

PHENOMENOLOGY AND SYSTEMATIC PHILOSOPHY

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In a paper read before this Society in 1970 I gave an interpretation of the transition from Hegel's *Phenomenology* to his *Science of Logic*.¹ In 1976 I presented the Society an argument that the categories of the *Philosophy of Right* are generated in the *Science of Logic* and not, à la Habermas, in history.² My topic for today, "Phenomenology and Systematic Philosophy," is conceived as a further development of the previous topics. It is divided into three parts. In the first (I) I propose a strategy for reading the *Phenomenology* as a "negative" introduction to systematic philosophy. In the second part (II) I suggest an interpretation of the *Logic* as the formal aspect of systematic philosophy which follows from the negative result of the *Phenomenology*, and, in turn, provides the conceptual framework for a non-metaphysical interpretation of reality. In the third part (III) I take the most fully developed and best known section of the 'real' aspect of systematic philosophy, the philosophy of objective spirit, and show how some of Hegel's most striking conceptual innovations, such as his theory of civil society, develop immanently within thought that is purified by an introductory phenomenology and formulated without any reference to concepts as abstractions from reality.

If such a project seems too vast—and perhaps it is—we can at least consider the possibility that projects of lesser scope might distort our comprehension. As an aid to keeping the whole project comprehensible, I have focused throughout on the notion of a posit—on the ultimate positivity of truth for consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, on the posit as the second moment of the logical concept and on the positivity of the moral subject and the member of civil society in the philosophy of objective spirit.

I

It has been suggested that Hegel's logic is his ontology and that Hegel's basic question is "Why should there be something rather than nothing?" This might seem a plausible interpretation in light of the fact that Hegel does begin his logic with a consideration of being and nothing. Still I think that the question is a misleading clue to the argument of Hegel's logic. As a less misleading clue, I would like to propose the following question: "What is determinacy?" or the question: "How is determinacy thinkable?" To this question Hegel gives, I believe, three basic and interconnected answers. If we may stipulate x as a symbol for the indeterminate, then Hegel's three answers to the question of determinacy might take the following forms. (1) x is determinate as a contrast, (2) x is determinate as determined, and (3) x is determinate as an individual. I should like to propose that we consider these as the respective themes of the three main parts of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, the doctrines of Being, Essence and Concept. With the hope of making their teachings clearer, I suggest that we call these:

- (1) the logic of contrastive determinacy,
- (2) the logic of determination, and

¹ "[Hegel's 'Deduction of the Concept of Science.'](#)" To appear in *Hegel and the Sciences* (Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol. XXXIV), D. Reidel.

² "The Relationship of Habermas's Views to Hegel" in *Hegel's Social and Political Thought*, ed. D.P. Verene (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), pp. 240–246.

(3) the logic of determinate individuality.

It will be evident that the concept of a posit, as something determined, will find its place within the logic of determination. But just as the concept of a pure posit cannot presuppose a determinate positor, it will also be evident that this logic as a whole may not begin with any determinate idea (*Vorstellung*). For the sake of emphasis, I should like to repeat this phrase. I can think of no other that more accurately captures the requirement for the beginning of a logic whose basic question is: What is determinacy? This phrase, once again, is: “logic may not begin with any determinate idea.”

It is, of course, a natural idea, in modern philosophy at least, that any contact with objective truth is necessarily routed through subjective consciousness, empirical or transcendental. That is presumably why modern philosophy tends to reduce all metaphysical questions to an epistemological question. In any case, Hegel regarded this natural idea (*natürliche Vorstellung*) as the most basic conceptual framework presupposed or pre-positing in modern philosophy. Since the idea had become virtually second nature to modern philosophy, Hegel knew that it would be difficult to eliminate. But if, on the other hand, he envisioned (as I believe he did) a conception of a systematic philosophy that must begin without any determinate idea, it will be plausible to consider that he would formulate a manual of exercises designed to uproot this deep-set idea and habit of thought. It is as such a manual of exercises that we can, I believe, best read his first published book, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. Its final objective is to *absolve* that natural idea mentioned in the opening sentence of the ‘Introduction’ to the *Phenomenology*. The stage of final absolution from the natural idea Hegel calls “absolute knowing” (*Das absolute Wissen*). At this stage, the subject of the *Phenomenology*, consciousness, may be said to discover that *all* of its principles for validating knowledge are what they are because they are posits of consciousness itself. It thus knows that there are no principles independent of its experience that might serve to validate knowledge as knowledge for consciousness. The state of absolute knowledge is accordingly the state in which consciousness as consciousness may be said to be absolved from any claim to know any determinate idea whatsoever. Therewith the “natural idea” is eliminated. That, in briefest outline, is why Hegel’s *Phenomenology* may be read as an introduction to his *Science of Logic*. To begin, this logic requires the absence of any determinate idea with a claim to conceptual significance. The *Phenomenology* brings about this state of affairs by an analysis of consciousness as an epistemic positor.

The key to such an interpretation of the relationship between phenomenology and systematic philosophy is to see that phenomenology does, whereas systematic philosophy does not, presuppose a determinate idea. Furthermore, the determinate idea presupposed by the *Phenomenology* must be the one whose elimination eliminates all determinate ideas whatsoever. What, then, is this determinate idea presupposed by the *Phenomenology*? In one word, it is consciousness. And what is the determinacy of this idea? It is the elementary content of consciousness, the abstract determinations, knowledge and truth. All consciousness is consciousness *of* something. To be consciousness is to have something for consciousness, to have a theme, to have an intentional object. Knowing consciousness therefore has the determinacy of a relation. And the determinate aspect of this relation is called knowledge. But consciousness also knows its knowledge to be *for it*, its theme, its intentional object. What does this mean? Put most simply it means that what is for consciousness, namely knowledge, is *for it* precisely

because it is *not in itself*. But to draw this contrast between what is for it and what is in itself, consciousness, in its most elementary structure, must posit the determination of being-in-itself. This being-in-itself, the necessary correlative of knowing consciousness, is what Hegel calls its moment of truth. On his analysis, then, truth, the moment by contrast with which consciousness as knowing consciousness has an object for it, is seen to be a posit by consciousness.

This, then, is the natural idea of modern philosophy. It is also the determinate structure of consciousness which is presupposed by the *Phenomenology*. And because it is presupposed, the *Phenomenology* is not a science in *stricto sensu*, i.e., in the sense of systematic philosophy. In fact, this is a structure which, taken as the fundamental structure of knowing, rules out the possibility of any genuine science. For scientific knowledge cannot explicitly acknowledge the idea of truth as a mere posit.

Still, the *Phenomenology* does presuppose or pre-posit this oppositional structure of consciousness as the determinate idea constituting its subject matter. And with such a subject matter it might seem that the *Phenomenology* could only lead to a radicalization of the skepticism implicit in the structure of consciousness, to that unmasking of truth as a posit explicitly affirmed by Nietzsche and implicitly acknowledged by the genial nihilism of contemporary intellectuals. Such, for example, is Jürgen Habermas' reading of the *Phenomenology*.³

But Hegel's analysis of consciousness has a dynamic as well as a merely structural dimension. Precisely because consciousness' idea of truth is a posit, it is also susceptible of being discovered *as* a posit. But because it is a necessary posit—even for the most avowedly skeptical consciousness—it constitutes the *horizon* within which any posit is *thematized* as a posit or discovered to be a posit. This horizontal dimension of consciousness is captured by Hegel through the use of a grammatical distinction that is introduced in the beginning of the *Phenomenology* and sustained until the end. It is namely, the distinction between the dative and the accusative, a distinction between what is “to” consciousness and what is “for” it.⁴

But the difference between the in-itself and the for-itself is already present in the very fact that consciousness knows an object at all. Something is *to it* (*ihm*) the *in-itself*, but the knowledge or the being of the object *for* consciousness (*für das Bewußtsein*) is *to it* still another moment.⁵

³ *Knowledge and Human Interests*, tr. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), Chapter One.

⁴ Despite Hegel's disavowal (WL, I, 7n/29n), readers are sometimes tempted to an interpretation of the PhG as 'part' of Hegel's system because the term 'phenomenology' is used to describe the second section of the philosophy of subjective Spirit (Enz., §413–429). Hegel had good reason to take up 'phenomenology' as a stage of subjective spirit (paralleled by the stages of 'morality' and 'religion' in the second and third parts of the philosophy of Spirit). But despite similarities of subject matter, the *methods* followed in the PhG and in the 'phenomenology' are radically different. A major clue to this difference is that the PhG does, whereas the 'phenomenology' does not, exploit the dative/accusative distinction as its motive principle.

⁵ PhG, §85/59, [my translation](#), as published in Martin Heidegger, *Hegel's Concept of Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 22. I first called attention to the significance of Hegel's distinction between the dative and accusative dimensions in “Die Epoché der Phänomenologie des Geistes,” in *Stuttgarter Hegel-Tage 1970*, ed., H.-G. Gadamer (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1974), pp. 605–621. For subsequent discussion see Klaus Hartmann, ed., *Die ontologische Option* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976), pp. 233 and 261.

To summarize Hegel's second principal observation about the determinacy of the natural idea in the *Phenomenology*: consciousness is not and cannot be regarded as determinate simply in virtue of the abstract contrast between what is *for it* and what is correlatively posited as *in itself*. The abstract form of consciousness always has a determinate shape (*Gestalt*). And any given shape of consciousness is what it is in virtue of the specific horizon in which it makes thematic its objects of knowledge. In any given shape, this is what is *to it*, i.e., pre-thematic. But because its pre-thematic horizon, its dative dimension, is susceptible of being made thematic, the abstract form of consciousness can undergo a sequence of transformations by which it "widens" its horizon. We can follow this development by considering the progressively broader dimension assumed by the dative dimension throughout the *Phenomenology*. (Unfortunately, the dative/accusative distinction is not preserved in either of the complete translations published in English.) Thus we can also grasp how, in principle at least, the *Phenomenology* might have an immanent conclusion. It would be that Shape in which consciousness comes to thematize a horizon which it had developed to the point of totality. Then, one might say, its horizon will have "exploded" and the distinction between the dative and the accusative dimensions, the in-itself and the for-consciousness, will have been eliminated. Such, in any case, is my reading of that elimination of the "opposition of consciousness" which Hegel stresses in his *Science of Logic* as the result of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

II

The logic then proceeds to generate the elementary categories of thought. To consider a category as a category, without any reference to a putatively legitimating structure in the real world, Hegelian logic must be liberated from metaphysics. This is achieved by a critique of the natural idea, the definitive structure of consciousness within the *Phenomenology*. It is, on the other hand, the explicit theoretical task of Hegel's logic to make all aspects of determinacy conceptually transparent.

As already indicated, this logic begins, not with an account of determinacies as determined, but with determinacy as determinate within a situation of contrast. The logic of contrastive determinacy begins with a consideration of the indeterminate, the negative result of the *Phenomenology*. Upon consideration, the indeterminate exhibits itself in the categorial forms of being and nothing. As pure thought forms, being and nothing are both without qualification; they are both indeterminate. Yet they are thought as different. Hence the first contrast in Hegel's logic of contrastive determinacy, a contrast through which the very concept of determinacy may be thought to arise.

The logic of contrastive determinacy is a study of all the elementary forms in which something that is otherwise indeterminate may be thought of as determinate by virtue of, and solely by virtue of, its standing in contrast with something other than it.

In this logic, to be *x* is therefore to be non-*y*. The whole logic of contrastive determinacy is a spelling out of the ways in which determinacy can be thought, not by reference to determinate structures in reality (this is the formula of metaphysics), but by contrast with other determinacies in question, say, *y*. It will be clear that in this logic no determinacy can be thought as independent of all others. But neither can they be said to stand in a relation of dependency. They are what they are in

and through their otherness; there is here no difference of logical order whereby any determinacy could be thought independent of or dependent upon another.

This logic is said to give a complete account of the categories of contrastive determinacy because the first contrast is generated out of the indeterminate, and because the sequence of the categories generated leads immanently to a way of thinking determinacy that is not contrastive.

The second way of thinking determinacy is the logic of determination, the logic in terms of which an x is thought determinate by virtue of its being determined or posited by its other. The distinguishing characteristic of this logic is differentiation into two logical orders. It is, we may say, a two-tiered logic. In some respects it bears a resemblance to the ordinary logical distinction between a meta-language and an object language. The one order refers to the other. And it is by virtue of this reference that the referents are said to be what they are. In other words, their determinacy is said to derive exclusively from their being determined or posited.

Hegel calls this way of thinking determinacy the logic of essence. The term essence designates the logical order which is superordinated to the order of posited determinacies just because the determinacies in question *are* thought *as* posits or determinations. This logic is thus said to provide the conceptual framework for our thinking relations such as that between essence and appearance or between cause and effect. The critical point, however, here and elsewhere in Hegel's logic, is that the categories or structures of thought generated are not thought by abstraction from, say, cause and effect relations in the real world. The contention is rather that we make sense of relations in the real world by ordinary thinking and that we can make sense of thinking by reconstructing the categories of thought independently of any reference to reality. This is another way of saying that the logic is wholly non-metaphysical. The logic of determinations treats determinate thought structures as what they are solely in virtue of their being determined. But Hegel's is a *pure* theory of positing because it considers nothing but the ways by which any x can be thought to be what it is exclusively in terms of its being posited, established, or determined. Here nothing is presupposed about the determiner that does not pertain to its logical role as a determiner of x, and nothing can be thought about x that is not accountable in terms of its being determined. Hence there can be no talk about God or about human agents, about divine or human commands, as the primitive forms of posits when posits are conceived logically. Such talk would presuppose or posit pre-logically a determinacy of the positor that, *ex hypothesi*, could not be accounted for by the logic of determination alone. But these very pre-positors are inevitably made by philosophers of the 'natural idea,' philosophers unschooled by the *Phenomenology*.

The third way of thinking determinacy in Hegel's logic is what I have called the logic of determinate individuality. In this sphere the specific topic is the conceptual framework in which we think of any x as an individual (*ein Einzelnes*). Although it is thoroughly misleading to think of the first two parts of the logic as anything like a 'thesis' and an 'anti-thesis,' there is an important sense in which the logic of determinant individuality constitutes a synthesis of the previous two spheres. Neither contrast nor determination provide frameworks for thinking anything determinate as a determinate individual. That is their defect. Each accounts only for the conceptual resources in terms of which we think "moments" (*Momente*) or logical aspects of a determinate individual. Nevertheless, these

moments are *the* moments of individuality. Specifically thought as moments, as they are thought in the logic of determinate individuality, they are called the moments of universality and particularity (*das Allgemeine und das Besondere*). Thought as determinate by virtue of contrast alone, an x is ultimately thought to be at one with that by contrast with which it was thought a determinate x. It comes to be thought as a universal. I shall illustrate this by the case of legal persons in the following section. On the other hand, if x is thought as determinate by virtue of determination alone, then it is ultimately thought in terms of its bare positivity, a determination without any logical connection with any other. It comes to be thought as a bare particular. In the next section I shall draw on Hegel's theory of the moral subject for an illustration of this.

The main lesson of the logics of contrast and determination, a lesson drawn in the logic of individuality, is that they are each necessary but insufficient conditions for the thought of a determinate individual. Each must be thought as a necessary moment of thinking individuality, but both must be thought together if individuality is to be comprehended. I shall illustrate this in the next section by reference to Hegel's argument that legal persons and moral subjects are only thinkable as individuals when they are thought as family members, participants in civil society and citizens of a state.

III

The formal structure of Hegel's philosophy of objective Spirit does not differ from the formal structure of any of the other five major parts of his "*Realphilosophie*."⁶ Each of these is a consideration of structures in the domain external to logic (*die Äusserlichkeit*) and in each case the real structure is an illustration of a formal logical structure. It is never the case that the structures may be said to be derived or abstracted from reality. That, once again, would be metaphysics.

What is distinctive about the philosophy of objective Spirit is that it concerns the domain of human selves in the state of plurality or as interacting with one another. This is, of course, the same domain that is treated by philosophers of history. To forestall a possible misunderstanding of my interpretation I wish to stress that the argument in Hegel's philosophy of objective Spirit is totally alien from any philosophy of history. The guiding framework for his analysis is an a-temporal logic, and no essentially chronological model of development.⁷

⁶ The six major parts of the "Realphilosophie" are: Mechanics, Physics, Organic Physics, Subjective Spirit, Objective Spirit and Absolute Spirit. Note that the philosophy of Subjective Spirit contains a theory of consciousness under the title 'Phenomenology.' This theory is a part of systematic philosophy and is not to be confused with the PhG, which contains a critique, not a theory, of consciousness. See footnote 4 above.

⁷ Hegel as the philosopher of history is a Young Hegelian invention. The famous proposition, "Philosophie ist ihre Zeit, in Gedanken erfasst," served Bruno Bauer, the young Marx and others as a *carte blanche* for wide ranging speculations about cultures and epochs. In the meantime such intellectual exercises have become an industry so entrenched in our landscape that the traditional appeal to Hegel would no longer be helpful or even intelligible. Thus it is left for intellectual historians to point out that our historico-cultural sensibilities derive ultimately from Hegel. But they carry matters too far. Though a large number of his immediate followers were drunk with history, Hegel's published works are filled with harsh critiques of historical explanation and influence-hunting. For sober assessments of the Young Hegelians see the various writings of Rüdiger Bubner, especially "Philosophie ist ihre Zeit, in Gedanken erfasst" in *Hermeneutik und Dialektik*, ed. R. Bubner (Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1970), II, 317–342. This is the Gadamer *Festschrift*.

The three main parts of the philosophy of objective spirit correspond, respectively, to the logics of contrast, of determination and of individuality. These are the parts entitled Abstract Law, Morality and Ethical Life. As in the case of logic per se, the first two spheres exhibit themselves as moments, each of which, taken by itself, is aporetic; but both, when articulated *as moments* and thought in the conceptual framework of the third sphere, show themselves to be necessary moments.

In the first of these spheres, Abstract Law or Legality, the factor whose determinacy is under discussion is called the person. The first thing that must be said about persons is that they are determinate or actual persons only in so far as they stand in a situation of contrast with other persons. That is to say, the logic by which they have their determinacy is the logic of contrast. As contrastive factors in a domain external to the logical system, however, the contrast cannot be regarded as a purely logical one. It must be mediated. The factor which is said to mediate the contrast between persons is called property. The contrast of persons mediated by property is called recognition. Thus it is Hegel's most elementary teaching about persons that they are what they are by standing in a contrastive relationship to other persons, by being recognized. The sphere of legality is accordingly the sphere of recognition (*Anerkanntheit*), and the safest generalization about Hegel's concept of legality is that it is the structure of reciprocal recognition.

Perhaps the most important feature of Hegel's treatment of legality in terms of his logic of contrastive determinacy is that this treatment, by virtue of the logic alone, requires that persons be considered determinate exclusively in and through their contrast with other persons. The logic would be inapplicable to any legal situation in which a 'person' were considered first with reference to some determinate status—slave or free, male or female, white or black. This means that Hegel's legal theory would not be pertinent to any legal system that did not acknowledge the principle of personal equality. And note that his aspect of the theory has nothing to do with Hegel's moral attitude on the question of equality: it follows from his logic alone. Moreover, as far as the logic of the theory is concerned, it must be regarded as a pure contingency that a real political institution in Europe had acknowledged and declared the equality of persons as a fundamental principle. Here again we see that a systematic reading of Hegel rules out any recourse to a philosophy of history.

Hegel's presentation of abstract legality is divided into three sections: property, which we have already touched upon, contract and wrong. It is in the second of these that the principle of contrast via recognition is made most evident. For a contract is, in the most basic sense, an exchange of property, and property is any aspect of a determinate personality that is susceptible of exchange. The contract, then, is that operation by which the contrast, and hence the determinacy, of persons is most intelligible. To engage in a contractual exchange of property is to engage in a process of recognition.

This process is described in two stages: the stipulation and the performance. In the first, the quantitative equality of the properties to be exchanged is posited and the formal character of the actual exchange is anticipated. In the performance some of the determinate factors which had defined the two (or more) persons are transferred one to the other and the fluidity of personal determinacy via contrastive recognition is once again affirmed. For the basic legal right of persons in this theory is not the right to any determinate thing or kind of things (e.g., not even to such 'basics' as food, clothing or

shelter). The self as person is not the self in need (this is a topic of civil society). The legal right of persons is the right to be determinate, the right to stand in determinate contrast with other persons or, in short, the right to be recognized.

The third subsection of Abstract Legality is wrong. The possibility of wrong derives in the first instance from the distinction between stipulation and performance in contract. The specific contrast as stipulated formally and the contrast as actualized in the performance may be out of agreement with one another. If this happens accidentally it is called a non-malicious wrong; if by design it is called fraud. In either case it is not an eventuality against which there are any protective resources in the sphere of abstract legality. Or, as Hegel put the matter: “abstract legality is always at the mercy of wrong.”

In its most extreme form wrong is crime. Here a person is denied his personality. The entire structure of reciprocal recognition, the legal form of contrastive determinacy, is simply negated. The perpetrator of such an act, the criminal, thereby loses his or her determinate place in the structure of legal contrast; in other words, the criminal act is a sacrifice of personality.

Still, the criminal as criminal is not without his or her rights. These are not legal rights, for legality is at the service of personality alone. But to be a person is to be something *universal*, it is to be in a mode of determinacy which, when carried to its limit, eliminates the determinacy of the selves in question whereas the criminal act is an act of *determination* in a sphere *contrastive* determinacy. It is wrong because it involves a conflict of spheres; it is right because the sphere of legality, like its counterpart in pure logic, is aporetic or systematically incomplete. The significance of abstract legality is to be a moment of a systematic whole.

The sphere within which the self-determination of the self is the proper way of determinacy is the sphere of morality. This self is the moral subject. In morality the subject is what it is by virtue of its own posits. These posits also take the form of acts in the face of others. But when we consider action as moral action, i.e., in terms of the logic of determination, then its social dimension is only accountable by way of the agent’s subjective meaning. Thus Hegel’s concept of *moral* action is parallel to Max Weber’s better known definition of *social* action. According to Weber:

Action is “social” insofar as its subjective meaning takes into account the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course.⁸

The moral subject is essentially an agent. By its acts it is what it is. But even more essentially the moral subject determines the objective principles by which its acts are validated. At the first stage of moral reasoning this simply amounts to drawing a line between what the subject does willy nilly and what it acknowledges to have done ‘on purpose.’ The subject accepts responsibility for what, by its own determination, it has done ‘on purpose.’ At the second stage of moral reasoning the subject takes responsibility for determining its intentions in such a way that its actions will be objectively valid. But still it is the subject alone which can determine the validity of its own intentions. In the third stage of morality the final implications of its logic of determination are put on display. What is here determined

⁸ *Economy and Society*, ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), p. 4.

or posited is not merely the action, its purpose and its objective intention, but also the principle(s) by which *all* moral validation can be thought. This extreme form of moral subjectivity, which Hegel calls ‘conscience,’ is obliged, by the logic of moral discourse, the logic of positing, to determine ‘the good.’ At the previous stage the determinations or posits of the subject were made with some reference to a putatively objective framework, e.g., a natural law. But at this stage the logic of moral self-determination requires that the objective framework itself be posited. When *this* is made a subjective posit, there is no longer any moral basis for the subject’s claim to a distinction between subjectivity and objectivity. As an ultimate moral posit, the good is no more logically necessary than evil.

Thus on Hegel’s account neither legality nor morality can be regarded as complete frameworks for a comprehension of selves in the situation of plurality. But both are necessary moments and any adequate theory will have to incorporate their respective logics.

Under the title “Ethical Life” (*Sittlichkeit*) Hegel claims to have formulated such an adequate theory. The point of this theory is not to deny the significance of legality and morality. Indeed, the concept of Ethical Life would make no sense in abstraction from the two previous moments of Hegel’s philosophy of objective Spirit, just as his logic of determinate individuality makes no sense in abstraction from the logics of contrast and determination.

It is, I believe, a distinguishing characteristic of Ethical Life in systematic philosophy that the self is comprehended as individual by virtue of its participation in *each* of three modalities of life in plurality. The respective modalities are the familial, the societal and the political. Each of these brings to prominence one of the three moments of the concept: universality, particularity and individuality. As a family member the ethical self is conceived to be *universal* because the family is One Person (“*Eine Person*”),⁹ and the member is a member through an immediate sentiment, the unity of *love*. As a member of civil society the ethical self is conceived under the aspect of *particularity*—the self is determinate by virtue of the particular *interests* that it posits, but which it posits in a structure of interaction (e.g., the world-market) that extends in principle to *all* other ethical selves. Each particular self is therefore seen to participate in one real structure which, unlike the real family, is the same for all: civil society is global. Finally, as political, the ethical self is an *individual* through loyalty to a nation-state which is, at the same time, a modern constitutional state, an institution whose legitimacy consists in upholding the *universal* principles of justice (the constitution) within the territory and traditions of a *particular* people. Finding its identity in the modern state, the ethical self can be “at home” with others who share not only a particular culture but also a common commitment to a rationally universal organization of authority (the structure of legality and action presented in the philosophy of objective Spirit as a whole).

We can begin to see the specific character of a systematic and non-metaphysical concept of ethical life when we compare it with that notion of ethical life which emerges as a shape of consciousness in Chapter Six of the *Phenomenology*. Ethical life from the standpoint of consciousness is, like every shape of consciousness, constituted by a two-fold opposition. Whereas ethical life in systematic philosophy exhibits the tri-modal structure of the concept, ethical life in phenomenology

⁹ Enz., §519–520 and §523.

is bi-modal, incomplete and self-destroying. The two orders, you will recall, are the public and the private realms, the domains of human and divine law, the members of which were essentially male or female.

Consider how the self is determinately individual in these respective types of ethical life. In the phenomenological type each self is assigned to one of the two orders primarily in terms of a natural determinacy, in terms of a factor determined in reality from the standpoint of consciousness. This factor is sex. If the self is female, its dominant ethical realm is private, the family; if male, its proper realm is public, the political order. In either case a resolute action must be tragic. The ethical individual acting with a claim to objective validity is doomed to essential conflict.

By contrast, the three spheres of ethical life in systematic philosophy are not spheres to which a self is assigned in virtue of some determinacy derived from reality. It is rather the case that the self *becomes* determinate by participation in *each* of the three spheres discovered in reality according to the structure of the concept.

Of course it is true that these three spheres of ethical life, like the concepts of the legal person and the moral subject, could not have been discovered in reality prior to the emergence of the modern world. But what Hegel calls *die Neuzeit*, modernity, will remain incomprehensible so long as we take our subject matter to be history. Our categories for a comprehension of modernity, the structure articulated under the title objective Spirit, are not generated in history but in pure logic, a logic made pure by a phenomenological elimination of the natural idea and a logic whose structure guides our discovery of those dimensions of reality which happen to be comprehensible. As a part of systematic philosophy, the science of spirit, like the science of nature, cannot “turn back to that reality which consciousness gave up” in phenomenology.¹⁰ On the other hand, systematic philosophy is systematic only if the *Phenomenology* has uncovered *all* of the shapes in which consciousness can make a claim to know reality.¹¹

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¹⁰ WL, II, 231/592.

¹¹ It is of course an open question whether systematic philosophy is possible within our intellectual milieu. We are all aware of numerous attempts to resurrect systematic philosophy in the form of some historically famous ‘system.’ Of course Hegel’s ‘system’ is not immune to such exploitation. But in this essay I have attempted to show how a reading of Hegel that distinguishes radically between the PhG and the system enables one to see that coming to terms with our anti-systematic intellectual milieu is the precondition for any rational discourse about systematic philosophy. For students of Hegel, however, the task proposed is doubly difficult because many of our most sophisticated contemporaries have become accustomed to regarding Hegel as a major source rather than as the diagnostician of the epistemological nihilism that we inhale and exhale on a daily basis.