust and Gretchen. He explains that 'it is the issue of a consciousness weary of the universality of knowledge and of the burden of mediation, that claims to turn back completely towards ineffable pleasure'.[77] Here the text puts on stage the absolute contradiction of self-enclosing singularity: the movement of return is already precipitating towards a fateful annihilation (*zu Grunde gehen*). Not only does singularity not understand this precipitation, it also ignores that towards which it is drawn: 'this consciousness aspires to disappear without even knowing it'.[78] It is already the contradiction of its *Aufhebung* and necessarily rushes into death. Somehow, this singular consciousness cannot be admitted by speculative logic, according to the definition given since the beginning of *Logic and Existence*: it appears in-authentic. There can be singularity, authentic singularity, only as self-consciousness, that is, as relieved in the universality of language and community, in the universal consciousness of mutual recognition (the political and so on): 'authentic singularity coincides with mediation', 'true becoming', 'the Logos as universal self-consciousness'.[79] Authentic singularity, Hyppolite suggests, is related to 'destiny' (and not to necessity, fate and enigma) on the condition that it does not reject mediation, is relieved in it and, thus, is self-consciousness. This singularity begins to understand the sense of the event. Or, from another perspective, the event does not appear enigmatic and without sense as fate appears to self-enclosing singularity. According to Hegel's definition of destiny in *Phenomenology*, self-consciousness 'penetrates the sense of necessity'.[80] Hyppolite concludes that 'human experience could only be

76 On the notion of sense, as immanent to universal self-consciousness, see, for instance, Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 5.
77 Ibid., p. 16.
78 Ibid., p. 17.
79 Ibid., p.14.
80 Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 17. Cf. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 220: 'The mediating agency would have to be that in which both sides would be one, where, therefore, consciousness recognized one moment in the other: its purpose and action in fate, and its fate in its purpose and action, that is, would recognize its own essence in this necessity.'

logical', in the Hegelian sense of 'logic'.[81] Furthermore, he insists that singularity 'accepts' (instead of rejecting) mediation and dialogue, insofar as, through mediation, it goes out of the contradiction of self-enclosure and lets itself be relieved, as self-consciousness, in the element of the universal and of sense.[82]

A recognition that does not relieve itself, mutual recognition or the recognition of self-consciousness, requires that one speaks (Hyppolite says: 'one has to confess one's action [...] in order to make it recognizable'), and thus relieves its singularity in the established community of self-consciousness, in the instituted universal consciousness. There can only be recognition of self-consciousnesses, of singularities relieved in the universal consciousness, mutual recognition. Announcing the passage or elevation to universal consciousness, Hyppolite writes: 'one also has really to welcome into oneself the particular determination of the other in order [...] to promote this concrete universality which is the genuine unity of the singular and the universal'.[83] Certainly, this passage does not account for a continuity between self-enclosing singularity and universal self-consciousness, between the ineffable and language, etc. In fact, singularity is always relieved in the universal self-consciousness, it is already self-consciousness, it already gets recognised as universal self-consciousness. The element of universality, in principle, eliminates all transcendence. So Hyppolite concludes the chapter on the ineffable by drawing a dividing line between singularity (with the contradiction of its *Aufhebung*) and sense (with relieved singularities, self-consciousnesses, etc.): 'One does not go from a silent intuition to expression, from an inexpressible to an expressed, any more than from non-sense to sense [...] Sense unfolds itself without being previously in an ineffable form'.[84] So he repeats the dreadful formula of his exorcism.

81 Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 18.
82 Cf. Ibid., pp. 17-19.
83 Ibid., p. 19.
84 Ibid., p. 21.

'Verbose Dialectics' and the Anthropological Circle: Michel Foucault and Jean Hyppolite*

GIUSEPPE BIANCO

Translated by Paul Rekret

Having already served as director of the École Normale Supérieure for ten years, in April 1963 Jean Hyppolite was elected professor of the Collège de France. Among the congratulatory letters from his former students held in the Fonds Jean Hyppolite is that of Michel Foucault, then Maître de conférences in psychology at the University of Clermont-Ferrand. In it, Foucault confides to Hyppolite the significance this event held for his generation: his teacher was for them, he writes, the 'sole philosophical model'.[1] This verdict is reaffirmed in the course of the address Foucault gave in honour of Hyppolite at the École Normale on 9th January 1969[2] and even more strongly the following year in 'The Order of Discourse', his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France.[3] There Foucault declared that all of the 'philosophical problems' that his generation had found themselves having to address had been posed by

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1 Letter dated 15th April 1963, Fonds Jean Hyppolite, Library of the École Normale Superieure.
2 Michel Foucault, 'Jean Hyppolite. 1907-1968', in *Dits et écrits*, Vol.1. (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), pp. 779-85.
3 Michel Foucault, 'The Order of Discourse', trans. by Ian McLeod in Robert Young, ed., *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, (Routledge: London, 1981), pp. 48-78.

Hyppolite in his 1953 book, *Logic and Existence*,[4] a book from which, Foucault added, he had drawn the very 'meaning and possibility' of his work.[5]

That Foucault expressed himself in these terms was not surprising. In 1970, two years after Hyppolite's death, the student had succeeded the teacher. Foucault's chair, proposed by Jules Vuillemin and entitled 'The History of the Systems of Thought', had replaced that of 'The History of Philosophical Thought' held by Hyppolite. In the copy of *The Order of Things* that he had given to Marguerite Hyppolite in 1975, Foucault wrote that he owed 'everything' to her husband.[6] Foucault had met Hyppolite almost twenty years earlier when the former had been a teacher of the khâgne[7] at Lycée Henri-IV.[8] In 1949 Hyppolite, then professor at the Sorbonne, examined Foucault's mémoire de DES[9] on 'La Constitution d'un transcendental historique dans la Phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel' and from this point on the two philosophers' paths did not cease to cross at the École Normale (where Foucault delivered a course in psychology between 1953 and 1955). Finally, while Hyppolite had declined to examine Foucault's primary thesis 'Folie et Déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique'[10], he had agreed to

4 Michel Foucault, 'Jean Hyppolite. 1907-1968', in *Dits et écrits*, op. cit. Vol.1. p. 785

5 'There are many of us that owe him a debt.' Michel Foucault, 'The Order of Discourse', p. 76 – *translation modified.*

6 Cf. Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, trans. by Betsy Wing, (London: Faber & Faber, 1992), p. 18

7 Preparation for the entrance exams to the *École Normale Supérieure* involves two years of further study beyond the baccalaureate: the first year is known as the *hypokhâgne* and the second as the *khâgne* – trans.

8 Foucault is cited only once by Hyppolite, in a lecture in 1965 where he mentions 'the greatest works in the history of knowledge, the archaeologies of knowledge: Foucault'. See 'La Situation de la philosophie dans le monde contemporain', in *Figures de la Pensée Philosophique*, Vol.II, (Paris: PUF, 1971), p. 1035.

9 The mémoire de DES (diplôme d'études supérieures) is roughly equivalent to a master's degree thesis – trans.

10 Letter dated 15th April 1963. Op.cit. [Translator's note: Foucault's thesis was published in 1961 under the title *Folie et Déraison; Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* and in a second edition in 1972 under the title *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*. Except where reference is made explicitly to the thesis itself, this work is referred to in the following as *The History of Madness*, and quotations are sourced, following Bianco, from the 1972 edition (here in the translation of Jonathan Murphy & Jean Khalfa, (London: Routledge, 2006)].

examine his secondary thesis on *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*.[11]

We might nonetheless ask to what extent Hyppolite constituted the 'sole philosophical model' for a whole generation and above all, in what sense his book could have given Foucault's research its 'meaning' itself. In his 1963 letter Foucault returns to an episode relating to his principal thesis:

> I shook my head the day you told me that my book [*The History of Madness*] was Hegelian; but in truth I was moved; that which is philosophical in it [...] was yours, and out of tact you had no doubt feigned not to recognize this.

If this sentence was indeed the avowal of a real philosophical debt and not merely flattery, we ought to seek to understand what could be 'Hyppolitian' in the general approach of Foucault's research, and more precisely, what could be Hegelian in *The History of Madness*, a work of which Hyppolite was no doubt an attentive reader.[12] Responding to this question will allow us to understand the development of Foucault's thought during the 1950s and to evaluate Hyppolite's importance for a whole generation of philosophers.

First of all, we will look to Hyppolite's work in the 1950s in order to describe the effect of Heidegger's later philosophy on his interpretation of Hegel. Next, we will analyse two lectures given by Hyppolite prior to Foucault's departure for Sweden in 1955 – two lectures which the third part of this article will then come to relate to Foucault's earliest works, while in the fourth and final section we will turn to *The History of Madness*.

11 Along with many others, this thesis is held in the Jean Hyppolite Archives at the library of the École Normale Superieure.

12 In his *En devenant Foucault. Sociogenèse d'un grand philosophe* (Paris: Croquant, 2006), p. 45, José-Luis Moreno Pestaña observes that referring to Hyppolite as one's teacher was one of 'the intellectual gestures which serve as ritual cement to a generation of intellectuals'.

Hegelianism is not a Humanism

The 1940s in France were dominated by a quasi-obsessive interrogation of the relation of man to history. This problematic was altogether renewed when, at the start of the 1950s, there occurred what Anson Rabinbach has characterised as a textual event: the publication of the 'Letter on Humanism' – first in an incomplete version in 1948 in the journal *Confluences* and then in 1953, in *Les Cahiers du Sud*, this time in its entirety.[13] The principal consequence of this text (whose consecutive translations came to problematise what was until then the 'humanist' interpretation of Heideggerean thought) was the dissolution of confidence – implicitly contained in Kojève's lectures on Hegel,[14] the 'humanist' interpretations of Marx, and Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's 'existentialist' philosophy[15] – in human subjectivity as agent and centre of history.

Like many of his contemporaries, Hyppolite was struck by what his student Michel Déguy did not hesitate to call a 'Heideggerean thunderbolt'.[16] This thunderbolt was so electrifying that it reverberated

13 Anson Rabinbach, 'Heidegger's Letter on Humanism as Text and Event', *New German Critique*, 62, (1994), pp. 3-38.

14 For a more detailed analysis of Kojève's 'humanist' presumptions and the suppositions of 'humanist' interpretations of Heidegger during the 1930s and 1940s, see Stefanos Geoulanos, *An Atheism that Is Not Humanist Emerges in French Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 2010.

15 Although in the wake of the liberation, between 1944 and 1948, the majority of essays on 'existentialism' sought to determine whether Sartre was or was not a student of Heidegger, whether existentialism was or was not a veritable humanism, whether Heidegger was or was not a Nazi philosopher, after 1948 this questioning shifted towards Heidegger's fundamental ontology and its relation to anthropology. This is the case in two articles by Alphonse de Waelhens on the essence of truth ('Introduction et commentaire', in *Martin Heidegger, De l'Essence de la vérité*, (Louvain-Paris: Vrin-Nauwelaerts, 1948), and 'Platon et l'humanisme', *Revue philosophique de Louvain,* 46 (1948), pp. 490-6; Mikel Dufrenne's article on Kant and metaphysics ('Heidegger et Kant', *Revue de métaphysique et de la morale*, 56 (1951), pp. 35-87; 'La foi et la pensée d'après Heidegger', *Philosophies chrétiennes*, (Paris: Fayard 1955), pp. 108-32; 'Le Problème de l'être chez Sartre et chez Heidegger', *L'Année propédeutique*, t.10,.7-8 (1958), pp. 424-432; 'L'Onto-théologique Hégélienne et la dialectique', *Tijdschrift voor Philosophie*, 20 (1958), pp. 646-723).

16 Michel Deguy, 'Entretien du 26 Novembre 1988', in Dominique Janicaud, *Heidegger en France*, 2nd Edition, (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001), p. 68.

among most of his students including those who would become neither phenomenologists nor Heideggereans, such as Foucault, and it is certainly no accident that between 1951 and 1952, if his biographies are to be believed, the latter began to read Heidegger.

Hyppolite, no doubt in part through the intermediary of his student Henri Birault, was perfectly aware of developments in German philosophy.[17] He had sought to contribute to its diffusion in France in publishing Jean Beaufret's translation of the *Poème du Parménide* in the 'Épiméthée' imprint he directed, in attending the Cerisy colloquium[18] on Heidegger, and even in seeking to invite him to the École Normale.[19] He had published several essays on Heidegger and had devoted two courses to him in 1951-1952 and 1952-1953 (a long commentary on 'The Essence of Truth' and a course entitled 'Ontologie et anthropologie ou rapports entre la finitude et l'ontologie'). In an essay dating from the 1950s, while

17 Henri Birault, assistant in philosophy at the Sorbonne between 1954 and 1957, published only one book, his principal thesis, which was supervised by Ferdinand Alquié. It was defended very late in 1970 and was entitled: 'L'expérience de la pensée. Essai sur le développement de l'idée critique dans la philosophie contemporaine' (published under the title of *Heidegger et l'expérience de la pensée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978)). His secondary thesis on Nietzsche and Pascale, first supervised by Hyppolite and then by Henri Gouhier following the former's death, was never published. In 1951 he taught at the Lycée Henri-IV and was a member of the jury for the agrégation. Between 1954 and 1958 he was assistant at the Sorbonne: he delivered two courses in 1954, one on 'What is Philosophy?' before this text was translated ('Qu'est-ce que la Philosophie?', *L'Année Propédeutique*, Paris, CDU, vol. VII, no.3-4, pp. 136-48, no.5-6, pp. 224-235, no.9-10, pp. 411-20, no.11-12, pp. 491-501), and the other on 'Kant and the Problem of Human Existence'. The opening of his first essay on Heidegger in 1951 is paradigmatic: 'There is no possible doubt today: Heidegger's philosophy, insofar as the word 'philosophy' is still suitable to such a 'thought' – is before all else, in increasingly exclusive fashion, a meditation on the essence of truth – a meditation which, in growing increasingly profound, is converted into a meditation on the 'truth of essence' or of being'. (Henri Birault, 'Existence et vérité d'après Heidegger', in *De l'être et des dieux*, (Paris: Le Cerf, 2006). p. 297).

18 'Qu'est-ce que la philosophie? Autour de Martin Heidegger', colloquium organised by Jean Beaufret, 27th August – 4th September 1955.

19 On Hyppolite's role in introducing Heidegger into the heart of the École Normale, see also Michael Sprinker's interview with Jacques Derrida ('Politics and Friendship: An Interview with Jacques Derrida.' trans. by Robert Harvey in *The Althusserian Legacy*, ed. by E. Ann Kaplan and Michael Sprinker, (London: Verso 1994), pp. 183-231).

treating his friend Sartre as a 'simple moralist',[20] Hyppolite contends that Heidegger is 'the greatest contemporary philosopher', the one to have given back to philosophers the possibility of 'believing, in the face of science and the technologies of world domination, in the validity of philosophy, in the primacy of ontology'.[21] His contemporaries owe to Heidegger, he adds, 'this philosophy of philosophy, this question of being – and the being of being – which constitutes the originary element'.[22] Hyppolite deems that the German philosopher had, most of all, opened a 'new problematic of being'; a problematic that at last permitted one to go 'to the things themselves'[23] and hence 'further' than the 'positivism' of Husserl and Bergson. Unlike the philosophies of the latter thinkers, Heidegger's philosophy does not allow itself, to be 'enlisted by anthropology'[24] since it conceives 'the unveiling and errancy' of man seeking to accede to truth as 'a characteristic of being itself'.[25] Accordingly, during the 1950s Hyppolite closes almost all of his essays by stressing the necessity of opening the properly anthropological dimension of the questions he broaches to an approach that is 'ontological' and 'fundamental'. Just as *Sein und Zeit* (a work made famous by the publication of *Being and Nothingness*) is but an anthropological introduction to ontology, so Hegel's *Phenomenology* should not be read as anything other than an introduction to the *Logic*.

The 'Heideggerean thunderbolt' that had struck Hyppolite had repercussions for his Hegelian studies most of all, especially for *Logic and Existence* which was published in 1953. Kojève's interpretation of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* had led to a dualist ontology which had profoundly influenced Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, and Bataille, along with many other authors of this generation (an ontology which opposes human action, conceived as the negative motor of history, to the plenitude of nature). In taking into account *The Science of Logic*, Hyppolite rejects the Kojèvian reading of Hegel since it remains, in his view, 'purely

20 Jean Hyppolite, 'La Psychanalyse chez Jean-Paul Sartre', in *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, vol.II, p. 786.
21 Jean Hyppolite, 'Note en manière d'introduction à *Que signifie penser?*' in *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, vol.II, p. 613.
22 Ibid., p. 610.
23 Jean Hyppolite, 'Ontologie et phénoménologie chez Martin Heidegger', in *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, vol. II, p. 613.
24 Ibid., p. 624.
25 Ibid., p. 620.

anthropological'.[26] From *Logic and Existence* on, Hyppolite's interpretation of Hegel is no longer centred upon understanding the human subject as the source of negation, but on the study of the development of the dialectic of being – a development that is to be interpreted 'phenomenologically', as that of sense coming to its realisation in absolute knowledge. According to Hyppolite, the emergence of absolute knowledge ought not to be situated, as Kojève thought, at the level of the transition towards self-consciousness which perfects the dialectic of consciousness presented in the *Phenomenology*, but at the level of the transition towards logic which the end of the book itself calls for. At the end of the *Phenomenology*, self-consciousness is shown to be but a simple stage of the self-reflexivity of being. As a consequence, while the *Phenomenology* describes the itinerary to be followed in order to arrive at absolute knowledge, it presupposes an ontological reflection surpassing man and coinciding with the self-expression of the absolute. This self-expression, this logos that Hyppolite describes in rather Heideggerean terms, is not the discourse of man about being; it is the discourse of being through man. According to Hyppolite, Hegel thinks 'the adventure of being and not that of man'[27] and that 'the adventure of man is also an adventure of being'. This is a 'speculative adventure through man and his consciousness of self, an adventure of being, as the sense of being'.[28] Thus, it is only on the basis of the dialectic which 'pushes difference into opposition' and accounts for empirical diversity through the concept of internal difference, that Hegelian philosophy can pass from a philosophy of essence in which thought and being, idea and empiricity, are separated, to an ontology or logic of sense in which sense is immanent to experience (both human and historical). And it is in this sense that Hyppolite – using an expression that will be taken up by Deleuze – can affirm that 'immanence is complete' in the Hegelian system. Hyppolite frequently relates the dedication to immanence of this system with Nietzsche's famous dictum on the death of God.[29]

26 Jean Hyppolite, 'La Phénoménologie de Hegel et la pensée française contemporaine', Ibid., p. 241.
27 Jean Hyppolite, 'Note sur la Préface de la Phénoménologie de l'esprit', in *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, vol. I, p. 337.
28 Ibid., p. 336.
29 See the first chapter of *Logic and Existence*, trans. by Leonard Lawlor & Amit Sen, (Albany: SUNY Press 1997), pp. 57-9.

Accordingly, in the problematic relation between logic and existence (a relation posed in and by language), existence must be sacrificed. In order to understand the *Logic*, the very idea of the subject and of man must be 'reduced', 'placed in parentheses';[30] for only on this condition will it be possible to 'return to the things themselves'.[31] Hyppolite will reinvoke such an epoché on several occasions, most notably at a colloquium on Husserl in 1957 where he will formulate the hypothesis of a 'transcendental field without subject'.[32] On 18th January 1969 Georges Canguilhem would come to say that one of Jean Hyppolite's merits was to have made French philosophy lose 'consciousness of what it had hitherto regarded as Consciousness'.[33]

Logic and Existence thus puts to an end all humanist readings of Hegel. The book constitutes a veritable rupture.[34] Nonetheless, as Foucault will underline in his 1969 homage, Hyppolite's book ends upon an aporia, or rather a problem that Hyppolite did not succeed in resolving and which his students thus inherit. The necessary historicity of absolute

30 'Speculative philosophy will be a reduction of the human condition. The *Logic*'s dialectical discourse will be the very discourse of Being, the *Phenomenology* having shown the possibility of bracketing man as natural Dasein' (Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 42 – translation slightly modified). 'Hegel does not want to do without experience but to reduce (in the modern sense of the term) anthropology'. (Ibid., p. 166).

31 Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 2.

32 In *Husserl et la pensée moderne*, ed. By Herman Leo Van Breda (La Haye: Martinus Nijhoff, 1959), p. 319. This idea will be picked up by Derrida in regard to writing in his *Edmund Husserl's 'Origin of Geometry': An Introduction* (trans by J.P. Leavey (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1989)), and by Victor Goldschmidt in order to characterize the first chapter of *Matter and Memory* (Victor Goldschmidt, 'Introduction', in *Les Annales bergsoniennes I*, ed. By Frédéric Worms (Paris: PUF, 2002), pp. 73-128).

33 Georges Canguilhem, 'Hommage à Jean Hyppolite (1907-1968)', *Revue de la métaphysique et de la morale*, 84 , no. 4 (1969), pp. 548-550.

34 In his study of the reception of Hegelianism in France, Michael S. Roth accurately argues that Hyppolite 'borrowed heavily from Heidegger, who provided the language that made a retreat from historicism legitimate [...] Hyppolite's 1952 [*sic*] essay on the Logic makes clear the link between the concern with the System of Hegel and the abandonment of the radical humanism of the 1940s. Heidegger's understanding of the role of philosophy vis-a-vis the human, of the person as vehicle of Being and not as subject, provided the bridge over which this retreat could be made'. (*Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth-Century France*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 69).

knowledge poses, as Hyppolite himself recognised, 'new, possibly insoluble, problems'.[35] In effect, if logos and its self-determining dialectical movement are eternal and history can always be conceived as a self-negation of this eternity, no negation internal to history allows itself to be tied to this eternal movement. History is thus the scene of a passage, but a passage which is not in itself a historical fact. It is only in resorting to a transcendent logos situated 'beyond' history that we may confer a meaning and a direction upon history. Thus the Hegelian teleology always risks falling back into anthropologism. This problem, which is none other than that of the differential relation of genesis and ideality, history and logic, becoming and origin, becomes the crucial problem of the transition of the 1950s. The majority of Hyppolite's students will come to resolve it by reducing history to a series of discontinuities deprived of sense and in the search for a new concept of difference without the negative and without the possibility of reconciliation.

With this 'Heideggerean' reading of Hegel's *Logic*, Hyppolite's approach to history and to the history of 'philosophical thought' is significantly altered. No longer sustained by a dialectical movement which would risk dragging philosophy back into anthropology, historical development will henceforth be presented only as a repetitive movement by which being reveals itself through man; similarly, the history of philosophy will henceforth be conceived only as the place [*lieu*] where being expresses itself through philosophers. Hyppolite will even come to say that man only exists insofar as he is a philosopher[36] and, as such, 'revealer' of the meaning of being.

Mental Pathology and Fundamental Problematics

In 1952, after having obtained a diplôme in psychology and an agrégation in philosophy, Foucault was asked to deliver a course in psychology at the Université de Lille and the École Normale, thanks to

35 Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 29.

36 'History does not produce the Logos, the self-knowledge of the Absolute, as we produce an effect according to a plan conceived in advance. Philosophy is not a conscious end, but man exists because he is a philosopher'. Jean Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 246. See also Michael S. Roth's commentary in *Knowing and History*, op cit., p. 77.

the support of Jules Vuillemin and Louis Althusser. Since 1948, the future author of *For Marx* had been 'caïman'[37] and promoter of the 'Georges Politzer' circle, whose objective was to bring together 'normaliens' with cadres and intellectuals of the Communist Party.[38] From the end of the 1940s the party's ideological line had been going through a period of hardening, involving the condemnation of existentialism and of psychoanalysis, Lysenkoism, generalised Zhdanovism, etc. Pronounced attacks against non-Marxist intellectuals all aimed at denouncing the alienating, mystificatory and so 'anti-human' character of bourgeois ideology, and so at opposing to the latter the only 'humanist' philosophy possible – dialectical materialism. Foucault took leave of the Party in 1951, but he long remained a sympathiser, becoming a 'Nietzschean communist.' His position was irenic: he took notes on Heidegger on the backs of communist student pamphlets and read Pavlov and Husserl, as well as Marx and the existentialist psychopathologists. In 1953-1954, more or less at the same time, he composed two texts: *Maladie mentale et personalité*, commissioned by Althusser, and a 'Preface', solicited by Jacqueline Verdeaux, to Ludwig Binswanger's *Dream and Existence*, a copy of which he sent to Jean Hyppolite. This copy bears a dedication which clearly depicts Foucault's conception of the hierarchical relation between psychology and philosophy: 'To Monsieur Hyppolite', he writes, 'these pages, however psychological, serve as the pretext for philosophy – in homage, and as a symbol of gratitude'.[39]

During this period Foucault pursued his apprenticeship in psychology at Sainte-Anne hospital. Meanwhile, Hyppolite participated for a whole year in Dr Jacques Lacan's seminars (not yet known as 'Lacan'[40]) which took place at the same hospital, while also attending Dr

37 A traditional nickname for tutors who assist normaliens in preparing for the agrégation examination, it refers to a crocodile from the Cayman Islands – trans.

38 See Jean-François Sirinelli, 'Les normaliens de la rue D'Ulm après 1945: une generation communiste?', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 32, (Oct-Dec 1986), see also Jean-Pierre Mochon's mémoire de DEA, 'Les Élèves de L'École normale supérieure de la rue d'Ulm et la politique, 1944-1962', *Université de Lille 3*, 1996.

39 Hyppolite's copy, held in the library of the École Normale, S Phi g 3287 L B 8. On this point see the illuminating pages that Jose-Luis Moreno Pestaña has devoted to the hierarchisation of possibilities in Foucault's work in his *En devenant Foucault*, op cit., (notably p. 64).

40 Foucault does not seem to know nor specially appreciate Lacan during the 1950s. In *Maladie Mentale et Personalité*, (Paris: PUF, 1953), p. 123, Foucault

Henri Baruk's consultations at the Charenton asylum.[41] In addition to the 'Commentary on Freud's Verneinung'[42] the new director of the École Normale gave two lectures directly related to Foucault's interests: 'Psychanalyse et philosophie'[43] and 'Pathologie mentale et organisation'.[44]

In 'Psychanalyse et philosophie' Hyppolite begins by situating existentialism in relation to psychoanalysis; he thus highlights the interest of the psychoanalytic explication of 'concrete man' given by Sartre and Binswanger. But immediately following this 'humanist' opening, Hyppolite invites us to 'go further', to go beyond anthropology which is 'always unsatisfactory'.[45] In his view, the crucial question is no longer the Kantian 'what is man?' but the Heideggerean 'what is being?' While the psychoanalytic and Heideggerean[46] approaches share points in common, the differences exceed the similarities: 'psychoanalysis is

disqualifies psychoanalysis for its conversion of the simple social givens of a determinate moment of history, into the founding norms of human subjectivity.

41 A neuropsychiatrist, Henri Baruk (1897-1999) was professor at the Sorbonne and, from 1932, medical director of the Maison de Charenton. Baruk adopted a moral and philosophical approach to mental illness, and was concerned with the wholeness of the person (see for example, 'Le problème de la personalité: ses aspects psychophysiologiques, psychopathologiques, moraux et sociaux', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, 146, 2 (1956), pp. 441-493. He cites *Logic and Existence* in his *Traité de psychiatrie: séméiologie, psychopathologie*, thérapeutique, étiologie (Paris: Masson, 1959). The relation between Hyppolite and Baruk is brought to light by Didier Éribon in his biography (*Michel Foucault*, op cit., p.71).

42 Jean Hyppolite, 'Commentaire parlé sur la Verneinung de Freud', in *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, vol.I, pp. 385-396.

43 Jean Hyppolite, 'Psychanalyse et philosophie', Ibid., pp. 373-84.

44 Jean Hyppolite, 'Pathologie mentale et organisation ', Ibid., vol.II, pp. 885-90.

45 Jean Hyppolite, 'Psychanalyse et philosophie', Ibid., vol. I, p. 383.

46 At numerous points in Hyppolite's oeuvre the analogy between existentialism and psychoanalysis is drawn; not only in two other texts on Freud (besides 'Philosophie et psychoanalyse' and his 'Commentaire parlé sur la Verneinung de Freud', 'L'existence humaine et la psychoanalyse', in *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, Vol.I, p. 397-405, and 'Philosophie et psychoanalyse', Ibid., pp. 406-42), but also in other essays. In the 1954 conference paper 'Ontologie et phénoménologie chez Martin Heidegger', (ibid., vol.II, pp. 615-24), the problematisation of the anthropological apparatus underlying psychoanalysis is the same: 'There is in Heidegger an approach as concrete and as historical as that of Freud in his psychoanalysis [...], but while in Freud the question is empirical and anthropological, concerned with this or that being – and not the being of beings – Heidegger's analytic is oriented by the horizon opened by being'.

bogged down by an anthropological foundation' while 'the originality of Heidegger' lies precisely in his attempt to exceed anthropology. Heidegger's important gesture is 'to have defined Dasein [...] by [...] the question of being [...], and to have defined man [...] by the question of metaphysics itself, to have carried out the exegesis of this metaphysics in its history, in its origins, in its meaning, in its phenomena of repetition'.[47]

There is an analogous movement to the argument in 'Pathologie mentale et organisation'. Setting out from his experience as a philosopher at the Charenton asylum, the experience had convinced him, he says, that 'the study of madness – alienation in the profound sense of the term – lies at the centre of anthropology'.[48] Visiting this asylum, this place which is 'the refuge of those who can no longer [...] live in our inter-human milieu',[49] allows the philosopher to analyse the separation between the mad and the 'normal'[50] and, through the latter, to illustrate the question of 'mental alienation' which arises for 'the man said to be normal'.[51] Hyppolite concludes that mental alienation is not simply the result of a failure in the relation of man to his milieu; it proceeds as well from a failure in the relation of Dasein to being. The problem is thus situated 'between anthropology and ontology':[52] the flight from the inauthenticity of quotidian life in which madness consists is not only the loss of 'an equilibrium which could be technically defined',[53] it is also – as Heidegger teaches us in 'The Essence of Truth'[54], though he is not named here – 'errancy itself'. Madness thus poses, 'the question of human essence in all its profundity and of [...] our relation to being'; it 'places us at the heart of human errancy between the flight from a world that is [...] too human [....] inauthentic, and an authenticity which, in its ontological meaning, poses the problematic of being itself'.[55] The only philosopher to have understood this problem, Hyppolite concludes, is Nietzsche, but he 'only grasped it by risking losing himself in it'.[56]

47 Jean Hyppolite, 'Psychoanalyse et philosophie', ibid., vol.I, p. 384.
48 Ibid., p. 384.
49 Jean Hyppolite, 'Pathologie mentale et organisation', ibid., vol.II, pp. 885-6.
50 Ibid., p. 886.
51 Ibid., p. 889.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., p. 890.
54 See section 7 of this essay entitled 'Untruth as Errancy'.
55 Jean Hyppolite, 'Pathologie Mentale et Organisation', p. 889.
56 Ibid., p. 890.

Anthropology and Ontology

The two articles to which I have referred – the 'existentialist' text 'Introduction to Dream and Existence' and the 'Marxist' text *Maladie mentale et personalité* – appear to be responses to Foucault's first works. Or rather, they seem to allow the putting back into question, in light of Heidegger's 'fundamental ontology', the 'humanist' paradigm shared by the majority of philosophical orientations in fashion in the immediate post-war period – notably Marxism and existentialist phenomenology.

In his preface to Binswanger's book, Foucault announces his wish to 'situate existential analysis within the [more general] development of contemporary reflection upon man' and 'to show, by observing the inflection of phenomenology toward anthropology, what grounds have been proposed for concrete reflection on man'.[57] This project is unclear: it seems to belong to a transitional phase in Foucault's thought, a phase that is no doubt aporetic. In his preface to Binswanger's work, Foucault himself writes that 'the dividing line' between Dasein and Menschsein, between 'ontology and anthropology', appears 'difficult to trace'; he avows that the 'ontological conditions of existence create problems', declaring in a prophetic tone the intention to put them aside for 'another time in which to approach them'.[58]

Maladie mentale et personalité is a work very much marked by a version of Marxism conforming to the humanism of the French

57 Michel Foucault, 'Introduction', trans. byForest Williams in *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry*, 19, 1 (1984-1985), p.31. Anthropology is defined thus (pp. 31-2): 'It is an undertaking which opposes anthropology to any type of psychological positivism claiming to exhaust the significant content of man by the reductive concept of homo natura. It relocates anthropology within the context of an ontological reflection whose major theme is presence-to-being, existence (Existenz), Dasein [...] The theme of inquiry is the human 'fact,' if one understands by 'fact,' not some objective sector of a natural universe, but the real content of an existence which is living itself and is experiencing itself, which recognizes itself or loses itself, in a world that is at once the plenitude of its project and the element of its situation. Anthropology may thus call itself a 'science of facts' by developing in rigorous fashion the existential content of presence-to-the-world. To reject such an inquiry at first glance because it is neither philosophy nor psychology, because one cannot define it as either science or speculation, because it neither looks like positive knowledge nor provides the content of a priori cognition, is to ignore the basic meaning of the project'.
58 Ibid., p. 32-3.

Communist Party – even if this version is enriched by the contribution of the 'existentialist' psychoanalysts. The objective of this book is to confront the representation of mental illness belonging to scientific knowledge with 'a reflection on man himself', and with 'the relation, historically situated, of man to the man who is mad and the man who is true'.[59] The book thus aims to frame the problem of mental illness through anthropology. In the final two chapters, in which Foucault deals with madness, we again find the terms or the conceptual apparatus that Hyppolite will problematise in his lectures. In the penultimate chapter entitled 'Illness and Existence,' mental illness is said to correspond to an 'abandonment to the inauthenticity of the world';[60] in the final chapter ('The Psychology of Conflict'), it is conceived as the 'non-dialecticised' result of a 'contradiction between the individual and his milieu'. Mental illness is thus subject to 'two types of conditions: social and historical conditions, which ground psychological conflicts within the real contradictions of the milieu; and the psychological conditions that transform the conflictual content of experience into the conflictual form of the reaction'.[61] Man's mental drift comes from his incapacity to resolve the conflict which he maintains with his milieu: man is alienated because he 'cannot recognise himself as man in the conditions of existence which man himself has constituted';[62] these conditions are evidently historical and, as a consequence, susceptible to change. 'Real psychology' is thus that which seeks to 'dis-alienate' man,[63] taking into account these two psychological and historical dimensions of madness.

This model of psychology is taken up by Georges Politzer (an author dear to Merleau-Ponty, whose courses in psychology Foucault

59 Michel Foucault, *Maladie mentale et personalité*, (Paris: PUF, 1954), p. 2.

60 Ibid., p. 69.

61 Ibid., p. 92.

62 Ibid., p. 102.

63 On this point Foucault writes: 'To wish to detach the ill individual from his conditions of existence and wanting to separate illness from its conditions of appearance is to enclose oneself in the same abstraction; it is to make psychological theory complicit with the social practice of internment: it is to wish to keep the ill individual in his alienated existence. True psychology must free itself from these abstractions which obscure the truth of illness and alienate the reality of the ill; for when it is a question of man, the abstraction is not simply an intellectual error; the true psychology must rid itself of this psychologism, if it is true that, like all the human sciences, it must have de-alienation as its aim.' (Ibid., p. 110)

attended at the Sorbonne and the Collège de France), but especially by many Marxists. Didier Éribon reports that between the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, Foucault 'made much of a book that left an impression on this whole generation: Georges Politzer's *Critique des fondements de la psychologie* – published in 1928 but out of print. The students had only one copy and passed it around fervently'.[64] *Maladie mentale et personnalité* – a book that regurgitates Politzerian terms such as 'drama,' 'dramatic' or 'concrete man' – does not stray from the Communist Party dogma established several years beforehand by Jean Kanapa in the 'Preface' he had written for a collection of Politzer's texts on psychology.[65]

However, this Marxian interpretation of madness (conceived as an alienation resulting from a series of irresolvable social contradictions) is completely abandoned in the second version of the book dating from 1962 – *Mental Illness and Psychology* – and in 'Folie et Déraison' (the thesis that Foucault writes in Sweden during the second half of the 1950s and which he defends in 1961). The humanist and 'Politzerian' Marx is in effect displaced in these two works by a 'Heideggerean' Nietzsche. Foucault summarises the evolution of his intellectual trajectory in a famous interview in the 1970s: he explains there how, after having studied Hegel, he moved from Marx to Heidegger, and then discovered Nietzsche, specifying that he could not have discovered the latter without the interpretation given by Heidegger.[66]

Mental Illness and Psychology substitutes the study of the 'real [social] conditions of madness' for reflection on 'psychopathology as a

64 Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, pp. 30-1.

65 Georges Politzer, *La crise de la psychologie contemporaine*, (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1947).

66 Interview with Gilles Barbadette and André Scala, 'The Return of Morality', in *Michel Foucault, Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings*, 1977-1984, ed by Lawrence D. Kritzman, (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 242-254. 'For me Heidegger has always been the essential philosopher. I began by reading Hegel [i.e., Hyppolite's translation and commentary], then Marx [i.e., the Marx of the PCF and Althusser's 'Politzer Circle'] and I set out to read Heidegger in 1951 or 1952 [thanks to Hyppolite and Vuillemin]; then in 1952 or 1953 – I don't remember anymore – I read Nietzsche [...]. My entire philosophical development was determined by my reading of Heidegger. I nevertheless recognize that Nietzsche outweighed him, [...] I had tried to read Nietzsche in the fifties but Nietzsche alone did not appeal to me – whereas Nietzsche and Heidegger: that was a philosophical shock!'

fact of civilization'. Chapter V of this work no longer questions 'the historical meaning of alienation' but 'the historical constitution of mental illness'. Chapter VI, for its part, abandons 'the psychology of conflict' for an understanding of madness as an 'overall structure'. As Pierre Macherey accurately put it, the Marxian myth of an unalienated human essence is replaced by the 'representation of a definitive relation of man to himself, which precedes all his historical experiences and relativises them in measuring them by his own fundamental truth'.[67] In these two works dating from 1961 and 1962 Foucault thus moves from an anthropological question concerning mental illness to an ontological question concerning madness. And Macherey concludes that in the conclusion of *Mental Illness and Psychology* there takes shape 'an interpretation of history as a process of concealment of truth, whose inspiration is indisputably Heideggerean: if there is no psychological truth of madness – *homo psychologicus* being only a late invention of our culture – it is because madness itself, in its essential and timeless truth, rends history with its lightning flashes'.[68] One of these lightning flashes, as Hyppolite had already indicated, is Nietzsche, who appears alongside Bataille, Artaud, Van Gogh, and Strindberg in the final chapter of *The History of Madness* entitled 'The Anthropological Circle'. There, Foucault underlines 'the coherence of an anthropological thought that ran permanently underneath the diversity of scientific formulations'[69] which accompany the analysis of the phenomena of mental illness.

More broadly, in *The History of Madness* history ceases to be presented as it was in *Maladie mentale et personnalité*, as a process of resolving contradictions and notably, of the contradiction which produces mental alienation. On the contrary, the history of madness is but the repetition of the same gesture of exclusion of madness from the space of the logos which is language, history, culture, humanity. As Foucault clearly spells it out in the 'Preface' to *The History of Madness*, insofar as madness is a 'dull sound' and a 'murmur' 'without any speaking subject and without an interlocutor' and thus an unnameable and 'unhuman' [*inhumain*] phenomenon, it constitutes the 'condition of possibility' or

67 Pierre Macherey, 'At the Sources of Histoire de la folie: A Rectification of its Limits', in *In a Materialist Way*. trans. by Ted Stolze, ed. by Warren Montag, (London: Verso, 1998), p. 90.

68 Ibid., p. 95 Translation altered – Trans.

69 Michel Foucault, *The History of Madness,* trans. by Jonathan Murphy & Jean Khalfa, (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 522.

'transcendental' which is not historical, but rather 'historial' – of human history conceived as the plenitude of meaning.[70] The division between reason and unreason, a historial structure which conceals the 'truth of madness', recalls the Heideggerean idea of history as the forgetting of being, and its reduction to beings. As with Heideggerean being, we cannot speak of madness without effacing and dismissing it, even though both constitute a quasi-transcendental condition of human language. This interpretation also constitutes a sort of perversion of the Hegelian logic described by Hyppolite in *Logic and Existence*. In the homage that he gives to his teacher, Foucault appears to use Heideggerean expressions; this is the case when he says that Hyppolite's voice was that of 'philosophy itself', that a 'philosophical discourse acquires determination, tears itself from its silence', or again, when he concludes that for Hyppolite, 'philosophy is never actualised or present in any discourse or any text', because 'philosophy does not exist' but rather 'hollows out all philosophies by its perpetual absence' by inscribing 'in them the lack with which they are ceaselessly developed, pushed forward, then disappear and are succeeded, and remain for the historian in the state of suspension in which he must take them up again'.[71]

This mutation in Foucault's thought is confirmed by a letter addressed to Hyppolite from Uppsala in November 1956. Foucault confides to him that in Sweden there is 'much talk [...] of M. Hyppolite, of the École and of the death of God'. He ends his missive with the hope 'that M. Hippolyte [*sic*] might return' to Sweden.[72] On the invitation of his former student, Hyppolite did deliver a series of lectures. In the lecture 'Histoire et existence'[73] delivered at Uppsala, Hyppolite had

70 Ibid., p. xxxi-xxxii: 'The plenitude of history is only possible in the space, both empty and peopled at the same time, of all the words without language that appear to anyone who lends an ear, as a dull sound from beneath history, the obstinate murmur of a language talking to itself – without any speaking subject and without an interlocutor, wrapped up in itself, with a lump in its throat, collapsing before it ever reaches any formulation and returning without a fuss to the silence that it never shook off. The charred root of meaning. That is not yet madness, but the first caesura from which the division of madness became possible'.

71 Michel Foucault, 'Jean Hyppolite. 1907-1968', In *Dits et écrits*, vol.1. pp. 783, 780, 782.

72Michel Foucault, undated letter, Jean Hyppolite archives at the library of the École Normale Supérieure.

73 Jean Hyppolite, 'Histoire et existence', in *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, vol. II, p. 975-986. Hyppolite had also given a lecture on 'Hegel et Kierkegaard dans la

retraced the adventures of French reflection upon history since existentialism. The concept of existence, of Dasein or 'being-there' – he had stressed – refers to the concept of 'situation' and even to that of 'historical situation,' while the problem of the sense of the historical situation refers in turn to the problem of the general sense of history. The lecture ends with two observations. The first concerns the difference between the positions taken by Sartre and Merleau-Ponty in relation to communism, a difference which was at the root of their break. The second sought to 'open an other problem':[74] to relate French existential philosophy to the new aspects of Heideggerean philosophy. Thus, Hyppolite sought to distance himself from his two colleagues: all existentialists remain humanists insofar as they conceive history as the history of men and not of being. Only Heidegger comes to 'enlarge [...] the problem' in taking into consideration a temporality which is no longer properly historical, because men are dismissed from their roles as actors. This 'history' is nothing other than the 'unveiling of being which operates through them in a certain temporality [...]. The liberty of man will – Hyppolite concludes – be less his own adventure than the adventure of being through him'.[75] As a consequence, the anthropological questioning of man by man must be subordinated to a more fundamental questioning of being by man. This latter questioning must in the last instance be understood as the discourse of being itself, a discourse of being creating itself in history, not thanks to man, but despite him.

The Verbose Dialectic

This epistemological recasting also affects the concept of alienation which Foucault had used abundantly until 1954. The use of this concept, central to Hegel and Marx, is grounded upon the following postulate: there exists a human identity or essence that can serve as a standard against which the degree of man's dispossession or alienation can be judged. Moreover, this concept constitutes the core of a philosophy of history which, in containing an ahistorical residue in the concept of man, remains anthropocentric.

pensée française contemporaine', ibid., vol. I, p. 196-208.
74 Jean Hyppolite, 'Histoire et existence', Ibid., p. 986.
75 Ibid.

This category is forcefully dismissed in *The History of Madness*, notably in the chapter entitled 'The Anthropological Circle' in which, in a coup de théâtre, Nietzsche appears. Foucault produces a genealogy of the anthropological apparatus which has structured the knowledge of man – including psychiatry and psychology – since the 18th century. This apparatus hangs upon a notion of alienation which Foucault does not hesitate to characterise as 'mythological'. This notion of alienation both involves and produces truly alienating practices: to put it more accurately, it is these practices as well as the institutions which deploy them that allow the mythological concept of alienation to be constituted. It is thus the series 'institutional asylum space – a priori of medical perception – truth of the human being', a series which Foucault describes in a very discerning way, which makes possible the formation of this concept of alienation which constitutes a fundamental element of the anthropological apparatus. Nonetheless, as emphasised in a recent essay whose salient points we will take up here,[76] Foucault's history of the emergence of the concept of alienation borrows Hegelian figures in a surprising manner. In particular, it is guided by the developments of the unhappy consciousness found in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and by Hyppolite's interpretation of the latter in his famous *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. The unhappy consciousness is a double consciousness because it interiorises the opposition between master and slave. It is the split, or rather the hesitation, between purely contingent determination and immutable certainty of self. In the final stage of the unhappy consciousness, the singular consciousness wants to alienate its particular will in order to be nothing but the universal will which it locates in God. This alienation, which is concretised in an impossible and guilty ascetic will, remains deprived of all means of dialectical overcoming, and so consciousness does not cease to humiliate itself in registering its exile within being – the impossibility of escaping its singularity.

In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* this figure of the unhappy consciousness is surpassed by that of reason, which is universal self-consciousness, identical to being itself, the first figure of spirit prior to its objectification in history. These are the two figures used by Hyppolite in

76 Emmanuel Gipay, 'Les deux genèses du dispositif anthropologique: Foucault lecteur de Hegel et de Kant', *Lumières*, 16, 'Foucault lecteur de Kant: le champ anthropologique' (2011).

Genesis and Structure (more precisely, in his concluding remarks), to bring judgment upon French philosophers as a whole:

> [They] generally prefer [...]the 'unhappy consciousness' to [...] 'spirit'. They take up Hegel's description of self-certainty which fails to be in-itself but which, nonetheless, exists only through its transcendence toward that in-itself; but they abandon Hegel when, according to him, specific self-consciousness – subjectivity - becomes universal self-consciousness – thingness – a movement through which being is posed as subject and subject is posed as being.[77]

For Hyppolite, French philosophy had found itself entangled in a repetition of the dialectic without overcoming the unhappy consciousness. For Foucault (who had no doubt read and re-read *Genesis and Structure* during his DES[78]), the anthropological apparatus animated by the 'verbose movement of alienation'[79] or by the 'verbose engagements of the dialectic',[80] is to be returned to the perspective of an incomplete dialectic, turning in circles, 'becoming involved in the game of incessant resumptions, adjustments between the subject and the object, between the inside and the outside, between lived experience and knowledge'.[81] Foucault thus takes up the figure of the unhappy consciousness, but instead of limiting its scope, as Hegel does, to the moment of the birth of the Church in the middle ages, or to use it, as Hyppolite does, in order to read French thought of the 1930s and 1940s, he makes it the figure of all modernity – a modernity read through the history of madness. As Emmanuel Gipay has shown, this figure guides Foucault's analysis of the birth of psychiatry [*aliénisme*]. In this analysis we find the salient points of the Hegelian description of the unhappy consciousness: a

77 Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by Samuel Cherniak & John Heckman, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), pp. 204-5.

78 The same Hyppolite who emphasised the importance of the *Phenomenology* since the liberation: 'After 1946, the *Phenomenology* – along with Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* and Merleau-Ponty's *The Phenomenology of Perception* – becomes the fundamental book that is referred to in all French philosophical milieus'. (Jean Hyppolite, 'La 'Phénoménologie de Hegel et la pensée francaise contemporaine', in *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, vol.I, p. 235.

79 Michel Foucault, *The History of Madness*, p. 528.

80 Michel Foucault, *The History of Madness*, p. 530 – translation altered.

81 Ibid. – translation altered.

consciousness which alienates its will to that of another, which faces the guilt of not managing to do so completely, and which becomes an object for itself. Finally, let us briefly take up these three points.

First of all, Foucault stresses that the doctor, far more than being just a depository of knowledge, is for the madman a moral guarantor. He is the representative of the values which will assist the patient to realise his human essence or his truth. The patient or 'the alienated', is certainly not deprived of his human truth which remains inalienable. But madness is nonetheless conceived as an accident related to the perversions of the social world – accidents which ought to spontaneously disappear once the patient is deprived of all possibility of satisfying his perversions, as in the case of his internment. Thus, the will of the madman is alienated before the general will of all that the doctor and his moral order incarnate.

Next, Foucault shows how practices introduced by Tuke and Pinel – 'tea parties,' the imposition of silence or of delirium – aim to make the patient perceive himself as an object through the gaze that he casts on the other patients or the gaze that other patients cast on him when they judge him on the basis of the moral values mobilized by the doctor. Through the gaze of the other, the subjectivity of the patient is divided: on the one hand there are the values of the doctor or the general will, on the other, the singularity of the patient or his own will. The figure of thought which accompanies the birth of psychiatry [*l'aliénisme*] is thus the unhappy consciousness wherein the subject, which understands itself as a determinate 'I', is incapable of moral universality.

But given this figure of the unhappy consciousness characterising modernity, it remains impossible, according to Foucault, to conceive an overcoming such as the one defended by Hegel: the Hegelian overcoming, insofar as it is dialectical, can only bring us back to the figure of the unhappy consciousness; the overcoming of the unhappy consciousness by the 'verbose dialectic' can only lead us to another divided consciousness. This overcoming without veritable overcoming to which Foucault refers corresponds to nothing less than the disappearance of the anthropological apparatus itself, to the erasure of the figure of man, to the death of 'normal' man and to the end of all 'verbose'

dialectics. This is announced, in a tone both prophetic and very Heideggerean, yet no less explicit and black and white, in the final chapter of *The Order of Things*[82] entitled 'The Anthropological Circle'.

82The guiding thread that links *The Order of Things* (1966) and the secondary thesis on Kant's Pragmatic Anthropology (1961) lies in the course entitled 'Problems of Anthropology' which Foucault gave at the École Normale in 1954-1955, while he was tasked with the course in psychology (Michel Foucault, 'Problèmes de l'anthropologie', transcribed by Jacques Lagrange from his own notes; 68 pages, Michel Foucault archives, Imec, Caen, C. 2.1 /FCL 2. A03-08). This course takes into consideration the 'theories of man' of the past fifty years (Husserl, Scheler, Binswanger, Jaspers, Keyler, Storms and Strauss are all cited), in which, according to Foucault, man ceases to 'be an object, to be nature, and begins to be history'. (p. 4). According to Foucault, this type of questioning on man had already been engaged with by Kant who – as Heidegger had emphasized in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (translated into French at the end of 1953) – had, in his course on logic, grounded the three first critical questions in the fourth: 'what is man?' According to Foucault, this question does not signify 'what is the truth of the being of man?' but rather, as Heidegger suggests, 'how can human beings live in the truth?' (p. 24). If, according to Foucault, Kant's importance lies in his having placed the anthropological question within the framework of a critical problematic, the German philosopher does not define man's 'concrete essence' and is content to delineate it from his natural characteristics (p. 47). This failure will be repeated in all the other anthropological attempts up to Feuerbach. Only evolutionism and notably, the recovery of this theory by Nietzsche and by Freud would come to extract the question of man from anthropology: just as Kant had substituted the critique of knowledge for the 'classical critique of error,' evolutionist anthropology 'would substitute the study of conditions for the investigation of the truth of man' (p. 47).

Hyppolite's Hegel Reconsidered

TOM ROCKMORE

Hegel's view of cognition is neither well known nor even often examined. One reason is that it is often believed that Hegel's position does not contain a view of cognition. Another is that as a form of idealism, Hegel's theory no longer speaks to us. A third reason is that the conception of the absolute, which looms large in Hegel's position, is, like his philosophy of nature, now unintelligible.

The aim of this paper is to say a few words about Hyppolite's acute remark about the absolute in a cognitive context as a way of getting clear about Hegel's view and its significance. In his important study of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, Hyppolite remarks that 'the *Phenomenology* is not a noumenology or an ontology but it remains, nonetheless, a [theory of] knowledge of the absolute. For what else is there to be known if 'only the absolute is true, or only the true is absolute'?'[1]

Hegel's theory of cognition is presented in the *Phenomenology* and in both versions of his theory of logic in the *Encyclopedia* and the *Science of Logic*, as well as in other, more minor writings. I will be concentrating on the view of cognition presented in the *Phenomenology* for two reasons. Hyppolite's comment mentions only that treatise, and the relation between Hegel's views in the *Phenomenology* and in the logical writings is controversial. According to Merleau-Ponty, writing at about the same time as Hyppolite, the *Phenomenology* is not an idealist work though one cannot say the same thing of the later writings. 'If the Hegel of 1827 can be reproached with idealism, one cannot say the same of the

1 Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman (Evanston: Northwestern, 1974), p. 4. 'La Phénoménologie n'est pas une nouménologie ou une ontologie; cependant elle reste encore une connaissance de l'Absolu, car qu'y aurait-il d'autre à connaître puisque 'l'Absolu seul est vrai, ou le vrai seul est Absolu' Jean Hyppolite, *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l'Esprit* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), p. 10.

Hegel of 1807.[2] Lukács, following Marx, also suggests that the two works are incompatible.[3]

Hyppolite, Kojève and French Hegel Studies

Hyppolite's cited remark raises a number of questions about Hegel's conception of knowledge. As a philosophical contextualist, Hegel is concerned to situate philosophical theories in their time and place. It is clearly important to understand Hyppolite's view of Hegel against the French background. In making his claim about the *Phenomenology*, Hyppolite is reacting not only to Hegel, but also to the surrounding debate, including Brunschvicg's important attack on idealism in general and Hegel in particular, the contemporary French interest in Marx, and above all to the famous reading advanced by Kojève.

French Hegel studies began during Hegel's lifetime. One of the earliest French thinkers to become interested in Hegel was Victor Cousin (1792 –1867), whom Hegel met in Heidelberg in 1816. Cousin, who taught courses on Hegel at the Collège de France in 1828, provided an early initial impulse for the French study of Hegel through his teaching[4] as well as through a series of translations he initiated.

After Cousin, French Hegel studies continued in a desultory manner. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Hegel's thought was discussed by a number of French writers. The neo-Kantian Léon Brunschvicg contributed a violently critical chapter on Hegel in his account of consciousness in Western philosophy.[5] Brunschvicg's influential attack on Hegel helped to establish an unsympathetic climate toward his thought. Brunschvicg, like Husserl, regarded Hegel as part of the romantic reaction to Kant. He described Hegel as 'the master of

2 Merleau-Ponty, *Les Temps modernes*, April 1946, pp. 1312-1313.

3 See 'Hegels falsche und echte Ontologie', in Georg Lukács, *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins*, in Lukäcs-Werke (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1986), pp. 468-558.

4 See Victor Cousin, *Cours de philosophie. Introduction à l'histoire de la philosophie* (1825, 1841) (rpt. Paris: Fayard, 1991). For an account of Cousin's rational reading of Hegel without the conception of dialectic, see Elizabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan and Co.: A History of Psychoanalysis in France, 1925-1985*, trans. by Jeffrey Mehlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), I, pp. 136-137.

5 Léon Brunschvicg, *Le Progrès de la conscience dans la philosophie occidentale* (Paris: Alcan, 1927), vol. II, pp. 382-401.

contemporary scholasticism.'[6] According to Brunschvicg, Hegel proposed a metaphysics of nature that was entirely outdated even prior to its formulation. Brunschvicg further maintained, from a clearly Cartesian perspective, that the absence of an appropriate method in Hegel's theory 'renders his philosophy of history as inconsistent and feeble as his philosophy of nature'.[7]

In the twentieth century, French Hegel studies continued at a slow pace up to Jean Wahl (1888-1974). Wahl, who was a non-systematic thinker influenced in the concrete, wrote two books important in the French context: *Le Malheur de la conscience dans la philosophie de Hegel* (1929) and *Études kierkegaardiennes* (1938). Wahl influenced such important French figures as Sartre and Levinas. The first book was especially important in the French context at a time when the *Phenomenology* had not yet been translated and few could read it in the original. It called attention to the relation of Hegel and Kierkegaard through the passage on the unhappy consciousness in the *Phenomenology*.[8] But by far the strongest influence on French philosophy, including French Hegel studies, was later provided by Alexandre Kojève.

The French Hegel is forever linked with the brilliant but mysterious figure of Alexandre Kojève. Hegel loomed very large in France from the beginning of Kojève's famous lectures on the *Phenomenology* until roughly the student revolution in May 1968, when during a meeting of the Common Market in Brussels Kojève, who in the meantime had taken a job in the Gaullist government, suddenly died.

Kojève was an absolutely central figure in French Hegel studies and, for that reason, in French philosophy of his time. One can scarcely exaggerate the importance of his famous lectures in the French context. Descombes' effort to read the French philosophical debate starting from the onset of Kojève's famous lectures on Hegel's Phenomenology at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes (1933-1939), sheds important light on the French philosophical thought in this period. Kojève's impact on the

6 Brunschvicg, *Le Progrès de la conscience dans la philosophie occidentale*, II, p. 397.

7 Brunschvicq, *Le Progrès de la conscience dans la philosophie occidentale*, II, p. 395.

8 Wahl's emphasis on the unhappy consciousness is the theme of a recent study of French Hegelianism. See Bruce Baugh, *French Hegel: From Surrealism to Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1993).

French study of Hegel is evidenced by two famous aperçus sandwiched around the Second World War. One is his view, expressed as his lectures were ending and France was marching off to war, that in the figure of Napoleon history has come to an end. According to Kojève, the reality of Napoleon is the self-appearing God. 'It is the *reality* of Napoleon, revealed by Hegel, who is the *appearing God*, the real and living God, appearing to human beings in the world he has created in order to be recognized [*pour s'y faire reconnaître*]. And it is his revelation by Hegel which transforms the myth of the Christian faith in truth or absolute knowledge [*absolutes Wissen*].'[9]

The other is his equally extravagant remark at the end of the War that devastated France and led to the Fifth Republic that today nothing is more important than reading Hegel. 'Because perhaps in the final analysis the future of the world, and hence the meaning of the present as well as the significance of the past depend on the way in which today one interprets Hegel's writings.'[10]

In comparison to Kojève, Hyppolite is certainly less brilliant, but perhaps a more reliable student of Hegel. He is the more orthodox counterweight to Kojève's often brilliant, but very unusual interpretations. Yet it is possible that Hyppolite's more modest interpretations are arguably closer to the mark. According to Hegel, philosophy necessarily occurs *post festum* in the process of reflecting on what has gone before. The turning of the historical wheel has a way of changing our views about what has occurred.

Preliminary Remarks on Hyppolite's Passage

The cited passage from Hyppolite includes a comment as well as a quotation from the *Phenomenology*. Hyppolite correctly suggests that Hegel, while proposing neither a noumenology nor an ontology, asserts that cognition provides knowledge of the absolute. A noumenology would be a claim to know the noumenon, or thing in itself. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant studies the distinction between phenomena and noumena in detail in a dedicated chapter. He limits claims to knowledge to possible objects of experience and excludes

9 Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, ed. by Raymond Queneau (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), p. 157.

10 Alexandre Kojève, *Critique*, 1946, no. 2-3, p. 366.

noumena from the latter. Since Hegel like most of Kant's successors dismisses the concept of the thing in itself or noumenon, he does not, nor could he even possibly defend a noumenology.

He also does not defend an ontology. In the so-called smaller or *Encyclopedia Logic*, Hegel calls attention to three positions of thought with respect to objectivity. In the first position, or metaphysics, he examines the pre-Kantian approach, which he describes as naïve. Hegel, who depicts this approach as the simplistic desire to go immediately to objects, claims it is initially ubiquitous in both philosophy and science, but fails to justify its claims to know.[11] Understood as ontology, metaphysics, which lacks a principle, consists in enumerating abstract determinations, but is unable to claim truth.[12]

Hegel on the Absolute

Hegel's reference to the absolute presupposes his analysis of this concept as early as the *Differenzschrift*, his first philosophical publication. In the *Differenzschrift*, where Hegel provides the initial formulation of a position he later deepens and extends in other writings, he suggests that Kant's critical philosophy is intended as genuine speculation, but falls short of its goal. According to Kant, his initial readers misunderstand the critical philosophy. He famously suggests that a position should be read according to its spirit, but not according to its letter.[13] Hegel, who applies this Kantian suggestion to the critical philosophy, thinks that Fichte distinguishes between the spirit and the letter of Kant's position. According to Hegel, Kant's theory is in principle a genuine idealism, but in practice it falls short of the mark. Hegel, who suggests that Fichte takes the spirit of the critical philosophy beyond the point at which Kant left it, implies that philosophy constitutes an ongoing tradition in which later thinkers build on earlier thinkers in realizing the spirit of their theories.

The concept of the absolute is difficult but important in German idealism. In following Kant, the term 'absolute' is used by Fichte, Schelling and Hegel in different ways. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*,

11 See G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, trans. by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), §26, p. 65.

12 See Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §33, p. 70.

13 See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), B xxxxiv, p. 123.

Kant suggests that this term, which has no exact synonym, refers to what is not incomparable and hence is valid in unrestricted fashion.[14] Hegel introduces the 'absolute' in an epistemological context in the Preface to the *Differenzschrift*. Here he identifies the absolute with Spinoza's substance. According to Spinoza God and Nature are two names for the same single reality, or substance.[15] Spinoza, who defends a view now often described as neutral monism, believes that thought and extension are attributes of substance. Hegel later describes his view in his account of Spinoza in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*.[16]

Spinoza solves the problem of knowledge from his monistic perspective through his conception of the attribute that is supposedly the essence of substance.[17] Hegel, who follows Spinoza, objects against Kant that the latter's dualist perspective makes it impossible to grasp the absolute. I take this point to amount to the claim that, since it fails to give an acceptable account of how it grasps the cognitive object, the critical philosophy fails as an approach to knowledge.

Hegel's implicit Spinozism appears to blend together philosophy and theology, epistemology and ontology. Since Spinoza identifies God with nature, to grasp the absolute would be to cognise both nature and God. According to Hegel, critical philosophy, which is only in principle idealism, above all in the deduction of the categories, aims at but fails to grasp the absolute. Hence, on Hegel's reading of Kant, the critical philosophy must be revised. The problem is not the idea of the deduction of the categories but rather the way Kant goes about carrying it out. According to Hegel, Kant fails to deduce the categories that are only belatedly deduced by Fichte. To deduce the categories would presumably demonstrate the link between thought and being, which is contained in the Spinozistic conception of substance.

In what does the deduction consist? According to Hegel, it consists in a speculative identity. Hegel writes: 'The principle of speculation is the

14 See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 382, p. 401.

15 'By *substance*, I mean that which is in itself, and is conceived through itself.' *Ethics*, in *Works of Spinoza*, translated, with an introduction by R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951), p. 45.

16 See G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. by Eva Moldenhauer and K. R. Michel, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1971, XX, p. 161.

17 'By *attribute*, I mean that which the intellect perceives as constitituting the essence of substance.' *Ethics*, in *Works of Spinoza*, p. 45.

identity of subject and object, and this principle is most definitely articulated in the deduction of the forms of the intellect.'[18] By implication, then, speculation is for Hegel a plausible strategy to approach the problem of knowledge. According to Hegel, Kant's effort to deduce the categories fails, not because he attempts to deduce the categories, but rather since his position is only in principle genuine idealism. Hegel here uses the terms 'speculation' and 'idealism' as synonyms. According to Hegel, the spirit of the Kantian philosophy consists in the deduction of the categories, which Kant understands as pure concepts of the understanding, but which Hegel, unlike Kant, understands as the speculative identity of subject and object. Since Kant does not succeed in deducing the categories, we can infer that in Hegel's eyes he is not a genuinely speculative thinker. As concerns idealism, Hegel values Fichte's over Kant's. The Kantian Fichte, whose position Kant rejects, but who constantly proclaims his fidelity to Kant, departs from the critical philosophy in many identifiable ways, such as his clear turn away from the thing in itself. According to Hegel, Fichte is a genuinely speculative thinker. In other words, Kant has an idea of a critical philosopher, which he does not realise, but which is realised by Fichte, who then, unlike Kant, is a genuinely speculative thinker, and, in that sense a genuine idealist. According to Hegel then, speculative idealism, which is intrinsically speculative, turns on the identity of subject and object.

An Antifoundationalist Approach to Cognition

There is a distinction between idealism and epistemological foundationalism. An idealist approach is a founded, or justified, yet is not a foundationalist approach to cognition. The terminology of epistemological foundationalism is recent, but the problem to which it refers is much older.

In the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel reacts to the views of Reinhold, Fichte and Schelling in building on the critical philosophy in the process of working out the initial version of his own position. Hegel presents his text as occasional, more precisely as justified through the need to

18 G. W. F. Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichtes' and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, trans. by H. S. Harris and Walter Cerf (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977), p. 80.

respond to Reinhold's supposed 'misreadings' of Kant, Fichte and Schelling. According to Hegel, Kant and Fichte present subjective forms of idealism, which fail to reach objectivity. Hegel follows Schelling, who supplements Kant's critical philosophy through a philosophy of nature [*Naturphilosophie*]. At the time, under the influence of Bardili, Reinhold was concerned to restate the critical philosophy in quasi-Cartesian, foundationalist form.

Epistemological foundationalism is a strategy invoked to justify claims to know. This strategy goes all the way back to ancient philosophy. Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* can be read as presenting an early form of the modern approach to epistemological foundationalism. This is an approach to knowledge, similar to, but unlike geometry, since it contains no axioms or postulates, the initial proposition being known to be true and the remainder of the theory rigorously following from it. In modern times, Descartes is often taken as the model epistemological foundationalist.

In the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel formulates a double objection to Reinhold. On the one hand, he objects to the supposed reduction of philosophy to logic in anticipating as well as rejecting a form of positivism later espoused by the Vienna Circle positivists. On the other hand, Hegel, who rejects foundationalism, objects to the very effort to base philosophy, in this case a successor form of the critical philosophy, on an epistemological ground. According to Hegel, foundationalism is neither plausible nor possible since there is no way to justify the initial proposition. This is an implicit criticism of Descartes, whose position is grounded on the alleged indubitability of the *cogito*. Further, according to Hegel, theory, which does not require an epistemological ground, justifies itself through its development. Hegel summarises his complex approach to philosophical justification without epistemological foundationalism in a simple statement: 'Philosophy as a whole grounds itself and the reality of its cognition, both as to form and as to content, within itself.'[19]

19 See G. W. F. Hegel, *The Difference Between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, trans. by H. S. Harris and Walter Cer (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977), p. 179.

Hyppolite and Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theory of Cognition

In the passage cited earlier, Hyppolite refers to Hegel's claim concerning knowledge of the absolute quotes a passage from the *Phenomenology*. This passage occurs early in the Introduction, where Hegel criticises Kant and outlines his mature conception of idealist cognition through the identity of subject and object, or thought and being.

In the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*, where he describes his general approach to cognition, Hegel, who begins by criticising Kant's *a priori* approach for introducing an impossible separation between the conditions of knowing and the knowing process, objects to the Kantian approach to cognition in terms of a distinction between the absolute and the medium by which it is cognised. As he does elsewhere, for instance in the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel depicts Kant's critical philosophy, which claims to overcome dogmatism, as intrinsically dogmatic, and thus asserting claims it fails to demonstrate. We recall that Kant's mature position is resolutely *a priori*, hence based on a claim to cognition that arises prior to and apart from experience. Hegel regards this approach as based on a mere assumption that the conditions of knowledge can be isolated from knowledge. Another way to state this point is to claim that theory of knowledge could be isolated from its practice. In the *Encyclopedia Logic* Hegel later famously compares this procedure to trying to swim without going in the water.[20] Here he restricts himself to identifying Kant's commitment to an *a priori* approach, which he calls a natural assumption, thereby inferring that the procedure is not scientific.

Hegel's objection to Kant's concern to approach the cognitive object as either an instrument or a medium to grasp the absolute is intended to show that the critical philosophy falls short of its intended mark. For if cognition claims to reach the absolute through a medium, then what we know depends on the medium. Hegel has in mind what Kant calls the sensory manifold through which unprocessed sensation is supposedly conveyed to the subject. And if cognition depends on an instrument, then we cannot grasp what is without the instrument. Hegel here is targeting the Kantian conception of the transcendental unity of apperception that supposedly synthesises the content of the sensory manifold.

20 See G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopedia* §10, p. 34.

Hegel's criticism is intended to identify a link between the critical philosophy and skepticism. Once again, as in the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel calls attention to the result of ontological dualism as impeding cognition. According to Hegel, both components of the Kantian theory of cognition depend on a mistaken dualism featuring a difference between the absolute and cognition, as well as between the subject and cognition.

Maimon, a contemporaneous epistemological skeptic, believed that the critical philosophy would eventually be understood as a sophisticated form of skepticism. Perhaps with Maimon in mind, Hegel draws attention to the critical relation between philosophy and epistemological skepticism. Hegel, who rejects the Kantian approach to cognition understood either as an instrument or as a medium, further rejects the so-called 'fear of falling into error'. This rejection is consistent with the view in the *Differenzschrift* of philosophy as self-justifying in virtue of its claim to progressively ground claims to know by progressively working out the theory in which they occur.

Hegel's critique of Kant is based on the supposition that he is a dualist, and that his dualism isolates the absolute from cognition, or what is to be known from the knowing process. This amounts to the supposition that the absolute, which is outside of or external to the truth, is, however, true. In this context, Hegel remarks that this assumption, which is understood as a fear of error, should rather be called fear of truth.

Kant's Copernican Revolution and Hegelian Idealism

Drawing the implications of his critique of Kant, Hegel turns immediately to a positive statement of his claim for cognition as cognition of the absolute in drawing the implication of his critique of Kant. According to Hegel, 'This conclusion is drawn from the following: The absolute alone is true, that is, it is the true which is alone the absolute'.[21]

This important statement clearly ties Hegel's view of cognition to the absolute, thus confirming Hyppolite's statement that for Hegel,

21 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by Terry Pinkard (New York: Cambridge University Press), §75, p. 71 -- forthcoming; G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, in *Hegel-Werke*, ed. by Eva Moldenhauer and K. R. Michel (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971), III, p. 70.

though there are other kinds of cognition, cognition in the highest sense of the term is cognition of the absolute. In that sense, it is clear that Hyppolite correctly describes Hegel's position. It remains to say what that position is with respect to cognition. What does it mean to cognise the absolute? The easiest way to respond is to look briefly at the relation of Hegel's approach to cognition to Kant's. The answer lies in Hegel's rethinking of Kant's Copernican revolution.

Though Kant never uses this term to refer to his position, it was arguably familiar to his readers since during his lifetime, it is used in this way by Schelling and Reinhold. According to Kant, modern natural science builds on early modern Copernican astronomy, which in turn put it on a secure path. He suggests that in the critical philosophy he employs a similar approach to formulate the future science of metaphysics. He describes the underlying constructivist insight as the claim that 'reason has insight only into what it itself produces according to its own design.'[22] Kant describes the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a treatise on method intended to transform metaphysics according to the example of mathematics and natural science.[23]

We can leave to one side the question of Kant's success in that endeavor, which lies outside the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that Hegel builds on, hence carries further, a Kantian form of constructivism in formulating his cognitive approach. Kant claims but does not show and perhaps cannot show that we know what we construct a priori. If the cognitive object is a thing in itself or noumenon, then the cognitive subject can neither constitute nor know a mind-independent cognitive object. Hegel's contribution lies in demonstrating that we know what we construct in describing cognition as a process of constructing the cognitive object.

Cognition as Constructing the Absolute

If the cognitive object is mind-independent, then it can neither be constructed nor known by the cognitive subject. In other words, there is no cognitive link between the subject that knows and the object that is known, and which is already constituted in independence of the subject. Hegel describes the process of knowledge as a process of the

22 Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B xiii, p. 109.
23 See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B xxii, p. 113.

construction and cognition of the cognitive object, which is not independent of, but rather depends on, the cognitive subject.

Hegel is often thought to neglect experience. In founding Marxism, Engels suggests that Hegel as well as all idealists goes from the mind to the world. In fact, Hegel, who takes experience very seriously, describes an experimental, self-correcting approach to knowledge, which begins in natural consciousness, what Husserl later calls the life-world, and through a process of trial and error rises to the standpoint of science.

According to Hegel, who arguably has Kant in mind, natural consciousness, which naively but incorrectly takes itself already to be knowledge, will prove to be only the concept of knowledge, which is only reached as the final result of the cognitive process. Natural consciousness is realised so to speak, in losing itself on the way to truth, in which it is transformed into science. Perhaps the central insight in this process regards of determinate negation in which the cognitive subject consciously formulates, examines, evaluates and rejects a series of candidates for knowledge (*Gestaltungen*). Through this process the cognitive subject educates itself from the initial stage of natural consciousness to science.

This process is negative as well as positive, negative in that views that emerge are rejected after evaluation, and in that sense skeptical, but positive in that its provisional result is not simply negated. If it were, then Hegel's position would merely be a restatement of the classical skeptical claim that we can know nothing, to which he opposes the very different claim that each view, or theory of the cognitive object within the process builds on, and thus goes further than, its predecessor. Since each view emerges as a result of earlier views that have emerged, been tried out and discarded, the provisional result is determined and has content. Unlike classical skepticism, which stops as a result of negation, the cognitive process is understood as determinate negation [*bestimmte Negation*] leads to a new view or theory of the cognitive object.

As was already the case in the *Differenzschrift*, so in the *Phenomenology* Hegel adopts identity as the criterion of knowledge. 'Identity' here denotes the constructive approach according to which we know only what we in some sense construct. The motor of the cognitive process, which impels it forward from naïve natural consciousness to its terminus *ad quem* in cognition, is the contradiction between the view of the cognitive object, or its concept [*Begriff*] and the object, which are

both present within consciousness. According to Hegel, the conscious cognitive subject merely looks on as the subject distinguishes between the concept of the object and the object of the concept. This process can be regarded as relating what Hegel calls science to phenomenal cognition, or to what is present to consciousness. The cognitive goal is finally reached when, as Hegel darkly says, it reaches the point where the cognitive process no longer needs to go further since the concept corresponds to the object, and the object corresponds to the concept.[24] In other, perhaps simpler language, since the concept and the object correspond to each other, at least provisionally, we can then claim to know.

Hegel, the Absolute and Knowledge

Hyppolite calls attention to Hegel's paradoxical conception of the absolute as the only truth, and the truth as the only absolute. These points concern the paradoxical status of the absolute, the traditional problem of knowledge of mind-independent reality, and the problem of knowledge of God.

In Hegel's theory the absolute is paradoxically both inside or within but also outside or without consciousness. It is outside consciousness in that it is the goal of the cognitive process. It is inside consciousness in that we know only what we in some way experience. Through the dialectical unfolding of cognition, theories about mind-independent objects and the objects of these theories progressively converge. The goal of the process is the point at which concept and object correspond in bringing the process to an end (a point which might in fact never be reached, and hence is regulative, but perhaps not constitutive).

The second point concerns what according to Hegel we know when we know the absolute. In knowing, we embark on what for Parmenides is the way of truth in respect to what is variously described as mind-independent reality, the real, the noumenon or thing in itself, and so on. This is the central insight in metaphysical realism, which has inspired observers from the time of Parmenides through Plato until the present. The conviction that to know is to know an unchanging mind-independent reality inspires Plato and many others who supposedly do

24 See Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §80, p. 51.

not fear knowledge. Now it has never been shown how to know mind-independent reality as it is. In fact, it could not be shown since, if reality were entirely independent, then there would be no epistemological link to the subject and it could not be known. Hegel's contribution is to demonstrate that if we deny the dualism introducing an absolute separation between subject and object, then we can understand the possibility of knowledge of what is both independent of as well as dependent on the subject. In other words, through experience we progressively construct (or reconstruct) the real within consciousness.

Finally there is the problem of knowledge of God. In the *Phenomenology* Hegel depicts religion in cognitive terms as seeking but failing to know what only philosophy can know. In denying that religion does not lead to knowledge of God, Hegel repeats a widely-held theological view. Thus Augustine, the paradigmatic Christian thinker of the early Middle Ages, begins *De Trinitate*, a well-known text from his mature period, in rejecting any effort to know God through reason in favor of faith.[25] On the contrary, in his Spinozistic conception of the absolute, Hegel seems to suggest that knowledge of any kind is simultaneously also knowledge of God. The claim that philosophy leads to knowledge of God follows directly from his Spinozistic conception of the absolute as substance, or the identity of God and nature. Thus for Hegel knowledge of nature and knowledge of God, hence in a certain sense philosophy and theology, cognition and faith coincide.

Hyppolite's Hegel Reconsidered

Great philosophers are understood differently in different times and places. Alongside Kojève, Hyppolite is widely known as one of the two main figures in the venerable French Hegel tradition. This paper has examined Hyppolite's remark from his important study of what he calls the genesis and structure of Hegel's great treatise. I have suggested that Hyppolite is correct to understand Hegel's theory of cognition as cognition of the absolute. I have further indicated why this claim seems plausible as an approach to knowledge in linking the Hegelian theory of

25 See Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. by Edmund Hill, O.P., *The Works of Saint Augustine: A New Translation for the 21st Century I/5* (Hyde Park NY: New City Press, 1991), Augustine, I,1.

the absolute to a constructivist approach to idealism originating in Kant's critical philosophy.

There is a tendency in the discussion to oppose Hegel to Kant. One way in which this is expressed is the view that Kant is not an idealist whereas Hegel is an idealist. According to this view, German idealism originates after Kant, for instance in Reinhold. Yet when we examine Hegel's position more closely, we see that, though he is critical of Kant, he does not merely oppose the critical philosophy, which he develops further beyond the point at which Kant left it.

In my view, the proximate origin of Hegelian idealism lies in Kant. Kant's Copernican revolution in philosophy can be read as laying claim to know what we in some sense 'construct'. This brilliant insight suggests that the real is not independent of time and place, but is constantly being 'constructed' as it were among informed observers. In this view, to know is to 'construct' or to 'reconstruct' the real, not to know it independently.

Hegel adds in two ways to the Kantian constructivist conception of cognition in linking cognition to the absolute, and in further suggesting that it is constructed in the cognitive process. We see this with respect to Hegel's conception of the absolute, in which he adapts an idea, which figures in the views of Kant, Fichte and Schelling, in his theory of cognition.

Hegel's *Phenomenology* describes successive cognitive stages beginning in bare sense certainty or immediate contact with the mind-independent external world, which cannot be directly or immediately known, and ending in a comprehensive grasp of cognition on a social and historical basis. The cognitive criterion is not a simple reflection of the mind-independent real nor even its empirical grasp but rather the whole synthetic model of reality, or the absolute, as 'constructed' (or 'reconstructed') and hence revealed in various levels of reflection in conscious experience. In this sense I agree with Hyppolite that Hegel is not interested in presenting knowledge of the absolute in and for itself, but rather in understanding as a viable alternative to the other main views in the tradition.

Hegel's Comedy

DANIEL SMITH

Hegel's account of Comedy (which is part of his analysis of the 'Spiritual Work of Art') plays an important role in the *Phenomenology*, coming just before 'Revealed Religion', itself at the very threshold of Absolute Knowing. Hegel's argument is by this point hugely complex, and so the aim of this article is to describe what is happening in this section in some detail. The first half of the article will look at the place of 'Religion' within the *Phenomenology*. In this chapter, as we will see, the structure of Hegel's argument changes dramatically, such that the basic subject-object schema, which had been the basis of the previous sections, is complicated by the addition of a third term (which we will term the 'object of the object'). The second half of the article will look in detail at the triad Epic-Tragedy-Comedy, focusing specifically on Hegel's phenomenological derivation of these shapes of consciousness. These particular transitions are especially clear exemplifications of the way in which Hegel's argumentation in the *Phenomenology* remains strictly immanent, that is to say, moves forward solely as a result of the contradictions which arise within each shape of consciousness, without relying on any external philosophical presuppositions. Against certain commentators who describe these dialectical transitions in terms of Hegel's theory of freedom, close attention to the details of Hegel's argument will show us that these external arguments are simply not necessary to make sense of this section. It is certainly true that, according to Hegel's theory of freedom, Epic-Tragedy-Comedy marks a progression from less freedom to more freedom, but this does not at all entail that the real 'work' is being done by the theory of freedom. On the contrary, as we will see, it is only the contradictions which arise from the internal logic of each art-form that makes its transition to the next stage necessary.

A Phenomenology of Religion

The conception of Religion which Hegel portrays here is very different from that found in a traditional theological setting. There is a precise methodological reason for this: Hegel is not here presenting a *philosophy* of Religion. His analysis is rather part of his *phenomenology,* and this section of his science of the experience of consciousness he calls 'Religion'. One of the rhetorical tricks frequently employed by Hegel in the *Phenomenology* is the sudden introduction of a familiar term at the point of emergence of a new dialectical form. This use of language is surprising at first, because the word usually points to something quite different from the technical structure it designates in Hegel's text. When, for example, he describes the primitive state of self-consciousness as the movement of returning to itself in the face of the 'vanishing essences' of its object, it comes as a great surprise to see this process abruptly named 'Desire'.[1] The reason why Hegel chooses this term, the connection between his concept and its use in ordinary language, does not become clear until later on in its development. The same is true of Hegel's use of the term 'religion'. We will therefore follow the advice of Frederic Jameson, who suggests that, when reading this section, we should initially 'bracket everything we traditionally associate with religion and [...] approach this topic as though it were utterly unfamiliar to us'.[2]

So what exactly is the object of consciousness at this point on its journey? In the previous section, 'Spirit', consciousness understood its object as 'a world'; a world, moreover, which took spiritual form as the ethical values of a community. This 'world' is not the world of phenomenal experience analysed by Heidegger or Sartre, but the world of the social substance (the set of values and norms effective within the social space). Reason is no longer understood as coming from within consciousness, nor does it come from something transcendent; reason is *embodied* in spirit, objectified in the values and practices of a particular community, and thus is wholly 'immanent within the world'.[3] As Pinkard

1 G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 105. Hereafter cited as *PS*.

2 Frederic Jameson, *The Hegel Variations: On the Phenomenology of Spirit* (London: Verso, 2010), p. 117.

3 Stephen Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth, and History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 78.

describes it, consciousness has 'moved from a conception of impersonal reason as providing [it] with a fixed standard by which [it] evaluate[s] all [its] various contingent claims to a conception of rationality as a form of reflective social practice'.[4] Understanding reason as the *'universal language'* embodied in 'the customs and laws of its nation'[5] means accepting that our universal ideas are not eternal Forms, but rather emerge out of the values and practices of a particular community. Our use of the term 'Justice', for instance, does not refer to a timeless Idea, but has its meaning and its rationality determined by the way the word is used within a particular group. From spirit onwards, then, the form of the object of consciousness is no longer just the form of a specific object, but the shape of a *world.*

What, then, is the contradiction that arises within 'Spirit'? As Hyppolite puts it: 'with spirit, the object of experience became 'a world,' and in-itself this world was indeed spiritual substance; *but it was not yet the consciousness of itself as spirit'*.[6] For 'us' (that is, for the phenomenologist reading Hegel's text), it has been clear for some time that consciousness has come to be what it truly is, namely spirit. 'We' are able to see that for consciousness, 'Reason' failed because it was looking for rationality in *individual* objects rather than in the *universal* social substance. Consciousness *itself,* however, has not yet come to this awareness. For consciousness, this new form of its object, the 'world' of a particular community, is simply taken up as its new object out of the failure of the previous one. Hegel makes an explicit analogy with the earlier shapes to describe this transition: 'just as for sense-perception simple being becomes a Thing of many properties, so for ethical perception a given action is an actual situation with many ethical connections'.[7] The motor for the dialectical movement in this section is the way in which consciousness conceives this 'world' and all the 'ethical connections' in it. Through its experience, consciousness gradually comes to find the ultimate truth of 'world' in its own existence as spirit. In other words, where the object of consciousness was previously only

4 Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) p. 135.
5 Hegel, *PS,* p. 213.
6 Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p. 534 (emphasis mine).
7 Hegel, *PS,* p. 267.

'implicitly Spirit',[8] that is, it was only spirit 'for us' and not 'for consciousness', now at the beginning of Religion, consciousness is *explicitly* aware that its object is spirit.

Even though, from the standpoint of philosophy itself, we know that consciousness ultimately 'is' spirit, we can see why contradictions continue to emerge within this section. Consciousness might at this point *be* spirit, but it has not yet recognised itself as such. What happens, then, at the end of the chapter on spirit? If consciousness now *does* explicitly conceive of itself as spirit, which is what it truly is, then how can further contradictions arise? This is a much more difficult question, not least because, as Harris notes, 'at the beginning of Hegel's seventh chapter our standpoint undergoes the most radical of all the transformations that occur in the *Phenomenology'*.[9] What is driving the process forwards, now that consciousness is explicitly aware of itself as what it actually is, namely spirit? Since consciousness now takes *itself* to be spirit (an "I' that is 'We' and 'We' that is 'I", in Hegel's famous formulation[10]), and it also takes its *object* to be spirit, then haven't we already reached the famous identity between thought and being, a perfect correlation between in-itself and for-us?

Hyppolite claims that there is indeed a major shift in this chapter of the *Phenomenology*, an important change in structure compared with the preceding sections:

> The phenomenology of religion is no longer the phenomenology of consciousness rising to the certainty that spirit is the only truth. It is spirit itself which, having arrived at self-knowledge, seeks an *expression* adequate to its essence.[11]

The section on Religion, for him, is no longer part of the journey of consciousness coming to find itself, but is an analysis of the different ways in which spirit *objectifies* this self-knowledge in spiritual and religious practices. If the previous moments were somewhat abstract accounts of different ways to conceive of the relation between the subject and the object, Hegel's phenomenology of religion is a concrete, material

8 *Ibid.*
9 H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder II: The Odyssey of Spirit* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), p. 521.
10 Hegel, *PS,* p. 110.
11 Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, p. 537 (my italics).

analysis of the different ways in which this truth gets expressed. We may affirm the philosophical proposition that 'man is spirit', or cognitively agree with the argument that shows it to be true, but for Hegel this is of secondary importance. What matters, for Hegel, is less what particular propositions we find ourselves inferentially committed to in the philosophical 'space of reasons' than the *material embodiments* of those abstract ideas, the way they are expressed in the world we live in (since the object at this point is still a 'world' – a world which, in this chapter, now explicitly contains spirit within it). For Hegel, it is never enough to give a totally abstract account of a certain phenomenon; what is needed in addition is an analysis of the way in which this universal philosophical idea finds expression in the real material world.

As Hyppolite puts it, if in the previous moments 'it was only a question of *consciousness* of absolute essence,' then now, in Religion, we are dealing with 'the *self-consciousness* of this essence'.[12] This section, he argues, is no longer really 'phenomenology' strictly speaking, but would be better termed 'noumenology': we are no longer dealing with consciousness coming to know itself, but rather with the *object* of self-consciousness coming to know itself. We see this difference expressed in the different form Hegel's argument takes at this point. In the actual dialectical transitions which take place in Religion, natural consciousness, the consciousness making its way through the *Phenomenology*, is only rarely mentioned. We see many different forms of consciousness appearing, but, crucially, these are not forms *which consciousness itself takes*. In 'Epic', for example, the character of the Minstrel plays a central role. Whilst it is tempting to read him this way, Hegel is not suggesting that consciousness at this point *becomes* a Minstrel. In terms of the basic subject-object schema which underlies the method of the *Phenomenology*, the Minstrel lies on the side of the *object*. The subject here is still consciousness, but consciousness as 'spirit', which 'finds itself' in various religious practices (in the same way that the slave 'finds himself' by working on the thing). Since spirit already knows itself to be spirit, the movement is now *wholly on the side of the object;* the contradictions which arise are now no longer between consciousness and the object, but are wholly immanent to the object itself.

12 *Ibid.* p. 533.

Hyppolite gives us another useful formula for understanding this section, designating it a 'phenomenology within phenomenology'.[13] Returning to our example of the Minstrel in Epic, we should ask the apparently simple question: what drives the dialectic forward at this stage? Who exactly bears witness to the contradiction? Hegel describes the problem which emerges within Epic thus: 'just as the gods fall into a contradictory relation with the self-like nature opposed to them, so too their universality comes into conflict with their own specific character and its relationship with others'.[14] Since it is the conception of the gods which falls into inconsistency, the contradiction is wholly *inside* the story which the Minstrel tells. Just as sense-certainty found that the act of describing or pointing to its experience itself undermined that experience, the Minstrel finds that in the process of telling his story, he undermines the ideas he originally set out to express. He tries to represent the gods as omnipotent universal powers who 'manage everything', but in the actual telling of his story, they end up functioning as impotent individuals, having their plans thwarted by 'ephemeral mortals who are as nothing'.[15] Further, we are told that 'the Minstrel... keeps himself outside of it [this contradiction] and is lost in his performance'.[16] Just as sense-certainty does not *itself* turn into perception ('we' make that transition, not sense-certainty), the Minstrel remains 'outside' the contradiction, continuing to tell his story, unaware that his position has been superseded. Unlike sense-certainty, however, we now have *three* terms: the subject (consciousness *qua* spirit), the object (the Minstrel), and the object of the object (the story).

In other words, to use what is perhaps Hegel's most important formula, in 'Religion', we are dealing with the process of *substance becoming subject*. As Zupančič writes: 'if, prior to this section, the principal role belonged to consciousness which, in the spirit of the world, had to come to its own Absolute, the main role now goes to the Absolute, which has to achieve its self-consciousness'.[17] The case of the Minstrel should make clear that this is not some mystical procedure whereby things magically start to move: the object of consciousness is at this point

13 *Ibid.* p. 535.
14 Hegel, *PS,* p. 442.
15 *Ibid.*
16 *Ibid.* p. 443.
17 Alenka Zupančič, *The Odd One In: On Comedy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), p.1 4.

a world, a world which includes the whole community of subjects, whose collective activity simply *is* the process of the expression of their understanding of themselves as spirit. 'Spirit' is not a fixed term, with a simple, univocal meaning that can be adequately expressed in propositional form (Hegel is one of the few thinkers never to fall into the trap of striving for a 'perfect' philosophical metalanguage). In order for a proposition to be *really* affirmed, it is not enough that it do so 'in our heads'; for Hegel, what is much more important is that we *act* on the truth of this proposition, to give it a real embodiment in the world. In fact, this is precisely what prevents Hegel's phenomenology from being the kind of idealist mystification it is so often taken for: the movement of substance becoming subject is not simply a movement of ideas, but must be a *material* phenomenon, having a tangible effect on the world from which it emerges.

Comedy itself provides us with a good example of this paradoxical movement of substance becoming subject. As Zupančič argues, comedy is notoriously difficult to pin down with conceptual determinations, since 'comedy lives in the same world as its definitions (in a much more emphatic sense than this could be said for other genres), and is quite capable of using its own definitions as material to be submitted to further comic treatment'.[18] She is not here only making the usual historicist point that comedy is always situated within a particular 'world', and relies on connections to that world for its effectiveness (political satire, for example, is much less funny when we are not familiar with the political 'world' being expressed). Her more important point is that comedy is also driven forward by a constant reflection on and relationship to its own current mode of appearance. The actual *content* of comedy, much more frequently than can be said for other genres, is comedy itself, the way in which our culture and society (which includes comedians themselves), understand the role and function of comedy. As Freud discovers very early on in his investigation on this topic, we cannot really give a satisfactory conceptual definition of comedy; any such definition would be liable to be immediately subverted by some new form which would escape and make fun of this very definition (this is, in fact, exactly how Freud himself proceeds in the first 'analytic' part of the book, refuting previous theories of jokes one by one by in each case providing a joke

18 *Ibid.* p. 3.

that doesn't 'fit' the definition).[19] Zupančič's conclusion, then, following Hegel, is that the comic subjectivity proper does not lie with 'the subject making the comedy, nor in the subjects or egos that appear in it, but in this very incessant and irresistible, all-consuming movement'.[20] Comedy is not a fixed determination, but relies on constant motion for its very survival. Because old forms become 'dated' so quickly (again, this happens far quicker than in almost any other genre), comedy must continually transform itself in order to continue to be comedy proper. This perpetual process of self-transformation is not just one feature of comedy among many, *it is comedy itself.*

Epic-Tragedy-Comedy

How, then, does Comedy emerge within the argument of the *Phenomenology?* The basic process in this section, as we have seen, is consciousness sitting by and watching the self-development of art. From the perspective of Hegel's *philosophy*, it is easy to see what is happening in this section. The general movement is away from representation, necessity and abstraction towards presentation, freedom and the concrete. We move from a story being told by a Minstrel, to an actor speaking his lines from behind a mask, to an actual person who *plays* with his mask, maintaining an ironic distance between himself and his 'character'. Similarly we move from determination by the 'irrational void of Necessity',[21] to the conflict between different universal powers which are nevertheless both 'equally right',[22] to an affirmation of the 'absolute power'[23] of human freedom. Finally we move from the conception of gods whose abstract universality is not restricted by their individual manifestation, to a concrete presentation of two nevertheless still abstract ideas, to the outright derision of abstraction, where even such noble ideas as the 'Beautiful' and the 'Good' are mocked. It is clear, then, why Hegel, *the* philosopher of freedom, thinks that each of these three forms is more true than the previous one. However, if we are to retain the idea that this section is *phenomenology* strictly speaking, these arguments simply can't

19 See Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious,* trans. by James Strachey (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 39-131.
20 Zupančič, *The Odd One In,* p. 3.
21 Hegel, *PS,* p. 443.
22 *Ibid.* p. 448.
23 *Ibid.* p. 452.

be relevant. Even the very good commentators on the *Phenomenology* don't seem to take this into account, providing us with a 'merely' philosophical account of the spiritual work of art.[24] If these are the only arguments which Hegel makes, then there is a strict violation of his methodology: the process would be driven by his theory of freedom rather than by the actual experience of natural consciousness. So, how does this particular triad look from the standpoint of consciousness itself?

We have already seen how, by its own logic, the narrative mode of Epic falls into a contradiction with itself. If Hegel's account is to retain its phenomenological legitimacy, the form of art which then emerges must develop logically out of this contradiction. This particular transition is a great example of a strategy which Hegel often uses, one of the key methodological procedures which allows his argumentation to remain strictly immanent. As Žižek points out, contrary to the standard view that a Hegelian triad always involves 'alienation, loss of the original organic unity, and the return to a 'higher' mediated unity', what we *really* find in Hegel is that the simple act of 'positing the distinction "as such" already *is* the looked-for "reconciliation"'.[25] We have an exceptionally clear example of this in the move from Epic to Tragedy. Affirming the contradiction which proved to be inherent to Epic *is already in itself the basic gesture of Tragedy*. Tragedy is the direct presentation of the contradiction which was found in Epic, staged *explicitly* as a contradiction where in Epic it was only *implicitly* so. As we saw, the problem which arose in Epic was the status of the gods: on the one hand they are absolute and omnipotent, 'exempt from transitoriness and the influence of alien powers', yet on the other hand, in their infighting and petty squabbles, they show themselves to 'stand in relation to others', and thus not in fact to possess the absolute power they are supposed to.[26] The contradiction arises precisely when one absolute universal power confronts another, thus demonstrating that they cannot *both* be truly absolute and universal. In Epic, the Minstrel, as we have seen, remains unaware of this contradiction, and continues to tell his tale regardless. In Tragedy, however, this contradiction between the absoluteness of two

24 In e.g. Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and Quentin Lauer, *Essays in Hegelian Dialectic* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1977).

25 Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MIT Press: 2009), p. 27.

26 Hegel, *PS,* p .442.

different universals is presented directly *as* a contradiction. We can see how this conflict is staged most clearly in the classic Hegelian example of *Antigone.* In this play we are presented with two opposing claims to justice: on the one hand, Creon's 'law of the city', and on the other, Antigone's 'divine law'. Consciousness does not possess any kind of formal procedure for deciding which of these ethical claims is more correct – there is no categorical imperative or utilitarian calculus to follow. For consciousness, both of these claims appear as absolute, and thus *both* parties are in some sense 'right'.

What are the other important features of Tragedy, on Hegel's phenomenological account? We have seen how affirming the contradiction present within Epic already serves as the basic formal frame of Tragedy, but there are a number of other key differences which emerge through the experience of Epic. In Epic, conflict between the universal powers was an embarrassing accident; this was precisely the *problem* with the genre, not an important aspect of its mode of representation. For Tragedy, then, the two different universalities must be presented 'as such', which of course implies a different narrative form. Against the contradictory Epic account of the gods, in Tragedy these universal powers which fall into conflict must be *explicitly* presented as conflictual. This means that, rather than a multitude of abstract gods on the battlefield, the competing claims to justice in Tragedy must each be expressed in the form of 'universal individuality'.[27] That is to say, if a universal is to be directly presented *as* a universal, it must now be embodied in an individual character. Thus, in Tragedy, the drama focuses on individual characters who directly 'are' their respective claims to justice. It follows from this that the characters should not be 'realistic': the more 'accidents of circumstance and personal idiosyncrasies' the characters have, the less they are able to 'be' the absolute ideals they are supposed to.[28] The Chorus gives further weight to each of the two

27 *Ibid.* p. 444.

28 *Ibid.* Zupančič makes the insightful point that this is manifest even in the *titles* of tragic works (see *The Odd One In* pp. 36-39). Tragedies, she observes, often highlight this 'universal individuality' by taking the proper name of the main character as their titles ('Oedipus' or 'Electra', right up to 'Hamlet' or 'Macbeth'). Comedies, by contrast, often give their main characters a *general* or *generic* name: her prime examples here are Chaplin's famous characters: 'Tramp', 'Lone Prospector' and 'Worker'. Even when comic characters are given a proper name, it is usually a deliberately generic one: 'Borat' or 'Bruno' (her examples) has a

opposing sides by registering their individual ideas within the ethical substance of the community. Tragedy does not present an arbitrary conflict between two individuals, but aims at an issue which should be of real importance to that particular ethical 'world'. The Chorus is thus a kind of external guarantee that the Tragedy presents a real conflict, a representative of society itself, needed to affirm that the tragic conflict really does bring out a genuine contradiction within this society. What makes this transition so interesting is precisely that which is most often missed by commentators, namely *the fact that it remains wholly immanent*. Hegel shows why the failure of the Epic narrative form must *by its own logic* lead to a number of very specific details regarding Tragedy.

The characters in Tragedy, as we have seen, are embodiments of a particular absolute claim to justice. Since this claim is absolute, the character who represents it must also be absolute: there is no room in Tragedy for negotiation or compromise. Again, this comes through clearly in *Antigone:* Antigone herself is iron-willed, fixated on her one ethical idea at the expense of everything else. This is the 'monstrous' side of Antigone emphasised by Lacan[29]: she is an almost inhuman figure who refuses to compromise on her position, to the point of not even being willing to discuss it. Significantly, it is only in the speech she gives immediately before her death that Antigone gives any justification for her actions. The justification she gives proves to be so strange that generations of critics from Goethe to Judith Butler have gone so far as to suggest that these lines cannot have been part of the original manuscript.[30] If it had been a husband or a child, Antigone tells us, she would not have gone to these lengths, because she 'might have found another'.[31] She only carried out her extreme actions because Polyneices was her brother, irreplaceable since her parents were both dead. Without

completely different function *qua* name than the singularity implied by 'Antigone' or 'Oedipus'. Her most convincing proof of this point is to imagine changing some famous titles: imagine how differently we would experience the play if 'Othello' were to be renamed 'A Jealous Husband'!

29 See Lacan, Jacques, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis,* trans. by Dennis Porter (London: Routledge, 1999), chapters XIX-XXI, pp. 243-287.

30 See J.W. Goethe. *Sämtliche Werke, 2. Abteilung, Band 12: Johann Peter Eckermann: Gespräche mit Goethe* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1999), pp. 586-587 and Judith Butler, *Antigone's Claim: A Kinship Between Life and Death* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2000).

wanting to detract from the intrinsic 'rightness' of Antigone's insistence that her brother be buried, we could easily point to deep flaws in her reasoning. Why is it specifically Polyneices' uniqueness that makes it necessary for him to be buried properly? If Polyneices is so important to her only because he was her irreplaceable brother, then why does she ask her sister, the equally irreplaceable Ismene, to sacrifice herself as well? Hegel's dialectical point is that it is precisely this single-minded insistence on her cause (even if this cause is absolutely justified), that violently rejects all rational discussion which makes the tragic outcome inevitable. The tragic situation arises because Antigone's 'consistent and unswerving pursuit of the good *turns itself* into wrong'.[32]

Once again, by taking up this contradiction we found implicitly in the previous shape and presenting it explicitly *as* a contradiction, we find that *we have already arrived at the next stage*. What has emerged over the experience of Tragedy is that absolute commitment to an ethical Idea, even if it is justified, leads inevitably to contradiction with the perhaps equally valid ethical Ideas of others. An absolute commitment to *one* Good always leads to disaster, because it precludes the possibility of any Good other than itself. Just as Tragedy used the contradictory experience of Epic for its formal structure, Comedy takes up the impossibility inherent to Tragedy as its own. We could perhaps formulate the basic proposition of Comedy thus: 'any total identification with a universal idea must fail'. This formula holds for Tragedy as much as it does for Comedy, but whereas it represents the *truth* of Tragedy, that which emerges over the course of a tragic drama, for Comedy it must be the starting point, more an axiom than an end result. The comic character, rather than finding out through experience that complete attachment to universals leads to ruin, *knows it from the very start*. This is why what follows Tragedy is a *humorous* genre: where before some positive content was affirmed (the irreducibility of conflicting universal Ideas), in Comedy, this becomes the affirmation of something purely *negative* (which is of course not the same as a simple negation). What is affirmed is the *im*perfection and *in*completeness of every universal idea, and with it, the imbecility of anybody who follows one. The exemplary Comedy in this respect is Aristophanes' *Clouds:* not only are Socrates and the

31 Sophocles, *Antigone, Oedipus the King, Electra,* trans. by H.D.F. Kitto (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.31.

32 Stephen Houlgate, 'Hegel's Theory of Tragedy', in *Hegel and the Arts,* ed. by Stephen Houlgate (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), p. 156.

sophists personally ridiculed, Aristophanes even goes so far as to make fun of the eternal Ideas themselves: when two actors, dressed as 'superior' and 'inferior' arguments argue, Aristophanes has the *inferior* argument win. In this extremely radical move, Aristophanes mocks not any particular 'superior' position, but the very notion that the 'superior' argument should win. This dismissal is not made from the position of a different universal Idea (such a position would just be a different 'superior argument'), but, as we will see, from the absolute negativity unleashed by the free human subject. As Hegel puts it, in Comedy: 'there is exposed the complete emancipation of the purposes of the immediate individuality from the universal order, and the contempt of such an individuality for that order'.[33]

We have seen how Comedy emerges out of the contradictions present in Tragedy. What, then, are the concrete features which emerge out of the actual experience of Comedy? Consciousness has, by this point, realised that the 'unthinking wisdom of the Chorus' is no longer the appropriate medium for its self-expression in art.[34] But there is another intermediate step (a kind of 'micro-dialectic' nestled within the transition from Tragedy to Comedy): the critique of the Chorus comes originally not from Comedy, but from 'rational thinking' (Hegel's name for Socratic philosophy), which takes the 'contingent character and superficial individuality' of the maxims of the Chorus, and 'lifts them into the simple Ideas of the Beautiful and the Good'.[35] This is, once again, not an external critique: Hegel does not cite the genius of the philosopher as the agent of this process, but 'the dialectic contained in these maxims and laws themselves'.[36] The muddled advices of the Chorus are further clarified and formalised by this rational thinking into the eternal Ideas of the Beautiful and the Good. The problem with this approach, however, is that it doesn't really solve the problem; these ideas are so vague that they 'tolerate being filled with any kind of content'.[37] It is at this point that Comedy enters, making a 'comic spectacle' of these empty ideas, demonstrating the way in which their 'liberation' from the confused statements of the Chorus, far from lifting them into a supposed higher unity, actually causes these Ideas to become 'the sport of mere opinion

33 Hegel, *PS,* p. 451.
34 *Ibid.*
35 *Ibid.*
36 *Ibid.*
37 *Ibid.* p. 452.

and the caprice of any chance individuality'.[38] In contrast to rational thinking's aim to clarify the situation of Tragedy, to systematise the confused logic of the Chorus, its result is precisely the opposite one of removing all validity from the claims of the Chorus. How does Comedy react to this situation? In exactly the same way we have seen with the other transitions: it raises itself to a 'higher' level simply by pointing out this contradiction. Comedy takes this failure as its *own* content, presenting directly the way that empty universal Forms can be used to justify any 'caprice' or 'chance individuality'.[39] In *The Clouds,* Socrates is not just portrayed as an idiot, but also as a cheat and a fraudster, using his supposedly 'rational' ideas of the Beautiful and the Good to take the money of any citizen foolish enough to join his expensive school.

What, then, comes to replace the 'unthinking wisdom' of the Chorus and the 'evanescent' universal Ideas of rational thinking? In its critique of the sophistry of 'rational thinking', the Comic consciousness has realised that *anything* which holds itself up as 'the essential', any universal Idea which claims to hold absolute power over it, can be subject to this same procedure:

> What this self-consciousness beholds is that whatever assumes the form of essentiality over against it, is instead dissolved in it – in its thinking, its existence, and its action – and is at its mercy. It is the return of everything universal into the certainty of itself.[40]

This process of subjecting the pantheon of the gods one by one to comic ridicule leads consciousness to realise that ultimately the 'absolute power' does not lie in the gods but in *itself.*[41] Once again, this is discovered as if 'by accident'. Comedy starts, as we have seen, with a purely *negative* aim, that of disparaging 'the universal order'; it is only through this movement that this 'negative power' of the individual self comes to be understood in

38 *Ibid.*
39 Hegel will return to this point in his critique of Kant's moral philosophy: the problem with Kant's notion of duty is that it is so universal that it tolerates being filled with any kind of content – Hegel describes Kant's system as an 'empty formalism' (G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right,* trans. by H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) p.162.
40 *Ibid.*
41 *Ibid.*

positive terms as an expression of human freedom. Žižek nicely describes this classic Hegelian move:

> what actually happens when, in a comedy, all the universal features of dignity are mocked and subverted? The negative force that undermines them is that of the individual, of the hero with his attitude of disrespect toward all elevated universal values, and *this negativity itself is the only true remaining universal force.*[42]

Hegel describes this movement thus:

> The *individual self* is the negative power through which and in which the gods... vanish. At the same time the individual self is not the emptiness of this disappearance, but, on the contrary, preserves itself in this very nothingness, abides with itself and is the sole actuality.[43]

The key outcome of Comedy, therefore, is the light-hearted subjectivity which emerges from it, the 'spiritual well-being' which gradually dissolves the 'unintelligible irrationality'[44] which still hung over Tragedy. Comic characters are no longer driven by Fate or by Necessity, but come to understand the radical negativity that 'is' their freedom as superior to these Notions.

Conclusion

The 'subject' that emerges from Comedy takes a very specific form, and this is what makes this section so significant for Hegel's project as a whole. As we have seen, the 'subject' in Comedy is the pure power of negativity, it is the dissolution of all positive universals which stand over against it. As we read in the Preface (where Hegel is making *philosophical* rather than phenomenological claims), this is ultimately nothing other than the true structure of the subject itself. In the same way that, at the beginning of 'Religion', consciousness becomes explicitly aware of itself as what it truly is, namely Spirit, in Comedy, consciousness has come to a full awareness of itself as subject (in other words, the concept of subjectivity at work in Comedy is the same as the

42 Žižek, *The Parallax View,* p. 107.
43 Hegel, *PS,* p.452.
44 Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason,* p. 247.

concept of subjectivity that Hegel takes to be ultimately true). We could, then, perhaps be justified in contesting the commonplace according to which Hegel's thought is essentially tragic, claiming instead that it is *comedy* which provides the clue to its basic structure. Further to her above-mentioned point about the titles of tragedies and the proper names of their characters, Zupančič makes the point that a lot of the chapter titles in the *Phenomenology* 'read as perfect comedy titles': "Lord and Bondsman', 'The Unhappy Consciousness', 'Pleasure and Necessity', 'The Law of the Heart and the Frenzy of Self-Conceit', 'Absolute Freedom and Terror', 'Dissemblance or Duplicity', 'The Beautiful Soul".[45] Our point is that this is no accident, because Hegel's thought itself has the structure he ascribes to Comedy. Rather than staging a tragic conflict between a 'thesis' and an 'antithesis', Hegel's procedure, just like Comedy's, is to take the universal pretentions of consciousness one by one, and to turn them inside-out. Hegel's subversion of each shape, the argument he makes in each section, is even *staged* like a Comedy: the protagonist ('consciousness') begins by taking itself absolutely seriously, remaining certain of itself at every step. Hegel 'trips up' consciousness in each case by highlighting the absurdities that it finds itself entangled in as a result of this strongly-held conviction (as in most great comedies, he does this by letting this very conviction be what leads the protagonist into these absurdities). The problem with tragedy (and the reason that it cannot serve as a model for the dialectical process) is that conflict is so 'absolute' that nothing can come of it: there is no positive moment within tragedy, only a 'missed encounter' that always ends in disaster. There is no possibility, in other words, for a *determinate* negation through which the original opposition can be 'sublated'. In a comedy, by contrast, this negative moment is only one part of this process: just as important as the undermining of universal values is the positive result which emerges from this very procedure.

Hegel succinctly sums up the movement of the Spiritual Work of Art immediately after the 'Comedy' section: 'through the religion of Art, Spirit has advanced from the form of *Substance* to assume that of *Subject'*.[46] As we have seen, this process of substance becoming subject is the basic procedure of this section of Hegel's dialectic: we are no

45 *The Odd One In* p.39. She adds: 'not to mention the ultimate comedy (and this is not meant ironically!) bearing the title 'Absolute Knowledge'.'
46 Hegel, *PS,* p. 453.

longer dealing with a changing relation between subject and object, but with a self-movement of the object itself. Natural consciousness does not have to 'get on stage' to undergo this process, it only has to include these works of art as a part of its spiritual world. What drives the process forwards is the internal logic of each form of art. In looking closely at the way this process is described in the text, we have seen the techniques Hegel uses to keep his analysis strictly immanent: the way he avoids 'adding' anything external is his incorporation of the formal impasses of the previous shape into the content of the next one. Each stage of the drama is nothing but the presentation 'as such' of the contradiction of the previous form. Hegel's deduction of the particular features of each of these types of drama also proceeds immanently: the failure of each of the concrete features of the previous form themselves transform into the positive features of the next. This triad, I would suggest, provides us with a particularly clear exemplification of this general logical structure, which reappears so often in Hegel's work.

Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit by Stephen Houlgate

DINO JAKUŠIĆ

Stephen Houlgate's *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* is intended to be a guide through Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* which 'aims to help students follow the twists and turns of that text itself.' It is a clear and detailed work, which does not rest at simply attempting to clarify and convey Hegel's meaning, but seeks to teach us how to read and understand a text which, on Houlgate's interpretation, literally twists and turns of its own accord.

The *Phenomenology of Spirit*, like every other text by Hegel, is notorious for its difficulty. In order to prepare for the reading of the text it is therefore necessary to understand certain underlying concepts and the project Hegel is pursuing. Since there is no overarching consensus on the topic of how to read Hegel (at least not a positive one - nothing seems easier than finding a philosopher who would agree that Hegel should not be read at all) there seem to be as many interpretations of Hegel's basic concepts and aims as there are Hegel scholars. As such, a proper way to introduce Houlgate's guide is to describe the form it takes and extract what is specific to Houlgate's reading of the *Phenomenology*.

Structure of the Book

The book is divided into four chapters. The first situates Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* in its historical context, with close attention paid to its relationship with Hegel's *Science of Logic*, which Houlgate considers to be the beginning of Hegel's actual philosophy, Kant's conception of critical philosophy, and the tradition of German Idealism in general. The second chapter presents us with Houlgate's understanding of

the fundamental themes of the *Phenomenology,* including the educative (*Bildung*) purpose of phenomenology, Hegel's idea of experience, the role of the '*we*', the relation between the beginning and the end of the text, and the reasons for the *Phenomenology* taking the point of departure that it does. Chapter Three gives a short exposition of the key historical figures directly influenced by the *Phenomenology* and how their (mis)understandings of the text influenced their own philosophical positions. Finally, the fourth chapter concludes the book with references to other contemporary English-speaking readers of Hegel, with particular attention paid to the work of Robert Pippin, and the fundamental differences between their readings of the *Phenomenology* and Houlgate's own.

The bulk of the book is devoted to a detailed, section by section guide through the *Phenomenology of Spirit* starting with *sense-certainty* and finishing with *absolute knowing*. Unfortunately, due to its size, the book is only able to provide a very detailed exegesis of the first four chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (from sense-certainty to reason), while the transitions from *observing reason* to *absolute knowing* are treated more briefly.

In the first, more detailed part, Houlgate opens each of the general sections (sense-certainty, perception, desire, etc.) with an explanation of the basic idea behind that shape of consciousness. This is followed by the separation of the movement of consciousness into experiences it undergoes during its micro-transitions within the same shape, providing a clear, natural separation of the progression of Hegel's text. After explaining all the micro-transitions of a given shape, Houlgate gives a general explanation of the macro-transitions between one general shape of consciousness and the next (e.g. from consciousness to self-consciousness) and the whole process starts again. This structure is repeated until the section on reason is reached, after which the same process is undertaken in less detail, with only the general logical structure being explained and the reader left to fill in the gaps. Throughout the book, however, macro-transitions are concluded with a pair of 'Study questions' which are intended to guide our reflection and understanding of the text.

Features of the Interpretation

As mentioned earlier, the specificity of Houlgate's reading of the *Phenomenology* rests on his interpretation of Hegel's project and the underlying mechanisms of the text. In addition to adopting certain positions regarding these topics, Houlgate introduces certain new concepts in order to facilitate the reading and understanding of the text.

One such set of concepts relates to the afore-mentioned separation of Hegel's text into micro and macro-transitions. The dialectic of the experience of consciousness at play within the general sections of the text is understood as one of micro-transition. For example, Houlgate separates sense-certainty into three such transitions, or experiences of consciousness, which, in this case, he calls 'The now', 'The dialectic of the I' and 'Pointing'. After the micro-transitions have brought sense-certainty through the third stage of experience, the macro-transition to Perception occurs. At this point we are introduced to Houlgate's understanding of the meaning of the cryptic *we* referred to by Hegel.

While the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is supposed to describe the progression of consciousness from its simplest stage to Absolute Knowing, Hegel often talks about something that escapes it. More than once Hegel says that consciousness is not aware of something necessitated by its movements, but *we* are. Houlgate reads this *we* as the reader or the phenomenologist reading the *Phenomenology*. Houlgate interprets the macro-transition as something brought about by the *we*, the readers or phenomenologists. For Houlgate, consciousness does not 'mutate' into a higher form or 'remember' its past commitments once the macro-transition happens:

> Strictly speaking (...) no shape of consciousness in the *Phenomenology* turns directly into the following shape sense-certainty does not become perception, the slave does not become a stoic, and the sceptic does not become the unhappy consciousness. In each case, we are the ones who effect the transition from one shape to another. (p. 26)

The categorisations Hegel gives of different moments of consciousness, from sense-certainty to absolute knowing, are not something consciousness classifies as such on its own, but a certain diagnosis understood by '*we*' who are *observing* the immanent transformations consciousness itself undertakes.

This leads us to probably the most important characteristic of Houlgate's reading of the *Phenomenology* which is his interpretation of the specific sense in which Hegel's phenomenological 'method' is supposed to operate. Unlike in the readings proposed by Robert Pippin or Charles Taylor, Houlgate does not see the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as an essay in transcendental argument. While acknowledging that Hegel is in some sense continuing Kant's critical project, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is for Houlgate a pedagogical text intended to educate natural, non-philosophical consciousness towards the standpoint of philosophy (the unity of thought and being) realised at the end of the text. The most important characteristic of his reading is Houlgate's claim that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* does not present us with Hegel's philosophy proper. To do phenomenology in this specific sense is to attempt to observe the immanent, self-moving logic which consciousness itself undertakes on the basis of its own experience. If consciousness starts from a position of separation of thought and being (as Natural Consciousness does) its own experience will lead it to the position of the unity of thought and being. Houlgate interprets this attempt to let consciousness unfold of its own accord, without presupposing any theoretical framework, as Hegel's attempt to remain genuinely 'critical' in the sense proposed, but betrayed, by Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Although it is *we*, as the readers and phenomenologists, who are indispensable for undertaking macro-transitions, we do not violate the principle of immanence by doing so. We do not infuse the experience of consciousness with our own everyday or philosophical 'experience' but simply posit what we see unfold through consciousness' immanent self-movement.

Houlgate justifies many transitions through this specific understanding of what Hegel intends phenomenology to be, and his various readings repeatedly invoke it in order to defend Hegel from possible criticism. Houlgate does not simply state his interpretation, however, but argues for it by situating Hegel's project in its historical context, and pointing out how various canonical re-interpretations of Hegel's philosophy, such as those of Feuerbach, Marx and Kojève, can be traced to a misunderstanding of the special sense in which Hegel executes his project. Unfortunately, while this might be sufficient for a new reader of Hegel, this book will probably not be enough to convince scholars of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* to adopt Houlgate's reading. The

reason for this is the simple fact that the nature of this book is introductory. The aim of it is not to argue for and posit the standard reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, but to help students new to Hegel in navigating through its difficult passages. That being said, Houlgate directly argues for and compares his reading with the ones of other contemporary Hegel scholars (e.g. Brandom, Pippin, Pinkard), but the nature of the book requires of him to keep such comparisons and arguments brief.

Conclusion

Houlgate's introduction to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is a clear and compelling reading of Hegel's difficult text. Through a novel understanding of Hegel's project and approach, Houlgate gives additional strength and vigour to Hegel's text, which serves as an introduction and justification to his general understanding of Hegel's philosophy as an ontological, rather than transcendental or epistemological, endeavour.

The main weakness of the book, and Houlgate can hardly be blamed for this, given the nature of the series it belongs to, is that it stays within the limits of being an introduction and a guide for new students of Hegel. Unlike Houlgate's *Freedom, Truth and History* which may be read as a general introduction to Hegel's philosophy, this book can be seen as being too demanding for readers who might simply have a general interest in learning something about Hegel's philosophy. While not lacking in clarity it retains complexity which would prevent it from motivating a reader who has not already made a firm commitment to engaging with Hegel's difficult text before consulting this book. On the other hand, while similar in style to his earlier guide to the *Science of Logic* (*The Opening of Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity*) Houlgate's introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is clearly aimed at less experienced readers. Veterans of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Hegel scholars, while finding Houlgate's reading interesting, might demand more critical engagement with the original text (i.e. the section of the text after *Reason*) and contemporary readings of Hegel to be convinced by Houlgate's position.

Keeping all that in mind we can say that Stephen Houlgate's new guide to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* succeeds in being what it aims to be: a useful and clear guide for students deciding to engage with

Hegel's text. The fact that Houlgate manages, within limits of space and the philosophical ability of the targeted audience, to present a convincing reading of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* which will, if not convince, most certainly provide a strong challenge to other available readings, can only be seen as an additional strength of the book.

Introduction to Metaphysics: From Parmenides to Levinas by Jean Grondin (trans. Lukas Soderstrom)

TSUTOMU BEN YAGI

Jean Grondin is most often recognised for his contributions to scholarship on Hans-Georg Gadamer. For not only has he published a number of books and essays devoted to elucidating Gadamer's hermeneutics, but his biography of Gadamer remains an unparalleled achievement that provides the most reliable and thorough account of Gadamer's life and path of thinking. In the volume under review here, however, Grondin exhibits a whole new orientation as he ventures into surveying the entire history of metaphysics, of which Gadamer occupies only a small section (in chapter eleven). The volume has recently been translated from the French, published in 2004 under the title *Introduction à la métaphysique*, by Lukas Soderstrom. It contains a little over three-hundred pages and, along with a brief preface, introduction, and conclusion, it is divided into eleven chapters that cover the history of metaphysics from Parmenides to Lévinas, as indicated by the subtitle (which does not appear in the original).

Given the widespread aversion to metaphysics that has come to characterise the philosophical scene over more than a half-century, notably due to the profound influence of Heidegger, Grondin makes his intention known already in the preface that he aims to confront such a tendency by seeking to revive metaphysics. In this sense, this volume serves not only as an 'introduction' in the customary sense of the term, where the purpose is to introduce the subject matter to readers who are unfamiliar with it, but also as an attempt to reconstruct the history of metaphysics with a specific aim in mind, namely, to demonstrate the indispensability of metaphysical thought. As Grondin proclaims in the preface, 'this book will argue that it is thus impossible to surpass

metaphysics without presupposing it' (p. xviii). Hence, the primary objective of this work is to rehabilitate the significance metaphysics obtains in philosophy by retracing the thoughts of those representative thinkers who have contributed to defining the metaphysical discourse in an important way over the course of its history.

Among a number of philosophers taken up, Kant and Heidegger assume an important and distinctive role, especially for the specific aim of this volume just laid out. For, in Grondin's view, they are the 'two major inspirations' for contemporary thought, insofar as 'The arguments of both have commanded all the attempts to go beyond metaphysics' (p. 251). While the special place Heidegger occupies is perhaps incontestable given his influence on contemporary thought, it is noteworthy that Grondin identifies Kant as another thinker who helped shape contemporary thought, rather than, say, Hegel or Nietzsche (while the former receives a fair amount of attention in the volume, the latter is only briefly mentioned). A reconstruction of the history of metaphysics Grondin embarks upon becomes truly meaningful only when one follows his reading of Kant and Heidegger. Rather than interpreting these two thinkers as having simply wreaked havoc on the stature of metaphysics as a credible form of thought, as it is often believed, Grondin brings out the moments in their thoughts which display metaphysical characteristics.

Kant, who is taken up in chapter eight, is commonly regarded as a philosopher whose works consisted in demarcating the respectable boundaries of metaphysics. As such, the emphasis is often given to the aspect of his thought which endorses the idea that metaphysics is legitimate only insofar as its discourse is confined to the realm of possible experience. Yet such an understanding alone would remain inadequate, since, as Grondin suggests, it does not take into consideration the fact that Kant was essentially more occupied with practical philosophy (metaphysics of morals) than theoretical philosophy (metaphysics of nature). Although Kant sought to develop his metaphysics of morals while remaining faithful to the transcendental arguments which he had worked out in his metaphysics of nature, the practical questions he dealt with no longer pertained to those which concern the conditions of knowledge. For, in asking about human freedom, the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul, it is 'less a question of assuring the scientific value of metaphysical knowledge

than a defense of pure reason's hopes, which Kant knew quite well no longer related to any science' (p. 152). Even if Kant regards his answers to such questions as *postulates* of practical reason, without which we are unable to properly account for human action, he is nevertheless guided by such questions which 'necessarily overstep the very limited boundaries of science as they relate to the ends of human reason' (p. 152).

Likewise, Grondin seeks out the metaphysical moments in Heidegger's thought in chapter ten. He does this by attending to the period between 1927 and 1929, during which Heidegger used the term 'metaphysics' affirmatively to characterise his own thinking (p. 208-13). In particular, Grondin identifies two works from 1929 as providing a revealing insight: *What is Metaphysics?* and *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Rather than conceiving of metaphysics as an impediment to our thinking, as he would later come to think, Heidegger, in these works, engages with metaphysics in order to radicalise it by reawakening the question of the meaning of Being. As Grondin highlights, Heidegger employs the expression 'metaphysics of Dasein' in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* to characterise his project precisely because, at this stage, he still maintains the view that the question of the meaning of Being may be rethought through the transcendence of Dasein. Against the Heidegger who later came to 'stigmatise metaphysics', as Grondin repeatedly describes him, Grondin reads him as a 'metaphysical thinker to the core' (p. 255) who radicalised metaphysics from within and out of metaphysical thinking.

Once Grondin's assessment of Kant and Heidegger is taken into account, his motives for re-examining the history of metaphysics become apparent. By investigating how different philosophers have developed and articulated metaphysical thoughts, Grondin intends to highlight the fact that there are 'many forms of metaphysics' (p. 247). In doing so, he is clearly making the case that metaphysics is capable of critiquing and overcoming itself. Thus we must not abandon metaphysics for 'another beginning', as Heidegger later came to believe, but rather discover a possibility for self-renewal within metaphysics itself. The history of metaphysics exhibits precisely such a self-critical dimension of metaphysics.

From antiquity, Grondin explores the thought of Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotle, and devotes a chapter to each thinker (followed by a

chapter dedicated to Plotinus and Augustine). Although the term 'metaphysics' was not coined until the first-century BCE by Andronicus of Rhodes and did not enter into the philosophical lexicon until the twelfth-century CE (p. xxii), we can already locate the origins of metaphysics in these thinkers. It is indeed clear, even at this point, that metaphysics proceeds in a dynamic fashion. Beginning with Parmenides' Being, Plato's elaboration of the notion of Idea was inspired by Parmenides, just as Aristotle reacted against Plato in developing his doctrine of Being *qua* Being. Grondin offers an interesting interpretation, inspired by Gadamer's reading of Plato and Aristotle (p. 272, note 42), which suggests that, contrary to the conventional view, it was actually Plato rather than Aristotle that preserved the intricate relation between the sensible and the intelligible without completely separating them. For, even if Aristotle espoused the hylomorphic structure of substance in order to account for change and movement, whereby matter and form are brought to unity, his view fundamentally hinges on the doctrine of the prime mover which marks the supreme principle and the highest activity. Aristotle thus distinguishes the divine from the sensible in such a way that they are disparately separate (p. 66). On the contrary, Plato still maintained the intertwined and interdependent relation between the two realms of reality, the sensible and the intelligible, since he concedes that the world is not only governed in a uniform manner according to the Idea, but is also dispersed by the principle of the indeterminate dyad. He therefore endorses a 'dualism of principles' (p. 44).

In chapter five, Grondin subsequently turns to Anselm, Avicenna, Averroes, Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus from the Middle Ages. It is to Grondin's credit that he includes non-Western thinkers in this volume. While each of these thinkers pursued metaphysics in their own way, they all shared the fundamental task of addressing the relation between Being and God, regardless of whether they dwelt in the world of Islam or Christianity. Grondin thus remarks that 'the Middle Ages were marked by a decisive confrontation between faith and reason' (p. 84). As such, it was in such a theological context of seeking to determine the ontological status of God that the ontological questions were developed by Duns Scotus into a formal and rational inquiry called 'transcendental philosophy', which would later be known as 'ontology'. As Grondin notes, it was not until the seventeenth century that 'the neologism *ontologia* appeared' (p. 106).

Grondin then proceeds with an explication of modern philosophy, where Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz are examined prior to the chapter on Kant. In chapter six, which is dedicated to Descartes, Grondin follows Jean-Luc Marion's interpretation of Descartes (p. 119) in suggesting that Descartes implicitly adopts two distinct forms of metaphysics in his *Meditations on First Philosophy*: metaphysics of the *cogito* and metaphysics of God. As such, one witnesses a '*tension* between the two faces of first philosophy' (p. 120) in Descartes, as he inherited aspects of scholastic thought while at the same time attempting to establish a new metaphysics founded on subjectivity. Spinoza and Leibniz, who are discussed in the following chapter, were deeply influenced by Descartes' approach of demonstrating the metaphysical concepts based on a rational method. Spinoza and Leibniz thus work out their metaphysical inquiry in an analytical manner, which Grondin describes as the 'metaphysics of simplicity and integral rationality'. Indeed such a characterisation well captures their views, as Spinoza identifies the immanence of God as the fundamental principle of the world, just as Leibniz considers the monad to amount to such a principle.

Subsequent to the chapter on Kant, Grondin turns his attention to the philosophical development during the period between Kant and Heidegger. While most of the chapter is devoted to explicating the central figures of German Idealism, namely, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, Grondin also offers an account of the development both prior and subsequent to this movement. He thus includes a discussion of the interpretations of Kant's theoretical philosophy formulated by Jacobi and Reinhold prior to the emergence of German Idealism, as well as a brief summary of the development following the movement, in which thinkers like Dilthey, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein are mentioned. Given the wide scope of this chapter, it constitutes the lengthiest in this volume. While the German Idealists are generally known for their preoccupation with metaphysics, Grondin refers to a rather paradoxical situation by explaining in the following way: 'Whereas Kant argued a resolutely anti-metaphysical philosophy, but recurrently used the term metaphysics, German Idealism elaborated powerfully metaphysical philosophies without ever using, *expressis verbis*, the title metaphysics' (p. 155).

Rather than acknowledging the end of speculative metaphysics, the German Idealists discovered possibilities of developing metaphysics

anew within and out of Kant's critical project itself. For they recognised in Kant an apparent contradiction whereby, on the one hand, he denounced all speculative metaphysics that reaches beyond the limits of experience, while, on the other hand, his own system remained plausible only on the assumption of speculative conditions. The metaphysics developed by the German Idealists, at least at the point of its inauguration, was inspired by such shortcomings as they identified in Kant's philosophy. They aspired to fulfil the system which Kant himself had not entirely completed. The German Idealists triggered, in turn, a strong reaction from their successors as they were considered to be relapsing into the same classical metaphysics that had supposedly been denounced by Kant.

In the final chapter (which follows the chapter on Heidegger), Grondin traces the philosophical development since Heidegger. Although it is often acknowledged that there has hardly been any substantial metaphysics after Heidegger's destruction of the history of metaphysics, Grondin contends that metaphysics has actually been 'rediscovered' in three distinct ways: existence (Sartre), language (Gadamer, Derrida), and transcendence (Lévinas). Grondin's point may be contentious, however, given that none of them, perhaps with the exception of Lévinas, explicitly declared their own thought as to be a form of metaphysics. Indeed, presumably for this reason, Lévinas takes on a distinctive and pivotal role for Grondin's reconstruction of the history of metaphysics, since Lévinas 'reasserts [the metaphysical culmination of philosophy] more forcefully than Heidegger, Sartre, Gadamer, or Derrida' (p. 246). This explains why Grondin places Lévinas at the very end of the volume, although, chronologically speaking, Derrida ought to come after him, because his thought, more than anyone else's, enables us to reaffirm confidence in metaphysics. This deliberate reversal thus signifies a textual play 'inscribed' by Grondin, which unfortunately is not developed further.

By reconstructing the history of metaphysics, Grondin seeks to demonstrate and highlight the diverse forms metaphysics is capable of taking. Even when one finds, for instance, the views of predecessors inadequate or problematic, it is always possible to criticise them and work out anew one's own position within and through the metaphysical tradition. In this way, Grondin hints at the *versatility* of metaphysics that constantly allows for new possibilities to emerge. In this regard, I think

Grondin's book serves its intended purpose. It is certainly helpful to delve into the history of metaphysics in this way, and the plurality of metaphysical discourses is evident in the specific questions that captivated the thinkers of the metaphysical tradition. What the book does not seem to deliver quite as effectively, however, is the supposedly common character that unites all metaphysical endeavours. As Grondin argues in the conclusion, metaphysics constitutes 'the guiding thread of the entire Western tradition' (p. 247). Unfortunately, he does not elucidate much as to how such a guiding thread can and should be conceived. His own scant contribution to this matter can be captured by the following passage where, shortly afterwards, he asserts:

> [M]etaphysics is, in essence, the self-critical endeavor of the human mind to understand the whole of reality and its reasons, an undertaking which can indeed be seen to have supported the Western intellectual tradition (p. 247).

Yet one must wonder whether such a definition is not too general and abstract to be useful. Indeed, have we not come to question the very notions of being 'self-critical' and the 'whole of reality'? Precisely *whose* reality is at issue? And exactly *who* is doing self-criticism? Moreover, Grondin does not seem at all concerned to address the reason why a sustained endeavour to understand the 'whole of reality and its reasons' should have recourse solely to the 'Western intellectual tradition'. Why should such a *human* aspiration be identified with and continue to be bounded by a geographically-confined tradition? Does that not, in fact, imply a restriction of reality?

Ultimately, this volume is an attempt to restore our confidence in metaphysics, calling for its revival by making the case that metaphysics is indispensable, if not unavoidable. Rather than refraining from metaphysics because it somehow remains inherently 'violent' in its inability to account for otherness, we must conceive of metaphysics as expressing the human hope. As Grondin asks in the following way:

> But where on Earth is the violence in the thinking of Being and its reasons? Isn't it this criticism itself that is extraordinarily violent in that it doesn't do justice to the human mind's hope of understanding reality? (p. 250)

In other words, we ought not shun metaphysics, but rather confront it. In seeking to understand reality, we transcend ('*meta*') our ordinary conditions in order to attain a more abstract vantage point. Grondin thus states:

> Metaphysics uses this natural transcendence [of going beyond experience and what is immediately given] of the human mind and language to argue that one only understands something when one sees it in a broader perspective (p. 249).

Yet the book still leaves much to be desired, insofar as Grondin himself does not offer any substantial clue, aside from his exhortation to restore metaphysics, as to how we may proceed with such a restoration. Supposing that we do regain the confidence and courage to take on metaphysics once again – what, then, would a renewed form of metaphysics actually look like? How can it be carried out? As a reader, one would expect him to at least suggest how he envisions such a possible metaphysics.

Leaving behind the content of the book, I wish at last to make some brief remarks about the editing of this volume. For I must admit that its overall quality is quite disappointing. The text contains numerous spelling and grammatical errors as well as missing characters and words to such a degree that they may actually hinder one's reading experience. Just to illustrate by pointing out the most frequently recurring error, 'than' is constantly misspelled as 'that' throughout the text. Other negligible errors are also very noticeable: 'Lévinas' is at times written with the accent mark, other times without; inconsistent capitalisation with words like 'Book' or 'Thomistic'; and the Greek alphabet is used at times for references to the book number of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, the Roman numeral at other times. Even if one considers such errors to be trivial and of little concern, they reveal a lack of care and attention on preparing the text for publication. However, there is further cause for even greater concern.

What I was particularly puzzled by at first was the fact that, on seeing in the text references made to the English language but none to the French, I was not at all sure whether such references were those of the author himself. Given that the original text appeared in French, it is natural to suppose that the author would make references to French

rather than to English. Yet, in the text, one encounters a number of passages such as the following:

> For some time now, I have deplored the absence of a historical introduction to metaphysics in *English*. Those that do exist are either old or [T]homistic, in an outdated and caricatured understanding of the term (p. xvii, emphasis added).

In the original, as it turns out, the same passage appears as follows:

> *Il y a déjà quelque temps que je regrette l'absence, en* langue française, *d'une introduction historique à la métaphysique. La plupart de celles qui existent sont ou très anciennes ou d'inspiration thomiste, au sens un peu périmé et caricatural du terme* (p. 13, emphasis added).

As one can see, the translator has substituted the reference to French with one to English. I cannot say with any firm conviction how unusual, if not outright misguided, such a practice is, but I am doubtful that this is a standard editorial practice. Given that French and English, and the philosophical culture and context corresponding to them, are far from being identical, and hence not directly substitutable, this simply seems to be a poor decision made by the translator. Such an editorial change would perhaps be admissible should there be an editor's note or translator's introduction explaining what changes they have made to the text and why. Unfortunately, such an explanation is nowhere to be found, as the volume contains no comments by either the translator or an editor. The only words we have from the translator are a paragraph included as the 'Note on References' (p. 258), which only explains the pagination used for citations in the text. Given that the volume also lacks an index, which would certainly have been helpful for an introductory work, I cannot help but think that it was a hasty job by the translator as well as the publisher.

Considering the book as a whole, I believe Grondin falls short of fulfilling the goal with which he sets out on this ambitious undertaking. To trace back and narrate the entire history of metaphysics in a volume of such modest length is not a trivial task to achieve. Rather than covering such a wide scope, it may perhaps have been more feasible and compelling had Grondin focused simply on, say, Kant and Heidegger as

the central figures of his attempt at rehabilitation, and mentioned other thinkers only as needed, should the project not be carried out in voluminous length. While the readers may be able pick up a basic knowledge of the metaphysical thinkers under discussion such that, in this respect, the book serves its intended purpose, what they are able to take away from it is likely to be quite limited, mainly because no thinker is addressed in sufficient detail to serve as a useful guide for exploring the intellectual terrain. Yet, concerning the other aim of the volume, the reconstructed history of metaphysics retold by Grondin lacks a coherent narrative to demonstrate the common features shared by metaphysics as a whole. Hence, it is difficult to grant that the author has succeeded in showing convincingly that 'metaphysics is the insurmountable presupposition of all thought insofar as it carried and supported the project of a universal understanding of the world that inquires into the Being and reason for things' (p. xvii). Insofar as Grondin 'inscribes' a reversal in the text, such that Lévinas follows after Derrida, we as readers would expect him to provide us with an elucidation as to what that reversal may signify for the rehabilitation. Moreover, insofar as he claims that metaphysics has been 'rediscovered', we would hope to find out in what way metaphysics has become possible again and how it can still be carried out today. Witnessing the considerable difficulty with which Grondin seeks out a possibility for the rehabilitation of metaphysics, we are left wondering whether we were doing metaphysics all along, or whether we still remain at a great distance from the point of rediscovering metaphysics.

The Ends of Beauty: Sinead Murphy's *the Art Kettle*

PETE WOLFENDALE

> I promise you... that if you ask me for a good thing that is good for nothing, I know no such thing, nor have anything to do with it... In a word, all things that are of any use in the world are esteemed beautiful and good, with regard to the subject for which they are proper.[1]

These words, attributed to Socrates by Xenophon, paint a picture of the beautiful which is strikingly at odds with those attributed to him by Plato. This tension – between the Socrates who grounds beauty in the practical concerns of everyday life and the Socrates who grounds beauty in the divine perfection of the intelligible that shines through its imperfect realisation in the sensible – inaugurates a division in the philosophical understanding of beauty that still haunts us in the present day. Though both sides of this divide have had their champions – such as Hume's thoroughgoing aesthetic utilitarianism and Kant's substitution of formal purposiveness for divine purpose, respectively – it is clear that, at least in the world of art, the latter tradition has been dominant for quite some time.

If Sinead Murphy's only concern was to chart the history of this dominance, and to suggest that it be countered by a return to the notion of craft, she would have written a good book. *The Art Kettle* goes beyond this by claiming that art is a mode of control that plays an important function in late capitalism, and that therefore the return to craft is as much an act of political resistance as it is an aesthetic choice. That such a bold and compelling thesis can be defended with such subtlety, accessibility, and, indeed, brevity (in only 76 pages) is what makes this a great book, which I can recommend enthusiastically to both academics and non-academics alike. I'll do my best to summarise the core points of each chapter, tracing the overall argument before raising some potential issues for the position it develops.

1 Xenophon, *The Memorable Thoughts of Socrates*, bk. 3, ch. 8, pp. 106-107.

'Parliament Square' sets out the guiding metaphor of the book – that the institution of art has become a means of managing the population comparable to the Metropolitan Police's tactic of 'kettling' protestors – by juxtaposing the forced removal of Brian Haw's permanent protest outside the Houses of Parliament, by means of the implementation of a kilometre wide exclusion zone, and the detailed recreation of the same protest by Mark Wallinger within the confines of this same zone, now nested safely in the heart of the Tate Britain. For Murphy, this exemplifies art's ability to take forms of creative resistance and channel them into domesticated forms of expression that are effectively self-managing.

'Stuck! Stuck! Stuck!' takes a look at the machinery underpinning the art kettle, by examining the relationship between the Turner Prize and the stuckist movement's opposition to it. On one side lies the valorisation of art whose principal conceptual element is the challenge of determining its own nature ('the loop of 'it's not art/it *is* art"), complemented by a wholesale rejection of the conceptual in favour of the valorisation of feeling ('Does it move me?') on the other. Murphy claims that these are two pathways through the same mechanism of control, which, despite sometimes seeming to turn art into life, by bringing elements of the real world into the gallery (e.g., bricks, beds, urinals, etc.), really turns life into art, by siphoning off its creative potential.

'Disinterested Parties' tries to uncover the root of these two halves, by tracing their historical origins to the debate between James Whistler and John Ruskin regarding the nature of art, epitomised by their infamous libel trial at the Old Bailey in 1878. Murphy identifies three parallel oppositions organising this debate: culture vs. nature, conceptual originality vs. moral feeling, and art for artists vs. art for the masses. What united the two sides in each case (the 'thinkers' and the 'movers', respectively) was their commitment to the disinterestedness of art: regardless of whether they believed art was supposed to engage with the public, they could nevertheless agree that it was not supposed to engage with their everyday concerns. This compact is the ideological core of the art kettle, and it has only been rarefied over time as its conceptual and technical flesh has sloughed away: the choice between thinkers and movers has given way to that between the art loop and the tyranny of feeling. This goes hand in hand with the emergence of the gallery and the museum as the principal sites of artistic encounter, insofar as they are places deliberately sterilised of all instrumental concerns. This is in turn

bound up with the emergence of painting as the artform *par excellence*, only to be surpassed by the installation.

'Craft' locates an alternative to disinterestedness in the life and work of the designer William Morris, who understood and rebelled against the increasing separation of beauty and use made possible by the industrial revolution. Murphy uses Morris to highlight the inverse of the alienation of workers from the products of their labour that so concerned Marx, namely, the increasing alienation of the consumers of these products from the processes of their production.[2] This trend has two related elements: (i) the suppression of complex possibilities for personal fulfilment in favour of a strict opposition between simple forms of satisfaction (consumption) and pointless forms of creative expression (art), and (ii) the suppression of creative possibilities of imagination, thought, and resistance that accompany these. The suppression of craft amounts to the division of human activity into the mutually exclusive domains of artless work and useless art.

'Anyone' traces a further historical trend beginning with Manet's exhibition at the Paris Salon (as interpreted by Bataille) and culminating in Andy Warhol's pop art (as interpreted by Danto), in which the 'arts of art', or the technical skills associated with artistic composition, are progressively stripped from it in the name of egalitarianism ('anyone can do it'), while actually executing an inegalitarian shift towards art that can only be appreciated by those trained in appreciation (critics). This is the historical vector that produces the art loop.

'The Human Touch' tries to save Manet from this trend by showing that his technical innovations were attempts to involve his audience in his painting, both in the structure of the work and in the content it portrayed, but that he ultimately failed to do so, and was then misinterpreted and reincorporated into the disenfranchisement of art. The systematic failure of such democratic gestures is explored further by way of Antony Gormley's Forth Plinth project *One and Other*, wherein, despite its egalitarian intent, any involvement on behalf of the public is simply converted into further alienation.

2 Curiously, this traces the dialectic of the master in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (§§190-193), corresponding to the dialectic of the slave that was so influential upon Marx's account of alienation (§§194-196). Whether this suggests that the solution to alienation is to be found in some new form of mutual recognition (§177) I cannot say.

'Trafalgar Square' turns to the history of fashion – from the emergence of couture with Charles Frederick Worth to the ultimate irrelevance of technical skill with Vivienne Westwood – in order to introduce the notion of taste. This consists in an understanding of usefulness from the perspective of consumption, as opposed to craft, which consists in a similar understanding from the perspective of production. Murphy uses the history of fashion to show how the increasing deferral of judgement to a privileged class of designers, along with the increasing lack of material constraints upon those designers, allows the simultaneous separation of the art of dressmaking from craft and the everyday mode of dressing from taste. Creativity is thereby evacuated from the everyday along with discernment, and transported into a world completely devoid of the concerns of living. This removes any basis for contrast between different aesthetic norms, engendering a pervasive liberal 'tolerance' that (*contra* Danto) is to be abhorred rather than embraced.

'Put the Kettle On, And We'll Make a Cup of Tea' compares the transformation in the social role of madness that Foucault describes in *Madness and Civilisation* to the transformation in the social role of art so far described, in order to justify the claim that contemporary art has become a discipline in Foucault's sense of the term, as the internalisation of the separation between uncreative-but-purposive activity and creative-but-purposeless activity. This facilitates the subsumption of all instrumental activity under the regime of capitalism, by shunting all creativity into the fastidiously non-instrumental regime of art. Murphy extends the comparison by showing that whereas Thatcher's 'Care in the Community' creates an 'asylum without walls', contemporary art has resulted in 'Creativity in the Community' and a 'museum without walls'. This is done through an analysis of several works of art championed by Nicholas Burriard, one time curator at the Tate Britain, each of which attempts to engage the public, but does so not by eliciting any constructive engagement, but by alienating people from their everyday lives *within* their everyday lives. She closes by considering how this warps Kant's conception of the distinction between public and private reason: counterposing private apathy to public tolerance. The only release from these is the flight into the unreasonable, yet entirely separate and disinterested realm of art, which functions as a release valve for creative resistance that thereby renders it into obedience. She closes with

the suggestion that (*contra* Burriard) the only response to this situation is a fundamentalism of good taste that refuses the liberalism of indiscriminate tolerance.

Given the space available and the format in which she has to develop it, Murphy's broadly Foucauldian analysis of the social role of art is surprisingly deep, and I must say that I am largely convinced by it. Moreover, even though it cannot be developed in detail, her suggestion that art's corralling of creativity is to be challenged by an aggressive rehabilitation of craft and taste is no less compelling. The only worries I have with Murphy's picture stem from the way it interacts with the traditional division between theories of beauty with which I opened. The estimable project of reconciling use and beauty will have gone too far if it banishes the useless from the aesthetic sphere completely. The call to synthesize opposing positions is often mere cliché, but in this case I think it is warranted. Rather than treating the interested and disinterested as two approaches to the *genus* of beauty, we should perhaps see them as different *species* of beauty, neither of which should be ignored. However, this is only possible if we can provide some account of the genus to which they belong. In short, we must understand what is common to both art and craft.

I think we can see the beginnings of this within Murphy's account, insofar as she implicitly refuses to follow Xenophon's Socrates in equating beauty and use. For her, the tragedy of contemporary art lies precisely in its collusion with capitalism's inherent instrumentalism, or its progressive suppression of everyday creativity in favour of abstract utility. She champions the aesthetics of craft precisely because it lies somewhere in between art's obsession with the *purely* useless and capitalism's obsession with the *merely* useful. So, to be beautiful is *more than to be* merely useful, but in the case of craft beauty must nevertheless derive from use. Perhaps, then, to be beautiful in this case is *to be more than* merely useful, or to be better than is required by the task at hand. The technical name for this is *supererogation*. Understood this way (*pace* Hegel), beauty would not emerge from the expression of the abstract Idea of freedom[3], but from the enhancement of concrete forms of freedom.

This means that the beauty of craft consists in its ability to create new practical possibilities that transcend its initial aims. This includes

3 See his *Lectures on Aesthetics*, 'Introduction', §3.

everything from the simple provision of greater sensuous satisfaction (e.g., a meal that is creatively seasoned), through the extension of existing practices (e.g., a musical instrument with a greater range or precision of play), to the constitution of entirely original modes of living (e.g., the internet's continuing creative transformation of social interaction). This is demonstrated nowhere better than in the contemporary craft of computer programming. One need not be a programmer to appreciate this. Talk to any programmer for long enough about their code and they'll inevitably bring up questions of beauty, freely contrasting 'elegant solutions' and 'ugly hacks', and deploying a homegrown aesthetic language of surprising subtlety. However, what is most apposite about this aesthetics – beyond parochial concerns regarding code readability, language preferences, or mathematical efficiency – is the central role played by *extensibility*, or the ability of code to be expanded upon or transposed into new contexts for novel purposes. The link between beauty, supererogation, and the enhancement of freedom is especially obvious here.

The question is whether we can make sense of disinterested beauty in similar terms. Here I believe it is important to dispute elements of Murphy's reading of Kant.[4] I think that her account, whilst acknowledging Kant's own biases – his privileging of natural beauty and his connection of beauty and moral feeling – locates his ideas on the right side of the historical divide, and correctly positions him upon the cusp of the shift in dominance within that tradition from the movers to the thinkers. Despite siding with the movers on the question of the moral role of beauty, Kant's aesthetics nevertheless helps to legitimise the thinkers' retreat to purely artistic interests. On the one hand, his notion of formal purposiveness transmutes the alienation of beauty from everyday purpose (as opposed to divine purpose) into its alienation from every particular purpose, thereby freeing artists to pursue their own satisfaction. On the other, his emphasis upon the cognitive role of beauty (and the sublime) inaugurates the turn towards the conceptual that ultimately exhausts itself in the art loop. However, there is more to these ideas than their role in the formation of the art kettle, and they deserve to be rehabilitated as part of the resistance to it. Though art has both degenerated as an aesthetic practice from within and been reconfigured

4 This is found mainly in the 'Craft' chapter (pp. 26-27). I once more recognise that this is, by necessity, a heavily truncated reading.

as a mode of control from without, it may still shelter an emancipatory spark that is ripe for rekindling.

First, it's important to see that although Kant's notion of formal purposiveness forbids us from grounding the beauty of a thing in its utility, it does not for that matter completely sever the link between beauty and purpose. On the positive side, Kant holds that the pleasure we find in beauty derives from the manner in which the cognitive free play it stimulates in us satisfies a higher end of reason, namely, that our cognitive faculties be capable of synthesising a coherent picture of nature as a whole.[5] On the negative side, it does not preclude us from questioning the purpose of art, or why we should aim to create and appreciate beautiful works. Moreover, the former issue suggests a possible approach to the latter, by orienting inquiry into the purpose of art towards its relation to the structure of reason. When seen in the light of the account of the beauty of craft I have proposed, this in turn suggests that we are to understand the function of art in terms of its relation to the structure of practical reason, or rather, freedom *as such*. This means that the disinterested beauty of art is only disinterested insofar as it eschews specific purposes in favour of purpose *qua* purpose.

Second, it's necessary to show that we can separate Kant's insight into the importance of the cognitive role of beauty from his too narrow interpretation of this role. If nothing else, it is important to dispute his separation of the sublime from the beautiful on cognitive grounds, in order to see the cases he distinguishes as further *differentia* of disinterested beauty. Our task is thus to provide a broader interpretation of the cognitive role that establishes a continuity between disinterested beauty and interested beauty. This means understanding how the cognitive effects of art contribute to the enhancement of freedom, despite, and perhaps even in virtue of their disconnection from the everyday purposes in which craft is embroiled. I believe the notion we are looking for here is *inspiration*. This is something that can be found in the harmonious free play of the imagination that Kant ascribes to the experience of beauty, in the discordant disruption of our faculties that he finds in the experience of the sublime (or what Deleuze calls 'the shock to thought' in his account of cinema)[6], and more generally in the ability

5 See his *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, trans. by Paul Guyer & Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 71.

6 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, ch. 7.

of art to create novel forms that, be they sensuous compositions or conceptual connections, and unbound as they are by prior purposes, provide us with raw cognitive materials from which to forge new practical possibilities.

This is only a rough taxonomy of the relevant forms of cognitive stimulation, but it is meant to indicate the extent to which the seemingly disinterested can nevertheless empower us in cultivating and pursuing our interests. If paintings and installations are emblematic of the pathological form of disinterested art, then perhaps literature and cinema are emblematic of its emancipatory form. Even as curated art progressively degenerated in the 19th and 20th centuries, we experienced an unprecedented explosion of speculative fiction in various media. For example, the great science fiction authors of the 20th century (e.g., Clark, Asimov, Le Guin, etc.) construct futures that, whilst not predictions in any strict sense, nevertheless expand our understanding of the horizon of possible action by supplying us with conceptual fragments that can be transposed into both passive anticipations and active plans (e.g., the famous anticipation of the geosynchronous satellite (Clark), ever more determinate expectations regarding the emergence of robots and AIs and plans for integrating them into our society (Asimov), or techno-social possibilities for reconfiguring gender relations (Le Guin)). Nor is this influence restricted to a purely conceptual register, as demonstrated by the aesthetic circuit between futurism and modernism in architecture and design, the sensory-motor circuit between modern cinematic narrative techniques and the neurological machinery of causal understanding, and the ever ramifying social force of musical genres and their associated subcultures. The inspirational role of art is exemplified by this propagation of forms across a culture, be they conceptual, aesthetic, neurological, or cognitively and practically efficacious in some other way. The progressive reconfiguration of the collective horizon of action that this engenders is nothing other than what Heidegger calls 'truth'.[7]

We thus have a schematic overview of the genus of beauty and its two species that combines both formal and substantive concerns. The

7 For Heidegger, the artwork is the site of this 'truth', or a point within the 'world' – understood as this horizon of action – in which the dynamic process through which it is constituted (also called 'strife') becomes visible as something worked upon (Cf. 'On the Origin of the Work of Art'). I don't think this view can be endorsed without serious qualifications, but it is worth underlining the aesthetic themes that run through Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger.

formal component is that beauty is understood as *unconditional value*. We can oppose this to merely instrumental value, which is entirely *conditional* upon the ends for which it supplies the means. The formal distinction between interested and disinterested beauty is thus the difference between *relatively* unconditional value, which remains to some extent dependent upon a purposive context (e.g., the everyday world of office workers, musicians, chefs, etc.), and *absolutely* unconditional value, which is entirely independent of any such context. The substantive component is that the source of such value is the *enhancement of freedom*. This is a matter of expanding the space of possible action and satisfaction through the development of new capacities and new ideas for deploying them in the interconnected and overlapping projects that constitute our lives. The substantive distinction between interested and disinterested beauty is thus the difference between *supererogation*, or the elaboration of an existing practice from within its purposive content (e.g., the improvement of modes of organisation, instruments, ingredients, etc.), and *inspiration*, or the creation of new practical possibilities outside of any such context.

However, it is not clear that this schema presents us with mutually exclusive types of beauty so much as a spectrum across which two competing tendencies intertwine. One of the most common objections to Kant's theory of beauty is that no artwork is entirely disinterested. We can do our best to subtract them from the purposive contexts of their creators, components, and even their audiences, but traces inevitably remain. For instance, the sheer 'prettiness' of much abstract expressionist painting straightforwardly panders to our perceptual sensibilities, the pleasure it produces stickling our interests in sensory stimulation. Moreover, there is a good case to be made that many artworks whose beauty is principally disinterested nevertheless contain components that cannot be abstracted from these contexts without ceasing to function. To take a specific example, the Department of No's 'Under Black Carpets' is a plan for a perfect bank heist, involving the simultaneous robbery of 5 different LA banks, dropping a plane on a building as distraction, and a variety of other elaborate and cunning tricks. This is all portrayed through a series of artifacts and videos that present the attempted police reconstruction of the chain of events after the fact, initially to be

displayed in a bank vault in Lisbon.[8] The fact that the Department of No insist they are designers rather than artists is especially telling here. Though the installation does not contribute to any concrete plans for armed robbery[9], it is nevertheless run through with purposive elements that simply cannot be disentangled from its disinterested beauty. It is a plan, a scheme, a plot, and to encounter its beauty we must engage with it as such; its careful design involves a level of technical skill comparable to the classical 'arts of art' despite being quite unlike them in character.

The burgeoning field of the aesthetics of games provides a more general example of this intertwining of formal and objective purposiveness.[10] Let's look at two rather different examples. On the one hand, the sublime intricacy of the non-Euclidean puzzle platformer *Anti-Chamber* is not something that can be understood in terms of the satisfaction of any objective end – either in terms of the escapism provided by narrative immersion or the competitive interplay between challenge and reward – and yet any formal end it satisfies is somehow submerged in an intensely articulated space of strategic action.[11] On the other, the exquisite melancholy of the indie tabletop RPG *Polaris* demonstrates that a such a complex poetic affect can be embedded in a style of play – the unique constraint of having players describe their actions in the past tense – as much as in the narrative co-ordinates of its setting – the tragic arc of the inevitable fall of the greatest city that ever was or will be.[12] Despite ongoing controversy, I think it obvious that we are dealing with art in both cases.

Whether found hunched over computers, sat round tables, or engaged in stranger or more physical sports, the beauty we find in games lies in their creation of *constrained* spaces of strategic action that nevertheless cultivate forms of *freedom*. This point is exemplified by the game of Go, in which an elegantly simple set of rules opens up awesome array of strategies, which then subtly unfold in surprisingly delightful

8 The Department of No is composed of Illona Gaynor and Benedict Singleton, and details of the work can be found here: http://we-make-money-not-art.com/archives/2012/09/under-black-carpets.php

9 As far as we are aware.

10 To see my own meagre contributions to this field, consult my paper with Tim Franklin 'Why Dungeons and Dragons is Art', in *Dungeons & Dragons and Philosophy*, ed. by Jon Cogburn and Mark Silcox (Chicago: Open Court, 2012).

11 http://www.antichamber-game.com

12 http://www.tao-games.com/

patterns. Whether one focuses upon the possibilities for supererogation this generates in competitive skill, or the possibilities for inspiration it generates in the interactive demonstration of emergent order, the game is undoubtedly beautiful. These considerations reveal that both the formal relativity of beauty to purpose and its substantive enhancement of freedom are manifold in their variations and overlapping in their instances, though this does not therefore make a taxonomy of them impossible.

This excursus on the philosophy of beauty might seem somewhat tangential to the task at hand, namely, explaining and assessing the significance of Murphy's book, but this suspicion can be dispelled by returning to Murphy's thesis armed with the theoretical resources marshalled above. The key point to make is that the intimate relationship between beauty and freedom makes Murphy's analysis of the institution of contemporary art as a mode of control all the more powerful. It brings into focus the cultural economy of creativity of which Murphy takes contemporary art to be a perversion, or perhaps even a cultivated pathology. This is the co-operative process of creating, copying, and improving ways of living that we're implicitly engaged in, if not explicitly organising. This combination of mimetic propagation and memetic evolution of innovations in our pleasures, practices, and instruments is a sort of distributed *social cognition* through which freedom develops itself. The dual ideals of supererogation and inspiration are supposed to govern this process, and the practices of craft and art are supposed to realise them insofar as they are essential components of the *social imagination*. From this perspective, my caution against abandoning art in favour of craft amounts to the idea that imagination requires flights of fancy as much as it does practical experimentation.

In diagnosing a systematic deficit of imagination in modern capitalism Murphy is in good company. At least two other titles from Zero Books explore the same theme: Mark Fisher's broad ranging *Capitalist Realism* and Nina Power's incisive *One Dimensional Woman*. These books go some way towards demonstrating the extent to which capitalism has developed mechanisms for suppressing political imagination, be it through imposing conceptual hegemony (neoliberalism) or co-opting emancipatory programs (contemporary feminism). However, there are two key differences between these works

and *The Art Kettle*. The first is simply a matter of generality: Murphy's book is concerned with the suppression of imagination *as such*, rather than simply with its political form, though it is clear that she draws strong political consequences from her analysis. The second is more subtle, and is perhaps best approached by way of the manifesto gracing the last page of every Zero Book:

> A cretinous anti-intellectualism presides, cheerled by expensively educated hacks in the pay of multinational corporations who reassure their bored readers that there is no need to rouse themselves from their interpassive stupor. The informal censorship internalized and propagated by the cultural workers of late capitalism generates a banal conformity that the propaganda chiefs of Stalinism could only ever have dreamt of imposing.

I always find reading this manifesto exhilarating, insofar as it encapsulates an important idea that runs across these books: there is something profoundly wrong with the academic discourses of our society and their inability to penetrate into mainstream understanding. Fisher and Power not only provide us with an analysis of how contemporary modes of living undermine our ability to think about political realities, but they also examine the sorry state of the public discourses on these topics – the very state which Zero Books aims to address. Murphy does something different but complementary in focusing upon the side of cultural production that is alluded to but not addressed in the manifesto. She takes aim at the 'artists' who have abdicated their social role as much as the 'thinkers' at whom Zero takes aim. These same creatives might be found browsing Zero titles in a gallery bookshop, nodding along to the above manifesto, not realising that they too are the 'cultural workers' in question – that they too are complicit.

This returns us to Murphy's own framing of the problem of the social role of art in terms of the social role of reason. The origin of this frame in Kant's famous essay 'What is Enlightenment?' provides a further connection to the account of beauty sketched above. To quote her at length:

> We have, in short, utterly conceded human reason to the working of capital, as that merely instrumentalist subsumption of means to given ends that is so malleable in the hands of profit, tempted by the

> abandonment promised elsewhere by the availability of an 'unreason' that has constituted, and been incubated by, the modern history of art, and that operates very well to console and to control a population whose capacities have been divided up, into the obedient pursuit of given ends that makes the population so efficient and enthusiastic pursuit of given pleasures that is now gradually and seamlessly transforming into a kind of anaesthetized spectatorship.[13]

The dissociation of art from reason that Murphy highlights here goes at least as far back as the romantics, but it is accelerated in the 20th century by the increasing influence of economics upon common conceptions of 'rationality' from the one side, and the critiques of these conceptions propagated by critical theory from the other, and culminates in the practical excesses of 'postmodernity' and the theoretical disaster of 'postmodernism'.[14] This mutation of the enlightenment faith in reason rapidly became malignant and metastasised across the arts and humanities, triggering a sort of auto-immune response wherein reason was given over to attacking itself. One of the great ironies of the 20th century is that art's emancipatory power came to be located in its ability to resist reason, when, as I have tried to show, its connection to reason through the ideal of beauty is its very essence. Murphy's detailed account of how this emancipatory promise forms the core of a mechanism of oppression demonstrates the depth of this irony better than anything written hitherto.

I will conclude by considering a related, but more specific irony, which Murphy herself considers at the close of the book. Foucault's work does not just form the foundation of the analysis that Murphy presents in her book, but has additional significance insofar as it was appropriated by and used to legitimate many of the excesses of 'postmodern' theory just discussed. In particular, his work provided a basis upon which to criticise the illicit normative connotations of the opposition between the rational and irrational, and thereby to valorise modes of thought and

13 *The Art Kettle*, pp. 74-75.

14 I scare quote both of these terms quite deliberately. I neither believe in any real historical era of 'postmodernity', and I believe that there are many important insights contained in Lyotard's 'postmodernism'. Nevertheless, the idea of 'postmodernity' serves well to index a certain cultural trend exemplified by Murphy's art-loop, and the word 'postmodernist' has been used often enough both by those who laud this trend and those who criticise it that it serves equally well to index the theoretical nexus underlying it.

practice that manage to escape its confines.[15] I fear Foucault would have been horrified by the theoretical escapology he inadvertently inspired, but he might have been equally horrified by the practical transmutation of his work into the sort of banal artistic product that this escapology encourages. It is this ironic fate which Murphy considers in closing:

> *The Foucault Art Project...* was apparently comprised of the ingredients of a standard academic conference on Foucault apart from the small difference that the souvenirs in the conference shop were not to be sold and the works of Foucault were not to be understood. "I don't know Foucault's philosophy", the artist mostly responsible for the artwork wrote in his advertisement, "but I see his work of art". Poor Foucault. Become art, one can look but definitely not touch.[16]

The saddest feature of this is that the artist completely failed to see Foucault's work of art. In his own 'What is Enlightenment?' essay Foucault takes up Kant's attempt to characterise the attitude of enlightenment, or to formulate it as an *ethos*. There is much that could be said about this *tour de force*, but I will restrict myself to the link Foucault draws between enlightenment and art:

> The deliberate attitude of modernity is tied to an indispensable asceticism. To be modern is not to accept oneself as one is in the flux of the passing moments; it is to take oneself as one is in the flux of the passing moments; it is to take oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration: what Baudelaire, in the vocabulary of his day [...] [describes as] the asceticism of the dandy who makes of his body, his behaviour, his feelings and passions, his very existence, a work of art. [...] This modernity does not 'liberate man in his own being'; it compels him to face the task of producing himself.[17]

Foucault takes this 'aesthetics of existence'[18] to be the essence of enlightenment; motivating not just individual but also collective projects

15 Beyond Foucault's methodological innovations (i.e., the archeology of knowledge and the genealogy of power) his more detailed historical work in *Madness and Civilisation* had an important influence on these ideas.

16 *The Art Kettle*, p. 75.

17 Michel Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?', in *the Foucault Reader*, ed. By Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 1984) pp. 41-42.

18 Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990) p. 12.

of self-construction. He then articulates his own overarching philosophical project in these terms, as an expression of the enlightenment drive to identify and overcome our limits, or 'to give impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of freedom'.[19] As such, the artist's inability to see either the art or the craft in Foucault's project is emblematic of the art establishment's inability to see its own social purpose.

I will end by considering what Foucault calls the 'stakes' of enlightenment: 'how can the growth of capabilities [*capacities*] be disconnected from the intensification of power relations?'[20] Here lies the beating heart of the obsessive instrumentalism of contemporary capitalism, and it is the core issue that Murphy, Fisher, and Power tackle from different angles. However, what is common to these thinkers is an attempt to dissect the ideological apparatuses that have domesticated the various emancipatory programs and forms of resistance that were supposed to, and that many still believe, pose challenges to capitalism's oppressive tendencies. In doing so they renew the project of enlightenment, by showing us that we cannot hope to understand oppression without first understanding freedom, and therefore that the postmodern eclipse of reason has colluded with capital insofar as it has warped our understanding of both, by reinforcing the flattening of normative discourse that constitutes capitalism's liberal visage. Murphy's singular achievement is to demonstrate that contemporary art's blindness to *beauty* undermines our creative freedom in precisely the way that contemporary politics' perversion of *reason* undermines our intellectual freedom. This opens up the possibility of a new alliance between *aesthetic fundamentalism* and *political rationalism* capable of challenging the *pervasive liberalism* that capital hides behind.

19 Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?', p. 46.

20 Ibid., p. 48.

Jean Hyppolite, entre structure et existence, ed. by Giuseppe Bianco

RICHARD LAMBERT

The core of this rich collection is constituted by the proceedings of a conference devoted to Jean Hyppolite, which took place at the Ecole Normale Supérieure on 27th May 2007. The contributors to the conference were Alain Badiou, Etienne Balibar, Giuseppe Bianco, Stephanos Geroulanos, Leonard Lawlor, Jérôme Lèbre, and Pierre Macherey, and it is to their contributions that I will give the most attention in the following. To the proceedings are added a thorough editor's introduction to Hyppolite's life and work, over 100 pages of Hyppolite's writings not included in the posthumous collection *Figures de la pensée philosophique* – including Hyppolite's first and last publications – and the transcript of a television interview with Hyppolite conducted by Alain Badiou in 1965. The volume also includes several photographs of Hyppolite and a detailed bibliography and list of his conference contributions.

The title of the collection refers to the planned title – *Structure et existence* – of the book Hyppolite indicated he wished to work on prior to his untimely death, and which would perhaps have been his *magnum opus*. As Bianco notes in his introduction, he planned to approach this work by 'a great many paths', and the title *Entre structure et existence* might be seen both as a reference to the movement between these two concepts that could be said to characterise Hyppolite's *oeuvre*, and to the volume's exploration of some of the manifold paths that might have converged in his unwritten work. The collection admirably succeeds in bringing out the many facets of Hyppolite's public life, work and influence, exploring the ways in which Hyppolite was, as Bianco puts it, 'a *passeur*, a professor, an organiser, a man of the institution, a historian of philosophy and a philosopher', as well as a translator.

Borrowing an expression from Deleuze, Bianco's extensively researched introduction considers the manner in which Hyppolite can be seen as an '*étoile de groupe*': 'an apparently less luminous point of an intellectual constellation, he nevertheless made it possible in constituting its centre'. This is why the biographical context is important here, perhaps more so than it might be in regard to other thinkers – as Bianco writes, 'We cannot evaluate the importance Hyppolite had as an '*étoile de groupe*' without reinscribing him within the constellation of relations that he entertained with his contemporaries, the institutions his path led him through, in the singular space-time that he both occupied and contributed to rendering possible.' The latter is particularly well evoked in Bianco's descriptions of the intellectual context of Hyppolite's time.

Bianco gives an account of Hyppolite's life from his school days to his death in 1968. Moments that he touches on include: Hyppolite's entry to the ENS in 1925 and his graduating in third place in his year group, behind Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir; his role as a teacher at lycée level in the early forties, when his students included Deleuze and Foucault; his supervision of dozens of theses during the fifties while a professor at the Sorbonne and later at the Ecole Normale Supérieure; his attempt to organise a forum for the discussion of the Algerian war at the ENS and his participating with Merleau-Ponty in the creation of the Union des forces démocratiques in 1958, and his assumption of a chair in the history of philosophical thought at the Collège de France in 1963.

In discussing the importance of the later Heidegger for Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence*, a point he returns to in his later contribution, Bianco sets the scene for many of the contributions that will follow:

> [*Logic and Existence*] ends in an aporia: that of the relation between logic and phenomenology, between logical time and human time. This aporia which calls for a new conception of difference, capable of accounting for an open historical time [*un temps historique ouvert*] as well as an antihumanist reading of Hegel turned towards the auto-development of Being as Logos, will influence the majority of Hyppolite's students: Althusser, Foucault, Derrida and Deleuze.

Pierre Macherey's 'Entre histoire de la philosophie et philosophie', takes up one of the central threads running through the volume: Hyppolite's relation to the history of philosophy. Throughout, Macherey draws

heavily on Foucault's memorial speech in honour of Hyppolite (reprinted here, pp. 1-9), drawing out something of the significance of Foucault's remark that Hyppolite spoke more readily of the history of philosophical thought than of the history of philosophy. Macherey's focus is on the *Phenomenology*; as he writes, this work was for Hyppolite not a historical monument, but 'responded to the needs, to the urgent necessities of a singularly trans-temporal philosophical actuality [*actualité*]'. His contribution also shows how the nature of Hyppolite's interest in the *Phenomenology*, a work of 'disquiet and doubt', open to originary, 'non-philosophical' experiences, went together with his turning towards the outside of the university.

Macherey's examination places Hyppolite's engagement with Hegel in the context of a longer history of the French reception of Hegel than is often related. It contrasts the interest of Hyppolite and others of his generation in the younger Hegel with Victor Cousin's use of Hegel's metaphysics in support of the notion of a general public reason incarnated in the power of the state and safeguarded by the elites of 'reflected reason'. In contrast to Cousin, Macherey presents Hyppolite's great contribution as being to open up, to grant access to a living relation to Hegel's thought, rather than to employ it in the service of a certain programme.

Hyppolite is also strongly contrasted with Kojève, not only in the manner of his approach to the *Phenomenology*, but also in terms of the focus of his interest in it. Against Kojève's conception of an end of history in which there would no longer be a place for philosophy as such, Macherey remarks that, 'what attracted Hyppolite to this work was precisely not the desire to abolish the tension of the movement of properly philosophical thought, but, on the contrary, the intention to seize this tension at its point of greatest acuity'. Thus, near the conclusion of his paper, again drawing on Foucault's reading, he claims that therefore 'Hegel, at least the Hegel of the *Phenomenology*, would be the representative par excellence of that inexistence of philosophy which paradoxically constitutes the guarantee of the existence of philosophical thought'.

Etienne Balibar's 'Du commun et de l'universel dans la Phénoménologie de Hegel; En souvenir des leçons de Jean Hyppolite à l'ENS 1960-1' also focuses on the *Phenomenology*, this time in regard to the question of the community. It offers what Balibar calls a 'structural

interpretation' of Hegel's definition of spiritual 'substance' as a work resulting from the activity of everyone and of each one. This is with the aim of yielding 'a better comprehension of that which, at the heart of the 'system' and sometimes against it, comprises the irreducible singularity of the Phenomenology.' His reading, he notes, is indebted to that of Hyppolite, who has shown the necessity of closely linking the interpretation of this definition with a series of transformations of the formula of the subject: *Ich = Ich*. The first transformation considered is that of the pluralisation of the subject: the '*Ich, das Wir, und Wir, das Ich ist*'. The next variation is '*das Sein, das Ich, und das Ich, das Sein ist*' – which Balibar parses as, 'the objectivity encountered in all its forms in experience, here designated as *being*'. Hyppolite's response to these seemingly starkly contrasting formulations, Balibar writes, is to suggest their combination or fusion: 'what makes it such that being is the I is that the I is the we (in the operation of everyone and of each one), but that must also be understood as a becoming subject 'for itself' of the acting community which thus achieves actuality.'

This paves the way for the possibility of thinking the *Phenomenology* as a long enquiry into 'the possibility of *universalising being in common and, correlatively, of instituting the universal* in the framework and the modality of a community', the various shapes of the latter being successive attempts at this universalisation. This sequence of shapes is of course in a certain sense a sequence of failures, and Balibar notes that it is at the moment when each figure comes closest to instituting the universal that it rediscovers the particularity that will lead to its collapse, even going as far as to describe this relation of the community and the universal in terms of *différance*.

For Balibar, the question is, however, what becomes of this differentiation, and so of the community as such, in the state of absolute knowing with which the *Phenomenology* concludes. 'Absolute knowing no longer corresponds', he writes, 'to any identifiable [*repérable*], nameable or describable figure of the community'. He concedes then that it is possible to read the *Phenomenology* as the progressive overcoming of the finitude of the community by the universal, in which all previous stages will come to be seen as errors, albeit necessary errors. In opposition to Kojève's reading of the culmination of the *Phenomenology* in particular, however, he suggests, though here does not develop, the possibility of an alternative reading. This is a reading in which the final

'truth' of the *Phenomenology* would be 'aporetic', would represent a critique of ideologies and of any particular culture's pretention to have "finally found'...the formula of adequation between the community and universality as such'.

Jérôme Lèbre's 'Un hégélianisme sans refuge: la pensée d'aliénation chez Jean Hyppolite' explores, in large part through the reconstruction of a dialogue between Hyppolite and Lukács, the meaning of Hyppolite's statement that: 'in language, just as in the work and in money, man is always alienated; it is this alienation that is the problem in Hegel'.

Lèbre examines this problem through Hyppolite's major engagements with Hegel, and through Hyppolite's review of Lukács' *The Young Hegel*, from which the above quotation is taken. He shows how alienation is first of all a *solution*, in Hegel's Frankfurt period, to the problem of the positivity and fixity of religion, and only later becomes a problem. The problem that it does become cannot, in Hyppolite's view, have a Marxist solution in the reunion of man with nature and with man, because it was Hegel's 'true grandeur' to have identified alienation with objectivation. Thus alienation, for Hyppolite, cannot be overcome, and Lèbre quotes his statement, also from the Lukács review, that, 'man is alienated [*s'aliène*], conceives himself otherwise and discovers in this objectivation an insurmountable alterity which it is nevertheless necessary to attempt to surmount – this is a *tension inseparable from existence*'.

In regard to alienation within language, which latter is, in Hyppolite's words, 'the new centre of all philosophical problems', Lèbre writes that 'it makes logic 'the dwelling-place [*la demeure*] of being as sense' and man 'the dwelling-place of the logos'. Without a humanist *refuge*, the Hegelianism of Hyppolite is thus not without an ontological *dwelling-place'*. In closing his contribution, Lèbre indicates Hyppolite's proximity to the generation that followed his – even down to the use of certain terms such as 'the trace' – a generation which attempted to think an alienation without refuge.

Stephanos Geroulanos' 'L'ascension et la marionnette : L'homme d'après Jean Hyppolite' gives a reading of Hyppolite's 'antihumanism' through the two versions of the latter's 'Humanisme et Hegelianisme', the first, shorter version of which was published in 1949 and is collected in Hyppolite's *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, and the second, longer

version in 1952. On Geroulanos' reading, Hyppolite opposes to the immanence of humanism a transcendence of history drawn from Hegel. It is this transcendence or 'divinisation' of history that rules out a Kojèvian becoming-God of humanity, and which leaves the human individual in an 'unstable equilibium' with regard to it.

Hyppolite is thus located in the context of the postwar rise of antihumanism, of which Geroulanos writes:

> Radicalising the approaches that had previously insisted on the incapacity of the subject to know and control the world in which he finds himself, this new, negative anthropology claims that the formal posteriority of man, his dependence in regard to historical, ontological and cultural constructions, counts more than any positive definition of the human.

This 'antihumanism' is of course not simply negative, but is in a certain sense an attempt to guard against the loss of the human. Indeed, Geroulanos quotes Hyppolite's claim that, 'the reduction of man to himself alone, this reduction of all of the divine to the human, ends with a loss of man'. But it is a recognition of the precarious position of man – as Lèbre puts it, '*suspended* on the one hand by a dialectical and divine history which crushes his particularity, and on the other by the finitudes of money, private right etc.' This is, Lèbre argues, the figure of modern humanity for Hyppolite.

Giuseppe Bianco's 'La dialectique bavard et le cercle anthropologique de Jean Hyppolite' (reprinted in English translation in the present volume, pp. 145-166) traces the influence of Hyppolite on the development of Foucault's thinking. It notes the long history of their association, from Hyppolite's being Foucault's teacher at the Lycée Henri IV, his supervision of Foucault's *mémoire de DES*, through Foucault's teaching at the Ecole Normale Supérieure while Hyppolite was its director, up to Foucault's inviting Hyppolite to speak at Uppsala in 1956. It also considers Foucault's acknowledgement of his debt to Hyppolite in various texts, and his effusive praise for Hyppolite's work, notably *Logic and Existence*, in his memorial speech for Hyppolite (also reprinted here, pp. 1-9).

Many lines of influence are thus indicated, but the particular influence the paper focusses on relates to a crucial transformation in Foucault's thought concerning madness that took place through the

1950's. The influence of Hyppolite on Foucault, however, goes through the influence of the later Heidegger on Hyppolite. Bianco evokes the importance of the publication in France of Heidegger's Letter on Humanism (the first incomplete translation of which was published in 1948, the complete version in 1953) – experienced on the philosophical scene as, in the words of Michel Déguy, the 'Heideggerian thunderbolt.' Bianco discusses Hyppolite's intensive engagement with the later Heidegger in the early fifties, an engagement which had a great influence not only on his *Logic and Existence*, but on his other writings of the period. Indeed, Bianco notes that he closed almost all of his essays of the fifties by remarking on the need to open the anthropological dimension of the questions he addressed to an 'ontological' and 'fundamental' treatment.

The paper then focuses on two papers given by Hyppolite in Jacques Lacan's seminar at the Sainte-Anne hospital – the same hospital where Foucault was pursuing his training as a psychologist – in which Hyppolite argues for the need to situate questions of madness not chiefly in relation to anthropology, but in man's relation to being. As Bianco writes in regard to the second talk, 'Hyppolite concludes that mental alienation is not the simple result of a failure in the relation of man to his environment [*milieu*]; it proceeds just as well from the failure of the relation of *Dasein* to being. The problem is thus situated 'between anthropology and ontology"; madness comes to be treated in terms of a Heideggerian '*errance*'.

In the light of these talks, Bianco then turns to the transformation in Foucault's thought concerning madness in the mid-to-late fifties. He first considers two early texts: Foucault's preface to Binswanger's *Traum und Existenz*, and *Maladie mentale et personnalité*, a text commissioned by Althusser. Both of these texts argue for the importance of an anthropological approach to, respectively, existential analysis and mental illness, the second in particular being marked by a humanist form of Marxism conforming to that of the French Communist Party. Bianco then shows how, in the later version of *Maladie mentale et personnalité* – renamed *Maladie mentale et psychologie* (and translated as *Madness: The Invention of an Idea*) – and in *Madness and Unreason*, the thesis Foucault wrote in Sweden and defended in 1961, this Marxist treatment of mental illness is completely abandoned. As Bianco writes, 'in these two works dating from 1961 and 1962, Foucault passes from an

anthropological question concerning mental illness to an ontological question concerning madness'. Madness now becomes the transcendental condition for the possibility of a plenitude of sense. Finally Bianco notes the importance of Hyppolite's reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology* for the critique of the notion of alienation that Foucault goes on to develop in *The History of Madness*. As Bianco writes, 'with Hyppolite, French philosophy became conscious of the reprise of the dialectic without sublation of the unhappy consciousness'. For Foucault, Bianco notes, the unhappy consciousness becomes the figure of modernity as such.

Alain Badiou's 'Jean Hyppolite, un style philosophique' takes the form of a series of anecdotes, for, as he writes, 'in order to do full justice to Hyppolite, it is necessary to speak of his character' [*personnage*], as 'Hyppolite established a sort of mediation, quite unusual, and moreover quite fragile, between the academic regime of philosophy...and its outside. This is what made him an exception within the philosophical academy in France'.

Badiou's reflections serve to bring out the many different roles of this 'mediator'. He speaks of Hyppolite the translator of the *Phenomenology*, who according to Badiou's German translator, Jürgen Brankel, turned what was in German a rather shapeless, 'typical work of youth' into a 'veritable monument'; Hyppolite the university entrance examiner, who left Badiou with a question that remained important for him up to his recent research; Hyppolite the *passeur* and the university lecturer, conjuring a vivid image of Hyppolite's presence in the lecture theatre and returning to a theme that recurs throughout the volume when he writes that, 'he was fundamentally a man of the present, even and especially when he was dealing with the history of philosophy'. He also speaks of Hyppolite as an organiser and an administrator – who presided over the reunion of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty on the occasion of the former's talk at the ENS, who envisaged a public role for the university, attempting to provide a forum through the ENS for the discussion of the Algerian war, and who campaigned for the reopening of the Sorbonne at the time of its closure by the police in 1968.

Badiou's *éloge* is not without its critical moments – when he writes, in relation to a conversation concerning de Gaulle, that Hyppolite's history [*historique*] was 'rather systematic, as though History were a reservoir of figures', and when Hyppolite is said to have displayed the aspect of a 'judge' in refusing to grant an invitation to Deleuze to hold

a series of seminars at the ENS. He also speaks, at the end of his contribution, of a 'latent melancholy' in Hyppolite, 'which one sensed periodically, and which charged his love of the present and his force of thinking with a sort of singular energy, which was not easy to hold steady [*maintenir*], which no doubt accounts for his reputed insomnia and his perpetual smoking'.

Leonard Lawlor's "L'immanence est complète' ou l'héritage de la pensée de Jean Hyppolite' aims to unfold the significance of Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence* not only for the generation of French philosophers that followed him, but also for contemporary philosophy. As he writes, 'it seems to me possible to say that the problems bequeathed by Hyppolite's remarkable book to Foucault's generation (a generation of which Derrida and Deleuze, among others, were a part), are the same as those with which we are confronted today, almost forty years later'. The paper initially takes the form of an examination of the meaning of the statement 'immanence is complete' in Hyppolite's *Logic and Existence* and then aims to show how this thought of complete immanence was 'redeployed' by Deleuze, Foucault, and Derrida. The ultimate aim is to show that it is precisely Hyppolite,

> that great reader of the *Phenomenology*, who has shown us how to escape from...Hegelianism... [who has] shown us how to think the infinite, who has opened the path of a thought which is, in fact, paradoxically, a thought of finitude. Hyppolite has shown us, in *Logic and Existence*, how to think difference in a new way.

This new way of thinking difference, a difference between non-separated terms, is for Hyppolite found in the complete immanence of reflection within being, insofar as the latter proves to be subject. The seeming difference between being and its reflected essence is then a difference *internal* to being itself, an 'inevitable illusion' in Hyppolite's words, created by being's own self-division. This is what Lawlor, following Hyppolite, calls 'essential difference'. It is a movement in which being becomes its own other and so speculatively contradicts itself, and Lawlor describes the form of this contradiction with reference to what he calls 'the most important discussion' in *Logic and Existence* – that of the finite and the infinite.

In the second part of his contribution, Lawlor turns to the development of the thought of internal difference in Foucault, and

Derrida, but also touches on Deleuze's review of *Logic and Existence*. As he writes,

> in sum, Deleuze advances precisely the contrary of that which Hyppolite advanced: *one must not* push difference up to contradiction, but, on the contrary, push contradiction up to difference, up to a difference that remains indeterminate and uncertain. It is precisely this same *indeterminate and uncertain* aspect of difference that Michel Foucault approaches in the opening of *The Order of Things*.

Lawlor goes on to consider how this difference takes form both in this work of Foucault's and in Derrida's *Khôra* as the indeterminacy of a term that is at once both contained and a container, internal and external, and which comes to be called by both Foucault and Derrida a '*non-lieu*'.

Lawlor convincingly shows how the projects of these three thinkers can be brought together under a negative unity, as it were, insofar as their starting point could be said to be a rejection of, and departure from, speculative contradiction. What remains less clear from his account, however, is why this unity should be also be characterised positively, in terms of immanence. Indeed, it surely remains questionable whether the form of difference that he describes in regard to Foucault and Derrida might more accurately be described as 'quasi-transcendent'. Perhaps, ultimately, it would be more faithful to these thinkers not to attempt to bring them under the identity of a certain approach, but to consider the plurality of responses that Hyppolite's impulse inspired in them.

The second part of the collection, composed of texts by Hyppolite, comprises:

1. Hyppolite's first published essay, 'L'originalité de la géométrie cartésienne', which appeared in *Méthode. Revue de l'enseignement philosophique*, in 1932.

2. 'Classe de philosophie et problèmes actuels,' a text in which Hyppolite reflects on the challenge of teaching philosophy in the classroom, where all too often the great philosophers are invoked by the by, 'in the discussion of a problem that has been posed in such a manner that the least one can say is that it was never posed in that way by those philosophers'. What follows is a personal reflection on an attempt to

introduce literary studies into a course on moral and social philosophy, in which Hyppolite's passion for teaching – for inspiring genuine philosophical engagement in his students – and the seriousness with which he assumed the responsibility of this role is evident throughout. As he writes, he partly introduced this method into a course on moral philosophy in order to 'give the students the impression that in philosophising, one prepares for a heavy task, that of better thinking one's role in society, and of better envisaging, in order to resolve them, the current problems that demand our attention'. This personal reflection concludes with a more general one: 'a literature without philosophy is a literature without thought, but a philosophy which remains confined within false problems, outside of a reality that it does not strain to comprehend and to reorganise (we must think our own time) would be, let us acknowledge it, a detestable philosophy'.

3. Three texts which help to bring out the depth of Hyppolite's engagement with existentialism. The first brings together Valéry and Sartre and makes a case for Valéry as a forerunner of existentialism. The second is a comparison of Bergson and (the early) Heidegger, which begins by noting a certain similarity in their respective conceptions of two different forms of time, and then goes on to consider their differences. To Hyppolite's paper is appended the transcript of the discussion that followed its presentation in 1948. This series is completed by 'Une chronologie de l'existentialisme français', in which Hyppolite distinguishes four periods of French existentialism.

4. Hyppolite's last published essay, 'Une nouvelle perspective sur Marx et le marxisme,' an extended and subtle reflection on Marx and Hegel in the light of the works of Althusser and his students. (This essay is reprinted in English translation in the present volume, pp.145-166.)

5. Hyppolite's own extended summaries of the courses he gave at the Collège de France between 1963 and 1968. One series of classes during this period was devoted to Fichte and Hegel, and in its last year was accompanied by a seminar on Hegel's logical discourse, to which Hegel scholars and young philosophers were invited to contribute. Papers were given by, among others, Althusser, Badiou, and Derrida. The other series was devoted to contemporary philosophy, and allows one to gain an

insight into the breadth of Hyppolite's interests: the nourishment of philosophy by non-philosophical sources, including poetry and the natural sciences, was explored in the works of Bachelard; the relations between time, sense, and being were examined in Husserl and Bergson, and the concepts of information, communication, and the message, were considered both in regard to the natural sciences and through a commentary on Mallarmé's *Coup de dés*. One gains the sense from both summaries that they relate active paths of thinking whose routes and conclusions were not planned to the last detail in advance, but were continually open to surprises, revisions and ever deeper questioning, guided by a spirit of immense intellectual curiosity.

The volume is completed by an interview with Alain Badiou which constitutes an extended discussion of perhaps the key theme running through the volume – that of philosophy's relation to its own history. Badiou persistently questions Hyppolite in regard to what it means for philosophical thought to be essentially historical today and on Hyppolite's view concerning the distinctiveness of the history of philosophy – on the sense in which the history of philosophy is a history like no other – as well as the role that the history of philosophy can play in teaching philosophy, and the sense in which philosophy after Kant can still be an ontology when metaphysics must put itself in question.

This collection will no doubt be an important reference point for those interested in Hyppolite and his influence on the generation that followed him. Throughout the volume, one gains the sense that Hyppolite's influence was so great precisely because of the strength and originality of his thought, and that this originality – as Derrida has also gone on to show – is not diminished by being elaborated principally through various readings of other thinkers. But more than this, the volume also allows the broad sweep of twentieth century French philosophy to be brought into view, for what is remarkable is just how many of the threads of which it was composed came together in Hyppolite. Indeed, the book evokes in relation to the figure of Hyppolite himself that relation between being and man which so fascinated him: it shows a moment of history passing through him that yet could not have occurred without him. Finally, it also demonstrates the fecundity that Hyppolite's thought retains as a source of inspiration for contemporary philosophy.

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Contact

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The Centre's office is located in the Department of Philosophy, in the Social Studies Building (S2.70). Queries by email may be addressed to the Centre's secretary, Stacey Heslop (s.d.heslop@warwick.ac.uk).

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- Submissions should be sent to plijournal@warwick.ac.uk.
- They should be double spaced in rich text or word document format, in Times New Roman font.
- Accepted submissions will be printed from the electronic copy supplied. References and notes should be given in the form of footnotes, and book titles should be italicised.
- Footnote references should conform to the style of the following examples:

  Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan, 1929), hereafter *CPR*.
  Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Minuit, 1986), p. 24.
  Daniel W. Conway, 'Genealogy and Critical Method', in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, ed. by Richard Schacht (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 318-33 (p. 320).
  David Sedley, 'The Structure of Epicurus' *On Nature*', *Cronache Ercolanesi*, 4 (1974), 89-92 (p. 90).

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