

Conclusion

Hegel, Heidegger, and the Metaphysics of Modernity

Heidegger's famous "grand narrative" of the completion of Western metaphysics in the nihilism of technological modernity has profoundly influenced a host of contemporary critiques of subjectivity, deconstructions of metaphysics, and challenges to the legacy of the Enlightenment project. In this regard, Heidegger's confrontation with Hegel enables us to explore a number of problems that remain of contemporary philosophical interest with respect to the related projects of *overcoming metaphysics* and the *critique of modernity*. My contention throughout this thesis has been that both Hegel and Heidegger present powerful versions of the identity/difference problematic, and in doing so represent 'paradigmatic' versions of the simultaneous critique of metaphysics and critique of modernity. The connecting theme that links the identity/difference problem with the critique of metaphysics is that of achieving an adequate conception of our selfhood and freedom within the historical context of modernity.

For Hegel, the dialectical-speculative path points towards the suspension of the metaphysics of reflective subjectivity (or *Verstand*) in favour of comprehending the self-developing system of speculative reason. Indeed, the standpoint of the understanding, which remains caught within the dichotomies of reflection, belongs to the early period of modernity (Descartes, Locke, Newtonian sciences), a period which in Hegel's day was already showing signs of transforming itself into a more complex configuration of Spirit.^[1] The rational demand for freedom, whether as the principle of individual subjective freedom, the 'objective' sense of rational social institutions and norms, and the comprehensive sense of self-recognition in otherness, now demands a genuinely speculative system of free (self-grounding) thought. Thus the standpoint of consciousness and the formalist standpoint of self-consciousness are to be overcome through a historicist-intersubjective conception of self-consciousness as Spirit. Freedom, comprehended in the speculative sense of a 'being with oneself in otherness,' is supposed to suspend the potential domination-relations between Self and Other implicit within both substance- and subject-metaphysics. In this manner, the overcoming of metaphysics (in the sense of *Verstand* or reflection) ushers in the appropriately dialectical-speculative thought Hegel thinks is adequate to the historical condition of modernity.

After the radical project of a preliminary fundamental ontology, Heidegger's onto-poetic path turns and takes a 'step back' behind the metaphysical foundations of modernity as the epoch of technological en-framing. The task of thought is to think the (unthought) ontological difference at the heart of metaphysics in its culminating phases (Hegel to Nietzsche in philosophy, self-willing

subjectivity and planetary technology in modernity). Indeed, Hegelian speculative thought is grasped as the culmination of the Cartesian ‘egological’ interpretation of Being as self-certain subjectivity, and therefore as that which must be ‘enveloped’ in order to re-think the mutual appropriation or belonging-together of man and Being. This confrontation with Hegel and the metaphysical tradition will prepare for the possibility of an onto-poetic experience of the event of appropriation beyond the objectification and nihilism of technological modernity. Heidegger thus confronts Hegel equally on the terrain of ‘overcoming metaphysics’ as that of ‘overcoming modernity’.

As I have suggested throughout, Heidegger’s *Verfallsgeschichte* of the forgetting of Being gives Hegel a decisive role in the modern metaphysics of subjectivity. Hence the legitimacy of Heidegger’s confrontation with Hegel becomes a significant factor in evaluating Heidegger’s critique of modernity: if Heidegger’s interpretation of Hegel remains problematical, this would also make questionable the ‘grand narrative’ describing the culmination of metaphysics in the nihilism of technological modernity. In the spirit of ‘disputatious dialogue’, I shall pose a few questions in conclusion that begin a questioning of Heidegger and suggest a recovery of Hegel. These concluding remarks are also intended indicate some of the contemporary resonances in their respective approaches to the identity/difference problem in the philosophical context of modernity.

The first issue concerns the adequacy of Heidegger’s engagement with Hegel’s thought. Although Heidegger clearly seeks to uncover the “unthought” of Hegel’s metaphysics, Heidegger’s most sustained engagements with Hegel remain oblique, fragmentary, and, consequently, misleading. As we have seen, Heidegger interprets Spirit according to a Cartesian-Fichtean “egological” model of self-consciousness that Hegel is at pains to supersede; while this facilitates the ‘deconstruction’ of Hegel as a crypto-Cartesian subjectivist, it nonetheless fails to do justice to Hegel’s complex struggle with Kantian idealism. The main difficulty lies in Heidegger’s failure to grasp the *intersubjective* constitution of self-consciousness that provides the basis for Hegel’s dialectical interpretation of reason and Spirit. For Hegel’s contribution to the theory of subjectivity lies precisely in his move from the abstract self-identity of self-consciousness (the Kantian and Fichtean ‘I = I’) towards the socially and historically constructed identity of the self through participation in a system of intersubjective relations of recognition within a concrete, historically specific community. This intersubjective dimension of Hegel’s phenomenology remains absent from Heidegger’s interpretation. This would not be a difficulty if Hegel were a minor figure in the history of metaphysical subjectivism; but it does become significant if we take seriously Heidegger’s thesis that modern metaphysics is completed in absolute subjectivity, and that Hegel provides the paradigmatic case of this process.

A more serious question is whether Heidegger can account for the critical orientation of his diagnoses of technological modernity. As we have seen, Heidegger abandons his earlier project of an

overcoming of metaphysics, a critical confrontation with modernity itself, since this project remains mired in the ‘activist-productivist’ metaphysics of self-willing subjectivity. Nonetheless, the critical attitude towards this metaphysics of subjectivity remains intact—an attitude that articulates and performs precisely that which it is supposed to abandon. The later Heidegger, as discussed, abandons the overcoming of metaphysics and performs a “step back” behind the metaphysical tradition in order to inquire after its unthought origins. This abandonment of the critical project is at the same time in the service of an undeniably critical orientation towards the nihilism of technological modernity, and a positive orientation towards the possibility of what I have called an onto-poetic experience of the relationship between Being, beings, and human being in the context of the all-encompassing technological *Ge-stell*. The poetic releasement or *Gelassenheit* from the tyranny of the metaphysical *logos* and its culmination in modern technology is motivated by a fundamentally critical impulse: to foster (through thought and language) the overcoming of the domination of thought over Being and consequent obliteration of the ontological difference. Heidegger’s diagnosis of modern nihilism—the imperialism of planetary technology, the devastation of the earth, the consummation of utter meaninglessness, and so on—is motivated by the possibility of an “other beginning,” an “other origin” of metaphysics that makes manifest that which the metaphysical tradition has covered over, another way of experiencing Being beyond technical domination and environmental devastation.

But how can Heidegger account for this critical *animus* towards modernity if the critical project of “overcoming metaphysics” has been abandoned as an avatar of self-empowering subjectivity? If we admit the critical impulse in relation to Heidegger’s understanding of technology, then we are admitting that the paradigm of self-willing subjectivity cannot be entirely abandoned. If we completely abandon self-willing subjectivity, as the later Heidegger claims to be doing, then it would seem that we should have no grounds at all to critically confront technology other than gesturing poetically to another way of dwelling on the earth. One can do this, of course, dismissing all critical objections to Heidegger’s “ungrounded” critique of modernity as merely regressive instances of the very self-willing and self-grounding modern subjectivity that Heidegger is attempting to question. But, in that case, it is not at all clear why Heidegger’s claim to have unearthed the secret and hidden origin of modern nihilism, the fundamental philosophical origins of the epoch modern technology, should claim any superior validity to other competing accounts of the “philosophical problem of modernity”—above all, any superiority to Hegel’s critical legitimation of the project of modern freedom as self-realisation in mutual intersubjective recognition. We can accept Heidegger’s “alternative” narrative of the metaphysics of modernity, but need not accept that it has the “grounding” power to claim that Heidegger has achieved clarity about the “truth” of modernity in its entire philosophical breadth.

Moreover, although the content of this radically ‘other beginning’ beyond technological en-

framing remains indeterminate or opaque, it is unquestionable that Heidegger stresses the affirmative possibilities of the mysterious event of appropriation in the context of our experience of modernity. Such a positive emphasis on a radical otherness or ineffable beyond that remains utterly opaque in content can be regarded as based on the yearning and longing of a neo-romantic subjectivity to achieve release from the antinomies of the modern world. In this regard, we recognise one of Hegel's famous phenomenological figures in Heidegger's thought of onto-poetic releasement from modernity: the romantic "unhappy consciousness" or "beautiful soul" who longs for the restoration of the broken or lost unity of Being, the lost sense and voice of Being itself in its silent and mysterious presencing, the ineffable event of appropriation that will save us in this "parlous time" of the devastation of the earth and flight of the gods.^[2] Heidegger attempts, in this sense, to have it both ways: to detach his thinking from metaphysical subjectivism in order to think the event of Being as such, but at the same time to engage in a devastating critique of technological modernity as the apotheosis of metaphysical nihilism from which release, or rather releasement, is desired. Yet how can the latter critique be performed without admitting the legacy of the self-critical modern subjectivity, the dissatisfied subject of modernity that has supposedly been abandoned?

This difficulty leads directly to my third remark. Despite Heidegger's caveats concerning the thoughtful character of the dialogue with the metaphysical tradition, the grand narrative of metaphysical nihilism leaves little space for critical engagement. Indeed, Heidegger's narration of the closure of the history of metaphysics and the obliteration of Being in modernity can be grasped as the inverse or negative image of the Hegelian reconciliation with actuality through the historical realisation of freedom. In this sense, Heidegger's narrative of the culmination of the metaphysical forgetting of Being in technological domination is more an *inverted Hegelianism* than a detachment from metaphysics. For Heidegger's history of the forgetting of Being is at least as totalising as Hegel's history of the realisation of Spirit. Indeed, it presents an equally teleological end-point, albeit as the culmination of metaphysics in the nihilism of technology rather than the self-realisation of subjective freedom in modernity. I would even suggest that Heidegger's oblivion of Being articulates the 'same' historical experience as Hegel's actualisation of freedom. Heidegger's narration of the withdrawal of Being is the *inverse reflection* of the Hegelian narrative of the coming to self-consciousness of Spirit: as the event of Being withdraws, the freedom of subjectivity emerges; conversely, as the freedom of subjectivity withdraws, the possibility of 'another experience' of Being returns. The speculative conclusion one might venture is that the experience of nihilism *is* the expression of the possibility (and dangers) of freedom: a radical freedom of subjectivity which, as Hegel pointed out, can always end in 'abstract negation,' but that is nonetheless the enduring legacy and principle of modern culture as much as of modern metaphysics. Hegel certainly analysed the dangers of an abstract conception of absolute

freedom, a freedom that can culminate in violence and terror,^[3] but he also outlined the possibility, as I have argued, of a rational freedom in modernity born of and sustained through the mutual recognition of the Other.

At the same time, however, we must draw attention to the sharp opposition between Hegel and Heidegger concerning their respective critical attitudes to modernity. Hegel's critical affirmation of modernity aims to provide a legitimation of the principle of subjective freedom. It points to the historical achievement of rationally grounded, self-reforming social institutions that comprise the 'closed' (in the sense of no longer to be superseded) yet mobile, self-resolving system of modernity. Speculative philosophy is supposed to provide the adequate legitimation of the historical condition of 'fully-fledged' modernity in its self-correcting dynamism. I have suggested that Hegel's (sometimes implicit) conception of mutual recognition provides a principle of intersubjective rational freedom adequate to the experience of (late) modernity. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that Hegel does not always successfully reconcile, within the *Philosophy of Right*, the 'modernist' commitment to the principle of subjective freedom, intersubjective recognition, and rational universality, with the seemingly 'pre-modernist' aspects of organic community, civic patriotism, and unreflective trust in the laws and institutions of the state.^[4] Indeed, it could be argued that Hegel's project of constructing a genuinely speculative system does at times suffer from the tendency to 'force' aspects of phenomenology and logic into the closure of the speculative system, and consequently that Hegel does not always successfully reconcile 'modernist' and 'premodernist' aspects of intersubjective freedom in his account of modern social and political life.^[5]

On the other hand, however, it is important to note that the simple opposition between "modernist" and "pre-modernist" (or indeed "post-modernist") aspects in Hegel's political philosophy is difficult to sustain without doing injustice to the complexity of Hegel's account of modern social and political institutions. Hegel does not by any means simply assert the need for a blind trust in every aspect of the modern state, which would deny the very principle of subjective freedom and rational autonomy that is the lasting achievement of modernity. Rather, Hegel is pointing out that the *rational* conception of freedom implies (along with education, choice, property, and so on) an affective trust in and habitual disposition to follow the laws, social practices, and political institutions that are necessary to the realisation of modern freedom itself. Otherwise we would likely remain caught within the insuperable dichotomy between the formal-universal freedom of abstract legal personhood and the conflicting private interests and asocial desires of the alienated subjects of modern civil society. In order to overcome the 'alienated' character of modern atomised individuality, genuine *social* freedom requires an affective disposition as well as a rational legitimation, in other words, a *felt* or intuited, as well as a *reflective*, understanding of the appropriateness and legitimacy of laws and social institutions.

Modern subjective freedom, in its concrete rather than abstract sense, is genuinely autonomous in that it gives itself its own formal laws and social institutions, to which it is then necessarily subject both in terms of its social *habitus* as well as its critical reflection. In this sense, Hegel's proposal for authentically *modern* rational freedom as autonomy seeks to overcome the limitations of an abstract freedom and atomised individuality that is characteristic of modernity in general.

Hegel's considered position thus critically affirms the inherent potentials for subjective and intersubjective freedom as the lasting achievement and legacy of social and cultural modernity. As a normative account of the principles of intersubjective freedom, Hegel's philosophical project still offers, I suggest, important critical insights into the problems of modernity. Heidegger's approach, however, involves a more 'despairing' diagnosis of modernity as the epoch of planetary technology. Modernity as the age of the "world-image" [*Weltbild*] is the historical condition of completed metaphysics in which Being is utterly obliterated and beings (including human beings) are reduced or objectified to mere 'standing reserve'. Heidegger's philosophical meta-narrative about the completion of subject-metaphysics (via Hegel and Nietzsche) in modern technology explicitly rejects the earlier "activist" stance of resolutely confronting the antinomies of modernity in order to contribute to the reversal of the nihilistic forgetting of Being. Instead, Heidegger turns to the onto-poetic releasement [*Gelassenheit*] from the horizon of modern subjectivity, a meditative preparation for the possibility of a more originary experience of the "belonging-together" of human beings and Being within the context of technological en-framing. Even though the later Heidegger has left behind the 'activist' and 'subjectivist' aspects of "authentic resoluteness," there nonetheless remains an element of 'subjectivism' in the now *passive* comportment towards the destinal sendings of Being, a passive hearing and heeding (rather than active decision and resolve) that remains the esoteric privilege of the thinker of Being. 'Freedom' in modernity is no longer, as for Hegel, the intersubjective freedom of mutual recognition that offers the paradigmatic resolution of the relation between Self and Other, identity and difference, universal and individual. Rather, for Heidegger, the modernist project of rational freedom gives way to the onto-poetic experience of the appropriative event, the solitary releasement towards the gifts of Being, which in the context of modernity is revealed in the ordering-calculating frame-work of global technology.

Heidegger's re-thinking of identity and difference in a non-metaphysical, onto-poetic register, moreover, raises an interesting paradox that returns us to certain insights within Hegelian speculative thought. In attempting to think the (ontological) *difference* as difference, Heidegger ends up affirming the (onto-poetic) *identity* (mutual appropriation or belonging-together) of man and Being. The attempt to think the hitherto concealed and obliterated difference returns us to identity, now apprehended in the onto-poetic sense of a non-instrumental and non-reductive relationship between the world and

ourselves. Moreover, the task of thinking at the end of metaphysics, namely to think the obliteration of the ontological difference, ends up affirming an esoteric discourse that cannot be universally communicated. Rather, it is restricted to the privileged “few” who are able to hear and heed the (silent) voice of Being. On the other hand, Hegel’s project of superseding the difference of consciousness and standpoint of *Verstand* in favour of speculative reason would seem to be a paradigm case of the metaphysical valorisation of identity over difference, the subordination of particularity to universality. Yet as I have argued in this study, Hegel’s metaphysics of Spirit is a thinking of identity *and* difference, of universality, particularity, and individuality, a metaphysics of modernity that is oriented by the Idea of freedom as “being with oneself in otherness”. In thinking the speculative identity of thought and Being in the universality of the Concept, Hegel produces a discourse that is in principle open to all, a path that even the naïve, unhappy consciousness of modernity can tread. This speculative thinking of identity and difference, universality and particularity, finds its concrete meaning in the freedom of intersubjective recognition: the adequate thought of freedom in late modernity.

In this sense, we find that Hegel’s account of the movement of reflection is demonstrated in the unfolding of the ‘disputatious dialogue’ between Hegel and Heidegger. In thinking the ontological difference, we find Heidegger thinking onto-poetic identity; in thinking speculative identity and universality, we find Hegel thinking intersubjective recognition and freedom as self-identity in otherness. The question is whether the metaphysical critique of modernity and the critique of modern metaphysics are reconcilable or not. The two paths I have discussed—Hegel’s speculative–dialectical and Heidegger’s onto-poetical paths—provide dual sources for the contemporary discourse on identity and difference, freedom and subjectivity, metaphysics and modernity. Some thinkers, such as Gadamer, have attempted to produce a ‘reconciliation’ between Hegelian and Heideggerian paths, a hermeneutic *Aufhebung* that preserves the dialectical rigour and hermeneutic sensitivity but negates the speculative excess and ontological hubris of each.^[6] Others, such as Derrida, have attempted a ‘double game’ in which Hegel as a thinker of speculative difference is played off against Heidegger as metaphysician of presence, while Heidegger as thinker of ontological difference subverts the closure of Hegelian metaphysics, with both movements of thought simultaneously affirming and negating each other within an “undecidable” deconstructive writing.^[7] Then there is the Habermasian path of intersubjective communication, the communicative turn not (consistently) taken by Hegel, who ultimately remained within the philosophy of consciousness despite his comprehension of modernity (1987, 23-44). Heidegger, on the other hand, exploded the philosophy of the subject, according to Habermas, but at the cost of destroying the foundations of Western rationalism, leaving nothing but the nihilism of a “totalising critique” of reason in his wake (1987, 131-160).

In this sense, both the contemporary “philosophy of difference” and ongoing “critique of the

subject” approaches draw much of their inspiration and philosophical grounding from Heidegger’s extraordinarily powerful confrontation with metaphysics and modernity. A host of contemporary thinkers draw their inspiration from the Heideggerian diagnosis of modernity and critique of metaphysics in order to propose an alternative form of ‘therapeutic’ non-metaphysical thinking.^[8] The thesis that the project of modernity has culminated, if not in utter nihilism, then in the subordination of difference to identity, finds one of its deepest roots in the Heideggerian diagnosis of the metaphysical foundations of modernity: namely that the (ontological) difference has been obliterated by the dominance of self-willing subjectivity and representational thinking. Within this critical diagnosis, Hegel stands as one of the paradigmatic figures of the metaphysics of identity, exemplifying the subjectivist will-to-power that subjugates otherness and subordinates difference to the unity of the same, the primacy of (abstract) identity. This now standard image of the metaphysics of modernity, I hope to have shown, demands further scrutiny and critical questioning as to its validity and plausibility. For if Heidegger’s confrontation with Hegel, as one of the key thinkers of the completion of subject-metaphysics, can be shown to be questionable, then we have good reason to re-evaluate the ‘Heideggerian’ narrative of the completion of metaphysics in technological modernity, and hence to question the claim that only a radical thinking of ‘difference as difference’ will be adequate to address the problems of (late) modernity.

Indeed, if Heidegger’s own onto-poetic path to thinking the ontological difference ineluctably reverts to an onto-poetic thinking of identity, and if Hegel’s project of thinking the speculative identity of subject and object ends up affirming freedom as self-identity in otherness, then this strongly suggests that any one-sided attempt to oppose the claims of radical difference against identity, or of rigid identity over against difference, will be bound to fail on its own terms. Furthermore, we can point to the emergence of two different forms of “closure” in the attitudes of Hegel and Heidegger to modernity: for Hegel, the critical affirmation of modernity through its dialectical-speculative comprehension provides a concrete conception of intersubjective normativity and freedom within the modern state; at the same time, this rational reconciliation with the (perhaps irresolvable) contradictions of modernity raises the question of an historical *other* to the antagonistic but self-moving systems of modernity. Hegel’s concrete diagnosis of the contradictions comes at the price of a certain ‘conservative’ reconciliation with a “modernity at variance with itself” (Habermas, 1987). Heidegger, by contrast, provides a radical diagnosis of the nihilism of modern technological enframing and counsels a radical openness to the event of appropriation that Being itself may send. That towards which we are supposed to remain hearing and heeding remains, however, utterly opaque, even though it is to provide the way forward through the historical labyrinth of modern technology. Heidegger’s radical openness to Being remains empty of content in the face of a modernity whose

sheer complexity escapes the onto-poetic thinker of Being. And this radical openness to what Being itself may send us has its own ethical and political dangers, as Heidegger's political involvement with Nazism strongly suggests.^[9] This chiasmatic reversal of the relationship between identity and difference in the dialogue between Hegel and Heidegger, I suggest, demonstrates the difficulty of thinking identity and difference, universality and individuality, and the meaning of rational freedom in modernity.

This thesis has attempted to explore a dialogue between Hegel and Heidegger concerning the problem of identity and difference and its significance for understanding the critique of metaphysics and critique of modernity. This dialogue is less harmonious than disputatious, much like the “lover’s quarrel” Heidegger describes between thinkers devoted to the “matter itself,” that which philosophy demands us to confront in thought. While I have attempted to affirm the hermeneutic importance of reciprocity, I would also remark that each participant brings his or her own hermeneutic interests, ‘prejudices,’ and interpretative horizons to any historically situated philosophical debate. In this sense, I have not been an impartial adjudicator, allowing each speaker to have his say, and thereby discreetly removing myself from the fray. My intention has been to present a *critical* dialogical encounter between Hegel and Heidegger oriented around a shared problematic—the problem of identity and difference and its significance for the critique of metaphysics and modernity. My critical proposal has been to argue that Hegel’s conception of intersubjective freedom offers an important path of inquiry within the contemporary critique of modernity, while Heidegger’s meditations on metaphysics and modernity, and in particular his confrontation with Hegel, must be submitted to further critical scrutiny in the face of its rather uncritical acceptance. Indeed, the prospects for a ‘post-metaphysical’ appropriation of Hegelian themes are promising, particularly concerning the concept of intersubjective recognition,^[10] as are recent attempts to draw on Hegelian themes for a critical theory of subjectivity and ideology in (late) modernity.^[11]

I have suggested, in short, that Heidegger’s “thinking dialogue” with Hegel seems in some respects closer to a philosophical monologue. Heidegger’s fine ear for the unthought at the heart of metaphysics—so brilliantly attuned to Kant and profoundly engaged with Nietzsche—seems somewhat deaf in the case of Hegel. Heidegger fails to heed that the nihilism of metaphysics is not only the forgetting of Being but also the experience of modern freedom. In this respect, it is Hegel who presents the more radical version of philosophical modernism compared with Heidegger’s post-modernist reversion to neoromantic onto-poetics. The contemporary scepticism towards the possibility of any emancipatory project in modernity, the anxiety that remaining committed to Enlightenment

ideals such as autonomous freedom could only result in nihilism and catastrophe, the suspicion that any rehabilitation of concepts of subjectivity and rationality is tantamount to the most dangerous kind of metaphysical hubris, all seem to owe their provenance and plausibility, in key respects, to Heidegger's powerful philosophical *Verfallsgeschichte* concerning the fate of metaphysics and subjectivity in modernity. In this sense, the debate between Hegel and Heidegger concerning the philosophical problems of modernity remains as pertinent today as it ever was. It is for this reason that I have emphasised the importance of the philosophical dialogue between the paths of speculative-dialectical and onto-poetic thinking. Indeed, the Hegelian and Heideggerian narratives of metaphysics, which mirror and invert one another, still provide a horizon for our own questioning of modernity, our own restless quest for freedom.

A final word on the Hegel-Heidegger relationship. Genuine dialogue requires reciprocity, an engagement with the Other, for it is this encounter with the Other that opens up the space for genuine thinking, reflection, and the possibility of thinking and acting otherwise than we do. But perhaps we cannot demand this 'human-all-too-humanist' impulse of a thinker exclusively devoted to the ineffable mystery of Being. I therefore close with Hegel's wise remark, as though anticipating Heidegger, on our need for continuing the work of philosophical thought:

the high sense for the Eternal, the Holy, the Infinite, strides along in the robes of a high priest, on a path that is from the first no path, but has immediate being at its centre, the genius of profound original insight and lofty flashes of inspiration. But just as profundity of this kind still does not reveal the source of essential being, so, too, these sky-rockets of inspiration are not yet the empyrean. True thoughts and scientific insight are only to be won through the labour of the Concept (PhG 48/¶70).

[1] Cf. "it is not difficult to see that ours is a birth-time and a period of transition to a new era. Spirit has broken with the world it has hitherto inhabited and imagined, and is a mind to submerge it in the past, and in the labor of its own transformation" (PhG 14/¶11). The appearance of philosophical Science was to have been a harbinger of the "approaching change," contributing to the illumination of the "features of the new world" (PhG 14/¶11).

[2] Cf. Hegel's description of the "beautiful soul," a figure of alienated modern "morality" or reflexive moral self-consciousness: "It lacks the power to externalize itself, the power to make itself into a Thing, and to endure [mere] being. It lives in dread [*Angst*] of besmirching the splendour of its inner being by action and an existence; and, in order to preserve the unity of its heart, it flees from contact with the actual world, and persists in its self-willed impotence to renounce its self which is reduced to the extreme of ultimate abstraction, and to give itself a substantial existence, or transform its thought into being and put its trust in the absolute difference [between thought and being]. The hollow object which it has produced for itself now fills it, therefore, with a sense of emptiness. Its activity is a

yearning which merely loses itself as consciousness becomes an object devoid of substance, and, rising above this loss, and falling back on itself, finds itself as a lost soul. In this transparent unity of its moments, an unhappy, so-called ‘beautiful soul’, its light dies away within it, and it vanishes like a shapeless vapour that dissolves into thin air.” (PhG 354-355/¶658).

[3] See Hegel’s discussion of the collapse of abstract freedom into terror and violence in the example of the post-revolutionary Jacobin Terror (PhG ¶¶582–595).

[4] See Theunissen’s rigorous analysis of the “repressed intersubjectivity” in Hegel’s exposition of abstract right, morality, and ethical life in the constitution of rational political community (1991). For Theunissen, Hegel never fully articulates the possibility of a radically democratic interpretation of collective will formation through intersubjective recognition, even though this comprises a necessary element in Hegel’s analysis of the modern state and the overcoming of the primacy of civil society over the state in modernity.

[5] A brief example can be found in Hegel’s discussion of the relationship between the individual and the state in the *Philosophy of Right*. According to Hegel, it is within the actual social and historical world of modernity, with its correlative forms of self-conscious individuality, that freedom is concretely and historically actualised (PR §142/189). Hegel refers to this historical type of individuality as the “right of *subjective freedom*” (PR §124R/151): the historically achieved right, characteristic of modernity, of the individual subject to seek his or her own ends, to freely choose his or her own manner of life, and so on. Indeed, this right of subjective freedom comprises, Hegel remarks, “the pivotal and focal point of the difference between *antiquity* and the *modern age*” (PR §124R/151). Hegel’s task was to describe how modernity makes it possible to unify the *subjective* freedom of individuals able to autonomously choose their own modes of life, with the *objective* freedom of the rational system of institutions, norms, and practices that embody and enable certain possibilities of action. On the one hand, Hegel insists that this subjective freedom of individuals is an irrevocable social and historical achievement of modernity; any political constitution that liquidates the freedom of subjectivity as the “principle of the modern world” thereby becomes deficient and irrational (PR §273A/312). On the other hand, Hegel at times seems to revoke the consistent application of this principle in respect of one of the most significant aspects of the modern state: the rational autonomy of its citizens. Although Hegel affirms the right of individuals to subjective freedom, the fulfilment of this freedom is at times presented as an unreflective performance of socially required duties. Within the modern rational state, custom and habit in the citizen (substantial freedom) are to counterbalance subjective and formal freedom in civil society. The highest duty of ethical individuals is to be members of the state (PR §258/275), and the political disposition of such individuals is a form of *patriotism* produced by existing institutions: it is a “certainty based on *truth*”, a “felt” rightness concerning the history, laws and institutions of one’s community, and *habitual* volition concerning the performance of social and political duties (ethical conscience as opposed to the subjective certainty of moral conscience) (PR §268). This ethical conscience and disposition consists of a patriotic trust—“which may pass over into more or less educated insight” (PR §268/288)—in which individuals are conscious, in an intuitive or “felt” way, that their own interests accord with those of their political community. Hegel thereby suggests that habit and custom, patriotic trust, and variable insight into the rationality of the political community, are supplementary elements required to balance the formal rationality and freedom of ethical individuality in modernity. The question is whether these “felt” aspects of modern civic duty and patriotism are adequate to overcome the dichotomies of the modern political and social subject divided between the abstract universality of legal and economic “personhood” in civil society and the formal character of modern political freedom and universalistic norms of morality in modernity. The fact that this problem is still very much with us today suggests that Hegel sharply *articulated* this fundamental issue in modern social and political experience, rather than definitively *resolved* these problems of atomisation, alienation, and the division between formal universality and rational individuality in modernity.

[6] See Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*, particularly Part II (1994).

[7] See Derrida's remark in *Of Grammatology*: "Hegel is *also* the thinker of irreducible difference. He rehabilitated thought as the *memory productive* of signs. And he reintroduced, ..., the essential necessity of the written trace in a philosophical—that is to say, Socratic—discourse that had always believed it possible to do without it; the last philosopher of the book and the first philosopher of writing" (1976, 26). Cf. also his remarks concerning the proximity of Hegel's dialectical conception of difference and Heidegger's ontological difference to Derrida's "quasi-concept" of *différance* (1982, 14, 23-26).

[8] Gianni Vattimo, for example, discusses the ethical possibilities opened up by the "Heideggerian" diagnosis of the nihilism of technological modernity (1988, 28); Rainer Schürmann argues for the post-metaphysical "anarchism" that the groundless thinking of Being could foment (1987).

[9] See Caputo (1992) for a thoughtful discussion of the relationship between Heidegger's Greco-German "mythology of Being" and his political involvement with Nazism.

[10] See Williams (1997), Honneth (1992) for explorations and positive developments respectively of the theme of recognition for contemporary moral, social, and political philosophical debates.

[11] See Žižek's eclectic appropriation of Hegelian themes (along with Lacanian psychoanalysis) in relation to the problems of subjectivity and ideology in contemporary liberal multiculturalism and global capitalism (1993) (1999). On the topic of the problem of universality and individuality in respect of social and political forms of intersubjective freedom, see the three-way dialogue between Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek in their recent co-authored text (2000).

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