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SEIN UND GEIST: HEIDEGGER'S CONFRONTATION WITH HEGEL'S *PHENOMENOLOGY*

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ABSTRACT: This paper pursues the 'thinking dialogue' between Hegel and Heidegger, a dialogue centred on Heidegger's 'confrontation' with Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. To this end, I examine Heidegger's critique of Hegel on the relationship between time and Spirit; Heidegger's interpretation of the *Phenomenology* as exemplifying the Cartesian-Fichtean metaphysics of the subject; and Heidegger's later reflections on Hegel as articulating the modern metaphysics of 'subjectity'. I argue that Heidegger's confrontation forgets those aspects of Hegel's philosophy that make him our philosophical contemporary: Hegel's thinking of intersubjectivity and recognition, of the historicity of the experience of spirit, and his critique of modernity. The point of this dialogue is to begin a retrieval of Hegel from Heidegger's critical deconstruction, and thus to suggest that the future of Hegel—in Catherine Malabou's phrase—remains something still to-come.

KEYWORDS: Hegel; Heidegger; Metaphysics; Modernity; Intersubjectivity; Recognition

> The genuine refutation must penetrate the opponent's stronghold and meet him on his own ground; no advantage is gained by attacking him somewhere else and defeating him where he is not.
>
> Hegel, *Science of Logic*

After a certain period of neglect, philosophical interest in the Hegel-Heidegger relationship has recently intensified in the English-speaking world.[1] While some studies

1. Recent works on the Hegel-Heidegger relationship include: Rebecca Comay and John McCumber (eds.) *Endings. Questions of Memory in Hegel and Heidegger*, Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1999; Karin de Boer, *Thinking in the Light of Time: Heidegger's Encounter with Hegel*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2000; Michael Allen Gillespie, *Hegel, Heidegger, and the Ground of History*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1984; David Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity. Hegel, Heidegger, and After*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1986; Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality, and Dialectic*, trans. Lisabeth During, London, Routledge, 2005; Dennis J. Schmidt, *The Ubiquity of the Finite: Hegel, Heidegger, and the Entitlements of Philosophy*, Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1988. See also Giorgio Agamben, *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*, trans. K. E. Pinkus with M. Hardt, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

adopt a distinctly Heideggerian perspective concerning Heidegger's critique of Hegel,[2] others launch a Hegelian defence of Hegel against Heidegger's interpretation, seeking to show that Heidegger has simply gone wrong in basic points of Hegel interpretation.[3] Others again adopt a more agnostic view of the veracity of Heidegger's reading of Hegel.[4] While all these approaches have merit, I wish to offer a more 'dialogical' approach to the Hegel-Heidegger relationship. Indeed, both Hegel and Heidegger advocated such an approach to the practice of 'originary' philosophical thinking. In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel remarks on the immanent critique that moves beyond mere external refutation in order to confront the problem at issue from within an opposing philosophical standpoint (SL 581).[5] Heidegger, for his part, observes that if a genuine dialogue with Hegel is to occur, 'we are required to be "kindred"' with him in the sense of being '*committed* to the first and last necessities of philosophical inquiry arising from the matter [*Sache*]' (GA 32 31).[6] This paper shall therefore attempt to pursue the 'thinking dialogue' between Hegel and Heidegger, a dialogue centred on Heidegger's 'confrontation' [*Auseinandersetzung*] with Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.[7] In particular, I consider Heidegger's critique of Hegel on the relationship between time and Spirit; Heidegger's interpretation of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as exemplifying the Cartesian-Fichtean metaphysics of the subject, examining in particular the question of the phenomenological 'we' in Heidegger's reading; and Heidegger's later reflections on Hegel's *Phenomenology* as articulating the modern metaphysics of 'subjectity' [*Subjektität*] that culminates in modern technics. I shall argue that Heidegger forgets those aspects of Hegel's philosophy that make him our philosophical contemporary: Hegel's thinking of intersubjectivity and recognition, his thinking of the historicity of the experience of spirit, and his attempt to sublate modern subject-metaphysics which is also a critique of modernity. The point of this dialogue is to begin a recovery or retrieval of Hegel from Heidegger's critical deconstruction, and to thereby suggest that the future of Hegel—to use Catherine Malabou's resonant phrase—remains for us something still to-come.

2. See, for example Parvis Emad, 'The Place of Hegel in Heidegger's *Being and Time*', *Research in Phenomenology*, no. 13, 1983, pp. 159-173; and David Farrell Krell, 'Hegel, Heidegger, Nietzsche. An Essay in Descensional Reflection', *Nietzsche-Studien*, no. 5, 1976, pp. 255-262.

3. See, for example, Denise Souche-Dagues, 'The Dialogue between Hegel and Heidegger' in Christopher Macann (ed.) *Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments Volume II: History of Philosophy*, London, Routledge, 1992, pp. 246-276; Robert B. Pippin, 'On Being Anti-Cartesian: Heidegger, Hegel, Subjectivity, and Sociality' in R. B. Pippin, *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997; and Robert R. Williams, 'Hegel and Heidegger' in W. Desmond (ed.) *Hegel and his Critics*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1989, pp. 135-157.

4. One of the restrictions Karin de Boer imposes in her account of Heidegger's encounter with Hegel is 'to minimize any consideration as to how far Heidegger's interpretations of his predecessors' are correct'. It is hard to see, though, how there can be a genuine 'thinking dialogue' if Heidegger's readings of Hegel are accepted without critical reflection. de Boer, *Thinking in the Light of Time*, p. 5.

5. As evident in my opening quotation from Hegel's greater *Logic*. G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller, New Jersey, Humanities Press, 1969, p. 581, (henceforth SL).

6. Heidegger, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Sp*irit, trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988, p. 31, (henceforth HPS).

7. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller, London, Oxford, 1977, (henceforth PS).

I. HEIDEGGER'S CRITICISM OF HEGEL ON TIME AND SPIRIT

It is significant that Hegel is one of the few figures in *Being and Time* (along with Descartes and Kant) singled out for an explicit critique.[8] In this sense, we could regard Heidegger's brief analysis of Hegel's conception of the relation between time and spirit as a contribution to the task of a 'de-struction' [*Des-struktion*] of the history of ontology.[9] Temporality as such, according to Heidegger, has remained unthought or at least distorted and misunderstood within the history of metaphysics, with the sole exception of Kant (BT 20). However, because Kant neglects to pose the fundamental question of Being, and lacks 'a preliminary ontological analytic of the subjectivity of the subject', he was unable to gain proper access to the ontological significance of the problem of temporality (BT 21). Heidegger traces Kant's difficulties back to an appropriation of the Cartesian cogito without a 'fundamental ontology' of Da-sein, and an assumed conception of time centred on the presence of the present. This 'metaphysical' understanding of time is based upon the assumption that the definitive dimension of temporal experience is provided by the familiar perception of the presence of beings encountered in the present.

This presupposition becomes even more acute in the case of Hegel, who is taken to exemplify the 'vulgar' metaphysical conception of time as an infinite sequence of discrete 'Nows' or present moments. Indeed, Hegel's concept of time, according to Heidegger, is 'the most radical way in which the vulgar understanding of time has been given form conceptually' (BT 392). Heidegger thus presents his brief critique of Hegel's 'metaphysical' conception of time and spirit (in §82 of *Being and Time*) as a contrast to the *existential-ontological* interpretation of the originary or ecstatic temporality of Da-sein. Hegel's account of the relationship between time and spirit—that spirit 'falls into' historical time and yet can be sublated or *aufgehoben* by speculative thought—is presented as evidence of how the metaphysical tradition has obliterated the question of temporality in favour of an ontologically inappropriate interpretation of Da-sein as objective presence.

In accordance with Aristotle's demarcation of time within the ontology of nature, Hegel's analysis of time is located in the second part of the *Encyclopaedia*, namely The *Philosophy of Nature*. Heidegger's exposition of paragraphs 254-258 of Hegel's *Encyclopaedia* aims to establish how Hegel's basic conception of time, defined as 'intuited becoming,' privileges the punctual moment of the present—as a Now-Here moment—within the abstract becoming or flux of successive moments. Heidegger argues that the logical conceptualizing of time—as the negation of the negation of the punctuality of space—demonstrates how time has been formalized 'in the most extreme sense' and levelled

8. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany, State University of New York, 1996, §82, pp. 391-396, (henceforth BT).

9. On this point Malabou eschews any confrontation between Heidegger and Hegel: 'It is not my purpose here to stage a confrontation between the Hegelian and Heideggerian conceptions of time'. Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, p. 4. This prompts Derrida, in his lengthy introduction to Malabou's book, to ask a series of probing questions regarding the significance of this demurral. See Jacques Derrida, 'A Time for Farewells: Heidegger (read by) Hegel (read by) Malabou', in Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, pp. vii-xlvii, esp. pp. xxvii ff.

down to an 'unprecedented degree' (BT 394).

A critical point can immediately be made here concerning Heidegger's claims. Hegel discusses space and time (in the *Philosophy of Nature*) as the most *minimal*, elementary, and *abstract* determinations of nature in general (space presupposes nothing but nature's self-externality while time presupposes nothing but space). Space and time in this abstract sense already acquire a more concrete significance with '*place*' [*Ort*]: the *posited* identity of space and time that is also their posited *contradiction* (EPN § 261).[10] With the category of place, the abstract punctuality of the Now as a present moment is already suspended in relation to the concrete determination of space.[11] As Hegel remarks: 'The Here is at the same time a Now, for it is the point of duration. This unity of Here and Now is Place' (EPN § 260 A). The extreme formalization of time as a succession of Now moments that Heidegger attributes to Hegel is already challenged at this still relatively simple level of categorical development in Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*. Although belonging to a somewhat different context, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (PS ¶¶ 90-110) similarly provides a critical demonstration of the untenability of the abstract punctuality of the Now in the experience of *sense-certainty*. These points cast doubt on Heidegger's presentation of Hegel's conception of time as such.

Nonetheless, Heidegger claims that Hegel's determination of time as the *negation of negation* is the most radical version of the Aristotelian conception of time, but also the most levelled down conception of temporality in Heidegger's originary, existential-ecstatic sense. This *logical formalization* of time is precisely what allows Hegel to make the connection between spirit and its development through historical time: 'Hegel shows the possibility of the historical actualization of spirit "in time" by going back to *the identity of the formal structure of Spirit and time as the negation of a negation*' (BT 396). This is the decisive point in Heidegger's discussion: the identity of time and spirit as sharing the logical structure of the 'negation of the negation' is also their reduction to an empty 'formal-ontological' abstraction that obliterates originary temporality. This reduction makes possible their kinship as well as the ontologically obscure 'actualization' of spirit in time that Hegel describes. In connecting time and spirit in this manner, however, Hegel also leaves unexamined 'the question of whether the constitution of Spirit *as* the negating of negation is possible at all in any other way than on the basis of primordial temporality' (BT 396).

Heidegger insists that this brief discussion of Hegel cannot claim to decide whether 'Hegel's interpretation of time and Spirit and their connection is correct and has an ontologically primordial basis' (BT 396). Nonetheless, I suggest that Heidegger's crucial claim with regard to Hegel deserves further critical engagement. Here I draw attention to Heidegger's compressed discussion of the essence of Hegelian spirit as *the Concept* or *Begriff*. Heidegger defines Hegelian Conceptuality as 'the very form of thinking that

10. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy Of Nature, Being Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. A. V. Miller, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1970, § 261, (henceforth EPN).

11. cf. 'In this way, the *negative* determination in space, the *exclusive* point, no longer only implicitly [or in itself] conforms to the Concept [*Begriff*], but is *posited* and *concrete* within itself, though the total negativity which is time; the point, as thus concrete, is *Place* [*Ort*]', EPN § 260 [trans. mod].

thinks itself: Conceiving *itself—as grasping* the non-I' (BT 395). This definition of the Concept is interpreted as the differentiation and comprehension of the difference between the 'I' and the 'non-I': 'the grasping of *this* differentiation, a differentiation of the difference' between I and non-I (BT 395). The Concept thus has the formal structure of the 'negation of a negation'. The 'absolute negativity' of the Concept, for Heidegger, gives 'a logically formalized interpretation of Descartes' *cogito me cogitare rem*' (BT 395). In other words, the Concept comprehends itself in *self-consciousness*: it is the 'conceivedness of the self conceiving itself', the self as it can authentically be, namely as *free*, a universality that is just as immediately 'individuality' (BT 395).[12]

Heidegger's interpretation of Hegel's Concept of self-consciousness is certainly legitimate in its general outlines: the 'I' *is* the existing Concept, according to Hegel. At the same time, however, Heidegger overlooks that this way of understanding the relationship between the I and the Concept fails to take into account the (logical) *limitations* of the category of *existence*, and moreover ignores the fact that self-consciousness is for Hegel the 'real-philosophical,' finite actualization of the Concept. To make this point clearer, we must consider the relationship between the structure of the Concept and that of the 'I' as subjective spirit. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel defines the Concept of self-consciousness as comprising three interrelated moments: the *universality* of the pure undifferentiated 'I'; the *particularity* of the mediation through the sensuous object of desire; and the concrete *individuality* of the reflective movement of recognition between self-conscious subjects (PS ¶ 176). While Heidegger accounts for the first moment (the abstract self-identity of the 'I' as I = I) and the second moment (the particularity of self-consciousness as desire), he has no account of the third moment (concrete individuality articulated through intersubjective recognition). Indeed, Heidegger's failure to account for the moment of *concrete individuality* in the Concept of self-consciousness clearly parallels the deficiencies in the Kantian-Fichtean account of self-consciousness that Hegel seeks to overcome through his account of the role of mutual recognition. In this sense, Heidegger, like Kant and Fichte, remains stuck at the *level of reflection* in conceiving of self-consciousness according to an abstract *formalism:* a deficient conception of self-consciousness which fails to unite all three moments of universality, particularity, and the crucial third moment of *individuality* achieved through the process of recognition.

Here we should also distinguish, furthermore, between the infinite structure of the Concept (the absolute, reflexive self-enclosure of the Concept as unitary or unique); and the 'relative' independence of the I, which is self-reflexive only through the *recognition* of the other, a process of 'doubling' or mutual reflection in which the other is both absorbed *and* released, both integrated *and* set free. The character of this process of recognition of and through the other, moreover, necessarily depends on the historically

12. In support of this 'Cartesian-Fichtean' interpretation of the Concept, Heidegger cites Hegel's statements that 'the I is the pure Concept itself which, as concept, has come into *existence* [*Dasein*]' (SL 583), and that the I is '*first*, this pure self-related unity, … as making abstraction from all determinateness and content and withdrawing into the freedom of unrestricted equality with itself' (SL 583). As I argue presently, these passages are significant in relation to Hegel's parallel between the threefold structure of the Concept and the three aspects (universal, particular, and individual) of the Concept of self-consciousness (see PS ¶ 176).

given structures of objective and absolute spirit. For Hegel, the 'I' is *unitary* only by not being *unique* or solitary: it finds its self-identity in otherness only within a plurality that preserves the other. To this extent, the I genuinely does 'fall into time', according to Hegel, insofar as the character of its self-identity depends upon something which it, as finite spirit, can never fully absorb and sublate; it depends upon the historical actuality of objective and absolute spirit as an other of which it is *merely an aspect,* but in which it finds its self-identity and freedom in the sense of being with itself in otherness. Only spirit in its evolving totality fully *realizes* the Concept; in its historical actualization it overcomes time within time itself.

Moreover, by emphasizing the parallel between the formal structure of self-consciousness and the Concept, Heidegger's 'Cartesian' interpretation of self-consciousness, as I shall argue further below, fails to comprehend the *hermeneutic aspects* of Hegel's account of the relation between the 'I' as existing Concept and spirit as self-comprehending totality. Hegel's characterization of the 'I' as existing Concept merely indicates its *formal* structure as a unity of universality, particularity, and individuality. It does not yet disclose those 'real-philosophical' conditions (namely the concrete historical forms of developing recognition) that make possible the determinate actualization of this formal structure (represented by the 'I = I'). Spirit is the concrete or actualized Concept that must appear in historical time, not simply because of the formal structure of the 'negation of the negation' shared by time and spirit, but because finite spirit remains dependent on objective and absolute spirit for its concrete self-identity in otherness. To be sure, spirit as totality is not reducible to subjective spirit as individual self-consciousness. Nonetheless, spirit 'exists' concretely and historically only because there are self-conscious individuals who can acquire adequate self-consciousness within historically developing structures of mutual recognition, work off their natural particularity and inequality in a historical process which progressively discloses spirit in its concrete rationality, and thus (re)produce (objective and absolute) spirit as that which in turn makes possible the finite self-consciousness of these historically situated individuals. Hegel's *Phenomenology* depicts this process as a recollection of the historical-dialectical experience in which spirit recognizes itself within 'comprehended history'—a process of conceptual-historical recollection without which, Hegel tells us, absolute spirit would remain 'lifeless and alone' (PS ¶ 808).

Although Heidegger's brief critical analysis does not claim to do justice to Hegel's broader philosophical project, Hegel is still presented as exemplifying the vulgar metaphysical conception of time. Questions must be asked, however, about the adequacy of Heidegger's interpretation. Why does Heidegger focus on the concept of time taken from the philosophy of nature rather than Hegel's explicit discussions of the historicity of spirit? Moreover, why is Heidegger's discussion in this respect restricted to the most *abstract,* elementary categorization of time in the philosophy of nature?[13] Heidegger

13. In the section on the animal organism in the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel seems to suggest that 'time' (and space) receives more concrete, higher determinations at higher levels of natural organization. The 'subjectivity' of the animal is a 'free time' that, according to inner contingency, 'determines its place'. *Hegel's Philosophy of*

ignores the *hermeneutical* dimension of Hegel's procedure in appropriating and conceptualizing categories and models from the history of philosophy; he fails to recognize Hegel's method of simultaneous *exposition* and *critique* in presenting categorical systems within speculative philosophy.[14] It is not surprising that Heidegger finds Hegel to have recapitulated in the Jena Lectures Aristotle's theses on time in the *Physics*, for Hegel hermeneutically appropriates these Aristotelian themes within the philosophy of nature as one aspect of the speculative system. In the paragraphs Heidegger discusses from the 'Mechanism' chapter of the *Encyclopaedia*, for example, Hegel examines the categorical structure of time and space pertinent not only to Aristotle but to *Newtonian mechanics*. The latter remains within the paradigm of the logic of essence that is the subject of Hegel's *critical exposition* in this part of the system (paralleled, for example, by the analysis of the dialectic between force and law in the *Phenomenology*). This discussion, however, cannot provide an adequate example of the essential relationship between time and spirit, for the simple reason that nature occupies a different conceptual/categorical level than spirit, and thus cannot provide the basis for conceptualizing self-conscious spirit in its historical development. In §82 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger overlooks this hermeneutic dimension in Hegel's discussion of time within the philosophy of nature and Hegel's critical exposition of the 'I' as the *finite* actualization of the Concept.

II. FINITUDE AND INFINITUDE: HEIDEGGER'S READING OF HEGEL'S *PHENOMENOLOGY*

As Denise Souche-Dagues remarks, Heidegger's 'simple refusal' of Hegel in *Being and Time* failed to do justice to the complexity and power of Hegel's speculative thought.[15] Hegelian metaphysics cannot be reduced to a corpus of historically ossified material in need of critical de-struction and ontological re-animation, for Hegel claimed to have achieved the suspension of substance- and subject-metaphysics within the speculative metaphysics of spirit. Heidegger thus embarks upon a different strategy, a dialogical confrontation with Hegel that is part of the project of overcoming metaphysics in the sense of comprehending the underlying question of the metaphysical tradition (the question of Being) and of consequently responding to the forgetting of the ontological difference

Nature, §351, p. 352.

14. See Michael Theunissen's *Sein und Schein. Die Kritische Funktion der Hegelschen Logik*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1980, for an interpretation of Hegel's *Logic* as involving this movement of simultaneous exposition and critique.

15. As Souche-Dagues suggests in her helpful schema, we can identify three important phases in Heidegger's reading of Hegel: 1) The critique of the 'Hegelian theory of time' in the 1925-26 Marburg lectures and in §82 of *Being and Time*. 2) The 1930/31 lectures on the 'Consciousness' chapters of the PhG and the 1942-43 commentary on the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*. 3) The 1957 lecture on 'The Onto-theological Constitution of Metaphysics,' based on a seminar on the *Science of Logic*, and the accompanying 1957 text on 'The Principle of Identity'. These three moments can also be characterized as marking three distinct attitudes adopted by Heidegger towards Hegel: 1) a simple refusal of the Hegelian problematic, 2) an attempt to assimilate Hegel into Heidegger's own project, and 3) a complicated 'setting at a distance which wants to be an appropriation'. Denise Souche-Dagues, 'The Dialogue between Hegel and Heidegger'. Quotation at pp. 246-247.

between Being and beings. In this regard, Hegel is now understood as representing the beginning of the completion or consummation of Western metaphysics (with Nietzsche as the conclusion), a process that must be critically displaced in order to prepare for the possibility of an 'other beginning' of (no-longer-metaphysical) thought.

Heidegger's next sustained engagement with Hegel occurs in the 1930/31 lecture series on the opening chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a reading that is centred on the problematic of *finitude*. Heidegger takes up this challenge concerning finitude and infinitude in reading the 'Consciousness' and 'Truth of Self-Certainty' chapters of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. It is also pursued and deepened in the later (1942/3) commentary on the 'Introduction' to the *Phenomenology*, the essay entitled 'Hegel's Concept of Experience' published in *Holzwege* in 1950.[16] In his lectures on the *Phenomenology*, Heidegger explicitly situates his critical dialogue with Hegel in the context of the post-Kantian metaphysics of the self-conscious subject. The confrontation between Hegel and Heidegger takes place on the terrain of *the problematic of finitude*, the 'crossing' between Hegel's conceptualization of the infinity of spirit and Heidegger's thinking of the finitude of Being. As Heidegger remarks:

> In our obligation to the first and last inherent necessities of philosophy, we shall try to *encounter* Hegel on *the problematic of finitude*. This means, according to what we said earlier, that through a confrontation with *Hegel's* problematic of infinitude we shall try to create, on the basis of our own inquiry into finitude, *the* kinship needed to reveal the spirit of Hegel's philosophy (HPS 38).

Heidegger's aim here is clear: to continue the task of a critical *Destruktion* of the history of ontology through a confrontation between the Hegelian problematic of finitude and Heidegger's own inquiry into finitude, and in so doing to provide the common problematic for a 'thinking dialogue' with Hegel on the question of Being.

Although Hegel 'ousted finitude from philosophy' by sublating it within the infinitude of reason, this was only an 'incidental finitude', Heidegger claims, a conception inscribed within the metaphysical tradition that Hegel was forced to take up and transmit (HPS 38). As distinct from Kant, with Hegel infinitude becomes a more significant problem than finitude, since the interest of speculative reason is to suspend all oppositions within the rational totality of thought-determinations. In this sense, Heidegger understands the project of post-Kantian idealism to consist in the systematic attempt to overcome the 'relative' knowledge of finite consciousness (in the sense of object-dependent knowledge of otherness) in favour of *the absolute knowledge* of speculative reason (in the sense of a no longer 'relative' or object-dependent self-knowledge). As ab-solving or *detaching* itself from the relativity of consciousness, absolute knowledge *detaches* itself from relative cognition such that consciousness becomes aware of itself or becomes *self-consciousness*. As I shall presently discuss, Heidegger's interpretation of consciousness thus rests on the assumption that the entire phenomenological exposition adopts the standpoint of absolute knowing in the sense of an *absolvent* knowledge that has absolved itself

16. Heidegger, 'Hegel's Concept of Experience' in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Maly, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 86-156, (henceforth HCE).

from any dependency on the consciousness of objects (HPS 51). It is only with the *unity* of consciousness and self-consciousness in *reason* that knowledge becomes '*purely unbounded, purely absolved, absolute knowledge*' (HPS 16). Phenomenology can thus be characterized as 'the *absolute self-presentation of reason* (*ratio*—logos), whose essence and actuality Hegel finds in *absolute spirit*' (HPS 30).[17]

a) The Presupposition of the Absolute and the Phenomenological 'We'

A decisive aspect of Heidegger's interpretation of the *Phenomenology* is the claim 'that *Hegel presupposes already at the beginning what he achieves at the end*'—namely absolute knowledge (HPS 30). Absolute knowledge must be presupposed from the outset of the exposition: 'if we do not already from the beginning know in the mode of absolute knowledge', then we cannot truly understand the *Phenomenology* (HPS 33). Hegel, Heidegger continues, presupposes that the absolute is 'with us, in and for itself, all along' (PS ¶ 73). Indeed, Heidegger takes this statement to capture Hegel's fundamental position.

This raises the question: who is the 'we' in Heidegger's reading of Hegel? Heidegger's interpretation presupposes that the *Phenomenology* begins absolutely with the absolute, and consequently that the phenomenological observer is already in possession of absolute knowledge. Indeed, Heidegger insists that we reject interpretations that take the *Phenomenology* to be 'an introduction to philosophy' leading from 'the so-called natural consciousness … to a genuine speculative philosophical knowledge' (HPS 29). Heidegger's *ontological* interpretation emphasizes, rather, the unfolding of absolute knowledge as a fundamental-ontological presupposition. We must have already abandoned the 'natural attitude' of everyday consciousness, 'not just partially, but totally', if we are properly to understand phenomenological experience (HPS 33).

This abrupt dismissal of any propaedeutic or 'educative' interpretation of the *Phenomenology* as a *Bildungsprozeß* is maintained in the essay 'Hegel's Concept of Experience'. Heidegger again rejects here traditional interpretations of the *Phenomenology* as an 'edificatory' introduction to philosophical science, a propaedeutic for 'natural consciousness' to educate it to the level of philosophical or absolute knowledge: 'in the opinion of philosophy even today, the phenomenology of spirit is an *itinerarium*, a description of a journey, which is escorted by everyday consciousness toward the scientific knowledge of philosophy' (HCE 107). Such approaches, for Heidegger, fail to comprehend the ontological meaning of the *Phenomenology* as the self-presentation of the absolute in its presence (*parousia*) to us (HCE 109). For '[t]he presentation of phenomenal knowledge', Heidegger tells us, 'is not a route which natural consciousness can tread' (HPS 108).[18]

17. For Heidegger, Hegel's understanding of reason basically fulfils the traditional conception of the Greek *logos*, via its transformation into the Latin *ratio*, and later development as reason or *Vernunft* in conjunction with the traditional discipline of 'logic'. This explains Hegel presentation of the conceptual and categorical structure of the Absolute, which simultaneously integrates the basic metaphysical positions of the Western tradition from Greek ontology to transcendental idealism, in terms of a 'science of logic'.

18. On the other hand, Heidegger states a few pages later 'that natural consciousness is alive in all shapes of spirit; it lives in each spiritual shape in its own way, including (and especially) that shape of absolute

It is worth mentioning the obvious difficulty that this interpretation is sharply at odds with numerous explicit statements in the text: Hegel describes the phenomenology as a 'ladder' to the standpoint of science [*Wissenschaft*] (PS ¶ 26), as an 'education' of the individual consciousness which repeats the formative path of universal spirit as though 'in a silhouette' (PS ¶ 28), a 'path of *doubt*' or even 'path of *despair*' (PS ¶ 78), and as the 'detailed history of the *education* [*Bildung*] of consciousness itself to the standpoint of Science' (PS ¶ 78). Heidegger's interpretation seems *prima facie* to contradict Hegel's repeated assertions in the *Phenomenology*.

Heidegger's response is to point to the fundamental-ontological significance of the project of phenomenology. In Heidegger's *ontological* interpretation, the phenomenological 'we' has from the outset 'lost the option of being this or that person and thus of being, randomly, an ego' (HPS 48). Rather, Heidegger's reading implies that the phenomenological 'we' is to be understood as a 'subjectivized' version of Heidegger's 'fundamental ontologist' already in possession of absolute knowledge; the 'we' refers to those who have already attained to absolute, fundamental-ontological knowledge of the whole.

Heidegger's fundamental-ontological interpretation of the 'we' can be contrasted, I suggest, with a *historicist-propaedeutic* interpretation, which emphasizes the *historical* character of the process of educative cultivation to the level of Science or *Wissenschaft*. The phenomenological 'we,' on this interpretation, refers to the culturally and historically situated ideal or imputed readers of the *Phenomenology:* philosophically cultivated individuals who desire, but do not yet possess, Science, and are therefore to be educated to the level of speculative philosophy in order to transform their self-understanding [*Besinnung*] as historical subjects of modernity. The *Phenomenology* on this view is a philosophical-historical propaedeutic to Science that has an intrinsically *dialogical* structure: the cognitive claims of a given figure [*Gestalt*] of consciousness are presented by natural consciousness in its 'own voice,' while the structural inadequacies of each cognitive attitude, according to its own standard of truth, emerges for 'us' as phenomenological observers. 'We' can grasp the self-testing of consciousness and the immanent transitions to progressively more complex and integrated figures of consciousness in a manner that ought to be intelligible to the superseded forms of natural consciousness as well, though usually *is not* due to the latter's basic 'unthinking inertia' (PS ¶ 80). Indeed, for Hegel, natural consciousness is typically prone to existential inertia or thoughtlessness, sentimentality, lack of reflection, and historical amnesia concerning its own historical-phenomenological experience (PS ¶ 80). At the conclusion of the phenomenological drama, we realise that we have been observing the philosophico-historical conditions of our *own* experience as dissatisfied modern subjects. Absolute knowledge, as the philosophical self-comprehension of the history of spirit, is the *result* that is also the *ground* of our experience of self-alienated modernity.

Why assume this historicist-propaedeutic reading of the phenomenological 'we'?

knowledge which occurs as absolute metaphysics and is at time visible to a few thinkers only' (HCE 112). This remark does not seem reconcilable with Heidegger's claim that natural consciousness is barred from the phenomenological path.

One reason is that it avoids the difficulty in Heidegger's ontological interpretation that presupposing absolute knowledge seems to make redundant the project of a phenomenology before it even begins. In Heidegger's interpretation, the *Phenomenology* quickly becomes an absolute ontology or all-consuming science of the absolute, rather than an introduction to the speculative system. If we presuppose that the 'we' is already in possession of absolute knowledge, we also presuppose knowledge of the categories and concepts underlying the figures of consciousness and self-conscious reason depicted in the *Phenomenology*. This means that Hegel's claims concerning what the phenomenology is to perform (to be a 'ladder' to Science, a path towards philosophical self-education, an introduction to the speculative system as a whole) become nonsensical. The presupposition of an absolute standpoint not only renders phenomenology superfluous but makes it collapse before it even begins.

An historicist-propaedeutic interpretation answers this difficulty by pointing out that the immanent phenomenological exposition is precisely what educates 'us' both to recognize the experiences of consciousness as historical figures of spirit and to recognize ourselves within this experience. The phenomenological path of self-consummating scepticism is supposed to be a path that the so-called 'natural consciousness' of the (historically situated) reader can tread, precisely in order to learn that its self-alienation can be overcome *in thought* through the conceptual comprehension of its historico-philosophical experience. The historically achieved level of conceptual-philosophical understanding—what Hegel called the 'reflection philosophy of subjectivity' culminating in Kantian idealism—provides the only 'presupposition' necessary for comprehending the transformation from 'natural' or rather *philosophically naïve* consciousness to the level of speculative thought. As Hegel states, the philosophically naïve reader 'has the right to demand that Science should at least provide him with the ladder to this standpoint, show him this standpoint within himself' (PS ¶ 26); a right based upon the individual's 'absolute independence', the *right of subjectivity* that is one of the distinctive achievements of modernity.[19] The naïve consciousness need not be excluded from phenomenology as a path that it cannot tread. Rather, the modern subject can claim its right of subjectivity in being educated to the standpoint of Science by climbing (and thereby suspending) Hegel's phenomenological ladder.

Heidegger's response to this issue is to point to the inherently *circular* character of the *Phenomenology* that, like all philosophy, 'merely unfolds its *presupposition*' (HPS 36). In this case, it is the absolute knowledge of Being that allows the Being of self-conscious spirit to comprehend itself. Heidegger's strongly 'circular' interpretation, however, faces the problem of accounting for Hegel's *rejection* of the notion that philosophy develops out of a fundamental presupposition (as in Hegel's criticisms of Reinhold's basic presuppositions of philosophizing). For Hegel, rather, the end emerges out of a process which is itself included in the result. Hegel's fundamental hermeneutical principle is that 'the whole is

19. 'The intelligible form of Science', according to Hegel, 'is the way open and equally accessible to everyone, and consciousness as it approaches Science justly demands that it be able to attain to rational knowledge by way of the ordinary understanding' (PS ¶ 13).

the true'—the truth emerges as a result of the whole process and the whole process in its self-unfolding is the site of the emergence of truth. The phenomenological exposition is therefore not the unfolding (and legitimation) of the foundational truth of an initial presupposition (such as the absolute knowledge of Being), but rather the path of absolute or self-consummating *skepsis*. It is the unfolding of the *untruth* of whatever presuppositions consciousness makes about itself, the untruth of its own (limited and self-contradictory) standards of knowing and truth; this 'untruth' is thus itself a necessary 'moment' of truth as it is disclosed in the whole developmental movement. Indeed, it is only the failure of the prejudices of natural consciousness that produces the possibility of Science's claim to be philosophical knowledge 'without presuppositions'.

The *Phenomenology* thus presents the demonstration of our 'liberation from the opposition of consciousness' (SL 49), and attainment of the speculative level of pure thought-determinations that is the only 'presupposition' of the *Logic* as such. It is in this sense that Science begins with the matter itself [*Sache selbst*], without any external reflections.[20] Hegel's project in the *Phenomenology* is therefore radically *anti-foundationalist*: Hegel rejects all (Cartesian or Reinholdian) foundationalism in favour of a self-constructing process through which the disparity between knowing and truth is finally overcome. As Hegel remarks, the *Phenomenology* describes the coming-to-be of *Wissenschaft*, a becoming that is 'quite different from the 'foundation' of Science; least of all will it be like the rapturous enthusiasm which, like a shot from a pistol, begins straight away with absolute knowledge, and makes short work of other standpoints by declaring that it takes no notice of them' (PS ¶ 27). In asserting absolute knowledge as the absolute presupposition of the *Phenomenology*, Heidegger appears not to have heeded Hegel's important claim that the absolute as a result is also the ground of the whole process of its own becoming.

b) Heidegger on Finitude

This brings us to the 'crossroads' of which Heidegger speaks in relation to Hegel: the problem of the *infinite* in Hegel's and Heidegger's understanding of *finitude* in relation to the meaning of Being. As Heidegger asks:

> Is the understanding of Being absolvent, and is the absolvent absolute? Or is what Hegel represents as in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as absolvence merely transcendence in disguise, i.e., finitude? (HPS 65)

Heidegger is concerned to ask whether Being in its essence is *finite* and how this finitude is to be understood with reference to *Being* rather than in relation to *beings*. This is in contrast with what Heidegger takes to be Hegel's conception of Being qua *infinity*, in which 'the infinity of absolute knowledge determines the truth of Being', and does so such that 'it has already sublated everything that is finite into itself' (HPS 75). For Heidegger, Hegel's sublation of finitude means that all philosophy moves *in* and *as* this sublation of

20. See Stephen Houlgate's discussion of the significance of Hegel's project of a speculative logic that satisfies the (modern) historical demand for 'free, *self-grounding* thought'. S. Houlgate, *Hegel, Nietzsche, and the Criticism of Metaphysics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 41ff.

finitude, which occurs in the process of a *dialectical* movement. Heidegger thus raises the question of the finitude of Being, a question that has hitherto not been raised but which has implicitly 'motivated previous metaphysics' (HPS 75). This is why the confrontation with Hegel over the problem of finitude and infinitude is 'inherently and historically necessary' as well as being a productive precondition for thinking through the question of Being.

Let us turn to Heidegger's account of the Hegelian concept of infinity. Heidegger indicates two aspects to this concept: 1) Hegel's grounding of the problem of Being in the *logos*, manifested in Hegel's 'logical' account of thinking as speculative knowledge or *dialectic*; and 2), the transposition of this logical grounding in Descartes' turn towards the *ego cogito*, manifested in 'Hegel's fundamental thesis', as formulated by Heidegger: 'Substance is in truth subject'[21] (HPS 76-77). Heidegger thus describes the Hegelian concept of infinity as having both a 'logical' and 'subjective' grounding. The *Phenomenology* undertakes the proper 'subjective' grounding of infinity *in* the subject and *as* subject, while the proper 'logical' grounding is developed in the *Science of Logic* (HPS 77). What is the relationship between the 'logical' and the 'subjective' grounding of infinity? On Heidegger's reading, the concept of infinity is 'inherently and necessarily grounded in the second [subjective] one' (HPS 77). The logical meaning of infinity is grounded in the infinite character of self-consciousness, which is in fact the reverse of Hegel's procedure, namely to point to self-consciousness or subjectivity as a 'formal' manifestation of the logical structure of infinity.

We can therefore raise certain questions here about Heidegger's interpretation of infinity and self-consciousness, and his claim that the logical meaning of the infinite is grounded in the structure of self-consciousness (rather than the reverse). Indeed, Hegel's *own* account of the infinite character of self-consciousness emphasizes its *inadequacy* as an exemplification of the true infinite. For it is precisely because of its *subjectivity* that self-consciousness is not the full or complete manifestation of the infinite (understood as self-subsisting independence that incorporates the finite within itself). To be sure, self-consciousness is the 'existing Concept', as previously discussed, but certainly not its full reality or concrete actualization, which is rather *Spirit* in its whole developed articulation. In this case—namely the standpoint of self-consciousness as itself a *Gestalt*, or series of figures in the *Phenomenology*, sublated by Reason—we have the finite (subject) as infinite, but not the infinite (spirit) as finite, that is, articulated as a concrete individuality. The result is an opposition between an abstract self-identity of self-consciousness that attempts to dominate and integrate otherness, an otherness that is reproduced in this very process such that the opposition between self and other can never be overcome.

For clarification of this point we must turn to Hegel's critique of the 'bad' or 'spurious' infinity of Kantian self-consciousness (and its Fichtean variant) in the *Science of Logic*. Hegel is concerned here in particular with the practical effects of the opposition

21. We should note in passing that this formulation significantly alters, in a rather one-sided and rigid manner, Hegel's own thesis in the *Phenomenology*: that the True is to be grasped 'not only as Substance, but equally as Subject' (PS ¶ 17).

between finite and infinite within the 'spurious' infinite belonging to the analytic understanding or *Verstand*. The latter—in the form of a 'quantitative progress to infinity which continually surmounts the limit it is powerless to remove, and perpetually falls back into it'—is exalted in the philosophy of reflection as something ultimate and even divine (SL 228). Within the sphere of practical reason, the 'progress to infinity' is likewise exalted in the feeling of the sublime, in which the subject, to quote Kant in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, 'raises himself in thought above the place he occupies in the world of sense, reaching out to infinity' (SL 229). This exaltation of the limitless progress indicates, for Hegel, rather the failure or succumbing of thought: the 'bad' infinite of the Kantian moral subject results in a 'wearisome repetition' in which a limit vanishes and reappears, is displaced into a beyond in order to be overcome, but in being overcome is once again displaced into another beyond, and so on *ad infinitum*. What results from such a endless progression is only the feeling of *impotence* in relation to this unattainable infinite as an *ought-to-be*, an alienation generated by the reflective understanding which attempts, but always fails, to *master* the finite (SL 229).

Hegel's critique of the Kantian account of self-consciousness points to the deleterious moral-practical effects of the opposition between freedom and nature. Within Kant's account, the infinity of outer sensuous intuition is opposed to the infinite of self-consciousness in its abstract universality. The self-conscious subject finds that its freedom lies in its (abstract) self-identity that is defined by excluding and opposing itself to 'the fullness of nature and Geist', which inevitably confronts it as a *beyond* (SL 231). The contradiction that emerges here is the same as that which structures the infinite progression: that between 'a returnedness-into-self which is at the same time immediately an out-of-selfness' (SL 231). The contradiction emerges between a self-identity defined by opposition to an other that is essential to the constitution of this self-identity, but which at the same time contradicts its essential character as a solitary self-relation or *solus ipse*. The result is a perpetual *longing* reminiscent of the self-alienation of the unhappy consciousness and 'beautiful soul' of romanticism: the unsatisfiable desire to overcome the breach between the solitary and self-determining 'void of the ego', and the fullness of sensuous otherness, where the latter is negated by self-consciousness yet still present in the form of an unattainable beyond.

The practical implications of this deficient form of self-identity and universality are highly significant. Hegel argues that the antithesis between finite and infinite—or 'the manifold world and the ego raised to its freedom'—results in a relation of *domination* in which the infinite fails to master the finite. Self-consciousness, in determining itself in its abstract self-identity, proceeds to determine nature and attempts to liberate itself from it: the result is an *objectification of the finite* (nature) and *reification of the infinite* (the free subject) in which the power of the ego over the non-ego (sense and outer nature) is conceived such that morality can and ought to progress while the power of finite sensuousness is diminished (SL 231). The moral project of achieving a perfect adequacy of the free will in relation to the universal moral law is in fact an unending progress to infinity, an achievement that is 'represented as an *absolutely unattainable* beyond' (SL 231).

The struggle and meaning of morality is defined precisely through this unattainability of moral truth as an overcoming of the opposition between infinite freedom and finite sensuousness.

The conclusion I want to draw from this analysis is that it is impossible for the logical Concept of infinity in its true sense to be grounded in the infinity of self-consciousness, as Heidegger maintains. Indeed, Hegel's critique of the *subjectivism* of the infinitude of self-consciousness argues explicitly against Heidegger's thesis. For the infinitude of self-consciousness remains a 'bad' infinite mired within an insurmountable opposition to the finite that takes the form of an endless progress towards an unattainable beyond. Heidegger thus misattributes to Hegel the very conception of the spurious infinite that Hegel attempts to overcome.[22]

III. HEGEL'S CONCEPT OF EXPERIENCE

Heidegger's 1942/43 interpretation of the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*—the essay 'Hegel's Concept of Experience'—is his most intensive treatment of Hegel's philosophy as a whole. Here I shall present a brief analysis with particular reference to the role of the ontological difference. For the critical question is whether Hegel actually does neglect the ontological difference in the exhibiting of the dialectical experience of consciousness, or indeed within the unfolding of dialectical-speculative logic. My aim here as previously is to question Heidegger's reading of Hegel and to suggest that Hegel's thought cannot be so readily sequestered as the culminating phase of modern subject-metaphysics, as Heidegger and his twentieth-century followers will argue.

As Heidegger famously declared, modern philosophy is defined by the search for an absolute foundation for knowledge in 'unconditional self-certainty' (inaugurated by Descartes and critically delimited by Kant). Hegel inherits and completes this search for an absolute or self-grounding knowledge that is grounded in the unconditional self-certainty of self-consciousness. Indeed, Hegel is the first philosopher, Heidegger notes, to fully possess the terrain of self-certain subjectivity once the Cartesian '*fundamentum inconcussum*' is thought of as the absolute itself. With Hegel, the absolute, Heidegger explains, is spirit:

> that which is present to itself [*bei sich*] in the certainty of unconditional self-knowing. Real knowledge of beings as beings now becomes the absolute knowledge of the absolute in its absoluteness (HCE 97).

Heidegger's formulations are certainly legitimate as far as Hegel's claim to develop a system of absolute knowledge is concerned. From an ontological point of view, Heidegger develops in this connection his fundamental thesis concerning the meaning of the *Phenomenology*: that Hegel presupposes the presence or *parousia* of the absolute to us, and that the absolute wills to disclose its Being through (absolute) knowledge. Hegel's aim

22. Indeed, Heidegger avoids direct reference to the crucial distinction between the infinite of the understanding and the infinite of reason, relying instead on the exposition of the infinite provided in the Jena logic (HPS 77-78).

from the beginning of the *Phenomenology,* Heidegger remarks, is 'to indicate the absolute in its parousia among us' (HCE 98). Indeed, Heidegger takes Hegel's remark—that 'the absolute is from the start in and for itself with us and intends to be with us'—to be the fundamental statement of Hegel's conception of Being (HCE 98). Hegel's conception of Being is articulated in this 'being-with-us (*parousia*)' of the absolute, which is 'in itself already the mode in which the light of truth, the absolute itself, beams [*anstrahlt*] upon us' (HCE 98). The absolute *is* as the ontological horizon of Being in which beings are disclosed to us in their radiant and intelligible presence.

Heidegger then shifts emphasis in order to develop a thesis crucial for his later thinking: that in the course of modern philosophy, from Descartes and Kant to Hegel and Nietzsche, the meaning of Being is progressively *subjectivized* (culminating in the essence of modern technics or *das Ge-stell*). This thesis of a *subjectivization of Being* is a central feature of Heidegger's reading of the *Phenomenology* and of Hegel's crucial role in the completion of Western metaphysics. According to Heidegger, Hegel takes complete possession of the terrain of subjectivity by transforming it into self-knowing and self-willing spirit. Philosophy becomes 'science' or *Wissenschaft* in the absolute metaphysics of Hegel precisely because 'it takes its meaning from the essence of the subject's self-certainty which knows itself unconditionally' (HCE 99). Philosophical science is thus the completion of the Cartesian project of a self-grounding knowledge that has its absolute foundation in the unconditional self-certainty of the knowing subject.

What does Heidegger mean here by the 'subject'? Since Leibniz, Heidegger claims, entities have been understood to be whatever are intelligible as representable for a cognitive subject. The subject, in speculative metaphysics,

> is now that which truly (which now means 'certainly') lies before us, the *subiectum*, the *hypokeimenon*, which philosophy since antiquity has had to recognize as that which presences (HCE 99).

The subject has its Being in the representing relation to the object, and in *being* this representing relationship it also represents itself to itself as *subject.* The mode of Being of the modern metaphysical subject is *self-certainty*, in the sense of a self-conditioned, or rather, *unconditional self-knowing.* This mode of Being as unconditional self-knowing is what Heidegger calls the s*ubjectity* [*Subjektität*] of the subject:

> The subjectity of the subject is constituted by the subject being a subject, i.e., by the subject being in a subject-object relation. Subjectity consists in unconditional self-knowing (HCE 100).

The Being of the subject is *subjectity* in the form of self-grounding self-knowledge, which Hegel raises to the level of speculative science. This unconditional self-awareness, which for Heidegger is the goal of the *Phenomenology*, articulates the subjectity of the subject and provides the basis for conceptualizing 'being *qua* being' [*das Seiende als Seiende*] as a mode of self-grounding self-knowledge. Interpreting the beingness of beings as *subjectity* means that Being is 'subjectivized'; subjectity in Hegel is now tantamount to 'the absoluteness of the absolute' (HCE 100).

A problem arises here that merits further consideration. How can the subject, whose Being is defined by subjectity, be considered *absolute*? As we saw earlier, the subjectity of the subject is defined in terms of the Being of the subject-object relation, which is thereby raised to the level of unconditional self-knowledge. But the very notion of a subject as 'absolute' seems self-contradictory, since the subject, according to Heidegger, remains inscribed within the paradigm of the subject-object relationship, and thus marked by its 'relative' status, that is, its insurmountable finitude. According to Heidegger, however, absolute knowledge is grounded in the Being of the subject-object relation *qua* subjectity, a move that reduces speculative knowledge to the level of merely 'relative' knowledge. It is not clear, then, how the figure of the subjectity of the subject—given its irreducible finitude and object/other dependence—can at the same time be raised to the level of the 'absoluteness of the absolute', as Heidegger maintains.

A final point to consider in Heidegger's interpretation is the problem of the ontological difference within the *Phenomenology*. According to Heidegger, this fundamental difference between Being and beings provides the un-thought origin and element of metaphysics in its entire history from Plato and Aristotle to Hegel and Nietzsche. This is to be understood as a history of decline [*Verfallsgeschichte*], namely as the *forgetting* of the ontological difference and indeed of the question of Being. Heidegger introduces the ontological difference into his interpretation of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, aligning ontological knowledge with 'Being' and ontic or natural consciousness with knowledge of 'beings'. Hegel's 'natural consciousness' is thus akin to ontic or pre-ontological consciousness that pertains to beings as present to consciousness. Ontological consciousness, on the other hand, describes the ab-solvent standpoint of the phenomenological 'we', those fundamental ontologists who heed the Being of beings in absolute knowledge.

Indeed, Heidegger proceeds to assimilate Hegel's 'natural consciousness' to fallen or inauthentic Da-sein, which covers over any authentic ontological experience of originary temporality or indeed of Being as such (HCE 111-112). As Heidegger remarks:

> In its representation of beings, natural consciousness does not attend to being; nonetheless, it must do so. It cannot help but participate in the representation of the being of beings in general because without the light of being it cannot even be lost *amidst* beings (HCE 111-112).

Here the ontological difference is explicitly invoked in order to clarify Hegel's distinction between the *for-itself* standpoint of consciousness and the *for-us* standpoint of the phenomenological observer. The very possibility of phenomenology is opened up by the ontological difference between beings apprehended by natural consciousness and Being as comprehended by the phenomenological 'we'.

Drawing on the analytic of Da-sein in *Being and Time*, Heidegger interprets Hegel's 'consciousness' as *ontic* or preontological consciousness whose object comprises *beings* taken as *representable*. At the same time, consciousness is also 'ontological consciousness' in the sense of having an awareness of the beingness of beings as *objectivity*. The parallel Heidegger draws here refers to the ontic or preontological understanding belonging to Da-sein in its everyday being-in-the-world; consciousness too has such a preontological

understanding even though consciousness only represents the 'beingness of beings' as objective presence. Heidegger thus attempts to absorb Hegelian phenomenology within the project of thinking the difference between Being and beings. Phenomenology is the process of making explicit this implicit difference between ontic and ontological truth, of comprehending the (unthematized) experience of the ontological difference between Being and beings.

Heidegger's theses concerning the ontological meaning of self-consciousness and the subjectivization of the absolute are thus brought together in his interpretation of the dialectical movement of *experience* as naming 'the Being of beings'. Hegel's concept of '*experience*,' according to Heidegger, names 'phenomena, as phenomena, the *on hei on*,' or beings thought in their beingness (HCE 135). 'Experience', Heidegger argues, is thus now a word of *Being* designating the *subjectity of the subject*. Accordingly, the dialectical experience of consciousness involves a comparison between *ontic* preontological knowledge and *ontological* knowledge. A dialogue or *legein* takes place between these two poles in which the claims of ontic and ontological consciousness are heard (HCE 138). This dialogical character of ontic-ontological consciousness prompts Hegel to call the movement of consciousness 'dialectical', where the latter is understood ontologically as the experience of consciousness defined as subjectity: 'Experience is the beingness of beings', Heidegger states, 'which is determined as *subiectum* on the basis of subjectity' (HCE 138).

Heidegger's ontological reading concludes with the 'turning' of natural consciousness towards Being or the presence of the absolute: the inversion of consciousness is construed as returning us—the phenomenological ontologists 'who are attentive, skeptically, to the being of beings' (HCE 153)—to our nature, which consists in our being in the *parousia* of the absolute. As phenomenological ontologists, we allow the ontic-ontological dialogue of experience—the *parousia* of the absolute—to unfold according to its will to be with us or disclose itself in ontological knowledge.

At this point Heidegger articulates the explicit connection between the metaphysics of subjectity and the modern understanding of Being disclosed within the horizon of the essence of technology. As we have seen, Heidegger argues that the absolute discloses itself as subjectity. This modern understanding of Being as subjectity, which culminates with Hegelian absolute spirit and Nietzschean will to power, determines modernity as the epoch of technics. Heidegger thus connects his critique of metaphysics with the confrontation with modernity: the critical encounter with technology as completed subject-metaphysics is announced through Hegel's interpretation of Being as subjectity. As Heidegger states:

> Within subjectity, every being as such becomes an object. All beings are beings from out of and within steadfast reliability. In the age of subjectity [i.e., modernity], in which the essence of technology is grounded, if nature as being is put in opposition to consciousness, then this nature is only another name for beings as the objects of modern technological objectification which indiscriminately attacks the continued existence of things and men (HCE 144).

What is striking in this analysis is its proximity to Hegel's *own* critique of the subject-metaphysics, or what Hegel elsewhere calls the 'metaphysics of reflection'. Hegel too criticizes the practical effects of the principle of abstract identity and universality that results in the obliteration of particularity, the domination of otherness, and the reification of subjectivity. Modernity, for Heidegger, is the era of subjectity and hence of technological objectification. Modern technology is itself nothing other than natural consciousness that 'has at last made feasible the unlimited, self-assuring production of all beings through the inexorable objectification of each and every thing' (HCE 112). But as we have seen, Hegel's own critique of the subjectivization of the Concept, the 'bad' infinity of the understanding, also emphasizes the domination, reification, and objectification resulting from modern subject-metaphysics. In this sense, Heidegger's critical remarks provide a striking repetition of Hegel's own critical confrontation with modern metaphysics of the subject and its moral-practical implications. In this respect, the dialogue between Hegel and Heidegger finds its shared matter of thinking in the critical confrontation with the metaphysics of modernity.

To conclude, in Heidegger's reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, the need to overcome the self-alienation of the unhappy consciousness becomes the need to overcome the objectifying thinking of ontic consciousness in order to return to the *parousia* of the absolute. In Heidegger's confrontation with Hegel, however, the *negativity* of the historical experience of spirit is lost in favour of a recovery of the forgotten 'experience' of the originary question of Being. Instead of Hegel's dynamic historical unfolding of intersubjective spirit we have Heidegger's *Verfallsgeschichte* of a perennial forgetting of Being. Heidegger's confrontation with Hegelian metaphysics thus remains determined by a philosophical metanarrative culminating not in freedom of subjectivity (as for Hegel) but in the nihilism of modern technics.

The main difficulty here, as I have argued, is 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 lasting legacy for the metaphysics of subjectivity is precisely his move from the abstract self-identity of formal models of self-consciousness (the Kantian and Fichtean 'I = I') towards a conception of social and cultural *intersubjectivity* as a concrete self-identity-in-otherness achieved through mutual recognition. Indeed, Hegel's project is nothing less than an attempt to think the experience of modernity; to comprehend the history and conditions of the formation of modern subjects, and to do so in the most conceptually systematic manner possible.

Heidegger's interpretation, however, neglects this intersubjective dimension of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. This is particularly evident in Heidegger's 'ontological' interpretation of the phenomenological 'we', which equates it with the fundamental ontologist of *Being and Time,* and hence claims that the *Phenomenology* is grounded in a fundamental presupposition—the absolute knowledge of Being. I have argued that this is an implausible interpretation of the project of the *Phenomenology* that fails to do justice to Hegel's attempt to provide a 'presuppositionless' introduction to philosophical science.

In these respects, we could say that the 'thinking dialogue' between Hegel and

Heidegger remains perhaps a philosophical monologue. Heidegger's fine ear for the un-thought at the heart of metaphysics—so brilliantly attuned to Kant and profoundly engaged with Nietzsche—seems somewhat deaf in the case of Hegel. For Heidegger fails to heed that the nihilism of metaphysics is not only the forgetting of Being but also the experience of freedom.[23] Nonetheless, the Hegelian and Heideggerian narratives of metaphysics—which mirror and invert one another—still provide a dual horizon for our own questioning of metaphysics and modernity; this is why the dialogue between Hegel and Heidegger remains philosophically important for us today. Genuine dialogue, however, requires reciprocity, an engagement with the other; but perhaps we cannot demand this of a thinker exclusively devoted to the mystery of Being. Hegel once remarked, as though anticipating Heidegger,

> 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 and not yet the empyrean. True thoughts and scientific insight are only to be won through the labour of the Concept (PS ¶ 70).

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23. As Heidegger sees more sympathetically in the case of Schelling's attempt to overcome metaphysics. See Martin Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Athens/Ohio, Ohio University Press, 1985.

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