

# **‘Seit ein Gespräch wir sind’:**

## **Language and dialogical experience in Hegel**

**‘Wij zijn immers een gesprek’: taal en dialogische ervaring in Hegel**

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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1 G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III (Werke 20)* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 507.

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# Introduction

In 1839, in a critique of Hegel's philosophy written eight years after Hegel's death, Ludwig Feuerbach gives the following verdict on Hegel's dialectics: 'Die *wahre* Dialektik ist kein *Monolog des einsamen Denkers mit sich selbst*, sie ist ein *Dialog zwischen Ich und Du*.'<sup>1</sup> Feuerbach's message is clear: in being a monologue that does not allow for any openness to what is other-than-itself, Hegel's dialectics cannot be considered 'die wahre Dialektik'.

Feuerbach's words can be seen as inaugurating a long and influential tradition. From Kierkegaard to Benhabib, from Arendt to Horkheimer: many thinkers have presented Hegel's thought as a closed, authoritative and introverted system that does not allow for openness or interaction, and which ultimately turns thought into a lonely affair.

This study presents a different Hegel: Hegel as a thinker for whom knowing is essentially dialogical, is thought speaking with itself. Thought speaking with itself does not – as in Feuerbach's reading – entail that knowing is a solipsistic endeavour in which an 'einsame Denker' communicates only with himself.<sup>2</sup> Rather, knowing is to be understood as an ongoing project, in which all who are involved and who are prepared to cooperate in the process of thinking are to do so through a dialogical interaction with what presents itself as thought.<sup>3</sup> Thought speaking with itself involves both the expression of thought – even if what is thought is still limited and not yet clear to itself – and a willingness to listen to and interact with what (initially) presents itself as other-than-itself, in order to further develop its connection with it. Thought speaking to itself by its very nature is dependent on language: it needs language in order to express itself and to communicate with other perspectives and other ways of thinking. Yet, as we will see, thought speaking with itself also produces a need to interact with language, and to ultimately transform language into a medium that expresses and allows for continuous interaction, allows thought to keep on speaking with itself.

The dialogical development of knowing involves that all those willing to partake in the project of knowing express themselves, make themselves heard and are prepared to interact with what presents itself as different by leaving fixed and particular positions,

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1 Ludwig Feuerbach, 'Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft', § 62 in: *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1955), p. 165.

2 In the 'Kraft und Verstand' section of the *Phänomenologie*, which examines knowledge claims that aim to explain ('erklären') the sensible world by means of supersensible and universal laws, Hegel explicitly rejects such a form of communication: 'In dem Erklären ist eben darum so viele Selbstbefriedigung, weil das Bewußtsein dabei, [um] es so auszudrücken, in unmittelbarem Selbstgespräche mit sich, nur sich selbst genießt, dabei zwar etwas anderes zu treiben scheint, aber in der Tat sich nur mit sich selbst herumtreibt.' *PhdG*, p. 134. *GW IX*, p. 101.

3 Already in the opening paragraphs of the preface to the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Hegel presents philosophy in terms of a joint venture: 'Daran *mitzuarbeiten* [my emphasis, AG], daß die Philosophie der Form der Wissenschaft näherkomme – dem Ziele, ihren Namen der *Liebe* zum Wissen ablegen zu können und *wirkliches Wissen* zu sein –, ist es, was ich mir vorgesetzt.' *PhdG*, p. 14. *GW IX*, p. 11.

by taking up the position of the other in order to question both the other position and its own, and in doing so develop knowing as a comprehensive generality. This interaction is to produce a knowing – and a language – in which each particular expression of thought is recognized and recognizes itself, so that knowing – and language – can ultimately be understood as belonging to no one in particular, but as belonging to us all, and as what we belong to.

I am not the first, however, to present Hegel as a dialogical thinker. It is, for instance, a prominent aspect of the view on Hegel defended by more recent authors such as Arvi Särkela and Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer, who both – although in different ways – emphasize that Hegel's 'Wir', the subject of knowing, is a continuously evolving intersubjective practice that is formed by interacting with and explicating the ways in which we act and speak.<sup>4</sup>

My approach differs in according a central role to the dialogical interaction between Hegel's text and its reader. I will show that philosophy as a project that requires cooperation and (dialogical) interaction not only demands 'mitarbeiten' from the author of a philosophical text,<sup>5</sup> but also from the reader. A philosophical text, for Hegel, cannot simply be presented as a "given" to the reader, but requires a reading in which the reader is given responsibility for, and is given a voice in, the development of what is presented, and thus to produce the 'Begriff' that 'liegt in dem Gesagten'.<sup>6</sup> The reader is not only to passively take sentences at their word, accept them as being true, but is also to discover the problematic aspects inherent in such a reading. The reader should allow the words on the page to interact with their context, to raise questions, doubts, or even contradictions. The reader thus experiences that what philosophy is essentially about depends on our actively participating in what is presented as thought, and on our embarking on a dialogue with philosophical texts. If we, as readers, respond to the calls such texts confront us with, we experience that in the process of reading we do find an answer to the question what philosophy is about. Yet, at the same time, we become aware that answers, if

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4 In his recent study, Särkela argues for a model of immanent critique that is to be understood as a self-transformative practice – which involves both critique and 'Wir' as its subject – in which metacritique is not externally applied, but is an integral element of this practice. See Arvi Särkela, *Immanente Kritik und Soziales Leben – Selbsttransformative Praxis nach Hegel und Dewey* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2018). Stekeler-Weithofer emphasizes Hegel's notion of 'Arbeit am Begriff', of knowing as a practice that requires continuous effort and involvement and in which we are to explicate the knowing that is implicit in what we – as part of intersubjective *Geist* – collectively say and do. Yet Stekeler does not see Hegel as basically a social theorist – a perspective that is more prominent in Särkela's view – but rather as showing that it is only through being involved in general and collective practices that we are able to develop ourselves as personal subjects. See the two volumes of Pirmin Stekeler-Weithofer's *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes – Ein dialogisches Kommentar* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2014) and his earlier work on Hegel's 'analytical' philosophy, which focuses mainly on Hegel's *Logik: Hegels Analytische Philosophie* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1992).

5 See note 3.

6 *PhdG*, p. 47, *GW IX*, p. 35.

taken as definitive, are self-defeating. We have to be prepared to give up any determinate hold on the text, and thus allow for further interaction with what the text has to offer.

Reading Hegel as dialogical also in this sense – as implicating the reader and granting a special position to language – has a twofold aim. Reading Hegel this way will allow me to further develop what is involved in his concept of experience, and in the related notion of ‘Bestimmung’: the process in and through which experience is developed. I interpret ‘Bestimmung’ as a movement that is dialogical in that it requires us to express ourselves, to literally use our voices (“Stimmen”), to be prepared to account for our views but also to check and adapt them. ‘Bestimmung’, as a practice of “speaking with” rather than “speaking about” what presents itself in experience, demands that we actively involve ourselves with what is voiced by others: both by critically engaging with what is expressed and by allowing other voices to make themselves heard. The ultimate goal of the process of ‘Bestimmung’ (‘final goal’ or ‘destination’ being a further meaning of ‘Bestimmung’) will then not reveal itself as a resolution in which there is no more to be said. The outcome is not to lie in complete consensus, as this would imply that knowing could then be left as it is and would not require further interaction. In absolute knowing as the concluding movement of the process of ‘Bestimmung’ there is a comprehensive understanding of both object and subject, but no standstill or quiet contemplation, as subject and object keep on speaking with each other.<sup>7</sup> ‘Bestimmung’ as a process of continuous and dialogical cooperation thus also is a process that is transformative in that we – those who are involved in this process – learn that what we took to be our position, our voice, our self, ceases to be fixed and determinate. We learn that there is no inner core, no solid starting point, no given “soul” we can return to, and that we have to relinquish determinate conceptions of who and what we are.

Secondly, it will also allow for a rethinking of the role played by language in Hegel’s thought. Language does not only play an important role in its being the reflection of experience or of traditional views on knowing, in its allowing for the mediation of experience, or of its being the reflection of the ways in which we think,<sup>8</sup> aspects that

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7 As Hegel writes in the introduction to the *Phänomenologie*: ‘Das Ziel [of the movement of knowing, AG] aber ist dem Wissen ebenso notwendig als die Reihe des Fortganges gesteckt; es ist da, wo es nicht mehr über sich selbst hinauszugehen nötig hat, wo es sich selbst findet und der Begriff dem Gegenstande, der Gegenstand dem Begriffe entspricht [my italics, AG]. *PhdG*, p. 74. *GW IX*, p. 57. The main denotation of ‘entsprechen’ is ‘to be in accordance with’, ‘to become one with’ or ‘to become identical to’, but it can also mean ‘to answer’, or ‘to account for’ (see the relevant lemmas in *Adelung* and *DWB*), again suggesting a dialogical aspect of the interaction between ‘Gegenstand’ and ‘Begriff’.

8 As Hegel puts it in the preface to the second edition of the *Wissenschaft der Logik*: ‘Die Denkformen sind zunächst in der *Sprache* des Menschen herausgesetzt und niedergelegt [...] In alles, was ihm (a human being, AG) zu einem Innerlichen, zur Vorstellung überhaupt wird, was er zu dem Seinigen macht, hat sich die Sprache eingedrängt, und was er zur Sprache macht und in ihr äußert, enthält eingehüllter, vermischer oder herausgearbeitet eine Kategorie; so sehr natürlich ist ihm das Logische, oder vielmehr: dasselbige ist seine eigentümliche Natur selbst, *WdL I*, p. 20.

are traditionally discussed in the literature on Hegel and language.<sup>9</sup> Focusing on the dialogical interaction between Hegel's text and the reader will also show language to be a medium that brings about experience, and provokes us into thought. Hegel's specific use of language allows us to become aware that we are initially inclined to accept language as a medium that is simply given. As part of what Hegel calls 'das natürliche Bewußtsein',<sup>10</sup> we find that we are prone to using language thoughtlessly. In taking words such as 'Bestimmung' to have a fixed and determinate meaning, or as belonging to a particular and determinate perspective, we fail to develop their full potential. Even philosophy, in failing to interact with its language, does not always know what it says.<sup>11</sup> Hegel wants us to become aware that philosophy does not already have a "clear and distinct" voice to speak with, in which thought can be presented transparently and unequivocally, as if it were plain and simple.<sup>12</sup> The presentation of philosophy should be such that it allows for continuous 'Bestimmung', for developing the voice of philosophy, a voice in which we can make ourselves and our knowing understood, and in which we can recognize the work and the plurality of voices that contributed to its making.

Hegel's presentation also allows us to experience that language taken as a medium that is immediately given acts as an impediment to the development of thought. We become aware that language is to be transformed from within, by engaging with what language – which, Hegel argues, reveals itself as 'das Wahrhaftere' –<sup>13</sup> is able to tell us about ourselves and our knowing. We have to develop language into a medium that is inclusive, in

9 See e.g. Jere O'Neill Surber (ed.), *Hegel and Language* (New York: SUNY, 2006), Bruno Liebrucks, *Sprache und Bewußtsein* (Frankfurt am Main: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1970), John McCumber, *The Company of Words* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), Daniel J. Cook, *Language in the Philosophy of Hegel* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973) and Theodor Bodammer, *Hegels Deutung der Sprache* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1969).

10 'Natural consciousness' refers to a type of knowing that can be characterized as habitual, as what we are used to, and which we tend to accept without further reflection. See *PhdG*, p. 48. *GW IX*, p. 36: 'Im gemeinen Leben hat das Bewußtsein Kenntnisse, Erfahrungen, sinnliche Konkretionen, auch Gedanken, Grundsätze, überhaupt solches zu seinem Inhalte, das als ein Vorhandenes oder als ein festes, ruhendes Sein oder Wesen gilt.'

11 In the preface to the *Phänomenologie*, Hegel singles out what he calls 'formalist' philosophy, such as Kant's, as especially guilty of this, and of reducing the form of philosophy to a 'leblose[s] Schema' that is external to the thought it aims to present: 'Dieser Formalismus [...], meint die Natur und das Leben einer Gestalt begriffen und ausgesprochen zu haben, wenn er von ihr eine Bestimmung des Schemas als Prädikat ausgesagt [...]. Es werden dabei teils sinnliche Bestimmungen aus der gemeinen Anschauung aufgenommen, die freilich etwas anders *bedeuten* sollen, als sie sagen, teils wird das an sich bedeutende, die reinen Bestimmungen des Gedankens, wie Subjekt, Objekt, Substanz, Ursache, das Allgemeine usf., geradeso unbesehen und unkritisch gebraucht wie im gemeinen Leben [...] so daß jene Metaphysik so unwissenschaftlich ist als diese sinnlichen Vorstellungen.' *PhdG*, pp. 48-49. *GW IX*, pp. 36-37.

12 As we can read in the introduction to *das Kritische Journal*, philosophical critique is also to engage with the form in which thought is expressed, and those who profess to present philosophical thought plainly and briefly are 'empty spirits': 'Die leere Form solcher Geister [...], die ohne Geist in kurzen Worten Wesen und Hauptsache der Philosophie geben wollen, hat weder wissenschaftliche noch sonst eine interessante Bedeutung.' *Jenaer Schriften 1801-1807 (Werke 2)*, p. 174. *GW IV*, p. 119.

13 *PhdG*, p. 85. *GW IX*, p. 65. In chapter three this passage from the section on sense-certainty will be extensively discussed. Language is 'das Wahrhaftere' in teaching sense-certainty that it cannot express its purely individual perspective (its *Meinung*) in language, since when it does so, it expresses itself as general-ity: 'Als ein allgemeines *sprechen* wir auch das Sinnliche aus.'

which we are able to recognize ourselves, in which thought is allowed to move as there is a continuous and active explication of all the *Bestimmungen* that lie in store in it, and in which meaning is never pinned down but is allowed to be in constant movement. The comparative ‘das Wahrhaftere’ – language being ‘more truthful’ than the *Meinung* (its particular perspective) consciousness aims to express – implies that language is not yet a perfect medium, and that it still betrays a lack (‘Bedürfnis’). We are thus to further perfect it in order to allow thought to approximate (‘näherkommen’) a comprehensive knowing of itself. ‘[Der] Begriff liegt aber schon in dem Gesagten’:<sup>14</sup> we do not need a new language, yet what is – or has been – said needs to be interacted with – through a dialogical practice of questioning, challenging and accounting for – in order to produce the conceptual understanding that is, as yet, still implicit. We need language so that we can express ourselves, so that we can come to an understanding of who we are and of the ways in which we think. We also need language to engage with what presents itself as knowing, with other perspectives and thus to contribute to the production of knowing – and of ‘Wir’ as its subject – as a meaningful whole.

The reading of Hegel I will propose and defend is thus, to begin with, an encounter with those readings of Hegel that see Hegel’s philosophy primarily as a self-enclosed system, in which a monologue is conducted from the perspective of an omniscient and fully transparent philosophical subject.<sup>15</sup> One of the most decided denunciations of Hegel’s “monologism” can be found in the work of the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, the ‘founder’ of the theory of *dialogic*, which claims that language and thought are inherently dialogical: ‘Dialogue and dialectics. Take a dialogue and remove the voices [...], remove the intonations [...], carve out abstract concepts and judgements from living words and responses, cram everything into one abstract consciousness – and that’s how you get dialectics.’<sup>16</sup> With and against Bakhtin, I will show that Hegel’s dialectics – as a process of ‘Bestimmung’ – does actually incorporate all that Bakhtin claims to have

14 See n. 6 above.

15 See e.g. Gadamer, who, in his study on Hegel’s dialectics, described the ‘großartige Monolog seines [...] dialektischen Philosophierens’ as the fulfillment of ‘sein [Hegel’s, AG] Ideal der immanenten Selbstentfaltung des Gedankens.’ See Hans-Georg Gadamer, ‘Hegel und die antike Dialektik’ in *Hegels Dialektik: Fünf Hermeneutische Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971), p. 9. In his essay ‘Hegel und das Problem der Metaphysik’, Horkheimer argues that the dialectical movement of thought is propelled by the interaction between consciousness and a philosophical subject that has already arrived at the standpoint of absolute knowing: ‘Die dialektische Selbstbewegung des Begriffs beruht wesentlich darauf, daß jede nicht abschließende begriffliche Bestimmung an der Idee des vollendeten Systems der Selbsterkenntnis gemessen wird und ihr nicht Genüge tut. Das Resultat (die absolute Identität) ist schon im Anfang vorweggenommen. See Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften, Band 2: Philosophische Frühschriften 1922-1932*, hrsg. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1987), p. 297. Benhabib, in her study on the transformation of critique, offers a more subtle analysis in arguing that Hegel, in the *Phänomenologie*, moves from ‘philosophical critique as dialogue’ as a process of communication between the writer-thinker and the readers’ to a model of appropriation by a ‘transsubjective subject’, and ‘the unfolding of experience’ comes to be seen ‘as the activity of exteriorization of a transsubjective subject who then “reappropriates” and “takes into possession” what was once his.’ See Seyla Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia Press, 1986), pp. 46-47.

16 M.M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 147.



been removed. Hegel's approach is dialogical in Bakhtin's sense in allowing voices that express a particular view of what knowing is to make themselves heard and in allowing language – in many different ways – to play a role through which the concepts expressed in it are involved in continuous, “living”, movement. In his texts, Hegel does not, as Bakhtin claims, take upon himself the role of omniscient narrator, who is already in possession of the truth, and guides the reader to acceptance of this truth, which will ultimately consist of nothing but a simple ‘Yes’.<sup>17</sup> The author's position in Hegel's texts, I will argue, is similar to Socrates' position in Plato's dialogues: for Socrates there is no doubt that the outcome of the dialectical (or dialogical) process is the truth, but it is not clear in advance what this truth is.<sup>18</sup> For Hegel, the truth is also ‘vorausgesetzt’, but what it is can only be clarified in the end, and, even then, requires a process of continuous work, continuous ‘mitarbeiten’.<sup>19</sup> Being involved in the dialogical development of what presents

17 A further proponent of a view that sees Hegel's philosophy as presupposing an omniscient and fully transparent philosophical subject is Rüdiger Bubner, who argues that, although he admits there is a form of dialogue to be found in the *Phänomenologie*, i.e. between consciousness and an observant consciousness, the latter is a ‘Wissenschaft’ that is already fully transparent to itself who uses the dialogue to guide consciousness to the truth it is already in possession of: ‘[D]ie phänomenologische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Bewußtsein[zielt] auf “das absolute Wissen”. Die hier zur vollen Durchsichtigkeit gelangte Wahrheit gilt aber als Fluchtpunkt des dialogischen Prozesses nicht für beiden Seiten gleichermaßen, sondern nur für die eine Seite, der die Einführung in die Wissenschaft noch bevorsteht. Von Anbeginn an hat nämlich die andere Seite, die von der Wissenschaft eingenommen wird, dem Bewußtsein eine solche Einführung in sie selbst als Wissenschaft verordnet.’ Bubner's view appears to suggest that the position of the ‘Wissenschaft’ – with Hegel as its representative – is already in possession of a truth that is fully transparent to itself, so that the ‘Einführung’ for the ‘andere Seite’ – in which both natural consciousness and reader are included – would then be ‘das Mittel, durch welches hindurch man es erblicke’, and as ladder that can be discarded as soon as the goal has been reached, and consciousness surrenders to the superior position: ‘Der unterlegene Partner wird vom überlegenen Partner auf dessen Position gehoben, um das vom Anfang an unterstellte, aber durch die Konkurrenz mit dem noch nicht bekehrten Bewußtsein ständig bedrohte Monopol jener Position definitiv zu sichern. Das geschieht, indem der einseitig in einen Dialog gezogenen Partner alle möglichen Partnerrollen durchspielt, um sie zugunsten des Vorrechts der Wissenschaft endlich aufzugeben.’ See Rüdiger Bubner, *Zur Sache der Dialektik* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1980), p. 145.

18 The question whether we should take Socrates at his word when he professes not to know the answer to the question he is asking is, or whether he is being ironic and merely poses as ignorant in order to get his discussion partners talking is a highly controversial one. For an overview of this discussion, see Melissa Lane, ‘Reconsidering Socratic Irony’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Socrates*, ed. Donald R. Morrison, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, pp. 237-259. As Drew Hyland points out in his article ‘Taking the longer road: The Irony of Plato's Republic’, Socrates’ (or in this case, as Hyland argues, rather Plato's) irony can also function as a way to veil hidden intentions, and to reveal different messages to different audiences (the main proponent of an extreme version of this view being Leo Strauss). In Hyland's view, the main function of Socrates’ (and Plato's) irony is a pedagogical one, in that it raises unease in the audience, and makes them think for themselves. See Drew A. Hyland, ‘Taking the longer road: The Irony of Plato's Republic’, in *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, No 1 (1988), pp. 317-335, esp. pp. 323-324. Hegel also appears to be in favour of this view in his discussion of the Socratic method in the *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*: ‘die Dialektik ist Gründe der Sache, die Ironie ist besondere Benehmungsweise von Person zu Person. Was [Sokrates] damit bewirken wollte, war, daß sich die anderen äußern, ihre Grundsätze hervorbringen sollten.’ By then examining the ‘Grundsätze’, Socrates aimed to reveal the contradictions inherent in them. The issuing confusion is what Socrates ultimately aimed for, since this is what will make his discussion partners think: ‘Diese Verwirrung hat nun die Wirkung, zum Nachdenken zu führen; und dies ist der Zweck des Sokrates. [...] Es ist Verwirrung, mit der die Philosophie überhaupt anfangen muß und due sue für sich hervorbringt; man muß an allem zweifeln, man muß alle Voraussetzungen aufgeben um es als durch den Begriff Erzeugtes wiederzuerhalten.’ *Werke* 18, pp. 458-466.

19 That is, in Hegel's case; for Socrates, i.e. for Plato's Socrates, the philosopher who allows himself to be led by the *logos* (which exists independent of him knowing it) of what really is, will ultimately arrive at a



itself in experience thus aims at a further approach of the truth (so that 'die Philosophie der Form der Wissenschaft *näherkomme* [my italics, AG]'),<sup>20</sup> and denies that it is already in possession of this truth.

Although I thus put forward an "open" reading of Hegel, and do not see his system as one in which full closure is achieved,<sup>21</sup> the openness in Hegel's thought, I will argue, is not one that knows no boundaries and can extend *ad libitum*.<sup>22</sup> The 'Bestimmung' of thought as absolute knowing does not imply that there is complete closure in the sense that knowing is now completely transparent to itself in all respects. Being involved in absolute knowing does imply that we are fully aware of its limits, as they are limits that we have developed ourselves. Within this self-enclosed totality, however, there is still movement, still interaction with all the voices that continue to make themselves heard, so that an infinity of new connections can continue to be made.<sup>23</sup> Reading Hegel as "open" for me thus implies that we read not only his system, but also his language as "open", as it is language which allows for – and brings about – continuous movement and interaction with what presents itself.

I do not read Hegel's project as primarily involved in interaction with – and development of – Kant's philosophy: as an attempt to overcome the dualisms inherent in Kant's thought,<sup>24</sup> or, as Robert Pippin argued in his influential book on Hegel's idealism, as an appropriation of Kant's argument in the Transcendental Deduction and of his notion of the 'transcendental unity of the apperception'.<sup>25</sup> Although engaging with fundamental

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complete grasp of the truth, and is then able to quietly contemplate this truth.

20 Cf. n. 3.

21 I would indeed argue that when Hegel talks about a 'system', he refers to the system of philosophical thought (the 'System der Wissenschaft') as a whole, rather than to *his* particular system. In the preface to the *Phänomenologie*, the sentence immediately preceding the one in which Hegel claims that his aim is to cooperate to the project of philosophy's becoming knowing of itself, reads as follows: 'Die wahre Gestalt, in welcher die Wahrheit existiert, kann allein das wissenschaftliche System derselben sein' *PhdG*, p. 14. *GW IX*, p. 11.

22 For a lucid discussion of the question whether or not there is closure in Hegel's system (with a particular focus on the *Logik*) and a convincing argument against several 'open' Hegelianisms, see David Kolb, 'What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel', in *Philosophical Topics*, Vol. 19, No. 2, *Nineteenth-Century Philosophy* (FALL 1991), pp. 29-50. I agree with Kolb when he argues that there is closure in the sense that in absolute knowing thought has a full grasp of its 'foundational categories' (op. cit., p. 30) and is able to recognize itself in them. There is also closure in the sense that thought is fully able to reconcile itself with what is (initially) perceived as other-than-itself. Yet, as Kolb writes, Hegel never 'claimed that [intellectual and practical] activity would stop, and he fully expected science [...] to continue generating new discoveries and new theories.' The system is thus open, in his view, with regard to 'empirical detail and historical embodiment.' I would like to add that it is also open in that self-enclosed thought continues to be a movement of self-revelation, of opening up unto itself, and a making heard of all the voices that have contributed to its coming to be.

23 The infinity is thus an infinity that is enclosed within the limits unified thought is able to impose on itself, and not the 'bad' 'Unendlichkeit des unendlichen Progresses'. On Hegel's notion of 'bad infinity', which is doomed to remain a 'Widerspruch' and fails to interact with itself, see *WdL I*, pp. 152-156, *GW XI*, pp. 79-81.

24 For an example of such a view, see e.g. Michael N. Forster, *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

25 See Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

questions discussed by Kant – e.g. What is autonomy? What is (the function of) critique? What can we know? What is the subject of knowing? How can thought become a systematic unity? – is definitely an important aspect of Hegel's project, so is his development of the metacritical challenge to Kant's project as put forward by Hamann and Herder. Indeed, I will argue that, as Hegel's aim is to contribute to the unification of philosophy as a whole, that his project is to be seen as an interaction with philosophy as a whole, as interacting with prominent expressions of knowing that have made themselves heard in the history of philosophy, such as Plato's, Aristotle's, Spinoza's, Hume's, Rousseau's, to mention but a few, but also with contemporary voices such as Jacobi, Schiller, Fichte, Goethe, Hölderlin, Schelling and many others.

In focusing on the interaction between reader and text I also aim to vindicate the way in which Hegel presents his thought. From Schopenhauer onwards,<sup>26</sup> many of Hegel's readers have attacked Hegel's presentation for unduly obscuring the thought he aims to convey. As Frederick Beiser puts it: '[Hegel's texts] are written in the worst prose in the history of philosophy. Their language is dense, obscure and impenetrable. Reading Hegel is often a trying and exhausting experience, the intellectual equivalent of chewing gravel.'<sup>27</sup> Although I do not deny that reading Hegel is indeed often a 'trying and exhausting experience', it is also an extremely rewarding and inspiring, at times even exhilarating one. In reading Hegel we come to realize that explication requires struggle, requires 'Arbeit des Begriffs',<sup>28</sup> and that it is only by being forced to interact with the ways in which thought is presented that we are able to explicate the riches it has to offer.

Rather than 'domesticate the rhetoric of [Hegel's] philosophy', which is what John McDowell claims we should be doing once we have grasped what 'absolute idealism' can teach us about the 'unboundedness of the conceptual',<sup>29</sup> I will argue that we should see Hegel's use of rhetorical devices as an integral aspect of the type of philosophy he wants to promote, in that his presentation continuously forces us to interact with what is said, and, hence, with what is (to be) thought. My approach in this study is thus to take a close look at language-related issues – from the 'unboundedness of the conceptual' down to the semantics of individual words and even minute details of punctuation – and to provide a close reading of those passages in Hegel's work – with a focus on his early work and especially on the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* – in which language is shown to play a necessary role in the development of knowing and of 'wir' – intersubjective *Geist* – as its

26 Schopenhauer famously attacked Hegel of being an octopus hiding within its cloud of ink, of being *mea caligine tutus* ('safe within my nebulous dark'). See Arthur Schopenhauer, *Hauptwerke. Band III: Der Satz vom Grunde. Über den Willen in der Natur. Die Grundprobleme der Ethik*, hrsg. Eduard Grisebach (Leipzig: Reclam, 1920), p. 207.

27 Frederick Beiser, *Hegel* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 1.

28 See *PhdG*, p. 65, *GW IX*, p. 48: 'Wahre Gedanken und wissenschaftliche Einsicht ist nur in der Arbeit des Begriffs zu gewinnen.'

29 John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 44.

subject. Especially in the *Phänomenologie*, Hegel shows great sensitivity with regard to the way in which particular shapes of knowing manifest themselves in language.

In using tools of literary analysis and close reading, my reading was greatly inspired by the work on Hegel by Katrin Pahl and John Smith.<sup>30</sup> In using the method of close reading I aim to explicate what it is that can be learned from the passages under scrutiny with regard to the question in what way language acts as the medium of thought, and what can be learned from Hegel's use of rhetoric about the development of self-conscious knowing. As the use of this method requires attention to minute detail, the philosophical implications of Hegel's rhetoric will occasionally, as in the example of 'Ausführung' below, be discussed in a distinct type of note.

As Hegel persistently argues, form is not an external envelope in which content is presented, form *is* content, and what knowing is can only be revealed if its process of becoming is incorporated in it: 'die Sache [what knowing is, AG] ist nicht in ihrem Zwecke erschöpft, sondern in ihrer *Ausführung*, noch ist das *Resultat* das *wirkliche* Ganze, sondern es zusammen mit seinem Werden.'<sup>31</sup> Both the presentation of philosophy, and its 'Bestimmung' by the reader, are an integral part of the production – or exposition ('Ausführung') – of 'Das wirkliche Ganze'. We are to develop an awareness that the truth is to be developed by interacting with the way in which it is expressed, and the presentation of philosophy – by making us realize that what we are presented with is not one-dimensional and simple, and can never be so –<sup>01</sup> should allow for such interaction.

<sup>01</sup> The word *Ausführung*, in the sentence quoted above, is a case in point: not only is it suggestive of activity, in which being is determined and in which truth comes to light, but it also intimates a staging of all the respective moments, or scenes, in which *Geist*, the protagonist of the *Phänomenologie*, appears and takes on all of its roles. *Ausführung* can also be read as a 'leading away from' the dark in which the truth cannot be perceived, and which thus brings the truth to light. Significantly, Hegel leaves open the question who is responsible for the *Ausführung*: it may be being, as the object of knowledge, but it could equally be its subject, the *Wissen* of (those involved in) true philosophy. It may be the author of the text, but could equally be its reader. A further example from this sentence is 'erschöpfen', which can mean to both to treat exhaustively, or to exhaust, (which is the meaning we are most likely to think of as soon as we start to understand Hegel's point that the object of knowledge cannot be posited in advance as a goal that is to be reached by a method that has not yet understood itself, an understanding that can only be reached in the *Ausführung* of knowing), but can also mean to create, which appears to be contradictory to both *Zweck* and *Ausführung*, but makes sense as soon as we realize that for Hegel creation is not *ex nihilo*, but refers to the whole process in which true knowledge comes to be.

Philosophy is to be presented in such a way that our preconceptions of what a philosophical text should be like are challenged, and that we may have to read a sentence differently from what we expected. The reader is given an active role in the development of

30 Pahl offers an enticing reading of Hegel's *Phänomenologie* by arguing that, for Hegel, emotions – as 'modes of relationality' – play a central role in the mediation of thought. See Katrin Pahl, *Tropes of Transport: Hegel and Emotion* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2012). Smith's work focuses on Hegel's concept of *Bildung* and offers a convincing analysis of the ways in which Hegel's concept of *Bildung* was formed by his own education, with its strong emphasis on rhetorical training. Smith shows that Hegel's dialectical method, although it is generally held to be strongly anti-rhetorical, is in fact highly rhetorical, and can be seen as an incorporation of many elements from his particular rhetorical background.

31 *PhdG*, p. 13, *GWIX*, p. 10.

meaning: in his (in)famous discussion of ‘der spekulative Satz’,<sup>32</sup> Hegel emphasizes that the process through which a sentence becomes speculative only really occurs when the ‘entgegensetzte Bewegung’ that is implicit in the sentence is made explicit by the reader: ‘Daß die Form des Satzes aufgehoben wird, muß nicht nur auf *unmittelbare* Weise geschehen, nicht durch den bloßen Inhalt des Satzes. Sondern diese entgegensetzte Bewegung muß ausgesprochen werden; sie muß nicht nur jene innerliche Hemmung, sondern dies Zurückgehen in sich muß dargestellt sein.’<sup>33</sup>

**02** In the context of what Hegel says with regard to the speculative sentence, the meaning of *Ausführung*, through interaction with words such as *Rhythmus*, *Metrum*, *Harmonie* and *Akzent*, is even further enriched, as we become aware it is also used for a musical performance, in which, as in speculative thinking, the harmony of the totality is produced through the interaction, and subsequent dissolution of all its individual parts, and also of what initially discords, or rather, appears to discord.

This ‘aussprechen’ apparently has to be taken quite literally: only in saying a sentence out loud, and by emphasizing certain words or parts (through which we in a sense also make it our own), can we come to understand that a sentence could also be read differently.<sup>34</sup> It is only through a consideration of these different readings, through the *Ausführung* and subsequent incorporation of all

32 See *PhdG*, pp. 58–64. *GW IX*, pp. 43–46. Speculative thought, which is to do justice to the process character of truth demands, Hegel argues, that we dare to relinquish the (dogmatic) idea that it is possible to capture what is true in a factual, fixed, sentence: ‘[d]er *Dogmatismus* der Denkungsart im Wissen und im Studium der Philosophie ist nichts anderes als die Meinung, daß das Wahre in einem Satze, der ein festes Resultat ist oder auch der unmittelbar gewußt wird, bestehe.’ True philosophical thought can only express itself in language in which there is movement – and thus no ‘bestehen’ – and in which negativity is incorporated in order to produce a meaningful whole. A sentence that reveals this movement is what Hegel calls a speculative sentence (‘ein spekulativer Satz’). Through its form, such a sentence may present itself as ‘dogmatic’, as uttering a definitive truth that can be – or should be – immediately accepted (e.g. ‘Gott ist das Sein’, or ‘das Wirkliche ist das Allgemeine’), but, as Hegel claims, reflection on its content should disrupt the relation between subject and predicate we are used to expecting. In reflecting on a sentence such as ‘Gott ist das Sein’, we experience that ‘das Sein’ has a substantial meaning, in which the subject, God, runs over (‘zerfließt’), so that God becomes part of being, and is no longer the fixed subject – one we can immediately be acquainted with and accept as given – of whom being is predicated: ‘dadurch scheint Gott aufzuhören was er durch die Stellung des Satzes ist, nämlich das feste Subjekt.’ As what appeared solid and certain – the God we took for granted – becomes unstable, thought feels slowed down, as it is made to return to and reconsider the subject – which now appears lost in the predicate – instead of being able to progress smoothly from subject to predicate. For Hegel, the meaning of words such as ‘Gott’, ‘das Sein’, ‘das Wirkliche’ and ‘das Allgemeine’ cannot be ‘vorausgesetzt’, cannot be posited in advance. Instead, they have to be given concrete meaning, which can only take place through actively reflecting on what presents itself, by allowing it to interact with its context, and to leave behind the type of thinking (‘das Rasonieren’) through which we are used to taking a sentence of the type S is P as indicative of ‘das gewöhnliche Verhältnis des Subjekts und Prädikats’.

33 *PhdG*, p. 61. *GW IX*, p. 45. In this I agree with Jere Surber, who argues that a speculative sentence is a sentence that becomes speculative if we take it speculatively by actively considering its content. Cf. Jere O’Neill Surber, ‘Hegel’s Philosophy of Language: The Unwritten Volume’ in Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (eds), *A Companion to Hegel* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 252. On this aspect of the speculative sentence, cf. also Bruno L. Puntel, *Darstellung, Methode und Struktur* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1973), pp. 32–34.

34 *PhdG*, p. 61. *GW IX*, p. 45: ‘Diese [...] dialektische Bewegung des Satzes [...] ist das wirklich Spekulative, und nur das aussprechen derselben ist speculative Darstellung.’ A related aspect is that, as soon as we have said a sentence out loud, it ceases to be mine only, and subjects itself to interpretation by others, and my attempts at interpretation may thus be corrected and adjusted. Cf. *PhdG*, p. 235, *GW IX*, p. 173: ‘Sprache und Arbeit sind Äußerungen, worin das Individuum nicht mehr an ihm selbst sich behält und besitzt, sondern das Innere ganz außer sich kommen läßt und dasselbe Anderem preisgibt.’

the different ways a sentence can be read,<sup>35 02</sup> that we are able to understand what is said in its totality.<sup>36</sup> Speculative thought is only possible when what appears is shown to be both the same as, yet different from, what is, as Hegel also intimates through one of his favourite phrases, ‘oder, was dasselbe ist’: we always have to be prepared to reconsider and return to what we are – or were – presented with and allow it to develop itself in different ways, in the light of what we have learned as being actively involved in ‘das wirkliche Wissen’.

Hegel’s discussion of ‘der spekulative Satz’ as the type of sentence that is to allow for the dialectical movement of thought has received ample attention in Hegel reception.<sup>37</sup> Yet, Hegel’s discussion of the speculative sentence is not merely an abstract discussion *about* the way thought is to be presented. It also reveals itself as an important means to accomplish concrete interaction *with* the reader, and to grant the reader responsibility for the development of the text’s potential. In this study, I will aim to show that Hegel’s presentation – through his use of multidimensional words such as ‘Ausführung’ and ‘Bestimmung’ and of rhetorical devices such as metaphor, litotes, parataxis and oxymoron, and through his interaction with literary texts such as Diderot’s *Le Neveu de Rameau* or Friedrich Schiller’s poem ‘Die Freundschaft’ – has a lot more to offer to the reader in allowing for such interaction in many different ways, each of which develops a different aspect of the dialectical – and dialogical – movement of thought. As close reading is of crucial importance to my approach, all of the quotations from Hegel’s work are given in German.

## Chapter overview

The first chapter will focus on Johann Gottfried Herder’s work on the relation between language and thought in which Herder – especially in his *Metakritik* – aims to overcome the dualisms inherent in Kant’s thought and to argue for a developmental conception of reason which cannot be thought of as distinct from experience and language. I will argue that Herder’s discussion of the intimate relation between experience, language and thought can be seen as foreshadowing important aspects of Hegel’s thought on this relation – such as language as the expression of experience and as the medium that allows us to share and further develop our experience. I will show that an important implication of Herder’s concept of reason – as organically developing and as mediated by language – is that, in order to come to an understanding of itself, it is to embark on a critical questioning of itself on how it came to be, by examining what can be learned from the ways in

35 On *Ausführung*, cf. n. 01 above.

36 As Theodor Adorno puts it, ‘[m]an muß einen ganzen Satz kennen, in jedem Augenblick des Vorhergehenden retrospektive gewahr sein.’ Theodor W. Adorno, ‘Skoteinos oder Wie zu lesen sei,’ in *Drei Studien zu Hegel* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 366.

37 See e.g. Günter Wohlfart, *Der Spekulative Satz* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1981) and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Speculative Remark (One of Hegel’s Bon Mots)* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.)

which our evolving experience of the world is expressed in language. A further crucial aspect that will bring into focus significant aspects of Hegel's thought on the relation between language, experience and thought is Herder's notion of 'lebendiges Daseyn', of our being actively involved in the world, of our concrete existence, as the essence of experience. Language, for Herder, is also (to be) a 'lebendiges Daseyn': it can only reflect and express a process that is living and concrete if it is living and concrete itself. As I will show, this view has important repercussions for how, in Herder's eyes, we are to approach and use language. Herder aims to reveal the potential of everyday language – of words such as 'Besonnenheit', 'Erfindung' and 'Merkmal' – to capture and do justice to the way in which we come to know the world. Philosophy, in Herder's eyes, is to be presented in such a way that it is made 'fluid' and is not perceived as static and conclusive. For Herder, and in this respect he can also be seen as adumbrating an important aspect of Hegel's work, the language in which philosophy is presented is to allow for interaction with the reader, in order to make her or him actively involved in the development and unfolding of thought.

In chapter two, I will discuss Hegel's thought on the relation between language and (speculative) thought in his early Jena works. I will argue that, for Hegel, the 'Bedürfnis der Philosophie' implies a need of and for language. The dialectical development of what presents itself in experience is one in which language plays an essential role: in consciousness' work on its appropriation of the world through its name-giving operations, but especially in the way spirit engages in a dialogical questioning of itself on the nature of consciousness' experience. The 'Bedürfnis der Philosophie' thus also manifests itself as a need for dialogical interaction. Consciousness experiences that already in the early stages of its coming to an understanding of itself and its world it is involved in a 'we', and that in order to further determine its experience – and itself – it needs to engage with the voices implicit in this 'we'. Finally, I will also show that Hegel's own use of language in these early works allows us to develop a sensitivity for – and appreciation of – what we can learn from our interaction with language. I will argue that his presentation is aimed at both provoking and overcoming the *Bedürfnis* of our knowing and the language in which it is expressed, and to make us aware of its potential to come to an understanding of who and what we are.

Chapter three has a twofold aim. If, as I contend, knowing, for Hegel, is essentially a project of dialogical and collective cooperation, I need to be clear about what I take the word 'dialogical' to mean. The first part of the chapter will therefore consist of a brief outline of the characteristics of the philosophical dialogue and a short discussion of Bakhtin's theory of *dialogic*. Bakhtin made a sharp distinction between what he saw as the monologic enterprise of Hegelian dialectics – in which all the voices that make themselves heard are ultimately synthesized into one, and the dialogic, in which these different voices will continue to co-exist and will remain involved in a process of mutual questioning and explication. Against and with Bakhtin, I will argue – in this chapter and in



chapters four and five – that Hegel's *Phänomenologie* in many ways can be interpreted as dialogical in the Bakhtinian sense. I will also discuss Hegel's own rather dismissive remarks on the genre of the philosophical dialogue and I will argue that his not presenting his thought in this way strongly suggests a refusal to have his work categorized as belonging to a specific genre. In the second part, I will focus on the sense-certainty chapter in the *Phänomenologie*, in which Hegel shows that even at this initial stage, in which consciousness claims to have an immediate awareness of its object, consciousness' knowing is already mediated. I will analyze the dialogical interaction between consciousness in its shape of sense-certainty and an observant 'wir', and I will argue that the dialogical questioning of sense-certainty on the nature of its experience not only allows consciousness to gain insight into the deficiencies of its knowing, but also in what it can learn from language as 'das Wahrhaftere'. Consciousness will learn that it is already part of a mediated generality, of an intersubjective 'Wir' – in which the reader, as I will argue, is also implicated – as the subject of knowing, and that it can only further develop itself and its knowing through active communication, in which it is prepared to surrender its particular position (its *Meinung*).

Yet, and this question will be the main point of focus in chapter four, what if a particular form of consciousness refuses to engage in the dialogical development of its experience, what if it wants to remain attached to its particular point of view, so that its interaction with what presents itself can only proceed by means of exclusive judgements? And what if the particular culture consciousness belongs to is restrictive and does not allow for any interaction with what presents itself as other-than-itself? In order to shed light on these questions, I will analyze Hegel's discussion of the world of *Bildung*, a world of rigid social stratification, which, so Hegel shows, in practice turns out to be a world of alienation, reversal and exclusion. I will show that Hegel's detailed discussion of the language used by the dominant forms of consciousness in the world of *Bildung* – 'das ehrliche Bewußtsein' that cannot but judge its world and 'das zerrissene Bewußtsein' that feels cut off from its world and can only express itself by means of ironic comments with which it reinforces its detachment – reveals that in the world of *Bildung* there is a conspicuous absence of dialogue between – or with – the shapes of consciousness that are observed, which all remain caught up in a language of divisive judgement. I will argue that the possibility of an inclusive language and the need for dialogical interaction manifests itself in three ways in Hegel's discussion of the world of *Bildung*: in the need ('Bedürfnis') felt by 'das zerrissene Bewußtsein' to go beyond itself in order to open itself up to the world it has become alienated from, in (occasionally) addressing and implicating the reader in the process of developing consciousness' experience, and, finally, in the interaction between Hegel's text and other texts, of which Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau* (itself a dialogue) is the most significant. Through an analysis of the latter interaction, I will argue that Hegel's use of Diderot's text is not merely to be seen as an example of the process of alienation and exclusion characteristic of the world of *Bildung*, but rather aims at the dialogical development of the issues and tensions raised by *Le Neveu de Rameau*. In

the interaction between the two texts, neither Hegel nor Diderot gets the last word, and Hegel thus shows, I argue, that in order to allow for the development of knowing and ourselves, we need an open-ended and transformative approach.

The question that does remain, and which I will discuss in the final chapter, is how consciousness can come to express itself in such a way that it is able to communicate and interact in a meaningful way with itself and with its world, and is ultimately able to come to a full understanding of itself and its knowing. How can that which was torn apart and divided in the world of judgement be made or allowed to interact in a way that allows for further development of what is expressed? Through a reading of the final sections of the *Phänomenologie*, in which Hegel discusses the development of consciousness' knowing in the shapes of conscience, religion and absolute knowing, I will argue that Hegel shows that such interaction can only occur if we are prepared to relinquish any determinate form we took our knowing, ourselves and our language to have. We need to allow – as the beautiful soul learns by having its 'hard heart' broken – for a process of continuous 'Bestimmung' of ourselves, our knowing and our language by expressing ourselves in such a way that we can open to up to – and reconcile with – what we (used to) judge. I will argue that absolute knowing as the concluding movement of this process of 'Bestimmung', even though it is self-enclosed and entails a comprehensive *Begriff* of itself, is open-ended in the sense that it continues to challenge and question itself, to make itself account for itself, and, in doing so, allow all its implicit voices to make themselves heard. We need to allow language to develop itself as a *Mitte* – a movement of mediation – to arrive at true communication and acknowledgement of all the voices that make up knowing. There is not and cannot be a last word – as also becomes apparent from Hegel's interaction with Schiller's poem 'Die Freundschaft' in the last lines of the *Phänomenologie* –, no final ('endgültig') judgement, as this would make the movement of thought come to a standstill.



# Chapter 1 Intimations and prefigurations: Herder on the nature of experience and its relation to language and thought

In his book *After Herder*, Michael Forster argues that Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) should be seen as a ‘philosopher of the first importance’, whose thought proved to be enormously influential, both in philosophy and beyond. Hegel is presented as one of the main examples of such influence: ‘Hegel’s philosophy turns out to be largely an elaborate systematic development of Herder’s ideas (especially concerning the mind, history and God).’<sup>1</sup> Although this sweeping statement fails to do justice to the profusion of ideas by other thinkers in dialogue with whom Hegel develops his thought,<sup>2</sup> I will try to show in this chapter that Herder’s ideas can in particular be seen as important and intriguing instigations and adumbrations of Hegel’s thought on the nature of experience, of *Geist* as its subject, and on the intricate relation between experience, language and reason. The direct influence of Herder on Hegel is hard to trace, as there are not many references to Herder to be found in Hegel’s works and letters.<sup>3</sup> Yet, a case can be made that Herder’s

- 1 Michael N. Forster, *After Herder: Philosophy of Language in the German Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 9.
- 2 At the very end of his essay on ‘Das geistige Tierreich’, Forster admits that there are indeed other important influences on Hegel’s thought, yet he still accords pride of place to Herder. Forster sets out by drawing a picture of two diverging strands in Hegel interpretation: a dominant one that sees Hegel as the heir of Kant (Forster cites Richard Kroner, a more recent example would be Robert Pippin), and a ‘weniger lautstarke’ view (advanced by authors such as Charles Taylor and Henry Harris) that sees Herder as a major influence on Hegel’s thought. Forster positions himself firmly in the latter camp, and in this essay aims both to play down Kant’s influence (especially on Hegel’s early works) and to show that Herder was of decisive importance with regard to Hegel’s monistic conception of spirit (and of its being essentially constituted by activity), and his views on the relation between individual and general. Unfortunately, Forster does little more than point at terminology that was used by both authors (such as ‘Geist’, and ‘Tun’) and provides few convincing arguments. See Michael N. Forster, ‘Das geistige Tierreich’, in Klaus Vieweg und Wolfgang Wiesch (hrsg.), *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes – Ein kooperativer Kommentar zu einem Schlüsselwerk der Moderne* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2008), pp. 394–411. Forster provides a more in depth analysis in his work on Hegel, *Hegel’s Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), although also in that work his main aim is to show – by focusing on similar terminology – that the *Phänomenologie*’s section on ‘Das geistige Tierreich’ draws its inspiration from Herder. See Michael Forster, *Hegel’s Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), esp. pp. 332–348.
- 3 Mainly, very briefly, to *Gott. Einige Gespräche*. and to the *Ideen*. See, for instance, *Glauben und Wissen in Jenaer Schriften 1801–1807, Werke 2* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp. 357–358, *GW IV*, p. 362. where Hegel argues that Jacobi’s characterization of Herder’s philosophy as ‘der Schaum von Spinozismus und das vernunft- und sprachverwirrende Predigen’ stems from the fact that Herder, like Jacobi, sees the absolute as unattainable for thought. In Hegel’s eyes, Herder is still to be preferred, in that his philosophy is ‘etwas Objektiveres’: where for Jacobi the Absolute could only be grasped through individual feeling or instinct, for Herder this could occur through a ‘Reflexionsbegriff’, through which, so Hegel claims, ‘das Vernünftige gleichfalls verhüllt wird’. An interesting aspect of Jacobi’s characterization is that, it is precisely Herder’s point that language and reason are entangled in one another, and cannot be considered in isolation.

ideas – especially those developed in his *Metakritik* on Kant – formed an important background against which Hegel developed his thought on questions related to the nature of language and the role it plays in the formation of experience and reason, and allows us to put Hegel's approach to language in sharper focus.<sup>4</sup> In this chapter I will, first of all, focus on Herder's thought regarding questions that Hegel is to critically develop in his work: a) language as the expression of experience and as the (intersubjective) medium that allows us to share and further develop and shape experience; b) language as both determining and binding thought; c) language as the medium that allows for a process through which we make the world our own (*Aneignung*) and come to recognize both what we know and ourselves as knowers (*Anerkennung*); and d) language as a reflection of the evolution of the ways in which human beings relate to themselves and to their world.

Finally, I will also argue that Herder can be seen as prefiguring Hegel in his use of language in the presentation of (his) philosophy: in his predilection for colloquialisms, for everyday language rather than technical terms, and, more generally, in his efforts to present his thought in language which aims to overcome Kantian dualisms. The language in which philosophy is presented is to express, capture and bring about the essential unity of what in Kant is firmly distinguished: of reason and experience, of subject and object, or of spirit and nature.

## 1.1 Experience and the development of reason

Already in one of his earlier works, the *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (1772),<sup>5</sup> it becomes clear that Herder rejects a strict demarcation of the realms of sensual experience and reason, and that he aims to show that language is intimately involved in the development of both. At the start of his essay he discusses the interdependence of

4 The relevance of Herder's thought for Hegel's philosophy is also highlighted in Charles Taylor's *Hegel*, who mainly focuses on the expressivist character of Herder's anthropology. See Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 13-25. Taylor, in my view, is more convincing than Forster in showing how some of the 'raw' material of Herder's writings, which are full of highly original and inspirational ideas, is developed into comprehensive theoretical thought by Hegel. Similarly, in his article on the importance of Herder for the development of German Idealism, John Zammito shows that, even if Herder was more or less sidetracked from intellectual life in Weimar and Jena towards the end of the nineteenth century, his indirect influence proved enormous. Zammito quotes Goethe to prove his point: 'So sind zum Beispiel Herders "Ideen" bei uns dergestalt in die Kenntnisse der ganzen Masse übergegangen, daß nur wenige, die sie lesen, dadurch erst belehrt werden, weil sie durch hundertfache Ableitungen von demjenigen, was damals von großer Bedeutung war, in andern Zusammenhänge schon völlig unterrichtet worden.' Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke Band 14* (Zürich: Artemis, 1950, p. 936), quoted in John H. Zammito, 'Herder, Kant, Spinoza und die Ursprünge des deutschen Idealismus,' in Marion Heinz (Hg.), *Herder und die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus* (Amsterdam/Atlanta: Editions Rodopi, 1997), p. 108.

5 This essay won Herder first prize in a competition organized by the Berlin Academy of Sciences in 1769. The aim of the competition was to decide a vehement debate that was fought within the Academy's own ranks on the question whether the origin of language was human (which was defended by Maupertuis) or divine (a thesis argued for by Süßmilch). For further historical background, see the afterword by Hans Dietrich Irmscher in his edition of this essay. Johann Gottfried Herder, *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, hrsg. Hans Dietrich Irmscher (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1966), p. 137 ff.

experience and reason in relation to the question whether language and reason are to be seen as specifically human. Herder argues that this is the case and states that the major difference between man and non-linguistic animals is that man's instincts and powers are not specifically aimed at a single task – such as building a honeycomb or a spider's web – and that this allows man to develop a sense of freedom:

er hat freien Raum, sich an vielen zu üben, mithin sich immer zu verbessern. Jeder Gedanke ist nicht ein unmittelbares Werk der Natur, aber eben damit kanns sein eigen Werk werden. Wenn also hiermit der Instinkt wegfallen muß, der bloß aus der Organisation der Sinne und dem Bezirk der Vorstellungen folgte [...] so bekommt eben hiemit der Mensch *mehrere Helle*. Da er auf keinen Punkt blind fällt und blind liegenbleibt, so wird er freistehend, kann sich eine Sphäre der Bespiegelung suchen, kann sich in sich bespiegeln. Nicht mehr eine unfehlbare Maschine in den Händen der Natur, wird er sich selbst Zweck und Ziel der Bearbeitung.<sup>6</sup>

Man's special position is linked to his starting to walk upright, as Herder also suggests in the *Ideen* (1784-1791): 'Mit dem aufgerichteten Gange wurde den Mensch ein Kunstgeschöpf [...] Durch die Bildung zum aufrechten Gange bekam der Mensch freie und künstliche Hände; Werkzeuge der feinsten Handtierungen und eines immerwährenden Tastens nach neuen klaren Ideen.'<sup>7</sup> Not only has man gained a sense of freedom because he is now in a position to use his hands freely, he is also able to see around him and thus to leave a distinct and demarcated sphere. Instinct no longer suffices, and man enters a world in which he is not merely dependent on, and determined by, an 'Organisation der Sinne' and a fixed 'Bezirk der Vorstellungen', but is now enlightened and informed by 'mehrere Helle' (sources of light or clarification).<sup>8</sup> Of course, these sources refer to the plurality of objects and surroundings around him, which have increased now that his horizon has widened, but Herder also suggests that in not being limited to one specific environment man has gained an ability to reflect both on the world and himself (he has entered the 'Sphäre der Bespiegelung'), and that he has thus developed a further source of cognition. Thought is for man not merely 'ein unmittelbares Werk der Natur', but is a medium that allows him reflect on himself and on the world around him, to become actively involved in this world, and to make it his own. In developing a capacity for reflection, man simultaneously discovers a sense of self and comes to see himself as an object that has to be developed ('Zweck und Ziel der Bearbeitung'). In being aware that

6 Herder, *Abhandlung*, p. 26.

7 Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* hg. Martin Bollacher (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989), pp. 136-137. Herder also refers to the etymology of the word *ανθρωπος* to prove his point: 'der Mensch ist *ανθρωπος*, ein über sich, ein weit um sich schauendes Geschöpf.' *Ideen*, p. 112.

8 The phrase can also be read as 'more clarity' (thanks to Paul Ziche for pointing this out to me), yet the next phrase ('Da er auf keinen Punkt blind fällt') seems to suggest that we are meant to read 'Helle' as a plural, since man does not focus his attention on one particular object (as this would, Herder suggests, make him blind to further development), but allows his cognitive powers to be developed by a plurality.

he is 'zur Freiheit organisiert',<sup>9</sup> man realizes that he is fallible – yet is therefore also able to learn from the mistakes he makes – and is now able to see not only the world but also himself as a project to be actively involved in and which requires 'work'. As I will explain in section 1.2.4, this notion of making the world (or yourself) your own ('sein eigen Werk') – through a process that Herder refers to as 'Zueignung' or 'Innewerden' – will come to play a prominent role in Herder's thought, and, in his view, is a process that can only occur through language.

It is important to note that for Herder there is no clean break between sensual animal and rational man. He sees a continuous development, in which reflection is no distinct faculty, but a capacity that evolves gradually from man's interaction with his environment ('Sphäre'), and is intricately linked with the 'Organisation der Sinne'.<sup>10</sup> Whether you call the totality of all the cognitive powers man is equipped with 'reason' or something else is not really significant, Herder stresses, as long as you see it as a totality:

Man nenne diese ganze Disposition seiner Kräfte, wie man wolle, *Verstand, Vernunft, Besinnung* usw. Wenn man diese Namen nicht für abgesonderte Kräfte oder für bloße Stufenerhöhungen der Tierkräfte annimmt, so gilt mir gleich. Es ist die *ganze Einrichtung aller menschlichen Kräfte; die ganze Haushaltung seiner sinnlichen und erkennenden und wollenden Natur*.<sup>11</sup>

For this totality of powers, Herder introduces the term *Besonnenheit*, and he stresses that we are not simply born with these powers, but rather with a potentiality – or disposition – that has to be developed. It is this development, or organization, of our powers

9 Herder, *Ideen*, p. 142.

10 This aspect is further developed in Ulrich Gaier, *Herders Sprachphilosophie und Erkenntniskritik* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 1988), pp. 97-100. Gaier shows that Herder's discussion of man's development through his interaction with his environment simultaneously reveals a development of the word 'Sphäre': 'Die idealistische Betrachtung [rather than the biological view of 'Sphäre' as the particular environment of a particular species] sieht den, empiristisch gesehen, zunehmenden Mangel an Bestimmung als Zunahme an Freiheit. Der Mensch als Wesen ist dann dadurch definiert, daß er nirgends instinktgeleitet ist, daß seine Sphäre unendlich offen und unbestimmt ist.' op. cit., p. 100.

11 Herder, *Abhandlung*, p. 26. Herder was critical of the psychology dominant in the *Aufklärung*, with its strict subdivision of mental powers (in which the intellect takes pride of place), and its dualistic view of the relation between mind and body. In order to develop a psychology that was monistic but did not simply reduce the mental to the physical, Herder introduced the notion of 'Kraft' in order to explain the interaction between mind and body, and more specifically the relation between immediate sensual experience and (self)conscious reflection. As Frederick Beiser explains: 'The guiding assumption behind Herder's theory of mind is that mind and body are not distinct kinds of substance, but different degrees of organization and development of a single living power [...] The essence of power is defined as self-generating, self-organizing activity, activity that gradually develops from simpler to higher degrees of organization. The difference between mind and body is not difference in kind, then, but only one in degree: the body is amorphous power, the mind organized power.' See Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 146. This notion of power met with serious criticism, most notably from Kant, who accused Herder of introducing *qualitates occultae* and of thus transcending the limits of possible experience. Herder's reply was that, as we know the effects of these powers, we have every right to assume their existence, and he expected the biological sciences to come up with an explanation of these forces. See Beiser, p. 148.

through which human beings can ultimately be distinguished from animals: ‘Der Unterschied ist *nicht in Stufen oder Zugabe von Kräften*, sondern in einer ganz *verschiedenartigen Richtung und Auswicklung aller Kräfte*.’<sup>12</sup> Herder firmly rejects the notion of reason as a completely distinct faculty: ‘Man hat sich die Vernunft des Menschen als eine neue, ganz abgetrennte Kraft in die Seele hinein gedacht, die dem Menschen als eine Zugabe vor allen Tieren zu eigen geworden und die also auch, wie die vierte Stufe einer Leiter nach den drei untersten, allein betrachte werden müsse [...]’.<sup>13</sup> Herder’s introducing the term ‘Besonnenheit’ is more than likely inspired by a wish to allow us to go beyond any preconceived notions linked to the term ‘Vernunft’, but also to reveal its being rooted in the senses. Feeling, willing and knowing cannot be separated, but are in continuous interaction, and ‘Besonnenheit’ refers both to this interaction and to the conscious reflection of this interaction: ‘Es ist [...] *die ganze Haushaltung seiner sinnlichen und erkennenden und wollenden Natur*.’<sup>14</sup> Finally, ‘Besonnenheit’ is not a neologism, and a further reason why Herder introduced this term may lie in its denotations of circumspection (which, as we saw above, Herder – in its literal sense – sees as one of the factors that led to man leaving the realm of instinct and becoming a ‘Kunstgeschöpf’) and reflection, of “thinking twice”.<sup>15</sup>

### 1.1.1 The development of language and reason

For Herder language is the natural medium through which *Besonnenheit* comes to be and is expressed, and it is language through which we can realize our potential for *Besinnung*.<sup>16</sup> Herder explains the intricate relation between ‘Reflexion’ (a term he uses alternately with *Besonnenheit*) and immediate sensual experience as follows:

12 Herder, *Abhandlung*, pp. 26-27.

13 Herder, *Abhandlung*, p. 27. This sentence already points forward to Herder’s *Metakritik*, in which he will argue against any form of rigid categorization and for a fourfold scheme of his own.

14 Herder thus makes a distinction between ‘erkennen’ and ‘Besonnenheit’: only through the latter are we conscious of what we know (or that we know) and are we able to reflect on ourselves as knowers and on the subject of our knowledge. As we will see below, ‘Besonnenheit’ for Herder entails active recognition of something.

15 See the lemma on ‘Besonnenheit’ in *DWB*.

16 Although Herder appears – initially, at least – to use both terms interchangeably (see the quotation on the previous page), ‘Besonnenheit’ is generally used to refer to the disposition to reflect on what is known, sensed and willed, whereas ‘Besinnung’ appears to capture the active employment of reflection (in a ‘Besinnungskreis’, *Abhandlung*, p. 28). On Herder’s use of ‘Besonnenheit’ and ‘Besinnung’, cf. Karl Menges, “Sinn” and “Besonnenheit” in Herder Jahrbuch 1998, pp. 156-175, For Menges, ‘Besinnung’ is more clearly linked to sensuality, and ‘captures more the generative aspect of making sense, of creating “Sinn”’ (p. 161, n. 18), which, Menges argues, is to be thought of as both ‘sensuality’ and ‘meaning’. See e.g. Herder’s ‘Vom Erkennen und Empfinden’ (*SW* VIII, p. 169: ‘Je mehr wir [...] das große Schauspiel wirkender Kräfte in der Natur sinnend ansehen, desto weniger können wir umhin, überall *Ähnlichkeit mit uns* zu fühlen, alles mit unsrer Empfindung zu beleben.’ ‘Sinnend’ here neatly captures both our being involved with the world by means of our senses and our reflective activity, by which we create ‘Sinn’ and give the world meaning. ‘Sinnen’ is both ‘fühlen’ and ‘beleben’.

Der Mensch beweiset Reflexion, wenn die Kraft seiner Seele so frei würket, daß sie in dem ganzen Ozean von Empfindungen, der sie durch alle Sinnen durchrauscht, *eine* Welle [...] absondern, sie anhalten, die Aufmerksamkeit auf sie richten und sich bewußt sein kann, daß sie aufmerke. Er beweiset Reflexion, wenn er aus dem ganzenden schwebenden Traum der Bilder, die seine Sinne vorbeistreichen, sich in ein Moment des Wachens sammeln, auf einem Bilde freiwillig verweilen, es in in helle ruhigere Obacht nehmen und sich Merkmale absondern kann, daß dies der Gegenstand und kein anderer sei. Er beweiset also Reflexion, wenn er nicht bloß alle Eigenschaften klar erkennen, sondern eine oder mehrere als unterscheidende Eigenschaften bei sich *anerkennen* kann [...]<sup>17</sup>

Herder stresses that reflection takes place when man becomes aware that he is able to organize the plurality of sensual impressions into distinct objects and that in doing so he distances himself from what immediately presents itself to him. This moment is described as a waking up from the dream of mere sensuality, and it is in this moment that man becomes conscious of himself as a being that is capable of reflection.<sup>18</sup>

Organizing and ordering what presents itself is described as a moment of recognition (*Anerkennung*) and this occurs through what Herder calls a 'Merkmal' (sign): 'Wodurch geschahe die Anerkennung? Durch ein Merkmal, was er absondern mußte und was, als Merkmal der Besinnung, deutlich in ihn fiel.'<sup>19</sup> Herder claims that this recognition of a distinct sign can only occur in and through language, and gives the example of how we come to know a sheep to make his point. Man does not merely see the sheep – as a wolf or ram does – as an object to be enjoyed, but becomes aware that his sensual impressions develop themselves in such a way that he is able to recognize the sheep as an object in its own right:<sup>20</sup> 'Sobald [der Mensch] in die Bedürfnis kommt, das Schaf kennenzulernen, so störet ihn kein Instinkt, so reißt ihn kein Sinn auf dasselbe zu nahe hin oder davon ab: es steht da, ganz wie es sich seinen Sinnen äußert. Weiß, sanft, wollicht – seine besonnen

17 Herder, *Abhandlung*, p. 32.

18 On the use of the metaphors of dreaming and waking, see Paul Ziche, "Stammelnde Natursprache" und "Lallendes Wörterbuch" – Anfänge von Sprache in Hegels Anthropologie' in *Hegel-Studien*, Bd 29, hrsg. Friedrich Nicolin und Otto Pöggeler (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1994), pp. 117-118. As Ziche shows, the metaphor of waking suggests that there is no clean break between the two levels of our being aware of the world, but that in waking up we become conscious of what is already present (albeit in a different form) in our mind. This links up with Herder's developmental psychology, in which mind and body are not distinct, but different kinds of organization. See note 11.

19 Herder, *Abhandlung*, p. 32.

20 Truly coming to know an object through 'Besinnung' thus also appears to involve an 'Anerkennen' in the moral sense: we allow what presents itself to the senses to form itself into an object that has been set free from being an immediate object of lust or fear, and can thus be an object in its own right. Simultaneously, as we understand the 'Merkmal' to fall in us, we come to recognize ourselves as the subject of knowing. The notion of 'Anerkennung' was also to play a crucial role in the works of Fichte and Hegel, although both these authors probably drew their inspiration from Rousseau (for whom recognition was essentially mutual) rather than Herder.



sich übende Seele sucht ein Merkmal – das Schaf *blöket!* sie hat Merkmal gefunden.<sup>21</sup> Hearing is for Herder the sense *par excellence*, and is for him clearly linked to language and reason.<sup>22</sup> The ‘Merkmal’ is none other than ‘ein innerliches Merkwort’: ‘Der *Schall* des Blökens, von einer menschlichen Seele als Kennzeichen des Schafs wahrgenommen, ward, kraft dieser Besinnung, *Name* des Schafs.’<sup>23</sup>

Herder emphasizes that the ‘invention’ of language is not only an expression of human nature, but also allows for the development of what is essentially human: ‘*die Sprache ist erfunden! ebenso natürlich und dem Menschen notwendig erfunden, als der Mensch ein Mensch war.*’<sup>24</sup> The coming to be of language can only be explained if we see human nature as a totality.<sup>25</sup> For Herder, both language and reason develop genetically, through the organization of what presents itself in the senses by means of ‘Merkmale’.<sup>26</sup> Both arise in and through an interaction with the world in which man is simultaneously active and passive, an aspect that is also reflected in Herder’s notion of ‘Erfindung’. This word clearly gets a double meaning: for Herder it is not just invention – as this would imply a radical break from the natural and sensual roots of language and reason – but is first and foremost a finding, a discovery of what is already there (the ‘Merkmal’) – albeit still inarticulate and dreamlike – which is subsequently developed through the characteristic human activity of *Besinnung*.<sup>27</sup> Language thus gets a twofold character, as Irmscher

21 Herder, *Abhandlung*, p. 33. ‘Kennen lernen’ emphasizes both the process character of experience and reflection, and their interdependence.

22 In Herder’s eyes, people who are born deaf are thus hardly capable of developing reason: ‘Das Beispiel der Taub- und Stummgeborenen zeigt, wie wenig der Mensch auch mitten unter Menschen ohne Sprache zur Ideen der Vernunft gelange und in welcher tierischen Wildheit alle seine Triebe bleiben.’ Herder, *Ideen*, p. 139. See also p. 347. The suggestion of the sheep example is that in bleating, the sheep makes itself heard as what it is, and makes itself known in such a way that what it is can be further developed by man’s cognitive powers.

23 Herder, *Abhandlung*, p. 33.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

25 See Irmscher’s ‘Nachwort’ in Johann Gottfried Herder, *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, hrsg. Hans Dietrich Irmscher (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1966), p. 160: ‘die Sprache [entspringt] nur dort aus der menschlichen Natur, wo dieses noch ein ganzes ist, eine Einheit von Fühlen und Denken, Empfangen und Tun.’

26 Herder underscores this genetic development by referring to the fact that in many languages there is just one word for both language, word and reason (e.g. *logos*): ‘In mehr als einer Sprache hat also auch “Wort” und “Vernunft”, “Begriff” und “Wort”, “Sprache” und “Ursache” *einen* Namen, und diese Synonymie enthält ihren ganzen genetischen Ursprung.’ *Abhandlung*, p. 43.

27 Cf. also Irmscher, *op.cit.*, pp. 163-164: ‘von einer “Erfindung” der Sprache im Sinne des Wortverstandes und der Akademie [kann] bei Herder nicht mehr die Rede sein. Denn die Sprache ist für Herder nicht ein Werk wie irgendein anderes auch, das der Mensch plant, beginnt und vollendet [...]. Es gibt also nicht einerseits den Menschen und dann andererseits und außerdem noch nachträglich gleichsam die Sprache als vorsätzliches Produkt der menschlichen Intelligenz. [...] Zwischen menschlicher Natur und Sprache besteht kein Kausal-, sondern ein Wesenzusammenhang.’ Irmscher thus stresses that Herder’s notion of ‘Erfindung’ – which is not causal and therefore not linked to a certain moment in time – allows him to escape the circularity in the explanation of the origin of language to which Herder’s predecessors – such as Condillac or Rousseau – had fallen prone (in which the existence of language is already presupposed in explaining its origin). Yet, although ‘Erfindung’ is not something that can be planned and started, it is in an important sense ‘work’: it is through the activity of *Besinnung* – in which both language and reason come to be and are developed – that man forms and develops his experience and clarifies his understanding of the world and himself. For Hegel, ‘work’, or activity, is also a very important aspect of our coming to know of the

explains: '[Die Sprache] ist sowohl Ausdruck des Innern wie Bezeichnung von etwas Gegenüberstehendem – und zwar als untrennbare Einheit.'<sup>28</sup> Herder's concept of the 'Merkmal' reinforces both this unity and this twofold aspect: it is a sign through which the world lets itself be heard, makes itself known (as in the bleating of the sheep) and leaves its mark on us, but in our becoming consciously aware of this 'Merkmal', we simultaneously make it our own, through which it also becomes an expression of our activity and our involvement with the world around us.<sup>29</sup> Herder puts it very eloquently in the *Ideen*: 'Immer war das Merkmal und die Materie seiner Bezeichnung längst dagewesen, aber jetzt ward es bemerkt, jetzt war es bezeichnet.'<sup>30</sup> 'Merkmale' both allow for and reflect human thought as a 'Diskurs der Seele',<sup>31</sup> and Herder stresses that we are not merely to think of an internal dialogue. One of the 'excellent' ('vortrefflich') aspects of *Besinnung* – of making sense of the world through linguistic expression – is that – already in its initial coming to be – language reveals itself as a means to enter into communication with others, and even presupposes communication:

Vortrefflich, daß dieser neue, selbstgemachte Sinn des Geistes gleich in seinem Ursprunge wieder ein Mittel der Verbindung ist. Ich kann nicht den ersten menschlichen Gedanken denken, nicht das erste besonnene Urteil reihen, ohne daß ich in meiner Seele dialogiere oder zu dialogieren strebe; der erste menschlichen Gedanke bereitet also seinem Wesen nach, mit andern dialogieren zu können. Das erste Merkmal, was ich erfasse, ist Merkwort für mich, und Mitteilungswort für andere.<sup>32</sup>

Language allows us to capture ('erfassen') our particular stance on the world, and to express it to others.<sup>33</sup> Language is thus from the outset a social activity, which allows us to react to others and others react to us, and which enables us to develop our particular 'Merkmale' by means of this interaction.<sup>34</sup> A judgement is not the 'fixing' of our particu-

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world, in which we are to be continually involved in the 'Arbeit des Begriffs', as I will discuss in the following chapters.

28 Herder, *Abhandlung*, p. 164.

29 Organizing the world through 'Merkmale' is thus clearly an aspect of 'Besinnung': of both being affected by the world (through the senses) and of organizing it into meaningful objects that can be recognized by others.

30 Herder, *Ideen*, p. 357. In this passage Herder is discussing the genesis of art (in the broad sense of arts and crafts) which is for him a similar process.

31 '[...] wir reden von der innern, notwendigen Genesis eines Worts, als dem Merkmal einer deutlichen Besinnung – wenn aber hat das je eine Tierart, auf welche Weise es sei, geäußert? Abgemerkt müßte dieser Faden der Gedanken, dieser Diskurs der Seele, immer werden können [...]' *Abhandlung*, p. 42. Cf. *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 200: 'Was heißt Denken? Innerlich sprechen [...]'.

32 *Abhandlung*, p. 43.

33 'Erfassen' again captures the twofold aspect of language: through a 'Merkmal' we 'receive' a particular shape of the world, but we also actively shape it according to our particular outlook (through which the 'Merkmal' becomes the 'selbstgemachte Sinn des Geistes').

34 Cf. Charles Taylor, 'The Importance of Herder' in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 98: 'If language must be primarily seen as activity, if it is what is constantly created and recreated in speech, then it becomes relevant to note that the primary locus of speech is conversation. We speak together, to each other. Language is fashioned and grows not principally in monologue but in dialogue, or better, in the life of a speech community.'



lar stance on the world with a particular 'Merkwort', but requires dialogical development – either through internal deliberation ('daß ich in meine Seele dialogiere') or through communication with others.

An important implication of Herder's view on the coming to be of language and reason – and their interdependence – is that they are seen as potential aspects of human nature that have to be developed: '[der Mensch] mußte schwach auf die Welt kommen um Vernunft zu lernen.'<sup>35</sup> Reason (*Vernunft*) evolves gradually through a continuous refining and conscious explication of our sensual impressions, and again it is the sense of hearing – *Vernunft* evolves from what has been heard ('vernommen') –<sup>36</sup> that takes pride of place:

Theoretisch und praktisch ist Vernunft nichts als etwas *Vernommenes*, eine gelernte Proportion und Richtung der Ideen und Kräfte, zur welcher der Mensch nach seiner Organisation und Lebensweise gebildet worden. Eine Vernunft der Engel kennen wir nicht [...]; die Vernunft des Menschen ist *menschlich*. Von Kindheit auf vergleicht er Ideen und Eindrücke seiner zumal feinen Sinne, nach der Feinheit und Wahrheit, in der sie ihm diese gewähren, nach der Anzahl, die er empfängt und nach der innern Schnellkraft, mit der er sie verbinden lernet. Das hieraus entstandene Eins ist sein Gedanke und die macherlei Verknüpfungen dieser Gedanken und Empfindungen zu Urteilen von dem, was wahr und falsch, gut und böse, Gluck und Unglück ist: das ist seine Vernunft, das fortgehende Werk der Bildung des menschlichen Wesens.<sup>37</sup>

*Vernunft* is a work in progress –<sup>38</sup> again Herder intimates that in the formation of reason man is both passive and active – in which man's potential for *Besinnung* – the organization of his cognitive powers – is continuously developed but in which he is also dependent on the concrete environment in which he is brought up ('Lebensweise'). For Herder this aspect is essential and – as we will see in the section on Herder's *Metakritik* – entails a radical departure from Kant's concept of reason.

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35 Herder, *Ideen*, p. 143.

36 'Vernehmen' has several denotations and thus fits in neatly with Herder's organic conception of the evolution of language – as we will soon see – according to which language shows a gradual abstraction from concrete sensual experience. 'Vernehmen' can simply mean hearing (although it can sometimes also refer to the use of all of the senses), but it can also mean 'consciously becoming aware of what has been heard'. In 'Vernehmen', as in 'Besinnung', we are thus both active and passive. See Adelung – *Grammatisch-kritisches Wörterbuch der Hochdeutschen Mundart*, available on <http://lexika.digitale-sammlungen.de/adelung/online/angebot>.

37 Herder, *Ideen*, p. 144.

38 An idea that Hegel will develop by continuously insisting that knowing or thought (rather than reason, as Herder puts it here) can only be developed by a strenuous 'Arbeit des Begriffs', by, as Herder puts it here, 'das fortgehende Werk der Bildung des menschlichen Wesens'. Cf. n. 27.

### 1.1.2 Language, reason and culture

In Herder's eyes, *Vernunft* is inextricably linked to culture and tradition, and is not only dependent on the input of sensual experience. For Herder experience also incorporates the idea that everything we come to know has a concrete past and that this past contributes to an understanding of both our environment and of ourselves. Since we are essentially social beings, culture and tradition come 'naturally' to us, and are inescapable formative forces: 'Bleibt der Mensch unter Menschen: so kann er dieser bildenden oder mißbildenden Kultur nicht entweichen: Tradition tritt zu ihm und formt seinen Kopf und bildet seine Glieder. Wie jene ist, und wie diese sich bilden lassen: so *wird* der Mensch, so ist er gestaltet.'<sup>39</sup> *Bildung*, the process through which human beings become socialized and develop their sense of identity and of belonging to a specific culture,<sup>40</sup> occurs through, and is shaped by, language: 'Was je der Geist des Menschen aussann, was die Weisen der Vorzeit dachten, kommt, wenn es mir die Vorsehung gegönnt hat, allein durch Sprache zu mir. Durch sie ist meine denkende Seele an die Seele des ersten und vielleicht des letzten denkenden Menschen geknüpft: kurz Sprache ist der Charakter unsrer Vernunft, durch welchen sie allein Gestalt gewinnt und sich fortpflanzt.'<sup>41</sup> Language is the means through which knowledge and culture are transmitted, and again Herder stresses the intersubjective, dialogical aspect of language: it allows human beings to interact with other 'denkende Seele[n]', from both past and future.<sup>42</sup> Language is the reflection and expression of human spirit, but is also a formative force that shapes human reason and its world.<sup>43</sup>

The interaction between language and reason also works the other way around: the continual evolution of language reflects the development of human reason. In the *Abhandlung* Herder explains that this development can not only be traced in individual words – in which we can see an increasing abstraction from concrete experience (e.g. 'Geist',

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39 Herder, *Ideen*, p. 340. The language used in this passage ('Tradition [...] formt seinen Kopf und bildet seine Glieder') is very much suggestive of Herder's psychology, in which mind and body are different forms of organization of the same substance. See n. 11.

40 Although Herder did not coin the term *Bildung*, his usage of the word (esp. in his *Auch einer Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1774)) – with which he aimed to capture a wide variety of formative experiences – may have contributed to Hegel's particular concept of *Bildung*. As becomes clear from the previous quotation, culture, in Herder's view, both shapes and misshapes man, an aspect that Hegel will develop by emphasizing that *Bildung* necessarily involves alienation from what we take to be our 'natural' selves. See chapter four, pp. 112-113, and section 4.2.

41 Herder, *Ideen*, p. 348.

42 This aspect of Herder's thought prefigures Bakhtin's theory on the dialogical nature of discourse, in which words are always to be interpreted in relation to 'an already uttered' and as open to future response. I will discuss Bakhtin's theory in some detail in relation to the dialogical aspects of Hegel's thought in chapter three, section 3.3.

43 Taylor sees this aspect as indicative of Herder's 'expressivism': language is an expressive action that 'actualizes a stance of reflection' to others, and has a constitutive function in that it shapes or transforms the world, in accordance with the stance of a particular perspective. See e.g. *Hegel*, pp. 13-25, and 'The Importance of Herder', p. 92 ff.

which originally meant ‘wind’, or ‘Seele’, which was used to refer to ‘breath’) –<sup>44</sup> but also in syntax: ‘was ist also die ganze Bauart der Sprache anders als *eine Entwicklungsweise seines Geistes, eine Geschichte seiner Entdeckungen!*’<sup>45</sup> Herder illustrates this by explaining that, as man’s relation to nature was originally a very active one, the first words were verbs, from which nouns subsequently developed.<sup>46</sup> An important implication of the idea that language and reason have a concrete past – and in this sense are dependent on experience – is of course that reason can no longer be considered according to the dominant Kantian view, as being universal, objective and timeless, but that it can only be understood as relative to a certain period or culture.<sup>47</sup> The study of languages for Herder thus becomes an essential tool to understanding the development of human reason.<sup>48</sup>

### 1.1.3 ‘Genuß des Geistes’: the immediate character of language and thought

Although the discussion of Herder’s thought on experience, language and reason so far has mainly revealed a strong emphasis on the mediated nature of both (reason is mediated by language, language is mediated by the past or by a particular culture, etc., etc.), we can also trace a strand in his works that aims to emphasize an immediate aspect to human thought. In a passage in the *Ideen*, Herder suggests that an immediate feeling accompanies our becoming aware that the manifold that is present in experience is organized into a unity. This feeling is even said to be an essential prerequisite for both language and thought:

[W]as wars, das den Menschen über die Tiere erhob und auch in der rohesten Ausartung ihn verhinderte, nicht ganz zu ihnen herabzusinken? Man sagt: Vernunft und Sprache. So wie er aber zur Vernunft nicht ohne Sprache kommen konnte: so konnte er zu beiden nicht anders als durch die Bemerkung des Einem in Vielen, mithin durch die Vorstellung des Unsichtbaren im Sichtbaren, durch die Verknüpfung der

44 *Abhandlung*, p. 70. Hegel also reflects on this aspect in his lectures on aesthetics. In his discussion of the metaphor he explains the vast number of metaphors in everyday language as follows: ‘[Metaphern] entstehen dadurch, daß ein Wort, welches zunächst nur etwas ganz Sinnliches bedeutet, auf Geistiges übertragen wird. “Fassen, begreifen,” überhaupt viele Wörter, die sich auf das Wissen beziehen, haben in Rücksicht auf ihre eigentliche Bedeutung einen ganz sinnlichen Inhalt, der sodann aber verlassen und mit einer geistigen Bedeutung vertauscht wird; der erste Sinn ist sinnlich, der zweite geistig.’ *Werke 13*, p. 518.

45 *Abhandlung*, p. 47. See also *Ideen*, p. 353 ff.

46 *Abhandlung*, p. 47: ‘Der Gedanke an die Sache selbst schwebte noch zwischen dem Handelnden und der Handlung; der Ton mußte die Sache bezeichnen, so wie die Sache den Ton gab: aus den Verbis wurden also Nomina und nicht Verba aus den Nominibus.’

47 The implication of course being that there is no objective standard according to which a culture can be judged, but that it can only be understood from within, and judged in relation to itself. See e.g. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, p. 144.

48 See also Taylor: ‘if thought or the characteristically human activity can only be in the medium of language, then the different natural languages express each the uniquely characteristic way in which a people realizes the human essence. [...] The study of language is the central and indispensable road to the understanding of human variety.’ Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 20.

Ursache mit der Wirkung gelangen. Eine Art religiösen Gefühls unsichtbar wirkenden Kräfte im ganzen Chaos der Wesen, das ihn umgab, mußte also jeder ersten Bildung und Verknüpfung abgezogener Vernunftideen vorausgehen und zum Grunde liegen. Dies ist das Gefühl der Wilden von den Kräften der Natur, auch wenn sie keinen ausgedrückten Begriff von Gott haben; ein lebhaftes und wirksames Gefühl [...].<sup>49</sup>

The word Herder uses for this becoming aware of the unifying of experience – ‘Bemerkung’ – again emphasises the twofold aspect of our interaction with the world outside us: the world leaves its mark on us, but we are simultaneously active in organizing and explicating what is yet silent, invisible or dreamlike into concrete ‘Merkmale’.<sup>50</sup> As this original awareness cannot yet be put in language or grasped by reason it can only be felt: it is a type of religious awe or enthusiasm for the powers – both the powers of nature and our cognitive powers – we feel at work in us and which allow us to form our experience into a unified world.

Yet, if we look at other passages in which Herder talks about enjoyment or enthusiasm as somehow entailed in or connected to human reflection, it appears to be more than the immediate feeling that originally inspires our faculties and sets them in motion (as a ‘lebhaftes and wirksames Gefühl’). It is also said to be the feeling that accompanies the activity of thinking and which allows human beings to further develop their sense of self (although paradoxically it is also the feeling through which we ‘lose’ ourselves as we become immersed in the activity of thought): ‘Nichts gewährt dem Menschen ein so eignes Gefühl seines Daseins, als Erkenntnis; Erkenntnis einer Wahrheit, die wir selbst errungen haben, die unsrer innersten Natur ist und bei der uns oft alle Sichtbarkeit schwindet. Der Mensch vergißt sich selbst: er verliert das Maß der Zeit und seiner sinnlichen Kräfte, wenn ihn ein hoher Gedanke aufruft und er denselben verfolgt.’<sup>51</sup> It is the enjoyment of thought that even the most primitive cannibal is said to strive for: ‘Auch der Menschenfresser im Durst seiner Rache und Kühnheit strebt, wiewohl auf seine abscheuliche Art, nach dem Genuß eines *Geistes*.’<sup>52</sup> This feeling can only occur when we truly think for ourselves and are not merely involved in what Herder calls ‘das tote Nachdenken’, in which we simply take what is given to us for granted. For Herder, immediate feeling is thus intimately involved in the cognitive process: it allows us to become aware of our cognitive powers and to instigate their use, and it is this use which then produces the feeling of involvement, not only with our individual thought processes, but with

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49 *Ideen*, pp. 375-376.

50 Cf. pp. 6-9 above.

51 *Ideen*, pp. 183-184. Again, Herder stresses both the dialogical aspect of thought and its being rooted in the sense of hearing by his use of the word ‘aufruft’: in thinking we react to the ‘call’ of thought, which we then aim to develop. Cf. p. 8 above.

52 *Ideen*, pp. 184. Although, of course, the cannibal is – in eating his fellow man – also literally involved in the ‘Genuß des Geistes’. Again, an interesting illustration of Herder’s monistic psychology. Cf. nn. 11 and 39.

human thought as a whole.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, as Charles Taylor convincingly argues, implicit in Herder's view of language as constitutive – of its shaping our world and who we are – and as expressive rather than merely designative, is the idea that in expressing ourselves in language we form not only thoughts but also feelings:

The revolutionary idea implicit in Herder was that the development of new modes of expression [i.e. through the mode of language rather than through cries or shouts, AG] enables us to have new feelings, more powerful or more refined, and certainly more self-aware. In being able to express our feelings, we give them a reflective dimension that transforms them. The language animal can feel not only anger but indignation, not only love but admiration.<sup>54</sup>

As language is the vehicle of thought living – and inspiring – thought can only take place in language that is itself alive and which allows us to truly become part of the activity of thought. In the *Abhandlung* Herder shows himself to be very critical of contemporary use of language, which in his view fails on all accounts:

Aus den größten Heldentaten des menschlichen Geistes, die er nur im Zusammenstoß der lebendigen Welt tun und äußern konnte, sind Schulübungen im Staube unsrer Lehrkerker, aus den Meisterstücken menschlicher Dichtkunst und Beredsamkeit Kindereien geworden, an welchen greise Kinder und junge Kinder Phrasen lernen und Regeln klaben. Wir haschen ihre Formalitäten und haben ihre Geist verloren, wir lernen ihre Sprache und fühlen nicht die lebendige Welt ihrer Gedanken. Derselbe Fall ists mit unsern Urteilen über das Meisterstück des menschlichen Geistes, die Bildung der Sprache überhaupt. Da soll uns das tote Nachdenken Dinge lehren, die bloß aus dem lebendigen Hauche der Welt, aus dem Geiste der großen wirksamen Natur den Menschen beseelen, ihn aufrufen und fortbilden konnten.<sup>55</sup>

If true thought – which is both inspired and inspiring – can only take place in language that is not formal or a mere repetition of phrases we have not made our own, this of course raises the question – which was also to become a pressing one for Hegel – in what

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53 Herder's most extensive discussion of the involvement of feeling in thought is *Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der Menschlichen Seele* (1778), *SW VIII*. See e.g. pp. 193-194: 'die Seele erkennt, daß sie empfinde. Was nun auch Gedanke sei, so ist in ihm die innigste Kraft, auf Vielem was uns zuströmt, ein liches Eins zu machen, und wenn ich so sagen darf, eine Art Rückwirkung merkbar, die am hellsten fühlet, das sie ein Eins, ein Selbst ist.' Cf. Taylor's characterization of the type of feeling that was advocated in the art of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, which could well be applied to this passage: 'the feeling here referred to is not simply a passive state of mind, but is also a disposition of the will. Hence this self-awareness is not just a vision of self, but also a self-feeling, and as such also pregnant with the aspiration to remain or become one-self, and it is all these inseparably.' See Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 21.

54 Taylor, 'The Importance of Herder', p. 98.

55 *Abhandlung*, p. 94. In the *Enzyklopädie*, Hegel voices a similar criticism with regard to 'Nachdenken', as an activity in which natural consciousness does not really think, but merely reflects (rather than reflects on) what it has been given, and which it takes to be the truth. See *Enz. I*, Vorrede zur zweite Ausgabe, p. 17, and §§ 3 and 7.

way language should be used in order to allow true thought to develop itself, and it is this question that I will address in the final section of this chapter.

Before looking more fully at the intricate relation between language and thought – not only at how language inspires but also at how it binds and determines thinking – we will first look at the way in which Herder developed his thoughts on the nature and role of experience – and its relation to the development of language and thought – in his discussion of Kant's critical project, in which he especially attacks Kant's concept of *a priori* knowledge.

## 1.2 Criticizing critique: Herder's *Metakritik*

Herder is most explicit on the nature of experience in *Verstand und Erfahrung* (1799), the first part of his rather aggressive *Metakritik* of Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781).<sup>56</sup> In this work Kant, Herder's former friend and teacher in Königsberg, is accused of being guilty of maltreating the nature of reason and of violating the nature of language along the way. Herder argues that Kant's project of determining the *a priori* principles of reason – independent of experience – in order to provide a secure foundation for our knowing results in completely divorcing reason from experience and language. Kant's dualistic approach, in Herder's eyes, produces a philosophy that views language as merely an arbitrary tool for thought and thus fails to grant language its central position as a mediator between sensual experience and understanding.<sup>57</sup> The importance of language, for

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56 Herder was not the first to embark on such a project. In 1784 Johann Georg Hamann, also a prominent figure in Königsberg and one of Herder's closest friends, published his – much shorter – metacritique in which he also targets the idea of a 'pure' reason that can be investigated in isolation from experience. Hamann attacks three of Kant's 'Reinigungen' (purifications) and tries to show that reason cannot be considered independently of tradition (and faith), experience and finally, language as 'das erste und letzte Organon und Kriterion der Vernunft'. See Johann Georg Hamann, 'Metakritik über den Purismus der Vernunft' in *Schriften zur Sprache*, hrsg. Josef Simon (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), pp. 219-227. Hegel wrote an extensive and enthusiastic review of Hamann's works in which he also briefly discusses his *Metakritik* ('nur sieben Blätter, aber sehr merkwürdig'), and in doing so completely sweeps away Herder's eponymous work: 'Man hat diesen Aufsatz [Hamann's *Metakritik*, AG] bereits ans Licht gezogen, um darin die Quelle nachzuweisen, aus welcher Herder seine mit großem Dünkel aufgetretene und mit gerechter Herabwürdigung aufgenommene, nun längst vergessene Metakritik geschöpft habe, die, wie die Vergleichung ergibt, mit den geistreichen Aufsätze Hamanns nur den Titel gemein hat.' Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Berliner Schriften 1818-1831 (Werke 11)*, p. 326. *GW XVI*, p. 167. Although I think that Hegel has a point in that Herder's presentation in the *Metakritik* is cumbersome – especially in comparison to the *Ideen* – and unduly polemical, I do agree with Marion Heinz, who points out that the *Metakritik* – through an attack on Kant's dualism – does provide not only an interesting development of Herder's thought on the nature of human cognition, but can also be seen as adumbrating important aspects of idealist thought, especially on the unity of subject and object. See Heinz, 'Herders Metakritik' in *Herder und die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, p. 92, and her introduction to Marion Heinz (Hrsg.), *Herders 'Metakritik': Analysen und Interpretationen* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 2013), pp. 7-9. Cf. also Thomas M. Seebohm, 'Der Systematische Ort de Herderschen Metakritik' in *Kant-Studien* 23, 1972, pp. 59-62.

57 A position that in Kant's system is taken up by the categorial schemes. Cf. also Violetta Stolz, 'Der Non-sense der Metaphysik – Kant, Herder und Horne Toohe' in Marion Heinz (Hrsg.), *Herders 'Metakritik': Analysen und Interpretationen* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 2013), p. 92.

Herder, is precisely that it both reveals the original unity of *Verstand* and *Erfahrung* and is able to bring about this unity.

In Herder's eyes the questionable nature of Kant's concept of reason already becomes apparent in the title of his *magnum opus*: '*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*: der Titel befremdet. Ein Vermögen der menschlichen Natur kritisirt man nicht, sondern man untersucht, bestimmt, begränzet es, zeigt seinen Gebrauch und Mißbrauch.'<sup>58</sup> Ironically, it could be argued that this is precisely what Kant sets out to do in the first part of his critical project. Yet for Herder it is out of the question to judge, to offer a critique of a natural capacity in man. One of the problematic aspects of Kant's project, he goes on to argue, is that a critique of reason can only be executed by reason itself, and that only reason itself is to be the standard against which it is measured: '[sie] ist Parthei und Richter, [...] Gesetz and Zeuge.'<sup>59</sup>

Herder then introduces three basic facts concerning the nature of reason, for which he does not provide further argument – probably because he wants us (and Kant) to see them as completely self-evident – yet which should simplify the task of judging.<sup>60</sup> The three 'facts' do not come as a surprise to the reader already familiar with Herder's works. The first is that reason can simply not be considered in abstraction from our being human, with our specific physical, mental and social characteristics; there is no such thing as pure reason. Secondly, human reason cannot be isolated from other forces ('Kräfte') that make up human nature: 'Es ist dieselbe Seele, die denkt und will, die versteht und empfindet, die Vernunft übet und begehret.'<sup>61</sup> Finally, as reason can only express itself

58 Johann Gottfried Herder, *Verstand und Erfahrung: Eine Metakritik zur Kritik der reinen Vernunft: Erster Teil* (Bruxelles: Culture et Civilisation, 1969), p. 3.

59 Ibid., pp. 6-7. As Beiser shows, Kant was well aware of this problem, and thought that his approach, in which he would bring reason to a 'self-awareness of its "eternal laws"', would prove an antidote to both dogmatism and skepticism. Yet, as Beiser convincingly argues, Kant failed to address the metacritical problem in that he did not show how self-knowledge is to be achieved: 'The sad truth of the matter is that [Kant] never developed a general meta-critical theory about how to acquire knowledge of the first principles of criticism. [...] Kants failure to address the meta-critical problem in any sustained and explicit manner had a very serious consequence: it left the authority of reason hanging in the balance.' See Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, pp. 6-7. Herder's critique of Kant – that reason is thus already presupposed in Kant's critical project – is similar to his critique of Condillac who, in giving an account of the origin of language, already presupposed language. Herder's aim is to give a genetic account of both.

60 As Beiser argues, one of the main questions raised by the meta-critical project is reason's claim 'to be a sufficient criterion of truth and to be in possession of self-evident first principles.' See Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, p. 7. Rather than confront Kant with this criticism, Herder takes the opposite course and introduces a different set of self-evident first principles, which, as they are 'facts', rely on experience. Herder thus immediately side-steps Kant's project and the question raises itself if Herder is truly involved in metacriticism or whether he is using Kant (by vehemently attacking him) in order to put forward his own philosophical system. On this question, see also Heinz, *Herder und die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, p. 96, and Gaier, p. 203: '[Herders] Werk will [...] Metakritik, kritischer Kommentar und systematische Rekonstruktion zugleich sein, ein Unternehmen dessen Aspekte nicht leicht zu trennen sind. Ungute Vermischungen der polemische Ausfälle mit den exponierenden Darstellungen resultieren daraus.'

61 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, pp. 7-8.



through language and can come to an understanding of itself in language, language should be called upon as one of the main witnesses in the tribunal of reason.<sup>62</sup>

### 1.2.1 Experience as being in the world

The prime target in Herder's attack is Kant's concept of pure reason with its *a priori* principles and strict demarcation of the realms of sensibility and understanding. As Hamann had already argued in his *Metakritik*, Kant – by claiming that human cognition consists of two separate branches –<sup>63</sup> had completely torn asunder what is originally a unity, and which can therefore never be reunited: 'Entspringen aber *Sinnlichkeit* und *Verstand* als zwei Stämme der menschlichen Erkenntnis aus *einer* gemeinschaftlichen Wurzel [...]; zu welchem Behuf nun eine so gewalttätige, unbefugte, eigensinnige Scheidung desjenigen, was die Natur zusammengefügt hat! Werden nicht beide Stämme durch eine Dichotomie und Zwiespalt ihrer gemeinschaftlichen Wurzel ausgehen und verdorren?'<sup>64</sup> As Beiser explains, Hamann's main contention is that Kant – by so strictly dividing the faculties of reason – has rendered all interaction between them inconceivable: 'The understanding is intelligible, nontemporal and nonspatial; but sensibility is phenomenal, temporal and spatial. How then, will they coordinate their operations?'<sup>65</sup> Herder follows up this line of attack by claiming that the understanding gradually evolves from what is given in sensibility, and that this also holds true for its so called *a priori* principles, such as the pure forms of intuition, space and time. Herder develops a genealogical deduction of space and time, in which he shows that these concepts gradually emerge and develop from our concrete experience of ourselves in the world. With regard to space he argues as follows: 'Wir sind und zwar mit andern; das wo wir sind, hangt unserm Daseyn an, eben so wohl als das Wo derer, die nicht wir sind. Dies Wo heißt *Ort* unsers Daseyns; wir nehmen ihn ein, d.i. ein Anderes kann in diesen Augenblick nicht seyn, wo wir sind.'<sup>66</sup> Experience is thus linked to 'Daseyn', to concrete existence, and, as Heinz shows, this is the pivotal idea of the positive answer to Kant that Herder tries to develop in the *Metakritik*: 'Ausgangspunkt und Grundlage [Herders, AG] ist das Existieren oder Sein, das *als lebendiges ein sich selbst* Raum und Zeit erwirkendes und sich so erhaltendes Tätigsein ist, das *sich selbst als solches gegeben* ist.'<sup>67</sup> For Herder, it is simply not possible to abstract from our concrete being in the world: 'Sich von sich selbst unabhängig zu machen, d.i. aus aller ursprünglichen, innern und aussern Erfahrung sich hinaus zusetzen, von allem

62 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, pp. 8-9.

63 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, hrsg. Jens Timmermann (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1998), B26. Kant did not claim that there was an original unity: there may be a common root, but this cannot be known: 'es [gebe] zwei Stämme der menschlichen Erkenntnis, die vielleicht aus einer gemeinschaftlichen, aber uns unbekannten Wurzel entspringen.'

64 Hamann, *Metakritik*, p. 224.

65 Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, p. 41.

66 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 90. Cf. also Herder's 'Axiom der Erfahrung': 'Du bist. Du bist mit andern. Nach Art und Graden der Anerkennung werde dessen gewiß; erfahre.' p. 393.

67 Heinz, *Herder und die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, p. 97.



Empirischen frei über sich selbst hinaus zu denken, vermag niemand. Das wäre ein prius vor allem a priori; damit hörte, ehe sie anfang, die Menschenvernunft auf.<sup>68</sup> The *a priori* can, for Herder, not be conceived as independent of, or preceding the *a posteriori*:

Das a priori dieser Aller [of the table of categories that Herder develops in answer to Kant's, AG] beruht nicht auf einer Position außer und vor aller Erfahrung, in welche ich mir diese, mithin mein eignes Daseyn und die Form meiner Sinnlichkeit ausklügeln mußte, sondern auf einem *lebendigen Daseyn in und mit der Erfahrung*: denn sobald *lebendiges Daseyn* gesetzt wird, *erfährets*. Es ist sich selbst Erfahrung; *ein sich selbst in Raum und Zeit innerer Kräfte zusammenfassendes, offenbarendes Daseyn*. Das prius und posterius dieses Wesens sind mit einander; denn ohne ein mit ihm gesetztes posterius konnte so wenig eiOn prius sein, als die ohne Jenes.<sup>69</sup>

Experience – and hence thought – can only occur when there is something to be experienced. It can only come to be in 'lebendiges Daseyn' as the original unity in which subject and object are one and can interact.<sup>70</sup> For Herder, experience is a process in which both the object and the subject of experience reveal themselves as what they are. Experience is simultaneously a unification and organization ('zusammenfassen') of the manifold that presents itself to us and a revelation of 'lebendiges Daseyn' in and through which we become aware of the powers that affect us and that are at work in us.<sup>71</sup> This dual aspect of experience – its being both a comprehensive totality and a process of

68 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, pp. 21-22. As Angelica Nuzzo points out, the implication of Herder's claim is 'the curious polemic point that Kantian reason, on Herder's view, is not human – a point that seems at odds with many Kantian statements.' For Nuzzo Herder is correct in seeing that Kantian reason is 'human first and foremost in the transcendental sense', and that, 'because it gains this qualification as the result of the transcendental investigation into its *a priori* forms and not in force of "human nature" or of observable empirical and historical conditions, is neither physiologically or anthropologically human.' See Angelica Nuzzo, 'Sensibility in Kant and Herder's *Metakritik*' in Marion Heinz (Hrsg.), *Herders 'Metakritik': Analysen und Interpretationen* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 2013), p. 34. As Nuzzo also shows (by focusing on the argument on space in both authors), Herder's Kant critique is thus not so much an attempt to answer the problematic aspects in Kant's account, but to oppose it with a completely different account. Cf. also Martin Bondeli, "'Ohn' alle Erfahrung": Herders Kritik an Kants Formalismus' in Marion Heinz (Hrsg.), *Herders 'Metakritik': Analysen und Interpretationen* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt 2013), esp. p. 120: 'Sein Bemühen, Kants Begründungstheoretische Gedankenführung durch ein genetisches Gegenkonzept zu überwinden, scheint als abwegig, da es sich gar nicht um ein Gegenkonzept, sondern nur um ein anderes Konzept handeln kann, ein Konzept, das möglicherweise sogar die passende Ergänzung zu Kants Ansatz darstellt.' It could be argued that Hegel's dialectical development of spirit is the concept that could fulfil such a role.

69 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 148. Herder thus does not advocate a classical empiricist position, but argues that, from the outset, experience and understanding are not to be thought of as independent faculties, but as two related aspects of the development of knowing. Cf. Bondeli, p. 114: 'Was Herder im Endeffekt verteidigt, ist allerdings nicht mehr ein relativer Apriorismus des Verstandes, sondern ein doppelter Apriorismus, ein Apriorismus von *Verstand und Erfahrung*.'

70 Cf. Heinz, *Herder und die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, pp. 97-98: 'Mit dem Begriff des lebendigen Daseins ist also eine ursprüngliche Einheit von Objektivem und Subjektivem als Anfang der Philosophie gesetzt.'

71 The twofold aspect of experience thus again comes to the fore (cf. p. 8 above), as Heinz also emphasizes: 'Das lebendige Dasein ist an sich selbst Erfahrung im aktiven Sinne des Sichoffenbarens, Sicherschließens in seinen Wirkungen, und dem entspricht ein passives Sicherfahren als Sichgegebensein in Vorstellungen der Sinnesorgane.' See Heinz, *Herder und die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, p. 98.

self-revelation – will play a crucial role in Hegel's notion of experience as a process of 'Selbstdarstellung'.

### 1.2.2 Language as the impure source of reason

Herder's attack on Kant's concept of pure reason is aimed at showing us that thinking cannot take place in sterile abstraction from concrete experience. We cannot start with pure principles, untainted by experience; purity or clarity ('Reinheit') can only come about through clarification of what immediately presents itself to us.<sup>72</sup> Reason is what is developed in this process, and is not something we already are in possession of, independent of experience: 'man [redet] von einer Vernunft, ehe Vernunft war.'<sup>73</sup> Herder hence advocates the exact opposite of the transcendental course Kant is taking:

Gerade der entgegengesetzte Weg ist der einzige, der fördert. Statt nämlich zu transcendiren, kehre die Vernunft auf den Ursprung ihres Besitzes, d.i in sich selbst zurück, mit der Frage; 'wie kamst du zu dir und deine Begriffen? Wie hast du diese ausgedrückt und angewandt, verkettet und verbunden? Woher kommst, daß du allgemeine, nothwendige Gewißheit zueignest? Unterlasset sie diese Frage und isolirt sich von aller Erfahrung: so thäte sie wohl, wenn sie sich auch von der Sprache isolirte: denn diese hat sie gewiß doch nur durch Erfahrung.'<sup>74</sup>

A consequence of Kant's transcendental project, Herder argues, is that – as language is transmitted through experience, and is therefore never 'pure' – we cannot have recourse to it in determining the *a priori* principles of cognition – neither as a witness nor as a medium in the tribunal of reason.<sup>75</sup> The opposite course is one in which reason returns to its origins,<sup>76</sup> and involves a dialogical questioning of itself in which it examines and aims

72 cf. *Ideen*, p. 27: 'Wie bei uns unsere Gedanken und Kräfte offenbar nur aus unsrer Erd-Organisation keimen und sich so lange zu verändern und zu verwandeln streben, bis sie etwa zu der Reinigkeit und Feinheit gediehen sind, die diese unsre Schöpfung gewähren kann.'

73 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 68.

74 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, pp. 68-69.

75 In his critical project, which, as he puts it in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, is an investigation (in 'einen Gerichtshof') of reason by reason (*KrV*, AXI), Kant pays hardly any attention to language and its relation to thought, as Michael Forster points out: 'Kant [in his critiques, AG] scrupulously avoids using such terms as 'language', 'sentence' and 'word' in fundamental explanatory roles, in favor of using such purely psychological terms as 'thought', 'judgment', 'concept', 'representation', 'intuition', 'principle', 'schema', 'idea', and so on; and moreover, when he defines the latter terms, again avoids using terms which refer to language, instead employing only psychological ones. Nor does Kant at any point in the *Critique of Pure Reason* or the other two critiques accord language anything more than an inessential and subordinate role.' Forster makes a case that this is not the whole story, but that Kant, both in his precritical and in later works such as the *Vienna Logic*, takes up a position that is much closer to the one advocated by Hamann and Herder. See Michael Forster, 'Kant's Philosophy of Language', in *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 74/3, 2012, p. 488.

76 Both for Herder and for Hegel the aim of philosophy is ultimately, as Hegel calls it, 'a Rückkehr in das Selbst'. In chapters three and four I will discuss this aspect of Hegel's thought in detail. An important difference between Hegel and Herder is that in Herder's eyes this self is already given (cf. the discussion of Herder's concept of 'Anerkennung' below), and can be uncovered through the activity of 'Erfindung', while

to develop what can be learned from the ways in which its conceptual understanding of the world is expressed in language. In the *Phänomenologie*, Hegel will use a similar strategy by starting his presentation of consciousness' experience of itself with a questioning of sense-certainty on the nature of its experience.

A disastrous effect of Kant's transcendental course, in Herder's eyes, is that through the synthetic *a priori* Kant is advocating, a world is constructed that is empty and sterile, and is nothing but a figment of the imagination. We will never be able to recognize ourselves in this world or its (invented) language, as it has no real content. Kant thus becomes seriously guilty of maltreating the nature of language: '[Der Mißbrauch der Sprache] constituirt in Wortlarven eine Übertvernunft, die alle Philosophie abschneidet und nur Figmente möglich macht, Figmente *ex nullis ad nulla*, ein *a priori*, das ehe es ist, sich selbst schafft, getrennt von sich selbst und ohn' alle Erfahrung.'<sup>77</sup> Herder argues that Kant's violation of language occurs in two ways: first by using words in a meaning that seems completely divorced from their original meaning, as in the case of 'Anschauung',<sup>78</sup> but also by using long-winded and dense formulas – such as 'die Vorstellung des Realen als eines Substratum der empirischen Zeitbestimmung überhaupt',<sup>79</sup> that turn language into a constructed apparatus that is externally applied to what presents itself to us, and in which we will never be able to recognize ourselves.

### 1.2.3 Language and the categorization of experience

Kant's duality of language and thought implies that the tool with which we think has no real connection with what we think.<sup>80</sup> For Herder, the same holds true for the ordering of

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for Hegel the self is developed by means of a 'return' that should be understood as an interaction with the different shapes in which the self presented itself.

77 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 70. This point is put more eloquently in the *Ideen*: 'Schwerlich kann unser Geschlecht nach diesem von der Gottheit erwählten Mittel der Bildung [i.e. language, AG] für die bloße Spekulation oder für die reine Anschauung gemacht sein: denn beide liegen unvollkommen in unserm Kreise. [...] Ja wenn sich die beide Extreme, Spekulation und Anschauung gar gesellen wollen, und der metaphysische Schwärmer auf eine Wortlose Vernunft voll Anschauungen weist: armes Menschengeschlecht, so schwebst du gar im Raum der Udinge zwischen kalter Hitze und warmer Kälte. Durch die Sprache hat uns die Gottheit auf einen sicherern, den Mittelweg geführt. Nur Verstandsideen sind, die wir durch sie erlangen und die zum Genuß der Natur, zu Anwendung unsrer Kräfte, zum gesunden Gebrauch unsres Lebens, kurz zu Bildung der Humanität in uns gnug sind. Nicht Äther sollen wir atmen, dazu unsre Maschine nicht gemacht ist, sondern den gesunden Luft der Erde.' *Ideen*, pp. 350-351.

78 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, pp. 77-78. Herder argues that Kant's use of 'Anschauung' for the way objects are given in sensibility is odd mainly because it suggests an exclusion of senses other than the sense of vision: 'Das Wort "Anschauung" in diesem Verstande ist dem Sprachgebrauch fremd; wer hat von der Anschauung eines Tons, eines Geruchs Geschmacks, Gefühls gehört? Sofern der Gegenstand den Sinn afficirt, nennen alle Sprachen es Empfindung.' I will discuss Herder's critique of Kant's notion of 'Anschauung' more fully on p. 22.

79 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 297. Herder wonders whether anybody would recognize that Kant is talking about substance.

80 As Nuzzo argues, not only do Kant and Herder appear to talk past each other since Herder's *Metakritik* fails to answer the challenges posed by Kant's critical project (see n. 60 above), they also use a different

experience through an *a priori* table of categories. Again, he argues that categories can only be deduced from the workings of the understanding as it forms and – is formed by – concrete experience:<sup>81</sup>

was sind die Kategorieen anders, als ein aus den Wirkungen des Verstandes an wirklichen Gegenständen abgezogenes Fachwerk das man, gereinigt und geordnet, ihm unterlegt, nicht als ein aller Übung vorhergehendes, ihm eingepflanztes Schema, durch welches allein alle seine Kraftäußerungen, d.i. Er selbst möglich werden. Es wäre ein Schema des Verstandes vor allem Verstande, ein Verstanderegister, “unangewandt ohn’ alle Bedeutung,” d.i. ohn’ alle Verstand.<sup>82</sup>

The question, however, raises itself whether Herder’s alternative categorization, which in contrast to Kant’s has first been distilled from and is subsequently applied to experience, but like Kant’s is indeed ‘Fachwerk’ in the sense that it is a finished and neatly structured scheme (the architectural metaphor suggesting that it is a structure that is made or ‘built’, rather than organically developed),<sup>83</sup> can do full justice to the nature of experience, the fluid and organic nature of which appears to resist neat categorization. In what way categorization can do justice to experience was to become an extremely prominent question for Hegel, but Herder also seems aware of the problematic aspects of the application of ‘Fachwerk’, as becomes clear from his discussion in the *Ideen* of how different nations and cultures can be classified:

Man ist gewöhnt, die Nationen der Erde in Jäger, Fischer, Hirten und Ackerleute abzuteilen und nach dieser Abtheilung nicht nur den Rang derselben in der Kultur, sondern auch die Kultur selbst als eine notwendige Folge dieser oder jene Lebensweise zu bestimmen. Vortrefflich, wenn diese Lebensweisen zuerst nur selbst bestimmt wären; sie ändern sich aber beinah mit jedem Erdstrich und verschlingen

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language: ‘[...] , Kant and Herder do not speak the same language – Kant’s critical language precedes the experience that such language allows to express; Herder’s metacritical language is directly one with the very experience it expresses.’ See Nuzzo, ‘Sensibility in Kant and Herder’s *Metakritik*, pp. 23-24. I agree with Nuzzo that there is an important difference between the two authors with regard to their use of language, yet I think her characterization of Herder is much too strong. Although it might be his aim to make his language ‘one with the experience it expresses’, in the *Metakritik* Herder does not really go beyond these reflections on which words to use. *Verstand und Erfahrung* reads mainly as a direct opposition and polemical refutation of Kant, in which Herder relies on rather short and unequivocal sentences in order to put forward his views.

81 As we saw earlier (p. 17 ff.), Herder sees experience as the process in which a ‘lebendiges Daseyn’ embarks on an interaction between itself and what is perceived as other than itself, and through which it comes to an understanding of both the external world and its inner self.

82 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, pp. 429-430.

83 In the second part of *Verstand und Erfahrung* Herder makes a huge effort to show that his fourfold table can be applied to nearly all aspects of experience, including the ways in which philosophical thought relates to experience. An interesting example is his categorization of ‘Idealismus’ – in which intriguingly the first class is made up of what Herder calls ‘Realisten’ – which Herder concludes with an image that, again, strongly suggests that we are to think of these categories as fluid and without any clear demarcations: ‘Vier Welten erscheinen also hier [in Herder’s portrayal, AG] in Einem Gemähde; ihr Licht und ihre Schatten fließen in einander.’ *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 401.

sich meistens so in einander, daß die Anwendung der reinen Klassifikation überaus schwer wird.<sup>84</sup>

Determination of an object through classification or categorization always seems to involve a negation of at least some of the aspects of an object – an aspect which Herder does not explicitly address but which was to become of vital importance in Hegel's dialectical movement – and is incapable of capturing the evolving and developmental character of reality. In *Verstand und Erfahrung* Herder tries to account for these aspects in the following comments on how his own fourfold table of categories is meant to be used and understood:

Wie entstanden also diese Kategorien? Etwa priorisch, ohne Gegenstände, von einem andern Wesen dem menschlichen Verstande als einen Tafel angeheftet, damit durch die Erfahrung möglich würde? Offenbar nicht also. Menschlich sind diese Begriffe gedacht, in einer menschlichen Sprache ausgesprochen; der Actus, durch den sie hervorgebracht wurden, ist die *Handlung des Verstandes* selbst, und zwar seine *einzigste, fortwährende Handlung*, ohne welche er kein Verstand ist. Sobald der menschliche Verstand begreift, muß er kategorisiren; er thut aber weder durch ein Addiren der Begriffe zu einander, noch durch eine Synthesis, die aus dem Gegebenen hinaus schreitet; sondern durch Erschaffung, Distribution und Comprehension des Gegebenen; das Eine wird ein Mehreres, das Mehrere wieder zu Einem. Dies Vierfache ist ein Actus der Seele, wer diese *Tetraktys* trennt, vernichtet das Wesen des menschlichen Verstandes. Synthese und Analyse sind Mittel; sein Ziel ist *Anerkennung des Erkennbaren* durch beide. Durch beide, wechselnd und zusammenwirkend, erwirbt er sich sein Gut, den Begriff, und spricht: 'ich habe verstanden.'<sup>85</sup>

Again Herder stresses the interactive aspect of our coming to an understanding: categorizing experience in such a way that we do justice to both how we know and what we know entails that we should always understand the categories as interdependent, and the activity of categorization as one in which there is no sequence of separate "steps", but rather a harmonious unity.<sup>86</sup> Yet, categorization for Herder can never fully capture

84 *Ideen*, p. 305. Here Herder also applies a fourfold classification: 'Jäger, Fischer, Hirten und Ackerleute.' For an explicit rejection of 'Fachwerk' see *Verstand und Erfahrung* p. 459: 'Sogleich erhellet, daß zwischen diesen drei Vermögen [sensitivity, imagination and the understanding, AG] mit Worten keine Grenze zu ziehen sei, als ob gewisse Worte, z.b. Materie, Form, Dasselbe, Ein Andres; von Innen, von Außen Einem derselben ausschließend zukämen, und wie in ein Fachwerk dahinein topisirt werden können.'

85 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 265-266. Seebohm suggests that Herder's model of the *Tetraktys* can be seen as a foreshadowing of Hegel's *Quadruplizität*, but also claims that Hegel makes an important move beyond Herder in incorporating the dialectical movement through negation as the motor through which the original totality that presents itself to the understanding is developed into concrete concepts, and which will allow thought to say: 'Ich habe verstanden'. See Seebohm, pp. 68-71.

86 Cf. also *Verstand und Erfahrung* pp. 206-207: 'Bei jedem wahren Begriff thut die Seele viel mehr als anschauen, sie *erkennt*, sie *eignet sich an*; nur dadurch werden ihr eigenthümliche, der Natur, den Sinnen, und sich selbst harmonische wahre Gedanken. Ist also die Harmonie die ich in den Gegenständen wahrnehme oder die Verbindung, in welcher ich mich denke, von mir in die Gegenstände gebracht worden? Mein

the interaction between experience and understanding that emerges in the 'lebendiges Daseyn'. This can only be achieved in the medium of language.<sup>87</sup> Language should therefore be studied and called upon as a witness in the tribunal of reason, as the supreme expression of the coming to be of human reason.

#### 1.2.4 Knowing as recognition of subject and object

Herder's discussion of how (his own) categorization is to be understood again reveals that, in his view, the ultimate goal of the operations of our cognitive powers is not merely knowing, but also recognition of what we come to know: '[das] Ziel ist Anerkennung des Erkennbaren.' As we saw in the example of the sheep, organizing our impressions by means of a 'Merkmal' allows us to recognize the sheep as an object that has been given meaning ('Sinn'),<sup>88</sup> and has become more than simply an object of desire or lust. Coming to know an object in this way is, for Herder, a process in which the subject interacts with the object in such a way that it makes it its own. This process, which Herder calls 'Innewerden', involves a much more active relationship with the object than the Kantian *Anschauen*. Again, Herder refers to everyday language to make his point: 'in unsrer Sprache deutet dies Wort selbst an, daß an dem Gegebenen als an einem nicht etwa nur *Gefundenen*, sondern sich nahe Gebrachten, also auf gewisse Weise sich *Angefundenen* die Seele Theil nehme. Wird diese dunkle Empfindung Apperception so nennen wirs nicht Anschauen, sondern *Innewerden*. Die Seele (nicht das Gemüth) wird eines Gegenstandes *inne*; durch welchen Actus sie ihn als den *ihrigen* betrachtet.'<sup>89</sup> Making an object its own involves that the subject becomes aware that the object already is its own; that

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Gedanke, er möge trennen oder verbinden, ist freilich Actus meiner Seele, (woran niemand zweifelt;) daß ich aber durch diesen Denkactus Ordnung in die Gegenstände *hineinlege*, daß ich sie gar Strich für Strich durch eine Zusammensetzung (Synthesis) hineinaddire, ist ein aus unvergönnter Spontanität unternommener, irreführender Mißbrauch der Sprache. *Anerkennend* zerlege ich sowohl als ich zusammensetze; *synthese* und *analyse* bieten einander die Hand.' For Herder, speaking, as Kant does, of a 'spontaneity' of the understanding is misleading as it suggests that the understanding is a completely independent force to begin with. Rather, it is in the interactive process of coming to an understanding that the understanding comes to an *Anerkennung* both of itself and the object of understanding, and in doing so becomes independent. (Cf. *Verstand und Erfahrung*, pp. 202-203) Herder in this passage also reflects on the etymology of 'erkennen', and emphasizes its genealogical character: '*Kennen* hieß ursprünglich *zeugen*, *gebähren*, *gebohren werden* [...] *Erkennen*, auch im geistigen Sinn, heißt ein *Begriff* genetisch, d.i. in seiner Stammesart erfassen, wahr finden, sich zueignen.' Similarly, the truth is what becomes true: '*Wahr* ist, was *währt* und sich *bewähret*.' (*Verstand und Erfahrung* p. 132)

87 Cf. Heinz, *Herder und die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, pp. 105-106: 'das Verhältnis von Sinnlichkeit und Verstand und ihren Gegenständen läßt sich nach Herder nicht nur kategorial erfassen, ihre lebendige Einheit läßt sich nicht in den Begriff auflösen, sondern stellt sich auch dar im "Metaschematismus tönender Gedankenbilder", d.h. in der Sprache, die ihre Eigenheit auf einer höheren Ebene bewahrt.'

88 On Herder's use of 'Sinn' cf. p. 5, n. 16 and p. 25, n. 104.

89 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 78-79. Cf. also the discussion of Herder's notion of 'Erfindung' on p. 10 of this chapter. Herder stresses that 'Innewerden' can only be the result of interaction between the human soul ('Seele') and its object, rather than between an object and the 'Gemüth', a Kantian term which is not clearly defined, but which can either refer to the cognitive capacity with which we think, or simply to consciousness. Cf. KrV, B33 and B67.



the object belongs to a world that has been developed by human thought. This is not a spiritual world that is opposed to what is given, but, as Herder constantly stresses, is a world in which spirit organically and gradually evolves from nature,<sup>90</sup> and in this process comes to know both nature and itself.

For Herder, since we make an object our own through linguistic appropriation, truly coming to know an object requires reflection on the language in which the object is expressed, as Nuzzo also points out in her discussion of Herder's critique of Kant's deduction of space:

Herder replaces Kant's "metaphysische Erörterung" of space with the genetic presentation of the "Innewerden des Raums [...] der Erfahrung und der Sprache gemäß." The starting point of Herder's genetic account in the appropriation process describing the soul's outreach toward objectivity, is the "Erörterung *des Wortes* Raum." It is not an attempt to tease out the *a priori* conditions of experience even before experience occurs, but to read out in the very language in which experience is first expressed the most original meaning of such an experience. [...] the metacritical shift invests the "word" space (not directly, the nature of space).<sup>91</sup>

Herder's account, however, is problematic in that it does not really start with a reflection on 'the original meaning' of the word, but with the presupposition that space is what we share with others and that it cannot be considered in isolation from our being in the world (our concrete *Daseyn*).<sup>92</sup> It is this presupposition that informs his 'Erörterung': 'Unser Seyn ist umgrenzt, und wo wir nicht sind, können andere seyn; dies verneinende Wo nennen wir Raum.'<sup>93</sup> Yet, his general aim is clear, which is to show that our knowing of the world is mediated by the way we find ourselves in the world and by the ways in which we express our being in the world through language.

90 As Hölderlin put it in a pithy phrase in his novel *Hyperion*: 'Ideal wird, was Natur war'. See Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte und Hyperion* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1999), p. 541. For Herder, we are not to think of this becoming ideal of nature as a creative act performed by the understanding, but as an act of recognition and appropriation of what presents itself to the senses. Cf. *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 226: 'Die Sinne präformieren, d.i. sie bilden ihm das Mannichfaltigem zu Einem, das er sich nicht erschafft, sondern anerkennend sich aneignet, und eben hiedurch Verstand ist.' On this aspect of Herder's thought, cf. Stolz, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

91 Nuzzo, op. cit., p. 40.

92 Cf. the discussion in section 1.2.1 above.

93 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 91. In what follows, Herder argues his case by elaborating on this aspect of experience, rather than through a further reflection on language. He sketches the development of an infant, that already as a baby in its mother's womb is aware that it occupies a space that is limited by something other than itself: 'Das ungebohrne Kind in seiner engen Wohnung ist, durch manchen Druck und Stoß, dieser Empfindung [that it takes up a position relative to something or someone else, AG] schon inne geworden.' What this sentence reveals, is that, in this case at least, 'Innewerden' is linked to embodied experience rather than linguistic mediation. Although this point is overlooked by Nuzzo, she interestingly argues that Herder's critique of Kant is deficient in failing to acknowledge that Kant also discusses orientation in his argument on space (albeit in the *Prolegomena* and the essay 'Was heißt, sich im Denken orientieren', rather than the first *Kritik*), and that thus Herder's view is much closer to Kant's than he admits. See Nuzzo, op. cit. pp. 40-41.

Expression through language, as we already saw, entails an appropriation of the world that not only allows for recognition of objects in the world – both by the individual subject and by those that share its world – but also of the subject itself and of the way it exists in the world. Not only the world outside us, but also our inner selves are given to us: ‘Wie alles um uns her, ist der Mensch sich selbst ein Gegebenes; er findet sich im Universum, wohin er sich nicht selbst setzte [...]’.<sup>94</sup> Yet, Herder stresses, even though we are intimately acquainted with ourselves, truly coming to know ourselves takes a lifetime: ‘der Mensch [wird] seiner selbst nicht zuerst, sondern fast zuletzt inne.’<sup>95</sup> Ultimately, recognition of who and what we are is a process without completion, as our existence is essentially becoming: ‘Der Mensch ist sich gleichsam nie ganz; seine Existenz ist *Werden*.’<sup>96</sup> Herder emphasizes the importance of action for this process: ‘Nur durchs Thun werden wir inne, daß wir zu thun *vermöchten*; durch Anwendung unsere Kräfte erweißen wir uns selbst, daß wir sind, das wir uns *besitzen* und *haben*.’<sup>97</sup> Only through externalizing and expressing ourselves in word and deed are we ultimately able to make ourselves our own.

For Herder – and this will become essential to Hegel’s concept of *Bildung* – externalizing ourselves also involves an aspect of alienation: ‘von unsrer eignen Existenz [tragen wir] ein *Idiom* in uns, und zwar, sonderbarer Weise, ists oft ein fremdes Bild, das mit der Gestalt, die wir im Spiegel oder Andre an uns gewahr werden, nicht übereinkommt.’<sup>98</sup> Intriguingly, it is our inner self (the ‘Idiom’) that initially appears strange and which we have to become acquainted with and come to recognize as our own. Herder explains the discrepancy between this inner self and what we see reflected – either in a mirror or in the eyes of others – by further elaborating on the self as an inner template that we carry within us: ‘Es zeigt, daß der Mensch von dem was er ist, oder vielmehr was er kann und seyn soll, eine Comprehension in sich trage, die er sich zwar selten oder nie zur ganzen Anerkennung bringt, deren er nur Theilweise inne wird, die aber demohngeachtet als ein Ganzes, als die Gestalt seiner Anlagen und Kräfte ihm einwohnet.’<sup>99</sup> For Herder, the feeling of alienation, of becoming aware that we are not what we took ourselves to be, can only be explained by our carrying the measure of what we truly are (and can and should be) within us.<sup>100</sup> Alienation – which necessarily occurs when we express ourselves – thus

94 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 373.

95 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 372.

96 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 376.

97 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, pp. 374-375.

98 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 377.

99 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, pp. 377-378. This quotation reveals that Herder does not always live up to his own demand to refrain from technical vocabulary in the presentation of philosophy. ‘Comprehension’, a term he uses more than once (cf. the quotation on p. 21 above) is a term indicating the unification of a manifold, or a unity that contains a manifold within itself. Herder may have borrowed this term from Kant (Cf. *KdU*, B 101)

100 Cf. *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 378: ‘Werde der Form inne, die in dir liegt, und drücke sie aus.’



helps us to discover who we are as a totality of the talents and forces nature endowed us with.<sup>101</sup>

### 1.2.5 The unity of *phaenomenon* and *noumenon*

Engaging with the ways in which an object presents itself to the senses through the process of ‘Innewerden’ ultimately allows us to come to an understanding of what the object is in itself. Herder dismisses the idea that there is a *Ding an sich* that we cannot get hold of and sees the noumenal world as what is enfolded in the process of interacting with the phenomenal world: ‘*Phänomenon* heißt, was erscheint; *Noumenon*, was sich der Verstand (νοῦς) denkt. Dies denkt er sich nicht *hinter* und *außer*, sondern an dem Phänomenon; und damit ist der ganze Verwirrung gehoben.’<sup>102</sup> In our coming to an understanding through our interaction with the phenomenal world, the truth, the *noumenon*, will reveal itself as none other than our understanding of the world. It can be no other:

Wenn etwas ins Reich der Dinge an sich, d.i. der Wahrheit gehöret; so ists unser Verstand [...] Sein νοῦμενον also, d.i. der *Sinn*, den er an den Gegenständen erfaßt, ist ihm das Ding an sich, d.i. Wahrheit. Diesen ersieht und erspäheth er am Seyn und Daseyn, an Eigenschaften und Kräften der Gegenstände in ihren Wirkungen; ein Verständliches, das zu ihm, dem Verstande, ein Geistiges das zu ihm, dem Geiste spricht: denn das Ganze, das sich ein Geist denkt, die Kräfte und Eigenschaften, die er in Wirkungen oder in einer lebendigen Organisation wahrnimmt, sind seiner Art, νοῦμενα ἐν φαινομένοις.<sup>103</sup>

This passage also reveals that for Herder ‘Sinn’, which here appears to be equivalent to ‘truth’ or ‘meaning’, is what is produced in the reflexive activity of *Besinnung*.<sup>104</sup> This activity is again presented as a dialogical interaction with what presents itself, in which a ‘Verständliches’ speaks to the understanding, and a ‘Geistiges’ to spirit, and in which what presents itself is developed into an object that can be known as what it is. ‘Geist’ in

101 As we will come to see in chapter four, for Hegel alienation is much more radical. In his view, alienation ultimately teaches us that there is no such thing as an ‘inner’, determinate, self. What we took to be our inner self – as what is ‘given’ – gets lost and is continuously transformed in the process of externalizing ourselves and interacting with others.

102 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 424. With ‘Verwirrung’ Herder indicates the ‘selbstgemachte’ confusion that arises from the meaning Kant gives to the word *noumenon*. For Kant it is an object of an intellectual intuition, and as such out of reach for human thought, that relies on sensible intuition. (Cf *KrV* B307). For Hegel, ‘Verwirrung’ is an essential aspect of our coming to know as it is the way in which the world presents itself to us, as a ‘Bacchantische Taumel’. It is through interacting with this confused bustle of coming to be and perishing that what is to be thought can be the developed, and the confusion sublated.

103 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 433–434.

104 Again, Herder stresses the continuity of senses and understanding, not only by using the word ‘Sinn’ in its twofold sense, but also by explaining the activity of *Besinnung* as ‘ersehen’ and ‘erspähnen’. Both verbs can either refer to having a visual image, or to the act of discovery or coming to an understanding. See the relevant lemmas in *DWB*.

this passage appears to indicate a being in possession of a potential for *Besinnung*, and although Herder sometimes uses the word in order to refer to what unites a particular culture or people, he does not seem to develop the word as Hegel will do in his work, i.e. as referring to an intersubjective entity, a 'wir' that is the collective achievement and expression of a plurality of forms of consciousness.

For Herder, there is no world beyond the mirror:<sup>105</sup> it is through interacting with what presents itself that we will grasp what it is, and our understanding is developed from what is reflected in the mirror. As we can only come to an understanding in and through language, this implies that also in language there is no meaning over and above what presents itself to us. The meaning of a word is not an autonomous idea or referent but is to be found in its usage: 'Keine Sprache drückt Sachen aus, sondern nur Namen: auch keine menschliche Vernunft also erkennt Sachen, sondern sie hat nur Merkmale von ihnen, die sie mit Worten bezeichnet.'<sup>106</sup>

Before dealing with this aspect more fully – especially with regard to its implications for the interpretation of texts – in the final section of this chapter, I will now focus on two important questions raised by Herder's argument with regard to the interdependence of language and thought.

### 1.2.6 Language as the limit of thought

If, as Herder argued against Kant, the realms of sensibility and the understanding cannot be separated, and language and thought are fully interdependent, this then raises the problem how critical reflection is possible.<sup>107</sup> We are not in possession of a meta-language which can help us reflect critically on what we are given, so how can we come to a full understanding of what immediately and concretely presents itself to us if we can only make use of a conceptual scheme that has already been formed? Language is thus not only the vehicle of thought, but also becomes an obstacle to our grasping reality. Herder puts the problem as follows:

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105 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 386: 'Suchst du etwa das Bild hinter dem Spiegel?' As we saw above, in the case of our coming to know ourselves, the interaction with what is presented in the mirror teaches us that these shapes are false representations of who we truly are, and that we have to turn inward to discover our true selves.

106 *Ideen*, p. 348. Cf. Forster, *After Herder*, pp. 64-71.

107 As Daniel Dahlstrom puts it: 'Language may well be a synthesis of sensibility and understanding but if they cannot be distinguished, it is not clear how that claim itself can be meaningfully sustained or how, indeed, any criterion for distinct reflection, the supposed hallmark of humanity, can be given. In a thoroughgoing holism, there is no *primus inter pares*.' See Daniel O. Dahlstrom, 'The aesthetic holism of Hamann, Herder and Schiller,' in Karl Ameriks (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 86.

Der Grund der Verirrungen ist also auch durch sich klar. Eben weil [die Vernunft] im *Allgemeinen* lebet und wie die Pflanze aus allen Elementen an sich zu ziehen hat, was für sie gehöret, muß sie auch mit der Pflanze die Ungemächlichkeiten des Allgemeinen teilen. Vom Weltall dringt so unermessen Vieles auf sie; in ihrem Werkzeug, der Sprache, kommen ihr Allgemeinheiten vor, die, als ob sie schon geformte richtige Begriffe wären, von der Einbildungskraft in Worte gefaßt, und vom Gebrauch mit einem falschen Ansehen beurkundet sind; traut sie ihnen, so ist sie betrogen.<sup>108</sup>

The question Herder raises here, i.e. in what way what presents itself as ‘schon geformte richtige Begriffe’ can be interacted with – in language that is already there – in order to produce ‘Begriffe’ thought can recognize as its own, is a problem that will be central to Hegel, and to which his idea of experience as dialectical movement – in which consciousness (dialogically) interacts with what presents itself – can be seen as an important answer.

If thought is essentially dependent on language then, Herder argues, what can be thought is limited: ‘Ists wahr, das wir ohne Gedanken nicht denken können und durch Worte denken lernen, so gibt die Sprache der ganzlichen menschlichen Erkenntnis Schranken und Umriß.’<sup>109</sup> Yet, if language determines what can be thought, in what way exactly does this work? Does this imply that what can be thought is contingent and relative to a certain culture or period? If the answer is yes, then this seems to be at odds with Herder’s suggestion that language and reason have a progressive character.<sup>110</sup> Herder does not provide us with a clear solution to the question in what way thought is limited or determined by language, but, as I will argue in chapters four and five, a possible answer can be found in Hegel’s view of knowing (and of language as its vehicle) as continuous self-presentation, self-determination and self-transformation.

### 1.3 In what language should thought be presented?

In the introduction to *Verstand und Erfahrung* Herder bitterly laments the fruitlessness of critical philosophy: ‘Sie versprach so viel; anmaaßend drang sie sich auf; was hat sie

108 Herder, *Vernunft und Sprache*, pp. 43–44. See also *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 73, where Herder refers to Bacon’s ‘idols of the market’ in order to make his point: ‘Markt-Idole nenne ich, die aus Verknüpfung der Worte und Namen sich dem Verstande einschleichen; sie sind sehr beschwerlich. Zwar glauben die Menschen, daß ihre Vernunft den Worten gebiete, oft aber wirken die Worte auch gewaltsam auf den Verstand zurück [...]’

109 Johann Gottfried Herder, *Fragmenten*, in *Sprachphilosophische Schriften*, hrsg. Erich Heintel (Hamburg: Meiner, 1960), p. 99. See also *Ideen*, p. 355, where Herder argues that the problem becomes even more pressing in written language: ‘was bei der Sprache sichtbar war, ist hier [in writing, AG] noch viel mehr sichtbar, nämlich, daß auch dies Mittel der Verewigung unsrer Gedanken den Geist und die Rede zwar bestimmt, aber auch eingeschränkt und auf mannigfaltige Weise gefesselt habe.’

110 Cf. *Ideen*, p. 354: ‘Die Gegeneinanderstellung verschiedner kultivierten Sprachen mit den verschiedenen Revolutionen ihrer Völker würde mit jedem Strich von Licht und Schatten gleichsam ein wandelbares Gemälde der mannigfaltigen Fortbildung des menschlichen Geistes zeigen.’

geleistet? Mit Protestationen gegen allen Dogmatismus ist sie die absprechendste Gebieterin in einer Sprache worden, die sich vorher keine Schule erlaubte.<sup>111</sup> Both in content and in form philosophy has become divorced from any reality we might recognize, and thought is presented in an empty language we cannot understand. Herder's advice appears rather obvious: 'Wer verstanden werden soll, schreibe verständlich.'<sup>112</sup> Yet how should this be done? How can language be used in such a way so that it expresses and speaks to the understanding? And how can it bring about a critical awareness of what is presented (rather than a mere 'Nachdenken') and produces a 'lebendige Einheit' through the interaction of form and content? To answer the first question, it is important to remember that for Herder, the understanding is dependent on, and evolves from, what is given in sensibility.<sup>113</sup>

Writing in such a way that thought is to make itself understood, for Herder, is not only to write without making use of abstract philosophical jargon, but also to directly appeal to all aspects of humanity by leaving room for emotion and phantasy, in what seems like casual and spontaneous writing, as well as for strict argumentation. This may be disturbing at first, as this is not what the reader of philosophy is used to.<sup>114</sup> By making use of diverse types of discourse, Herder thus not only tries to do justice to his holistic conception of human consciousness, but also aims to make the reader leave behind his preconceptions of what philosophy should look like, and to embark on a dialogue with the text. What a text has to say is thus to be enfolded in the process of reading.<sup>115</sup>

Not only is this process of interaction with the reader achieved by incorporating a variety of types of discourse – through which a dialogue with and within the text is created – but also by Herder's use of rhetorical devices through which the reader is invited to enter into a dialogue with the text, as Michael Forster argues:

111 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. XXI.

112 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. XXII.

113 To write with understanding is thus to incorporate all aspects of human *Besonnenheit*, as Ulrich Gaier explains: 'Herder suchte der Entfremdung des Denkens von seiner humanen Ganzlichkeit, der Entfremdung der Theorie und Wissenschaft von der Praxis und von der Kunst und Kultur entgegenzuwirken. Die Konsequenz einer solchen Absicht ist, daß ein solches Programm nicht etwa in einem einseitigen Diskurs verkündet wird, sondern daß bereits die Sprache, in der diese Absicht bekundet wird, die sich von einander entfernender und entfremdenden Diskurse mit einander verbindet und zum sprachlichen Bild des vollständigen humanen Menschen integriert. Herder hat, wie er mehrfach sagt, als 'triceps' gedacht und geschrieben, dreiköpfig als Historiker, Philosoph und Dichter oder als Sensualist, Rationalist und Analogiedenker und seine Gedankenschritte oft gleichzeitig mit empirischen, rationalen und analogischen Argumenten gestützt.' Gaier, op. cit., p. 11.

114 Ibid.: 'dieses Verfahren ist irritierend für Leser, die in einem einzigen Diskurs geführt zu werden gewohnt sind; ihnen scheint der Gedankengang durch lauter Disgressionen unterbrochen und Argumente gar durch Bilder erschlichen zu sein.'

115 Ibid.: 'Wenn es [...] Herders Ziel war, seine Leser im Sinne, seine Leser im Sinne der Humanität zu verändern, so mußten dies seine Texte nicht erst durch ihre Gedankenergebnisse, sondern durch den Lektüreprozeß selbst leisten, dem sie die Leser aussetzten.'

Herder's writing often seems emotional and grammatically undisciplined in ways that might perhaps be expected in casual speech but not in philosophical texts. This is intentional. [...] When writing this way he is often in fact using grammatical-rhetorical figures which can easily look like mere carelessness to an untutored eye but which receive high literary sanction from classical sources and are employed by him artfully (e.g. anacoluthon).<sup>116</sup>

The anacoluthon is a very telling example of what Herder tries to achieve with his way of writing: it is a sentence that is deliberately ungrammatical, and which therefore challenges our preconceptions of what a sentence should look like.<sup>117</sup> In doing so, it raises an awareness in us of the normativity of language, and makes it possible for us to question this normativity. Besides, according to classical rhetoric, the anacoluthon is a figure of speech that can be used in order to express or evoke emotion or confusion, which ties in with Herder's holistic conception of human *Besinnung*, but also with his aim to disturb the reader into thinking critically. If thought is to be developed, it can only be done in language that instigates and allows for development, and perhaps, most importantly, is able to speak directly to and from the hearts of people: 'Da sollen die stumpfen, späten Gesetze der Grammatiker das Göttlichste sein, was wir verehren, und vergessen die wahre göttliche Sprachnatur, die sich in ihrem Herzen mit dem menschlichen Geiste bildete, so unregelmäßig sie auch scheine.'<sup>118</sup> The true nature of language is not to be found in the rules externally imposed by grammarians, but in its gradual evolution. Although this evolution may at first seem to occur without any order ('unregelmäßig'), it is led by inner laws that can only be developed through our interaction with language. Rhetorical devices such as the anacoluthon – which produce a sense of confusion in the reader and a need to complete what presents itself as yet unfinished –<sup>119</sup> prove to be a very effective means to bring about such an interaction.

Finally, Herder's rejection of a dualism of language and meaning has important repercussions for his view on how texts should be interpreted. As we saw earlier, for Herder the noumenal is not something distinct from the phenomena we are presented with, but is that which is brought about through our interaction with these phenomena. The meaning of a text, therefore, is not something hidden behind the text – and which resides

116 Michael Forster, *After Herder*, p. 11. Forster gives an example of an extreme form of anacoluthon from *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*: 'Siehe diesen Mann voll Kraft und Gefühl Gottes, aber so innig und ruhig fühlend, als hier der Saft im Baum treibt, als der Instinkt, der tausendartig dort unter Geschöpfe verteilt, der in jedem Geschöpfe einzeln so gewaltig treibet, als dieser in ihn gesammelte stille, gesunde, Naturtrieb nur wirken kann.' See *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, hrsg. Hans Dietrich Irmscher (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1990), p. 8.

117 See Paul Claes en Eric Hulsens, *Groot retorisch woordenboek – Lexikon van stijlfiguren* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2015), p. 32. Interestingly, the anacoluthon is also used with great effect in stream-of-consciousness writing, which tries to capture the associative flow of thought. A similar effect may also have been on Herder's mind.

118 *Abhandlung*, p. 94.

119 As we will see in the following chapter, Hegel similarly aims at using language in such a way that it produces a sense of *Bedürfnis*, which could then be used productively in order to overcome Kantian oppositions.

in the writer's mind – but is that which is enfolded in the process of interpretation. We should refrain from either a 'bloße Phänomenologie' in which we merely accept what is given,<sup>120</sup> and can at best give a description or paraphrase, but also from its opposite course, which is 'sich außer oder hinter den Worten einen Sinn zu dichten, zu welchem man zwar nie kommen könne und werde, der aber, problematisch wenigstens, doch da sei.'<sup>121</sup> This can only occur if we see our interaction with the text as a 'lebendiges Daseyn', in which we are both active and passive.

## Conclusion

Herder's thought on the unity of experience and reason, and the essential role played by language in revealing and producing this unity, in many respects contributed to a vibrant and inspiring environment in dialogue with which Hegel developed his own thought on the relation between experience and language. Herder's main contributions to this environment lie in his notion of 'lebendiges Daseyn', of our being actively involved in the world as the origin or, rather, as the essence of experience. Experience, for Herder, is a process in which the subject interacts both with itself and with the object it is presented with, and through which both subject and object are to reveal themselves as what they essentially are. By means of this process, in which language plays a central mediating role, the subject ultimately makes the object its own, and is able to recognize it as such. It develops its understanding of the object – and of itself – by expressing and communicating its experience to others.

Language, for Herder, is not only a means of expression and communication, but also a formative force that shapes human reason, our world and ourselves. Language, too, is thus very much a 'lebendiges Daseyn': it can only reveal a process that is living and concrete by being living and concrete itself. This view has important repercussions for how we are to approach and use language. Herder aims to reveal the potential of everyday language – of words such as 'Besonnenheit', 'Erfindung' and 'Merkmal' – to capture and do justice to the way in which we come to know the world, to the interaction of subject and object, of senses and understanding. Philosophy, in Herder's eyes, is to be presented in such a way that it is made 'fluid', and is not perceived as static and conclusive. It is to allow for interaction with the reader, who thus becomes actively involved in the development and unfolding of thought.

As we saw in this chapter, not only Herder's idea of experience and language as a 'lebendiges Daseyn', but also other aspects of his thought on the way experience and thought are mediated by language, suggested solutions or raised questions that are developed

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120 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, p. 431.

121 *Verstand und Erfahrung*, pp. 431-432.

and transformed in Hegel's philosophy. The most important of these are: a) reason is to come to an understanding of itself through a return to its origins: through a (dialogical) questioning of itself in which it examines and aims to develop what can be learned from the ways in which its conceptual understanding of the world is expressed in language; b) language not only acts as a vehicle but also as an obstacle to thought, so in what way can what presents itself as 'schon geformte richtige Begriffe' – in language that is already there – be interacted with so that a conceptual understanding is produced that thought can recognize as its own?; c) how can experience be categorized while doing justice to its being a fluid and constantly moving totality, and how can language help us to provide an answer to this problem?; d) what is the nature of a judgement, and how does it relate to thought as a totality?; e) how does thought limit and determine itself?; f) the importance of *Bildung* for the development of reason, and of the subject and object of knowing, into what they essentially are; and g) the idea that *Bildung* involves continuous effort ('das fortgehende Werk') and necessarily includes an aspect of alienation. In the following chapter I will discuss in what way Hegel develops a number of these issues in his early Jena writings.





## Chapter 2 Language as a medium to provoke and overcome *Entzweiung*: Hegel's thought on language in the *Jenaer Systementwürfe*

In the previous chapter, we have seen that overcoming Kantian dualisms was one of the main aims of Herder's thought. In order to do so, he argued, thought needs to turn to language in order to both bring about and reveal the unity of what is divided in Kant. Language – which, for Herder, is the reflection of the way in which (human) thought evolved – is the medium in which reason can come to an understanding of itself and of its experience. For Herder, language is not only the vehicle of thought, but also acts as its obstacle. What language can teach us is by no means self-evident, and in order to come to an understanding of what initially presents itself as 'schon geformte richtige Begriffe',<sup>1</sup> as concepts that are already there, we have to interact with them.<sup>2</sup> Yet how are we to do this? How can we critically engage with language from within, without having recourse to any external standard or method? And how can language then be shown to be the medium through which Kantian dualisms can finally be overcome? And if, as Herder claims, both reason and language are essentially an 'Allgemeines',<sup>3</sup> how exactly are we meant to understand this being an 'Allgemeinheit'? And what does an answer to this question tell us about ourselves, and about the way in which we come to know? Herder's metacritical work raised important questions, but also provided few methodological resources which could help us find an answer to those questions. In this chapter I will discuss in what way Hegel's early work on the relation between experience and thought – and the role, or, rather, the many roles played by language in their development – aims at developing answers to those questions.

In the introductory pages of his *Differenzschrift* (1801), Hegel analyzes the shortcomings of (contemporary) philosophy and gives an outline of what is to be the programme of real, or what he calls 'speculative', philosophy. The problem he discerns in the philosophical systems of his day – and his main targets are Kant and Fichte – is that, even though their aim was to present thought in a systematic fashion, they are caught up in what Hegel calls *Entzweiung*: a dualism that cannot be overcome, and because of which absolute truth remains beyond the grasp of thought: 'Entzweiung ist der Quell *des Bedürfnisses der Philosophie* und als Bildung des Zeitalters die unfreie gegebene Seite der Gestalt. In der Bildung hat sich das, was Erscheinung des Absoluten ist, vom Absoluten isoliert

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1 See ch. 1, p. 27.

2 See ch.1, e.g. p. 10 and section 1.2.4.

3 See ch. 1, p. 27.

und als ein Selbständiges fixiert.<sup>4</sup> In the determination of reality, our reflective powers produce fixed oppositions, which have always been present in philosophy, and have now only taken a new form:

Die Gegensätze, die sonst unter der Form von Geist und Materie, Seele und Leib, Glaube und Verstand, Freiheit und Notwendigkeit usw. und in eingeschränkteren Sphären noch in mancherlei Arten bedeutend waren und alle Gewichte menschlicher Interesse an sich anhängten, sind im Fortgang der Bildung in die Form der Gegensätze von Vernunft und Sinnlichkeit, Intelligenz und Natur [und], für den allgemeinen Begriff, von absoluter Subjektivität und absoluter Objektivität übergegangen.<sup>5</sup>

What philosophy should aim for – once it is aware of its need (its *Bedürfnis*) – is to overcome these oppositions: '[s]olche festgewordene Gegensätze aufzuheben, ist das einzige Interesse der Vernunft.'<sup>6</sup> This sentence not only sets a clear task for reason – or rather, states what is to be its only task – but at the same time gives an indication as to how reason is to proceed, and through which method it is to accomplish its goal, and so do justice to what it essentially is. Here already, Hegel uses 'aufheben' as a term indicative of the dialectical movement through which thought is to be developed.<sup>7</sup> <sup>03</sup> In the process of 'aufheben' the oppositions are simultaneously resolved and preserved, yet without their fixed ('festgewordene') shape. At the same time, and this aspect of Hegel's thought and method will be a central focus in this chapter, Hegel's use of 'aufheben' aims to show that we need to turn to language in order to help us overcome the 'Entzweiung': Hegel does not use 'aufheben' in a radically new way, but rather reveals that allowing the multiple meanings the word already has to be unfolded simultaneously reveals that language is a medium in which differences – different meanings – are already reconciled. It is up to us, Hegel wants us to become aware, to allow these differences to come to the fore, to become productive, and thus to allow them to contribute to the ultimate reconciliation of these opposites.

**03** Hegel's choice of words suggests that he wants to show that the meaning of 'aufheben' does not reside in its particular usage of the word, but is its true meaning, which presents itself through the dialectical movement of thought, which reveals the word as being true in its having a 'gedoppelte Bedeutung'. Revealing the dialectical movement of thought thus entails both a critical reflection on language as the medium of thought and a speculative usage of language.

4 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie in Jenaer Schriften 1801-1807 (Werke 2)*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 20. *GW IV*, p. 12.

5 Ibid., p. 21. *GW IV*, p. 13. Hegel's wording implies that the shape the oppositions used to have – such as the dualism of body and soul – at least had the advantage of having significant meaning for people, whereas the abstractions of transcendental philosophy fail to be of interest. For a detailed account of these dualisms, and their importance in the development of Hegel's argument in the *Phänomenologie*, cf. Michael Forster, Hegel's *Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), esp. pp. 23-42. On Hegel's use of the word 'Interesse', see n. 10 below.

6 Ibid., p. 21. *GW IV*, p. 13.

7 In the *Phänomenologie*, Hegel explains his use of this verb as follows: '[d]as Aufheben stellt seine wahrhafte gedoppelte Bedeutung dar, welche wir an dem Negativen gesehen haben; es ist ein *Negieren* und ein *Aufbewahren* zugleich.' *PhdG*, p. 94. *GW IX*, p. 72. A further important meaning, which seems to be at play in Hegel's concept of *Aufhebung*, is 'to raise', so that through *Aufhebung* of each phase progress is made.

Hegel thus moves beyond Herder's metacriticism by positing that (Kantian) dualisms are not just to be resolved, but are also to be taken up by thought and revealed as ultimately being an important force in the production of true thought. Already in the opening sentence of the 'Vorerinnerung' to the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel remarks on the importance of difference to thought: 'Aus den wenigen öffentlichen Äußerungen, in welchen man ein Gefühl der Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie erkennt, leuchtet mehr das Bestreben heraus, diese Verschiedenheit zu umgehen oder sie sich zu verbergen, als eine Deutlichkeit des Bewußtseins darüber.'<sup>8</sup> If difference is to be productive of the ultimate unity of all the shapes or systems in which thought presented itself, it is to be brought to light so that it is clear with what differences we have to become involved, so that they cease to be 'feste Gegensätze'.

Both *Entzweiung* and *Bedürfnis* are thus by no means seen in a purely negative way: both are presented as a precondition or source (*Quell*) from which philosophy is able to develop itself as what it truly is. What we set out with is thought in its 'unfreie gegebene Seite der Gestalt': thought that is presented as given and determinate, and which we cannot but accept. We are to become aware of what is missing in this particular shape – and what we are missing – so that we are able to transform and liberate this determinate shape by allowing the differences inherent in them – and our differences with it – to come to the fore.

In this chapter, I will argue that, for Hegel, the *Bedürfnis der Philosophie* simultaneously reveals itself as a *Bedürfnis* of, and for, language. In our becoming aware that philosophy as we know it is wanting, we simultaneously realize that (our use of) language is shown to be wanting in philosophically meaningful ways. At the same time, the need for a philosophy in which thought can ultimately be unified manifests itself, as Hegel aims to reveal, as the instigation of a process through which language itself is to become speculative, and is allowed to unfold its full potential. Language, like thought, is to be liberated from its 'unfreie gegebene Seite der Gestalt': we should become aware that language is not a finished product that we can use as a tool to think with, and which remains external to thought. Instead, it is in and through language that we can come to a comprehensive understanding of ourselves and our world. Language is to be transformed into a medium which allows for the 'Aufhebung festgewordener Gegensätze' and in which thought can come to speak for and with itself, by involving itself with all the different perspectives inherent in it.<sup>9</sup>

8 *Differenzschrift*, p. 9. *GW IV*, p. 5.

9 As Hegel continues in the 'Vorerinnerung' to the *Differenzschrift*: 'Weder die unmittelbare Ansicht beider Systeme [of Fichte and Schelling, AG], wie sie vor dem Publikum liegen, noch unter anderen die Schellingsche Beantwortung der idealistischen Einwürfe Eschenmayers gegen die Naturphilosophie hat jene Verschiedenheit zur Sprache gemacht.' (p. 9, *GW IX*, p. 5) If thought is to involve itself with its differences, they have to be 'made to speak': they have to be revealed in language.

First, I will show what, in Hegel's view, a critical reflection on (our use of) language and its development can teach us about the *Bedürfnisse* of thought language confronts us with, and also on the shortcomings in the ways in which we use language. I will argue that Hegel aims to reveal that such a reflection will produce an awareness that language can act as a means to use these shortcomings productively, and to overcome the *Entzweiung* by bringing about a unity in which difference has been made fluid and productive. For Hegel, language has an essentially duplicitous and oxymoronic character, always has a 'gedoppelte Bedeutung', with which we have to involve ourselves to produce its – and our – potential. Language will also be revealed to be a generality (*Allgemeinheit*) in which we – by interacting with it – can come to an understanding of ourselves as essentially belonging to a generality, of being part of *Geist* as an intersubjective entity, as the 'Interesse' of reason.<sup>10</sup> In doing so, we will simultaneously develop a more concrete understanding of what concepts such as *Allgemeinheit* – that we initially took to be 'schon geformte richtige Begriffe', but which, as such, proved to be empty abstractions – involve.

## 2.1 The language thinking starts with and its challenges

In the 'Vorerinnerung' to the *Differenzschrift*,<sup>04</sup> Hegel makes the following remark concerning the starting point of philosophy, and in doing so simultaneously alerts us to (initial) 'Bedürfnis' of the concept of *Allgemeinheit*:

Was die allgemeine Reflexionen, womit diese Schrift anfängt, über Bedürfnis, Voraussetzung, Grundsätze usw. der Philosophie betrifft, so haben sie den Fehler, allgemeine Reflexionen zu sein, und ihre Veranlassung, daß mit solchen Formen als Voraussetzung, Grundsätzen usw. der Eingang in die Philosophie noch immer übersponnen und verdeckt wird und es daher im gewissen Grade nötig ist, sich darauf einzulassen, bis einmal durchaus nur von der Philosophie selbst die Rede ist."<sup>11</sup>

**04** 'Vorerinnerung' is rather an odd and not very widely used word, according to the respective lemmas in *DWB* and *Adelung*. In its usual denotation – and this is how Hegel's contemporary readers would be likely to interpret the word – it is a term for an introduction in which the reader is reminded of important aspects of the subject. However, the word is also suggestive of something that can be remembered, or made into something that we belong to, before we actually know what it is we need to remember or make our own, which is in line with what Hegel claims in the passage that is quoted above, where he discusses the problem of using philosophical terms while presupposing that their meaning is already clear, and the unreflected use of which thus unnecessarily obfuscates our understanding. 'Vorerinnerung' can in this sense be considered an *oxymoron*, and in what follows I want to argue that it is precisely the oxymoronic character of our everyday language – because of which language initially obscures but ultimately reveals its meaning, and presents itself as an expression of the Absolute as the original identity of opposites – that Hegel wants to bring to the fore, and use productively in order to make thought transparent to itself. Ultimately, we will come to realize that in the 'Vorerinnerung' we are reminded of what is already there, and of which we already are a part, but which has not yet been developed into concrete reality. Only then are we able to truly and fully internalize ('erinnern') what we have already been presented with.

10 As, in the sentence quoted above (p. 34), Hegel's use of the word 'Interesse' not only implies that it is important to reason that it sublate its 'festgewordene Gegensätze', but also that, in doing so, reason is revealed as being an 'interesse' – a medium to which different perspectives belong and in which they are to interact.

11 *Differenzschrift*, pp. 13-14. *GW IV*, p. 8. Hegel, in this passage, clearly hints at the contemporary debate on the foundation of the system of (Kant's) philosophy. The main spokesman at the time was Karl Leonard Reinhold, whose work Hegel directly addresses in the *Differenzschrift*.

This sentence starts with an apparently tautological statement (or circular argument): the ‘allgemeine Reflexionen’ suffer from the problem of being precisely that: general reflections.<sup>12</sup> What Hegel wants to achieve with this sentence is to make us think about the nature of a general reflection, and to show that as soon as we do so, we come to understand that its meaning is different from what we take it to mean. The problem with any start in philosophy, Hegel argues, is that we start with something that can only be accepted on the basis of authority, but does not yet have any concrete meaning, and thus cannot properly be understood. The general remarks can only be taken for granted, but in our becoming aware that what we do is merely accept them on the assumption that their meaning is self-evident – and that more work needs to be done – we come to realize that ‘allgemein’ is precisely not that what it claims to be. Initially, for Hegel, ‘allgemein’ refers to a generality that is still abstract, something that is not yet understood as we have not yet actively involved ourselves with it.<sup>13</sup> In this initial ‘Allgemeinheit’, philosophy – and language – is not yet something that is truly common (*gemein*) to us all, which is why at this stage we cannot say that ‘von der Philosophie selbst die Rede ist.’<sup>14</sup> Hegel adds that we have to involve ourselves (‘einlassen’) only to a certain extent (‘in gewissem Grade’) with the reflections and the vocabulary we start with, implying that it is equally important to let thought, and the language we use to express thought, run its own course, and to allow it to develop gradually and organically into a medium that can ‘speak for itself’.<sup>15</sup>

12 Hegel was a great champion of the circular argument, in which the beginning is always a *Voraussetzung*, and can ultimately only be justified by the end. In thought’s returning to itself, what presents itself as (an object of) thought will have developed itself as what it is. On this aspect, see e.g. Tom Rockmore, *Before and After Hegel: A Historical Introduction to Hegel’s Thought* (Indianapolis/ Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), pp. 61–62.

13 In the opening pages of the *Geist* section in the *Phänomenologie*, Hegel describes this process vividly: ‘Als die *Substanz* ist der Geist die unwankende, gerechte *Sichselbstgleichheit*; aber als *Fürsichsein* ist sie das aufgelöste, das sich aufopfernde gütige Wesen, an dem jeder sein eigenes Werk vollbringt, das allgemeine Sein zerreißt und sich seinem Teil davon nimmt. Diese Auflösung und Vereinzelung des Wesens ist eben das *Moment* des Tuns und Selbsts Aller; es ist die Bewegung und Seele der Substanz und das bewirkte allgemeine Wesen. Gerade darin, daß sie das im Selbst aufgelöste Sein ist, ist sie nicht das tote Wesen, sondern *wirklich und lebendig*.’ *PhdG*, p. 325. *GW IX*, p. 239.

14 Hegel’s claim is that in absolute knowing, thought will be in full possession of itself, in a language that will have completely developed its speculative potential, and which will thus also completely belong to philosophy. Whether this claim implies that language will ultimately be fully transparent is an important question, to which I will return at a later stage.

15 This idea – that the objects of thought have to be interacted with in such a way that these objects are also allowed to develop themselves (through a process of *Selbstdarstellung*) as what they are in themselves – was to remain a dominant element of Hegel’s thought. Cf. *Enz. II*, § 246, Zusatz, p. 22: ‘das begreifende Erkennen ist die Mitte, in welcher die Allgemeinheit nicht ein Diesseits in mir gegen die Einzelheit der Gegenstände bleibt, sondern indem es sich negativ gegen die Dinge verhält und sich dieselben assimiliert, findet es die Einzelheit ebenso darin, läßt die Dinge gewähren und sich frei in sich bestimmen.’ On the other hand, as Hegel also insists, the objects of thought can only develop their true nature if this freedom is limited by the dialectical development of thought, rather than being allowed to run loose and develop into something that is only contingently connected to what these objects are in themselves. See *PhdG*, p. 18, *GW IX*, p. 14, where ‘das begrifflose substantielle Wissen’ (that merely believes in a ‘Ding an sich’, and sees it as an unattainable ‘Jenseits’, rather than an object that can be developed into something that can be known) is accused of only being able to develop itself and its objects according to its own whims, as it spurns the determination of thought: ‘wenn dies begrifflose substantielle Wissen die *Eigenheit* des Selbsts in dem Wesen versenkt zu haben und wahr und heilig zu philosophieren vorgibt, so verbirgt er sich dies, daß es, statt dem Gotte ergeben zu sein, durch die Verschmähung des Maßes und der Bestimmung vielmehr

Throughout his work, Hegel shows that the problem of an abstract generality in need of further development can be observed in language both at a semantic level – in studying how the words we use are related to reality – and at the level of syntax – by looking at the way in which the structure of language is related to the structure of thought and the structure of reality. Furthermore, it is Hegel's aim to make us aware that language is a manifestation of spirit ('Dasein des Geistes'<sup>16</sup>), in the sense that it is a depository of the historical shapes of *Geist*, but also in its being the medium in which *Geist* manifests itself as an intersubjective entity that allows for active *Anerkennung* of ourselves and what is (initially) perceived as other-than-ourselves. It is in all of these senses that the potential of language – which initially presents itself as a *Bedürfnis* – will have to be developed.

In his early texts, and especially in the *Jenaer Systementwürfe*, Hegel is mainly occupied with the way in which consciousness initially tries to grasp its experience, and the problems it faces when it aims to express this experience and develop it into thought, but, as we will see below, he also related this discussion to language-related issues – such as a speculative use of language and language as the 'Dasein des Geistes' – he was to develop more fully in the *Phänomenologie*.

## 2.2 Hegel's discussion of language in the *Jenaer Systementwürfe*

### 2.2.1 Language in the initial stages of consciousness: signing and naming

Hegel's early texts on the philosophy of spirit, which form the second part of what was later published as the *Jenaer Systementwürfe*,<sup>17</sup> were written between 1803 and 1806, while Hegel was lecturing in Jena. The manuscripts mainly consist of lecture notes and were not meant for publication. As these texts are drafts, they are not to be read as conclusive statements,<sup>18</sup> but rather as texts which allow us illuminating insights in the way Hegel's thought evolved. They are of special interest to this study as they contain some

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nur bald in sich selbst die Zufälligkeit des Inhalts, bald in ihm die eigene Willkür gewähren läßt.' Cf. also Herder's use of 'bewähren', see e.g. *Verstand und Erfahrung* p. 132.

16 Cf. *PhdG*, pp. 478-479. *GW IX*, p. 351.

17 The first part deals with philosophy of nature.

18 In fact, Hegel did not want any of his works to be read as 'conclusive statements'. Throughout his work, he argues against seeing *Wissenschaft* as a collection of results, of goals that have been achieved. See e.g. the Vorrede to the *Phänomenologie*: 'die Sache ist nicht in ihrem Zwecke erschöpft, sondern in ihrer Ausführung, noch ist das Resultat das wirkliche Ganze, sondern es zusammen mit seinem Werden' (*PhdG*, p. 13, *GW IX*, p. 10). 'Werden' is not to be interpreted as referring only to the path that led up to a particular goal, but as the continuous explication of 'die Sache', of the object of knowing. A result, for Hegel, even though it is the latest step in the development of knowing, is never to be viewed as final. See also *WdLI*, p. 36: 'Nicht nur aber die Angabe der wissenschaftlichen Methode, sondern auch der Begriff selbst der Wissenschaft überhaupt gehört zur ihren [of logic, AG] Inhalte, und zwar macht er ihr letztes Resultat aus; was sie ist, kann sie aber nicht voraussagen, sondern ihre ganze Abhandlung bringt dies Wissen von ihr selbst erst als ihr Letztes und als ihre Vollendung hervor.' Cf. also *Enz. I*, p. 13, or § 13.



of the most explicit discussions of language and its relation to thought in Hegel's work.<sup>19</sup> Besides, as we will see below, these texts already give us an intriguing view of the way Hegel's style and use of philosophical vocabulary developed, and how such a vocabulary – or, indeed, any vocabulary –<sup>20</sup> can be used in philosophically meaningful ways.

In the 1803/1804 version of the *Jenaer Systementwürfe*, Hegel sets out by discussing the nature of consciousness. In consciousness, spirit distinguishes itself from nature and, in reflecting on what it has been separated from, turns nature into a world that is ideal, and, as such, is accessible to thought.<sup>21</sup>

Sein Seyn überhaupt ist es zuerst, wie es in sich selbst die Reflexion setzt, die bisher die unsrige war, daß es die *Idealität der Natur* ist; oder ist zuerst in negativer Beziehung auf die Natur, und in dieser negativen Beziehung existirt es als bezogen auf die Natur selbst innerhalb derselben, und die Weise seiner Existenz ist nicht eine Besonderheit eine Einzelheit der Natur, sondern ein allgemeines der Natur ein Element der Natur; die Elemente in denen es [als] Mitte existirt sind nur die Elemente der Luft und der Erde, als die indifferenten sich selbst gleichen Elemente nicht der Unruhe des Feuers und Wassers; denn es ist nur als absolut sich selbstgleiches, und als existirende Mitte ist es selbst gesetzt, als eine ruhige indifferente Mitte.<sup>22</sup>

This very long and complicated sentence reveals many aspects of how Hegel views the initial stages of the development of spirit (*Geist*) as consciousness. First of all, in the coming to be (*Seyn*) of consciousness as such, nature is developed into an independent generality ('ein allgemeines der Natur'), through which its being can no longer be considered fully as belonging to consciousness, but has also become something distinct – both from that which is conscious (from us, the empirical subject of consciousness or 'das bewustseyende'<sup>23</sup>) and the object of consciousness – and which now belongs to consciousness itself ('sein Seyn').<sup>24</sup> At this early stage of *Geist*'s development consciousness is still indifferent to what it has distinguished itself from, and it will have to further

19 On the nature of these texts, see Daniel J. Cook, *Language in the Philosophy of Hegel* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), pp. 28-29, Surber, *Hegel and Language*, pp. 10-11, and Terry Pinkard, *Hegel* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), pp. 172-202.

20 As I will discuss in more detail in the chapters on the *Phänomenologie*, Hegel's use of language aimed at blurring the boundaries between what is seen as everyday language – belonging to natural consciousness – and what is taken to be philosophical language, in order to overcome the *Entzweiung* perceived between the two. There is just one language – and we are to use it in such a way that its philosophical potential is realized.

21 The transition from nature to spirit was also a dominant theme for Schelling and Hölderlin. On Schelling's ideas on language as the mediation between the two (the 'Subject-Object'), and his influence on Hegel, see Surber, *Hegel and Language*, pp. 8-9. Hölderlin's style also reverberates in these texts, as I will discuss on p. 40.

22 Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe I (Gesammelte Werke, Band VI)*, hrsg. Klaus Düsing und Heinz Kimmerle (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1975), p. 276.

23 Ibid., p. 275.

24 Hegel already at this early stage in his work uses personal pronouns (*sein*, *mein*) in a very suggestive way, in order to try and develop the speculative potential of language. This aspect will be elaborated on in the discussion of the 'Sinnliche Gewißeheit' section in the *Phänomenologie*.

interact with itself – with that which is now seen as other-than-itself – in order to come to an explication and understanding of itself, which, as we will see, demands that consciousness expresses its particular experience in language.

Hegel's wording in this sentence reveals that this interaction has not yet started and that as yet ('zuerst') we only have an awareness of consciousness *an sich*. In order to emphasize the gradual character of the experience through which *Geist* comes to ever higher levels of self-understanding, Hegel frequently makes use of words such as 'zuerst' and 'noch'. A further striking aspect of this sentence is its paratactical structure, in which the parts are connected by conjunctions such as 'sondern', 'und' and 'oder', and which thus stand in an insubordinate relation to each other. This aspect of Hegel's style – which he used abundantly and with great effect in the *Phänomenologie* ('oder, was dasselbe ist') – may have been inspired by Friedrich Hölderlin, who dismissed the hypotactical style (in which phrases are subordinated to a main clause), and used parataxis with great effect in extremely long, convoluting sentences.<sup>25</sup> Hölderlin rejects the hypotactical style as it implies a dichotomy between form and content, while in his eyes content and form should be an organic whole, which unfolds in the act of reading. The 'logic' of a sentence is not a thing apart from its content, but should also be seen as a process, in which there is continuous interplay between words and phrases.<sup>26</sup> The suggestion of Hegel's use of parataxis is that order cannot be provided in advance, as a model to which the parts have to be subjugated, but that all parts are equally important in making up the whole, and that in each part of the sentence we come to realize a different aspect of the totality. All aspects, all the moments are necessary to produce a unified whole, in which the parts continue to interact.

A further striking aspect of Hegel's language in the sentence quoted above is its use of words that can be read metaphorically, such as 'Feuer' and 'Wasser', but also 'Mitte'.<sup>27</sup>

25 On Hölderlin's possible influence on Hegel's style and alleged obscurity, see also Terry Pinkard, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 137-138. See also Adorno's essay 'Parataxis' (pp. 460-461), a discussion of Hölderlin's later work (and a decisive dismissal of Heidegger's interpretation of Hölderlin) in which Adorno occasionally points at similarities between Hegel's style and Hölderlin's, e.g. in the following, rather flippant remark: 'Auch die Hegelsche [Form, AG] befolgt keineswegs stets die Norm des Diskursiven, welche in Philosophie für so fraglos angesehen wird wie in Dichtung die Art Anschaulichkeit, der die Verfahrungsweise des späteren Hölderlin opponierte. Texte Hegels, die etwa um die gleiche Zeit geschrieben wurden, scheuen nicht Passagen, welche die ältere Literaturhistorie leicht Hölderlins Wahnsinn hätte zurechnen können.' Adorno then cites a passage from the *Differenzschrift* (pp. 22-23), which I briefly discuss in ch. 4, p. 115. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Parataxis' in *Noten zur Literatur* (Gesammelte Schriften, Band 11), hrsg. Rolf Tiedeman (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), pp. 447-491.

26 In one of his 'Aphorismen', Hölderlin explains his preference, and comments on what he calls a logical ordering of words or periods, and remarks: '[d]ie logische Stellung der Perioden, wo dem Grunde (der Grundperiode) das Werden, dem Werden das Ziel, dem Ziele der Zweck folgt, und die Nebensätze immer nur hinten an gehängt sind an die Hauptsätze worauf sie sich zunächst beziehen, – ist dem Dichter gewiß nur höchst selten brauchbar.' In: J.Ch.F. Hölderlin, *Theoretische Schriften*, hrsg. Johann Kreuzer (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1998), p. 17.

27 The most likely meaning of 'Mitte' in this sentence is a means, or medium, but the word is also suggestive of a forum, an *agora* in which opinions can be exchanged, and in which (a) people can find self-expression. *Sein as Mitte* through which what is *an sich* can be further developed is also suggestive of Hegel's criticism



Although consciousness – through the act of reflection – has come to exist as a generality, or means, through which we can possibly come to an understanding of who we – as *Geist* – are, it is a *Mitte* which is still indifferent, and in which we have to start showing an interest in order to come to such an understanding. The initial indifference of consciousness is further reinforced by Hegel's remark that as *Mitte*, consciousness exists only ('nur') in the elements of air and earth – as metaphors for subjective *Geist* and substantial nature – which as yet find themselves opposed to each other, and are unable to interact without the aid of the 'Unruhe des Feuers und Wassers'.<sup>28</sup> In order to make this happen, *Geist* as consciousness will also have to give itself a concrete substantial nature, and no longer just remain in its element of air, as a 'nicht festes, sondern im seinen Erscheinen *Verschwindendes*'.<sup>29</sup> It is in and through language – and later through work and family –<sup>30</sup> that this occurs: 'Jene erste gebundene Existenz des Bewußtseyns als *Mitte* ist sein Seyn als Sprache, als Werkzeug, und das Gut. Oder als einfaches Einsseyn, Gedächtniß Arbeit und Familie.'<sup>31</sup> In language we find ourselves 'bound' to a substantial unity in and through which we are able to express ourselves and to communicate with others,<sup>32</sup> but we also find ourselves bound by this unity. We find that in language (and work and family), reality takes on a fixed and objective nature that is not only

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of Kant's notion of the *a priori*. See e.g. *Glauben und Wissen*, where Kant is chastised for not daring to develop the potential of the synthetic *a priori* as the original identity of opposites, and because of which thinking is to remain formal, and incapable of producing any real content: 'Um dieser Weigerung willen [Kant's refusal to see the *a priori* as an original identity of opposites, AG] bleibt ihr nichts übrig als die reine Leerheit der Identität, welche die Vernunft bloß im Urtheil betrachtet als das für sich seiende reine Allgemeine, d.h. das Subjektive, wie es in seinem von der Mannigfaltigkeit völlig gereinigten Zustand als reine abstrakte Einheit zustande kommt.' In *Glauben und Wissen in Jenaer Schriften 1801-1807, Werke 2* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp. 316-317. *GW IV*, p. 335. For Kant, Hegel argues, *Sein* is merely a copula, an empty link. Cf. *Glauben und Wissen*, p. 307. *GW IX*, pp. 328-329. Hegel's reflections on the nature of *Seyn* as verb, and the nature of sentences of the form *A=B*, will be discussed extensively in a later section, also in relation to Hegel's remarks on the speculative sentence.

28 Ultimately, as Hegel already intimates in the next paragraph, when consciousness has been fully developed, it has freed itself from existing within the sphere of the four determined elements and has come into its own in the absolute, quintessential element of ether, through which it is simultaneously the soul, or the motor through which the totality is organized into a unity: 'Indem das Bewußtseyn aber absolut frei für sich ist, so entreißt es sich dieser seiner Existenz in den bestimmten Elementen und sein Element ist nur das absolute Element des Äthers.' (*GW VI*, p. 277) Cf. the *Vorrede* to the *Phänomenologie*: 'Das reine Selbst-erkennen im absoluten Anderssein, dieser Äther *als solcher*, ist der Grund und Boden der Wissenschaft oder das *Wissen im allgemeinen*. Der Anfang der Philosophie macht die Voraussetzung oder Forderung, daß das Bewußtsein sich in diesem *Elemente* befinde. Aber dieses Element erhält seine Vollendung und Durchsichtigkeit selbst nur durch die Bewegung seines Werdens. (p. 29) Again, Hegel makes clear that philosophy can only truly be in 'its element' after it has been fully developed. The foundation ('Grund und Boden') of philosophy is not something we can start with in order to build a system, but can only be fully grasped when all its manifestations have been completely interacted with and understood. In absolute knowing, we will see that the apparent oxymoron ('Äther [...] ist der Grund und Boden') will have been dissolved into a knowing that has clarified itself (whether this implies that it is now fully transparent will be discussed at a later stage).

29 *GW VI*, p. 277.

30 Although we can also read most of the words in this sentence as modifying the ways in which language manifests itself. Language is, Hegel's discussion will reveal, both medium and tool, involves and reflects the 'Arbeit des Begriffs', is – and is not – 'einfaches Einsseyn' – and allows us to remember and recognize what presents itself in experience.

31 *GW VI*, p. 277.

32 The link with work and family further reinforces the social nature of language.

determined by us, but also reveals itself as an other, an objective world to which we do not belong and which we are determined by,<sup>33</sup> and because of which we are not entirely at liberty to express ourselves freely.<sup>34</sup> Hegel's use of metaphor can be seen as an instigation to make consciousness aware of the need to liberate language from its being an 'other', and of its (initially) appearing to us as having a fixed and determinate meaning.<sup>35</sup> Consciousness is thus challenged to interact in such a way with its 'gebundene Existenz' that the strictures it feels limited by are made fluid rather than fixed,<sup>36</sup> and that ultimately – through expressing itself to others and engaging with other perspectives – it can come to recognize itself in the language it initially feels opposed to, '*in der Sprache von andern, zu denen er spricht*'.<sup>37</sup>

Through interaction with its 'gebundene Existenz', consciousness is thus allowed to come to an understanding and recognition of itself, but also to experience what it truly means to be part of a generality. In being actively involved in *Geist*, consciousness has an immediate awareness of its motivating force and inspirational 'fire'.<sup>38</sup> From the outset, Hegel not only sees *Geist* as an object through which we can come to an understanding of who and what we are, but also as a means which allows us to feel what it means to be taken up into a unity and contribute to its development, an aspect that is eloquently stressed by Stekeler-Weithofer in his commentary on the *Phänomenologie*:

Der absolute Geist also sind *wir selbst*, aber nicht als bloße Ansammlung oder Menge von Einzelpersonen, als bloßes distributives Kollektiv, sondern als eine

33 As Surber shows, this aspect of Hegel's account of language, as a 'Janus-faced' mediation between nature and spirit, is inspired by Schelling's view of language as the 'paradigmatic "Subject-Object"'. See Surber, pp. 8-11.

34 As language presents us with, as Herder puts it, 'schon geformte richtige Begriffe', in which we do not yet recognize ourselves.

35 Metaphors – in their presenting an object of thought by means of an unexpected *Vorstellung* – thus allow us to understand that what we take to be a 'fixed and determinate' is indeed an outward representation, with which we have to interact in order to produce the truth. Cf. Hegel's remark in the *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*: 'ein [...] Grund für das Metaphorische liegt darin, daß der Geist, wenn ihn seine innere Bewegung in die Anschauung verwandter Gegenstände vertieft, sich zugleich von der Äußerlichkeit derselben befreien will.' *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I (Werke 13)*, p. 522.

36 And in doing so do justice to being in the element of water.

37 *GW VI*, p. 277: 'Aber in Wahrheit ist Sprache, Werkzeug, Familiengut nicht bloß die eine Seite des Gegensatzes, das dem sich als das Bewußte Setzenden Entgegengesetzte, sondern ebenso auf ihn bezogen; und die Mitte, das, worin er sich von seinem wahren Gegensatze abscheidet, *in der Sprache von andern, zu denen er spricht* [...]. Er ist als Tätiges. Diese Mitten sind nicht das, wogegen er tätig, nicht gegen *Sprache, Werkzeug* als solches, sondern die Mitte oder, wie es genannt wird, das Mittel, wodurch, *durch welches* hindurch er gegen ein anderes tätig ist.' This passage again shows Hegel's paratactical style (cf. p. 40 above), and his predilection for place adverbials (e.g. 'durch welches hindurch'). On this latter aspect, which emphasizes the aspect of interactive involvement as a thorough-going movement, see also section 3.4.4 ('wir kommen hierdurch dahin'). Hegel also already intimates that 'Werkzeug' and 'Mittel' are not external to knowing but form an integral part of it. Cf. the introduction to the *Phänomenologie*, p. 68. *GW IX*, p. 53.

38 An aspect that, as we saw in chapter one, is also present in Herder. He argues that an immediate feeling of enjoyment – a 'Genuß des Geistes' – is linked to the use of our cognitive powers. Cf. ch. 1, pp. 11-14. For Hegel, such a feeling – as we saw in the quotation above – is not so much linked to the use of our cognitive powers, but rather to our being actively involved in a generality, in *Geist* as an intersubjective unity.

Gemeinschaft, in welcher die Formen der Vernunft, um es *pars pro toto* zu sagen, zu einer einheitlichen Menschheit verbunden sind. Diese Gemeinschaft sind wir selbst. Sie transzendiert jedes Einzelnen. Diese Gemeinschaft wird in Religion, Kunst und Philosophie nicht bloß als Gegenstand eines Wissens thematisch, sondern als *expressiv zu feiernde Form gemeinsamen Lebens*, die uns allererst zu denen macht, die wir sind und sein können.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, Hegel's most immediate interest in his early philosophy of spirit is the way consciousness attempts to process and express its experience of the world, which initially is through non-verbal signs rather than words.

### 2.2.2 The first expression of consciousness: sign-making

Hegel continues his discussion of language as the first 'potency' (*Potenz*<sup>40</sup>) of thought by returning to the initial stages of consciousness, in which its sensual awareness of the world (in *Empfindung*) is made ideal. An important difference with the discussion in the *Bewußtsein* section of the *Phänomenologie* is that in the *Jenaer Systementwürfe* Hegel also gives an account of the prelinguistic stage of consciousness' attempts to grasp and express its experience of the world it is distinguished from.<sup>41</sup> At this point consciousness is still pure subjectivity and as such is empty and dreamlike: 'das Bewußtseyn als diese empirische Einbildungskraft ist *ein leeres, wahrheitsloses, wachendes, oder schlafendes Träumen*.'<sup>42</sup> What is sensed is made into something other than the object of the sensual experience, but which, as yet, has not been externalized, and is thus doomed to remain purely subjective: 'Dieses *formale Seyn* des Bewußtseyns hat keine wahrhaftte *Realität, es ist etwas subjectives, es existirt nicht äusserlich*.'<sup>43</sup> The *Mitte*, in which consciousness posits the world that is sensed as ideal, is not yet language at this stage; consciousness is still 'dumb' (*stumm*). The only means available to consciousness to take hold of the world it finds itself opposed to is signification:

39 Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. I, p. 58.

40 'Potenz' is an important concept in Schelling's philosophy, and refers to the powers or potencies through which nature gradually develops itself in a series of evolving levels of being ('Stufen') in each of which a previous level is further developed. Hegel uses 'Potenz' as the heading of the section in which the forms in which the 'gebundene Existenz des Geistes' manifests itself are discussed, and language is the first of those. In the later version of the *Jenaer Systementwürfe*, Hegel abandoned Schellingian vocabulary in order to (further) develop his own.

41 Of course, in the sense-certainty section, consciousness is also invited to present its particular truth through pointing ('zeigen'), but this takes place after its initial attempts to express what it takes to be its certainties in language have failed.

42 *GW VI*, p. 285. Cf. Herder on consciousness' 'waking up' in and through language (e.g. *Abhandlung*, p. 32). Cf. also *GW VIII*, p. 190: 'sein [of *Geist*, AG] Erwachen ist das Reich der Nahmen.'

43 *GW VI*, p. 285. Like Herder, Hegel aims to develop an answer to Kant's formalism by insisting that consciousness can only develop its experience by being actively involved in the world and by expressing its experience.

Das Bewußtseyn als diese existirende Mitte seines Begriffs ist daher nur Zeichen überhaupt, worin ein angeschautes, als ein aus seinem Zusammenhange gerissenes, als auf ein anderes bezogen gesetzt wird, aber ideell, daß es noch in Wahrheit in seinem Zusammenhange besteht; die Bezeichnung ist seine ausser ihm seyende Idealität, und dieses ist selbst ein bestehendes, *ein Ding*, unendlich darin, das aber eine andere Bedeutung hat, als es ist, gesetzt als ein anderes als es für sich ist; zufällig für das dessen Zeichen es ist; für sich nicht mehr es selbst seyend. So wenig das aufgehobenseyn des Angeschauten im Zeichen ist, ebenso wenig ist das Aufgehobenseyn des Subjects in ihm gesetzt, die Bedeutung des Zeichens ist nur in Beziehung auf das Subject; es hängt von seiner Willkühr ab, und ist nur durch das Subject selbst begreiflich was dieses sich dabey denkt; es hat nicht seine absolute Bedeutung in ihm selbst, d.h. das Subject ist in ihm nicht aufgehoben.<sup>44</sup>

In its attempts to make the world that is intuited ('angeschaut') its own, consciousness turns the object that is intuited into a sign with which it marks reality – so that it is able to recognize the object –<sup>45</sup> but this process of signification does not allow for any development of either subject or object that truly teaches us anything about their respective nature. In the process of signification consciousness gets hold of an object by separating it from its context and placing it in a different context by linking it to a sign of its own making. The arbitrary nature of the sign thus has no real link to what it signifies ('zufällig für das dessen Zeichen es ist'), and what is signified can therefore not be further developed in any meaningful way (through which its nature is truly 'aufgehoben' in a meaning that is accessible to others) in the sense that the object can be recognized as itself and not as something completely different from, and indifferent to, its true nature.<sup>46</sup> The same holds true for the subject, which is similarly still locked up in a world that has no meaning beyond that which it has arbitrarily assigned to it, and has therefore not been able to develop its own nature – and thus go beyond its being purely subjective – by means of the sign.<sup>47</sup>

44 GW VI, pp. 286-287.

45 In this sentence I use 'recognize' in the sense of 'being able to perceive something as familiar', but not in the sense of acknowledgement, of *Anerkennung*, as it is precisely Hegel's point that, at this stage of consciousness' development, this is not possible, as there is no *Mitte* in which communication can take place. Cf. Katrin Pahl's lucid discussion of 'Acknowledging' in her *Tropes of Transport: Hegel and Emotion* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2012), pp. 120-151. For Herder – as was discussed in ch.1, pp. 6-8 – our coming to know through the activity of 'Besinnung' also involved 'Anerkennung' in the moral sense.

46 And is thus different from Herder's 'Merkmal', which does allow for development since it involves both subject and object. Cf. ch. 1, pp. 6-8.

47 Hegel's remarks on the speculative sentence also focus on this aspect of the sublation (*Aufhebung*) of the subject. In the speculative sentence, however, this sublation occurs mainly at a syntactic level, whereas here Hegel's perspective is semantic. It is difficult to make complete sense of Cook's rendering of the final clause of the passage quoted above. Cook indicates that Hegel gives no concrete examples of what the 'prelinguistic signs' may be, but that they would probably be 'natural objects to which ideal (non-natural) meanings are attributed [...]'. Such things as trees, snakes and eggs might qualify. Certain natural properties or configurations are taken over and used by consciousness when it invents its "sign language"; it is for this reason that Hegel concludes this section by stating that the sign-object "does not have its absolute meaning in itself, that is, Nature (viz., its natural properties) is not transcended in it." See Cook, p. 32.

Signmaking is an important instigation for consciousness to embark on the journey that will ultimately lead to absolute knowing.<sup>48</sup> It is an indication of the *Bedürfnis* felt by consciousness when it becomes aware of its being separated from its object, but is also what makes consciousness feel an even greater *Bedürfnis*, which is a need for language in which it can express, communicate and further develop itself.

Although Hegel does use the word 'denken' for what goes on in consciousness at this point, it may be questioned whether it is possible to speak of thought at this stage of consciousness' development, since at this level 'denken' is nothing but a mental activity that allows consciousness to recognize a particular object. It is not yet thought in the sense of unifying, or interacting with, what initially presents itself by means of concepts, through which *Geist* is able to come to an understanding both of the world and itself. In order for thought to take place, therefore, it appears that we need to express our experience in language.

### 2.2.3 From signs to names

In going beyond the 'mute signification' ('stumme Bezeichnung'), consciousness turns the meaning of the sign – its being a means through which consciousness is able to recognize a particular object – into something that also exists for itself, and as such is accessible to another consciousness: 'die *Bedeutung* muß für sich seyn; entgegengesetzt dem, das bedeutet, und dem, für welches es die Bedeutung hat; und das Zeichen als ein wirkliches unmittelbar verschwinden. Die Idee dieser Existenz des Bewußtseyns ist das *Gedächtnis*, und seiner Existenz selbst, die *Sprache*.'<sup>49</sup> It is in and through language that what is sensed in intuition can be developed into something that is – and can be – not only remembered and recognized, but truly thought ('gedacht'). In his explanation Hegel elaborates on (and in doing so corrects) his rather careless use of the word 'denken' in

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Apart from the fact that 'to transcend' does not do full justice to 'aufheben' – as in the process of *Aufhebung* (see n. 03) all of the stages in which an object presents itself are not merely left behind and discarded in order to 'go beyond' these stages, but are both negated and taken up and further developed in order to reach a truer and more complete version of the object under scrutiny – it is doubtful whether the 'Subject' can refer to nature (albeit in its idealized, and as yet, subjective form), especially in the light of the preceding clauses, in which it is the pure subjectivity of consciousness that links 'das Angeschaute' (the object that is intuited) to an arbitrary sign. Cook does have a point that in 'abstract' and 'non-natural' conventional language signs, such as the letters of the alphabet or mathematical symbols, nature is transcended, but that does not seem to be the main thrust of Hegel's argument in this passage. However, as we will see below, language as a means to fully abstract what is to be thought from what is presented in the senses will become an important aspect of Hegel's discussion of the difference between signs and names.

48 Cf. Cook, pp. 32-33: 'Signmaking is the first expression of consciousness' attempt to overcome its alienation from the world about it. [...] The making of an object into a sign, into An-other-than-it-is-for-itself, is the crucial first step consciousness takes on the road towards objective Spirit and, finally, absolute knowledge. This attribution of meaning to various natural objects – and the concomitant recognition of the resultant change in consciousness' self-awareness – is the basis for Hegel's theory concerning the dialectical nature of experience.'

49 *GW VI*, p. 287.

the previous paragraph: 'Das *Gedächtniß*, die *Mnemosyne der Alten*, ist seiner wahren Bedeutung nach, nicht dieses, daß Anschauung oder was er sey, die Producte des Gedächtnisses selbst in dem allgemeinen Elemente seyen, und aus ihm hervorgerufen, es auf eine formale Weise, die den Inhalt nichts angeht, besonders werde; sondern daß es das *was wir sinnliche Anschauung genannt haben*, zur *GedächtnisSache*, zu einem gedachten macht'.<sup>50</sup> Not only does Hegel correct himself, but this passage can also be seen as an implicit comment on Kant: Hegel's critical attitude with regard to Kant's concept of 'Anschauung' becomes apparent in the flippant subjunctive 'oder was er sey'. 'Anschauung' in Kant's project, Hegel suggests, does not allow for any real, concrete development – such as suggested by Hegel's usual phrase 'oder, was dasselbe ist' – but only for a hypothetical unfolding.<sup>51</sup> The 'wir' in Hegel's sentence appears to refer to the Kantian position, or rather to knowing in the shape of the Kantian perspective. Identifying with a position subsequently allows for its development, and is a strategy that Hegel, as we will see,<sup>52</sup> will make much use of.

Language is the element that is truly general ('allgemein') in that what is remembered, or 'called up' ('hervorgerufen'),<sup>53</sup> in consciousness is not a sign divorced from any content we can relate to ('den Inhalt nichts angeht'<sup>54</sup>) but, through its externalization, is accessible to all.<sup>55</sup> Consciousness is able to become a reality in expressing itself through names rather than signs: 'Hierin [in the 'Gedächtnissache', AG] erhält das Bewußtseyn erst seine Realität, daß an dem nur in Raum und Zeit Idealen, d.h. das Anderssein außer sich Habenden diese Beziehung nach außen vernichtet und es für sich selbst ideell gesetzt werde, daß es zu einem *Nahmen* werde. Im *Nahmen* ist sein empirisches Seyn

50 *GW VI*, p. 287. *Mnemosyne* is the Greek goddess of memory, who is also seen as the inventress of language. 'Gedächtniß' can refer to that which is remembered or to the act or faculty of remembering (similar to the English 'remembrance'). Hegel further develops the potential of this word by alerting us to its being rooted in 'denken' (as are the Dutch 'herdenken', '(na)gedachtenis' or 'aandenken'). On the importance of this concept for idealist thought, cf. Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism*, ed. David S. Pacini (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. xxxi ff. Hegel's point is that if we allow 'Gedächtniß' to reveal its true meaning ('wahre Bedeutung'), that which is remembered is not something with a mythical origin that is essentially unattainable, but is something that is available to thought. Cf. Thomas Sören Hoffmann: 'Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831),' in Tilman Borsche (hrsg.), *Klassiker der Sprachphilosophie: Von Platon bis Noam Chomsky* (München: Beck, 1996), p. 263.

51 Cf. also Herder's critique of Kant's concept of *Anschauung*. See ch.1, p. 19 ff.

52 See e.g. the discussion on pp. 55-58 below, and the discussion of the sense-certainty section in chapter three.

53 In being vocally remembered ('hervorgerufen') in speech, what is remembered is externalised and can resound. In order to reinforce this latter aspect, Hegel uses the word 'verhalten' (e.g. *GW VI*, p. 294), 'wiederhallen' (*GW VI*, p. 318) or 'wiederklingen' (*Enz.* 1817, § 159).

54 Hegel's phrase allows for a twofold interpretation: 'Inhalt' can both refer to the object that is intuited and thought, but also to *Geist* as substance. Language, as 'the general element' allows for a recognition and further development of both.

55 The question that raises itself here is whether – given that there is a plurality of languages – this all indeed refers to all language users, or only to those who speak a particular language, at a particular time in history. On the problem of the relation between thought and contingent languages, see Jim Vernon, *Hegel's Philosophy of Language* (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 22 ff. and John McCumber, *The Company of Words* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), p. 219. A further discussion of this question lies beyond the scope of this dissertation.



daß es ein concretes in sich mannigfaltiges lebendes und seyendes ist aufgehoben, es zu einem schlechthin in sich einfachen *Ideellen* gemacht.<sup>56</sup> What initially presents itself as a concrete and living manifold – but which is simultaneously completely meaningless as it lacks the potential for being understood (since it cannot make itself heard) – is unified and abstracted into an ideal entity – in names – through which consciousness is now able to further develop its objects in thought.<sup>57</sup> Names – in their having, other than signs, no immediately obvious relation to what presents itself in the senses – are a further abstraction of what presents itself in consciousness, and allow thought to develop what is to be thought within the sphere of the ideal, its own domain. In their being a more complete abstraction than signs, names simultaneously present an invitation to consciousness to fill them with content and to make them concrete and meaningful, and not have to depend on a natural object (a sign) in order to understand the ‘empirisches Seyn’.<sup>58</sup>

Hegel further elaborates on names being a further abstraction and idealization of what presents itself to the senses in discussing the example of Adam’s appropriation of nature.<sup>59</sup> ‘Der erste Act, wodurch Adam seine Herrschaft über die Thiere constituirt hat, ist, daß er ihnen Nahmen gab, d.h. sie als seyende vernichtete, und sie zu für sich ideellen machte. [...] der Nahme ist an sich, *bleibend*, ohne das Ding und das Subject. Im Nahmen ist die für sich seyende Realität des Zeichens vernichtet’.<sup>60</sup> Through names the object of consciousness is idealized and appropriated in such a way that this idealization – the name – is turned into a lasting reality, and as such is accessible to others. Simultaneously, in the act of naming the reference to an external, sensual object (which is still present in the sign) is dissolved (‘vernichtet’). In a later use of the example of Adam, Hegel is more explicit about the transition from concrete sign to abstract name:

Das Bild wird ertötet, und das Wort vertritt das Bild. Dies *ist* ein Löwe; *der Name* gilt für die Sache. – Logos; Gott sprach usf. – Die Sprache ist die höchste Macht

56 *GW VI*, pp. 287–288.

57 Throughout his work, Hegel insists on the movement from what initially presents itself as concrete – but which is still a completely abstract reality as it has not been grasped conceptually – to a fully concrete reality, in which *Geist* has come to a complete unfolding and self-understanding of all its manifestations. This completely concrete reality is simultaneously fully accessible to thought, and it is only then that thought has fully abstracted what is to be thought from its concrete manifestations.

58 Cf. Cook, p. 33.

59 Cf. the discussion of Herder’s ‘Innewerden’ as the development of nature into spirit. For Herder, this development is a very gradual one, whereas for Hegel the appropriation of nature by spirit is also disruptive and radical: becoming ideal also involves the killing off (‘vernichten’, ‘ertöten’ of the sensuous world (which is still present in signs and images).

60 *GW VI*, p. 288. For other uses of this example, see *Differenzschrift*, p. 15, *GW IV*, p. 9, and *Nürnberger and Heidelberger Schriften 1808–1817: Werke 4*, p. 52. Interestingly, the example of Adam is not used in the discussion of names in the *Enzyklopädie*. As Birgit Sandkaulen explains, a reason for this might be that in the Jena writings the transition from nature to spirit is a quite radical one (see n. 59 above), with its exclusive focus on the intricate links between memory, thought and language, whereas in the *Enzyklopädie* this transition is a step that is also prepared by anthropology and phenomenology ‘als Vorstufen der Selbstvergewisserung des Geistes.’ See Birgit Sandkaulen, ‘“Esel ist ein Ton”: Das Bewußtsein und die Namen in Hegels Jenaer Systementwürfen von 1803/04 und 1805/06,’ in Heinz Kimmerle Hg.), *Die Eigenbedeutung der Jenaer Systemkonzeptionen Hegels* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004), p. 150.

unter den Menschen. – Adam, heißt es, gab allen Dingen (Tieren) ihren Namen. – Die Sprache ist Ertötung der sinnlichen Welt in ihrem unmittelbaren Dasein, das aufgehoben werden zu einem Dasein, welches ein Aufruf ist, der in allen vorstellenden Wesen widerklingt.<sup>61</sup>

In language reason is able to go beyond the merely sensual, and sublate (*aufheben*) this initial immediacy into a *Dasein* that can be communicated to others and which is simultaneously a call or challenge ('Aufruf') to further develop its potential through answering this call and entering into a dialogue with what resounds ('widerklingt').<sup>62</sup> Adam, as the original man, is not yet part of a community or tradition, but the vocal expression of his appropriation of the world through names can be seen as its beginning.

## 2.2.4 Names as speech

For Hegel, it is in concrete speech – in becoming related to other names – that names come to exist: 'Der Nahmen existirt als Sprache.'<sup>63</sup> In being uttered as speech, language becomes a medium in which what is appropriated by spirit can be communicated and further developed. As speech, Hegel emphasizes, language also takes on a reality that is fluid and evanescent: '[die Sprache] ist der existierende Begriff des Bewußtseyns die sich also nicht fixiert, ebenso unmittelbar aufhört, als sie ist; sie existirt im Elemente der Luft, als eine Aüsserlichkeit, der formlosen freyen Flüssigkeit, indem sie so absolut ausser sich ist, als sie ist, die allgemein mittheilende Existenz hat; die leere Stimme des Thiers erhält eine unendlich in sich bestimmte Bedeutung.'<sup>65</sup> When we speak, the sounds we use, as the concrete materialization of our expressing and communicating our experience, have already disappeared by the time that which is communicated has been abstracted from them. Besides, in voicing our marking of reality by means of names, our voice is not 'die leere Stimme des Thiers' – as this expresses merely contingent utterings of purely individual sensations which can never be accessed by another consciousness – but becomes the voice through which reality is determined (*bestimmt*).

05 GW VI, p. 288. To illustrate his point that language 'exists in the element of air', Hegel uses a great number of fricatives in this passage, e.g. the 'formlose freye Flüssigkeit'.

Through these observations, Hegel makes us aware of an essential aspect of determination by means of spoken language: by giving the world – or rather, our experience of it – a

61 *Nürnberger and Heidelberger Schriften*, p. 52. In his discussion of signs and language in the 1830 *Enzyklopädie*, Hegel also expresses his predilection for languages that make use of an alphabet rather than signs (such as hieroglyphs or characters): 'Die Buchstabenschrift ist an und für sich die intelligentere; in ihr ist das Wort, die der Intelligenz eigentümliche würdigste Art der Äußerung ihrer Vorstellungen, zum Bewußtsein gebracht, zum Gegenstande der Reflexion gemacht.' See *Enz. III*, § 459.

62 The further development of the potential of reason is thus again dependent on the senses, yet this dependence is no longer immediate.

63 *GW VI*, p. 288.



voice (*Stimme*) – we use a means – the disappearing sound of our voice – that does justice to the fluid and ever evolving nature of reality. We thus become aware that determination should be a continuous process, and that as soon as we think that we are in possession of what is to be thought through its having been pinned down, an essential aspect of reality (and thought) is left out. On the other hand, as we saw earlier, thought cannot fully express itself in a medium in which just one element – in this case the element of air – is dominant; if voice were the only means available to determine reality, it would, in the end, inescapably elude us. The *Bedürfnis* revealed by our expressing our experience in language is thus also a need for interaction with other voices, and so to turn the ‘allgemein mittheilende Existenz’ into a medium in which particular voices not only make their individual experiences heard, but in which experience is shared and further developed.<sup>66</sup>

06 ‘Mittheilen’ can mean both ‘to impart’ or ‘to state’, but also ‘to give’ or ‘to share’. What needs to be developed, in Hegel’s view, is an *Allgemeinheit* that is recognized as the result of continuous interaction and involvement with what is expressed and with what we take to be our *Begriff*. See also n. 27 above.

As Hegel had already suggested in the discussion immediately preceding his remarks on names coming to exist as (spoken) language, the ordering of experience through names also produces an objective world – to which consciousness finds itself initially opposed – in which names have a being of their own. By focusing just on this aspect, consciousness could easily be tempted to assume that the lasting, continuous (*bleibend*) nature of names is indicative of a fixed and static order. Yet, through his insistence that language is the ‘existierende Begriff des Bewußtseyns die sich [...] nicht fixiert’, Hegel challenges us to see the objective world that is produced through naming as a world that is not only accessible to us as a means to communicate, but is also a world that is in need of continuous elaboration and development, and requires further *Bestimmung*. We are simultaneously presented with a challenge to look upon – and use – language in such a way that we do justice to its being the ‘existierende Begriff’, as the expression of thought that does not pin itself down. What may initially – as a name – present itself to us as a fixed abstraction, should, through an approach that is itself fluid, adaptive and critical, be taken up by consciousness and developed into a concrete and living objectivity which is a true *Allgemeinheit*.<sup>64</sup> What Hegel intimates in this brief passage on names as speech is that it is precisely the disappearing sound of our voice – and the interaction between vowels and consonants involved in the production of names as speech – that provides us with a model of the dialectics involved in the determination of reality, as becomes clear in his concluding remarks:

Das rein tönende der Stimme, das Vocale, unterscheidet selbst sich, indem das Organ der Stimme seine Gegliederung als eine solche in ihrem Unterschiede zeigt;

64 I therefore do not fully agree with Surber, who, after briefly addressing these passages, concludes that ‘the temporal fluidity of experience and thought becomes “fixed,” externalized, and takes its place in the order of objectivity in the “higher form” of articulated and intersubjectively accessible conceptual terms.’ Surber, *Hegel on Language*, p. 11. In spoken language, the ‘temporal fluidity of experience’ is also externalized, and as such is the ‘Begriff des Bewußtseyns die sich nicht fixiert’. Hegel thus stresses the importance of not taking concepts as fixed, even though they may present themselves as static.

dieses rein tönende wird durch die stummen unterbrochen, das eigentlich hemmende des blossen Tönens, wodurch vorzüglich jeder Ton für sich eine Bedeutung hat, da die Unterschiede des blossen Tönens im Gesange nicht für sich bestimmte Unterschiede sind, sondern erst sich durch den vorherigen und folgenden Ton bestimmen. Die als tönend gegliederte Sprache ist Stimme des Bewußtseyns, darin daß jeder Ton Bedeutung hat, d.h. daß in ihm ein Nahmen existirt, die Idealität eines existirenden Dings; das unmittelbare nichtexistiren desselben.<sup>65</sup>

Vocalization is a process in which what has not yet been determined – pure voice – distinguishes itself through the interjection of what is not voice, i.e. consonants ('dieses rein tönende wird durch die stummen unterbrochen'). Names become meaningful units – and become the expression of a world that is ideal – as all of their individual tones are allowed to interact and determine each other in a process in which all individual elements are unified, and can be understood only in relation to their previous and subsequent shapes, in which their material aspect – as vowels and consonants – is simultaneously abstracted from.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, the determination of experience is to take place through a process of *Bestimmung* in which 'jeder [Stimme] Bedeutung hat', in which each particular voice does not have a meaning that can be distinguished in itself (as there are no 'für sich bestimmte Unterschiede'). It is to develop its meaning through a process of determination in which it is prepared to relinquish what it took to be its purely private meaning, and in which it will be recognized for its contribution to a (continuously evolving) meaning that is accessible to all.

### 2.2.5 Language as the relation of names to other names

Hegel continues his discussion of names by developing the aspect of their – in existing as language – always being in a relation to other names, and thus alerts us to the importance of context: 'der Nahmen als solcher ist nur der Nahmen des einzelnen Dinges; sie [language, AG] ist die *Beziehung* der Nahmen, oder wieder die *Idealität* ihrer Vielheit selbst, und spricht eben so diese *Beziehung* aus, das gewordene Allgemeine, oder sie wird zum *Verstande*.'<sup>67</sup> What we assume a name to do is name an individual thing that presents itself to consciousness, but in its articulated externalization as the 'gewordene Allgemeine' it can only be understood (*verstanden*)<sup>68</sup> in relation to other names. A name 'as such' therefore does not tell us anything –<sup>69</sup> and consciousness experiences that its

65 *GW VI*, pp. 288-289.

66 As we will come to see, Hegel shows that this process cannot only be observed at the level of (vocalized) names, but also at the level of sentences and larger units of text.

67 *GW VI*, p. 289. In this sentence, the 'Beziehung' can, of course, also refer to the syntactical ordering of words in a sentence.

68 Like Herder, Hegel often alerts us to the etymological roots of *Verstand* and *Vernunft*: both develop from what has been heard ('verstanden' or 'vernommen')

69 Just like a tone in itself has no meaning without the tones that precede and follow.

attempts to pin down the individual concrete object that presents itself are doomed to fail.<sup>70</sup> Hegel further develops his position on the interaction between subject and object by taking a closer look at what is involved in the process of name-giving:

Wir betrachten die Momente des sich organisirenden Bewußtseyns weder auf der Seite des Subjects in der Form von Vermögen, Neigungen, Leidenschafften Trieben u.s.w. noch auf der andern Seite des Gegensatzes, als eine Bestimmtheit der Dinge, sondern wie es als Einheit von beyden, absolut für sich ist; es ist in ihm selbst die Bewegung eines thätigen gegen ein passives; aber als die *Bewegung* selbst ist es das Eins in welchem der Gegensatz nur ideell an sich ein aufgehobener ist, alle Momente desselben sind als Vermögen, Neigungen im thätigen, so wie als Bestimmtheiten des andern; aber das Wesen ist die *Mitte*, und die Mitte des Bewußtseyns, wie es als Moment der Gegliederung seiner Totalität ist, gehört beyden an; oder sie beyde auf dieselbe [bezogen], nach ihrem Gegensatze bestimmt; in der empirischen Anschauung ist das eine, empirisch anschauendes, das andre [das] empirisch angeschaute, Nahmen gebende, dem ein Nahmen gegeben wird, so das begreifende, begriffene.<sup>71</sup>

We can really only do justice to the interaction between consciousness and its objects, through which the *Begriff* of consciousness and of its objects is developed, if we think of this interaction as a unity that is continuous movement, in which object and subject are simultaneously active and passive. We realize that we not only give names, but are also given names, and that it is in the activity of both determining and being determined by what we experience that we can come to an understanding of this experience. In the final clause of the passage above Hegel develops the notion of *Begriff*: it refers both to the object of understanding ('das begriffene'), but also to the subject, to that which understands ('das begreifende'). Ultimately, both object and subject will have been developed and organized into a unified (*begriffen*) whole, in which they can only be understood in relation to each other.<sup>72</sup> In Hegel's view, understanding the relation between subject and object in this way allows us to go beyond the perspective of either realism or idealism, and to develop a knowing in which both points of view are taken up.

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70 In emphasizing that names can only really tell us anything through their relation to – and difference from – other names, Hegel adumbrates de Saussure's structuralist linguistics. In the 'Sinnliche Gewißheit' chapter of the *Phänomenologie*, as we will see in chapter three, Hegel will again address the problems experienced by consciousness when it tries to grasp and express its initial and individual awareness of the world.

71 *GW VI*, pp. 290-291.

72 *Begriff* is one of the richest words in Hegel's philosophical vocabulary. When we have a true understanding of what a concept (*Begriff*) entails, we have a grasp ('Griff') of the way it has unfolded as a totality, so as something that includes, or encloses ('begreifen') all its parts. See also Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 58. Inwood also shows that the past participle ('begriffen'), which Hegel uses in the passage quoted above, can be used in the expression 'begriffen sein in', which means to be actively involved or engaged in something, a meaning that is very much in line with Hegel's emphasis on the active, processual and communal character of thought.

Consciousness is allowed to further develop itself through learning that name-giving is an operation in which it is both active and passive, but also finds that it is now in possession of negation as an important step to be taken in the process of determination. Hegel gives the example of colour to make his point:

Für das Subject selbst, wie der Realismus und Idealismus seine Streitfrage auf die rohste Weise stellt, ob ausser ihm die bestimmten, unterschiedenen und sich in ihren Unterschieden beziehenden Farben etwas seyen, ganz abgesehen, von der Existenz des Subjects, so muß ebendarum behauptet werden, daß das Subject als solches [eben so wohl] nur *eine Einzelheit* ist, d.h. ein solches, ausser welchem die Totalität der Bestimmtheiten, und ebenso der Farben ist; als insofern es nicht absolute Einzelheit sondern Bewußtseyn [ist] sie in ihm sind; aber ebenso insofern die Bestimmtheit der Farbe Blau nicht Einzelheit ist, ist es ebenso Totalität der Farbe, ausser welcher keiner Farbe ist.<sup>73</sup>

Both subject and object exist as such, as concrete individuals, but can only be determined and understood through the interaction with each other and with everything they are not. We can only determine something as blue, by simultaneously determining it as *not* being yellow, red, green, etc.

In the same process, consciousness is also able to take a further step, which is to arrive at the concept of colour in general, but this simultaneously allows consciousness to develop an understanding of itself and its activities:

Das Blau, ist vors erste aus der Continuität seines Seyns herausgerissen, abgetrennt von dem Vielfachen, besondern, in welchem es ist; aber es ist immer noch diese Bestimmtheit; aber in dem Gedächtnisse ist es zugleich für sich, aber zugleich auch neben andern, und durch die *negative Einheit des Gedächtnisses* bezogen auf einander; es wird als dieses Bezogenseyn gesetzt, an sich ein allgemeines nach der Bestimmtheit seines Inhalts ein anderes, als es ist; es ist *Farbe*, und Verstandesbegriff, bestimmter Begriff. Es ist das Allgemeine verschiedener Farben; aber nicht gleichsam eine Extraction derselben, sondern eine Abstraction, d.h. ihre Bestimmtheit ist unmittelbar in ihrem Seyn eine aufgehobene.<sup>74</sup>

Consciousness is now able to understand its own activity as one in which its determinations of what it finds itself presented with gain a reality that fully belongs to itself. It also realizes that the further development of these determinations is not a process of extraction in which consciousness draws elements from its immediate sensual experience, but one in which this experience is completely abstracted from, and in which thought

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<sup>73</sup> See *GW VI*, p. p. 292-293.

<sup>74</sup> See *GW*, p. 290.

becomes only occupied with itself. Thinking about names as such, and developing their meaning in relation to other names, rather than taking them to directly refer to an empirical object, makes us realize that the name 'Blau', for instance, is 'ein anderes, als es ist'. It is not a direct link to the sky or sea we see before us, the external objects to which we initially are inclined to attribute being. In its becoming an other, an object of thought it is now – through the annihilation of empirical being – an object which has true being. 'Als', in the phrase just quoted, thus allows for a twofold reading: a name is something other than ('als' as a conjunction in a phrase in which two things are compared) what we take it to be, and through this becoming an other it comes into being ('als' meaning 'at the moment when'). It is in and through the namegiving process as an explication of its own operations that consciousness gains a reality of its own, and through which we simultaneously gain a new understanding of being.

Language as name-giving is thus revealed to be a means through which consciousness learns of and through itself.<sup>75</sup> It allows consciousness to gain a fundamental insight into its own operations as a dialectical progress in which it is both active and passive. In this process it also comes to understand the nature of determination: both subject and object can only be determined through the negation of what it is not, yet determination also requires continuous interaction with what it is differentiated from. In the process of *Bestimmung* we have to allow a particular object to interact with its context, but we should also allow our particular determination of experience – which we express in language – to interact with other *Bestimmungen* (voicings) of experience. Finally, this process allows consciousness to gain insight into the nature of being as an active process to which it belongs, and which belongs to itself.<sup>76</sup> Both consciousness, language and 'Sein' have been – and are – developed as essentially an interactive and continually moving *Mitte*, not a 'ruhige indifferente Mitte',<sup>77</sup> but one in which differences are made productive and contribute to the becoming of a continuously evolving totality.

### 2.2.6 Self-determination through interaction with other selves

In language that has ceased to be an indifferent medium, and which, as Hegel calls it, has raised itself to the level of understanding ('die Sprache, die sich zum Verstande erhebt'),<sup>78</sup> 'what's in a name', as we saw, is to be determined through the interaction with other names. In being involved in the process of determination, consciousness also comes to understand that the determination of itself also demands that it go beyond its

75 Cf. Sandkaulen, op.cit., p. 155: 'die Sprache [wächst] über die Funktion des Behaltens und Mitteilens hinaus und [wird] zu einem Medium der *Selbst*-Vergewisserung, in der das Bewußtsein erst Realität gewinnt.'

76 Not to a particular consciousness, it is no longer 'sein Seyn' (see p. 39), but to consciousness as an interactive generality, as a concrete *Allgemeinheit* that can be recognized as such.

77 Cf. p. 39 above.

78 *GW VI*, p. 295. Again, it becomes clear that we can only come to an understanding by involving ourselves with what is expressed in language: it is 'Verstehen' that produces 'Verstand'.

being an isolated individual – through which it finds itself opposed to other individual entities – and to posit itself as being part of a totality: ‘Das Bewußtseyn als Bewußtseyn des Einzelnen ist entgegengesetzt [dem] anderer Einzelner, und es muß itzt die Einzelheit als eine aufgehobene setzen, oder es als existirendes Ding gegen existirende Dinge, praktisches Bewußtseyn.’<sup>79</sup>

In his analysis of the further development of spirit as practical consciousness, Hegel briefly returns to the subject of language, and emphasizes that the *Potenz* of language can only be fully realized in the language of a people (*Volk*), as the expression of its general spirit: ‘Nur als Werk eines Volkes ist *die Sprache* die ideale *Existenz des Geistes*, in welcher er sich ausspricht, was er seinem Wesen nach und in seinem Seyn ist; sie ist ein allgemeines an sich anerkanntes im Bewußtseyn aller auf dieselbe Weise wiederhallendes; jedes sprechende Bewußtseyn wird unmittelbar zu einem anderen Bewußtseyn.’<sup>80</sup> In speaking, in expressing its experience in language, consciousness is made into something other than itself, externalizes itself into an entity – language – that is accessible to others, and which can be recognized by those others as the expression of its ‘general’ consciousness.<sup>81</sup> Through the act of speaking and interacting with others, each and every consciousness is allowed to further develop and unfold itself, both as individual consciousness and as part of general spirit.

It is therefore up to consciousness not to accept language as a mere given – through which it would be no more than a ‘todtes anderes’ – but to really make language its own. Making language its own, Hegel reveals, involves both consciousness’ coming to an understanding (of itself) through its reflections on what it says, but also the transformation of language – through the destruction (‘das Vernichten’) of its being a completely stable and fixed determination of reality – into a unity that is truly meaningful and alive, so that what is expressed can be developed into a unity in which a people can come to understand themselves: ‘Die Sprache wird [...] in einem Volke reconstruiert, daß sie als das ideelle Vernichten des äussern, selbst ein äusseres ist, das vernichtet, aufgehoben werden muß, um zur bedeutenden Sprache zu werden, zu dem was sie an sich, ihrem Begriffe nach ist; also ist sie im Volke als ein todtes anderes als sie selbst, und wird Totalität indem sie als ein äusseres aufgehoben, und zu ihrem Begriffe wird.’<sup>82</sup>

79 *GW VI*, p. 296.

80 *GW VI*, p. 318. ‘Wiederhallen’ again alerts us to the initial expression of language as sounds. Cf. note 53 and the discussion of ‘Aufruf’ on p. 48. Cf. also Hegel’s earlier remark (discussed on p. 41 above) on language and ‘Arbeit’ etc. as means through which consciousness makes manifests itself to others, and which, in their being substantial unities, can be further developed.

81 In the *Phänomenologie*, this aspect of language is also discussed, see p. 235, *GW IX*, p. 173, and pp. 478-479. *GW IX*, p. 351.

82 *GW VI*, p. 319. An implication of Hegel’s claim that the potency of language comes to be realized in a people appears to be that the understanding that is achieved is relative to a specific people and its language. Cf. Terry Pinkard, *Hegel*, p. 173: ‘The norms for being able to respond appropriately [...] are relative to the relevant linguistic community.’ Even though this seems to follow from Hegel’s lines, I would like to contend that the overall argument Hegel is making is that thought and language are inherently social activities, and as such are dependent on a community.

Not only language is thus transformed, but consciousness also learns that in order to develop itself it has to give up its particular perspective, and allow itself to be determined through being an active part of a community.

### 2.3 Language and the dialogical development of experience<sup>83</sup>

In many ways, as we saw above, names present us with a reality that we are inclined to take as objective and determinate, as simply given. We also found that names cannot be understood in isolation: language is revealed to be a medium – a generality – with which we have to interact in order to develop the meaning of what presents itself. Language at the same time provides us with the means through which we develop meaning by entering into a dialogue with what we are presented with. In this process of questioning initial determinations of experience, both object and subject of thought can be further developed, by allowing them to interact with their context and with other *Bestimmungen*. In doing so, consciousness also comes to an understanding of itself as being essentially involved in a generality (*Geist*) in which there is a continual exchange and development of the *Bestimmungen* inherent in it. It is these aspects which Hegel elaborates on in his later version of the *Jenaer Systementwürfe* (1805/1806).

At the beginning of the discussion of language, Hegel briefly returns to the discussion of names in relation to the development of consciousness, and further develops his position.<sup>84</sup> The first stage of this process – the internalization of objects through signs or images – is again shown to be completely arbitrary (subject to *Willkür*).<sup>85</sup> This time, however, the emphasis is on the perspective of the ‘I’, as it is involved in the appropriation of its objects:

Der Gegenstand hat hiedurch (through the ordering of the objects that are intuited by means of images, AG) überhaupt die Form, die Bestimmung meiner zu seyn erhalten; und indem er wieder *angeschaut* wird, so hat sein *Seyn* nicht mehr diese reine Bedeutung des Seyns, sondern des *Meinen*, er ist mir schon bekannt; oder ich *erinnere* mich seiner [...]. Erinnerung setzt das Moment des Fürsichseins hinzu – ich hab es schon einmal *gesehen* – oder *gehört*; ich *erinnere* mich; ich sehe, höre nicht bloß den Gegenstand, sondern geh dabei innerhalb meiner – *erinnere* – *mich*, nehme *mich* aus dem blossen Bilde heraus, und setze mich in mich; ich setze mich besonders zum Gegenstande.<sup>86</sup>

83 In the following chapters, the dialogical development of experience will be discussed in more detail, with reference to relevant sections in the *Phänomenologie*.

84 As Cook shows, Hegel leaves behind Schellingian terminology such as *Potenz*, and takes on an approach that appears to be inspired by Fichte. See Cook, p. 36. Cf. also n. 40.

85 See p. 44 above.

86 *GW VIII*, p. 188. This passage is a clear illustration of Hegel’s predilection for placed adverbials (‘hinzu’, ‘heraus’, ‘innerhalb’, and also ‘hiedurch’ can be read as such). Cf. n. 37 above.



In the making an object of intuition its own consciousness simultaneously makes itself into an object that can be further developed. The stress on the I positing itself is reminiscent of Fichte,<sup>87</sup> yet Hegel uses this idea to further develop his own position. Rather than a positing of a transcendental I as an act in which the I is completely abstracted from any empirical content, Hegel sees the activity of consciousness as a recollection of what has already been internalized – and thus made mine (*Mein*) –<sup>88</sup> through the senses. It is this activity of recollection (*Erinnerung*) through which consciousness is able to explicate and develop the implicit *Ansichsein* of subject and object into a concrete reality.<sup>89</sup> In this process consciousness also becomes an internal object for itself ('*ich erinnere mich*') that can be further appropriated and developed. What is lost in the initial appropriation of the outside world through signs is its being (*sein Seyn*), and the re-creation of – or the return to –<sup>90</sup> being is the task consciousness now has to meet. As we already saw in the earlier draft, language – as the '*nahmengebende Kraft*' – is the means through which this is to be achieved, as it allows consciousness to externalize itself ('*ins Daseyn treten*') and become an object that is accessible to others:

Das Ich ist hier als *Innres* des Dings selbst Gegenstand, noch ist diese Innerlichkeit des Dings getrennt von seinem Seyn, es ist noch nicht die Allgemeinheit, oder das Ding als *Ding* gesetzt. Diß daß ich das Ding nur als Zeichen, sein Wesen aber als Ich, als Bedeutung, als Reflexion in sich anschaue, ist ebenso selbst Gegenstand; es ist

87 See Cook, p. 36, n. 38: 'The constant repetition of 'Ich' in this draft leads one to suspect that Hegel came under the influence of Fichtean terminology, perhaps as an alternative to the Schellingian terms which he was gradually abandoning and whose abuse by others was severely condemned by him at this time. Though Hegel finally develops his own peculiar terminology, the effect of this turn towards a more ego-oriented, internalizing view of experience remains a vital element in his final system. Even here, however, Hegel retains a realistic side to his thinking, since he never doubts the independent existence of the object world and views the internalizing of the non-ego world as, in fact, set off by this very desire of consciousness to appropriate and make meaningful the brute, outside world.' Even though Hegel appears to be inspired by Fichte in these passages, he also shows himself critical of Fichte's philosophy by suggesting that the pure self ('*das Innre der Natur*' as '*reines Selbst*') as the starting point of philosophy is doomed to remain locked within itself, and can therefore never produce real content. It is to remain an empty nothing ('*das leere Nichts*'). Cf. Hegel's analysis of Fichte in the *Differenzschrift* and *Glauben und Wissen*, which were published before Hegel wrote these drafts. See e.g. *Glauben und Wissen* in *Jenaer Schriften 1801-1807, Werke 2*, p. 397 ff. *GW IV*, pp. 389 ff.

88 Hegel in this draft already aims at developing the speculative potential of philosophical vocabulary, e.g. by his linking of *mein* and *Meinung*. When something has been internalized it is no longer the pure being of the object, which only belongs to itself (*sein Seyn*). Cf. pp. 39-40 above, Cf. also Cook, p. 35, n. 37. Cook, however, interprets Hegel's creative usage as punning, whereas in my view Hegel's aim is serious: by alienating words from what is '*nach der Gewohnheit*' seen as their natural meaning, he wants to evoke a sensitivity to the multidimensional aspect of language, and to alert his reader that language cannot simply be taken at face value, or according to preconceived notions with regard to the meaning of words. We are thus invited to develop a critical attitude with regard to what we assume to be given.

89 Cook claims that it is in this draft that Hegel first begins to use his own terminology to describe the process of *Geist's* development. However, already in the *Differenzschrift* (e.g. p. 79) and *Glauben und Wissen* (e.g. p. 293), Hegel makes frequent use of terms such as *Ansich* and *Fürsichsein*.

90 The words '*Rückkehr zum Seyn*' already suggest – and in the *Phänomenologie* this idea will be fully developed – that consciousness' development is one in which it returns to its origins, which can then be known as what they are. The being it returns to is more fundamental (as it fully belongs to spirit as intersubjective totality) than the one consciousness set out with (which only belongs to its particular perspective).



unmittelbare Innerlichkeit erst so, es muß auch ins Daseyn treten, Gegenstand werden, umgekehrt diese Innerlichkeit äusserlich seyn; Rückkehr zum *Seyn*. Diß ist die Sprache, als die *Nahmengebende Krafft*.<sup>91</sup>

Hegel's explication of this passage develops the dialogical aspect of both language and spirit. In language, *Geist* is present as the unity of two selves – of the object (*Ding*) under consideration and of the I opposed to it – that can interact freely: 'Diß ist denn das wahre *Seyn* des Geistes überhaupt – er ist da als Einheit zweyer freyer Selbst; und ein Daseyn, das seinem Begriffe gemäß ist, – es hebt sich so unmittelbar auf – verhält, aber ist *vernommen*.'<sup>92</sup> Language thus allows spirit to become aware of itself as a continuously evolving ('es hebt sich so unmittelbar auf') interaction between selves that can only be developed if this interaction involves listening to and taking up what is said ('[es] ist vernommen'), so that it can come to an understanding of itself.<sup>93</sup> Initially, the dialogue within language – and within spirit – is started when an object is given a name and its meaning is expressed: 'Zunächst spricht die Sprache nur mit diesem Selbst, der *Bedeutung* des Dings, gibt ihm einen Nahmen, und spricht diß als das *Seyn* des Gegenstandes aus.'<sup>94</sup> At first ('zunächst'), language – as the manifestation of spirit – speaks with just one of the two selves, which is the '*Bedeutung* des Dings'. Yet, both 'zunächst' and 'nur' suggest that more interaction is required if our understanding of the object and of ourselves as spirit is to be developed. In reflecting on making the world its own by means of name-giving, spirit becomes aware that name-giving as producing a manifold of names is not enough. We have to allow names to interact,<sup>95</sup> so that they can be determined in relation to other names: 'der Geist geht in sich aus diesem *Seyn* des Namens, oder sein Benahmen ist ihm Gegenstand, als ein Reich, als ein Vielheit von Nahmen; sie sind *einfache*, in sich abgeschlossene [...] – aber der Nahmen ist einsam ohne *Beziehung* und Verknüpfung – eine nicht sich selbst tragende Reihe, weil keine Bestimmtheit d.h. *Beziehung* an *ihm* selbst auf anderes ist.'<sup>96</sup> Calling the name 'einsam' may be seen as a form of projection by spirit, which is thus alerted to its own needs. In reflecting on itself, it comes to understand that it, too, needs interaction with others, other selves, other voices that make themselves heard, in order to further determine itself, as it, like the name, would be 'einsam' instead.

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91 *GW VIII*, p. 189.

92 *Ibid.*

93 I do not completely agree with Cook's interpretation of this passage. Cook writes (p. 37): 'Language bestows an objective, determinate existence upon this subjective, internal world of signs. This power of language is the first working of *Geist* as *Geist*, for it creates an object (ein *Seiendes*) that is adequate to the concept or idea that consciousness has of it. Language is the means whereby *Geist* first develops an external, rational form.' Even though *Geist* has now -through the operation of name-giving – created an object that is 'adequate to the concept', it should not be taken as a finished product, but as an object that still has to be developed and determined in order to produce complete *Begriff*. Hegel is just as keen to show us that we should not take 'determinate' as fixed and static, but that it is also in the nature of conceptual thought – and of spirit as its subject – to be in continuous and fluid progress.

94 *GW VIII*, p. 189.

95 See section 2.2.5 above.

96 *GW VIII*, p. 191.

A further reflection on its name-giving operations allows spirit to understand that it not only needs dialogical interaction in order to develop itself, but also that it is already involved in such an interaction. Name-giving is presented as the answering of a question: ‘Was ist diß?’<sup>97</sup> The question springs from the I feeling opposed to its object,<sup>98</sup> yet it is ‘we’ that come up with an answer – suggesting that more selves are already implicit in spirit: ‘antworten wir, es ist ein Löwe, Esel, u.s.f. es ist, d.h. es ist gar nicht ein gelbes, Füße und so fort habendes, ein eignes selbständiges, sondern ein *Nahme*, ein Ton meiner Stimme; etwas ganz anderes, als in der Anschauung ist, und diß sein wahres Seyn.’<sup>99</sup> Yet, the name still makes itself heard as the expression of one particular voice – ‘a Ton *meiner* Stimme’ (my italics, AG) – so that spirit becomes aware of a need for further determination by involving itself with other voices. Initially, however, both name and spirit can be no more than a superficial reality (‘nur erst das sehr oberflächliche geistige Seyn’<sup>100</sup>) that will have to be given depth and content by allowing the plurality of selves implicit in it to interact.

Hegel’s discussion of the development of this still superficial reality emphasizes the creative powers of spirit (its ‘Schöpferkraft’), yet also further discloses the dialogical nature of spirit, which, however, this time appears to be presented as a ‘speaking to’ rather than ‘a talking with’. Hegel again refers to Adam’s mastering of nature through giving names:<sup>101</sup>

Durch den Nahmen ist also der Gegenstand als seyend aus dem Ich herausgebohren.  
– Diß ist die erste Schöpferkraft, die der Geist ausübt; Adam gab allen Dingen einen Nahmen, diß ist das Majestätsrecht und erste Besitzergreifung der ganzen Natur, oder das Schaffen derselben aus dem Geiste; λογος Vernunft Wesen des Dings und Rede, *Sache* und *Sage*, Kategorie. Der Mensch spricht zu dem Dinge als dem *seini-gen*, und diß ist das *Seyn* des Gegenstandes. Geist verhält sich zu sich selbst; – er sagt zum Esel, du bist ein innres und das Innre ist Ich.’<sup>102</sup>

In this passage we see an interesting progress from Adam, via man (‘der Mensch’), to spirit. Through this progress we are made aware that – although we might be tempted to think that what Adam does, as individual, is to name each individual thing (‘alle Dinge’) – what is referred to with a name is the general nature of a thing, its belonging to a category. It is not merely Adam, but man in general who is involved in the process of the expression of being in language and thought, and Hegel makes us aware that we can learn something about ourselves – as being part of a generality – by trying to understand what is involved at a specific stage of our development as spirit. A departure from

97 GW VIII, p. 189.

98 See the passage quoted on pp. 56-57 above.

99 GW VIII, p. 189.

100 Ibid.

101 Cf. the discussion of on pp. 47-48 above.

102 GW VIII, pp. 189-190.

Hegel's earlier discussion of Adam's name-giving is that here it is not only presented as a mastering of nature, but also as a creative act. In creating a spiritual world that is available through language, man is not only able to make the world his by organizing and categorizing it,<sup>103</sup> but in doing so also produces a spiritual realm – the realm of true being ('das wahre Seyn des Geistes als Geistes überhaupt'<sup>104</sup>) within which all spiritual beings can communicate and which is thus open for further development and clarification. This twofold character of language – its being both a substantial unity and the expression of a subject, both a 'Besitzergreifung' and a 'Schaffen aus dem Geiste' – is further reinforced by the paratactical structure of the sentence at the heart of this passage, which ends with a list in which Hegel explicates the potential of the word *λογος*.<sup>105</sup>

The progress of man to spirit also reveals a development of the dialogical nature of spirit: from man's speaking to animals and things as his, as being subordinate to him, to spirit's talking with itself.<sup>106</sup> 'Geist verhält sich zu sich selbst': spirit is now – through its mastering and creating a world through language – able to relate to and interact with the 'geistiges Seyn' of objects and to communicate with all the voices that are inherent in it, so that it can further determine ('bestimmen') itself.

## 2.4 Names as a means of overcoming the *Bedürfnis*

In the 1805/1806 version of the *Jenaer Systementwürfe* Hegel also reveals the potential of names as a means to overcome the *Bedürfnis* of thought and language, and to bridge the gap between subject and object. In its initial attempts to structure and organize what presents itself in experience, consciousness finds itself opposed to a manifold of names that are indifferent to each other, that have not been developed in relation to other names:<sup>107</sup> 'Sein Inhalt sind die *gleichgültigen* Nahmen; aber an ihrer Gleichgültigkeit als

103 So that 'Der Mensch spricht zu dem Dinge als dem *seinigen*'. On Hegel's use of 'sein' and 'das Seyn', cf. pp. 39-40 above, and also p. 53, n. 76.

104 *GW VIII*, pp. 189.

105 On Hegel's use of the word *λογος* in this passage, cf. Hoffmann, p. 260: 'Sprache [ist] nicht nur ein Mittel eines wenn auch immer notwendigen *Erscheinens* von Vernunft, sondern als ihr sich zum Geist integrierendes *Dasein*, als Einheit substantieller wie subjektiver Erkenntnisbeziehung aufzufassen. Diese Maßgabe nimmt freilich nicht weniger als die Mitte der gesamten Hegelschen Philosophie in Anspruch, die methodische, wechselseitig-unendliche Einholung des Substantiellen, Ansichseienden und des Subjektiven, Fürsichseienden ineinander und deren Darstellung nicht nur durch, sondern als den Begriff zu entwickeln.' Hoffmann refers to a passage in Hegel's lectures on the history of philosophy, in which we are also alerted to the double aspect of *λογος*: 'Λογος ist bestimmter als Wort. Es ist schöne Zweideutigkeit des griechischen Worts, – Vernunft und zugleich Sprache. Denn Sprache ist die reine Existenz des Geistes; es ist ein Ding, vernommen in sich zurückgekehrt.' See G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III, Werke 20* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), pp. 107-108.

106 Hegel's predilection for the use of parataxis – in which parts are not subordinated to each other, but can freely 'talk' to each other, may thus also be explained by a wish to reflect the dialogical aspect of spirit, which allows all the voices implicit in it to make themselves heard and to freely interact.

107 Hegel already discussed this aspect (albeit in relation to signs rather than names) in the first draft of the *Jenaer Systementwürfe*, see p. 44 above.

Vieler ist nicht das *Selbst*, als Negatives, wie es in Wahrheit ist; das negative am Vielen ist die Beziehung eines jeden durch sich selbst auf das *Andre*.<sup>108</sup> In differentiating and ordering this manifold, consciousness comes to recognize its content as something that it belongs to, as it has been directly involved – as the negativity through which the initial indifference is questioned and interacted with – in the production of content: ‘Es geht dem zu, den *Inhalt* aus sich zu schaffen.’<sup>109</sup> In this process of ordering thought eventually reaches a level where it is fully its own and is no longer dependent on the images it initially associated with names:

Das Gedächtniß, bewahrt den Nahmen überhaupt, die freye willkürliche Verknüpfung dieses Bildes, (der Bedeutung) und des *Nahmens*, daß bey dem Bilde ihm der Nahmen, und bey dem Nahmen das Bild da ist; aber höher ist die Befreyung der Beziehung von diesem Ungleichartigem, daß sich Nahmen nur auf Nahmen bezieht. [...] es ist das erste sich selbst als *Krafft* erfassende Ich, es selbst ist die Nothwendigkeit, frey von der Vorstellung – die fixierende und fixierte Ordnung – Die Übung des Gedächtnisses ist deswegen die erste *Arbeit*, des erwachten Geistes, als Geistes – Das Geben, Erfinden der Nahmen ist eine erfindende Willkür; in dem Gedächtniß verschwindet zuerst diese Willkür, Nahmen ist befestigtes Zeichen; bleibende Beziehung, eine allgemeine – Ich hat seine Willkür in seinem Seyn aufgegeben; sich als allgemeines gesetzt.<sup>110</sup>

By liberating itself from the fixed (and fixating) order of its representations, *Geist* allows itself to be determined by its own powers. In becoming an autonomous being, *Geist* is able to start bridging the gap it felt between the object it tries to grasp and itself. ‘Es selbst ist die Nothwendigkeit’:<sup>107</sup> rather than being aware of a *Bedürfnis* in what it is presented with (whether this is the object of knowledge, a type

**07** In the context of this passage, the most obvious meaning of ‘Nothwendigkeit’ appears to be ‘necessity’, as it is opposed to ‘freye Willkür’. However, ‘Nothwendigkeit’ can also mean ‘to feel, or to be aware of a need’, or even ‘that which turns away the need’. Both meanings can definitely be applied to the way *Geist* develops itself as thought, in a process in which it is both active and passive. (See the relevant lemmas in *DWB* and *Adelung*).

108 *GW VIII*, p. 192.

109 *Ibid.*

110 *GW VIII*, pp. 192–193. Again, Hegel, like Herder, refers to the evolution of consciousness that is achieved through its name-giving activity as a ‘waking up’: the exercise of remembrance is ‘die erste *Arbeit* des erwachten Geistes’. Cf. note 42. A related metaphor Hegel uses to indicate the initial stage of consciousness is night: ‘Der Mensch ist diese Nacht, diß leere Nichts, das alles in ihrer Einfachheit enthält – ein Reichthum unendlich viele Vorstellungen, Bilder, deren keines ihm gerade einfällt –, oder die nicht als gegenwärtige sind.’ What follows evokes a world in which this ‘Nichts’ is not merely undifferentiated emptiness, but becomes a world full of terror as consciousness finds itself unable to relate to its images: ‘Diß die Nacht, das Innre der Natur, das hier existirt – *reines Selbst*, – in phantasmagorischen Vorstellungen ist es rings um Nacht, hier schießt dann ein blutig Kopf, – dort eine andere weisse Gestalt plötzlich hervor, und verschwinden ebenso’. *GW VIII*, p. 187. Cf. also the discussion of signs and names in the *Enzyklopädie*, where Hegel describes the process of signification as one in which what is remembered is reproduced by means of images that lie in stock in the ‘tiefe Schacht des Ich’. *Enz. III*, § 462. For a discussion of this passage, see Jacques Derrida, ‘Le puits et la pyramide: introduction à la sémiologie de Hegel,’ in *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Minuit, 1972), pp. 101–102.

of philosophy or language), it now feels this need within itself, and simultaneously feels it can rely on its own powers to overcome this need.

In expressing and confirming (by means of the ‘befestigtes Zeichen’<sup>08</sup>) its ordering of the world, *Geist* turns both itself and its object into an *allgemeines* that is open to others. Both subject and object are thus made into a thing (*Ding*) that can be developed:

08 ‘Befestigen’ can also mean to fixate, which is also what happens at this stage of consciousness’ processing of its experience, and which is a necessary step into making itself available to others. Yet, as we saw earlier, consciousness should then be challenged to move on and come to an understanding that it is only in thought that is continuous movement that a full *Begriff* of what really is can be achieved.

Die Arbeit ist zugleich, daß Ich sich selbst zu dem macht, was es im *Nahmen* geben ist, nemlich *Ding*, *seyendes*, der *Nahmen* ist es, und ist ein *Ding*; – es macht sich zum *Dinge*, indem es sich in die Ordnung der *Nahmen* fixirt. [...] Es kann nur als *Gedächtniß* sich zum *Dinge* machen, weil das *Ding* zu dem es sich macht, *an sich Ich ist*; es ist itzt das thuende, die Bewegung sich zum Gegenstande machende, der es unmittelbar im *Nahmen* geben ist. [...] Hervorbringen seiner selbst, negiren seiner selbst – wenn der *Nahme* als der Gegenstand, worauf es thätig ist, angesehen wird, so hebt es sich selbst auf.<sup>111</sup>

This passage reveals a number of interesting aspects of the way Hegel sees the transition from passive remembrance to active thought, in which the being of an object is determined by the order created by *Geist* itself, and in which *Geist* can ultimately come to recognize itself. First of all, it can be read as an interesting comment on Kant’s claim that the *Ding an sich* is unknowable. It is knowable, Hegel argues, since the thing, as I, is open for introspection. Furthermore, it becomes clear that for Hegel a thing is not an individual object that presents itself to the senses, an empirical object (which is the way Adam conceives of things<sup>112</sup>), but that we can only properly speak of things when they have been developed into objects of thought. Although these things – as names – are initially generalities that are completely abstract and indifferent, we can – through our ‘negative’ interaction with these generalities – relate them to others, differentiate them and make them into generalities that are truly meaningful as we understand them as a recognition of not only the outside world but also of ourselves.

Above all, through its interaction with what is available as *Gedächtniß*, the ‘Ich’ not only develops and comes to an understanding of its object and of itself, but also enables itself to discover and explicate its own method, which is that of a dialectical – and dialectical – movement. It finds out that it can only produce its own inner nature by negating – by critically involving itself with – what it initially took itself to be and, in doing so,

111 *GW VIII*, pp. 192-193. In the first sentence Hegel plays with the word ‘nemlich’, as that which is involved in a name.

112 Cf. pp. 47-48.

reach a higher level in its development ('so hebt es sich selbst auf'<sup>113</sup>). It is language that allows consciousness to take this important step: in occupying itself with names – and their relations to other names – as objects of thought, rather than with the images they refer to, the 'I' is now able to enter the domain in which thought has abstracted itself from the sensual, and can now turn to itself: 'Diese Arbeit ist daher das erste innre wirken auf sich selbst – eine ganz *unsinnliche* Beschäftigung – und der Anfang der freyen Erhebung des Geistes, denn es hat sich hier zum Gegenstande – Eine viel höhere Arbeit, als die kindische Beschäftigung mit äußerlichen sinnlichen, oder gemahlten Bildern.'<sup>114</sup> There is obvious irony in the remark that initially, the activity of the 'I' is 'unsinnlich'.<sup>115</sup> it turns in on itself and leaves the realm of the senses, but finds, as yet, only a 'pure', abstract self that is still to be developed. It can only affirm itself as 'I' (Fichte's Ich=Ich), and repeat its self-positing, as it is without any meaningful content.<sup>116</sup> As Hegel says in an interesting aside written in the margin: 'Es ist Wiederhohlen eines *Bekannten*, wo kein *Interesse* mehr an der *Sache* ist; kein Genuß, sich im Andern zu finden, nicht das Benahmen: – daher rein *unsinnliche* Beschäftigung -.' In order to go beyond this mere affirmation of itself, it has to externalize itself and turn itself into an object. By expressing itself through names, by voicing its experience in language, it turns its experience into a generality that can be developed, and through which it can simultaneously develop itself.<sup>117</sup> Occupying itself with names thus indeed allows the I to engage in meaningful, rather than senseless activity, and to truly be involved in – and enjoy – what is other than itself.

## Conclusion

In Hegel's early Jena writings, language is discussed primarily as an ordering and differentiating of names, yet Hegel's presentation reveals that it plays a much larger role than that. Language is also shown to be a means through which consciousness can develop itself and, in doing so, come to an understanding of itself and its object, and overcome the gap it initially felt between the two. Not only is language a medium (*Mitte*) through which consciousness can express its experience and communicate it to others, it is also revealed to be a medium in which consciousness can come to an understanding of itself as being already involved in intersubjective spirit. Already in these early works, Hegel refers to consciousness' activity as *Arbeit*, and thus emphasizes that our coming to understand ourselves and the way we know of the world is very much a practical activity

113 On 'aufheben', see n. 03.

114 *GW VIII*, p. 194.

115 As it is both literally and figuratively senseless. We can only make sense by involving ourselves with what presents itself in the senses.

116 *GW VIII*, p. 194.

117 *GW VIII*, p. 196: 'Diese Richtung auf den Nahmen hat also die gegengesetzte Bedeutung, daß nemlich die Richtung auf Ich, aufheben desselben als des fürsichseyenden, d.h. willkührlichen, thätigen gesetzt ist – es ist gesetzt die *Allgemeinheit*, mit gleichem Werthe gleichem aufgehobeneyn des thätigen Ich und des Gegenstandes.' On 'Name' and 'nemlich', see n. 111 above.

in which what is implicit is developed and unfolded through a process of active involvement with the world around us, a world we initially perceive as different and other than ourselves, but ultimately come to recognize as one we can relate to and belong to. The dialectical development of what presents itself in experience – as is already intimated in these early drafts – is one in which language – in all of its manifestations, from its phonology (the ‘formlose freye Flüssigkeit’) to its being a means to communicate, from its being a medium that binds a community to its being a means (as metaphor or parataxis) to present thought – is shown to play an essential role: in consciousness’ work on names, but especially in the way spirit engages in a dialogical questioning of itself on the nature of its experience. Consciousness experiences that already in the early stages of its coming to an understanding of itself and its world it is involved in a ‘we’, and that in order to further determine its experience – and itself – it needs to engage with not only its own voice (the ‘Ton meiner Stimme’) the voices implicit in in this ‘we’.

Through his creative speculation on the etymological origins of words such as ‘Meinung’, ‘Sache’ and ‘nemlich’, and multi-dimensional words such as ‘aufheben’ and ‘Nothwendigkeit’, and the metaphorical use of words such as ‘Äther’ and ‘Element’, Hegel makes us aware of the meaning we, initially uncritically and thoughtlessly, project onto words, forces us to (re)consider our own perspective and take account of, and engage with, other perspectives. The gradual character of the experience through which *Geist* comes to ever higher levels of self-understanding is reinforced by his frequent use of time adverbials (‘noch’, ‘zuerst’, etc.). Not only in his use of words, but also in the way sentences are structured – e.g. by means of parataxis, in which the parts of a sentence will have to interact in order to produce a meaningful whole – Hegel shows great sensitivity to how language can be used in a philosophically meaningful way, and to how the reader can be challenged to interact with the text in order to discover that the meaning of the text is produced from within that interaction.

In the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Hegel will further trace the development of consciousness and show how it comes to a deeper understanding of itself through its being involved in social and political activity, in which the dialectical movement of its experience is further explicated. In the *Phänomenologie*, as I will discuss in the next chapters, language will also play an important role in bringing about the development of consciousness’ experience, yet with a significant shift in focus. Rather than viewing language as a product of consciousness – names – in which it has abstracted from its experience, Hegel now aims at developing the potential of language as a means through which consciousness can come to a critical awareness of its historical development as *Geist*, and of the strictures it has imposed on itself in its historically determined shapes – and how – in order to overcome these strictures – it will have to develop a self-conscious or, in Hegel’s words, speculative use of language. Doing so, as we will see in the discussion of relevant sections from the *Phänomenologie*, will also allow for the further development of the dialogical potential of spirit.





## Chapter 3 The dialogical development of experience: consciousness as sense-certainty

In the previous chapter we saw that the dialectical development of consciousness' experience involved a dialogical questioning of its experience. This questioning was aimed at developing what can be learned from consciousness' expressing its experience in language and revealed that already at the initial stages of its coming to an understanding of itself and of its experience, consciousness is involved in spirit, in a general 'we' rather than an individual 'I'. What the questioning also intimated is that, in order to further determine its experience, consciousness would have to involve itself not just with its own perspective, its own voice, but with other perspectives implicit in this 'we', and to develop their potential by means of a dialogical interaction, through an attentive listening to and a critical questioning, checking and correcting of what they have to say. In this chapter the dialogical development of experience will be further examined, by taking a closer look at the first passage in the *Phänomenologie* in which language is given a central role in allowing consciousness to develop its understanding of the nature of its experience and of itself: the initial experience of consciousness as sense-certainty.

Characterizing Hegel's dialectics as dialogical may appear rather controversial, as many thinkers criticized Hegel's thought precisely for its being monological.<sup>1</sup> Thus, if the dialectical development of experience is to be characterized as dialogical rather than monological, we need to become clear on a number of questions. What do we mean by the terms 'dialogue' and 'dialogical'? And what was Hegel's own view on the use of dialogue in philosophy? In what way can his own specific use of language – which, as we saw in the previous chapter, appears to be aimed at bringing about a dialogue with the reader, and at disclosing the speculative potential of language – be called dialogical? Before taking a closer look at the way in which Hegel employs forms of dialogue, or dialogical thinking, and what this reveals about the nature of the dialectical development of experience – and its essential relation to language – I will therefore first discuss Hegel's own – rather dismissive – remarks on dialogue as a philosophical genre. Then I will give an outline both of the general characteristics of the philosophical dialogue and of Bakhtin's theory of the *dialogic*. The term *dialogic* was first coined Bakhtin,<sup>2</sup> who made a sharp distinction between what he saw as the monologic enterprise of Hegelian dialectics – in which all the voices that make themselves heard are ultimately synthesized into one, and the dialogic,

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1 See the introduction, p. xiii, n. 15. For an interesting discussion of the dominant view on Hegel's dialectical method in critical theory (from Horkheimer and Habermas to Honneth and Benhabib), which criticizes Hegel's method for not being phenomenological enough and for already presupposing a philosophical subject fully transparent to itself that is able to dogmatically 'guide' consciousness to the standpoint of absolute knowing it already inhabits, see Särkela, pp. 38-42 and pp. 111-112.

2 See M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

in which these different voices will continue to co-exist and will remain involved in a process of mutual questioning and explication. Bakhtin's theory will – as we will see – help to bring into focus significant aspects of Hegel's dialectical method, and I will argue that precisely those aspects can be called dialogical in the Bakhtinian sense.

### 3.1 Hegel on philosophical dialogue: the Solger review

Hegel's most extensive discussion of the philosophical dialogue is to be found in his review of the letters and literary remains of his Berlin colleague and friend Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand Solger, a theorist of Romanticism and translator of Sophocles. Solger wrote a number of philosophical dialogues, mainly on the subject of beauty and art. In a review of A.W. Schlegel's lectures, Solger raises the question of the ideal form of philosophy, which in Solger's eyes can be no other than the 'dialogische Form'. Hegel sees this as a grave mistake:

In dem letzten Kapitel der betrachteten Abhandlung [the Schlegel review, AG] kommt Solger auf die Form des Vortrags zu sprechen, in welcher die Philosophie 'ihrer aufgestellten Bedeutung und Bestimmung am besten solle genügen können', welches die *dialogische* Form sein soll, – ein Mißgriff, der ihn seine ganze Laufbahn hindurch verfolgte, den wir ihn, trotz der Erfahrung, dadurch der Wirkung seiner vorgetragenen Ideen vielmehr im Wege zu sein, hartnäckig behalten und nur Verstimmung daraus ernten sehen.<sup>3</sup>

Why is Hegel this dismissive of Solger's predilection for the dialogue, which is said to lead to a 'Verstimmung' rather than a 'Bestimmung' of philosophy?<sup>4</sup> In the light of what we saw in the previous chapter with regard to Hegel's own presentation of the dialectical development and determination of experience – through a dialogical questioning of consciousness on its name-giving practice – this dismissal comes rather unexpected. Hegel gives the following explanation: 'Jene Form [the dialogue, AG] hängt ganz mit jener Bedeutung der Philosophie zusammen, nur außerhalb ihrer selbst die Belebung der Idee in den Subjekten hervorbringen zu können.'<sup>5</sup> Apparently, Solger felt frustrated by a failure to properly communicate with his audience – a frequently returning topic in his letters –<sup>6</sup> and saw himself forced to find an alternative means of promulgating his philoso-

3 G.W.F. Hegel, 'Solgers nachgelassene Schriften und Briefwechsel' in *Berliner Schriften 1818-1831 (Werke 11)* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 262. *GW XVI*, p. 119.

4 Hegel's choice of words appears to suggest that the type of dialogue Solger writes does not allow for an interactive development of the voices ('Bestimmung') inherent in it, and apparently does not allow for interaction with the reader.

5 *Werke 11*, p. 262. *GW XVI*, p. 119.

6 On Solger's vain attempts to appeal to the general public, cf. Jeffrey Reid, *Real Words: Language and System in Hegel* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p. 97.

phy, one which was to evoke an enthusiasm ('Belebung') in his audience.<sup>7</sup> Hegel's reaction suggests that, in his eyes, the use of dialogue – as a form that is somehow extrinsic to thought and incapable of truly evoking a 'Belebung der Idee' –<sup>8</sup> would reinforce rather than repair a rift between philosophy proper and the general public's interest in – and experience of – what thought entails. Unfortunately, Hegel's argumentation in what follows is rather roundabout and is mainly aimed at showing the depth of Solger's despair of an audience chiefly interested in 'das tägliche Brot und die täglichen Austern.'<sup>9</sup> On returning to the discussion of the use of dialogue in philosophy, however, it becomes clear that the main thrust of Hegel's critique is Solger's specific form of dialogue. If only Solger had tried to imitate Plato:

Doch protestiert Solger ausdrücklich dagegen, daß er Platon habe nachahmen wollen; aber die Nachahmung einer Methode kann doch nichts anderes heißen, als, was an ihr zweckmäßig und richtig ist, ausüben. Allein Solger hat die plastische Form, welche der Dialog allein durch die Eigenschaft, die Dialektik zur Seele zu haben, gewinnen kann, nicht aufgenommen, sondern ihn in das Gegenteil, in die *Konversation* verändert, wodurch aller Vorteil dieser Form für abstracte Materien, die strenge Notwendigkeit des Fortgangs mit einer äußerlichen Belebung begleitet, verlorengegangen und nur der Nachteil, ermattende Breite des Vortrags, ein lästiger Überfluß, die Gestalt der Zufälligkeit des Vorgetragenen, die Störung oder Unmöglichkeit, den Faden des Rasonnements festzuhalten und zu übersehen, hereingebracht worden ist.<sup>10</sup>

7 In fact, Hegel adds, his work achieved the opposite of what he was aiming for, as it was 'der Wirkung seiner vorgetragenen Ideen im Wege'. Solger's work reaped 'Verstimmung' rather than 'Belebung'. *Werke 11*, p. 262. *GW XVI*, p. 119.

8 It takes Hegel a couple of pages to reveal that he and Solger appear to have rather different conceptions of *Leben* and its relation to thought: 'Der Zusammenhang [in Solger's thought, AG] von *Denken, Leben, Kunst* ist so gedacht (S. 620): "Ich möchte gern das *Denken* wieder ganz ins *Leben* aufgehen lassen; ... daher kam es, daß ich mir die *künstlerische dialogische* Form gleich als mein Ziel hinstellte. Man will *nicht leben*, sondern vom *Leben schwatzen*, - hat doch keiner, der in unserer Zeit *etwas recht Lebendiges* leisten wollte, wie *Novalis, Kleist* usw., *durchkommen* können!" Es ist oben gezeigt, daß Solger die eigentümliche Lebendigkeit, welche die Natur der denkende Idee *in ihr selbst* enthält, mißkannt hat, welche schon Aristoteles als die höchste Lebendigkeit faßte. Dieser Alte sagt (*Metaphysik XI, 7*): Die Tätigkeit des Denkens ist *Leben*'. *Werke 11*, pp. 266-267. *GW XVI*, p. 123. Hegel rejects the idea of the artistic consciousness of romantics such as Kleist or Novalis (in whose work a disruptive irony (Kleist) or 'Sehnsucht' (Novalis) rather than thought is to be found) – rather than a towering intellectual giant such as Goethe – as the 'recht Lebendiges'; what is truly alive is the activity of thought: the *noësis noëseōs noësis* of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.

9 Ibid., pp. 263-264. *GW XVI*, p. 121. Hegel also includes a tongue-in-cheek reference to himself (from a letter Solger wrote in 1818, shortly before Hegel was to arrive in Berlin) in order to paint Solger's bleak picture of an audience merely interested in bread and oysters: 'Bei Gelegenheit, daß [...] Solger auf den Referenten zu sprechen kommt, äußert er sich: "Ich war begierig, was H. hier für einen Eindruck machen würde. Es spricht keiner von ihm. Es durfte nur der dümmste Nachbeter hergekommen sein, dergleichen sie gar zu gern einen hätten, so würde großer Lärm geschlagen und die Studenten zu *Heil und Rettung ihrer Seelen* in seine Kollegien gewiesen.'" *Werke 11*, p. 264. *GW XVI*, p. 121.

10 *Werke 11*, p. 268. *GW XVI*, p. 124.

If dialogue is to be a suitable vehicle for philosophical thought, it is not to be a mere conversation on a philosophical topic – which is what Hegel accuses Solger of – but is to have a ‘plastic’ form, in which thought is ‘moulded’, or rather moulds itself, into a concrete shape. The form of the dialogue is to express the dialectical progress of thought, and any merely accidental or burdensome material – which is to give it the appearance of a chance conversation – is to be excluded from it. It is this what Plato is a master of: ‘es [Plato’s art of writing dialogues, AG] ist die abstrakteste, strengste, von aller Konversationsmanier am entferntesten.’<sup>11</sup> In fact, the course (‘Fortgang’) of the dialogue in Plato (especially in the later ones such as *Parmenides*, which was Hegel’s favourite) is firmly determined by the character (usually Socrates) asking the questions: ‘In jener plastischen Form Platons behält einer der Unterredenden den Faden des Fortgangs in der Hand, so daß aller Inhalt in die Fragen, und in das Antworten nur das formelle Zustimmung fällt; der Belehrende bleibt Meister und gibt nicht Auskunft auf Fragen, die man ihm machte, oder Antworten auf vorgebrachte Einwendungen.’<sup>12</sup> All the participants in the dialogue subject themselves to the dialectical course thought is to take, and refrain from insisting on the right – as it had been defended by the Sophists – to seek their own advantage and to freely develop their own opinions.<sup>13</sup> It is the latter aspect that would lead to the ‘Verstimmung’ Solger’s writing is said to produce, by writing dialogues in which characters merely voice opinions without showing a real interest in the overall argument that is to be developed. Yet if what Hegel advocates is the ‘Bestimmung’ of thought through the dialectical development of what is presented – which he apparently recognizes in Plato’s use of dialogue

11 *Werke 11*, p. 269. *GW XVI*, p. 125.

12 *Werke 11*, pp. 269–270. *GW XVI*, p. 125. Cf. Hegel’s remarks on the Socratic dialogue in his lectures on the history of philosophy: ‘Sokrates’ Manier ist nicht Gemachtes, dagegen die Dialoge der Neueren, eben weil kein innerer Grund diese Form rechtfertigte, langweilig und schleppend werden mußten. Das Prinzip seines Philosophierens fällt vielmehr mit der Methode selbst als solcher zusammen; es kann insofern auch kein Methode genannt werden, sondern es ist eine Weise, die mit dem Eigentümlichen des Sokrates ganz identisch ist.’ (*Werke 18*, p. 456) On Hegels appraisal of the Socratic method as one in which thought can truly be dialectically developed, cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, ‘Hegel und die antike Dialektik’ in *Hegels Dialektik: Fünf Hermeneutische Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971), pp. 8–9: ‘In der Tat kann Hegel für sein methodisches Ideal des philosophischen Beweises [...] den Stil der sokratischen Gesprächsführung [in Anspruch nehmen], jene immanente Plastik, d.h. Selbstfortbildung des Gedankens, die er der sokratische Gesprächsführung nachrühmt. Er hat ohne Zweifel richtig erkannt, daß die farblose Rolle, die die Partner des sokratischen Gesprächs spielen, der immanenten Folgerichtigkeit der Gedankenführung zugute kommt. Er lobt die sokratischen Partner als wahrhaft plastische Jünglinge, die auf die Selbstgefälligkeit und Willkürlichkeit eigener Einfälle, die den Fortgang des Gedankens stören würden, zu verzichten bereit sind.’ The question suggests itself whether this type of dialogue can be called dialogic in the Bakhtinian sense, and I will address this issue in the section on Bakhtin (3.3).

13 This insistence that one character is to hold ‘die Faden des Fortgangs’ in his hand does not necessarily imply that Socrates already knows what the outcome will be, as Hegel seems to suggest in the quotation just given. What Socrates does insist on is to follow ‘the wind of argument,’ as he calls it in *The Republic* (394d6–9) and to see to it that it is through *logos* rather than *doxa* that the progress of thought is determined. Like Donald Davidson, I am inclined to take Socrates’ position seriously, in that Socrates does not feign ignorance (the so-called Socratic irony), but rather insists that we simply cannot know the answer to a question in advance, without having seriously investigated the matter. Indeed, the answer is there (in itself), but we still have to find and develop it by means of ‘Selbstfortbildung des Gedankens.’ Hegel’s use of dialogue rests on similar assumptions (see also the quotation from Gadamer in the previous note), as I hope to show in my discussion of relevant sections of the *Phänomenologie*. Cf. Donald Davidson, ‘Dialektik und Dialog,’ Rede anlässlich der Verleihung des Hegel-Preises 1992 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993), pp. 11–12.

– can this ‘Bestimmung’ take place through a questioning in which those who participate are expected to do no more than agree with (‘Zustimmen’) the answers implicit in the rhetorical questions asked by their interlocutor? Would this not imply that the ‘Belehrende’ is already in possession of ultimate answers that both the participants in, and the reader without the text, are simply to accept? Hegel’s remark on Plato seems to be both a simplification of Plato’s dialogical method and go against Hegel’s own, which – as I aim to show in the following chapters – is a method in which ‘Bestimmung’ will be a form of determination in which the dialogical development of all the voices that present themselves in spirit’s experience are to play a decisive part.

Hegel gives us more insight in how he understands the ‘Zustimmung’ in providing a further reason for approving of Plato’s form of dialogue. It helps us to focus on each individual step through which the totality of the philosophical argument is developed: ‘An der von Platon ihr entgegengesetzten Dialektik [the dialectical method of the Sophists, AG] ist jene Form des Dialogs ein Äußerliches, welches nur die Lebendigkeit herbeibringt, die Aufmerksamkeit nicht bloß auf das Resultat oder die Totalvorstellung zu richten, sondern zur Zustimmung für jede Einzelheit des Fortgangs aufgeregt zu werden.’<sup>14</sup> This affirmation (‘Zustimmung’) should not be a mere formality (‘etwas Kahles und ein lahmer Formalismus’<sup>15</sup>), but an active involvement with what is to be thought. This can only occur when each individual step and each individual voice is shown to be play its part in the production of the whole: ‘jede einzelne Bestimmung und Satz [sei] einfach und im strengsten Zusammenhange exponiert.’<sup>16</sup> This might at first glance seem a rather straightforward and self-evident observation of what is to be expected of a philosophical text. However, we are to miss Hegel’s point if we take the exposition to be an activity that is only required of the writer. In that case this requirement would even be paradoxical, for how could a sentence ever simultaneously be presented as both simple (‘einfach’) and as part of a complex total? It is through being developed as being part of a whole that what is initially taken to be simple and one-sided is shown to allow for the development of all the aspects that inhere in this seeming simplicity.<sup>09</sup> This development is also dependent on the activity of the reader, who – as in the case of the speculative sentence – is expected to explicate the meaning of a ‘simple’ part of the text by relating it to its context, and in doing so, unfold all the meanings that are already inherent in the individual part.

**09** ‘Einfach’, like Dutch ‘eenvoudig’ or English ‘simple’, can mean consisting of just one, but can also mean uncomplicated, easy to grasp, and thus is a word that, in Hegel’s usage, becomes, like ‘natural’ in ‘natural consciousness,’ highly ironical. The original unity is apparently just one, and therefore taken to be straightforward, but can only be grasped as what it really is through its already being a triplicity, in which what is initially taken to be ‘die *einfache Negativität*’ and ‘das Einfache’ are shown to depend on each other in order to – through destroying each other’s simplicity – be a productive unity, which can only resolve itself by going through all the complications it necessarily has to go through. In the end, calling something ‘simple’ will have shown itself to be a representation that, as it is a simplification, only captures part of what there is. The truth, even if it has been clarified, can never be simple.

14 *Werke* 11, p. 270. *GW* XVI, p. 125.

15 *Werke* 11., p. 270. *GW* XVI, p. 126.

16 *Ibid.*

The 'plastic' form of a text, in which each part shapes, and is shaped by, its context, does not necessarily require the dialogue form, as Hegel remarks in his concluding observations on the philosophical dialogue, but does depend on a thorough conceptual analysis, which permeates each individual part of the text: 'Solche plastische Form des Fortgangs ist aber nur möglich durch die bis zum Einfachsten durchgedrungene Analyse der Begriffe.'<sup>17</sup> In this respect, Aristotle is just as convincing as Plato, even if the former's thought is not available in dialogue form: 'Nach dieser wesentlichen Bestimmung spekulativen Vortrags ist *Aristoteles* in seinen Entwicklungen ebenso plastisch, so daß, wenn man den gediegeneren Dialogen Platons die Form des Fragens benähme und die Sätze in direkter Elokution aneinanderreichte, man ebensosehr Aristotelische Schriften zu lesen glauben würde.'<sup>18</sup> In the end, therefore, it seems that for Hegel, Plato's greatness lies in his philosophical depth and his mastery of dialectics, whereas he appears to consider Plato's use of the dialogue form as something more or less extrinsic ('ein Äußerliches') to his thought. In Hegel's eyes, the only real benefit of a dialogue lies in the fact that the use of questions and answers forces us to linger with particular steps in the argument, and to fully develop their potential.<sup>19</sup>

Hegel's rejection of the dialogue in the Solger review might explain why he – unlike Fichte and Schelling –<sup>20</sup> never wrote a dialogue himself,<sup>21</sup> but also raises a number of questions he leaves (partly) unanswered. First of all, if the dialogue form is rejected by Hegel as being extrinsic to its contents, and for evoking an enthusiasm in the reader that has no clear relation to what is said, in what way can the 'Belebung der Idee' be an integral aspect of a philosophical text? Secondly, are not – contrary to what Hegel appears to be claiming in the Solger review – dialectics and the dialogue fundamentally intertwined

17 *Werke* II, p. 270. *GW* XVI, p. 126.

18 *Werke* II, pp. 270-271. *GW* XVI, p. 126. On Hegel's use of 'gediegen', cf. p. 115, n. 016.

19 In his lectures on Plato, Hegel also appears to consider the dialogue a form that hinders rather than helps our understanding of Plato's thought: '[Wir] haben nur seine Dialoge, und diese Gestalt erschwert es uns, sogleich Vorstellung zu gewinnen, uns bestimmte [so not only in Solger, but even in Plato there is the risk of 'Verstimmung'; AG] Darstellung von seiner Philosophie zu machen. Die Form des Dialogs enthält sehr heterogene Elemente, Seiten; was ich darunter verstehe, ist dies: daß darin eigentliches Philosophieren über das absolute Wesen und das Vorstellen von demselben mannigfaltig vermischt ist, macht diese Verschiedenheit aus.' (*Werke* 19, p. 21).

20 In 1800, Fichte's *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* was published, a three-part volume in which Fichte aimed at promulgating his philosophy to a larger audience, and of which the second part, *Wissen*, was written in dialogue form. Schelling also wrote dialogues: *Clara and Bruno oder über das göttliche und natürliche Prinzip der Dinge*, a dialogue in Platonic vein which appeared in 1802, was equally an effort to make philosophy more accessible to the general public. Although at first it was Hegel's ambition to become a *Popularphilosoph*, his initial attempts failed, and he remained rather disdainful of popular philosophy throughout the rest of his career. See Pinkard, *Hegel*, pp. 61-62, p. 220, and p. 444. Hegel's disdain might also partly explain his rejection of Solger's attempts at popularization by means of the dialogue. Interestingly, in his review Hegel does not compare Solger's dialogues to contemporary dialogues, although he was familiar with the dialogues written by Fichte and Schelling and may have read other examples, since Jacobi, Herder, Hemsterhuis and Moses Mendelssohn had also written dialogues.

21 Unless the first known text by Hegel, which he wrote at the age of fifteen, is considered a dialogue. 'Unterredung zwischen Dreien' is a short play, based on Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. See Johannes Hoffmeister (hrsg.), *Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung* (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1936), pp. 3-6.



in Plato, so that essential characteristics of the development of thought can be learned not only from the contents of Plato's work, but also from the form in which he presents his work? And what light does an answer to this question shed on the way form and content are interrelated in Hegel, who, even though he did not write dialogues, used so many aspects of dialogical writing in his work? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, and a question we should now address, what exactly constitutes a dialogue – a question Hegel only answers negatively by claiming it should not be a 'Konversation' – and what does an answer to this question teach us about the dialogical aspects of his thought?

### 3.2 What is a philosophical dialogue?

In order to answer this question, I will turn to Vittorio Hösle's *Der philosophische Dialog*, a rich and highly informative work on the philosophical dialogue as literary genre. It starts with a quotation from Henry Home, Lord Kames, lines which suggest a reason Hegel may have had in considering the dialogue an unsuitable form for the presentation of his thinking:

But of all works of this kind, what is truly the most difficult, is a characteristic [sic] dialogue upon any philosophical subject: to interweave characters with reasoning, by suiting to the character of each speaker, a peculiarity not only of thought, but of expression, requires the perfection of genius, taste and judgment.<sup>22</sup>

Whether or not Hegel considered himself in possession of 'perfection of genius, taste and judgment' is a question open to conjecture, yet what he would probably have rebelled against – had he known this work –<sup>23</sup> is Lord Kames' demand that each character in the dialogue is equipped with a specific voice and a 'peculiarity' of thought and expression. As we will see in the discussion of passages from the *Phänomenologie*, it is precisely Hegel's aim not to pin down particular positions, but to show that the dialectical development of thought should be seen as a continuous flux in which there is a constant interchange and reversal of roles.<sup>24</sup>

In his analysis of the philosophical dialogue, Hösle identifies a number of characteristics that, in his view, distinguish a dialogue from other genres in philosophical writing.<sup>25</sup>

22 Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism* (1762), quoted in Vittorio Hösle, *Der philosophische Dialog: Eine Poetik und Hermeneutik* (München: Beck, 2006), p. 7. See also: Kames, Lord, and Henry Home. *Elements of Criticism: In Two Volumes*, edited by Peter Jones, Liberty Fund, Incorporated, 2005. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uunl/detail.action?docID=3327286>, p. 312.

23 There is no reference to Kames in Hegel's published works, nor in his letters.

24 As we will see in section 3.3, Hegel is thus much closer to Bakhtin's theory of dialogics, with its concept of *heteroglossia* – the multiplicity of voices which constantly interact with each other and with their context, and thus allow for the constant development of meaning.

25 Hösle uses a tripartite subdivision of genre in philosophical writing: the objective form (systematic exposition, the encyclopedia), the subjective form (the essay, the meditation, the journal), and the intersubjective

First of all, a dialogue is not a conversation ('Gespräch'). The latter is a social interaction between people that actually took – or takes – place, whereas the dialogue is a fictional work (although it may report on historical conversations, as in the case of Cicero) created by a single author.<sup>26</sup> Secondly, as the dialogue is a form of fiction, it allows the author to freely express the general and abstract contents of his thought by means of concrete illustrations (a 'Versinnlichung des Allgemeinen'<sup>27</sup>). Although the use of concrete situations and characters helps the reader to relate to what is discussed, the precise nature of the relation between particular and general is not immediately self-evident: 'Gerade weil die Natur dieser Verbindung nicht eindeutig ist, ist der Rezipient zu besonderen Anstrengungen aufgefordert.'<sup>28</sup> Besides, in a dialogue the author uses an indirect means of communication, in posing behind the mask of one or more of the characters in the dialogue. In Hösle's view, both these aspects grant the reader a great sense of autonomy:

Daß [...] die Intention des Autors philosophischer Dialoge [...] nicht leicht zu eruieren ist, kann den Leser in einer Weise zu Autonomie erziehen, wie es nur große Kunst vermag, nicht aber das Genre der Objektivität in der Philosophie. Der Leser des Dialogs sieht, wie die Gesprächspartner allmählich zu Wahrheit geführt werden; er ist nicht mit einer fertigen Theorie konfrontiert, die zwar eventuell leichter auswendig gelernt werden kann, die aber einem ebendeswegen auch fremder bleibt, weil sie nicht das Resultat eigener Anstrengung ist. Auch wenn die scharfe Trennung zwischen Gespräch und Dialog die entscheidende Gedanke ist [of this chapter in Hösle's book, AG], kann man sogar sagen, eben wegen der Indirektheit der Mitteilung initiiere der philosophische Dialog ein – allerdings vermitteltes und notwendigerweise asymmetrisches – Gespräch zwischen Autor und Leser, wie es etwa ein System nicht in Gang bringen kann.<sup>29</sup>

As we will see in the discussion of significant passages in the *Phänomenologie*, it is precisely the incorporation of the elements mentioned here – indirectness, the play with different guises and roles, and the slow preparation of what is to be known rather than

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form (the dialogue, letters, sermons). See op.cit., p. 22 ff. The dialogue need not necessarily require two or more different characters; it is also possible to have an internal dialogue within one character. Hösle interprets Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae* as an example of the latter category. Initially, Philosophy is seen as different from Boethius himself, as a transcendent force, yet this changes in the course of the dialogue: 'Am Anfang ist sie ohne Zweifel eine Boethius überlegene Macht, die als eine andere Person erfahren wird; doch im Verlauf des Gesprächs wird sie immer mehr zur Stimme der Vernunft [...], Sie ist gleichsam das bessere Selbst.' In fact, Hösle argues, we cannot have a discussion with other people without the ability to have a conversation with ourselves: 'ohne die Fähigkeit zum "Gespräch der Seele mit sich selbst", zur privaten Antizipation möglicher Einwände anderer [...] ein Gespräch mit anderen Menschen gar nicht möglich wäre.' (op. cit., p. 255). However, the opposite may also be true: it is through being involved in social interactions that we learn how to interact and converse with ourselves.

26 Op. cit., p. 40.

27 Op. cit., p. 43.

28 Op. cit., p. 45.

29 Op. cit., p. 48. Cf. p. 152.

the presentation of a knowing that considers itself a finished product –<sup>30</sup> which is so distinctive of Hegel's method.<sup>31</sup>

Hösle's discussion of Fichte's use of dialogue in 'Die Bestimmung des Menschen', and especially in a work with the intriguing title 'Sonnenklarer Bericht an das größere Publikum, über das eigentliche Wissen der neuesten Philosophie' – a dialogue between 'der Autor' und 'der Leser', shows how the use of dialogue does not necessarily allow for reader autonomy. In the latter work, the reader paradoxically loses autonomy in being made a partner in the dialogue: 'Im Grunde wird die Autonomie des Lesers gerade dadurch verletzt, daß er zum Gesprächspartner gemacht wird; denn damit erhebt Fichte den Anspruch, seine Einwände vorwegnehmen zu können.'<sup>32</sup> Even though Fichte explicitly admonishes the reader to think for him- or herself, his ultimate aim is to force the reader into accepting his views: 'der heutige Leser [wird] den Eindruck nicht los, die einzige Betätigung des Lesers, die Fichte sich vorstellen könne, sei, mit *seiner* Philosophie übereinzustimmen; zu Kritik an ihr wird er jedenfalls nicht eingeladen.'<sup>33</sup> Hösle shows that reader autonomy in Plato's dialogues is achieved precisely by their not being 'sonnenklar': '[die] Platonische Schriften [verlangen] von dem Leser ein ganz anderes Niveau der Selbständigkeit des Mitdenkens als der 'Sonnenklare Bericht', der kaum hermeneutische Frage aufwirft.'<sup>34</sup> It is Plato's type of reader autonomy – which involves a much more active role than a mere 'Zustimmen' –<sup>35</sup> that, as we will see, Hegel is after, and his use of forms and aspects of the dialogue may be explained as one means – among others – through which he tries to do justice to this aim.<sup>36</sup>

30 The latter aspect is an important theme in nearly all of the introductions to Hegel's published writings. See e.g. the introduction to the *Wissenschaft der Logik*, where he explains why we cannot simply start with a definition of what is to be known: 'Eine Definition, mit der irgendeine Wissenschaft den absoluten Anfang macht, kann nichts anderes enthalten als den bestimmten, regelrechten Ausdruck von demjenigen, was man sich *zugegebener- und bekanntermaßen* unter dem Gegenstande und Zweck der Wissenschaft *vorstellt* [...]. Bei diesem Verfahren, die Wissenschaft mit ihrer Definition anzufangen, wird von dem Bedürfnis nicht die Rede, daß die *Notwendigkeit* ihres *Gegenstandes* und damit ihrer selbst aufgezeigt würde.' (*WdL I*, pp. 42-43, *GW XI*, p. 20). An important implication of this passage is that a truly philosophical text cannot be written or read 'regelrecht': clarity can only be achieved by going through all the motions implied in the text (and thus get rid of the 'Vorstellungen' we initially assume to represent the truth), and not presupposed in advance.

31 Hösle's remark that Plato's dialogues show rather than tell, and thus both hide and reveal their meaning ('Die Platonische Dialoge tun, was Heraklit vom Delphinischen Apoll sagt (DK 22B 93) – weder sage er noch verberge er, sondern er deute an: οὔτε λέγει οὔτε κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει) op. cit., p. 173, n.30), can also be seen as a characterization of Hegel's presentation. Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer (*Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 1, pp. 36-37): 'Hegels Sätze [sind] keine Thesen. Hegel selbst *behauptet* fast nichts, jedenfalls nichts, was nicht praktisch schon klar wäre [...]. Seine Sätze *zeigen* daher mehr, als sie *aussagen*. [...] Hegel appelliert daher auch wiederholt an den Leser, weiter zu klärende Zwischenergebnisse in seiner Sinnanalyse noch nicht als endgültige Erklärungen zu lesen, da sie erst zusammen mit den nachfolgenden Erläuterungen zu einem Gesamtbild werden. Das und der ungeheure Spannungsbogen der Argumentation sind erst einmal zur Kenntnis zu nehmen.'

32 Op. cit., p. 266.

33 Op. cit., p. 265. The work had the intriguing subtitle 'Ein Versuch, die Leser zum Verstehen zu zwingen.'

34 Op. cit., p. 266.

35 See the discussion in section 3.1.

36 In fact, many aspects of Hegel's presentation, as will be discussed in detail in the section on sense-certainty and in chapters 4 and 5, are aimed at an initial obscuring of the message. See also Theodor Adorno, who also

A further aspect of the dialogue Höhle singles out is its potential to show a diversity of positions and to incorporate contradictions: 'Dialoge [...] können [...] durch den Aufweis von Widersprüchen Wichtiges lehren, indem sie die Unhaltbarkeit einer Position gleichsam sinnlich erfahrbar machen.'<sup>37</sup> The best dialogues, Höhle argues, are those in which different positions are presented in such a way that there is both an empathy with the representatives of those positions, and a willingness on the part of the writer to allow these positions to clash and to interact in a productive way.<sup>38</sup> In Höhle's eyes this empathy is not to be found in Hegel: 'Ein guter Dialog setzt ein Interesse, ja, eine Empathie seines Verfassers mit den Individuen [voraus], die andere Positionen vertreten, wie sie bei einem Monisten wie Spinoza oder Hegel kaum zu finden sind.'<sup>39</sup> As I will argue in the discussion of Hegel's particular use of dialogical writing, which also involves an intertextual dialogue with other authors, it is precisely an integral aspect of Hegel's method to invite the reader to take up particular shapes and guises of knowing in order to come to an *Anerkennung* (acknowledgement) of those positions, and of the preconceptions involved in her or his own position.

A dialogue is essentially intersubjective, Höhle shows, yet the product of one author, who is thus faced with a challenge to do justice to positions that may be alien to her or his own.<sup>40</sup> A related aspect of the dialogue is its didactic value: its ability – through the incorporation of a plurality of characters who are led to an understanding by means of questions and examples – to gradually make progress towards what knowing and thinking essentially entail.<sup>41</sup> In fact, the dialogue finds its origin in a didactic situation in which there is an oral exchange on a subject of interest, an exchange that may be either symmetrical – a discussion among friends – or asymmetrical, as in the case of a conversation between teacher and pupil.<sup>42</sup> The dialogue may be seen as the written continuation

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stresses the relation between Hegel's alleged obscurity and reader autonomy: 'Wer Hegel sich anvertraut, wird geleitet zu der Schwelle, an der über sein Wahrheitsanspruch zu entscheiden ist. Er wird zu Hegels Kritiker, indem er ihn folgt. Unterm Aspekt des Verstehens ist das Unverständliche an Hegel Wundmal des Identitätsdenkens selbst.' Theodor W. Adorno, 'Skoteinos oder Wie zu lesen sei,' in *Drei Studien zu Hegel* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 374.

37 Op. cit., p. 58. Cf. also p. 273: 'in Platons objektivem Idealismus hat auch der Irrtum, freilich in verzerrter Form, an der Wahrheit Teil.' Hegel is also keen to stress that we should embrace our mistakes, as it is only through learning from our initial misconceptions that we ultimately arrive at the truth: 'Inzwischen, wenn die Besorgnis, in Irrtum zu geraten, ein Mißtrauen in die Wissenschaft setzt, welche ohne dergleichen Bedenklichkeiten ans Werk selbst geht und wirklich erkennt, so ist nicht abzusehen, warum nicht umgekehrt ein Mißtrauen in dies Mißtrauen gesetzt und besorgt werden soll. Daß diese Furcht zu Irren schon der Irrtum selbst ist.' *PhdG*, p. 69. *GW IX*, p. 54.

38 Op. cit., pp. 136-137.

39 Op. cit., p. 137.

40 Op. cit., p. 143. This aspect, Höhle points out, is explicitly discussed in a letter David Hume wrote on his 'Dialogues concerning natural religion.' See op. cit., pp. 142-143.

41 Plato, of course, as Höhle also point out, is a master of the didactic dialogue, not in the least through the inclusion of characters such as Adeimantos and Glaucon, who are not always able to follow Socrates, and ask for clarification or examples whenever the discussion is at risk of becoming too complicated or obscure. See e.g. op. cit., p. 167 and p. 356.

42 Op. cit., p. 81 ff. Plato's *Symposium* or Cicero's *Tusculanae Disputationes* may be considered examples of the former, whereas Augustinus' *De magistro* can be seen as the archetypal teacher-pupil dialogue.

of such discussions, and, as in Plato's case, as fuelled by the ambition to do justice to Socrates' legacy.<sup>43</sup> As is well known, Socrates himself was highly critical of writing: in the *Phaedrus* (275ff) he praises 'serious discourse' as the medium in which the word is truly alive, and not at risk of being misinterpreted, whereas the written word leaves the reader completely alone and 'without instruction' on how to understand the text.<sup>44</sup> Socrates' aim was to reveal just enough, so that he could both help his audience and simultaneously achieve an 'aporetic' feeling (eine 'Aporieerfahrung'<sup>45</sup>) in the reader, who is thus challenged to critically examine both what is said and his or her own preconceptions. In the discussion of relevant passages from the *Phänomenologie*, I will try to show that the dialogical aspects of Hegel's presentation also bring about a sense of *aporia* in the reader, who is thus provoked to actively participate in the development of thought.

Finally, Höhle focuses on the reception of the philosophical dialogue and shows that many dialogues can be seen as explicitly embarking on a discussion with other authors or with (traditional) philosophical views. Moreover, the dialogue, as we already saw above, can be seen as the philosophical genre which, more than any other genre, has the 'intrinsic power to elicit the active involvement of an attentive reader.'<sup>46</sup> Not only these two aspects, but also the other characteristics Höhle sees as distinctive of the dialogue – the instantiation of what is abstract and general by means of concrete examples, an indirect means of communication, its propaedeutic character, the element of role playing and the intersubjective nature of the dialogue – also play a significant role in Hegel's work, as I will discuss in the section on 'sinnliche Gewißheit', and in chapters four and five. Before doing so, I will first address the main aspects of Bakhtin's theory of the *dialogic*, which, as I already suggested,<sup>47</sup> will also help to bring into focus significant aspects of Hegel's dialectical method, and I will argue – against Bakhtin's express dismissal of

43 Op. cit., p. 83 ff. As Höhle points out, it can also be argued that Plato, in writing down Socrates' thought, took revenge on the authorities whose aim it had been to silence Socrates: 'Nach Sokrates' Hinrichtung war der *logos Sokraticos* [...] in einem neuen Medium, dem der Schriftlichkeit, das Sokrates selbst fremd geblieben war, gleichsam die Rache seiner Schüler an jenen die gedacht hatten, mit der Beseitigung des Ärgernisses, das seine Person darstellte, sei auch sein Programm gestorben.' This revenge can be seen as the instigation of the transition from discussion to dialogue: 'Diese Rache zog freilich einen medialen Übergang nach sich – vom Gespräch zum Dialog.' See op. cit., p. 85.

44 Fichte intriguingly finishes his dialogue in the *Bestimmung des Menschen* with the sentence: 'Ich lasse dir mit dich selbst allein.' Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Die Bestimmung des Menschen* (Hrsg. Theodor Ballauf und Ignaz Klein) (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1962), p. 103.

45 Op. cit., p. 356. Although Höhle sees this 'Aporieerfahrung' as an essential aspect of Plato's method, he simultaneously challenges the view that Plato's early dialogues end in *aporia*. He defends the interpretation promulgated by the *Tübinger Schule* that sees the apparent lack of closure in the early dialogues as a further aspect of Plato's didactic method and Socratic irony. Plato is thus seen as deliberately withholding answers that he already has and is to discuss in later dialogues (and in his unwritten work, the *agrafa dogmata*, which plays such a prominent role in the *Tübinger Schule* view of Plato). A further discussion of this aspect lies beyond the scope of this study, yet it can be argued that Hegel's presentation, like Plato's, is aimed at bringing about a sense of *aporia* in the reader, as a means of provoking his audience into thought.

46 Kenneth Sayre, 'A Maieutic View of the Late Dialogues,' in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. by J.C. Kluge and N.D. Smith (Oxford: OUP, 1992), p. 239. Quoted in Höhle, op. cit., p. 440.

47 See p. 66 above.

Hegel's dialectics as monological –<sup>48</sup> that precisely those aspects can be called dialogical in the Bakhtinian sense.

### 3.3 Bakhtin's theory of the *dialogic*

At the beginning of the twentieth century Bakhtin developed a theory of the novel – which was simultaneously a reflection of his ideas on language and literature in general – in which the term 'dialogic' was to hold center stage.<sup>49</sup> For Bakhtin, the novel (which literally means the 'new') is of prime interest since it is a genre that resists neat classification:

"novel" is the name Bakhtin gives to whatever force is at work within a given literary system to reveal the limits, the artificial constraints of that system. Literary systems are comprised of canons, and "novelization" is fundamentally anticanonical. It will not permit generic monologue. Always it will insist on the dialogue between what a given system will admit as literature and those texts that are otherwise excluded from such a definition of literature. What is more conventionally thought of as the novel is simply the most complex and distilled expression of this impulse.<sup>50</sup>

In his essays, Bakhtin thus not only discusses Pushkin and Dostoevsky, but also focuses on Rabelais, and even on the Naturalist drama of Ibsen, or on epic poems such as Byron's *Don Juan*, as 'masks of the novel', since what can be observed in those works is that 'formerly distinct literary genres are subjected to the novel's intensifying antigeneric power, their systematic purity is infected and they become "novelized"'.<sup>51</sup> For Bakhtin, the novel is a term that can be used for what is "new" in any period, and not just in the period when it is said to have "arisen".<sup>52</sup>

Before taking a closer look at Bakhtin's concept of the *dialogic*, I would briefly like to discuss the question of genre in relation to Hegel's *Phänomenologie*. There is a strong tradition that interprets the *Phänomenologie* as a kind of *Bildungsroman*,<sup>53</sup> and an important

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48 See the introduction, p. xiii.

49 Bakhtin's work remained unpublished in the West until the 1970's. In the seventies, his works immediately became influential and inspired theorists such as Julia Kristeva and Tzvetan Todorov. At the beginning of the twentieth century, independent of Bakhtin, aspects of the dialogue – with an emphasis on the relation between the subject and the other – also became prominent in the work of more existentially orientated authors such as Martin Buber (*Ich und Du*) and Emmanuel Levinas.

50 Introduction to M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. xxxi.

51 Ibid., p. xxxii. The novel's power to 'infect' the purity of distinct genres is an image Hegel would wholeheartedly approve of. On Hegel's use of 'Ansteckung', cf. chapter four, p. 136.

52 Ibid., p. xxvii. Ian Watt's influential *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), for instance, saw the beginning of the eighteenth century (Defoe, Richardson, Fielding) as the period in which the genre of the novel was born.

53 See e.g. Paul Redding's entry on Hegel in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hegel/>, access date 07-11-2017), par. 3.1: 'its (of the *Phänomenologie*, AG) structure has been



argument in favour of this interpretation would indeed be the role played by dialogue in the *Bildungsroman*, which – rather than the novel's plot – allows the protagonist to test her or his preconceptions, and which thus allows both for further development (*Bildung*) of character and (self-)understanding, but also of the acknowledgment of positions that are initially seen – by the main character, but possibly also by the reader – as superficial, hostile or mistaken. Yet, although this aspect is definitely present in the *Phänomenologie*, I would like to argue that it is precisely the work's resistance to such – or any – categorization that makes the work 'novel' in Bakhtin's sense. This resistance is already apparent in the preface, which, as Stekeler-Weithofer shows, is an ironical commentary on the superfluous nature of prefaces, and in this resembles the self-conscious prefaces of Dostoevsky:

Sie [the preface, AG] trifft sich mit den Selbstkommentaren in den Vorworten der Romane Dostojewskis, in denen Vorworte ebenfalls für überflüssig erklärt werden. Sie gründet inhaltlich auf die Einsicht, dass es in einer philosophischen Überlegung nicht um die Aufstellung von Thesen oder Resultaten geht, die dann in der Ausführung begründet werden, und schon gar nicht um eine Erzählung über die Geschichte von mehr oder weniger guten Einfällen. Alles Historische und Narrative ist aus der Philosophie zu verbannen.<sup>54</sup>

Although the 'historical and narrative' is by no means fully absent from the *Phänomenologie*, for Hegel the merely anecdotal – as we also saw in the Solger review – is to be excluded if it cannot be shown to have an intrinsic relation to the development of what is to be thought.<sup>55</sup> Besides, as is convincingly argued by Pahl, there is no 'grand narrative' in the *Phänomenologie* in the sense that the protagonist's progress is made in a smooth and orderly fashion. The path natural consciousness follows towards self-understanding is rather full of gaps and awkward transitions.<sup>56</sup> The *Phänomenologie*, in Pahl's view, should therefore not be interpreted as a *Bildungsroman*, but as a text in which three, what Pahl calls, 'literary spatio-temporalities' converge: complex narrative, theatrical enactment and poetic rhythm (especially in relation to the speculative sentence), and which thus refuses to be pigeonholed.<sup>57</sup> For Hegel, philosophy is to be presented in such a

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compared to that of a *Bildungsroman*, having an abstractly conceived protagonist – the bearer of an evolving series of 'shapes of consciousness' or the inhabitant of a series of successive phenomenal worlds – whose progress and set-backs the reader follows and learns from.' Among the defenders of this view we find Jean Hyppolite, Josiah Royce and M.H. Abrams. Cf. Pahl, p. 6 and p. 228, n.8.

54 Stekeler-Weithofer (*Hegels PhdG*, Bd. I), pp. 145-146.

55 See *PhdG*, p. 11, *GW IX*, p. 9: 'etwa eine historische *Angabe* der Tendenz und des Standpunkts, des allgemeinen Inhalts und der Resultate, eine Verbindung von hin und her sprechenden Behauptungen und Versicherungen über das Wahre –, kann nicht für die Art und Weise gelten, in der die philosophische Wahrheit darzustellen sei.'

56 Pahl suggests that consciousness' progress is thus a *Brechung* rather than a *Bildung*: 'Consciousness' *Bildung* consists in a series of painful experiences, in the repeated breaking of consciousness's certainty and existence.' (op. cit., p. 65) Hegel's concept of *Bildung* will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

57 Pahl, op. cit., pp. 51 and 65. Cf. also Allen Speight, *Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 17 ff. Speight argues that the *Phänomenologie* is an 'appropriation' of



way that our preconceptions of what a philosophical text should be like are continuously challenged. The refusal to meet with such preconceptions may also prove a further reason why Hegel employs forms of dialogical writing in his text rather than obey the strictures of the genre of dialogue writing, or, rather, any strictures belonging to a specific genre.

If we now return to Bakhtin's concept of the dialogic, this is most clearly outlined in his essay 'Discourse in the Novel' (1934-35). For Bakhtin, what is distinctive of the novel is its heterogeneity: 'The novel as a whole is a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice.'<sup>58</sup> The interaction between these different styles and languages produces the unity of the work as a whole.<sup>59</sup> Each individual element within the novel forms – and is formed by – both its immediate context and the novel as a totality: 'The linguistic and stylistic profile of a given element (lexical, semantic, syntactic) is shaped by that subordinated unity to which it is most immediately proximate. At the same time this element, together with its most immediate unity, figures into the style of the whole, itself supports the accent of the whole and participates in the process whereby the unified meaning of the whole is structured and revealed.'<sup>60</sup> The novel is an 'orchestration' of individual characters, whose language expresses their specific outlook and (social) background, and 'the internal stratification present in every language at any given moment of its historical existence is [thus] the indispensable prerequisite for the novel as a genre.'<sup>61</sup> This diversity of speech types is what Bakhtin calls heteroglossia [*raznorecie*] and is made manifest in the novel by the use of a variety of voice and genre: 'authorial speech, the speech of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters'<sup>62</sup> The interaction between these different voices allows for the development, or in Bakhtin's words, 'dialogization' of the novel's theme: '[the] distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization – this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel.'<sup>63</sup> If we consider Hegel's specific use of language in the *Phänomenologie*, we also see that he

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three literary modes: tragedy, comedy and the novel, through which Hegel both depends on these specific forms of literature and is able to produce a 'successor narrative' in which he goes beyond these literary modes. See also Rebecca Comay, 'Resistance and Repetition: Freud and Hegel' in *Research in Phenomenology* 45, p. 264: '[...] at a narrative level [...] the *Phenomenology* presents itself less as a novel than as a series of interlinked short stories. The connective tissue between the individual shapes is often tenuous; each moment threatens to become an isolated episode, a set piece waiting to be ripped out of context, quoted, excerpted, anthologized, recycled.'

58 Op. cit., p. 261.

59 Ibid. p. 262: 'the style of a novel is to be found in the combination of its styles; the language of a novel is the system of its "languages"'

60 Ibid., p. 262.

61 Ibid., p. 263.

62 Ibid., p. 263.

63 Ibid. Language, for Bakhtin, is essentially speech, 'parole' rather than 'langue', and linguistics a 'linguistics of utterance'), even though he agrees with de Saussure that language is a 'system of general language norms', op. cit., p. 264. Cf. Michael Holquist's introduction, p. xxi: 'Language, when it *means*, is somebody talking to someone else, even when that someone else is one's own inner addressee.'

employs a range of different registers – poetic, philosophical, colloquial, and even rather vulgar –<sup>010</sup> and that in this respect, too, his work can be called dialogical in the Bakhtinian sense. If Bakhtin's thought on the novel can be said to 'insist on the dialogue between what a given system will admit as literature and those texts that are otherwise excluded from such a definition of literature',<sup>64</sup> Hegel's presentation appears to ask the question what type of language can be called truly philosophical. His answer would probably be that indeed any language is potentially philosophical, if it allows us – or, perhaps even, forces us – to come to a critical reflection of what it is that we say and think.<sup>65</sup>

A further aspect of Bakhtin's dialogics that is of interest in relation to Hegel's work is the importance attached to rhetoric. In order to come to a full understanding and artistic appreciation of the novel, Bakhtin advocates a 'return to rhetoric': 'The novel [...] has the closest genetic, family relationship to rhetorical forms. And throughout the entire development of the novel, its intimate interaction (both peaceful and hostile) with living rhetorical genres (journalistic, moral, philosophical and others) has never ceased; this interaction was perhaps no less intense than was the novel's interaction with the artistic genres (epic, dramatic, lyric).'<sup>66</sup> A focus on rhetoric especially allows us to reveal what Bakhtin calls 'the internally dialogic quality of discourse',<sup>67</sup> and permits us to move beyond traditional ways of interpretation, not only of the novel, but also of the relation between speaker and language: 'Philosophy of language, linguistics and stylistics [i.e. such as they have come down to us] have all postulated a simple and unmediated relation of speaker to his unitary and singular "own" language, and have postulated as well a simple realization in the monologic utterance of the individual.'<sup>68</sup> In fact, Bakhtin argues, such a unitary language is not a given, but is 'always

**010** An interesting example can be found in a highly ironical passage in the 'Vernunft' section on 'Physiognomik und Schädellehre', in which a shape of consciousness is discussed that reduces spirit, or the soul, to a physical 'thing' (the brain): 'Das Tiefe, das der Geist von innen heraus, aber nur bis in sein vorstellendes Bewußtsein treibt und er in diesem stehenläßt, – und die Unwissenheit diese Bewußtseins, was das ist, was es sagt, ist dieselbe Verknüpfung des Hohen und Niedrigen, welche an dem Lebendigen die Natur in der Verknüpfung des Organs seiner höchsten Vollendung, des Organs des Zeugung, und des Organs des Pissens naiv ausdrückt. – Das unendliche Urteil als unendliches wäre die Vollendung des sich selbst erfassenden Lebens; das in der Vorstellung bleibende Bewußtsein desselben aber verhält sich als Pissen.' (*PhdG*, p. 262, *GW IX*, p. 192) What Hegel appears to aim for in his language is also a 'Verknüpfung des Hohen und Niedrigen', in which the depth of spirit is ultimately realized through interacting with whatever expression is used, so that consciousness no longer remains in a state of 'Unwissenheit' as to what it says, no longer remains tied to its particular 'Vorstellungen'. We are to develop ourselves, our knowing and our language in such a way that we can come to a 'Vollendung des sich selbst erfassenden Lebens': to be part of a living totality in which an infinity of self-revealing connections can be made.

64 See p. 76 above.

65 And, hence, of the depth of spirit (see n. 010).

66 *Ibid.*, p. 269. Bakhtin argues that the view that denies the novel 'any aesthetic significance' – such as propounded by the Neo-Kantian theorist Gustav Shpet – on the basis of a study of its rhetorical aspects (which are judged to be completely 'extra-artistic') nevertheless has the merit of contributing to our understanding of the way rhetoric plays a significant role in the novel, especially in relation to the aspect of discourse. (*op. cit.*, p. 268)

67 *Ibid.*, p. 269.

68 *Ibid.*

in essence posited': it is a theoretical construct which 'at every moment of its linguistic life is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia.'<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, Bakhtin, as can be grasped from his attributing 'life' to it, also sees this unitary language as a force that has 'real presence' and whose generative, what Bakhtin calls 'centripetal', forces work at overcoming and shaping the 'centrifugal' forces of heteroglossia. The unitary language strives for a maximum of concreteness and mutual understanding,<sup>70</sup> whereas heteroglossia aims at doing justice to particular perspectives, often by parodying or polemicizing against 'cultural, national and political centralization.'<sup>71</sup> The interaction between these two forces has been largely ignored in Bakhtin's eyes, and the dialogical aspect of literature, and especially of the novel, has not been allowed to come to the fore: 'A literary work has been conceived by stylistics as if it were a hermetic and self-sufficient whole, one whose elements constitute a closed system presuming nothing beyond themselves, [...] the artistic work as a whole – whatever that whole might be – is a closed authorial monologue, one that presumes only passive listeners beyond its own boundaries.'<sup>72</sup> As I will argue in the next section and in chapters four and five, the *Phänomenologie* should not be read as a 'closed authorial monologue', and Hegel's incorporation of forms of dialogical writing and other rhetorical devices such as oxymoron, parataxis and metaphor is to be explained by a strong motivation to grant his readers autonomy,<sup>73</sup> rather than reduce them to 'passive listeners'.

Bakhtin's argument that the novel is not to be seen as a self-sufficient whole also extends to the smallest elements that constitute the novel: its words. Words cannot be treated as static entities that do not belong to anyone in particular. They always find themselves embedded in concrete speech, which is always the speech belonging to a particular perspective:

any concrete discourse (utterance) finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist – or, on the contrary, by the 'light' of the alien words that have already been spoken about it. [...] The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by

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69 Ibid., p. 270.

70 Ibid., p. 271.

71 Ibid., p. 273. Bakhtin argues that we thus need to develop a 'specific feel for language and discourse that one gets in stylizations, in *skaz* [Russian fairy-tale, AG], in parodies and in various forms of verbal masquerade, "not talking straight," and in the more complex artistic forms for the organization of contradiction.' Op. cit., pp. 274-275. As will be shown in the discussion of the *Bildung* section from the *Phänomenologie* (in chapter four), these latter three aspects play an important role in Hegel's presentation in this work.

72 Ibid. pp. 273-274.

73 On reader autonomy, cf. the discussion on p. 72 above. Bakhtin's ideas on the reader's responsiveness as an 'active understanding' (op. cit., pp. 280-281), and as bearing part of the responsibility for the development of the meaning of the text, are thus similar to Hegel's thoughts on 'Zustimmung'. See p. 69 above.

socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance, it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue.<sup>74</sup>

Although for Hegel the emphasis is less on the fabric of 'socio-ideological consciousness', an unraveling of which – through dialogue – will contribute to our understanding of words uttered 'at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment', than on consciousness as the subject of *Geist's* journey to self-understanding, it is definitely the case that at all stages of this journey – even, as we will see in the next section, at the level of sense-certainty – consciousness experiences that language is already essentially mediated, and that we can only fully understand what words mean if we allow them to interact with their context, and to 'brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads'. Hegel, too, wants us to see that we cannot have an immediate grasp of the meaning of words, but that an 'obscuring mist' is a necessary prerequisite for our coming to understand the words we are presented with.<sup>75</sup>

Bakhtin further develops his argument on the mediated aspect of language by contending that any discourse, be it literary or 'extra-artistic,' is always – except in the case of the biblical Adam –<sup>76</sup> dialogically oriented towards "the already uttered," the "already known," [or] the "common opinion",<sup>77</sup> to that which in Hegel is expressed by 'das natürliche Bewußtsein'. Not only are words and discourse directed towards what has already been said, they also anticipate a response and are thus open towards the future: 'Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word.'<sup>78</sup> It is this aspect which, in Bakhtin's eyes, has been largely ignored by linguistics, where the interest in rhetorical forms seems to be mainly determined by 'demands for comprehensibility and clarity – that is, precisely those aspects that are deprived of any internal dialogism, that take the listener for a person who passively understands but not for one who actively answers and reacts.'<sup>79</sup> Again, it can be argued that one of the motivations for Hegel's own alleged obscurity – apart from his argument that clarity can only be achieved and not presupposed – is a desire to activate his readers into thought, and to grant them part of the responsibility for the development of thought.

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74 Ibid. p. 276. As we already saw in the discussion of the Solger review, for Hegel it is vital that philosophy is presented in such a way that it is a 'Lebendiges': that it expresses and provokes the activity of thought. In the fragment quoted above, Bakhtin appears to have a different conception: what is 'living' is what has been shaped by, and taken from, concrete historical and social context (although this may, of course, be fictional). Bakhtin's conception thus bears closer resemblance to Solger's. Cf. p. 67, n. 8.

75 Cf. p. 73, n. 36.

76 See op. cit., p. 279: 'Only the mythical Adam, who approached a mythical and as yet verbally unqualified world with the first word, could really have escaped from start to finish this dialogic inter-orientation with the alien object that occurs in the object.' Cf. Hegel's reflections on Adam's name-giving in the previous chapter.

77 Op. cit., p. 279.

78 Ibid., p. 280.

79 Ibid.

Developing the meaning of words, texts and discourse dialogically, Bakhtin argues, also entails the appropriation – and expropriation – of what is given to us from ‘other people’s mouths’: ‘the word in language is half someone else’s. It becomes “one’s own” only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word [...]. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language. [...] Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker’s intentions; it is populated – overpopulated – with the intentions of others. Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one’s own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process.’<sup>80</sup> For Bakhtin, this process implies that consciousness is faced with the necessity of ‘*having to choose a language*’. With each literary-verbal performance, consciousness must actively orient itself amidst heteroglossia, it must move in and occupy a position for itself within it, it chooses, in other words, a “language”’.<sup>81</sup> For Hegel, as will be discussed in the next section, appropriation also plays an important role in developing the meaning of language, since for Hegel, too, language comes to us as a medium in which previous shapes of consciousness make themselves heard. An important difference is that, for Hegel, making this medium our own does not imply that we choose a language, but rather that we allow language (and thought) – by bringing out the plurality of perspectives that are reflected in language – to be transformed into a medium that is ultimately accessible and clear to all, so that we can both liberate language and ourselves from belonging to particularized perspectives.<sup>82</sup>

A final aspect of Bakhtin’s discussion that is relevant in relation to Hegel’s work is the distinction made between ‘monological’ poetry and the ‘dialogical’ novel. In the novel, there is a mediated and more distant relationship between author and work than in a poem: ‘[The author] can make use of language without wholly giving himself up to it, he may treat it as semi-alien or completely alien to himself, while compelling language ultimately to serve all his own intentions. The author does not speak in a given language (from which he distances himself to a greater or lesser degree), but, he speaks, as it were, *through* language, a language that has somehow more or less materialized,

80 Op. cit. pp. 293-294.

81 Ibid., p. 295. In the next sentence, Bakhtin, elaborates on this idea of ‘choosing a language’: ‘Only by remaining in a closed environment, one without writing or thought, completely off the map of socio-ideological becoming, could a man fail to sense this activity of selecting a language and rest assured in the inviolability of his own language, the conviction that his language is predetermined.’ (Ibid., p. 295) ‘Choosing a language’ thus implies entering a realm in which language is dynamic, open to change and which simultaneously involves a willingness to open up to the ‘violation’ of what is held to be certain and fixed, and which thus allows for development of the participants in language. Bakhtin’s remark is slightly reminiscent of Wittgenstein’s private language argument, cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), §§ 243-271.

82 This does not imply that these particularized perspectives cease to exist; rather, the aim is to develop language and thought in such a way that these perspectives cease to be taken as determinate and fixed, and as absolute for a particular shape of consciousness, but are also acknowledged for their contribution to the development of knowing.

become objectivized, that he merely ventriloquates.<sup>83</sup> Language is not only a medium of expression, but also becomes an object of reflection through which we can come to an understanding of the various perspectives that the writer allows to voice themselves. For Bakhtin, as for Hegel, language can thus be seen as the ‘Dasein des Geistes’;<sup>84</sup> as the medium in which spirit – or, as Bakhtin would call it, the ‘socio-cultural horizon’ – manifests itself in all its diversity.

For Bakhtin, the poetic form does not allow for such development of language: it is a self-enclosed world in which the poet has an immediate relation to his words.<sup>85</sup> The ‘stratification’ of speech, its social diversity, is limited by a poem’s rhythm: ‘*Rhythm, by creating an unmediated involvement between every aspect of the accentual system of the whole [...] destroys in embryo those social worlds of speech and of persons that are embedded in the words: in any case, rhythm puts definite limits on them, does not let them unfold or materialize.*’<sup>86</sup> Through rhythm only one particular perspective is allowed to make itself heard, and precludes us from developing other accents and intentions. Bakhtin’s ideas on rhythm are reminiscent of Hegel’s discussion on the speculative sentence in the *Vorrede* to the *Phänomenologie*, although Hegel appears to see rhythm as a productive rather than a restrictive force. Hegel argues that a ‘normal’, predicative sentence can only become speculative when the ‘*entgegengesetzte Bewegung*’ (through which other perspectives are developed) that is implicit in the sentence is made explicit: ‘*diese entgegengesetzte Bewegung muß ausgesprochen werden.*’<sup>87</sup> This ‘*aussprechen*’ apparently has to be taken quite literally: only in saying a sentence out loud, and by emphasizing certain words or parts (through which we in a sense also make the sentence our own), can we come to understand that a sentence could also be read differently.<sup>88</sup> Hegel thus does not so much see rhythm as that which limits interaction with and between different perspectives, but rather as the result of an interaction that is instigated by means of accentuation, and for which, again, the reader is to take responsibility: ‘[Der] Konflikt der Form eines Satzes überhaupt und der sie zerstörende Einheit des Begriffs ist dem ähnlich, der im Rhythmus zwischen dem Metrum und dem Akzente stattfindet. Der Rhythmus resultiert aus der schwebenden Mitte und Vereinigung beider.’<sup>89</sup>

83 Op. cit., p. 299. Pahl also interprets Hegel’s habit of quoting from other texts as an act of ventriloquism. See e.g. Pahl, p. 95. I will discuss the relation of Hegel’s text to other texts extensively in chapters four and five.

84 *PhdG*, pp. 478-479. *GW IX*, p. 351. This passage will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

85 Op. cit., p. 297: The poet must assume a complete single-personed hegemony over his own language, he must assume equal responsibility for each one of its aspects and subordinate them to his own, and only his own intentions. Each word must express the poet’s *meaning* directly and without mediation; there must be no distance between the poet and his word. The meaning must emerge from language as a single intentional whole [...].’

86 Ibid.

87 *PhdG*, p. 61. *GW IX*, p. 45.

88 Cf. the discussion of the ‘speculative sentence’ in the introduction, pp. xvii-xviii.

89 *PhdG*, p. 59. *GW IX*, p. 43. On the rhythm of the speculative sentence, cf. Pahl, pp. 102-117.



In considering the above aspects of Bakhtin's dialogics, it comes as a bit of a surprise that in one of the very few remarks he made on Hegel, Bakhtin denounces Hegel's work precisely for transforming what is essentially dialogical into 'monological dialectic': 'If we transform dialogue into one continuous text, that is, erase the divisions between voices (changes of speaking subjects), which is possible at the extreme (Hegel's monological dialectic), then the deep-seated (infinite) contextual meaning disappears (we hit the bottom, reach a standstill).'<sup>90</sup> In the next section, through a discussion of relevant passages from the sense-certainty section in the *Phänomenologie*, I hope to show that, although there are important differences between Bakhtin and Hegel, such as their respective ideas on the nature of consciousness or on appropriation, Hegel's approach in the *Phänomenologie* can indeed be called dialogical in the Bakhtinian sense: through its incorporation of a diversity of styles and voices (in which individual elements are in constant interaction with the whole), in the interaction between language as a unifying, centripetal force and the centrifugal forces of heteroglossia, in its use of rhetoric, and, finally, in the importance given to the interaction with – and provocation of – the reader who is to actively participate in the development of the text's potential.

### 3.4 The dialogical character of consciousness' initial experience as 'sinnliche Gewitheit'

When we look at Hegel's discussion of the nature of the experience made by sense-certainty, we see that – similar to the discussion of the initial mastering of nature through the giving of names in the *Jenaer Systementwürfe* – it occasionally takes the form of a dialogical thought experiment, in which sense-certainty is questioned about its experience. The title of this section – *Die sinnliche Gewitheit oder das Diese und das Meinen* –<sup>91</sup> suggests that Hegel has a twofold aim: not only does he want to present the way sense-certainty knows of the world, but he also wants to examine what can be learned from its trying to articulate its initial experience by means of expressions such as 'this'.<sup>91</sup> The 'questioning' of

**011** Throughout his work, Hegel very often makes use of the conjunction 'oder', and especially of the phrase 'oder, was dasselbe ist'. His aim in doing so is to make us aware that the way things appear to us, the way they present themselves, is both the same as but also different from what things are in themselves. Cf. also the discussion of Hegel's paratactical style in ch. 2, p. 40.

90 Michail Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, transl. VW.McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 162, quoted in Jean-Franois Ct, 'Bakhtin's Dialogism Reconsidered through Hegel's Monologism': the Dialectical Foundation of Aesthetics and Ideology in Contemporary Human Sciences,' in *Materializing Bakhtin: The Bakhtin Circle and Social Theory*, ed. Craig Brandist and Galin Tihanov (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), p. 24.

91 Several commentators have noted the similarities to Wittgenstein's argumentative strategy in the *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, where he aims to show the impossibility of private ostensive definition and, hence, the essentially communal nature of language. See e.g. Charles Taylor, 'The Opening Arguments of the *Phenomenology*,' in Alisdair MacIntyre (ed.), *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), pp. 151-188, and Michael N. Forster, *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 207-212. Forster aims to show that the strategies of Hegel and Wittgenstein are 'virtually indistinguishable', but also points out a major difference, which lies in their respective views of common sense and common language: 'Hegel [...] has no scruples about



sense-certainty begins after Hegel has explained that it is only possible to have an experience of an actual sense-certainty ('eine wirkliche sinnliche Gewißheit'), in which both the object and the subject are determined and no longer stand in a relation of pure immediacy. Hegel then aims to show that already at the level of sense-certainty knowledge is essentially mediated. In order to do so, he challenges the 'wir' observing sense-certainty's experience to take up the position of the subject and interrogate sense-certainty on the nature of its experience. In this section, I will discuss the intriguing questions raised by this interrogation. First of all, who exactly is involved in this 'wir', and what is the nature of its involvement with sense-certainty? Secondly, in what way is the aspect of role-playing – that figures prominently in Hegel's discussion of sense-certainty – an essential element of Hegel's concept of experience, and what does an answer to this question suggest about the nature of experience? And finally, how are reader and author implicated in the unfolding of the experience made as sense-certainty? I aim to show that discussing these questions will provide further argument for interpreting both Hegel's dialectical method and his presentation as dialogical, and also hope to define more precisely in what way his particular method and presentation can be called dialogical.

### 3.4.1 'Wir' and its involvement in the unfolding of sense-certainty's experience

The first question that is raised by Hegel's discussion of sense-certainty is who actually participate in its experience. An obvious answer would be the one suggested by the first sentence of the section on sense-certainty: 'Das Wissen, welches zuerst oder unmittelbar unser Gegenstand ist, kann kein anderes sein als dasjenige, welches selbst unmittelbares Wissen, *Wissen des Unmittelbaren* oder *Seienden* ist.'<sup>92</sup> There is an object, the immediate knowing of sense-certainty (in which an 'Ich' has an immediate awareness of 'das Sein der Sache'), that appears to a subject, introduced as a 'we' (it is 'our' – 'unser' – object) who, interestingly, is invited to assume exactly the same position (i.e. a position of immediacy) as the one that is attributed to sense-certainty.<sup>93</sup> Both subject and object are thus a form of consciousness, as Bruno Liebrucks shows: 'Wir haben von der ersten Zeile des Werkes an nicht nur ein Bewußtsein, sondern deren zwei. Das eine vollzieht

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departing from common sense or common language, and is therefore quite happy to see his conclusion diverge from them in propositional and even conceptual content. He consequently avoids the basic inconsistency and the ensuing contortions and interpretative implausibilities found in Wittgenstein's version of the argument.' (p. 209) Hegel's aim, as I will argue in this study, can be construed as an attempt to arrive at a speculative transformation of language that results from consciousness' critical reflections on the way it is used to express its experience, through which it not so much departs from, but achieves a critical awareness of common sense and common language, in order to develop and transform language from within. Doing so will simultaneously entail a transformation of its knowing and of itself.

92 *PhdG*, p. 82. *GW IX*, p. 63.

93 The question thus raises itself whether reflection is at all possible, as this immediate stance taken up by the subject would imply that it would not be able to assert anything other than that sense-certainty is its object.

seine Erfahrungen, das andere schaut diesem Bewußtsein zu.<sup>94</sup> Liebrucks' observation on the twofold nature of consciousness seems to suggest that only the consciousness that has the experience (the object) is active, with the other form of consciousness (the subject) in the role of passive observer, and initially appears to be in line with Hegel's discussion of what is involved in sense-certainty. Indeed, Hegel's appeal on 'us' not to interfere in any way with what we are presented with – which immediately follows the opening sentence –<sup>95</sup> can be taken as a compelling argument that this is indeed Hegel's stance. However, observing consciousness does not completely stick to its task. As soon as it discovers that, initially, it can learn no more from its observations other than that a 'reines Ich' is aware of a 'reines Sein',<sup>96</sup> it focuses its attention on an actual example of sense-certainty. Hegel speaks of 'zusehen,' yet, in comparison to the initial appeal to take up a position that is purely '*unmittelbar oder aufnehmend*' a more active stance appears to be required.<sup>97</sup> Focusing on an actual example reveals that subject and object are dis-

94 Bruno Liebrucks, *Sprache und Bewußtsein* (Frankfurt am Main: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1970), p. 2.

95 *PhdG*, p. 82, *GW IX*, p. 63: 'Wir haben uns ebenso *unmittelbar oder aufnehmend* zu verhalten, also nichts an ihm, wie es sich darbietet zu verändern und von dem Auffassen das Begreifen abzuhalten.'

96 The words 'reines Ich' may be taken to be linked to Hegel's critical Kant (and Fichte) reception, in which it is precisely the pure I that fails to truly get hold of the object it finds itself opposed to, and has to remain within its own boundaries. Yet, in the context of sense-certainty, the 'reines Ich' can also be seen as referring to an empiricist position such as Locke's, where the knowing subject is seen as a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate, which is completely formed by its (sensory) experience. Cf. Jürgen Naeher, *Einführung in die Idealistische Dialektik Hegels* (Opladen: Leske, 1981), p. 54. As Wieland stresses, it is Hegel's aim to make us aware that already at this level consciousness is neither pure in the Kantian nor in the Lockean sense: 'die sinnliche Gewißheit ist keine ungeschichtliche, abstrakte Bewußtseinsstruktur – etwa im Sinne eines kantianischen "Bewußtseins überhaupt" –, sondern ein empirisches, konkretes und geschichtlich vermitteltes Bewußtsein, das schon in einer Welt – der von 1806 – lebt. Es handelt sich – analog zu den Figuren in den frühplatonischen Dialogen – um ein Bewußtsein, das schon vielerlei mitbringt, manches zu wissen glaubt, Vorurteile und Vormeinungen hat, ein Bewußtsein vor allem das Rede und Antwort stehen kann.' Cf. Wolfgang Wieland, 'Hegels Dialektik der Sinnlichen Gewißheit,' in Hans Dietrich Fulda und Dietrich Henrich (Hrsg), *Materialien zu 'Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes'* (Frankfurt am Main, 1973), op. cit., p. 79. See also Pinkard, who similarly argues that already at 'its basic levels' consciousness is 'world-involving': "consciousness" can only be understood in terms of various "formations of consciousness," of the ways in which certain historically determinate communities take certain kinds of things and practices as authoritative for themselves in determining what counts as knowledge.' Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 45. Robert Pippin makes a similar argument in 'You Can't Get There from Here: Transition problems in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*' in Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), pp. 52-85. The sense-certainty section is not only a critical exchange with empiricism, but indeed with any type of philosophy that is founded on an immediate awareness, whether it is of an object that presents itself to the senses or of an I, such as we find in Descartes (the *cogito*), Kant or Fichte, or of a supersensible, which the Romantics claimed to be directly accessible through feeling. Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. I, p. 430, and Hyppolite, *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l'Esprit de Hegel*, p. 88.

97 Andrzej Warminski makes the interesting suggestion that already the requirement to be passive presupposes activity, as we have to clear away all the preconceptions that might interfere with being mere observers: 'there is a negativity already built in into this relation [between 'wir' and 'unmittelbares Wissen', AG] in that we can behave (*verhalten*) immediately and add nothing to our taking up (*Aufnehmen*) of the object only if we leave out, forget, negate, put down, as it were, what we already know and act as though we knew only as much and in the same way as sense-certainty knows.' Andrzej Warminski, *Readings in Interpretation: Hölderlin, Hegel, Heidegger* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 165-166. A similar point is made by Särkela, who argues that the 'deskriptive Tätigkeit des "reines Zusehens"', is just as much part of experience as what is initially taken to be the object of experience (i.e. the object consciousness

tinct entities (ein '*Dieser als Ich* und ein '*Dieses als Gegenstand*'<sup>98</sup>), and 'wir' are subsequently invited to reflect on this distinction ('Hauptverschiedenheit'<sup>99</sup>): 'Reflektieren *wir* über diesen Unterschied [...].'<sup>100</sup> Not only the use of italics,<sup>101</sup> but also the sentence structure highlights the 'wir' and invites the reader to reflect both on the distinction between I and object and on the nature of this 'wir'. The question that suggests itself is whether this 'we' is still the observing consciousness, which has momentarily stepped out of its role, or whether now a further character has entered the scene, a 'we' that is able (and allowed) to critically reflect on the experience made in sense-certainty. The nature of the characters involved in the unfolding of – and reflection of – the experience made by consciousness is also discussed by Pahl, and she claims that there is indeed a 'wir' that is actively involved, rather than merely observant:

The subject of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is the path of spirit's self-reflection or of its coming- to-know-itself. Hegel defines spirit as a plural subject: "the 'I' that is 'We' and the 'We' that is 'I.'" The double genitive of the title indicates that spirit serves as both the agent of the phenomenological enquiry and its subject matter. This means that the subject of the *Phenomenology* is divided between spirit in the form of the protagonist and spirit in the form of the phenomenologist. In other words, the book has two characters who manifest and propel spirit's self-reflection: the phenomenologist and the protagonist, called "consciousness." Hegel refers to the phenomenologist in the first-person plural ("we"), indicating that the author and the reader share in the plural subjectivity of the phenomenologist and reinforces the slippage between author, reader, and spirit.<sup>102</sup>

Although I do not fully agree with Pahl's distinction between the two characters as two forms of spirit, as the 'protagonist' is not aware of himself as a plural subject until he

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claims to have an experience of). Consciousness thus learns that it not so much 'has an experience', but plays an active role in it ('eine Erfahrung machen') through which its experience (and itself) is continuously transformed.) See Särkela, pp. 56-57. See also pp. 72-74.

98 Hegel's apparently odd use of gender in this phrase (with '*dieser*' for the neutral '*Ich*' and '*dieses*' for the male '*Gegenstand*') is already suggestive of the fact that, already in sense-certainty, our knowledge is mediated: '*Ich habe die Gewißheit durch ein Anderes, nämlich die Sache; und diese ist ebenso in der Gewißheit durch ein Anderes, nämlich durch Ich.*' (*PhdG*, p. 83) Thanks to Paul Ziche for pointing this out to me.

99 *PhdG*, p. 83. *GW IX*, p. 64. In fact, the ability to select a 'main' distinction ('Hauptunterschied') from an infinite ('unzählig') host of distinctions already seems to suggest a more active stance. Interestingly, 'unzählig' not only means 'infinite', but also 'inexpressible' (see *DWB*), which seems to be at odds with the previous sentence, in which sense-certainty is said to voice its truth: '[Das] *Sein* [...] aber, welches das Wesen dieser Gewißheit ausmacht und welches sie als ihre Wahrheit aussagt'. Apart from the question whether sense-certainty is at all capable of communication, we are also alerted to a possible element of pretentiousness, or role-playing, in the assertions made by sense-certainty, and we are warned not to take at face value what we are presented with. Besides, in the sense of 'inexpressible', 'unzählig' – especially in the light of the subsequent discussion – reads like an echo of *individuum est ineffabile*: the individual cannot be grasped or expressed.

100 *PhdG*, p. 83. *GW IX*, p. 64.

101 Although the question is whether the emphasis is originally Hegel's or has been added by one of the later editors.

102 Pahl, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

has come to the level of self-consciousness,<sup>103</sup> her notion of a plural subjectivity of the 'phenomenologist' which involves not only spirit, but also reader and author, helps us understand the nature of the 'wir' that is invited to reflect. The 'phenomenologist' is not merely a spectator who records the protagonist's progress (as in Liebrucks' interpretation) but is also able to assume a different, self-conscious guise through which the author is able to manifest himself as a voice that both comments on observing consciousness and simultaneously challenges the reader to become part of the 'wir'.<sup>104</sup> There is thus not a single point of view, or voice, in the *Phänomenologie*: it moves freely between the perspective of an observant and occasionally intrusive narrator (Pahl's 'phenomenologist') who is able to comment on the interaction between 'natural' and 'observing' consciousness, and the respective perspectives of these two forms of consciousness.

The ambiguous nature of the 'wir' – as a plural subjectivity including spirit, author and reader – is also discussed by John Smith in his extensive study of Hegel's use of rhetoric.<sup>105</sup> In his view, the 'wir' is not a mere rhetorical device aimed at directly addressing

103 *PhdG*, pp. 144-145. *GW IX*, p. 108. The paragraph in which Hegel introduces us to the notion of *Geist* as a unity of different selves ('*Ich*, das *Wir*, und *Wir*, das *Ich* ist') starts as follows: 'Es ist ein *Selbstbewußtsein für ein Selbstbewußtsein*. Erst hierdurch ist es in der Tat; denn erst hierin wird für es die Einheit seiner selbst in seinem Andersein; [...] Indem ein Selbstbewußtsein der Gegenstand ist, ist er ebensowohl Ich wie Gegenstand. – Hiermit ist schon der Begriff des *Geistes* vorhanden.' In the chapter on consciousness, therefore, the protagonist has not yet achieved an awareness of himself as *Geist*. To do Pahl justice, I think that she has a strong point in interpreting the 'protagonist' as a plural subject (already at the level of sense-certainty), even if the protagonist himself is not aware of this. Furthermore, Hegel himself is not always completely consistent in his terminology. Cf. the preface to the *Phänomenologie*, p. 31, *GW IX*, p. 24: 'Das Wissen, wie es zuerst, ist, oder der *unmittelbare Geist* ist das Geistlose, das *sinnliche Bewußtsein*.' In sense-certainty, therefore, *Geist* is still only *an sich*, and consciousness has not recognized itself as already being involved in spirit. In the introduction to the *Phänomenologie*, Hegel talks about the presentation of the journey of the successive stages of knowing as one that can be taken in two different ways, and distinguishes between a 'path' of consciousness and a 'path' of spirit: 'sie kann [...] als der Weg des natürlichen Bewußtseins, das zum wahren Wissen dringt, genommen werden, oder als der Weg der Seele, welche die Reihe ihrer Gestaltungen [...] durchwandert, daß sie sich zum Geiste läutere, indem sie durch die vollständige Erfahrung ihrer selbst zur Kenntnis desjenigen gelangt was sie an sich selbst ist.' (*PhdG*, p. 72, *GW IX*, p. 56) On these two paths, cf. the discussion in Walter Kaufmann, 'Hegel's conception of phenomenology' in Edo Pivčević (ed.), *Phenomenology and Philosophical Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 218 ff.

104 Cf. Pahl, p. 11: 'Hegel uses a philosophical version of free indirect discourse – a narrative technique that blurs the distinction between the voice of the narrator and the voice of a character. Hegel presents the theories (or "certainties") and insights of his protagonist/s by oscillating imperceptibly between the protagonist's voice and the phenomenologist's voice.'

105 The question of the nature of the 'wir' ('Wer sind "wir"?') is also discussed by Särkela (op. cit., pp. 110-115), who distinguishes two main strands of interpretation. The first (and Särkela cites critical theorists such as Horkheimer, Honneth and Habermas as main representatives) equates the 'wir' with the distant standpoint of absolute knowing, whose stance with regard to natural consciousness is viewed as 'einseitig belehrend'. According to a more 'dialogical' interpretation (e.g. Heidegger), the 'wir' does not look back and observe, but actively engages itself with consciousness, and in doing so becomes part of the experience. Särkela shows that both interpretations, in according an active role to the 'wir', fail to get rid of what Särkela calls the 'Dilemma des "Wir"': how can 'we' – whoever 'we' are – critically engage with what is experienced while refraining from interfering in (through our '*reines Zusehen*') the experience made by consciousness? I hope to show that a model in which the 'wir' is not to be identified with one particular position but takes up a number of different roles (both observant and active) – such as defended by Pahl and Smith – may be a helpful approach to solving this dilemma. There is thus not so much a dialogue between the 'protagonist'

and including the reader, but is a prerequisite for the formation of the text's potential, as 'it makes possible the text's "movement" – as *dialektische* and *bildende Bewegung* – by constructing a series of argumentative "moves" that shift identifications with various positions.'<sup>106</sup> The 'wir' is only rhetorical, Smith stresses, in that it 'maintains the fiction of a persuasive dialogue.'<sup>107</sup> Although I strongly agree with Smith's suggestion that Hegel's use of 'wir' intimates the text's dialogical character and potential, I do not think the dialogue can be seen as 'persuasive' in the sense that one of the positions involved in the 'wir' ultimately gets its way. In Smith's view, the *Phänomenologie* 'consists of a series of polemical struggles between positions (*Erscheinungen*) in which each must be presented, argued with, and persuaded to give up its conviction and claim to authority,' with the positions being presented 'on the principles of rhetorical, that is, ad hominem, argumentation.'<sup>108</sup> Even though, in the 'struggle' that is considered in this section, sense-certainty does not seem to get a fair treatment, as it is not even allowed to speak,<sup>109</sup> I would argue that it is ultimately Hegel's aim to show that in testing sense-certainty's claims (which occurs through 'our' posing as sense-certainty) we learn that its position is untenable. However, what we do not see is its surrender to a competing position. The dialogue is not a debate between 'sinnliche Gewißheit' and 'Wahrnehmung' with 'Wahrnehmung' as the winner, which is how Smith sees it: 'The rhetorical "movement" of the dialogues entails convincing a consciousness to accept another mode of presenting knowledge.'<sup>110</sup> Rather, what is gained through the 'wir's' (dialogical) experience is that, in posing as sense-certainty, we – as the 'phenomenologist' – have learned that our preconceptions of what 'das wahre Wissen' entails have to be further developed, and that we are merely one step closer to the truth, and that we now have to test the claims made by 'Wahrnehmung'. In this sense, and here I fully agree with Smith, Hegel's use of 'wir' is formative in that it allows the positions taken up in the course of consciousness to check their experience or, rather, the ways in which they express their experience.<sup>111</sup>

In his analysis of the 'wir', Smith distinguishes four different positions, and, in doing so, inadvertently reveals that it is indeed very difficult – and may very well be against Hegel's

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consciousness and 'us' (a model Särkela attributes to Heidegger), but a dialogue within the 'wir', to which all the voices of which it is made up contribute.

106 John H. Smith, *The Spirit and the Letter: Traces of Rhetoric in Hegel's Philosophy of Bildung* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 225.

107 Ibid., p. 226.

108 Ibid., p. 222.

109 Since it is the 'wir' who take up sense-certainty's position in order to answer the question it put to sense-certainty. I will elaborate on this aspect in section 3.4.2. below.

110 Ibid., p. 223. Cf. also p. 224: 'one partner persuades the other to abandon not just knowledge but an entire mode of depicting and relating to knowledge.'

111 Ibid., p. 226: 'It [Hegel's use of 'wir,' AG] literally gives the text its form and formation (*Bildung*) by allowing different partners to compare their proposed verbal representations.' Smith's stress on the formative aspects of the text, and its link to the concept of *Bildung*, is very helpful in that it also suggests that 'wir' is an entity that is formed in the course of thought's development (similar to Smith's, second, 'philosophical,' we – see p. ), and that at this stage of consciousness' journey it becomes apparent that there is a 'wir', although it is not yet clear who or what it is, and which presents itself in different guises.

intentions – to make clear-cut distinctions with regard to those positions. First, there is the ‘omniscient narrator’ – a voice that Smith associates with Hegel’s own – to whom Smith attributes a ‘bird’s eye’ view on the trials and tribulations of consciousness: ‘That narrator believes to have attained the level of knowledge (*Wissenschaft*) that grants him a position above and beyond that of “knowledge as it appears.” From this perspective, the narrator-*wir* merely records the dialogues between other consciousness [sic] as he hears them.’<sup>112</sup> The latter sentence, however, implies that this position is more or less equivalent to that of the observing consciousness, is by no means directly involved in the story, and refrains from the commenting we would expect from an omniscient narrator.<sup>113</sup> However, as we saw above, already at the beginning of the sense-certainty section there is a ‘*wir*’ that actively and explicitly provides comment on the way observing consciousness is to conduct itself, a voice through which Hegel simultaneously appears to address and involve the reader. Pahl’s phenomenologist therefore appears to be a more helpful model, precisely through its incorporation of a plural subjectivity, in which there are continuous shifts of position and in which both reader and author are implicated.<sup>114</sup> Smith complicates his discussion of the omniscient narrator even further by comparing this position to the one taken up by Socrates in some of Plato’s (later) dialogues: ‘This dialogue situation could be illustrated by the example of some of the Platonic dialogues in which Socrates, as the narrator-*wir*, knows the answer already and yet allows the others to struggle for adequate expression.’<sup>115</sup> As I already argued in the discussion of Hegel’s remarks on (Platonic) dialogue,<sup>116</sup> the positions of Socrates and the ‘narrator-*wir*’ in Hegel are alike, although not in their already being in possession of the answers to the questions they pose, but because they use (forms of) dialogue as a dialectical strategy to help thinking to develop itself in order to eventually arrive at the truth.<sup>117</sup>

The aspect of development definitely plays a role in Smith’s second ‘*wir*’, the ‘philosophical’ we that is ‘emerging out of the dialogue’,<sup>118</sup> and which, at the level of

112 Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 226.

113 Smith compares this narrative position to the role of the *kritikes*, ‘the decision maker in a dispute who must remain neutral during the debate’ (p. 226), again suggesting that one of the positions involved will defeat the others, and is thus already in possession of the truth. To do Smith justice, his discussion of the other three positions shows that he sees all three as continuously evolving and developing in the course of their (dialogic) experience.

114 Cf. p. 87 above.

115 Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 226.

116 See p. 68 of this chapter, and especially note 13.

117 Cf. also Wieland, op. cit., p. 80, n. 3: ‘Wer “*wir*” sind, wird im Text nicht gesagt. Sicher scheint mir zu sein, daß “*wir*” nicht die Position des absoluten Wissens einnehmen. Denn diese Redeweise dient auch bei Hegel (as in Plato’s work, AG) zugleich dem Zweck den Leser in unaufdringlicher Weise in den Gedankengang einzuziehen. So sind “*wir*” eher eine Art sokratischer Instanz.’

118 Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 226. In the discussion of the ‘philosophical’ we, Smith interestingly draws on Jean Hyppolite’s analysis of the relation between dialectic and dialogue in the *Phänomenologie*. In the passage Smith cites to build his case, Hyppolite, according to Smith, ‘redefines the dialectical experience, which for Hegel seems to take place within an ontological and monological consciousness or Spirit, as the intersubjective confrontation of various individual consciousnesses.’ Ibid., p. 225. Smith’s interpretation by and large does justice to Hyppolite’s argument, yet he leaves out a number of important sentences at the beginning of this argument, in which Hyppolite makes the convincing claim that the ‘philosophical’



sense-certainty exists only 'potentially' and is developed by means of the dialogue between the two forms of consciousness. This 'emergent' 'wir', I would like to argue, is an important addition to Pahl's twofold model, in that it reveals that there is a 'wir' that initially is only *an sich*, and which is formed from within the (dialogical) interaction between protagonist and phenomenologist.<sup>119</sup> The third 'wir' identified by Smith is more or less identical with Pahl's protagonist, yet in the guise of 'the Other.' It is the position that is observed and which 'we' are invited to identify ourselves with: 'The *wir* in the *Phenomenology* [...] attempts constantly to adopt the standpoint of the consciousness which the *wir* is also observing. Only by arguing from the standpoint of the Other can "we" hope to convince the Other, and ourselves, of the validity of our own emergent position.'<sup>120</sup> Smith's third 'wir' is thus not so much a specific position, but rather a willingness to adopt the point of view of a particular shape of consciousness that we initially see as 'other', but which we eventually come to see as an integral part of ourselves. Smith thus provides a second – and important – argument why 'wir' are challenged to identify ourselves with sense-certainty: not only are we asked to do so because sense-certainty may not be able to express itself through language,<sup>121</sup> but a further reason is that we can only come to a full understanding of all that is involved in the experience through which knowing is developed by going through this experience from within a certain shape of consciousness. Finally, Smith's fourth 'wir' refers to the readers of the text, who are implicated in the text's unfolding: "'We," the readers, must actively participate in the development of the dialogue and are drawn to identify with its positions.'<sup>122</sup>

The strength of Smith's model is its insistence on a continuous shift in perspective, and its stress on formation and development through its inclusion of the 'emergent' we. It is less convincing in its claim that the 'movement' of the text is more or less linear, with one position abandoning its claims in favour of another.<sup>123</sup> As I hope to show in the remainder

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we, or '*nous philosophique*' emerges from within natural consciousness: 'Il n'est certes pas possible de distinguer la conscience naturelle et la conscience philosophique comme l'en-deçà et l'au-delà, comme deux mondes séparés. Le *nous philosophique* est déjà immanent à la conscience naturelle.' Hyppolite's emergent '*nous philosophique*' is thus indeed intersubjective, yet these different perspectives all find their origin in natural consciousness (and their ultimate synthesis in absolute *Geist*). Cf. Jean Hyppolite, *Figures de la Pensée Philosophique I* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), p. 211.

119 In her comments on the interaction between protagonist and phenomenologist, Pahl convincingly argues that 'absolute knowledge' is not to be equated with the phenomenologist's position, but that knowing – and language – are developed by means of this interaction. See Pahl, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

120 Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 227.

121 Cf. p. 89, n. 109.

122 Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 227. I think Smith is correct in saying that the reader 'is drawn to identify' with positions in the text, and that the reader is thus implied in these positions. I therefore disagree with Smith in seeing the reader as having a position distinct from the others.

123 'The *wir* has shifted positions from the disinterested observer at the beginning, to the poser and answerer of questions and examples within the dialogue, to the status of a stupefied sense certainty itself, and finally to a higher, more knowledgeable (since persuaded) consciousness.' Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 232. This again suggests that one of the positions (the 'narrator-*wir*') is already in possession of the truth, and that the other positions are convinced by its claims, which seems to clash both with Hegel's tenet that the truth is ultimately produced as the result of consciousness' coming to an understanding of itself and its way of knowing, and with Smith's acknowledgement of an 'emergent' or 'philosophical' 'we



of this chapter, the shifts in perspective are by no means successive, as there appears to be a continuous back and forth between the different positions that are included in the 'wir.' Besides, these shifts are not always easy to perceive, as Hegel refuses to provide immediate insight into whose voice we are hearing. We come to understand that the positions that make up who we are cannot be pinned down and are to be formed and developed by means of continuous (dialogical) interaction.

### 3.4.2 The dialogical development of sense-certainty's experience

Just before the start of the questioning of consciousness on its experience as sense-certainty, a significant shift in perspective occurs when 'wir' – in the role of 'phenomenologist' – are once again told to refrain from reflection, and to merely observe sense-certainty in order to find out whether the essence of its object – i.e. its immediate presence as something that is here and now – is what sense-certainty says it is.<sup>124</sup> This observation subsequently takes the form of an interrogation – through which, once again, the consciousness that has just been told to remain strictly observant is put into a position that requires activity – so that we are immediately made to wonder whether it actually is sense-certainty that does the talking. There is indeed a suggestive shift of pronouns as soon as sense-certainty has been asked what its object is: '*Sie* [sense-certainty, AG] ist also selbst zu fragen: *Was ist das Diese?* Nehmen wir es in der doppelten Gestalt seines Seins, als das *Jetzt* und als das *Hier*, so wird die Dialektik, die es an ihm hat, eine so verständliche Form erhalten als es selbst ist. Auf die Frage: *was ist das Jetzt?* antworten wir also zum Beispiel: *das Jetzt ist die Nacht*.'<sup>125</sup> After the question has been put to sense-certainty, however, it is not sense-certainty that comes up with the answer. It is 'wir' – and again, this 'wir', in its being active, appears to involve more than

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that is similarly formed. A position comparable to Smith's is taken up by Rüdiger Bubner, who argues that the 'Zwiegespräch' in sense-certainty should not be interpreted as a dialogue, as in his view the aim of the discussion is a didactical one, which is to lead the consciousness that is observed to the standpoint of the 'phänomenologische Betrachter': 'Ein Dialog [...] kommt nicht zustande, da die Absicht des gesamten Unternehmens auf die Beseitigung der Differenz zweier Partner durch die vorab bestimmte Identifikation des einen mit den anderen zielt.' Bubner, op. cit., pp. 144-145. As I hope to show in the next section (and in the rest of this study), Hegel's dialectical method involves a continuous 'Bestimmung' of both object and subject of knowing – which takes place through a continual taking up of different positions and a dialogical questioning of those positions – and thus precisely resists any 'vorab bestimmte Identifikation'.

124 *PhdG*, p. 84, *GW IX*, p. 64: 'Der Gegenstand [the object of sense-certainty, AG] ist also zu betrachten, ob er in der Tat, in der sinnlichen Gewißheit selbst, als solches Wesen ist, für welches er von ihr ausgegeben wird; ob dieser sein Begriff, Wesen zu sein, dem entspricht, wie er in ihr vorhanden ist. Wir haben zu dem Ende nicht über ihn zu reflektieren und nachzudenken, was er in Wahrheit sein möchte, sondern ihn nur zu betrachten, wie ihn die sinnliche Gewißheit an ihr hat.' Hegel's wording ('von ihr ausgegeben wird') again suggests that sense-certainty's presentation of its experience may involve an aspect of play-acting.

125 *PhdG*, p. 84, *GW IX*, p. 64. Cf. *GW VIII*, p. 189, where language is presented as the 'Einheit zweyer freyer Selbst' and a dialogue emerges between language as the 'Bedeutung des Dings' and of the subject that expresses itself in language. In this case it is also 'wir' who conduct this dialogue: 'was ist diß? antworten wir, es ist ein Löwe, Esel u.s.f.' See also ch. 2, p. 22, where this passage is discussed. The example 'Jetzt ist die Nacht' may very well not be a purely random example since it neatly links up with the metaphors of sleeping and waking up. Cf. ch. 2, p. 60, n. 110.

just an observing consciousness – who take up the being of its object in a shape that can be both temporally and spatially located, and thus allow the dialectics inherent in this shape to get a ‘verständliche Form’ – a form in which the dialectics can be expressed and understood.

An intriguing aspect of this passage is Hegel’s use of the word ‘verständlich’: the form in which the object of sense-certainty is apprehended comes to be understood in a way that is equal to its potential for doing so.<sup>126</sup> Our coming to know is thus already at this level presented as a process of making (ourselves) understood – which involves the continual expressing, questioning and developing of all the perspectives implicit in the ‘wir’. Yet, as we already saw, neither the object nor the subject of sense-certainty makes itself heard in this passage,<sup>127</sup> as it is ‘we’ who answer the question. The dialogue that is presented is thus a dialogue that ‘wir’ – and, again, this ‘wir’ is, because of its active nature, closer to the plural subject of Pahl’s phenomenologist than to Liebrucks’ observing consciousness – conduct with ourselves after having identified ourselves with sense-certainty.<sup>128</sup> As Liebrucks puts it: ‘Wir vollziehen hier einen Identifikationsakt mit der sinnlichen Gewißheit und zugleich fragen wir sie.’<sup>129</sup> Yet, it can be questioned if we, after the ‘Identifikationsakt’ through which we allow sense-certainty to express itself, do not presume too much. If sense-certainty can only assert that something is, the answer ‘the now is the night’ could never be given, as this is only possible from the standpoint of ‘Wahrnehmung,’ consciousness’ next shape.<sup>130</sup>

126 ‘Verständlich,’ in the context of this passage, can be seen as a further example with which Hegel alerts us to the etymological roots of ‘verstehen.’ Cf. ch. 2, p. 53, n. 78. See also the discussion in chapter one (e.g. in section 1.2.2.) on Herder’s remarks on the development of reason as a process of self-questioning and making understood.

127 And the question, of course, is whether they can, since consciousness in sense-certainty does not yet have language at its disposal. See Stekeler-Weithofer (*Hegels PhdG*, Bd. I, p. 451) on this clause: ‘das besagt auf ironische Weise, dass die Idee einer rein sinnlichen Gewißheit unverständlich ist.’ Cf. Liebrucks, op. cit., p. 14: ‘Die “Phänomenologie des Geistes” fängt sprachlich an, obwohl die sinnliche Gewißheit untersprachlich ist.’ Cf. p. 10: ‘Die Stufe der sinnlichen Gewißheit kann – streng genommen – überhaupt nichts sagen.’ However, Warminski interprets ‘our’ answering the question as a form of ‘bullying’ of sense-certainty, in that it is not allowed to say anything. Warminski, op. cit., p. 173. Yet, this interpretation only makes sense on the assumption that sense-certainty were able to express itself, and make itself understood as sense-certainty, which seems to go against Hegel’s point that this is impossible, since all knowing – and thus also its expression – is essentially mediated.

128 Smith makes the interesting suggestion that the question is a rhetorical one (*The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 230). It is indeed rhetorical in the sense that the ‘wir’ does not expect sense-certainty to answer, yet it is not rhetorical in the sense that the answer is presumed to be already implicit in the question. The ‘Identifikationsakt’ takes place because we want to learn something from our identifying ourselves with sense-certainty, not because we want to teach sense-certainty a lesson.

129 Liebrucks, op. cit., p. 14.

130 Cf. Katharina Dulceit, ‘Language, Objects, and the Missing Link,’ in Jere O’Neill Surber (ed.), *Hegel and Language* (New York: SUNY Press, 2006), pp. 158-159: ‘On the condition of immediacy, it turns out, consciousness could not experience the object it *in fact* experiences. In order to preserve immediacy consciousness must refrain from reflecting on its object in any way, such as comparing and contrasting it with other objects, because to do so would involve predicates, and predicates [...] would also apply to other objects and not exclusively to that of its immediate experience.’ Cf. also Taylor, ‘The opening arguments of the *Phenomenology*’, pp. 162-163.

The nature of the interaction between subject and object – or rather the way in which it is (trans)formed through our ‘nehmen’ – is further revealed by Hegel’s use of ‘erhalten’. ‘Erhalten’ – of which ‘die Dialektik’ is the subject – can mean both ‘to maintain’, ‘to restrain’ or ‘to obtain’,<sup>131</sup> and ‘die Dialektik’ – through ‘our’ involvement with it – thus becomes an active force. The suggestion is that through our activity we are now in possession of the dialectical process inherent in sense-certainty, which through this activity is simultaneously limited to a form that is accessible to us. This would also suggest that the ‘selbst’ in this passage is the consciousness that observes what happens in sense-certainty, rather than the object of sense-certainty (‘das Diese’) or sense-certainty itself, which is what Hegel suggests at the beginning of the passage (‘*Sie* ist also selbst zu fragen’), even though, strictly speaking, sense-certainty does not yet have an awareness of itself. The dialectical process is shown to belong not only to us, however, as it is ‘die Dialektik, die es an ihm hat’: already in sense-certainty, ‘das Diese’, the object that natural consciousness claims to be directly aware of, is said to have a dialectic of its own. Apart from raising the question whether ‘das Diese’ can be seen as a further character involved in the unfolding of sense-certainty’s experience, this sentence, through its subtle use of pronouns and multidimensional words – such as ‘erhalten’ – allows for multiple readings. It thus allows the reader, before the answers to the questions raised can be developed, to become aware that the dialectics of experience involves a continuous shift in perspective, and that, in order to gain a full understanding of all that is involved, we are to develop all potential readings.

After the short dialogical exchange in which we are asked to pose as sense-certainty, Hegel invites us to reflect on the way in which we express what presents itself to the senses (‘das Sinnliche’), and again it is not immediately clear who is implied in the ‘wir’:

Als ein Allgemeines *sprechen* wir auch das Sinnliche *aus*; was wir sagen, *ist: Dieses*, d.h. das *allgemeine Diese*, oder; *es ist*; d.h. das *Sein überhaupt*. Wir stellen uns dabei freilich nicht das allgemeine Diese oder das Sein überhaupt *vor*, aber wir sprechen schlechthin nicht wie wir es in der sinnlichen Gewißheit *meinen*. Die Sprache aber ist, wie wir sehen, das Wahrhaftere; in ihr wiederlegen wir selbst unmittelbar unsere *Meinung*; und da das Allgemeine das Wahre der sinnlichen Gewißheit ist und die Sprache nur dies Wahre ausdrückt, so ist es gar nicht möglich, daß wir ein sinnliches Sein, das wir *meinen*, je sagen können.<sup>132</sup>

The implicit dialogue this passage is between the ‘wir’ of the first sentence, ‘observing’ consciousness taking up the position of sense-certainty,<sup>133</sup> and the ‘wir’ of the third

131 See the lemma on ‘erhalten’ in *DWB*.

132 *PhdG*, p. 85. *GW IX*, p. 65.

133 ‘wir auch’ implies that we act – or rather, speak – in the way we assume natural consciousness would act and speak. I thus read this sentence as indicating that we are still involved in the ‘Identifikationsakt’. However, the sentence can also be read (with the stress on ‘auch’ rather than ‘wir’) as stating that everything we

sentence, in which we are asked to look back and reflect on this experience. Warminski convincingly argues that this acting out of experience is a ‘reexperience,’ without which we ‘would not be in truth “we”.’<sup>134</sup> The ‘Identifikationsakt’ would thus not simply be a ploy through which the experience made at the level of sense-certainty can be expressed and communicated, but is also aimed at making us realize that this act is justifiable in that we are not invited to assume a role that is completely foreign to us, but that we are meant to take up the position of a former shape of ourselves, in order to understand and acknowledge its contribution to the development of knowing and of ourselves. The reflection made by the ‘wir’ that is looking back reveals that as soon as we try to express what we think we know as something that is given immediately through the senses, we become aware that our attempts are refuted by the language we use and that it is simply impossible to say what we – as individual instances of ‘das reine Ich’ –<sup>135</sup> mean. In the second part of this passage, therefore, we – and there is a strong suggestion that both reader and author are implicated in ‘wie wir sehen’ – are challenged to embark on a dialogical questioning of ourselves by means of language, as language can provide us with (provisional) answers to the quest for ‘das wahre Wissen’. As I already argued, the ‘wir’ that is looking back does not yet imply the position of absolute knowing,<sup>136</sup> since – as Hegel explicitly states in both the *Vorrede* and the *Einleitung* –<sup>137</sup> it is precisely natural consciousness’ preconception that ‘das wirkliche Erkennen’ – or the Absolute – is knowledge that is already ‘allgemein bekannt’ – and is thus a position that is already available at this stage – that has to be dispelled. Knowing is indeed ‘allgemein’, but is not yet known as such, as it has not yet been made concrete by truly experiencing and involving ourselves – through a dialogical questioning – with what it is we claim to know. The *Phänomenologie* is the ‘Weg zur Wissenschaft,’ and none of those involved in this journey are in a position to claim to take up a standpoint that has not yet been made available. At this stage, ‘das wirkliche Erkennen’ is still only *an sich*.

The dialogical questioning of ourselves not only enables us to develop ourselves and our knowing, but also reveals the essential role language plays in this process. Initially,

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express in language – from what we take to be concrete and immediate to abstract concepts – is expressed as an ‘Allgemeines’.

134 Warminski, op. cit., p. 166. Cf. also Rebecca Comay, *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 86, who argues that experience as ‘re-experience’ also implies an element of trauma: ‘experience is the belated and vicarious experience of the missed experience of the other.’

135 ‘Wir’ can thus also be read distributively, as a collection of individuals – who each try to express their awareness of a ‘this’ – who do not conceive of themselves as a ‘we.’ Yet, as Stekeler-Weithofer shows, the dialectical development of sense-certainty’s experience reveals that each use of ‘I’ or distributive ‘we’ already presupposes a generic ‘we.’ Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. I, p. 116: ‘der Gebrauch des Wortes “ich” [setzt] in gewissem Sinn den des Wortes “du” voraus und damit am Ende gleich ursprünglich den des Wortes “wir” [...]. Noch wichtiger aber ist, dass jedes Ich, Du und distributionelle Wir ein generisches Wir oder Man voraussetzt, das als Erläuterung des Sinns jeder Rede von einem transzendentalen statt bloß empirischen Ich fungiert.’ On the question whether Stekeler-Weithofer is justified in conflating ‘Man’ and ‘das generische Wir,’ cf. n. 149.

136 Cf. p. 88, n. 105 and p. 91, n. 123.

137 See the first paragraphs of both.

language – as the truth of sense-certainty – is perceived as a generality that is abstract and empty (since we are unable to say anything other than ‘this’, ‘now’, ‘here’ and ‘is’). ‘Die Sprache ist das Wahrhaftere’: precisely in its having content that is already mediated, language reveals itself as being more truthful than ‘das reine Diese,’ the object of sense-certainty.<sup>138</sup> Language, Hegel wants us to understand, is also – as we already saw in the previous chapter –<sup>139</sup> a general medium in which we – increasingly – come to find ourselves reflected, and through which we can come to an understanding of what we are.<sup>140</sup> Language appears as content that we can use as a guide to the truth, precisely because it does not yet present itself as an absolute, but as a comparative truth (‘das Wahrhaftere’).

What is initially taken to be the truth of sense-certainty is thus an experience that cannot be expressed, that can never be shared, can never be open to others, and which therefore can never be general experience: ‘Sie sprechen von dem Dasein äußerer Gegenstände, welche, noch genauer, als *wirkliche*, absolut *einzelne*, ganz *persönliche*, *individuelle* Dinge, deren jedes seines absolut gleichen nicht mehr hat, bestimmt werden können; dies Dasein habe absolute Gewißheit und Wahrheit.’<sup>141</sup> There is another telling shift of pronouns in these final remarks in the section on sense-certainty. The suggestion is that the position maintained by those (‘Sie’) who claim that we can have knowledge of what we are immediately presented with, is one to which ‘we’, who have been taken

138 The only thing, Hegel claims, that sense-certainty, if it had language at its disposal, would be able to express is that something is. Yet even this making this assertion appears problematic, as in saying ‘this is’, even if it is to refer to a general ‘this-as-such’ or ‘*Sein überhaupt*’, it already makes use of some form of determination. This is precisely the point of the opening of the ‘*Sein*’ chapter in the *Wissenschaft der Logik*: ‘*Sein, reines Sein*, – ohne alle weitere Bestimmung.’ (WdL, p. 82, GW XI, p. 43) If we were to add ‘ist’, we would already admit to its ‘*Dasein*’, and would have determined it as such. Consciousness thus learns that there is ‘an inner conflict’ in the knowledge claims it wants to assert from within the standpoint of sense-certainty, or, as Katharina Dulceit puts it: ‘Insofar as it [consciousness, AG] presumes to have *immediate* knowledge of something radically and exclusively *individual*, it lays claim to immediacy and determinacy simultaneously, because in order to individuate its object it must determine it. But determining its object sufficiently would violate its condition of immediacy, while insisting on immediacy will leave it with an empty This-as-such; that is the crux of the matter.’ See Katharina Dulceit, ‘Can Hegel Refer to Particulars?’ in Jon Stewart (ed.), *The Phenomenology of Spirit Reader* (New York: SUNY, 1998), p. 110.

139 See chapter 2, p. 41, where Hegel’s ideas on language as the ‘erste gebundene Existenz des Bewußtseyns als Mitte’ are discussed.

140 See also Theodor Bodammer, *Hegels Deutung der Sprache* (Hamburg Felix Meiner Verlag, 1969), pp. 72-73: ‘[An] der Beweisführung der ersten Kapitel der “Phänomenologie des Geistes” [wird] sichtbar, daß das betrachtete Bewußtsein schon ein “Bewußtsein als Mitte” zu seiner Voraussetzung hat; mit andern Worten: daß es sich, ohne allerdings selbst darum zu wissen, bereits im voraus zu einer sprachlich-idealen Welt organisiert hat.’ Language as a medium through and in which consciousness can gain an awareness of itself, yet which initially is used ‘ohne selbst darum zu wissen,’ bears close resemblance to the ‘emergent’ we, an initially abstract generality whose potential will have to be developed by means of interaction. Cf. also *PhdG*, pp. 478-479, GW IX, p. 351, where Hegel discusses language as the medium in which *Geist* manifests itself as an intersubjective entity that allows for ‘Anerkennung’ of both the other and ourselves: ‘[die Sprache] ist das *für andere* seiende Selbstbewußtsein, welches unmittelbar *als solches vorhanden* und als *dieses* allgemeines ist. Sie ist das sich von sich selbst abtrennende Selbst, das als reines Ich=Ich sich gegenständlich wird, in dieser Gegenständlichkeit sich auch als *dieses* Selbst erhält, wie es unmittelbar mit den anderen zusammenfließt und *ihr* Selbstbewußtsein ist; es vernimmt ebenso sich, als es von anderen vernommen wird, und das Vernehmen ist eben das *zum Selbst gewordene Dasein*.’

141 *PhdG*, p. 91. GW IX, pp. 69-70.

up in the dialectical movement of sense-certainty and who thus belong to its result as a truly general experience, no longer belong, as we have come to understand the internal contradictions of this position. ‘Sie’, we now see, are in fact not even able to enter into a meaningful dialogue with ‘us’ because of their failure – or refusal – to express themselves adequately: ‘was sie meinen, sagen sie nicht.’<sup>142</sup> ‘Wir’, Hegel implies, have already experienced that language is a mediated generality, through which we are allowed to further determine our experience, and to further develop what we initially simply take to be the truth of our experience.

The forms of dialogue at the level of sense-certainty have revealed themselves to be both the instigation and an instructive instantiation of the dialectical process through which consciousness can ultimately come to self-understanding.<sup>143</sup> In order to make knowing a truly common (‘gemeinsam’) enterprise, we have to actively involve ourselves with all that is said and implied with respect to the question what knowing ultimately entails. We have to question what we are presented with – and (re)consider the answers we are given – not only because this questioning can yield illuminating insights that will lead us to absolute knowing, but also because this active involvement helps us understand and acknowledge that all the former shapes of knowing are not merely arbitrary *Meinungen*, but rather tentative steps made by a formation of consciousness that is ultimately a different shape of ourselves.

### 3.4.3 Role-playing: the acting out of experience

Already in the opening paragraphs of the sense-certainty section, Hegel’s choice of words – ‘erscheinen’, ‘gibt sich aus’ – strongly suggests an element of play-acting in consciousness’ experience, which sheds further light on the dialogical nature of what experience, in Hegel’s eyes, entails.<sup>012</sup>

**012** This aspect is activated by their being part of a cluster of theatre or acting metaphors, through which Hegel emphasizes that our coming to know what really is can only take place through a careful consideration of its appearances: ‘Ausführung’, ‘Vorstellung’, ‘Erscheinung’, ‘Gestalt’, ‘Auftreten’, ‘Character’, ‘Szene’, ‘Vorhang’, etc. Even ‘Kreis’ can be taken to belong to this cluster, as being the auditorium in which the play is staged, or it can also refer to the stage itself, if circular.

142 *PhdG*, pp. 91. *GW IX*, p. 70. I would like to argue that ‘Sie’ should not be understood to refer to sense-certainty as the form of knowing that ‘zuerst’ presents itself as a point of departure for consciousness’ experience of its knowing, but rather of the ‘dogmatic’ proponents of the empiricist position, who claim that there is such a thing as a ‘reines Ich’, an empty *tabula rasa*, which has an immediate access to its object of knowledge. As ‘Sie’ are more or less left behind (or leave themselves behind) at the end of the sense-certainty section, I do not agree with Smith’s interpretation of the text’s movement as ‘the formation of a new consensus out of a differentiation of opinions.’ (Cf. Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 232) What is developed through sense-certainty’s experience is knowing as a communal and general enterprise, and being part of that entails giving up dogmatic positions.

143 As Stekeler-Weithofer claims, Hegel’s dialectical method is not to be seen as a logic of propositions but of expressions that are embedded in a dialogue: ‘Hegels Dialektik [...] ist [nicht] eine Logik der Sätze oder Satzfiguren, sondern der Aussagen und Sprechhandlungen im Dialog und im Hin und Her von Einzelurteil und gemeinschaftlichem Wissen. Hegels Dialektik in eine formalsyntaktische dialektische Schlusslogik auf der Satzebene überführen zu wollen, geht an ihrem Status und Sinn vorbei.’ Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd I, p. 17. Cf. p. 60: ‘Es ist eine Methode des dialogischen Aufweisens und Zeigens, kein deduktiven Ableiten oder ‘Beweisen’, sondern demonstrative Hinführung zu gemeinsamen Einsichten.’



Of course, in the introduction Hegel had already proclaimed that the *Phänomenologie* was to be a ‘Darstellung des erscheinenden Wissens,’ in which a specific form of natural consciousness is observed as it enters the stage (‘auftritt’<sup>144</sup>) on its journey to ‘das wahre Wissen,’ with the strong implication that what we get to observe are shapes in which knowing presents itself, and not yet true knowing. As sense-certainty, consciousness makes its first appearance in the guise of knowledge that is extremely rich in character: ‘Der konkrete Inhalt der *sinnlichen Gewißheit* läßt sie unmittelbar als die *reichste Erkenntnis* [...] erscheinen [...].’<sup>145</sup> Significantly, Hegel leaves the question open as to who – or what – is responsible for this initial appearance. The most obvious candidate – as this is what the sentence starts with – seems to be ‘der konkrete Inhalt,’ the object which allows sense-certainty to appear as an immediate form of knowing. Observing consciousness soon discovers, however, that – ‘in der Tat’ – there is no such thing as a concrete content that we have immediate access to.<sup>146</sup> This ‘Tat,’ as we saw in the section above – does not just refer to the supposed interaction between subject and object on the level of sense-certainty, but also implicates the ‘wir,’ who thus ceases to be a strictly ‘observing’ consciousness. In fact, the second part of the sentence of which ‘der konkrete Inhalt’ appears to be the subject, already implies an active stance on ‘our’ part: ‘für welchen [sense-certainty as a form of knowing that presents itself as infinite riches, AG] ebensowohl, wenn wir im Raume und in der Zeit, als worin er sich ausbreitet, *hinaus*-, als wenn wir uns ein Stück aus dieser Fülle nehmen und durch Teilung in dasselbe *hineingehen*, keine Grenze zu finden ist.’<sup>147</sup> The going ‘hinaus’ and ‘hinein’ already strongly suggests that we are not only observers of the acting out of sense-certainty’s experience, but are also expected to enter the stage and put ourselves in sense-certainty’s position in order to actively participate in the development of the experience.

If we – in our role of the consciousness that is allowed to reflect – then reconsider sense-certainty’s first appearance, we discover that its appearance is indeed merely an appearance, rather than an immediate access to this shape of knowing. ‘Der konkrete Inhalt’ of sense-certainty thus ceases to be the object of sense-certainty, which – ‘in der Tat’ – has revealed itself as the ‘abstrakteste und ärmste Wahrheit,’<sup>148</sup> and instead becomes a metonym for the ‘Sie’ the sense-certainty section ends with: the proponents of the view that knowledge is founded on an immediate and purely receptive awareness of an object, and who dogmatically claim that there is such a thing as concrete content. In making us aware that we are not to take what is presented as sense-certainty

144 *PhdG*, p. 80. *GWIX*, p. 61.

145 *PhdG*, p. 82. *GWIX*, p. 63.

146 Hegel almost always uses ‘in der Tat’ in such a way that it not only means ‘indeed,’ but that we are also alerted to its literal meaning: in the act (of becoming an actual sense-certainty in which experience is to be had). Cf. Dina Emundts, *Erfahren und Erkennen: Hegels Theorie der Wirklichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2012), p. 179, n. 28: “In der Tat” heißt hier (neben “wirklich”) “in der Tätigkeit des sich auf etwas Beziebens”.

147 *PhdG*, p. 82. *GWIX*, p. 63.

148 *PhdG*, p. 82. *GWIX*, p. 63.



at face value, Hegel simultaneously intimates that what is said is also a presentation of a particular point of view, rather than an 'objective' overview by an omniscient narrator. Hegel's sentences are indeed often to be read as 'quotations' from a particular shape of consciousness, or a particular view of what knowing entails, as Stekeler-Weithofer explains: 'es sind Sätze, die im Modus eines zitartartiges Berichts zu lesen sind, was *andere* sagen oder was *man* sagen würde oder sagen kann, als solche zu erkennen oder kenntlich zu machen und nicht mit Hegels eigenen Meinungen zu verwechseln.'<sup>149</sup> When sense-certainty is said to appear as knowledge that is 'unmittelbar' and 'von unendlichem Reichtum,' we are expected to read these words with quotation marks, and to understand that it does so in the eyes of those who have already convinced themselves that they have an immediate access to an object of knowledge. From the start, it is thus not only observing consciousness that is requested to be involved in sense-certainty by taking up its position, but the reader is also challenged to actively participate in the development of experience – to be also involved 'in der Tat' – and to place her- or himself in the role of the phenomenologist or the consciousness that reflects and questions what it is presented with.

Hegel's wordplay with 'Beispiel' – in the consideration of an example of an actual sense-certainty – suggests an etymological kinship to 'spielen',<sup>150</sup> and thus further reinforces the aspect of role-playing.<sup>151</sup> Hegel turns to an example as the initial consideration of the immediate relation between the object as 'das reine Sein' and the subject as

149 Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 1, p. 37. Interestingly, Stekeler-Weithofer only refers to what 'andere' or 'man' would say from a certain perspective, whereas Hegel's frequent use of 'wir' appears to be aimed at allowing us to acknowledge a certain perspective as a particular manifestation of *Geist*, an entity to whom we all belong. With regard to conflating 'Wir' and 'Man', Stekeler-Weithofer says the following: 'die eigentliche Einsicht (into *Geist* as a generic 'we', AG] ist die, dass wir erst vermöge der Teilnahme an einer *allgemeinen Praxis zu personalen* Subjekten werden, dass also das emphatische Selbstbewusstsein des Ich sich erst aus einem *diffusen* transzendentalen Wir oder Man entwickelt.' (Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 1, pp. 27-28). Although I fully agree with Stekeler's interpretation that we can only become self-conscious subjects through being involved in general practices (cf. the discussion of 'Sprache als das Wahrhaftere' above) that already exist – through which we simultaneously explicate and clarify these, initially, diffuse practices – I think it is precisely Hegel's insistence that we can only see ourselves as 'personal' subjects through understanding ourselves as having developed from within a practice, that explains his predilection for the use of 'wir', as this turns this practice into an entity we can identify with. In the *Phänomenologie*, Hegel uses 'man' 69 times, mostly as a rather meaningless 'filler' (e.g. 'man könnte sagen', p. 12, *GW IX*, p. 10) or to indicate a dogmatic position that is 'bekannt' rather than 'erkannt' (e.g. 'das Vorgeben, teils daß ihre Bedeutung allgemein bekannt ist, teils auch daß man selbst ihren Begriff hat, scheint eher nur die Hauptsache ersparen zu sollen, nämlich diesen Begriff zu geben.' p. 71, *GW IX*, p. 55). 'Wir', on the other hand, is used no less than 232 times. Finally, Stekeler rightly points out that we should not read Hegel's sentences as reflecting his own opinions. Although, Hegel, as the author of this text, is present within the text, he – as I already argued above – does not claim to be already in possession of answers to the questions that are posed.

150 'Beiheerspielen' may be a neologism coined by Hegel. See Warminski, p. 176: 'the word *Beispiel* seems to derive from Hegel's home-made verb *beiheerspielen*.'

151 There is no evidence that there is indeed a link between the two words. See the lemma in Grimm: 'mit *Spiel ludus* hat das Wort nichts zu schaffen.' However, there is indeed a link to the Old German *spel*, which means play in the sense of a dramatic performance (cf. German 'Trauerspiel' or Dutch 'treurspel' for tragedy).

a 'das reine Ich' suggested that there is no knowledge that can be developed.<sup>152</sup> 'An dem reinen Sein aber, welches das Wesen dieser Gewißheit ausmacht und welches sie als ihre Wahrheit aussagt, spielt, wenn wir zusehen, noch vieles anderes beiher. Eine wirkliche sinnliche Gewißheit ist nicht nur diese reine Unmittelbarkeit, sondern ein Beispiel derselben.'<sup>153</sup> As an example, sense-certainty is something of which an experience is to be had, and in which more is at play – as it, in being a reality, has already somehow been determined in the process of its actualization – than just pure immediacy. As Warminski suggests, in our consideration of the 'Beispiel', in taking upon ourselves the role of 'wir', we also become an example of what happens to the consciousness that is asked to observe or, occasionally, to reflect. We are thus alerted to the fact that we are not only invited to pose as sense-certainty, but initially also pose as shapes of the 'wir' – we take up the position of observing and/ or reflecting consciousness – and that these are also shapes we will have to interact with before we can truly know and recognize ourselves as being part of a 'wir' that is the result of *Geist's* journey as a collective enterprise.<sup>154</sup> It is only through taking part – or by taking up roles – in knowing as a particular practice (in this case sense-certainty's) that we can develop our – collective and individual – identity as subjects.<sup>155</sup>

Hegel's discussion of 'Beispiel' also invites us to reflect on the contrast between example and what is taken to be essential: 'Diesen Unterschied des Wesens und des Beispiels, der Unmittelbarkeit und der Vermittlung machen nicht nur wir, sondern wir finden ihn an der sinnlichen Gewißheit selbst, und in der Form, wie er an ihr ist, nicht wie wir ihn soeben bestimmten, ist er aufzunehmen.'<sup>156</sup> In this passage we see a reversal of roles as it is precisely what sense-certainty takes to be its essence – its object as 'das einfache unmittelbar Seiende' – that through 'our' reflection was shown to be mediated ('Ich habe die Gewißheit durch ein Anderes'<sup>157</sup>), and which thus proves elusive and inessential. Our reflection has revealed that it is rather the example, the alleged inessential, the shape in which the object presents itself, through which the essence of knowing is developed, as it is only through interaction with such shapes – with the way an object is 'vermittelt' – that

152 It could therefore be questioned whether, in the case of an immediate sense-certainty, we can speak of knowledge at all. Cf. Andreas Graeser, 'Zu Hegels Portrait der Sinnlichen Gewißheit,' in Dietmar Köhler und Otto Pöggeler (hrsg), *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006), pp. 50-51: 'der Zusammenhang im ersten Kapitel der *Phänomenologie des Geistes* betrifft nicht, oder zumindest nicht primär, die Frage, ob ein Gegenständlichkeit x vermittle eines Prädikats *F* erschöpfend beschrieben werden könne oder nicht. Zur Debatte steht vielmehr die Frage, ob es überhaupt so etwas wie eine begriffslose Erkenntnis geben könne und ob es ein unmittelbarer Zugang zur Realität offensteht.'

153 *PhdG*, p. 83. *GWIX*, p. 64.

154 Warminski, op. cit., p. 178.

155 Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer's remarks in n. 147. Cf. also Hyppolite, who similarly argues that Hegel, unlike Fichte, does not presuppose self-consciousness, but allows consciousness to develop self-consciousness in the course of its experience: 'Hegel ne présuppose pas comme Fichte la conscience de soi, le moi-moi, il la fait découvrir dans le développement de la conscience.' Jean Hyppolyte, *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l'Esprit de Hegel* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), p. 96.

156 *PhdG*, p. 83. *GWIX*, p. 64.

157 *PhdG*, p. 83. *GWIX*, p. 64.

we are able to learn, and that we can come to a full understanding (*Begriff*) of the object.<sup>158</sup> Initially, this *Begriff* is purely *an sich*: there is no truth that already exists, and that somehow resides beyond the ways in which what is manifests itself to us.

The acting out of experience is thus a necessary step in our coming to know for two different reasons. On the one hand, Hegel shows that there simply is no other way: as the inner nature of an object – what it truly is – is shown neither to reside in a particular presentation of its object, nor in a transcendent realm beyond the way it manifests itself, it can only be grasped by allowing individual shapes of an object (or of the way we know of an object) to act and to interact. On the other hand, taking up the position of a particular perspective allows us to look at the object from within such a perspective, and to understand its contribution both to the development of ‘das wahre Wissen’ and to who we – as *Geist* – ultimately are.<sup>159</sup>

#### 3.4.4 ‘Wir kommen hierdurch dahin’: the intersubjective and dialogical nature of sense-certainty’s experience

One of Hegel’s main aims in the sense-certainty section, apart from showing that its truth (that knowledge is necessarily general and mediated) conflicts with its claims (that it has immediate knowledge of a “pure this”), is to show that – already at this stage of its development – the experience made by consciousness is of an inherently complicated nature, and that these complications provide the potential for further development.<sup>160</sup> This complexity is, as we saw earlier,<sup>161</sup> already apparent in the title, which is not simply ‘Die sinnliche Gewißheit’, but ‘Die sinnliche Gewißheit *oder* [my italics, AG] das Diese und das Meinen:’ the truth of sense-certainty is to be obtained through a consideration of the way in which it manifests itself, i.e. in its expressions of the way in which it experiences its object. Interaction with these expressions reveals that there is neither a ‘pure this’ nor a ‘pure I’ which enters this relation immediately – as it were “from nowhere” – but that – in being actual – both the ‘I’ and the ‘this’ are revealed as being already related and involved. The concrete experience of sense-certainty – which manifests itself in the way it acts and expresses itself – reveals that its ‘certainties’ are ultimately no more than

158 Cf. also Wieland, op. cit. p. 73: ‘Die Unterscheidung von Wesen und Beispiel kommt also nicht ganz von außen; sie wird nicht an die sinnlichen Gewißheit herangetragen, sondern wir *finden* sie *an* ihr. Immerhin ist auch hier zu berücksichtigen, daß *wir* es sind, die den Unterschied finden; wir finden ihn aber erst, nachdem wir ihn gesucht haben.’

159 Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd.1, p. 119, on Hegel’s use of the word ‘Anschauung’: “‘Anschauung’ steht manchmal [in Hegel, AG], wie bei Kant, für eine bloß subjektive ‘Intuition’ oder gar Meinung. Anschauung eines Gegenstandes in meinem [Stekeler’s, AG] Sinn setzt dagegen immer schon die Möglichkeit des Perspektivenwechsels voraus, also eine mögliche Bezugnahme auf denselben Gegenstand oder dasselbe Geschehen aus anderer Perspektive, wie wir etwa lernen, indem wir Rollen im Umgang mit einem Ding oder auch nur die Plätze tauschen.’

160 Hegel uses the suggestive and oxymoronic phrase ‘einfache Komplexion’ (*PhdG*, p. 90, *GW IX*, p. 68) to capture both aspects of sense-certainty’s experience: its claims and its truth.

161 See p. 84 above.

provisional answers, and that the 'I' in fact already presupposes a 'we' that poses the questions. Sense-certainty's expressing its certainties implies that a dialogical structure is already assumed: there is an addressee, even if – initially – it is not exactly clear who or what is addressed. Expressing a claim – even if this occurs through the activity of pointing –<sup>162</sup> implies that this claim enters an area in which it is no longer purely 'mein', and in which it is open to an audience that observes and – occasionally – critically reflects on what is communicated. The voicing ('aussagen' or 'aussprechen') of a claim may originate from the aim to merely proclaim and assert a certain point of view in order to have others agree with it (on the assumption that what is voiced is both certain and true), yet always entails the possibility that what is said is corrected, denied or questioned.<sup>163</sup> For Hegel, it is the latter aspect which allows for the dialectical development of what is initially perceived as true. Expression allows for negation, for the opening up to an interaction with other perspectives, through which – already at the level of sense-certainty – both knowing and its subject ('we') are developed. This opening up to interaction thus simultaneously implies an orientation towards the future, which Bakhtin saw as an essential element of dialogics: expressing, negating and questioning what is expressed all anticipate a response through which what is said can be developed. Yet Bakhtin also argued – and in this respect the experience of sense-certainty can, again, be called dialogical – that what is said is also to be understood as a reaction to the past, to the 'already uttered' or 'already known,' even if the latter is still only implicit.<sup>164</sup> Hegel's employing a form of dialogue in order to examine consciousness initial experience thus alerts us to the fact that knowing is not an enterprise that can be embarked on *ex nihilo*. Our coming to know (ourselves) is to occur through the (attempts at) articulation – and subsequent development – of what we unwittingly do and say, of the – practical and communal – tradition we are already part of, and of which sense-certainty is a particular manifestation.<sup>165</sup>

162 See *PhdG*, p. 88-90. *GW IX*, pp. 67-68. In the third and final example, observing consciousness is to refrain from questioning sense-certainty on its experience, and is invited to take up sense-certainty's position in order to allow sense-certainty to reveal its experience through pointing. Hegel's analysis of this example reveals that even if we were able to place ourselves in the exact same position as the subject of sense certainty – without any distance in time or place – we would still not be able to get hold of the immediate here and now of sense-certainty. Pointing out cannot isolate a particular *Jetzt*, as the fleeting nature of time entails that the particular now eludes us in the act of pointing: '*Jetzt*; es hat schon aufgehört zu sein, indem es gezeigt wird.' Similarly, trying to pin down a particular here by pointing shows us that it is not simply '*dieses Hier*', but simultaneously 'ein Vorn und Hinten, ein Oben und Unten, ein Rechts und Links', i.e. it a complex unity made up of many 'here's'. What can be learned from the experience made by taking up the position of sense-certainty is that it cannot get hold of an object – and is thus unable to arrive at knowledge of the object – through the activity of pointing at: pinning down or fixating a particular thus proves to be a futile endeavour.

163 Cf. Speight, op. cit., pp. 3-4, who argues that Hegel's epistemological project is essentially a 'corrigibilist' one.

164 Cf. the discussion on p. 81 above.

165 Stekeler-Weithofer uses the word 'empraktisch' (borrowed from Karl Bühler's *Sprachtheorie* (1934)) to refer to the norms that have been laid down in the way we act in and talk about the world, without knowing – in the sense of self-conscious knowing – what we say and do. Expressing these implicit rules allows for questioning, for further explication and development. See e.g. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. I, p. 35.

A further aspect of sense-certainty's experience which can be said to be dialogical in the Bakhtinian sense is the reliance on actualization ('eine wirkliche sinnliche Gewißheit'): it is only by means of a – more or less – concrete example that sense-certainty's claim to knowledge – its *Meinung* – can be explicated. What this *Meinung* entails – its meaning – is not something sense-certainty already knows prior to expressing its claim, but – as 'das Wahre der sinnliche Gewißheit' is that which is developed in the course of its being questioned.<sup>166</sup> Ironically, natural consciousness embarks on its experience assuming to be already in possession of the meaning of its *Meinung*, but its failures to properly express its knowledge claims reveal that a *Meinung* is precisely that, it is pure subjectivity without any content it can be aware of, or which can be developed. Actual expression entails that the *Meinung* ceases to be something that is purely mine, and – instead – allows meaning – in the sense of the truth of what is expressed – to be produced rather than merely accepted.<sup>167</sup>

In the course of sense-certainty's experience, it becomes clear that the 'I' already presupposes a 'we' in more ways than one. First of all, in being presented with specific expressions of examples of sense-certainty's experience (e.g. 'das Jetzt ist die Nacht'<sup>168</sup>), and the subsequent (dialogical) checking of their truth, we become aware that these are merely examples, and that there is not just one sense-certainty, but an infinite plurality of individual 'I's who all claim to have direct access to a particular here and now, which could either be a tree or a house, or indeed anything at all. What consciousness learns in being confronted with another 'I's claim to truth is that both the 'I' and its object are already a mediated generality:

166 In her discussion of the 'Gesetz des Herzens' section of the *Phänomenologie*, Pahl argues that 'utterance,' or 'exposure,' rather than 'expression' (as a translation of 'Äußerung') is in line with Hegel's intentions, as expression, in her view, refers to the outward manifestation of an already existing 'inner truth.' See Pahl, op. cit., pp. 28-29. Although I agree with Pahl that Hegel rejects the notion of an inner truth that is distinct from – or lies beyond – its manifestations, I have chosen to use 'expression' in the discussion above to capture Hegel's irony: it is sense-certainty that assumes its statements to be expressions of an inner certainty that is already true.'

167 Already on the first page of the preface to the *Phänomenologie*, Hegel urges the reader not to expect a mere overview of knowing as a finished product that can simply be accepted: 'wie und was von Philosophie in einer Vorrede zu sagen wäre - etwa eine historische *Angabe* der Tendenz und des Standpunkts, des allgemeinen Inhalts und der Resultate, eine Verbindung von hin und her sprechenden Behauptungen -, kann nicht für die Art und Weise gelten, in der die Philosophische Wahrheit darzustellen sei.' *PhdG*, p. 11. *GW IX*, p. 9. We usually take the word 'Angabe' to mean indication of, or information on, a state of affairs, yet, by having us take a closer look at the word – through the use of italics and its placement in the sentence – Hegel wants us to realize that what is referred to by the word 'Angabe' is not only indicated, but also something that is merely given to us, and should be accepted as such, without further reflection on our part. This, of course, is the opposite of what Hegel is after. Ironically, what Hegel appears to reject here is, in a sense, precisely what he does in the course of the *Phänomenologie*. However, by already alerting the reader not to accept, but to interact with, what he or she is presented with, the (historical) perspectives can truly be developed and united, rather than remain a mere assembly of points of view, who continue to voice their opinions in a continuous back and forth ('hin und her') without really listening to what the other is saying, without entering into a dialogue with the other perspective, so that what is said can never be understood and explicated as a necessary step in our coming to know.

168 *PhdG*, p. 84. *GW IX*, p. 64.

Beide Wahrheiten haben dieselbe Beglaubigung, nämlich die Unmittelbarkeit des Sehens und die Sicherheit und Versicherung beider über ihr Wissen; die eine verschwindet aber in der anderen. Was darin nicht verschwindet, ist *Ich*, als *Allgemeines*, dessen Sehen weder ein Sehen des Baums noch dieses Hauses, sondern ein einfaches Sehen ist [...]. Ich ist nur allgemeines, wie *Jetzt*, *Hier* oder *Dieses* überhaupt; ich meine wohl einen *einzelnen Ich*, aber sowenig ich das, was ich bei Jetzt, Hier meine, sagen kann, sowenig bei Ich. Indem ich sage: *dieses Hier*, *Jetzt* oder ein *Einzelnes*, sage ich überhaupt: *alle Ich*, jeder ist das, was ich sage: *Ich*, *dieser einzelne Ich*. [...] Die sinnliche Gewißheit erfährt also, daß ihr Wesen weder in dem Gegenstande noch in dem Ich und die Unmittelbarkeit des einen noch des anderen ist; denn an beiden ist das, was Ich meine, vielmehr ein Unwesentliches, und der Gegenstand und Ich sind Allgemeine, in welchen dasjenige Jetzt und Hier und Ich, das ich meine, nicht bestehen bleibt oder *ist*.<sup>169</sup>

Consciousness thus discovers that it is already part of a distributive we – the collection of all the individual claims in sense-certainty – but, as Hegel shows, this plurality of ‘I’s already presupposes a general I,<sup>170</sup> that at this at this stage is still an abstract generality, but with which we – in the course of the further development of the way(s) in which we know of the world – will increasingly be able to identify ourselves. Significantly, Hegel continues his comments on sense-certainty’s experience with the re-introduction of the ‘wir’ in its role as phenomenologist: ‘Wir kommen hierdurch dahin, das *Ganze* der sinnlichen Gewißheit selbst als ihr *Wesen* zu setzen, nicht mehr nur ein Moment derselben [...].’<sup>171</sup> In this sentence ‘hierdurch’ is used in order to suggest the reason for our positing the totality of sense-certainty as its essence, yet it can also be read as a place adverbial: by going through the whole of experience – by going through specific instances (or moments) of ‘Hier’ – we are lead to the point (‘dahin’) where we now find ourselves: we not only realize we have to posit the totality of sense-certainty as its essence, but also come to an awareness that the subject of this experience is already a ‘we’. Already at the level of sense-certainty, Hegel thus intimates, consciousness’ experience is of an intersubjective nature, and prefigures the I as We at the start of the section on self-consciousness: ‘das Ich, das Wir, und Wir, das Ich ist.’<sup>172</sup>

169 *PhdG*, pp. 86-87. *GW IX*, p. 66.

170 Cf. Hyppolite, *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l'Esprit de Hegel*, p. 95: ‘La vérité de ma visée, comme visée mienne, c’est donc le moi comme moi universel; mais il est symptomatique que Hegel ait choisi la réfutation qui suppose la pluralité des moi. Elle [the refutation, AG] aboutit en effect a ce moi commun qui est une de ses présuppositions essentielles de sa philosophie: “Ce moi qui est un nous, ce nous qui est un moi”’.

171 *PhdG*, p. 87. *GW IX*, p. 67.

172 As discussed above, this interpretation is also propounded by Hyppolite, Stekeler-Weithofer and Bodammer. An opposing view is maintained by Höslé, who argues that self-consciousness is not the result of any previous intersubjectivity, but issues forth from consciousness’ reflections on the laws of nature and life. For Höslé, self-consciousness only depends on intersubjectivity in order to realize itself: ‘*Das Selbstbewußtsein geht bei [Hegel] nicht aus intersubjektiven Beziehungen hervor. Wohl aber bewährt sich bei Hegel das Selbstbewußtsein erst in intersubjektiven Prozessen.*’ See Vittorio Höslé, *Hegels System: Der Idealismus der Subjektivität und das Problem der Intersubjektivität* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1987), p. 369.



## Conclusion

If we now look at Bakhtin's critique of Hegel's philosophy as 'monological', in there being just one 'continuous text' with no 'division between voices,' so that ultimately the text 'reaches a standstill,'<sup>173</sup> we can conclude that his reading of Hegel must either have been prejudiced or rather superficial. Already in the sense-certainty section, there is a plurality of voices: the cacophonous interchange of the 'I's who all claim a particular 'this' ('jede einzelne Bestimmung'), traditional philosophical views, and, above all, the voice of the 'we' that is involved in many ways in sense-certainty's experience, and which cannot be identified as belonging to one specific 'we', but which itself appears to be made up of many voices.

Besides, as we saw in the discussion of the imaginary dialogue at the beginning of the section, Hegel uses language (e.g his use of the verb 'erhalten') in such a way that the reader becomes aware that a certain "taking" of the text simultaneously provides a challenge to develop a different position, and that, in order to do full justice to the text's potential, the reader will have to continuously shift positions in order to actively develop all the implications of the text, and can by no means leave the text as it is. The dialogue in sense-certainty not only allows for the development of both the subject and the object of knowing, or of the many positions involved in the 'we,' but through this dialogue we also gain an awareness of the significant role played by language in consciousness' experience. Language, as 'ein Allgemeines,' and, as such, as 'das Wahrhaftere,' is not only able to teach consciousness important lessons, but also allows for our becoming aware of language as a repository of the way we are wont to look at the world, and which can be explicated through our embarking on a dialogue with language.<sup>174</sup>

One of the concepts that has been further enfolded and enriched through the experience gained by allowing the inner dialectic of sense-certainty to express itself, is that of *Allgemeinheit*. What is posited as the truth of sense-certainty and which is claimed to be general experience has revealed itself to be a completely abstract general that cannot get hold of its object: '[es] wird in aller sinnlichen Gewißheit in Wahrheit nur dies erfahren, was wir gesehen haben, das *Dieses* nämlich als ein *Allgemeines*, das Gegenteil dessen, was jene Behauptung allgemeine Erfahrung zu sein versichert.'<sup>175</sup> What is initially assumed to be 'allgemein bekannt', as content we are immediately acquainted with – and which is thus assumed to be the most concrete form of knowledge – is revealed to be a completely empty and meaningless abstraction: the this 'als ein *Allgemeines*' or the

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<sup>173</sup> See p. 84 above.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. I, p. 33: 'In der [Hegel's, AG] Analyse wird nur vorausgesetzt, dass wir mit den Wörtern schon umgehen. Was wir dabei tun und sagen, das gilt es allerdings explizit zu machen.'

<sup>175</sup> *PhdG*, pp. 90-91. *GW IX*, p. 69.



indifferent '*Nichtdieses*'.<sup>176</sup> In coming to understand that a generality is not something that is there for the taking, that is simply given to us, and of which we may or may not become part, we realize we should take an active part in the development of what we are presented with – by means of an internal dialogue in which what presents itself is differentiated from and made to interact with what it is not. Through this dialogue we allow both ourselves – as individuals being involved in the unfolding of thought – and that which is to be thought – whether is an object or thought in general – to be developed. The experience gained by sense-certainty has revealed language to be the ideal means through which this explication can be achieved, not only because it produces an awareness of the limitations of sense-certainty, but especially as it reveals itself as a medium – a generality in which we express what is universal rather than particular or individual – through and in which we can embark on a dialogue with all the particular perspectives (*Meinungen*) that through active communication should be made to produce a generality that indeed belongs to all, and will ultimately be developed into a fully concrete generality. In this process language simultaneously comes into its own, through a *Verkehrung* of what we initially take words and sentences to mean and in which what presented itself as rich and concrete is shown to be abstract and poor, and in need of further development. *Allgemeinheit* is perhaps the best example of such a word: initially it refers to precisely that which is not common to all, but is only presumed to be so.

Yet, it can be objected that this process of language coming into its own, of its being transformed into a concrete generality we can recognize ourselves in – since through our interaction with it we have contributed to its development – and the dialogical development of experience presuppose a readiness in consciousness (in whatever shape it presents itself in) to take part in such a process. What if it refuses to do so? What if it wants to remain firmly locked within its particular perspective, and reject any form of interaction with other perspectives, since it has already decided in advance that they are wrong? In the next chapter, I will discuss in what way the *Bildung* section of the *Phänomenologie* can help us develop an answer to those questions.

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176 *PhdG*, p. 85, *GW IX*, p. 65: 'Ein solches Einfaches, das durch Negation ist, weder Dieses, noch Jenes, ein *Nichtdieses*, und ebenso gleichgültig, auch Dieses wie Jenes zu sein, nennen wir ein *Allgemeines*; das Allgemeine ist also in der Tat das Wahre der sinnlichen Gewißeheit.'

## Chapter 4 *Bildung*: the world of alienation and its language of judgement and disruption

In the section on *Bildung* Hegel discusses the experience of forms of consciousness that – on entering the world of culture – simultaneously enter a world from which they increasingly feel alienated. In his analysis of culture as alienation,<sup>1</sup> Hegel again includes a detailed discussion of language, which reveals that in the world of *Bildung* there is never any real dialogue between – or with – the shapes of consciousness that are observed, as they all remain locked within their own specific world, with their own specific language. Adapting to a particular culture and the specific roles prescribed by this culture entails that there is continuous judgement, by others and of others, by itself and of itself. In this world of judgement, language is used to exclude and exert power over others, and there appears no possibility to move to a language that is fully inclusive.

However, as I hope to show in this chapter, the possibility of dialogical interaction which allows for the development for language that is inclusive, nevertheless manifests itself in three ways in the discussion of *Bildung*: in the need (*Bedürfnis*) felt by the consciousness that feels cut off from its surroundings ('das zerrissene Bewußtsein'<sup>2</sup>) to go beyond itself in order to open itself up to the world it has become alienated from, in the interaction between Hegel's text and other texts, of which Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau* (itself a dialogue) is the most significant, and, finally, in – be it only occasionally –<sup>3</sup> addressing and implicating the reader in the process of enfolding the consciousness' experience. Besides, Hegel – as he did in the sense-certainty section – presents the experience made in the world of *Bildung* as a form of intricate role-play, and this aspect will also be dealt with in detail. Before doing so, and before discussing both the absence and presence of dialogue in this chapter of the *Phänomenologie*, I will first discuss Hegel's rather idiosyncratic concept of *Bildung*, a paradoxical world of established culture and cultural formation, of self-formation and self-loss, and of alienation and reversal.

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1 The title of the section is 'Der sich entfremdende Geist. Die Bildung', indicating that alienation is the dominant aspect of the world of culture.

2 'Zerrissenheit' not only implies that consciousness feels cut off from the world, but also that it feels torn within, as it has lost any sense of a self or an identity it feels at home in. To quote Yeats, consciousness feels that 'things fall apart' as its 'centre does not hold'. W.B.Yeats, 'The Second Coming' in *Selected Poetry* (London: MacMillan, 1962), p. 99.

3 In 'Die Bildung und ihr Reich der Wirklichkeit', Hegel uses 'wir' only four times, a stark contrast with the 39 instances of 'wir' in the sense-certainty section.

## 4.1 Hegel's concept of *Bildung*

First of all, it is important to stress that Hegel does not appear to have one single, coherent and unambiguous concept of *Bildung*. In the *Phänomenologie*, his first use of the word is in the *Vorrede*, where Hegel discusses the nature of his method, which he sees as an integral part of what knowing entails:

die Sache ist nicht in ihrem *Zwecke* erschöpft, sondern in ihrer *Ausführung*, noch ist das *Resultat* das *wirkliche* Ganze, sondern es zusammen mit seinem Werden. [...] Der Anfang der Bildung und des Herausarbeitens aus der Unmittelbarkeit des substantiellen Lebens wird immer damit gemacht werden müssen, Kenntnisse *allgemeiner* Grundsätze und Gesichtspunkte zu erwerben, sich nur erst zu dem *Gedanken* der Sache *überhaupt* aufzuarbeiten [...].<sup>4</sup>

Here *Bildung* is equated with the process through which knowing is developed.<sup>5</sup> It is said to be a process of active involvement with what we are presented with as knowing (the 'Kenntnisse *allgemeiner* Grundsätze und Gesichtspunkte'): we have to work ourselves up from our habitual, everyday stance of acceptance of the world (and our knowing of that world) as something that is simply there, and which we can be immediately acquainted with, to a position in which we get to – by interacting with the 'Gesichtspunkte' implicit in historical shapes of knowing – experience what the process of thought entails.<sup>6</sup>

The process of *Bildung* encompasses two perspectives: it refers both to the coming to know and development of (individual instances of) natural consciousness, through which it eventually reaches the level of absolute knowing, and to the (historical) enfolding of knowing, through which philosophy ultimately comes into its own as science.<sup>7</sup> Whereas the *Einleitung* of the *Phänomenologie* focuses on *Bildung* as the formative experience of consciousness, the *Vorrede* presents *Bildung* as the mutual interaction between

4 *PhdG*, pp. 13-14. *GW IX*, pp. 10-11.

5 Thus, the project as *Phänomenologie* as a whole can be seen as a prime example of *Bildung*. See *PhdG*, p. 31, *GW IX*, p. 24: 'Dies Werden der Wissenschaft überhaupt oder des Wissens ist es, was diese *Phänomenologie des Geistes* darstellt.' Cf. John Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 5 ff. and p. 176.

6 As Stekeler-Weithofer continuously stresses, for Hegel knowing is a communal effort, and it is only through our being actively involved in knowing as a continuous and general *practice*, that we ultimately arrive at 'das wahre Wissen'. Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer (*Hegels PhdG*, Bd.1), p. 197: 'Objektstufige Wissenschaft ist nicht empirische Erzählung, sondern Arbeit am Begriff': Hegel himself puts it thus: 'Wahre Gedanken und wissenschaftliche Einsicht ist nur in der Arbeit des Begriffs zu gewinnen.' (*PhdG*, p. 65, *GW IX*, p. 48) Cf. also Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, pp. 19-20. Already in the first step, our distancing ourselves from our habitual perspective on the world, work is involved: it is said to be an 'Herausarbeiten' from what is considered a world that is immediately given.

7 Cf. Hegel's discussion of *Bildung* in the *Einleitung*: 'Die Reihe seiner Gestaltungen, welche das Bewußtsein auf diesem Wege [the 'Weg der Verzweigung', through which consciousness comes to see the 'Unwahrheit des erscheinenden Wissens', and is thus able to develop its truth, AG] durchläuft, ist vielmehr die ausführliche Geschichte der *Bildung* des Bewußtseins selbst zur Wissenschaft.' (*PhdG*, p. 73, *GW IX*, p. 56).

individual consciousness and general spirit,<sup>8</sup> through which ultimately ‘der selbstbewußte Geist’ is formed.<sup>9</sup> The following passage reveals significant aspects of this interaction:

Die Aufgabe, das Individuum von seinem ungebildeten Standpunkte aus zum Wissen zu führen, war in ihrem allgemeinen Sinn zu fassen und das allgemeine Individuum, der selbstbewußte Geist, in seiner Bildung zu betrachten. Was das Verhältnis beider betrifft, so zeigt sich in dem allgemeinen Individuum jedes Moment, wie es die konkrete form und eigene Gestaltung gewinnt. Das besondere Individuum ist der unvollständige Geist, eine konkrete Gestalt, in deren ganzem Dasein eine Bestimmtheit herrschend ist und worin die anderen nur in verwischten Zügen vorhanden sind. In dem Geiste, der höher steht als ein anderer, ist das niedrige konkrete Dasein zu einem unscheinbaren Momente herabgesunken; was vorher die Sache selbst war, ist nur noch eine Spur; ihre Gestalt ist eingehüllt und eine einfache Schattierung geworden. [...]. Der Einzelne muß auch dem Inhalte nach die Bildungsstufen des allgemeinen Geistes durchlaufen, aber als vom Geiste schon abgelegte Gestalten, als Stufen eines Wegs, der ausgearbeitet und geebnet ist [...]. Dies vergangene Dasein ist bereits erworbenes Eigentum des allgemeinen Geistes, der die Substanz des Individuums und so ihm äußerlich erscheinend seine unorganische Natur ausmacht. – Die Bildung in dieser Rücksicht besteht, von der Seite des Individuums aus betrachtet, darin, daß es dies Vorhandene erwerbe, seine unorganische Natur in sich zehre und für sich in Besitz nehme. Dies ist aber von der Seite des allgemeinen Geistes als der Substanz nichts anderes, als das diese sich ihr Selbstbewußtsein gibt, ihr Werden und ihre Reflexion in sich hervorbringt.<sup>10 013</sup>

**013** In this passage, Hegel's choice of words ('unscheinbar', 'verwischten Zügen', 'Spur', 'eingehüllt', 'Schattierung') suggests that past manifestations can no longer be clearly distinguished as they cannot be seen properly. If spirit is to actively develop a comprehensive understanding of itself, if it is to become self-conscious spirit, it might therefore choose to interact with what makes itself heard, rather than rely on visible representations.

First of all, Hegel stresses that individual consciousness and *Geist* not just interact, but that they depend on each other in order to develop their potential. Initially, individual consciousness is dominated in its outlook by one particular perspective, by one

8 In his commentary on this passage, Stekeler-Weithofer stresses the parallel between the enfolding of general spirit (*phylogenesis*) with the development of the individual person (*ontogenesis*), analogous to the parallel structure of *Politeia* and *Psyche* in Plato (although in Plato, of course, the temporal or historical dimension is lacking). Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd.1, p. 243. Cf. also Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel: Texts and Commentary* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1965), p. 45.

9 In the 1807 version of the *Phänomenologie*, Hegel wrote 'der Weltgeist'. 'Der selbstbewußte Geist' is one of the revisions of the 1831 version. This change may have been inspired by a wish to provide a more coherent picture of the process of *Bildung* that is depicted here, as the passage quoted above concludes with the claim that the ultimate result of *Bildung* is the becoming self-conscious of *Geist*, through which it can reflect on its coming to be. This final sentence also reads slightly different in the 1807 version: 'Dies ist aber eben so sehr nichts anders, als das der allgemeine Geist oder die Substanz sich ihr Selbstbewußtsein gibt, oder ihr Werden und Reflexion in sich.' This becoming self-conscious of *Geist* occurs through the work of individual consciousness. See also Kaufmann, op. cit., pp. 45-47.

10 *PhdG*, pp. 31-33. *GW IX*, pp. 24-25.

particular way of determining its experience (*Bestimmtheit*). Other perspectives and determinations are present, but only in the form of traces, as the original determinations (by others, or by itself) have been rendered diffuse and opaque over time. Hence, individual consciousness is an incomplete (*unvollständig*) shape of spirit. On the other hand, *Geist* as the residue of past forms of determining and shaping the world is still abstract, as all the concrete experiences that have helped shape it have become mere shadows, enveloped in an entity from which consciousness is, as yet, lacking. From the perspective of individual, *Bildung* is initially a reverse motion, a form of *anamnesis* in which individual consciousness goes through the past that lies in store in *Geist*, in order to become acquainted with the ways in which the world is already known, and through which it not only develops knowing, but also comes to know both *Geist* and itself.<sup>11</sup>

Hegel's discussion of *Bildung* in this passage has a strong prescriptive and even pedagogical ring to it: it is presented as a task ('Aufgabe') to lead the uneducated individual to knowing,<sup>12</sup> and individual consciousness is told how it must proceed ('Der Einzelne muß,' my emphasis, AG) in order to come to know and explicate what, as yet, is still abstract and implicit. It can only do so by going through the shapes in which spirit manifested itself ('vom Geiste abgelegte Gestalten'<sup>14</sup>), by following the path that has already been prepared by *Geist*'s previous efforts.<sup>13</sup> For Hegel, *Bildung* goes beyond Kant's *sapere aude*: we should not take these words to imply that we, as thinking subjects, are completely self-reliant and autonomous, and can only make decisions and judgements by abstracting from everything through which we are

**014** Hegel's predilection for multi-dimensional words reveals itself in his choice for 'abgelegt': in the context of this passage it does not only mean 'travelled' or 'finished' (which of course refers to the process of going through ('durchlaufen') the 'Bildungsstufen', but also links up with the clothing metaphor he used earlier in this passage ('ihre Gestalt ist eingehüllt'), which, again, suggests the element of roleplay we already saw at work in sense-certainty and which will also be a prominent feature of the world of *Bildung* (as will be discussed in the next section). Both 'eingehüllt' and 'abgelegt' are also suggestive of *Bildung* as the formative process through which an organism develops itself in a process in which it continuously changes its appearance.

- 11 It could be argued that the process Hegel depicts here bears close resemblance to the interaction in the sense-certainty section, with its (dialogical) interaction between the protagonist and the phenomenologist from which a third 'wir' emerges that is formed from within this interaction. Self-conscious *Geist* can thus be seen as the resultant force that emerges from *Bildung* as the interaction between individual consciousness and spirit. Cf. Wim van Dooren, 'Der Begriff der Bildung in der *Phänomenologie des Geistes*' in *Hegel-Jahrbuch* (1973): 'parallele Bildungen greifen ineinander – die Bildung des Individuums ist zugleich die Bildung der Welt, es gibt immer zugleich eine subjektive und eine objektive Seite des Bildungsprozesses [...]. Das Endergebnis einer solchen Verwirklichung können wir dann wieder Bildung nennen [...].'
- 12 The sentence leaves open to whom this task presents itself: to spirit that has already interacted with its past (and thus is 'höher [...] als ein anderer'), an omniscient subject already in possession of absolute knowing, or to Hegel as the author of the *Phänomenologie*. In either case, we are not to think of the 'educator' as already being in possession of knowing as 'das wahre Wissen', but rather, as Hegel puts it at the beginning of the 'Vorrede', as contributing to ('mitzuarbeiten') the project of turning knowing into self-conscious knowing, into 'Wissenschaft': 'Die wahre Gestalt, in welcher die Wahrheit existiert, kann allein das wissenschaftliche System derselben sein. Daran mitzuarbeiten, daß die Philosophie der Form der Wissenschaft näherkomme – dem Ziele, ihren Namen der *Liebe* zum *Wissen* ablegen zu können und *wirkliches* Wissen zu sein –, ist es, was ich mir vorgesetzt.' *PhdG*, p. 14, *GW IX*, p. 11. See also ch. 3, e.g. n. 105 and n. 123.
- 13 In *The Spirit and Its Letter*, Smith highlights the pedagogical aspects of Hegel's concept of *Bildung*. Smith argues that Hegel's *Bildung* is strongly influenced by Hegel's own education in Stuttgart, with its marked emphasis on rhetoric. See e.g. op. cit. p. 15 ff.

determined – such as family, society and history. If we truly dare to think, Hegel argues, we occupy ourselves with what presents itself to us ('das Vorhandene') and which we, through painstaking critical reflection, can ultimately liberate from the way it appears to us.<sup>14</sup> The process of *Bildung* also allows us to liberate ourselves from the *Meinungen* that we saw as the reflections of our true and inner selves, and also come to see ourselves as being in continuous formation. Yet, being told what to do – to become involved with spirit's past manifestations – seems to be at odds with a knowing that develops dialogically. Hegels' concept of *Bildung* – as presented here – also appears to imply that consciousness initially has to remain silent – as it does not having anything to say that is of real interest – and can only listen to what can be learned from what it is presented with.<sup>15</sup> The suggestion is that – like Adeimantos and Glaucon who have to allow themselves to be led by Socrates (who, in turn, allows himself to be led by *logos*) –<sup>16</sup> we have to be educated into becoming a true participant in knowing that is to be developed dialogically, and to develop a voice that is worth hearing.

In many ways, the concept of *Bildung* Hegel outlines in the *Vorrede* appears to be both a reflection and a further elaboration of contemporary ideas relating to *Bildung*.<sup>17</sup> For many of the *Aufklärer*, such as Moses Mendelssohn, it came to stand for modern education – as distinct from conventional and passive *Erziehung* – with a strong emphasis on self-cultivation and sound, independent judgement, through which society could become truly meritocratic, led by men of learning.<sup>18</sup> *Bildung* not only referred to self-formation in the sense of self-education, however, but was also used in a sense which linked the term to its original usage in (much older) theological sources, mainly of mystical, Neoplatonist or pietistic origin. In these works, the term suggested the presence of an inner form (an *imago Dei*) which determined the subsequent shaping of the human self or spirit.<sup>19</sup>

14 Cf. *PhdG*, p. 73. *GW IX*, p. 56.

15 Hegel also emphasizes that we have to proceed slowly, to allow ourselves to be truly immersed in – and led by – what we are presented with, without clinging to what our preconceived notions about what knowing is or who we are, and without caring about immediate 'results'. Cf. *PhdG*, p. 13, *GW IX*, p. 11: 'Denn statt mit der Sache sich zu befassen, ist solches Tun (the aiming for immediate results, AG) immer über sie hinaus; statt in ihr zu verweilen und sich in ihr zu vergessen, greift solches Wissen immer nach einem Anderen und bleibt vielmehr bei sich selbst, als daß es bei der Sache ist und sich ihr hingibt.'

16 See ch. 3, p. 68, n. 13.

17 See the entry on *Bildung* in the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, hrsg. Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer und Gottfried Gabriel (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1971). See also Pinkard, *Hegel*, p. 49 ff., and Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 68-70.

18 See Pinkard, *Hegel*, p. 49: 'By Hegel's time, the idea (of *Bildung*, AG) had been distinguished from that of *Erziehung*, education. *Bildung* incorporated within itself the notion of true education and cultivation as in turn demanding self-formation. As it were, one could *become* educated (in the passive tense, represented by the term *Erziehung*), but one had to *make oneself* into a cultivated-educated person (in the active sense, represented by the term *Bildung*). *Bildung* required self-activity, self-development, and self-direction.' Pinkard points out that these ideas were of particular significance to Hegel, for whom – being brought up in a family of civil servants – *Bildung* thus opened up a future in which a career based on merit – rather than on belonging to an aristocratic family – was a distinct possibility.

19 This sense of *Bildung* may also have inspired Herder, in whose thought man develops himself on the basis of an inner self ('Idiom') we increasingly become (re-)acquainted with in the process of *Bildung*. See ch.1, p. 24. More on Herder's concept of *Bildung* on pp. 112-113 below.



As Smith explains, the term came to refer to a 'complex of ideas': 'the specular relationship between God, humans and the world; the process of their interaction (especially the human itinerary back to God); and the end product of that process.'<sup>20</sup> The secular version of the notion of self-formation according to an inner power or form also gained prominence in the natural sciences of Hegel's day: in 1781 Johann Friedrich Blumenbach published *Über den Bildungstrieb und das Zeugungsgeschäft*, a work with which Hegel was familiar.<sup>21</sup> In this work, Blumenbach develops the notion of 'Bildungstrieb' as the ability in organisms to organize and preserve themselves ('Selbstorganisation'), which enables them to express themselves as what they are.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, two authors gave an enormous impetus to the further elaboration, and secularization, of the concept of *Bildung*: Goethe and Herder. Goethe developed a theory of morphology, which explained the teleological development of organisms in terms of self-formation and self-expression.<sup>22</sup> Besides, Goethe, in writing *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* (1795-96) was the spiritual father of the *Bildungsroman*,<sup>23</sup> in which he aimed to capture what is involved in becoming a person, an individual who – through experience – has come to understand and express who he or she is. As Martin Swales writes in his study of the *Bildungsroman*: 'It is a novel form that is animated by a concern for the whole man unfolding organically in all his complexity and richness. *Bildung* becomes, then, a total growth process, a diffused *Werden* [...], involving something more intangible than the acquirement of a finite number of lessons.'<sup>24</sup> Herder used the term *Bildung* throughout his work,<sup>25</sup> and contributed enormously to its pro-

20 Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 47. If we substitute God by *Geist*, this is very much the interaction that Hegel depicts in the *Vorrede*. In the context of the historical background of *Bildung* as self-formation, Smith also indicates the importance of Leibniz, who turned the 'complex of ideas' into a coherent philosophical position: '[Leibniz] "monadology" envisioned a soullike entity that proceeded, thanks to its independent, internal power, through the process of self-realization to an approximation of its inherent likeness to the divine (or the universe as a whole).' (p. 48).

21 On the influence of contemporary biology on Hegel's thinking, see e.g. Dietrich von Engelhardt, 'Die biologische Wissenschaften in Hegels Naturphilosophie' in *Hegels Philosophie der Natur: Beziehungen zwischen empirischer und spekulativer Naturerkenntnis*, hrsg. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Michael John Petry (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), pp. 121-137.

22 A theory that may have inspired Hegel, who was well versed in Goethe's work, to use words and metaphors (such as 'Verwandlung', *PhdG*, p. 235, or p. 585) that are suggestive of an organic process of self-formation.

23 As the title of Swales' book on the German *Bildungsroman* indicates ('*The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse*') this statement can be questioned. Swales shows that the first use of the term *Bildungsroman* was in 1820, in a work by the philologist Karl Morgenstern, who saw *Wilhelm Meister* as the first and prime example of its kind. On the other hand, Swales argues, 'Morgenstern may have coined the term and summarized some of its implications, but the kind of novel he was envisaging had been analyzed before, by the critic Friedrich von Blanckenburg in his *Versuch über den Roman* of 1774. This work of novel theory grew out of Blanckenburg's enthusiasm for a specific work of fiction, Christoph Martin Wieland's *Agathon* (1767). Martin Swales, *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 12-13.

24 Swales, op. cit., p. 14. The 'diffused *Werden*' is a description that would fit the 'Weg der Verzweiflung' followed by the protagonist of the *Phänomenologie*, and, in this sense, the book could, arguably, be called a *Bildungsroman* after all. Cf. the discussion in chapter three, p. 77.

25 Cf. chapter 1, section 1.1.2.



mulgation.<sup>26</sup> For Herder, *Bildung* not only implied the (organic) formation and expression of the individual self, but also included the historical development of human culture, which reflected the original force ('Grundkraft'), the drive for expression of humanity as a whole.<sup>27</sup>

Hegel's use of *Bildung* in the *Vorrede* appears to reflect – to a greater or lesser degree – most of the aspects mentioned above – self-formation and expression, the importance of gaining experience, cultural development – and in that sense illustrates the demand that in order to come to know, we should first occupy ourselves with what is already there, the 'vom Geiste schon abgelegte Gestalten'. Where Hegel appears to depart from contemporary ideas on *Bildung* is in his insistence that self-formation does not presuppose an inner, authentic, core or self that education can start with, and which is to be brought to fruition by attending to its needs. In Hegel's eyes, self-formation is the development of a self that initially is only *an sich*, and which can only be known as what it is at the very end of the process of education. At the start of its process of *Bildung*, individual consciousness knows neither itself nor the culture it belongs to – it only takes itself to be immediately acquainted with both – and has to develop an understanding of both by, as we saw above, becoming involved with 'Kenntnisse *allgemeiner* Grundsätze und Gesichtspunkte', by first making these its own. Individual consciousness initially regards this world of spirit – as we saw in the passage quoted above – as a world that it does not yet belong to, that appears as something 'äußerlich' to himself,<sup>28</sup> and which, even if it is said to be its nature ('seine Natur'), is perceived by consciousness as 'unorganisch'.<sup>29</sup> From the point of view of the individual, *Bildung* is the appropriation of what it is presented with ('das Vorhandene'), even if this is to occur by means of rather violent action.<sup>015</sup> It is only thus, by means of the appropriation of what already belongs to general spirit, that what was still an abstract

**015** 'in Besitz nehmen', 'erwerben' and especially 'zehren' all suggest a process that, in the eyes of consciousness, can, at this stage, only occur through radical, revolutionary action, rather than through gradual evolution. 'Zehren' is a highly suggestive word, as it not only means 'to destroy' (and thus links up with 'ausmachen' in the previous sentence, which not only means 'to determine', but also to 'finish' or even 'kill off'), but also 'to digest', and thus does suggest an organic, natural process and therefore also appears to capture the perspective of the phenomenologist, who is able to see *Bildung* as also being an organically evolving process.

26 Smith interestingly remarks that Herder 'introduced if not the linguistic then at least the conceptual possibility of understanding *bilden* as a reflexive verb, *sich bilden*.' Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 48. Although it could be argued that this usage is already to be found in earlier works, such as the Lutheran Bible. See the lemma on 'Bildung' in *Adelung*.

27 Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 48. On Herder as responsible for the development of an 'expressivist' anthropology, cf. Taylor, *Hegel*, pp. 13-20. I also briefly discuss Herder's concept of *Bildung* in ch.1, p. 10.

28 'ihm äußerlich erscheinend', which Hegel added in the 1831 version, can also be read as a pleonasm, in that what appears is necessarily an outward manifestation. What Hegel wants to suggest is that consciousness takes an appearance to be an outward manifestation of an inner core, of an essence that is already given, and that somehow resides beyond its expressions. It is precisely this view that Hegel wants to dispel.

29 Whereas it appears essential to the idea of *Bildung* to conceive of the formation of the self, and of spirit, in organic terms. The question suggests itself whose perspective is captured by the rather oxymoronic phrase 'seine unorganische Natur', as 'unorganisch' would be an adjective used by consciousness, the protagonist, whereas 'Natur' can only be used by the phenomenologist (or by consciousness after it has been told *Geist* is its nature, a view it is, as yet, unable to accept).

object – the past as a mere storehouse of humanity's endeavours to grasp and express their world – can become a concrete world that consciousness can recognize as its own, since it took part in its development. *Bildung* as a process, for Hegel, thus requires that consciousness becomes aware of a rift – and simultaneously, a need to repair this rift – with the world it took for granted, in which – ‘von seinem ungebildeten Standpunkt’ – it simply accepted the world as immediately given (either through its own representations, or through ‘Kenntnisse’ that were uncritically taken up as ‘Angaben’<sup>30</sup>) and which it has now come to see as an estranged world that it will have to make its own again.

Hegel's concept of *Bildung* thus appears rather ambiguous, as referring both to the formation of a world of spirit (*‘Bildung der Welt’*) and to this world as already having been formed, and also to the formative process in which consciousness interacts with this world, through which it both develops its individual self and contributes to the coming to be of self-conscious spirit. *Bildung* in the former sense thus appears to be responsible for the coming to be of *Bildung* in the latter sense. In being confronted with the culture and traditions that are already there, *Bildung* as that which has already been formed – the ‘Bildungsstufen’ that spirit has already gone through – consciousness develops a need for individual development, for *Bildung* as a formative process.<sup>31</sup>

The idea that *Bildung* – as that which has already been formed – produces an opposition (a form of ‘Entzweiung’) and a need to overcome that opposition – and thus also a need to embark on a process of *Bildung* as self-formation, is already laid out in the *Differenzschrift*:

Betrachten wir die besondere Form näher, welche eine Philosophie trägt, so sehen wir sie einerseits, aus der lebendigen Originalität des Geistes entspringen, der in ihr die zerrissene Harmonie durch sich herstellt und selbsttätig gestaltet hat, andererseits aus der besonderen Form, welche die Entzweiung trägt, aus der das System hervorgeht. In der Bildung hat sich das, was Erscheinung des Absoluten ist, vom Absoluten isoliert und als ein Selbständiges fixiert.<sup>32</sup>

In this passage, *Bildung* refers to a particular perspective on the world, belonging to a particular period of time, which has come to be seen as fixed and determinate, and as no

30 Cf. chapter three, n. 167.

31 Cf. also the speech that Hegel gave as rector of the Nuremberg gymnasium, in which he argued that one of the main reasons for studying a world different from ours (he of course refers to the classical world) is to provoke a sense of ‘Entfremdung’, a sense of wonder because of which we feel the need to occupy ourselves with the classical world, to make it our own, and, ultimately, to recognize this world as a world from which we, too, originate, and that it is through studying this world that it is possible to ultimately achieve a ‘Rückkehr zu sich selbst.’ See the ‘Rede zum Schuljahrsabschluß am 29. September 1809’ in *Nürnberger und Heidelberger Schriften 1808-1817 (Werke 4)*, esp. pp. 320-322. On the importance of the ‘Bedürfnis der Philosophie’ for Hegel's thought, see also ch.2, p. 33 ff. See also Smith's lucid discussion of *Bildung* and its link to ‘Bedürfnis’ and ‘Entzweiung’ in the *Differenzschrift*. Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 159-161.

32 *Differenzschrift*, p. 20. *GW IV*, p. 12.

longer allowing for further formation. In fixating itself it has opposed itself to knowing as an infinite totality of continuous evolution and production, which Hegel calls the Absolute. Rather than referring to a formative process – which was the main thrust of the discussion in the *Vorrede* – *Bildung* here appears to refer to determinate stages of that process, that each remain locked within themselves. Yet in what follows, *Bildung* is also used in order to refer to the process through which specific ways of looking at the world become, or have become, established, and which, as such, are experienced as restrictive ('unfrei') and incapable of change:

Je weiter die Bildung gedeiht, je mannigfaltiger die Entwicklung der Äußerungen des Lebens wird, in welche die Entzweiung sich verschlingen kann, desto größer wird die Macht der Entzweiung, desto fester ihre klimatische Heiligkeit, desto fremder dem Ganzen der Bildung und bedeutungsloser die Bestrebungen des Lebens, sich zur Harmonie wiederzugebären.<sup>33</sup>

**016** 'Gedeihen' means 'to grow slowly' or 'to thrive'. See the entry on 'gedeihen' in the *DWB*. In the 'Vorrede', immediately preceding the sentence on the 'Anfang der Bildung', Hegel uses the past participle, 'Gediegenheit', to refer to the object of knowing: '[d]as leichteste ist, was Gehalt und Gediegenheit hat, zu beurteilen, schwerer, es zu fassen, das schwerste, was beides vereinigt, seine Darstellung hervorzubringen.' (*PhdG*, p. 13, *GW IX*, p. 11). The object of knowledge is, in the first clause, described as that which has content ('Gehalt') and 'Gediegenheit'. Hegel probably wants us to think of the object of knowledge as something solid or pure, but the word can also refer to the way an object coincides with its presentation: 'Gediegenheit' as the locus where 'Ausdruck und Gedanke gleichsam zu einem Ganzen zusammengewachsen sind'. See the entry on 'Gediegenheit' in *Grimm*. Interestingly, the entry also gives 'Gediegenheit' as that which presupposes ('voraussetzt') 'eine Weiterbildung', a denotation that is very much in line with both Hegel's conception of how the totality becomes real ('zusammen mit seinem Werden'). 'Gediegen' thus becomes a very interesting metaphor, in that – through its meaning of 'solid' or 'pure' on the one hand, and as being the past participle of 'gedeihen' (to grow slowly) on the other – it reflects two different perspectives on knowing.

On the one hand, the progress of *Bildung* – the formation of a world of spirit – is depicted in organic terms ('gedeiht'<sup>016</sup>), as a process in which life expresses itself as an ever-increasing manifold in which the *Entzweiung* can become entangled,<sup>017</sup> yet on the other hand, it is

**017** 'Verschlingen' is, again, a highly suggestive word. It can mean 'to become entangled', thus suggesting a form of growth, yet one which is restrictive and limiting, in that what grows is made to adapt to a specific shape of *Bildung*, through which the *Entzweiung* is further reinforced. A further meaning, through which it becomes linked to 'zehren' and 'ausmachen' (see n. 015), is 'to consume' or 'to devour', and suggesting an *Entzweiung* that is eating its way into the manifold, and through, which, initially, it is not productive of any real knowing, but only expands its own power ('desto größer wird die Macht der Entzweiung').

said to be a process through which the world that is produced becomes increasingly rigid ('fest'),<sup>34</sup> increasingly strange ('desto fremder'), and the attempts to (again) be at home in this world increasingly futile.<sup>35</sup> The more developed a particular culture becomes, the

33 *Differenzschrift*, pp. 22-23. *GW IV*, p. 14.

34 In this passage, Hegel suggests that it is not only the dominant perspectives of a specific period that become fixed and isolated, but that the same goes for views belonging to a specific region ('klimatische Heiligkeit'). Cf. *Glauben und Wissen*, p. 289, *GW IV*, p. 316, where Hegel links the emergence of subjectivity to Northern European culture and its Protestantism ('Die große Form des Weltgeistes aber, welche sich in jenen Philosophien erkannt hat, ist das Prinzip des Nordens und, es religiös angesehen, des Protestantismus').

35 This wish to ultimately reproduce itself, or give birth to itself ('sich wiederzugebären') in a harmony that is to be achieved by interacting with the world consciousness feels opposed to is already suggestive of Hegel's

greater the need for consciousness to interact with it – both in order to break open the prevalent culture so that its rigid rules and regulations are made fluid and adaptive, and to develop the self it became aware of as a result of the *Entzweiung* – the more difficult it becomes to do so. Consciousness might even be tempted to give up altogether, to become indifferent and to withdraw within itself. The alienation produced by *Bildung* – as the dominant culture produced by a particular shape of spirit – thus proves to be both a prerequisite – in producing a sense of self and in being the instigation of a need felt by consciousness to be one with its culture (again) – and an obstacle to *Bildung* as formation, of individual consciousness and of the particular culture it feels alienated from. In the next section I will discuss if, and in what way, Hegel's extensive discussion of *Bildung* in the *Geist* chapter of the *Phänomenologie* will provide us with answers to the question in what way consciousness and spirit are able to overcome the alienation produced by *Bildung*.

## 4.2 'Die Welt der Bildung' as a world of alienation, reversal and judgement

In focusing on the aspect of consciousness' alienation from a world it used to feel it belonged to, the account of the world of *Bildung* that Hegel presents in the *Geist* chapter can be seen as a further elaboration of the discussion in the *Differenzschrift*. The section on *Bildung* is preceded by a (more or less idealized) discussion of the 'Welt der Sittlichkeit' of ancient Greece, in which consciousness, in sensing a natural harmony with the existing social order and customs (its '*Sitten*'), feels immediately at home. With the breakdown of this social order (the 'Untergang der sittlichen Substanz'<sup>36</sup>), consciousness loses its sense of an identity as something immediately given. On entering a world in which consciousness does not have a natural but only a formal identity, *Geist* ceases to be a meaningful, living substance: 'das Leben des Geistes und diese in allen ihrer selbst bewußte Substanz [ist] verloren. Sie tritt als eine *formelle Allgemeinheit* heraus, ist ihnen nicht mehr als lebendiger Geist inwohnend, sondern die einfache Gediegenheit ist in viele Punkte zersprungen.'<sup>37</sup> This is a world ('der Rechtszustand', the historical equivalent being the Roman empire<sup>38</sup>) with formal laws according to which the identity of each individual consists in its legal status as a person, but in which the harmony of the ancient Greek world is shattered and fragmented: 'Das Allgemeine, in die Atome der absolut viele Individuen zersplittert, dieser gestorbene Geist ist eine *Gleichheit*, worin

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discussion in the *Bildung* section of the *Phänomenologie*, where consciousness is said to produce its true nature (give birth to its real self) only by alienating itself from its nature as given, and to interact with the ways in which the world has formed ('gebildet') itself. Cf. the discussion in the next section.

36 *PhdG*, p. 354. *GWIX*, p. 260.

37 *Ibid.* Hegel again uses the word 'Gediegenheit' to refer to the social order of ancient Greece. See p. 115, n.016. The word 'einfach' suggests that although consciousness perceived the spirit of ancient Greece to fully coincide with itself, it still lacked *Entzweiung* (which Hegel shows to first manifest itself in Greek tragedy, which reveals the internal conflicts that would ultimately lead to the breakdown of the idealized harmony of Greek *polis* life) through which it could be further developed and develop a sense of self-consciousness.

38 On Hegel's historical (and topographical) allusions, cf. notes 34 and 46.

*Alle als Jede, als Personen* gelten.<sup>39</sup> Each individual counts, and is equal to all others, but there is nothing beyond this equality (there is no differentiation that brings about interaction), no sense of a generality as a ‘wir’ the individual can belong to. There is a sense of self, but this consists in nothing more than in being a person,<sup>40</sup> since that is all that is recognized by the state: who you are, where you come from or what your background is, is simply of no consequence.<sup>41</sup> As persons, all members of the state are completely on their own, and are unable to relate in any positive, meaningful way to others or their ruler, the ‘Herr der Welt’: ‘[sie] sind als Personen für sich und schließen die Kontinuität mit anderen aus der absoluten Sprödigkeit ihrer Punktualität aus; sie sind also in einem nur negative Verhältnisse wie zu einander so zu ihm.’<sup>42</sup>

Hegel is very explicit about the lack of meaning – of the world having any content consciousness experiences as real – in a world in which it is the law that counts: ‘Das Bewußtsein des Rechts erfährt darum in seinem wirklichen Gelten selbst vielmehr den Verlust seiner Realität und seine vollkommene Unwesentlichkeit, und ein Individuum als eine *Person* bezeichnen ist Ausdruck der Verachtung.’<sup>43</sup> It is only by asserting their legal rights that “persons” can make themselves heard: ‘Dies *Gelten* ist die allgemeine Wirklichkeit des Selbsts, aber sie ist unmittelbar ebenso die Verkehrung; sie ist der Verlust seines Wesens. – Die in der sittlichen Welt nicht vorhandene Wirklichkeit des Selbsts ist durch ihr Zurückgehen in die Person gewonnen worden; was in jener einig war, tritt nun entwickelt, aber sich entfremdet auf.’<sup>44</sup> What is won in the world of law, compared to the ethical world of the Greek *polis* (in which the individual felt that he was one (*einig*) with the social order, and it was clear which role(s) he or she had to play),<sup>45</sup> is that there is now a sense of self, yet what is lost – and this is simultaneously the cause of a feeling of alienation – is any meaningful content this self might have, as this content is simply not acknowledged. The task that both consciousness thus finds itself confronted with is how to interact in such a way with its world that both its world and itself can become concrete and meaningful whole.

39 *PhdG*, p. 355. *GW IX*, p. 260.

40 The image Hegel uses is ‘das spröde Selbst’ (*PhdG*, p. 355, *GW IX*, p. 261): the self is nothing more than a rough element, that is need of development. ‘Spröd’ in the sense of raw, or elementary, may be linked to the shattered ‘Gediegenheit’, of which it is a fragment. See n. 016.

41 Being recognized as a person is thus to be nothing more than an abstraction. Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd 2, pp. 250-251: ‘Der abstrakte Begriff der Person ist bloß erst reine Zuschreibung. Er setzt noch nicht schon voraus, dass die Person auch schon ihre personale Fähigkeiten gut genug entwickelt hat und anwendet: eine Person im Sinn eines bloßen menschlichen Individuums, das personale Rechte hat, ist noch ohne inhaltlichen Bestand.’ Of course, Hegel does not claim that this content is already a finished product, as it is still in need of being formed. Rather, his point is that in being identified as a person, the raw content we already do have is completely denied and can therefore not be developed.

42 *PhdG*, p. 358. *GW IX*, p. 263.

43 *PhdG*, p. 357. *GW IX*, p. 262.

44 *PhdG*, p. 359. *GW IX*, p. 264.

45 The problem for the individual in the world of law is that the roles that can be played are seen as purely contingent, as not being in any meaningful way related to the individual’s essence. Ironically, it is as a person that the sense of having a fitting *persona* is lost. Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 260.

At the start of the section with the double title 'Der sich entfremdende Geist. Die Bildung'<sup>46</sup> – already intimating that alienation is an essential aspect of *Bildung* – consciousness finds itself completely opposed to its world, which now fails to be of interest as it has produced a reality that consciousness experiences as strange and as simply being imposed:

Aber derjenige Geist, dessen Selbst das absolut diskrete ist, hat seinen Inhalt sich als eine ebenso harte Wirklichkeit gegenüber, und die Welt hat hier die Bestimmung, ein Äußerliches, das Negative des Selbstbewußtseins zu sein. Aber diese Welt ist geistiges Wesen, sie ist an sich die Durchdringung des Seins und der Individualität; dies ihr Dasein ist das *Werk* des Selbstbewußtseins; aber ebenso eine unmittelbar vorhandene, ihm fremde Wirklichkeit, welche eigentümliches Sein hat und worin es sich nicht erkennt. [...] diese äußerliche Wirklichkeit [...] ist nicht nur dieses zufällig für das Selbst vorhandene elementarische Wesen, sondern sie ist seine, aber nicht

46 As Smith indicates, Hegel's 'subdivisions of the *Phänomenologie* illustrate characteristic ambiguities connected to the concept of *Bildung*,' as the term appears both in the general title of a section (VI B) and in a subheading to indicate a part of that section (VI B I a: 'Die Bildung und ihr Reich der Wirklichkeit'). See Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 197. In the general title, *Bildung* appears to suggest the process of alienation that is then observed and analysed in different, specifically historical shapes (the Enlightenment, the French Revolution), of which 'Die Welt der Bildung' is one. Although Hegel, especially in the *Geist* chapter, includes numerous implicit and a few explicit references to specific historical periods, I do not think that – as in the case of 'Die Welt der Bildung' the allusions appear to suggest so many periods (the Enlightenment, the early modern period as understood by Hobbes, the Roman Empire and the Middle Ages) – we are meant to read the insights Hegel presents as relating to specific periods only (a reading which more or less turns the *Phänomenologie* into a *roman à clef*). Rather, I think that Hegel wants us to understand that historical processes give us insight in the development of spirit, yet that such processes can be observed at any time, including our own. See van Dooren, op. cit., p. 167: 'Es könnte sein, daß Hegel hier [in the discussion of the 'Welt der Bildung', AG] nur eine bestimmte historische Periode aus der ganzen Entwicklung der Menschheit bespricht, so daß die wichtigste Frage *nur* die ist: welche Periode meint er? Die *Phänomenologie* wäre dann eine Art Schlüsselroman, wo wir uns nur mit der Suche nach der wahren historischen Gestalten zu belasten brauchen und vielleicht hinterher eine allgemeinere Bedeutung herausfinden können. Wenn es aber wahr ist, daß Hegel in der *Phänomenologie* je eine bestimmte Periode aus der Geschichte beabsichtigt, warum läßt er uns darüber im unklaren? Ist der Umstand, daß Hegel sich nicht klar hierüber ausspricht, nicht ein Anzeichen dafür, daß er die etwaige historische Periode nur als ein austauschbares Beispiel verwendet?' A similar argument can be made with regard to the many topographical references, which also range from general ('Welt', 'Reich') to specific. A rather specific reference is to be found at the end of the introduction to section B, where Hegel briefly sketches the movement of alienated spirit, which, in a country that we may take to be France during the Age of Terror, becomes completely focused on itself as a free and autonomous subject, and then moves to another country, very likely Germany, where Kant is to further develop the moral implications of being such a subject ('[die] Revolution bringt die *absolute Freiheit* hervor, womit der vorher entfremdete Geist vollkommen in sich zurückgegangen ist, dies Land der Bildung verläßt und in ein anderes Land, in das Land des *moralischen Bewußtseins* übergeht' (*PhdG*, p. 362, *GW IX*, p. 266). On the link between the development of subjectivity and (northern European) Protestantism, cf. n. 39. With regard to the topographical allusions, Smith points at the ambiguous nature of most of these allusions, and argues convincingly that their ambiguity precludes a reading that fixates the movement of spirit in time and space: although 'the development of Spirit is presented as a movement between seemingly well-demarcated worlds, lands, empires, kingdoms and realms, [...] [t]he very attempt to contain *Bildung* spatially leads to a copious display of geopolitical images that transgress their own borders.' See Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 198.



positive Arbeit, – vielmehr seine negative. Sie erhält ihr Dasein durch die *eigene* Entäußerung und Entwesung des Selbstbewußtseins [...].<sup>47</sup>

In this world, as we already saw in the section on ‘Der Rechtszustand’, each individual self perceives itself as a mere atom, completely cut off from other selves. It is unable to make contact, as it is ‘das absolut diskrete’. ‘Diskret’ further reinforces the absence of continuity between consciousness and the rest of the world, but also suggests that, at this moment in its development, consciousness keeps itself to itself and remains silent; there is, as yet, no communication with what it finds itself opposed to, the ‘harte Wirklichkeit’,<sup>48</sup> the social world as entirely consisting of rules and regulations. Even though this world is perceived as purely negative, it is also revealed as having its origin in spirit, as being essentially spirit. It is thus ultimately the product not of its ruler (who merely contains – ‘befaßt’ – the world of law), but of itself (‘das *Werk* des Selbstbewußtseins’). Yet, at the same time, individual consciousness completely fails to recognize itself in this world, as it appears as a world that is simply there, a world that is completely external to itself, even though its existence is brought about through a process in which self-consciousness both externalizes itself and, in doing so, destroys its own essence (*Entwesung*), which is to know and recognize itself. Consciousness is thus responsible for its own alienation, although this is only clear from the phenomenologist’s perspective, and not yet for consciousness as the protagonist.<sup>49</sup> Consciousness is at this stage only able to relate negatively to its world, and as yet fails to develop the way it expresses itself, so that it no longer remains discrete but is able to truly communicate with its world and with itself.

After the short introduction in which he presents the coming to be of the alienation of spirit, Hegel proceeds to discuss the world produced by alienated spirit, of which the discussion of *Bildung* is a subsection. As we saw above, one of the characteristics of this world is that – other than in ancient Greece – there is now a sense of self, a focus on the subject which finds itself opposed to its world: ‘Der Geist dieser Welt ist das von einem *Selbstbewußtsein* durchdrungene geistige *Wesen*, das sich als *dieses für sich seiende* unmittelbar gegenwärtig und das *Wesen* als eine Wirklichkeit sich gegenüber weiß.’<sup>50</sup> That this world is permeated (‘durchdrungen’) by subjectivity, does not imply that this subjectivity is fully understood,<sup>51</sup> and that the subject is able to engage in a positive,

47 *PhdG*, pp. 359-360. *GW IX*, p. 264.

48 This world is said to be ‘ebenso hart’, since, as Hegel makes clear in this passage, it is produced by a spirit that is, at this stage, ‘das spröde Selbst’: its self is completely undeveloped, coarse and inaccessible.

49 Even though the perspective of the phenomenologist is implied, Hegel hardly ever makes it explicit in this section, thereby suggesting a lack of contact at all levels.

50 *PhdG*, p. 363. *GW IX*, p. 267.

51 Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 280: ‘Es handelt sich wieder um die Einsicht, dass der Vollzug des subjektiven Lebens das Absolute ist. Das bedeutet noch keineswegs, dass die Wahrheit und die möglichen Missverständnisse dieses Grundgedankens der modernen Welt auch schon begriffen wären. Immerhin weiß das Subjekt der Moderne, dass es in gewissem Sinn seinem eigenen *Wesen* insofern gegenüber steht, als dieses erst einmal *auszubilden* ist.’



meaningful way with the world it finds itself opposed to. What is now understood is that what the subject finds itself confronted with is a world of its own making, with its own project, and that it is taken up in the formation of itself as a particular world, in the development of itself as a particular person:

Aber das Dasein dieser Welt sowie die Wirklichkeit des Selbstbewußtseins beruht auf der Bewegung, daß dieses seiner Persönlichkeit sich entäußert, hierdurch seine Welt hervorbringt und sich gegen sie als eine fremde so verhält, daß es sich ihrer nunmehr zu bemächtigen hat. Aber die Entsagung des Fürsichseins ist selbst die Erzeugung der Wirklichkeit, und durch sie bemächtigt es sich also unmittelbar derselben.<sup>52</sup>

The (modern) project of becoming a fully autonomous subject is one in which the subject aims to develop itself and its world in accordance with what it takes to be its personality, in a process in which it externalizes this supposed personality ('sich entäußert') and, in doing so, produces its world. 'Entäußerung' is a word that, through interacting with its context, invites more than one reading, and is thus made to reveal many aspects of the movement of spirit that Hegel here wants to capture. Its most obvious meaning is probably 'externalization' or 'moving forth from itself', although this was a meaning that was relatively recent (one of the first people to use it in this way was Fichte, to indicate a process of 'heraustreten aus dem Innern'<sup>53</sup>). The primary meaning of 'Entäußerung', however, was 'to relinquish' (which is used by Pinkard in his recent translation of the *Phänomenologie*), or 'to renounce' (which links up with Hegel's use of 'Entsagung' in the next sentence), suggestive of a 'letting go' of its 'Persönlichkeit'. Hegel, on the basis of this reading, suggests that in the '*Welt der Bildung*' he is going to analyze, society has become organized strictly formally with clear-cut social roles, so that each individual, in order to partake in society has to give up whatever individual characteristics it may have (or thinks it may have). At the beginning of the section 'Die Bildung und ihr Reich der Wirklichkeit', Hegel thus leaves the reader guessing as to what characteristics the world of *Bildung* may have, and proceeds by showing what characteristics it does *not* have:<sup>54</sup> it is not, or no longer, a world of 'Persönlichkeiten', we have left the world of the 'Rechtszustand', with its abstract and formal conception of personhood, and we come to understand that a personality is only something you can develop, not what you start out with. As Hegel had made abundantly clear in his discussion of the 'Rechtszustand', being – in the legal and formal sense – a personality entails that there is not really that much to be expressed, apart from the claim that the individual is an autonomous person, whose rights have to be respected. Nevertheless, individual consciousness is either unaware of this or ignores this, and proceeds on the assumption that it can unfold its individual

52 *PhdG*, p. 363. *GW IX*, p. 267.

53 See the entry on 'entäußern' in *DWB*.

54 A strategy, or rhetorical device (litotes), Hegel makes frequent use of in order to illustrate that we can only come to know what presents itself through a process of determinate negation.

personality – as a determinate content it claims to be immediately aware of – and that it is thus able to bring about its own particular world (*‘seine Welt’*, my italics, AG). Yet, in bringing about its world, consciousness experiences that it relates (*‘sich verhält’*) to this world as something alien (*‘fremd’*), and that it finds itself confronted with the task to make this world – and, as a consequence, its personality, its own. Expressing itself in such a way that it will be able to engage with – and thus to relate to – its world, will also contribute to the formation of a spirit that is no longer alienated from itself, but is aware of itself as a community that is able to express itself in such a way that it is able to relate to itself (so that *‘Geist verhält sich zu sich selbst’*<sup>55</sup>). The question, therefore, that now needs to be answered is in what way consciousness is to express itself, and Hegel’s approach is, again, to first reveal in what way consciousness is *not* to express itself, by examining forms of expression in the *Welt der Bildung*.

#### 4.2.1 Expressing the self in the *Welt der Bildung*

In its attempts to shape the world and itself on the basis of what it sees as its individual personality, consciousness finds itself confronted with the ways in which its formative project works out in practice. It finds it has to come to terms with the fact that, in trying to present itself as what it takes itself to be, it not only expresses itself in unforeseen ways, but also that it is not completely at liberty to form itself as it wants to, as it has to adapt to a determinate social world, with determinate social roles. Hence, consciousness does not always recognize what it takes to be itself in the way it externalizes itself, since in doing so it renounces what it takes to be its individual personality (*‘Entsagung des Fürsichseins’*) and feels a sense of alienation from the way it realizes itself. *‘Entsagung’* means ‘renunciation’ or even ‘self-denial’,<sup>56</sup> which reinforces the interpretation of the process of *‘Entäußerung’* as one in which the assumption of an inner self as immediately ‘given’ is abandoned. It is only through the alienation that comes with the externalization of what consciousness sees as its own nature, that consciousness becomes a reality, or, in Hegel’s words, *‘das Selbstbewußtsein ist nur etwas, es hat nur Realität, insofern es sich selbst entfremdet; hierdurch setzt es sich als Allgemeines’*.<sup>57</sup> This generality, the self that presents itself to its world, however, precisely because consciousness is now involved, is different from the *‘geistlose Allgemeinheit des Rechts’* of the previous section,<sup>58</sup> for the very reason that it is a generality that results from a process of becoming, and is not merely posited: *‘Die Allgemeinheit, welche hier gilt, ist die gewordene, und darum ist sie wirklich.’*<sup>59</sup> It is through *Bildung* – as the process of becoming by being involved in a generality (which Hegel now has made emphatically clear is essentially a

55 See ch. 2, p. 58.

56 *DWB*. On *‘Entsagung’* as linguistic expression, cf. n. 70.

57 *PhdG*, p. 363. *GW IX*, p. 267.

58 *PhdG*, p. 364. *GW IX*, p. 267.

59 *Ibid.*

process of alienation) – that the individual becomes an actuality: ‘Wodurch also das Individuum hier Gelten und Wirklichkeit hat, ist die *Bildung*.’<sup>60</sup> Its true nature, Hegel claims in an oxymoronic sentence, lies in this process of formation and of alienation from what consciousness took to be its nature: ‘Seine [of the individual, AG] wahre *ursprüngliche Natur* und Substanz ist der Geist der *Entfremdung* des natürlichen Seins.’<sup>61</sup> It is only through such a process that an individual can become what it is in itself: ‘Diese Individualität bildet sich zu dem, was sie *an sich* ist, und erst dadurch ist sie *an sich* und hat wirkliches Dasein.’<sup>62</sup> Only through its externalization of itself – and relinquishing its supposed essential nature – can an individual become what it is, otherwise it is mere potentiality; only through daring to become an object can its potential be revealed as what it is in itself (*an sich*). It is simply impossible to know in advance what talents and endowments an individual may possess; what these are can only become apparent through the individual’s actualization.<sup>63</sup>

**018** Ibid. This sentence can also be read differently. Its ambiguity is intended and reflects the ambiguous nature of Hegel’s concept of *Bildung*. In this section, Hegel is also very much interested in what is implied in the individual’s partaking in a generality that has already been formed, i.e. the existing culture of this particular world (‘welche *hier* gilt’, my emphasis, AG). Translating *Bildung* in this section as culture, which is what many translators/ commentators do, only catches the latter meaning. Pinkard has ‘cultural formation’, which captures both: *Bildung* as culture that has already been formed, and *Bildung* as the act of formation or becoming, both of the individual and the general. Hegel’s use of ‘Gelten’ is an echo of the closing paragraph of the ‘Rechtszustand’ section, but the difference is that what is taken into account at this stage is not just the individual’s formal status as a person, but also the way in which it has involved itself in the social formations of its world, through which it can ultimately become a concrete, substantial self. ‘Gelten’ also links up with the dominant economic vocabulary of this section, e.g. ‘Reichtum’, ‘Werk’, ‘Eigentum’, ‘nützlich’, ‘ausspenden’, ‘Klient’, etc. See also Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 203, n. 39.

An individual’s true nature, as we saw above, thus lies in its second nature, which is formed through partaking in existing social practices and in, through effort and exercise, making these practices its own.<sup>63</sup> It is through this process that we can change from

60 Ibid. Thus Hegel already intimates that this is a world not only of alienation, but also one of *Verkehrung*, in which what was thought to be unnatural turns out to be natural (its nature *originates* in the world of culture), and what was thought to be good turns out to be bad, and *vice versa*.

61 *PhdG*, p. 364. *GW IX*, p. 267. The sentence echoes Pindar’s ‘Become what you are’, and prefigures Nietzsche’s ‘Werde, der du bist!’ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, Kritische Studienausgabe, hrsg. Giorgio Colli und Mazzino Montinari (München: dtv, 2016), p. 297.

62 As Stekeler-Weithofer explains, this process is not only an externalization, but also an internalization: ‘Deren (of the individual, AG) Ausbildung ist Ent-Äußerung bzw. “Verinnerlichung” äußerlich einübbarer bzw. lernbarer Formen des (kooperativen, sozialen) Verhaltens und Handelns unter Einschluss des Sprachhandelns. Ziel von Bildung ist daher zugleich die Verleiblichung von ‘geistigen’ Lebensformen als Möglichkeiten an sich in der Ausbildung vernünftiger Fähigkeiten oder Haltungen (als *hexis* oder *habitus*) der Einzelpersonen und die Ausbildung des geistigen *Wesens* des Individuums, seine Verwandlung in eine sozialkulturelle Person.’ *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 283.

63 On the idea of a ‘second nature’ as that which integrates the “space of reasons” with the natural world, cf. John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1996), e.g. p. 84 ff, and pp. 123-126. See also John Smith, ‘Freedom through *Bildung*: Rhetoric, “Second Nature,” and “Ethical Life” in Hegel’s Political Theory’ in: *Oxford Handbook in Rhetoric and Political Theory*, ed. Keith Topper (Oxford: Oxford UP, forthcoming, 2018), who argues that the idea of a second nature as the incorporation of ‘social formations that are at first foreign’ (p.11), can not only be traced back to classical ethics (e.g. Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*), but also to classical rhetoric. Of course, this development of a second, true, nature, also involves a mastering of the individual’s raw nature, through which it can liberate itself from being determined by its unconscious drives and desires.

being a merely formal person into a person with substance. What Hegel aims to expose and challenge is the view that takes someone's individuality to reside in her or his particular nature or character (which he calls the 'vermeintliche Individualität'):

Wenn [...] fälschlicherweise die Individualität in die *Besonderheit* der Natur und des Characters gesetzt wird, so finden sich in der realen Welt keine Individualitäten und Charaktere, sondern die Individuen haben ein gleiches Dasein füreinander; jene vermeintliche Individualität ist eben nur das *gemeinte* Dasein, welches in dieser Welt, worin nur das *sichselbstäußernde* und darum nur das Allgemeine Wirklichkeit erhält, kein Bleiben hat. – Das *Gemeinte* gilt darum für das, was es ist, für eine Art.<sup>64</sup>

The perspective in this passage shifts from the individual to the perspective of its world. In judging individual human beings to be of a certain character – to belong to and thus to represent a specific type – this perspective – predominant in the *Welt der Bildung* – fails to see the individual as what he or she truly is, i.e. as a work in progress that is to be evaluated on the basis of the ways in which the individual expresses and forms itself. What is lacking is true interaction with and interest in what someone says or does, since all that counts is the initial judgement because of which an individual will always be what he or she was originally believed to be. What is also lacking is any possibility of interaction with the perspective that judges: it is an impersonal perspective (implied in the passive construction 'Wenn [...] gesetzt wird') that is said to be wrong ('fälschlicherweise'), but which is not allowed (possibly because it is thought to be too fixed and definitive) to develop its superficial first impressions and opinions ('das Gemeinte'). 'Das Gemeinte', like 'die Meinung' in the sense-certainty section, is what belongs to me only, or to a specific perspective, and has not been developed through appropriation by a 'wir'. In the sense-certainty section, however, the 'wir' set out to dialogically engage with sense-certainty, whereas here, it seems, the perspective of 'die Welt der Bildung' has become so fixed and determinate that interaction appears to be impossible. Any form of 'wir', at this stage, is conspicuous by its absence.<sup>65</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Judging and being judged

The world of *Bildung* is thus shown to be a world in which any meaningful communication between individual consciousness and the world is impossible, since whatever is expressed is judged, categorized, and not interacted with. Hegel elaborates on *Bildung* as a world of judgement and categorization in a telling passage: 'Art ist nicht ganz dasselbe, was *Espèce*, "von allen Spitznamen der fürchterlichste; denn er bezeichnet die Mittelmäßigkeit und drückt die höchste Stufe der Verachtung aus". *Art* und *in seiner Art*

64 *PhdG*, p. 364. *GW IX*, p. 268.

65 Cf. p. 107, n. 3.

gut sein ist aber ein deutscher Ausdruck, welcher dieser Bedeutung die ehrliche Miene hinzufügt, als ob er nicht so schlimm gemeint sei, oder auch in der Tat das Bewußtsein, was Art und was Bildung und Wirklichkeit ist, noch nicht in sich schließt.<sup>66</sup> To call someone an 'Espèce', which might be customary in the highly formalized and socially stratified society of prerevolutionary France, 'das Land der Bildung',<sup>67</sup> is to see someone as being strictly defined by the role he or she plays in society, with complete disregard and disdain ('Verachtung') for what marks out someone as an individual. The relevant German expression, however, appears to suggest either that whoever says this does not really know what is said, as there is, as yet, no awareness of what 'Art', 'Bildung' and 'Wirklichkeit' really mean,<sup>68</sup> or, and this suggests supreme irony, is said by someone who does know what is meant (i.e. something similar to the French expression), but makes it seem less disdainful ('es [sei] nicht so schlimm gemeint') by adding an honest expression ('die ehrliche Miene hinzufügt'). These two positions intimated by Hegel's remarks on the German and French expressions prefigure the two forms of consciousness that will come to hold centre stage in Hegel's presentation of 'Die Welt der Bildung': 'das edelmütige Bewußtsein' that completely conforms to society, and 'das niederträchtige Bewußtsein', that aims to seek to satisfy its own desires, and merely pretends to comply with society's demands.<sup>69</sup> The most important element in relation to Hegel's preceding discussion, however, is that we, as readers, are again made aware that the world we have entered in this chapter is not just a world of judgement, but rather an oxymoronic world of *Verkehrung* in which things are not as they seem, in which falsehoods are proclaimed, in which our true nature is shown to lie in a process of alienation from what we took to be nature, and in which we do not know whether to trust someone with an honest face. Hegel leaves open the question whether we are meant to take the German perspective as hypocritical (as seemingly honest) or as honest, but undeveloped. At any rate, the suggestion of irony is there, and evokes in the reader a feeling of insecurity on how exactly to interpret what we are presented with. This, of course, is exactly what Hegel wants to achieve, as we are meant not just to accept, but rather to interact with the way things appear to us. We come to realize that there are no such things as 'essences' – of individual human beings or of concepts such as *Bildung* – that we can immediately become acquainted with, and that can simply be presented to us. Finally, the remarks in this passage show Hegel's marked interest in what a particular perspective's linguistic expressions can reveal about its outlook on the world, and this too will prove a dominant feature of the discussion that follows. The world the individual has to make its own is one

66 *PhdG*, pp. 364-365. *GW IX*, p. 268. This passage contains the first (loose) quotation from Goethe's translation of Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau*. The intertextual dialogue between Hegel's text and Diderot's text will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

67 Cf. n. 46.

68 And thus has no idea that the difference between someone's animal-like nature (his art) and his or her personal development only comes to light in the way someone's potential is actualized (the *Wirklichkeit*). Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2., p. 288.

69 As I will argue in the discussion of Hegel's use of *Le Neveu de Rameau*, this especially holds true for the shapes these forms of consciousness take on in the final stages of this section: 'das ehrliche Bewußtsein' and 'das zerrissene Bewußtsein'.

that has been formed by the ways in which a particular shape of spirit has externalized and objectified itself, and of which its linguistic expressions form an integral and important part.<sup>70</sup>

In order to further examine the aspects of *Verkehrung* and judgement in the world of *Bildung*, Hegel considers the examples of 'good' and 'bad', in relation to two concrete manifestations of this world, *Staatsmacht* and *Reichtum*. In considering the world from a normative point of view, consciousness judges the general sphere ('das Allgemeine') to be good when it is '*das sich selbst gleiche*, unmittelbare und unwandelbare Wesen aller Bewußtsein[e]';<sup>71</sup> when it is the expression of norms that are shared by each individual consciousness, and because of which the individual aims to make itself fully identical to this generality and conform completely to its norms.<sup>72</sup> What is thought bad is a general sphere in which each individual acts according to its own demands, and in doing so harms this generality (and will eventually completely destroy it): 'das Allgemeine, insofern es sich preisgibt und die Individuen das Bewußtsein ihrer Einzelheit sich an ihm nehmen läßt [...] ist das nichtige Wesen, das *Schlechte*.'<sup>73</sup> However, Hegel adds, consciousness does not only have individual thoughts about good and bad, but also finds itself opposed to good and bad as a concrete reality.<sup>74</sup> The two concrete manifestations Hegel is going to examine are the political realm of the *Staatsmacht*, in which the individual is completely subordinate to society and makes itself equal to all other individuals, and the economic realm of *Reichtum*, where each individual is focused on furthering its private interests ('Es meint wohl in diesem Momente jeder Einzelne *eigennützig* zu handeln'<sup>75</sup>), and thus sees itself as fundamentally unequal to all others. However, Hegel, by implicitly referring to Adam Smith's 'invisible hand', immediately adds that

70 Cf. Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 201: 'The state of alienation which is the precondition of *Bildung* in modern society takes on a specific form in the language of that society; the alienated individual attempts to overcome alienation by mastering the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the surrounding society.' Cf. *ibid.*, p. 203 ff. Smith also points out the significance of externalization ('Entäußerung') as 'Entsagung': 'the world created by self-consciousness is one it projects by the ways it expresses itself (*sich äußern*) and by what is says (*sagen*).'

71 *PhdG*, p. 367. *GW IX*, p. 269. Consciousness is thus not only mistaken in its assumption that, as an individual, it possesses a 'given' essential self that is immediate, unchangeable and identical to itself, but also in holding that 'das Allgemeine' possesses such an inner core.

72 The individual considers its own preferences completely irrelevant: 'die Bewegung des fürsichseienden Bewußtsein [spielt] nur beiher.' *PhdG*, p. 367. *GW IX*, p. 270. Cf. Hegel's use of 'beiherspielen' in the sense-certainty section. Again, it refers to that which at first sight appears to be merely an example, an inessential action which takes places at the edge of the centre stage (the 'Beispiel'). However, in its being concrete, it allows for movement and for development of that which is seen as an immediate and immovable ('unwandelbar') given. On the importance of the example for Hegel's speculative method, see also Rebecca Comay and Frank Ruda, *The Dash – The Other Side of Absolute Knowing* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2018), e.g. p.28.

73 *PhdG*, p. 367. *GW IX*, p. 270. 'Preisgeben' links up with the other economic terms in this section, and already suggests that the 'bad' world is a world in which individuals do not act for the common good, but for their own, i.e. their riches ('Reichtum').

74 *PhdG*, p. 367. *GW IX*, p. 270: 'Aber diese einfachen *Gedanken* des Guten und Schlechten sind ebenso unmittelbar sich entfremdet; sie sind *wirklich* und im wirklichen Bewußtsein als *gegenständliche Momente*.'

75 *PhdG*, p. 368. *GW IX*, p. 270.



in pursuing their private interests the actions of individuals in the realm of *Reichtum* are ultimately conducive to the benefit of all: '[Reichtum ist] das beständig werdende Resultat der Arbeit und des Tuns Aller, wie es sich wieder in den Genuß Aller auflöst. In dem Genuße wird die Individualität zwar für sich oder als einzelne, aber dieser Genuß selbst ist Resultat des allgemeinen Tuns, so wie er gegenseitig die allgemeine Arbeit und den Genuß aller hervorbringt.'<sup>76</sup> In both realms, *Staatsmacht* and *Reichtum*, individual consciousness sees itself reflected, and thus discovers that it has a dual nature, a 'Doppelwesen': 'In diesen beiden geistigen Mächte erkennt also das Selbstbewußtsein seine Substanz, Inhalt und Zweck; es schaut sein Doppelwesen darin an, in der einen sein *Ansichsein*, in der anderen sein *Fürsichsein*.'<sup>77</sup> As Stekeler-Weithofer puts it: 'Die Person ist *homo politicus* und *homo oeconomicus* zugleich.'<sup>78</sup> Individual consciousness has a twofold perspective on the world: as *homo politicus* it is concerned with the general interest, with that which it supposedly shares with all other individuals; as *homo oeconomicus* it is focused on its private interests, and on the question how society can contribute to what it wants for itself. Hegel does not in any way suggest that the one is in any way better than the other; what he wants to bring to light is that the only way we can truly understand ourselves is as being a 'Doppelwesen', as a being that wants to belong to and contribute to 'die Allgemeinheit', but also wants to be able to enfold and assert itself as an individual person in its own right.

What is it that we can learn from reflecting on the language used by consciousness as a 'Doppelwesen'? As Hegel shows in the course of this section, not only do consciousness' reflections on the way it relates to its being part of the world reveal its essential dual nature, but also that its essence lies in forming judgements about this relation, in using a particular language:<sup>79</sup> – 'Das Selbstbewußtsein ist aber ferner die Beziehung seines reinen Bewußtseins auf sein wirkliches, des Gedachten auf das gegenständliche Wesen, es ist wesentlich das *Urteil*.'<sup>80</sup> Yet, although self-consciousness is 'Wissen um sich selbst', it is not clear that it is consciousness – as the protagonist – that discovers that judgement is its essence. The phenomenologist perspective ('Wir sehen jetzt...') is also absent from these passages (or, at least, is not made explicit). What we have, is a depersonalized

76 *PhdG*, p. 368. *GW IX*, p. 270.

77 *PhdG*, p. 368. *GW IX*, pp. 270-271.

78 Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 306. In trying to unravel the implications of self-consciousness' 'Doppelwesen', and especially of the nature of its (normative) judgements, I rely strongly on Stekeler-Weithofer's lucid and convincing account of these passages.

79 That its rational interest lies in its allowing the two perspectives to interact (and thus to allow its essential nature as 'Doppelwesen' to fully develop and establish itself), however, is not yet clear to consciousness at this stage. Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 307: 'Zu beurteilen sind die relativen Ansprüche der beiden Gesichtspunkte, des Allgemeinen und des Einzelnen, des Gemeinsamen und des Privaten, des Gemeinwesens und des Handelns, der Politik und der Ökonomie. Die Beurteilung einer Handlung [...] oder einer gemeinsamen Kooperationsform [...] nach gut oder schlecht geschieht dabei nie unabhängig vom gewählten Gesichtspunkt, also nie 'absolut'. Es sind diese Gesichtspunkte vielmehr in ein angemessenes Gleichgewicht zu bringen, wenn man vernünftig urteilen möchte.'

80 *PhdG*, p. 369. *GW IX*, p. 271.



account that presents this observation as if it were an objective fact, and in which the phenomenologist may or may not be implied.<sup>81</sup>

Hegel also discusses the implications of his observations on self-consciousness as being essentially judgement for the very nature of our normative judgements. In making judgements about the world we cannot appeal to objective criteria that are independent of the way we find ourselves related to the world and to each other.<sup>82</sup> What we judge to be good and bad is ultimately a reflection of ourselves, it is a world that has been formed (*gebildet*) by us, it is a product of *Geist*, and so are our judgements. As Hegel puts it in a very dense statement: '[das Selbstbewußtsein] ist der wirkliche Geist der gegenständlichen Wesen [of good and bad as consciousness' objects of thought, AG] und das Urteil der Erweis seiner Macht an ihnen, die sie zu dem macht, was sie *an sich* sind. Nicht dies, wie sie unmittelbar an sich selbst das *Gleiche* oder *Ungleiche*, d.h. das abstrakte Ansich- oder Fürsichsein sind, ist ihr Kriterium und ihre Wahrheit, sondern was sie in Beziehung des Geistes auf sie sind: ihre Gleichheit oder Ungleichheit mit ihm.'<sup>83</sup> Whether or not our judgements reflect what we collectively – by explicating what is implicit in our normative practices – have come to understand as good and bad (through which we develop these norms into what they are *an sich*) is what determines whether or not we use these judgements correctly.<sup>84</sup>

What consciousness finds out in practice, is that its original judgements of good and bad do not (always) hold, since it always makes its judgements as a 'Doppelwesen', as a being that has a twofold perspective on the world, and does not always consider its world from the standpoint of what is best for all, but also tends to adopt the point of view of an individual in its own right:

Hiernach findet nun das *an* und *für sich seiende* Bewußtsein in der *Staatsmacht* wohl sein *einfaches Wesen* und *Bestehen* überhaupt, allein nicht seine *Individualität* als solche, wohl sein *Ansich*-, nicht sein *Fürsichsein*, es findet darin vielmehr das

81 On the absence of the phenomenologist from the 'Welt der Bildung' section, cf. p. 123.

82 Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 308: 'Niemand hat einen unmittelbaren Zugriff auf eine allgemeine Sphäre des an sich Richtigen und Guten. Jeder derartige Zugriff geschieht je schon aus je meiner Perspektive in je meiner Urteil.'

83 *PhdG*, pp. 369-370. *GW IX*, p. 271.

84 As Stekeler-Weithofer puts it: 'Es geht nicht um eine abstrakte Wahrheit oder abstrakte Kriterien, Normen oder Regeln *an sich*, sondern darum, dass jede konkrete Kriterium in seinem *Fürsichsein* oder *realen Gebrauch* immer nur "in der Beziehung des Geistes" auf es zu verstehen ist. Wir bewerten die Güte gemeinsamen Lebens. Alle Normativität ist bewertete Kooperativität. Dabei bestimmen *unsere* Identifizierungen, Urteile, Anerkennungen und Zufriedenheiten, was es je konkret heißt, die Kriterien oder Normen in befriedigendem Ausmaß richtig anzuwenden oder zu befolgen.' See also Dean Moyer, 'Self-completing alienation' in Dean Moyer and Michael Quante (eds), *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 160-161. Moyer argues that Hegel aims to show that alienated individuals arise from within a culture 'whose moral grammar has become problematic': it is a culture in which good and bad are still taken to be absolutely opposed, and to refer to 'natural' and objective criteria, whereas the ways in which this culture manifests itself reveal that 'good' and 'bad' can only be understood in relation to a particular perspective.

Tun als einzelnes Tun verleugnet und zum Gehorsam unterjocht. Das Individuum reflektiert sich also vor dieser Macht in sich selbst; sie ist ihm das unterdrückende Wesen und das *Schlechte*; denn statt das Gleiche zu sein, ist sie das der Individualität schlechthin Ungleiche. – Hingegen der *Reichtum* ist das Gute; er geht auf allgemeiner Genuß, gibt sich preis und verschafft allen das Bewußtseins ihrer Selbsts. Es ist *an sich* allgemeines Wohltun; wenn er irgendeine Wohltat versagt und nicht jedem Bedürfnisse gefällig ist, so ist dies eine Zufälligkeit, welche seinem allgemeinen notwendigen Wesen, sich allen Einzelnen mitzuteilen und tausendhändiger Geber zu sein, keinen Eintrag tut.<sup>85</sup>

In reflecting on its purely private interests, consciousness finds that the *Staatsmacht* represses these interests; that it is only seen as a good individual when it renounces what it wants for itself. On the other hand, it finds that *Reichtum* allows the individual to have what it wants, through which it simultaneously is enabled to develop its self-consciousness, in the sense of an increased awareness of its individual wants and needs. Besides, *Reichtum* can also be seen as being directed at the enjoyment of all ('er geht auf allgemeiner Genuß').<sup>86</sup> The final sentence of this passage is even more appreciative of *Reichtum*, and even to such an extent, with such high praise, that it suggests an ironical stance with regard to the perspective that wants to defend its appraisal of *Reichtum* by emphasizing that it is not only beneficial for the individual, but is also 'allgemeines Wohltun'. This perspective apparently wants to reassure itself, or reassure others, that *Reichtum* is indeed the good. In doing so it personifies wealth, and even attributes God-like qualities to *Reichtum*: it is said to lie in its 'notwendige[s] Wesen' to convey itself to each ('sich allen einzelnen mitzuteilen').

'Mitteilen' not only suggests that *Reichtum* is a beneficial entity which ensures that we can all partake of its beneficence, but also implies that the way 'das Allgemeine' communicates (itself) is through language,<sup>87</sup> and that, conversely, language allows us to partake of general spirit. If truly partaking in 'das Allgemeine' is to occur through language, doing so by means of exclusive and divisive judgements is not the way to achieve this. The question, however, is whether this is clear to consciousness in its role as *homo oeconomicus*,<sup>88</sup> who thinks of both its wants and its enjoyments in purely economic terms, and does not feel the need for any interaction other than that which contributes to the

85 *PhdG*, p. 370. *GW IX*, p. 272.

86 As we saw above (p. 126), Hegel already intimated that *Reichtum* could ultimately prove beneficial to all, but here the perspective is different. In the earlier passage, *Reichtum* was seen (from the perspective, as it were, of 'the invisible hand') as the state that was (unwittingly) produced by the individual efforts of all, whereas in this passage, the perspective lies with the *homo oeconomicus* who wants to defend his or her particular position by claiming that 'Reichtum ist das Gute', not contingently, as in the first case, but necessarily.

87 Which is also suggested by the word 'versagt' ('denied') in the remark, in the same sentence, that it is only purely by chance that a particular want is denied by *Reichtum*.

88 Cf. *PhdG*, pp. 370-371: 'Das Selbstbewußtsein hat sich aber nur erst unvollständig auf seine Gegenstand bezogen, nämlich nur an dem Maßstabe des Fürsichseins.' *GW IX*, p. 272.

increase of (its private) wealth. What is clear is that from its perspective good and bad have changed places: 'Diese beiden Urteile geben den Gedanken von Gut und Schlecht einen Inhalt, welcher das Gegenteil von dem ist, den sie für uns hatten.'<sup>89</sup> Although, at first glance, this 'für uns' might seem to indicate that the perspective of the phenomenologist is now going to be involved, this is not the case: 'uns' here refers to the perspective of the *homo politicus*, which is prepared to renounce its individuality, and only thinks of 'us'.<sup>90</sup> There is a 'wir', and there is an 'Ich', but, in the world of *Bildung*, *Geist* has become alienated from its being an 'Ich, das Wir, und Wir, das Ich ist.' The task that still awaits is for these two perspectives to interact, through which *Geist* can be again 'bei sich selbst', and through which self-consciousness can fully be itself as integrated *Doppelwesen*.<sup>91</sup> Yet, as we have seen, expressing itself through exclusive judgements is not the way in which this interaction can take place; what is needed is a form of communication which is a 'mitteilen', in which all those who partake in spirit can find themselves reflected. 'Geist verhält sich zu sich selbst': if spirit is to truly relate to itself it is to talk to itself and listen to itself.

At this stage of its development, however, consciousness still relates to its world by means of divisive judgements, and thus remains divided within itself: 'Das Bewußtsein kommt dadurch, daß es sich auf verschiedene Weise verhält, selbst unter die Bestimmung der Verschiedenheit, gut oder schlecht zu sein'.<sup>92</sup> The 'good' consciousness ('das edelmütige Bewußtsein') is the one that makes itself equal to the state's wishes and acts completely in accordance with the state's demands, whereas 'bad' consciousness (das 'niederträchtige Bewußtsein'), in the pursuit of its own evanescent pleasures ('der vergängliche Genuß'), strives to make itself unequal to the state as that which has lasting power ('das bleibende Wesen'), and which uses its power to suppress whatever the individual may want for itself.<sup>93</sup> Yet, Hegel immediately adds, these judgements are, as yet, none other than classifications that are externally applied,<sup>94</sup> and are still meaningless

89 *PhdG*, p. 370.

90 The relation between this perspective and its object is also described in linguistic terms: 'Nach dieser Seite (consciousness as 'ansichseiendes Wesen', i.e. *homo politicus*, AG) spricht ihm die Staatsmacht sein Wesen aus.' *PhdG*, p. 371. *GW IX*, p. 272.

91 Again (see p. 126), Hegel does not suggest any predilection for a particular perspective but shows that the individual is just as important as the general, and that we are to do justice to these two aspects of ourselves if we want to flourish. The same goes for the two types of society that are discussed, as Stekeler-Weithofer also stresses: 'Hegel erkennt immerhin schon, dass es einer Balance zwischen Staatsmacht und liberaler Ökonomie bedarf. Weder der Liberalismus noch der Kommunismus sind als zwei Extreme irgend vernünftig. Diese Argumente wurden damals, noch werden sie heute begriffen.' *Hegels PhdG*, p. 315. As becomes clear from this quotation, Stekeler also interprets the historical references in the *Phänomenologie* as examples, and underlines that Hegel's analysis pertains to several periods, including our own. For a different account (although Stekeler and Pinkard share the basic view that – as Pinkard's title indicates – reason, in Hegel's philosophy, is fundamentally social), that brings forward many significant and illuminating details of the specific historical periods Hegel discusses, see Pinkard, *The Sociality of Reason*. On the question in what way Hegel's selection of historical examples is to be interpreted, see also n. 46 above.

92 *PhdG*, p. 371. *GW IX*, p. 273.

93 *PhdG*, p. 372. *GW IX*, p. 273.

94 *PhdG*, pp. 372–373, *GW IX*, p. 273: 'Die Reflexion, die im Urteil vorgestellt ist, ist teils erst für uns ein Setzen der einen sowie der anderen Bestimmung und daher ein gleiches Aufheben beider, noch nicht die Reflexion

for the individual that is said to be either 'noble' or 'base': 'Teils *sind* sie erst unmittelbar *Wesen*, weder dies *geworden* noch an ihnen *Selbstbewußtsein*; dasjenige, für welches sie sind, ist noch nicht ihre Belebung; sie sind Prädikate, die noch nicht selbst Subjekt sind.'<sup>95</sup> The individual consciousness has not yet been allowed to develop its own concrete subjectivity, it has not yet come to recognize itself as a particular type of consciousness,<sup>96</sup> but merely feels it has to act in accordance with certain pre-ordained roles. Stekeler-Weithofer writes of this passage: 'Es ist noch unklar, was die Personen konkret tun müssen, damit sie in ihrem Vollzug so sind, wie die Prädikate sagen. Nur das meint die Formel, dass eine solche Charaktermaske "noch nicht selbst Subjekt" ist.'<sup>97</sup> Although I do agree with Stekeler's remark, I think that Hegel's 'Formel' also implies that language in the world of *Bildung* is still a static entity to which consciousness finds itself opposed, as it does not recognize itself as a subject in it. Not only consciousness' experience of itself has failed to come alive, but it also fails to recognize language as a meaningful generality in which it can actively partake.

One conclusion that can be drawn from these reflections on 'die Welt der Bildung' as a world of judgement, is that this is a completely divided world, that is seen *either* from one perspective, *or* from another: 'Um dieser Trennung willen fällt auch das Ganze des geistigen Urteilens noch an zwei Bewußtsein[e] auseinander, deren jedes unter einer einseitigen Bestimmung liegt.'<sup>98</sup> What is lacking is a unification of these two perspectives:

Wie sie nun zuerst die *Gleichgültigkeit* der beiden Seiten der Entfremdung – der einen, des *Ansich* des reinen Bewußtseins, nämlich der bestimmten *Gedanken* von Gut und Schlecht; der andern, ihres *Daseins* als Staatsmacht und Reichtum – zur Beziehung beider, zum Urteil erhob, so hat sich diese äußere Beziehung zur inneren Einheit oder als Beziehung des Denkens zur Wirklichkeit zu erheben und der Geist

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derselben für das Bewußtsein selbst.' Again, 'für uns' appears to refer to the perspective of the general interest (cf. the previous page), rather than the perspective of the phenomenologist. From what follows, it becomes clear that consciousness has to find out how to relate to these judgements, indicating that they are part of its world, and not applied from the phenomenologist's point of view, who is not part of this particular formation.

95 *PhdG*, p. 373. *GW IX*, pp. 273-274. Cf. Hegel's remarks on the speculative sentence, *PhdG*, pp. 58-62. *GW IX*, pp. 42-45.

96 To be a certain 'type' appears to be at odds with the development of an individual personality. Cf. the discussion on p. 123 ff. In what follows, Hegel again emphasizes that in 'die Welt der Bildung', with its highly formalized culture, it is virtually impossible to become who you are. On the other hand, without the alienation that results from our taking up roles that we do not feel match our alleged individual character, we would not be able to become who we are either.

97 Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, pp. 321-322.

98 *PhdG*, p. 373. *GW IX*, p. 274. The association – with its implied criticism of Kant's synthetic judgement *a priori* – of 'Urteil' with 'Trennung', as a tearing apart of that which is one (i.e. an original being, 'Seyn', in which subject and object are united) goes back to Hölderlin's 'Urtheil und Seyn'. See J.F.Chr. Hölderlin, *Theoretische Schriften* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1998), pp. 7-8. Cf. also Hegel's remarks in *Glauben und Wissen*, p. 307, *GW IV*, p. 328: '[s]o hat Kant in Wahrheit seine Frage [...] gelöst; sie [synthetic judgements *a priori*, AG] sind möglich durch die ursprüngliche absolute Identität von Ungleichartigem [...]. Das Vernünftige, oder wie Kant sich ausdrückt, das Apriorische dieses Urteils, die absolute Identität, als Mittelbegriff, stellt sich aber im Urteil nicht, aber im Schluß dar; im Urteil ist sie nur die Copula: ist, ein Bewußtloses.'

der beiden Gestalten des Urteils hervorzutreten. Dies geschieht, indem das *Urteil* zum *Schlusse* wird, zur vermittelnde Bewegung, worin die Notwendigkeit und Mitte der beiden Seiten des Urteils hervortritt.<sup>99</sup>

The alienation in which consciousness finds itself involved in this world of judgement is no longer one of sheer indifference ('Gleichgültigkeit'), since, as we saw earlier, judgement is essentially a relation. However, this relation is perceived as one in which neither side feels involved ('diese äußere Beziehung'): there is, as yet, no unity that can be acknowledged by both sides as the result of their mutual interaction. If this interaction were to take place, it would ultimately lead to the judgement becoming a conclusion ('Schluss'),<sup>100</sup> or rather, a 'mediating movement' ('vermittelnde Bewegung') that produces from within itself a true common ground, a *Mitte* as a general sphere that has become meaningful as the two sides can recognize themselves in it, since it has emerged from their interaction, and, moreover, still is this interaction, in the sense that the two sides still actively participate.<sup>101</sup> However, this *Mitte* as a 'we' in which we are actively involved, and which does justice to both our individuality and our general interest is not yet accessible, since at this stage consciousness is still caught up in its either/ or outlook, and not only feels an irreconcilable divide within itself (between the two sides of its *Doppelwesen*), but also sees itself as fundamentally opposed to its world. What is lacking is any form of dialogue through which the opposing sides, that are caught up in their judgements, can produce a 'Schluss' as a concluding – and inclusive – movement of mediation.

### 4.3 The *Doppelwesen* and its language

Hegel continues his discussion of 'die Welt der Bildung' – a world in which society has become so highly developed and organized that all aspects of life, and all individual actions, are determined by the implicit and explicit rules of the dominant culture, and judged accordingly – by focusing on the language used by the two forms in which consciousness manifests itself. In doing so, he aims to reveal that 'das niederträchtige Bewußtsein' and 'das edelmütige Bewußtsein' are not only incapable of breaking out of

99 *PhdG*, p. 373. *GW IX*, p. 274.

100 'Schluss', of course, is the result of the process of 'beschließen', that not only means 'to draw a conclusion, but can also mean 'to include within a circumference' (see the relevant entry in the *DWB*), with the suggestion that both sides are now fully included, a suggestion that is made explicit in the final clauses. Cf. Hegel's remark towards the end of the *Phänomenologie*: 'In dem Wissen hat also der Geist die Bewegung seines Gestaltens beschlossen.' *PhdG*, p. 588, *GW IX*, p. 431. See also Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd.2, p. 322: 'Der Schluss, von dem die Rede ist, betrifft wohl (auch) den "Zusammenschluß" von Staatsinteresse und Reichtum, Freiheit und Wohlstand. Die "Mitte" oder "Vermittlung" zwischen der subjektiven Willkür im Reden und der sachlichen Wahrheit oder Kohärenz hängt offenbar allgemein von den real in der Tat gezogenen Schlüssen ab.'

101 Again, we are reminded of the (dialogical) interaction in sense-certainty, with the 'emergent we' as its resultant force.

their particular way of judging the world, but also remain locked within their particular language. The language they use comes with the position they take up in society and prevents them from embarking on any meaningful communication with those who do not belong to their particular social sphere. Language is, as yet, a long way removed from being a medium in which each perspective finds itself reflected and which can thus be the true mediating ground of those perspectives.<sup>102</sup>

The ‘noble’ consciousness is, as we already saw, characterized by its obedience to the state, by always taking account of the general interest rather than its own, and we would expect its language to reflect this. Yet, Hegel shows that this is not the full story, as there is not yet a concrete relation between individual and state, and neither is there a concrete language:

Es ist der *stolze* Vasall, der für die Staatsmacht tätig ist, insofern sie nicht eigener Willen, sondern *wesentlicher* ist, und der sich nur in dieser *Ehre* gilt, nur in dem *wesentlichen* Vorstellen der allgemeinen Meinung, nicht in dem *dankbaren* der Individualität, denn dieser hat er nicht zu ihrem *Fürsichsein* verholfen. Seine *Sprache*, wenn es sich zum eigenen Willen der Staatsmacht verhielte, der noch nicht geworden ist, wäre der Rat, den es zum allgemeinen Besten erteilt.<sup>103</sup>

Serving the state is the activity for which the individual is acknowledged and for which it receives honour.<sup>104</sup> This honour, however, is not concrete in the sense that it is bestowed by an individual who is grateful for a service rendered to her- or himself (through which, in turn, both would feel acknowledged *as* individuals) but is abstract and even hypothetical (the individual does what it *assumes* to be in the general interest ‘[das] Vorstellen der allgemeinen Meinung’<sup>105</sup>). The final sentence emphasizes the still abstract nature of the relationship between the individual and the general: there is, as yet, no concrete representative of the state (as the embodiment of ‘das allgemeine Beste’) to whom the individual can relate; and if there were such a representative, it would communicate

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102 Mediation, however, does not imply that ultimately a consensus or standstill between different perspectives would be reached. Cf. the discussion in section 3.4.1. Mediation also involves giving up your particular position and allowing for continuous dialogical development and transformation, through which the medium itself is also transformed. See also Comay and Ruda, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13: ‘Whenever there is a conflict between competing particular claims to the universal, mediation does not consist in finding a mutually agreeable arrangement whereby each side learns to understand and accommodate each other’s position.’

103 *PhdG*, p. 374. *GW IX*, p. 275.

104 That this (although still abstract) honour engenders a feeling of pride in the individual, suggests that the individual, after all, not only acts disinterestedly, but that it ultimately wants to be acknowledged for its own sake, for its deeds as reflecting its individual qualities. In the discussion that follows, Hegel often discusses the way the individual relates to its world in terms of virtues and vices (‘obedience’, ‘gratitude’, ‘hypocrisy’, etc.).

105 ‘Vorstellen’ can also be read in its literal sense, in that noble consciousness puts the general interest before its own.



with it through the language of advice ('Rat').<sup>106</sup> Intriguingly, Hegel immediately points out that, as mere power, the state does not have any actual power, and is, as yet, purely dependent on what its servants deem to be best.<sup>107</sup> 'Die Staatsmacht ist daher noch willenlos gegen den Rat und nicht entscheidend zwischen den verschiedenen Meinungen über das allgemeine Beste. Sie ist noch nicht *Regierung* und somit noch nicht in Wahrheit wirkliche Staatsmacht.'<sup>108</sup> At this stage, and we are reminded of the cacophony of *Meinungen* in sense-certainty,<sup>109</sup> there are only – strictly separated ('verschieden') – opinions on what is pretended to be in the interest of all. These opinions are mere pretense for two reasons: first, there is, as yet, no 'general will' as the result of an interchange of individual wills, and secondly, these opinions in reality merely reflect what is in the interest of a particular position or class within society: 'Das *Fürsichsein*, der *Wille*, der als *Wille* noch nicht aufgeopfert ist, ist der innere abgeschiedene Geist der Stände, der seinem Sprechen vom *allgemeinen* Besten gegenüber sich sein *besonderes* Besten vorbehält und dies Geschwätz vom allgemeinen Besten zu einem Surrogate für das Handeln zu machen geneigt ist.'<sup>110</sup> The irony is obvious, there is, at this stage, nothing but empty talk ('Geschwätz') – and no action ('Handeln') through which a mediation between perspectives could be brought about – on what is supposed to be 'das allgemeine Beste'. We thus come to see that noble consciousness' advice is 'zweideutig und verdächtig',<sup>111</sup> through which it is revealed to be a base consciousness as well.<sup>112</sup>

Moreover, noble consciousness, in seeing its advice accepted and subsequently presented by the state, becomes aware of a feeling of alienation: 'Dadurch, daß der

106 In what follows, Hegel does not provide any concrete examples of what the language of advice would look like, but focuses on the interaction between the state and its servants. As the subjunctive mood ('wäre') also indicates, the interaction between individual and general interest is still abstract.

107 Words such as 'Vasall' and 'Stände' suggest that the particular formation that Hegel discusses here is the feudal society of the Middle Ages. Yet again, his discussion appears to be equally valid for modern bureaucratic societies. Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 314 ff.

108 *PhdG*, pp. 374–375. *GW IX*, p. 275.

109 See ch. 3, p. 106.

110 *PhdG*, p. 375. *GW IX*, p. 275.

111 *Ibid.*

112 *PhdG*, p. 375, *GW IX*, p. 275: 'Es [noble consciousness in its role as advisor, AG], verhält sich daher noch ungleich gegen dieselbe [the state, AG] und fällt unter die Bestimmung des niederträchtigen Bewußtseins, immer auf dem Sprunge zur Empörung zu stehen.' As Stekeler-Weithofer (*Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 328 ff.) clearly explains, the problem is not so much consciousness' being 'zweideutig' about what it wills, as a complete surrender of its own will to the state's wishes would prove a real danger (in that it unquestioningly does what it is told), but rather its pretense about its motives. There is nothing wrong with being aware of your particular interests and trying to realize them; the realization of these interests would only pose a problem in the case of an unbridgeable conflict with the interests of others. What is to be brought about is a state in which particular interests and the general interest are in balance. Cf. also Pahl (op. cit., p. 11), who argues that 'Zweideutigkeit' is characteristic of all shapes of consciousness: 'Spirit is multiply divided, and each of its personae acts in the double consciousness of being both the hero and the villain of this story.' As we already saw, Hegel aims to reveal that knowing, and the language in which it is expressed, is essentially 'zweideutig': we cannot take what we are presented with at face value, but have to interact with it – and with other representations – in order to produce the truth as an interactive totality. This productive aspect of duplicity is not yet clear to consciousness at this stage, who takes duplicity to imply that there is a true meaning that lies hidden behind what presents itself, and that the 'Vorstellung' is thus something distinct from the truth.



abgeschiedene innere Geist, das Selbst als solches, hervortritt und sich entfremdet, wird zugleich die Staatsmacht zu eigenem Selbst erhoben; so wie ohne diese Entfremdung die Handlungen der Ehre, des edlen Bewußtsein und die Ratschläge seiner Einsicht das Zweideutige bleiben würden, das noch jenen abgeschiedenen Hinterhalt der besonderen Absicht und des Eigenwillen hätte.<sup>113</sup> What a particular consciousness, as representative of a particular class, wanted to achieve by means of its counsel (i.e. the realization of what it wanted for itself) it now finds presented as the expression of the state's wishes,<sup>114</sup> which is therefore seen as being a self in its own right.

We thus see a continual reversal of roles, through which Hegel further reinforces the aspect of 'Zweideutigkeit':<sup>115</sup> the individual that is initially seen as subjecting its will to the state, has the state subject itself to its power through the acceptance of its advice, and what it took to be its own self, has, through its externalization, become the self of the state. Significantly, the process of externalization, that was previously described as an 'Entäußerung', is here one through which what is expressed (as the counselor steps forward) becomes completely separated ('abgeschieden') from what consciousness initially felt to belong completely to itself (its 'innere Geist' as a 'given' of which it is immediately aware). The suggestion is that, as yet, there is no means available through which this separation can be resolved. The 'abgeschiedene innere Geist' is also a chiasmic reversal of the image Hegel used in the previous paragraph, 'der innere abgeschiedene Geist der Stände', through which he did not so much aim to capture the process of externalization, but rather hinted at the spirit of this particular society, which is one of rigid social stratification, with each group being isolated ('abgeschieden') from others.

### 4.3.1 Language as power

The alienation felt by consciousness, Hegel stresses, takes place solely in language: 'Diese Entfremdung geschieht allein in der *Sprache*, welche hier in ihrer eigentümlichen Bedeutung auftritt.'<sup>116</sup> Language has now revealed itself to consciousness as the means through which it can make its self – its individual wants and needs – heard and acknowledged by others, yet simultaneously is the medium through which consciousness

113 *PhdG*, p. 375. *GW IX*, pp. 275-276.

114 Seeing its particular will becoming the will of the state not only produces a sense of alienation, but has the added effect that noble consciousness ceases to be 'das Zweideutige', since it can no longer be seen as having a purely private agenda, since this agenda now belongs to all.

115 The aspect of roleplay is also suggested by the image of the counselor stepping forward ('der abgeschiedene innere Geist [tritt] hervor'). See also 'auftritt' in the next quotation.

116 *PhdG*, p. 376. *GW IX*, p. 276. Pinkard translates 'eigentümlich' as 'distinctive', which fails to capture the suggestion that language has now become the property of a particular consciousness (and does not yet belong to all): it is *its* will that is effected by means of language. Smith has 'proper' (*The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 205) which does manage to catch the 'Zweideutigkeit' inherent in the word. We will also see that language – in being duplicitous – manifests itself as the power to both subvert and to reveal the truth, and in that sense also manifests itself in its 'eigentümlichen Bedeutung'.

becomes estranged from what it takes to be itself.<sup>117</sup> The focus is now on the very act of speaking, through which a particular will – in the shape of advice – is realized:

In der Welt der Sittlichkeit *Gesetz* und *Befehl*, in der Welt der Wirklichkeit erst *Rat*, hat sie das *Wesen* zum Inhalte und ist dessen Form; hier aber erhält sie die Form, welche sie ist, selbst zum Inhalte und gilt als *Sprache*; es ist die Kraft des Sprechens als eines solchen, welche das ausführt, was auszuführen ist. Denn sie ist das *Dasein* des reinen Selbsts, als Selbsts; in ihr tritt die *für sich seiende Einzelheit* des Selbstbewußtseins als solche in die Existenz, so daß sie *für andere* ist.<sup>118</sup>

Language is now considered as a performative force, as the means through which a concrete reality can be brought about. A law or an advice expresses what is to be done and effects this by means of its own power ('die Kraft des Sprechens').<sup>119</sup> Stekeler-Weithofer points out the inherent structure of such 'speech acts':

Wenn Hegel sagt, 'es ist die Kraft des Sprechens als ein solches, welche das ausführt, was auszuführen ist', so kommentiert er damit gerade die (Versuche der richtigen) Aktualisierungen von Sprechhandlungen, welche auf eine gewisse Anforderung reagieren, etwa das Antworten auf das Fragen oder die Erläuterung auf das Nachfragen. Und er nennt den expressiv-performativen Charakter der Aktualisierungen von Sprechhandlungen. Man *tut* etwas, wenn man ein Versprechen gibt oder ein Gesetz erläßt.<sup>120</sup>

The actualization ('Ausführung') is always a reaction to a question or a request, and thus points at the dialogical potential of the interaction, although at this stage neither the receiver nor the giver of the advice appears to be aware of this. On the contrary, consciousness is purely focused on the becoming a reality of what it sees as its 'inner', of what it takes to be its strictly individual I: '*Ich* als dieses *reine* Ich ist sonst nicht da; in jeder andere Äußerung ist es in eine Wirklichkeit versenkt und in einer Gestalt, aus welcher es sich zurückziehen kann'.<sup>121</sup> Yet, in a passage that is reminiscent of the reflections on consciousness trying to express a particular sense-certainty,<sup>122</sup> it appears that in

117 Cf. Cook, op. cit., p. 84 ff: 'In the mere act of speaking out, language performs its function of enabling the individual ego to relate itself to its social world, by gaining the recognition and attention of others and thus transcending its own private existence. The very act of speaking mediates between a particular ego and the world with which it seeks to identify.'

118 *PhdG*, p. 376. *GW IX*, p. 276.

119 The difference between the language of law and command, and the language of advice being that the former is used to subject the individual to a generality, whereas the latter aims at bringing about that which an individual deems best.

120 Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 331.

121 *PhdG*, p. 376. *GW IX*, p. 276. What is distinctive of the speech acts under consideration, is that they express the intention of the speaker, which can thus be checked.

122 Cf. *PhdG*, pp. 86-87, *GW IX*, p. 66.

expressing itself, the 'I' simultaneously ceases to be a purely individual I, and instead becomes a general 'I':

*Ich ist dieses Ich – aber ebenso allgemeines; sein Erscheinen ist ebenso unmittelbar die Entäußerung und das Verschwinden dieses Ichs und dadurch sein Bleiben in seiner Allgemeinheit. Ich, das sich ausspricht, ist vernommen; es ist eine Ansteckung, worin es unmittelbar in die Einheit mit denen, für welche es da ist, übergegangen und allgemeines Selbstbewußtsein ist. – Daß es vernommen wird, darin ist sein Dasein selbst unmittelbar verhallt; dies sein Anderssein ist in sich zurückgenommen; und eben dies ist sein Dasein, als selbstbewußtes Jetzt, wie es da ist, nicht da zu sein und durch dies Verschwinden da zu sein. Dies Verschwinden ist also selbst unmittelbar sein Bleiben; es ist sein eigenes Wissen von sich und sein Wissen von sich als einem, das in anderes Selbst übergegangen, das vernommen worden und allgemeines ist.*<sup>123 019</sup>

**019** In this passage, Hegel also uses 'Ansteckung' (infection) as a metaphor for the process that is taking place, which suggests that this process is one in which that which is 'vernomen' stealthily penetrates the general sphere. What is 'vernommen' is not questioned and not properly interacted with, as the 'Ich' and the 'Wir' are still indifferent to each other. However, 'Ansteckung' can also mean 'to light' or 'to kindle' and thus also links up with the 'Erscheinen' at the beginning of the passage. In either case, 'Ansteckung' suggests a revealing, a bringing to light of consciousness' loss of what it takes to be its individual nature and its becoming part of a generality.

With a sentence in which 'I' appears, individual consciousness aims to express its opinion or advice as belonging to '*dieses Ich*'. It does so with the intention of being heard by those addressed,<sup>124</sup> and in being heard ('vernommen') and understood,<sup>125</sup> the 'I' becomes a general in the sense that the individual's advice is taken over and now seen as the expression of the 'general will'.<sup>126</sup> This general will is thus revealed to be not so general after all,

<sup>123</sup> *PhdG*, p. 376. *GW IX*, p. 276.

<sup>124</sup> Again, there is the implication of a dialogical potential of the interaction.

<sup>125</sup> On the 'vernehmen' and 'verhalten', cf. ch. 2, n. 53. Cf. also Hegel's remarks in 'Der Kampf der Aufklärung mit den Aberglauben' on the propagation ('Mitteilung') of the Enlightenment's 'pure insight': 'Die Mitteilung der reinen Einsicht ist deswegen einer ruhigen Ausdehnung oder dem *Verbreiten* wie eines Duftes in der widerstandslosen Atmosphäre zu vergleichen. Sie ist eine durchdringende Ansteckung, welche sich nicht vorher gegen das gleichgültige Element, in das sie sich insinuiert, als Entgegengesetztes bemerkbar macht und daher nicht abgewehrt werden kann. Erst wenn die Ansteckung sich verbreitet hat, ist sie *für das Bewußtsein*, das sich ihr unbesorgt überließ.' *PhdG*, pp. 402-403. On infection as a metaphor, cf. Pahl, p. 176, and Comay, *Mourning Sickness*, p. 18, p. 53, p. 63, and esp. p. 105. Comay shows that the metaphor was used positively by Enlightenment thinkers (such as Voltaire) to suggest the spread of their ideas, yet was used by critics of the French Revolution to suggest the dangerous aspect of the promulgation of revolutionary thought. See also Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, pp. 416-419.

<sup>126</sup> In his analysis of this passage, Stekeler-Weithofer stresses a different aspect (*Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 334): 'Als Sprechender bin ich, wenn ich einen Satz äußere, in dem das Wort "ich" vorkommt, "dieses Ich", also dieser Sprecher, im Kontrast zu dir oder ihm, zu euch oder ihnen. Aber als Sprecher rufe ich der allgemeine Form der Sprecherrolle auf und aktualisiere eine Selbstaussage, deren Inhalt allgemeinverständlich ist und die in gewissem Sinn "jeder" in meiner Rolle [...] aktualisieren oder reproduzieren könnte. Im Wechsel von Sprecher von Hörer "verschwindet" das Ich als Ich, verwechselt sozusagen die Seiten; was bleibt, bin ich als Person auf der einen Seite, du und ihr auf der anderen, die ihr meine Äußerungen hört und allgemein versteht. Was ihr dabei vernehmt und versteht, ist etwas Allgemeines, selbst wenn ich diese in meiner Selbstaussage auf besondere Weise auf mich "anwende". Das vernommene Ich schafft mit dir und euch zusammen das Wir, die Vernunft.' Although I do agree with Stekeler's interpretation, I doubt whether it is the main conclusion Hegel wants us to draw at this stage. In Hegel's discussion of 'das Gewissen', as we

as it is tied to a particular perspective, and is not the result of a 'vermittelnde Bewegung': it is '*sein eigenes Wissen*' and '*sein Bleiben in seiner Allgemeinheit* (my italics, AG).'<sup>127</sup> In the world of *Bildung*, *Geist* thus reveals itself as a disrupted unity, since it has come apart in two sides that mutually exclude one another: 'Ihre Einheit [of the general and the individual perspective, AG] ist zersetzt in spröde Seiten, deren jede für die andere wirklicher, von ihr ausgeschlossener Gegenstand ist.'<sup>128</sup>

The language of these two opposing forces, or two 'extremes' as Hegel calls them,<sup>129</sup> is still only seen as purely functional, as a means through which these forces aim to bring about a reality that reflects their perspective.<sup>130</sup> It is not yet a language that is truly a *Mitte*: a medium in which *Geist* finds itself reflected as a unity in which 'die vermittelnde Bewegung' between different perspectives has taken (and is taking) place. *Geist* is therefore not (yet) able to express itself as this unity: 'diese Sprache ist daher noch nicht der Geist, wie er sich vollkommen weiß und ausspricht.'<sup>131</sup>

In order to examine this functional and instrumental language, Hegel first turns to the language used by noble consciousness: 'Das edelmütige Bewußtsein, weil es das Extrem des Selbsts ist, erscheint als dasjenige, von dem die *Sprache* ausgeht, durch welche sich die Seiten des Verhältnisses zu beseelten Ganzen gestalten.'<sup>132</sup> Language appears to issue forth ('ausgehen') from noble consciousness, and is thus seen as the expression of a recognizable self, a particular individual with a particular advice, and a particular interest.<sup>133</sup> As the expression of an individual self, language appears as the means through which both perspectives can present themselves as being 'ensouled' ('beseelt'),<sup>134</sup> as having an actual self, but their language also – as we will come to see – shapes a world

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will see in the next chapter, there is a similar passage (*PhdG*, p. 479, *GW IX*, p. 351) which seems to be more in line with what Stekeler argues here. I think that at this stage Hegel wants us to see that there is as yet no 'wir' that is understood in the way it is presented by Stekeler. Das 'Allgemeine' in this passage is still an 'I', still an entity that we (in Stekeler's sense) feel completely isolated from, as it is the expression of 'das abgeschiedene Innere'.

127 'sein Bleiben' is simultaneously 'dies Verschwinden', which again underlines that this is a world of 'Verkehrung'; it is a world in which self-consciousness manifests itself as a 'Jetzt' that is both present and absent ('wie es da ist, [ist es] nicht da').

128 *PhdG*, p. 377, *GW IX*, p. 276. On Hegel's use of 'spröde', cf. p. 117, n. 40 above.

129 *PhdG*, p. 377, *GW IX*, p. 277: 'Die beiden Extreme, die Staatsmacht und das edelmütige Bewußtsein, sind durch dieses [by their being just a 'reine[s] Selbst', AG] zersetzt, jene in das abstrakte Allgemeine, dem gehorcht wird, und in den fürsichseienden Willen, welcher ihm aber noch nicht selbst zukommt'.

130 Cook therefore calls this the language of self-assertion. See Cook, op. cit., pp. 84-86.

131 *PhdG*, p. 378, *GW IX*, p. 277.

132 *PhdG*, p. 378, *GW IX*, p. 277.

133 'Ausgehen', with the preposition 'von', can mean to 'issue forth' or to 'be the source of' (Pinkard), but it can also mean 'to cease to be' or 'to come to an end' (similar to Dutch 'uitgaan'), suggesting that language, in firmly belonging to one perspective, is unable to develop itself, and will never come alive.

134 Again, a passage that, in its context, becomes highly ironical. The selves in 'Die Welt der Bildung' are ultimately completely empty, as will be revealed in the rest of Hegel's discussion. They are therefore merely taken (or take themselves) to have a soul through which these selves come to life. What is also lacking, of course, is any 'Beseelung' in their interaction; the two positions remain these two extremes, and do not produce any meaningful whole.

in which the focus is ultimately exclusively on the self as purely individual. Hegel's use of 'erscheint' already alerts us not to accept the way noble consciousness presents itself (and its language) at face value, and in what follows noble consciousness' duplicity becomes explicit: 'Der Heroismus des stummen Dienstes wird zum *Heroismus der Schmeichelei*.'<sup>135</sup> Noble consciousness does not only act on behalf of the state, and simply – and silently – does what it is told, but uses language to serve a double purpose: through flattery, it pleases the powers that be in order to ultimately further its own interests. In calling itself servant, it turns the state into its master, into an individual with an actual self, to whom it can address itself. It presents itself as fully dependent on its master, but equally feels that the master's power fully depends on its being granted by its servants.<sup>136</sup> We have now entered the realm of absolute monarchy:

Es wird hierdurch der Geist dieser Macht, ein *unumschränkter Monarch* zu sein; – *unumschränkt*: die Sprache der Schmeichelei erhebt die Macht in ihre geläuterte *Allgemeinheit*; das Moment als Erzeugnis der Sprache, des zum Geiste geläuterte Daseins, ist eine gereinigte Sichselbstgleichheit; – *Monarch*; sie erhebt ebenso die *Einzelheit* auf ihre Spitze; dasjenige, dessen das edelmütige Bewußtsein sich nach dieser Seite der einfachen geistigen Einheit entäußert, ist das reine *Ansich seines Denkens*, sein Ich selbst.<sup>137</sup>

As we saw above, in this world the focus is not only on power, but also on its being an 'Einzelheit'. It is a world in which the general will has been unmasked as an utter abstraction; there is only individual interest and no sense of community.<sup>138</sup> The ultimate power is therefore granted to a monarch who is nothing but sheer individuality ('das reine

135 *PhdG*, p. 378. *GW IX*, pp. 277-278. At the beginning of the section on *Bildung*, Hegel had already indicated that its spirit has 'das absolute diskrete' as its self, a remark that in the light of this passage becomes highly ironical, since the servant merely presents himself as discrete. Cf. *PhdG*, p. 359, *GW IX*, p. 264, and the discussion on p. 65 of this chapter. Cf. also Cook, op. cit., p. 87: 'Now consciousness does not *want* to say what it means or mean what it says. Hegel would agree with Conrad's definition of a diplomatic statement as one "in which everything is true, but the sentiment which seems to prompt it."'

136 Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 342: 'Der Herr ist Herr nur, weil die Diener ihn dazu machen.' As Pinkard shows, master and servant also depend on each other for their 'selves': 'In sacrificing everything of his *self* to the state as personified in the absolute monarch, the aristocrat-courtier constitutes the state itself as that which bestows honor upon him. Whereas previously he would have held a title and independence on his own (as the Duke of such-and-such), he now has his title only when his having that title is recognized by the monarch. [...] By ceding the monarch this "privilege," the nobility constitutes him as the absolute monarch which the monarch claims to be.' Pinkard, *The Sociality of Reason*, p. 161. What you are is thus fully constituted by the role that you play ('the Duke of such-and-such' or 'the absolute monarch'). Cf. the discussion below on the monarch's being a mere name. The dialectical movement that is presented here echoes the master-slave dialectic in the self-consciousness section of the *Phänomenologie*, and can again be observed towards the end of Hegel's discussion of conscience, where the valet cannot recognize its master as a hero, since being a hero is not a role the valet can conceive of from his perspective: 'Es gibt keinen Helden für den Kammerdiener; nicht aber weil jener nicht ein Held, sondern weil dieser – der Kammerdiener ist'. *PhdG*, p. 489. *GW IX*, pp. 358-359.

137 *PhdG*, pp. 378-379. *GW IX*, p. 278.

138 It is thus also a world of sheer loneliness, which, in the passage quoted above, is emphasized by the isolation of the words 'unumschränkt' and 'Monarch'.

*Ansich seines Denkens, sein Ich selbst*').<sup>139</sup> The monarch's power is completely without limits; it is said to be 'unumschränkt', which also suggests that there is still no possibility of a 'Schluss': there is no possibility of any mediation with critical challenges, and neither is there any circumference within which the 'Schluss' as mediating movement can occur.<sup>140</sup> In being unlimited, the monarch's power may be absolute, but, as a pure 'Ich', the monarch also completely lacks any determination, for which he depends on his servants:

Bestimmter erhebt sie die Einzelheit, die sonst nur ein *Gemeintes* ist, dadurch in ihre daseiende Reinheit, daß sie dem Monarchen den eigenen *Namen* gibt; denn es ist allein der Name, worin der *Unterschied* des Einzelnen von allen anderen nicht *gemeint* ist, sondern von allen wirklich gemacht wird; in dem Namen *gilt* der Einzelne als rein Einzelner nicht mehr nur in seinem Bewußtsein, sondern im Bewußtsein aller. Durch ihn also wird der Monarch schlechthin von allen abgesondert, ausgenommen und einsam; in ihm ist er das Atom, das von seinem Wesen nichts mitteilen kann und nicht seinesgleichen hat. – Dieser Name ist hiermit die Reflexion-in-sich oder die *Wirklichkeit*, welche die allgemeine Macht *an ihr selbst* hat; durch ihn ist sie der *Monarch*. Er, *dieser Einzelne*, weiß umgekehrt dadurch *sich*, diesen Einzelnen, als die allgemeine Macht, daß die Edlen nicht nur als zum Dienst der Staatsmacht bereit, sondern als *Zierate* sich um den Thron stellen und daß sie dem, der darauf sitzt, es immer *sagen*, was er *ist*.<sup>141</sup>

Hegel's analysis of the ruler's predicament reveals that its loneliness is reinforced by the judgemental language of its servants: as 'Einzelheit', the monarch is nothing of himself, he is only that what he is called and is nothing beyond his name, or beyond the flattery uttered by his servants, who thus come to hold complete power over him.<sup>142</sup> The monarch cannot but play the part that he is given, and is completely locked within himself ('abgesondert, ausgenommen und einsam') as he has no equals with whom he can openly and honestly discuss affairs of state. Again, there is complete lack of any form of dialogical interaction: the nobles speak a language of flattery to which the monarch – from his completely isolated position – is not able to reply.

Hegel's analysis of power – and the way in which language establishes power – further reveals that the servants' power increasingly comes to serve their own interests, which is to add to their personal wealth. The power of the state diminishes; it becomes a

139 A phrase that suggests Louis XIV's 'L'État, c'est moi.'

140 Cf. the discussion on p. 81. The suggestion here is that there ultimately is need for a generality, and a knowing that is not completely boundless, but is able to set limits to itself. The absolute is infinite but is able to contain this infinity within itself. I will return to this discussion in chapter five.

141 *PhdG*, p. 379. *GW IX*, p. 278.

142 On name-giving as a means of exerting power, cf. ch.2, p. 47 ff, where Adam's 'Besitzergreifung' of the world is discussed. Here, the monarch is held hostage by the servants' flattery; he may not believe all that is said, but he cannot deny it since that may harm his position. Furthermore, all the praise that is bestowed on him prevents him from seeing things as they really are: he simply has no means of coming to understand who he really is (other than his name).

‘vollkommene[r] Einzelheit und Zufälligkeit, die jedem mächtigeren Willen [the lust for money, AG] preisgegeben ist; was ihm an *allgemein* anerkannter und nicht mittelbarer Selbständigkeit bleibt, ist der leere Name.’<sup>143</sup> The general interest has now been revealed as the abstraction it was all along; all that remains is an empty name. ‘Das Allgemeine’ is now only there to serve the economic interests of its people, who have become consumers rather than servants.<sup>144</sup> Consequently, consciousness comes to see itself solely in the role of consumer; economic wealth is what gives its life meaning and purpose, apart from that its life is ‘wesenlos’: [Reichtum] ist die in seinem Genusse wesenlose Rückkehr des Individuums in sich selbst. Er bedarf also selbst der Belebung’.<sup>145</sup> ‘Belebung’ here can be read in two ways: *Reichtum*, as a particular formation of consciousness, has to be lived through (‘belebt’) and experienced in full, in order to become aware that more is needed to live a life that has meaning (‘Belebung’) beyond being a slave to money, a life in which you can fully become and enjoy who you are. As yet, consciousness still perceives itself, its essence, to fully depend on *Reichtum* as its benefactor. It also comes to see that both its wealth and the personal status it is granted are purely contingent and not based on any personal merit:

Hier aber sieht [das Selbstbewußtsein] sich von der Seite seiner reiner eigensten Wirklichkeit oder seines Ichs außer sich und einem Anderen angehörig, sieht seine Persönlichkeit als solche abhängig von der zufälligen Persönlichkeit eines Anderen, von dem Zufall eines Augenblicks, einer Willkür oder sonst des gleichgültigsten Umstandes.<sup>146</sup>

Like the absolute monarch, individual consciousness is nothing of itself, has no personality which it can recognize as its own,<sup>147</sup> and sees itself as purely dependent on circumstances that are beyond its control, and which it feels are completely indifferent to what it is as a person. Rather than gratitude for the wealth it is bestowed, it feels complete dejection and indignation: ‘Der Geist seines Danks ist daher das Gefühl wie dieser tiefsten Verworfenheit so auch der tiefsten Empörung.’<sup>148</sup> Consciousness feels no connection to anything at all, and thus feels it has entered a state of ‘Zerrissenheit’: it is torn within

143 *PhdG*, p. 380. *GW IX*, p. 279.

144 *PhdG*, p. 381. *GW IX*, p. 279: ‘So durch die allgemeine Macht bereichert, existiert das Selbstbewußtsein als die *allgemeine Wohltat*, oder sie ist der *Reichtum*.’

145 *PhdG*, p. 381. *GW IX*, p. 280. Cf. ch. 3, p. 67.

146 *PhdG*, p. 382. *GW IX*, p. 280.

147 It is said to be ‘einem Anderen angehörig’: as a slave to money it fully belongs to a power (*Reichtum*) in which it can recognize nothing of itself; it is mere greed. ‘Angehörig’, an adjective that is rooted in the verb ‘hören’, also suggests that consciousness both listens and answers to this power; it speaks its language.

148 *PhdG*, p. 382. *GW IX*, p. 280. Hegel’s discussion of the dialectical development of consciousness as *Doppelwesen*, and especially the section on *Reichtum*, is full of echoes from Matthew 6 and 7, where we are warned not to make ourselves dependent on riches as we cannot serve both God and Mammon (Matthew 6:19-24), and where we are told not to judge, ‘or you, too, will be judged’, according to the same yardstick we use ourselves (Matthew 7:1-2). Merely serving Mammon will lead to darkness and destitution; we can only be truly grateful to God (or, in Hegel’s case, to *Geist* as ‘vermittelnde Bewegung’, as a medium in which we can feel truly acknowledged for what we are, and which we can in return acknowledge and be grateful to).



and its world is torn apart: 'Indem das reine Ich selbst sich außer sich und zerrissen anschaut, ist in dieser Zerrissenheit zugleich alles, was Kontinuität und Allgemeinheit hat, was Gesetz, gut und recht heißt, auseinander und zugrunde gegangen; alles Gleiche ist aufgelöst.'<sup>149</sup>

In focusing on the perspective of spirit, 'Der Geist des wohlthuenden Reichthums', rather than consciousness, Hegel concludes his analysis of power – and its language – in the 'Welt der Bildung', and emphasizes that this is not just a duplicitous world of self-interest and self-deception, but ultimately involves a complete loss of self.<sup>150</sup> This spirit presents itself – or rather, knows itself ('weiß'), thus ironically suggesting an element of self-conceit – as power rather than dependence: '[Er ist] die Macht über das Selbst die sich *unabhängig* und *willkürlich* weiß und die zugleich weiß, daß, was sie ausspendet, das Selbst eines Anderen ist.'<sup>151</sup> It sees itself as having a will of its own, but this is a purely arbitrary will, and has no relation to with what is in the interest of others. Although this spirit is aware that what it gives to others ('ausspendet'), its wealth, is ultimately dependent on the effort of others, it feels arrogant rather than dejected.<sup>152</sup> In its arrogance it has no regard whatsoever for the plight of others, who are treated with disdain, and is only interested in being regarded as good (even if this regard has to be bought by giving those dependent on his beneficence a free meal): 'In diesem Übermute, der durch eine Mahlzeit ein fremdes Ich-Selbst erhalten und sich dadurch die Unterwerfung von dessen innerstem Wesen erworben zu haben meint, übersieht er die innerste Empörung des anderen [...].'<sup>153</sup> The duplicity of this spirit, whose beneficence is mere pretense,<sup>154</sup> is emphasized by the word 'übersieht', which, like so many of the words and phrases Hegel uses, is itself duplicitous. First of all, it can mean 'to survey', which suggests that the misfortune of others is merely observed, without any feeling of misgiving or empathy whatsoever,<sup>155</sup> but the context also activates a further meaning, i.e. 'to ignore', which suggests that this spirit simply fails to notice the situation of those less fortunate. Both meanings strongly suggest, again, that there is no interaction at all: other perspectives are not taken into account as they are neither heard nor seen in a way that would allow for interaction. What this spirit ultimately is confronted with is the utter depravity of its own

149 *PhdG*, p. 382. *GW IX*, p. 280.

150 *PhdG*, p. 383. *GW IX*, p. 281.

151 *PhdG*, p. 383. *GW IX*, p. 281.

152 *PhdG*, p. 383, *GW IX*, p. 281: 'an die Stelle der Empörung tritt der Übermut,' a phrase which is, again, suggestive of the staging of a play.

153 *PhdG*, pp. 383-384. *GW IX*, p. 281.

154 As Stekeler rightly remarks, Hegel's critique is not just aimed at plutocratic societies but rather at the idea that seeming is equated with being; that the role someone plays is confounded with what he or she is. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 355: 'Für Hegel ist diese Charaktermaskenanalyse allerdings nicht so wichtig in Bezug auf eine Gesellschaftskritik oder gar im Kontext eines Aufrufs zur sozialen Revolution, als vielmehr in Bezug auf die Kritik falscher Selbstverständnisse und Selbstverhältnisse und als Beispiel für deren allgemeine Form.'

155 There is even a suggestion of control of those who have been subjected by the plutocracy (cf. the 'Unterwerfung' in the previous clause); the wealthy may fear rebellion from those who miss out. Cf. the lemma on 'übersehen' in *Adelung*. On 'übersehen', see also Pahl, op. cit., p. 249.

soul, which, however, it fails to register: 'Er steht unmittelbar vor diesem innersten Abgrunde, vor dieser bodenlosen Tiefe, worin aller Halt und Substanz verschwunden ist; und er sieht in dieser Tiefe nichts als ein gemeines Ding, ein Spiel seiner Laune, einen Zufall seiner Willkür; sein Geist ist die ganz wesenlose Meinung, die geistverlassene Oberfläche zu sein.'<sup>156</sup> What it does see is mere play,<sup>157</sup> as it feels it can simply toy around arbitrarily without attaching real importance to anything.<sup>158</sup> In the last clause the perspective shifts, and implies that of the phenomenologist, who observes that what this spirit fails to see is that it has depth nor essence (and is thus 'geistverlassen'), and is mere superficiality.<sup>158</sup>

**020** It presents its wealth as a 'gemeines Ding': an ordinary thing to which it pretends not to attach too much value. However, 'gemein' also suggests that wealth is supposed to be (from the perspective of the general will that has understood itself as such) something that is shared by all. Pinkard has 'common', which manages to capture both aspects. Finally, 'gemein' suggests nasty ('niederträchtig'), which, as we already saw, is how wealth is perceived by those who see it as leading to the state of *Zerrissenheit*. Finally, in being a mere 'thing', wealth can never become a meaningful entity to which consciousness can truly relate.

#### 4.3.2 'Die Sprache der Zerrissenheit': the power of language to disrupt and its failure to connect

The spirit of wealth also has its particular language, which is either the base variety of 'die Sprache der Schmeichelei' (which is used by those who hope for a small share in the wealth of those they flatter) or 'die Sprache der Zerrissenheit': the language of those who feel rejected and torn apart. Intriguingly, the latter language is said to be a 'perfect' ('vollkommen') language: 'Die Sprache der Zerrissenheit aber ist die vollkommene Sprache und der wahre existierende Geist dieser ganzen Welt der Bildung.'<sup>159</sup> Apparently, this language perfectly captures the disintegration, the falling apart of 'die Welt der Bildung', that in both shapes, *Staatsmacht* and *Reichtum* has now revealed itself in all its artificiality. We have arrived at the point at which consciousness, as its 'Zerrissenheit' is now complete, feels utterly lost and is unable to attach itself in any way to anything beyond itself. It finds that its language similarly fails to make any connections, and is thus ultimately powerless:

Dies Selbstbewußtsein, dem die seine Verworfenheit verwerfende Empörung zukommt, ist unmittelbar die absolute Sichselbstgleichheit in der absoluten Zerrissenheit, die reine Vermittlung des reinen Selbstbewußtseins mit sich selbst. Es ist die Gleichheit des identischen Urteils, worin eine und dieselbe Persönlichkeit sowohl Subjekt als Prädikat ist. Aber dies identische Urteil ist zugleich das unendliche; denn diese Persönlichkeit ist absolut entzweit, und Subjekt und Prädikat [sind]

<sup>156</sup> *PhdG*, p. 384. *GW IX*, p. 281.

<sup>157</sup> Both the 'Mahlzeit' and 'Spiel seiner Laune' echo the plot of Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau*, and adumbrate the intertextual dialogue that is to follow shortly.

<sup>158</sup> Not only duplicitous words and phrases abound, but also images of *Verkehrung*: the abyss ('Abgrund') has now become a surface ('Oberfläche').

<sup>159</sup> *PhdG*, p. 384. *GW IX*, p. 282.

schlechthin *gleichgültige Seiende*, die einander nichts angehen, ohne notwendige Einheit, sogar daß jedes die Macht einer eigenen Persönlichkeit ist.<sup>160</sup>

What is to be gained by self-consciousness is that, in its becoming aware of its predicament, it will start to rebel, and 'reject its rejection'.<sup>161</sup> At this stage, however, consciousness is still completely locked within itself, and, hence, it assumes that the only interaction that can take place is with itself. Yet, Hegel immediately shows that this pure ('reine') mediation, this 'Ich=Ich', does not produce anything at all. In having been unable to develop as an individual personality in the world of alienation and falsehood, in which the only way of becoming a personality is to adopt one, every predicate that consciousness chooses to express a judgement of itself proves to be neither false nor true,<sup>162</sup> since it has no way of telling who it is.<sup>163</sup> It finds both its world and its language completely indifferent ('gleichgültig'). Consciousness' alienation is complete: not only does it feel estranged from the role(s) it is forced to play in society – its actual self – but what it considered to be the entity it is most intimately familiar with – the self as an 'immediate given' – has now also become a stranger to itself.<sup>164</sup>

The all-pervading alienation has now revealed itself as the true spirit of *Bildung*: 'Es ist also hier der seiner in seiner Wahrheit und seines *Begriffes bewußte* Geist dieser realen Welt der Bildung vorhanden. Er ist diese absolute und allgemeine Verkehrung und Entfremdung der Wirklichkeit und des Gedanken; die *reine Bildung*.'<sup>165</sup> Yet, what is experienced ('was erfahren wird'<sup>166</sup>) is not only alienation and reversal – of good and bad, noble and base, rich and poor – but also that this world is one of continuous judgement:

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160 *PhdG*, pp. 384-385. *GW IX*, p. 282.

161 Pinkard translates this phrase ('Die Selbstbewußtsein, dem die seine Verworfenheit verwerfende Empörung zukommt') in the present ('self-consciousness [...] repudiates its own abjectness' (p. 302), yet I think that Hegel uses 'zukommt' to intimate that this rejection (through which self-consciousness can ultimately move on) is what self-consciousness deserves, but also that it still lies ahead, that it 'moves toward' self-consciousness.

162 The judgement is identical in its being a version of 'Ich=Ich', yet, at the same time it is an infinite judgement in that I can predicate anything about myself if I do not know who I am. Like Pinkard, Stekeler (*Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, pp. 357-358) interprets this passage as an elaboration on self-consciousness' judgement: 'I am rejected', with the infinity arising from the tension between the 'I' that criticizes and the 'I' that is criticized. I would like to argue, however, that Hegel's aim is to show that even that self-certainty is not available to consciousness at this stage, as it is completely divorced from itself.

163 Self-consciousness is 'absolut entzweit': it is only self-consciousness in being aware of itself (as an 'it'), yet it has no sense of what its individual self is, since it has become completely alienated from this self.

164 It even feels that its predicate becomes a personality in its own right ('die Macht einer eigenen Persönlichkeit'): consciousness now feels it has 'zwei Seelen in [einer] Brust', whereas in fact it has none. Whatever individual self there was has been relinquished (or even 'sold') and has developed into a mere thing; it is said to be 'dies preisgegebene selbstlose Wesen oder das zum Dinge gewordene Selbst'. (*PhdG*, p. 385, *GW IX*, p. 283)

165 *PhdG*, p. 385. *GW IX*, p. 282.

166 Again, Hegel uses the passive form, thus making identification with the implied subject more difficult. The reader also experiences 'Die Welt der Bildung' as a world with which it is difficult to interact.

Was vorhanden ist, ist also dies, daß alle Momente eine allgemeine Gerechtigkeit gegeneinander ausüben, jedes ebenso sehr an sich selbst sich entfremdet, als es sich in sein Gegenteil einbildet und es auf diese Weise verkehrt. – Der wahre Geist aber ist eben diese Einheit der absolut Getrennten, und zwar kommt er eben durch die *freie Wirklichkeit* dieser selbstlose Extreme selbst als ihre Mitte zur Existenz. Sein Dasein ist das allgemeine *Sprechen* und zerreißende *Urteilen*, welchem alle jene Momente, die als Wesen und wirkliche Glieder des Ganzen gelten sollen, sich auflösen und welches ebenso dies sich auflösende Spiel mit sich selbst ist.<sup>167</sup>

In this world, spirit manifests itself in a language that is ‘das allgemeine *Sprechen*’, which is not yet understood as a (dialogical) speaking *with* each other, but merely manifests itself as a speaking *about* others or ourselves (as other). It is ‘das zerreißende *Urteilen*’ through which what is judged becomes separated from its surroundings and context; neither the subject nor the object of the judgement is consequently able to further develop itself (they cannot enfold themselves as ‘wirkliche Glieder des Ganzen’), and remain in opposition to each other, as ‘absolut Getrennten’.<sup>168</sup> Yet Hegel also reveals that this separation, this ‘Zerrissenheit’, also contains within itself the still latent but true spirit which will eventually bring about – and manifest itself as – the mediation of what are still seen as irreconcilable extremes. In its becoming aware of its disruption, consciousness will develop a need to truly involve itself with what is other than itself so that it will also allow its either/ or judgements to be developed into a ‘Schluss’, as an interactive movement of continuous questioning and revision, through which eventually the judgements, rather than the individual *Momente*, will be dissolved (‘sich auflösen’).<sup>169</sup> What this world of ‘Verkehrung’ – in which the individual plays (or feels forced to play) a role that is not her or his own – also reveals, is that there is the possibility of taking up a different perspective (‘sich in sein Gegenteil einbilde[n]’) and to engage with what it is not, even though consciousness is – at this stage – not yet aware of the positive potential

<sup>167</sup> *PhdG*, p. 386. *GW IX*, p. 283.

<sup>168</sup> And, as we saw above, because of which ‘die Sprache der Zerrissenheit’ is experienced as one in which there appears to be no connection between subject and predicate. The predicate is merely a label that is externally attached. Cf. also the introduction to the *Phänomenologie*, where Hegel criticizes the type of knowing in which knowledge and object of knowledge are firmly opposed, and which therefore can never achieve anything but ‘mit Antworten auf alles dieses (whatever presents itself, contingently, as an object of knowledge, AG) sich herumzuplacken.’ (*PhdG*, p. 70, *GW IX*, p. 55) Cf. also *PhdG* p. 51, *GW IX*, p. 38: ‘[d]ie Wissenschaft darf sich nur durch das eigene Leben des Begriffs organisieren; in ihr ist die Bestimmtheit, welche aus dem Schema äußerlich dem Dasein aufgeklebt wird, die sich selbst bewegende Seele des erfüllten Inhalts.’ On the link with Hölderlin’s ‘Urtheil und Seyn’, see also n. 98.

<sup>169</sup> Of course, the ‘individual moments’ will, in the sense of their being taken as ‘fixed’, also be dissolved, but will also be able to remain in the sense that they are fully able to develop and transform themselves, and to ‘become what they are’. Besides, consciousness will learn that there is no absolute good or bad, but, rather, that if we truly know something, we understand that it is simultaneously both good and bad. Cf. *PhdG*, p. 388, *GW IX*, p. 284: ‘das Gute und Edle [verliere] nicht darum [seinem Wert] weil es an das Schlechte geknüpft oder mit ihm *gemischt* sei; denn dies sei seine Bedingung und Notwendigkeit.’

inherent in such a shift of perspective, and only feels alienation.<sup>021</sup> 'Der wahre Geist' will thus ultimately manifest itself as a 'talking with' rather than a mere 'speaking about'.<sup>170</sup>

As a language of disruptive judgement, 'die Sprache der Zerrissenheit' proves to be true in the sense that it captures each individual part of this world: 'Dies Urteilen und Sprechen ist [...] das Wahre und Unbezwingbare, während es alles überwältigt [...]. Jeder Teil dieser Welt kommt darin dazu, daß sein Geist ausgesprochen oder daß mit Geist von ihm gesprochen und von ihm gesagt wird, was er ist.'<sup>171</sup> Nothing in this world escapes judgement, everything is up for scrutiny, and the truth of its language lies in its mastering of a totality.<sup>172</sup> Again, consciousness is whatever it is said to be, and there is no possibility to question the judgements that are made, since they are made indirectly. Things are said about consciousness ('von ihm'), rather than to it, and there is a strong suggestion that what is said should not even be taken seriously, as what is uttered are mere witticisms.<sup>022</sup> Not only does 'das zerrissene Bewußtsein' have no means to avoid being judged, but it also finds that 'das Urteilen und Sprechen' cannot be overcome in the sense that there is no option but to speak this language (it is 'unbezwingbar'). Disrupted consciousness is aware, however, that it is doing this, in contrast with what is introduced as 'das ehrliche Bewußtsein', which, in its simply accepting the world as it appears, reminds us of consciousness in sense-certainty:

Das ehrliche Bewußtsein nimmt jedes Moment als eine bleibende Wesenheit und ist die ungebildete Gedankenlosigkeit, nicht zu wissen, daß es ebenso das Verkehrte tut. Das zerrissene Bewußtsein ist das Bewußtsein der Verkehrung, und zwar der absoluten Verkehrung; der Begriff ist das Herrschende in ihm, der die Gedanken zusammenbringt, und dessen Sprache daher geistreich ist.<sup>173</sup>

**021** 'Einbilden' not only suggests that, in 'die Welt der Bildung' taking up a specific role involves an element of pretense, but also that, from the perspective of 'der wahre Geist', true *Bildung* is only possible through alienation and reversal. Consciousness needs to take up a different perspective – to involve itself with *Bilder* and *Beispiele* – in order to question both the other perspective and its own point of view.

**022** 'mit Geist sprechen' is to speak with 'Esprit', with wit. The sentence can also be read differently (and is thus a further example of 'Zweideutigkeit'): in 'der wahre Geist' (cf. the discussion above) each individual comes into its own in that its particular spirit is expressed and acknowledged (and that thus the individual can recognize itself in what it is said to be) so that individual consciousness experiences that the language of 'der wahre Geist' is not merely witty, but truly captures and expresses its essence.

170 Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 360: 'Der Geist existiert daher [in understanding the potential involved in a 'Perspektivenwechsel', AG] am Ende [i.e. as 'wahre Geist', AG] *zwischen* den Personen, in der *Mitte* und *Vermittlung* in dialektisch-dialogischen Gesprächen, nicht *in* ihren Köpfen oder auch nur in ihrem eingeübten Verhalten und Tun. [...] Der Appell an allgemeine Richtigkeiten ist [...] immer nur Aufruf zur Aufhebung relevanter Widersprüche.'

171 *PhdG*, p. 386. *GW IX*, p. 283.

172 'Das Wahre ist das Ganze', *PhdG*, p. 24, *GW IX*, p. 19. The truth of 'das Urteilen und Sprechen' is of course only a totality of (indifferent) parts ('Teile') and not yet a developed totality, and in that sense is not true at all; 'Das Ganze aber ist nur das durch seine Entwicklung sich vollendete Wesen.' (ibid.)

173 *PhdG*, p. 386. *GW IX*, p. 283.

Honest consciousness is not only honest, but also naive in its taking the world at face value,<sup>174</sup> and thus fails to see (and in that sense ‘does the wrong thing’) that it needs to question what it is presented with in order to be able to develop its impressions into thought. Disrupted consciousness understands that the world of civilization necessarily perverts what is taken to be natural and given. It acts accordingly, and perfectly adopts the language of ‘Verkehrung’: ‘Der Inhalt der Rede des Geistes von und über sich selbst ist also die Verkehrung aller Begriffe und Realitäten, der allgemeine Betrug seiner selbst und der anderen; und die Schamlosigkeit diesen Betrug zu sagen, ist eben darum die größte Wahrheit.’<sup>175</sup> The only way in which it can be true to itself – in its ‘Zerrissenheit’ – is by perverting everything. It thus also perverts its understanding of itself, and its language is a language of self-importance (‘Rede des Geistes von und über sich selbst’) rather than of self-knowledge. To further illustrate the language of ‘das zerrissene Bewußtsein’ and ‘das ehrliche Bewußtsein’, Hegel turns to Diderot’s *Le Neveu de Rameau*. Before addressing Hegel’s use of this text, I will first discuss Hegel’s concluding remarks on the spirit of *Bildung* as a spirit of alienation, disruption and reversal.

#### 4.4 The return of ‘wir’ to the world of *Bildung*

After being completely absent from the rest of this section, we finally see a return of the phenomenological ‘wir’, who reflects on the differences between the languages of disrupted and of honest consciousness: ‘Betrachten wir der Rede dieser sich selbst klaren Verwirrung gegenüber die Rede jenes *einfachen Bewußtseins* des Wahren und Guten, so kann sie gegen die offene und ihrer bewußte Beredsamkeit<sup>023</sup> des Geistes der Bildung nur einsilbig sein; denn es kann diesem nichts sagen, was er nicht selbst weiß und sagt.’<sup>176</sup> ‘Betrachten’, however, is all we can do (in contrast with the ‘Fragen’ in the sense-certainty section); there appears to be no possibility of any form of dialogical interaction with either form of consciousness. Both remain firmly tied to their own perspective and their own language,

**023** Both ‘Beredsamkeit’ (rhetoric) and ‘Rede’ (rather than ‘Sprache’) suggest the artificial and formal character of this language. It is a language that is adopted, it is a formal guise in which consciousness can come to an awareness of itself, but in which it cannot yet recognize and acknowledge itself: there is, as yet, no self-understanding, as its self fails to be developed. ‘Rede’, like ‘account’, can also refer to a sum of money that is owed (see *DWB*), and thus becomes another example of the economic vocabulary in this section. Cf. Smith (*The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 207), who convincingly argues that in Hegel’s discussion of *Bildung*, the individual aims to overcome alienation by adopting the language that comes with a certain ‘type’. Its mastering of specific linguistic conventions, however, does not help to overcome alienation, but further effects it: ‘*Entäußerung* becomes the individual’s means of attaining an identity and power in society by learning to adopt the modes of expression and rhetorical conventions dominating the society. With the highest form of alienation – rhetorical mastery of Otherness, that is, of all modes of expression and the ability to appropriate and invert any rhetorical position – the individual reaches the highest form of *Bildung*.’

174 This consciousness is ‘ungebildet’: it does not have (or does not want to have) any understanding of the ‘way the world is’ which could prove harmful to its natural honesty. In its ‘taking’ or accepting the world as natural, however, it also does something to the world: it perverts its also being a world of cultural formations. ‘Natural consciousness’ thus can be seen as a form of *oxymoron*.

175 *PhdG*, pp. 386–387. *GW IX*, p. 283.

176 *PhdG*, pp. 387–388. *GW IX*, p. 284.



and are therefore completely averse to any movement or interaction. On the one hand, there is the empty eloquence ('Beredsamkeit') of the consciousness that, although it is aware that it is part of a highly artificial world of culture, cannot do anything other than play along with it and be highly artificial itself. The confusion that ensues from its topsy-turvy witticisms is ironically said to be clear to itself ('sich selbst klar'): disrupted consciousness self-righteously pretends that from its perspective it has a clear view both of itself and of what the world is like.<sup>177</sup> However, in its being self-conscious and accessible ('offen'),<sup>178</sup> it is still to be preferred – as there is at least the possibility of any interaction – to the monosyllabic utterings ('gut', 'wahr') of honest consciousness, which merely repeat the judgements 'das zerrissene Bewußtsein' had already made about itself, pose no questions and fail to produce anything new.<sup>179</sup> 'Das einfache Bewußtsein' pronounces its judgements in the hope that they will bring about the downfall or dissolution ('Auflösung') of the 'Welt der Verkehrung', by making people turn their back to society and return to a state of nature.<sup>180</sup> It fails to see that since this world has been produced by spirit, its demand should be addressed to spirit (i.e. to itself as being part of it): 'die Forderung dieser Auflösung kann nur an den Geist der Bildung selbst gehen, daß er aus seiner Verwirrung als Geist zu sich zurückkehre und ein noch höheres Bewußtsein gewinne.'<sup>181</sup> 'Forderung' is a telling word: 'das einfache Bewußtsein', after expressing its judgements, simply demands that the world mends its ways, and does not in any way aim to express itself in such a way (e.g. by speaking of its 'Bedürfnis') that would enable

177 Which, in another sense, is true of course: 'das zerrissene Bewußtsein' has at least seen clearly that this world is one of alienation and reversal. Hegel constantly aims to reveal that consciousness, in all its manifestations, is simultaneously both right and wrong, and that what fails at this moment is an interaction through which a synthesis of these manifestations (and synopsis of these views) can be achieved.

178 'Offen' is, at this stage, not so much a being directed towards the other, but rather refers to what takes place in (or rather, in front of) a public, e.g. the witty exchange of opinions in the Enlightenment salons (in which Diderot took part, and which play such a prominent role in his *Le Neveu de Rameau*).

179 Honest consciousness is shown to be unable to come up with any arguments for its judgements, not even when it adds syllables, Hegel adds flippantly: 'Geht es über seine Einsilbigkeit hinaus, so sagt es daher dasselbe, was er ausspricht, begeht aber darin noch dazu die Torheit zu meinen, daß es etwas Neues und Anderes sage. Selbst seine Silben, *schändlich, niederträchtig*, sind schon diese Torheit, denn jener sagt sie von sich selbst.' *PhdG*, p. 388. *GW IX*, p. 284. Cf. Hegel's disparaging remarks in the *Vorrede* on those who profess to have an immediate grasp of the truth and to capture the truth in just one word ('das Schöne, Heilige, Ewige, die Religion und Liebe', *PhdG*, p. 16, *GW IX*, p. 10). See also Pahl, op. cit., p. 21.

180 *PhdG*, pp. 388-389. *GW IX*, p. 285. Hegel again reveals the 'Verkehrung' of the judgements of 'das einfache Bewußtsein' who demands either that the individual takes care of her- or himself as individual, or that we 'fall back' ('zurückversenke[n]' or 'zurückfalle[n]') into a primordial state of nature, in which we are reduced to being mere animals, who will most likely tear each other to pieces, yet are seen as innocent: 'Fordert das einfache Bewußtsein endlich die Auflösung dieser ganzen Welt der Verkehrung, so kann es nicht an das *Individuum* die Entfernung aus ihr fordern, denn Diogenes im Fasse ist durch sie bedingt, und die Forderung an den Einzelnen ist gerade das, was für das Schlechte gilt, nämlich für sich als Einzelnen zu sorgen. An die allgemeine *Individualität* aber gerichtet, kann die Forderung dieser Entfernung nicht die Bedeutung haben, daß die Vernunft das geistige gebildete Bewußtsein, zu dem sie gekommen ist, wieder aufgeben, den ausgebreiteten Reichtum ihrer Momente in die Einfachheit des natürlichen Herzens zurückversenke und in die Wildnis und Nähe des tierischen Bewußtseins, welche Natur und Unschuld genannt wird.'

181 *PhdG*, p. 389. *GW IX*, p. 285.



any interaction through which it could come to a shared interest with other perspectives.<sup>182</sup> It also fails to see that spirit is already aware of this 'Forderung': 'In der Tat aber hat der Geist dies schon an sich vollbracht.'<sup>183</sup> There is thus an implicit need within spirit to leave its state of 'Entfremdung', and, in returning to itself, move forwards rather than backwards. This is not yet clear to 'das zerrissene Bewußtsein', who ironizes everything including itself,<sup>184</sup> but can be observed by the phenomenologist, whose perspective is implied in the next sentence: 'Die ihrer selbst bewußte und sich aussprechende Zerrissenheit des Bewußtseins ist das Hohngelächter über das Dasein sowie über die Verwirrung des Ganzen und über sich selbst; es ist zugleich das sich noch vernehmende Verklingen dieser ganzen Verwirrung.'<sup>185</sup> The latter phrase suggests that all that remains of the ironical and self-conscious mockery is the fading away of its echo. Like honest consciousness, disrupted consciousness can only hear itself speak; it cannot move beyond its own perspective. The outlook on the world of both perspectives is mere vanity as they see only themselves reflected; it is the 'sich selbst vernehmende Eitelkeit aller Wirklichkeit und alles bestimmten Begriffs', a phrase that simultaneously suggests that all efforts to produce any knowing that can be acknowledged as the result of a mediation of opposing perspectives are in vain.

The positive outcome of consciousness' tribulations as *Doppelwesen* in the world of *Bildung* is not so much a sense of self – which consciousness had already become aware of on its being granted formal personhood – but rather a sense of what this self is not. Consciousness is now able to return to itself, after having gone through its alienation:

In jener Seite der Rückkehr in das Selbst ist die *Eitelkeit* aller *Dinge* seine *eigene Eitelkeit*, oder es *ist* eitel. Es ist das fürsichseinde Selbst, das nicht alles zu beurteilen und zu beschwatzen, sondern geistreich die festen Wesen der Wirklichkeit wie die festen Bestimmungen, die das Urteil setzt, in ihrem *Widerspruche* zu sagen weiß, und dieser Widerspruch ist ihrer Wahrheit.<sup>186</sup>

However, consciousness, as appears from this passage, is not yet aware of the positive potential of a return to itself. It fails to see – although it is apparent to the phenomenologist – that it can now – through incorporating its experience of alienation – finally embark on becoming an individual personality that it can acknowledge (and which can

182 'Forderung', moreover, is a further example of the economic vocabulary in this section, as one of its denotations is 'a financial claim'. See *DWB*. 'Das einfache Bewußtsein' is thus more deeply immersed in 'die Welt der Bildung' than it is aware of, or than it pretends to be.

183 *PhdG*, p. 389. *GW IX*, p. 285.

184 Both 'das ehrliche Bewußtsein' and 'das zerrissene Bewußtsein' take up a detached stance and profess not be involved. Honest consciousness does so by taking the world seriously and judging it accordingly; disrupted consciousness by taking nothing seriously.

185 *PhdG*, p. 389. *GW IX*, p. 285.

186 *PhdG*, p. 389. *GW IX*, p. 285.

be acknowledged) as its own.<sup>187</sup> What we are to strive for is a world, a self and a language in which the 'festen Bestimmungen' are made fluid and set in movement through the continuous expression of – and interaction with – its oppositions.

What consciousness does is not so much return to itself, but rather withdraw into itself, as it is only interested in confirming its particular outlook, and thus fails to make a connection with what is other-than-itself.<sup>188</sup> It fails to interact with the objects of its judgement or idle chit-chat (its 'beschwatzen'), and, hence, it fails to see that the 'vanity of all things' is ultimately a reflection of its own vanity.<sup>189</sup> Hegel's irony is biting when it is remarked that, in the 'Welt der Bildung', consciousness – both in its honest and in its disrupted shape – knows everything best, while unaware that it is ultimately right in pronouncing the 'Verkehrung' of the world of culture: 'Er weiß also jedes Moment gegen das andere, überhaupt die Verkehrung aller, richtig auszusprechen; es weiß besser, was jedes ist, als es ist, es sei bestimmt wie es wolle.'<sup>190</sup> What consciousness fails to grasp is that 'die Verkehrung aller' should also involve the interaction of all individual moments, as well as all individual perspectives.<sup>191</sup>

At this stage of consciousness' development, the only means to achieve any kind of interaction is through irony. It is also through irony – as, in its being mostly absent, there is no possibility of entering the text as part of the 'wir' – that the text communicates with the reader. A telling example can be found in the final reflections made on consciousness' attempts to master its world:

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187 Cook (op. cit., p. 90) interprets these lines as suggesting the possibility of developing an 'authentic self': 'By exposing the contradictory or dialectical nature of thought and reality itself, the individual in culture, through its rupturing outlook and expression, performs an essential role in the spiritual development of human consciousness. Out of this condition, pathetic for the consciousness which is experiencing it – arises the possibility of authentic individuality.' As I will argue in chapter five, in the section on 'die schöne Seele', Hegel rather aims to show that the idea of an 'authentic' self is mistaken, since it is based on the assumption that there is an inner, single self we can be immediately acquainted with and it is precisely this assumption that Hegel wants to expose as mistaken.

188 As Stekeler shows (*Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 376), the 'Rückkehr in das Selbst' here also intimates Kant's subjective idealism: 'Die "Rückkehr in das Selbst" ist [...] Titel für eine Reflexionsphilosophie, welche alles beurteilen will, für alle Urteile Kriterien sucht – und dadurch selbst allzu geistreich wird und notwendig in eine Dialektik der reinen, dann aber auch der praktischen Vernunft verstrickt wird.' The 'Reflexionsphilosophie' is also unable to grasp anything beyond its own reflection. Cf. *PhdG*, p. 390, *GW IX*, p. 286: 'es [versteht] das Substantielle sehr gut zu beurteilen, aber hat die Fähigkeit verloren es zu fassen.'

189 The first sentence of this passage, again, echoes a verse from the Bible, in this case from the Old Testament. Ecclesiastes 1:2 reads: 'Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.' Hegel's remarks on vanity also reflect Rousseau's thought on the perverting effects of culture, and his fierce attack on 'amour-propre' in the *Discourse sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*. Where Hegel and Rousseau differ is that Hegel does not advocate a return to nature but sees the alienating effects of society as necessarily contributing to the coming into its own of both *Geist* and individual consciousness.

190 *PhdG*, p. 390. *GW IX*, pp. 285-286. Again, Stekeler points out (*Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 376) that Kant is one of the main targets of Hegel's irony (cf. n. 201): 'Insbesondere artikulieren viele kritisch-analytischen Reflexionen die Kriterien von Unterscheidungen schärfer, exakter, kontextinvarianter als es der konkrete Sprachgebrauch und gemeinsame Weltbezug erlaubt. Kant ist ein Künstler einer derart verschärften Definition von Wörtern.'

191 'Verkehren' can also mean 'to be acquainted with' or 'to be connected with'.

Macht und Reichtum sind die höchsten Zwecke seiner Anstrengung; es weiß, daß es durch Entsagung und Aufopferung sich zum Allgemeinen bildet, zum Besitze desselben gelangt und in diesem Besitze allgemeine Gültigkeit hat; sie sind die wirklich anerkannte Mächte. Aber dies sein Gelten ist selbst eitel; und eben indem es sich ihrer bemächtigt, weiß es sie, nicht Selbstwesen zu sein, sondern vielmehr sich als ihre Macht, sie aber als eitel. Daß es so in ihrem Besitze selbst daraus heraus ist, stellt es in der geistreichen Sprache dar, die daher sein höchstes Interesse und die Wahrheit des Ganzen ist; in ihr wird *dieses* Selbst, als dies reine, nicht den wirklichen noch gedachten Bestimmungen angehörige Selbst, sich zum geistigen, wahrhaft allgemeingültigen.<sup>192</sup>

Hegel gives us no indication whose reflections these are, and thus this passage becomes highly duplicitous and full of irony. In its search for general acknowledgement, individual consciousness sets power and wealth as its goals, yet as soon as it has come to possess them it realizes that neither power nor wealth have any validity beyond that which it attaches to them; they are no independent beings ('Selbstwesen'), and it thus comes to see them as vain, and takes on an ironical distance to its possessions, which it expresses in its 'geistreiche Sprache'. Disrupted consciousness thus sees language as a means to present itself as having a position outside of the world it sees as vain ('es [ist] selbst daraus heraus'),<sup>193</sup> and for this reason sees language as its 'highest interest'.<sup>024</sup> Mastery of the linguistic conventions of its world (and the ironical inversion of those conventions) allows disrupted consciousness to detach itself from a world in which it finds itself unable to express itself in a language in which it can engage with what it recognizes as truly belonging to itself, rather than with the trappings of power and wealth. However, if we read the sentence on language from the perspective of the phenomenologist, the meaning shifts: the witty language of 'disrupted consciousness' is *its* (sein) 'Interesse', whereas the phenomenologist becomes aware that, ultimately, language is the 'Wahrheit des Ganzen' in that it reveals the way particular perspectives present themselves, and, moreover, that language has the potential to be a medium in which these perspectives can come to interact, so that there is ultimately a meaningful 'inter esse'.<sup>194</sup> From the perspective of the phenomenologist, language will eventually allow consciousness to find a sense of self that is free – in which 'die Entsagung des Fürsichseins' has occurred –<sup>195</sup> and no longer determined by the social conventions (whereas the 'reine Selbst' is for disrupted consciousness merely a detached self) that make it into something it is not, and for which language will be a medium in which

**024** 'Interesse' can also mean 'interest rate', and thus suggests that 'disrupted consciousness' sees language as a good, similar to power and wealth; it is something to be possessed, and which will then prove to be of interest, i.e. be profitable. Yet, what this consciousness fails to see is that it is 'in ihrem Besitz' in a twofold sense: it not only possesses wealth, power and a mastery of language, but is simultaneously mastered by them.

192 PhdG, p. 390. GWIX, p. 285.

193 Besides, 'es [ist] selbst daraus heraus' again captures consciousness' alienation from itself.

194 Cf. the discussion in chapter two, p. 36.

195 Cf. p. 120 ff.

consciousness can express itself as not merely witty but as truly spiritual ('geistreich' in its literal sense), and in which its self can be acknowledged as what it is, and not just for what it possesses.<sup>196</sup>

#### 4.5 The *Phänomenologie* and *Rameaus Neffe*: an intertextual dialogue

Even though the world of *Bildung* manifests itself as a world in which there is a conspicuous absence of dialogical interaction, there is – as we saw above – the occasional invitation to the reader to respond to the text. Another way in which Hegel's discussion of *Bildung* engages in interaction is by means of an exchange with Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau*. In the final section of this chapter I will discuss what we can learn from this exchange about the way in which Hegel's text interacts with Diderot's text – and with other texts – and, more specifically – as this is a prominent subject in both texts – about the question in what way language can be developed into a medium in which thought can be fully expressed.

In order to illustrate *Bildung* as a world of alienation and reversal in which consciousness appears as a *Doppelwesen* with a language that reflects its own interests ('die Rede des Geistes von und über sich selbst'), Hegel more than once alludes to, or (loosely) quotes from, Diderot's dialogue. Hegel first read the work in 1805, and his reading may have coincided with his writing the chapter on *Geist*. The work had been made available in Germany through Goethe's translation, who admired *Le Neveu de Rameau* for perfectly capturing the social world (and language) of the French salons at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>197</sup> The dialogue (which Diderot himself called a 'satire'<sup>198</sup>) is set in the 'Café de la Régence' in Paris, where the 'Ich' of the story, a philosopher, sometimes

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196 Disrupted consciousness still sees its 'allgemeine Gültigkeit' to depend on the possession of 'Macht und Reichtum' (and its ability to speak the language of power and wealth).

197 In fact, during Diderot's lifetime the work was only available in German translation. Diderot had never aimed to publish it (as he was subjected to a libel campaign) during his lifetime, and after his death in 1784 a copy of the manuscript ended up in Jena, was read by Schiller, who subsequently passed it on to Goethe. The dialogue was first published in France in 1891, after the original manuscript had been rediscovered. For a more detailed account of the history of the manuscript, and of Goethe's translation, see James Schmidt, 'The Fool's Truth: Diderot, Goethe and Hegel,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57:4 (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), pp. 625-629, and Smith, *The Spirit and Its Letter*, pp. 208-209. On the publishing history of Diderot's manuscripts, cf. Philipp Blom, *Böse Philosophen: Ein Salon in Paris und das vergessene Erbe der Aufklärung* (München: dtv, 2013), pp. 364-365. Ironically, Blom claims that in the 19th century, in which Kant and Hegel wrote their works, there was no time for Diderot's playfulness: 'Im 19. Jahrhundert, das ganz im Bann großer, systematischer Werke wie Kants Kritiken, Hegels Metaphysik und dem *Kapital* von Marx stand, war kein Platz für Diderots spielerische und eklektische Denkweise.'

198 As Julia Kristeva points out, Diderot (in an article on 'the cynic') saw Menippean satire as one of his main sources of inspiration. Interestingly, it was Bakhtin (as Kristeva also mentions) who saw Menippus as the founder of dialogism and polyphonic rhetoric. See Julia Kristeva, *Étrangers à nous-mêmes* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), p. 203. Cf. also Hans Robert Jauss, 'Der dialogische und der dialektische "Neveu de Rameau" (oder: Wie Diderot Sokrates und Hegel Diderot rezipierte)' in *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), pp. 468-470.

ends up when the weather is too cold or wet to go for a walk.<sup>199</sup> Inside the café, the 'Ich' shuns company, and prefers to remain alone to observe the behaviour of others, who come to the café to play chess: 'ich beobachtete viel, sprach wenig und hörte so wenig als möglich'.<sup>200</sup> However, he is accosted by what he claims to be one of the strangest characters he has ever seen,<sup>201</sup> and is drawn into a dialogue with this man, who declares he is the nephew of the famous composer Jean-Philippe Rameau.<sup>202</sup> In the lively exchange that follows, the two protagonists – who may have inspired Hegel's portrayal of 'das ehrliche Bewußtsein' and 'das zerrissene Bewußtsein' – cover almost every aspect of contemporary French culture and its representatives (both famous and obscure),<sup>203</sup> and discuss whether it is possible to develop a truly individual self – and remain true to this self – within the strictures imposed by society.

Before the dialogue actually starts, the 'Ich' gives a lengthy impression of Rameau's nephew, a talented musician and actor, who in the dialogue is constantly referred to as 'Er'.<sup>204</sup> The reason the 'Ich' needs so many words is that he feels at a loss to give a

199 The 'Ich' of the dialogue is also the narrator, and occasionally provides comment on himself, his partner (Rameau's nephew) or the observants of the nephew's theatrical performances. Interestingly, the 'Ich' introduces himself by pointing out his predilection for an internal dialogue, in a passage slightly suggestive of Kant's daily walk in Königsberg: 'Es mag schön oder häßlich Wetter sein, meine Gewohnheit bleibt auf jeden Fall um fünf Uhr abends im Palais Royal spazierenzugehen. Mich sieht man immer allein, nachdenklich auf der Bank d'Argenson. Ich unterhalte mich mit mir selbst von Politik, von Liebe, von Geschmack oder Philosophie und überlasse meinen Geist seiner ganzen Leichtfertigkeit.' Denis Diderot, *Rameaus Neffe*, übersetzt von J.W. von Goethe (Berlin: Holzinger, 2015), p. 3. The 'Ich' thus immediately characterizes himself as a purely self-reflecting subject, for whom thought is, as Hegel calls it, 'die reine Vermittlung des reinen Selbstbewußtseins mit sich selbst.' *PhdG*, p. 385. *GW IX*, p. 282.

200 Diderot, *Rameaus Neffe*, p. 3. Again, this clause suggests the 'Ich' prefers to remain locked within his own world.

201 *Rameaus Neffe*, p. 3: 'eine der wunderlichsten Personagen [...], die nur jemals dieses Land hervorbrachte, wo es doch Gott an dergleichen nicht fehlen ließ.'

202 The structure of Diderot's dialogue thus appears to conflict with Hegel's demand in the Solger review that one of the partners in the dialogue was to hold the 'Faden des Fortgangs in der Hand, so daß aller Inhalt in die Fragen, und in das Antworten nur das formelle Zustimmung fällt; der Belehrende bleibt Meister [...]. Cf. the discussion in ch.3, p. 66 ff. Although the 'Ich', the philosopher-narrator, presents the story to the reader, he does not appear to be completely in control, since he is unable to determine the course of the dialogue (and, of course, if it had been up to him, the dialogue would not even have started). In the Solger review Hegel mentions Diderot as one of the modern masters of the dialogue, as he is able to make the form serve the content of the dialogue (even though the content is not of supreme philosophical interest): 'Wir haben in modernen Sprachen Meisterwerke des dialogischen Vortrags (man braucht nur auf Galianis Dialoge, Diderot, Cousin und Rameau zu verweisen); aber hier ist die Form gleichfalls der Sache untergeordnet, nichts Müßiges; die Sache ist aber kein spekulativer Inhalt, sondern eine solche, welche ganz wohl ihrer Natur nach Gegenstand der Konversation sein kann.' *Werke II*, p. 269. *GW XVI*, p. 125.

203 Goethe added an appendix to his translation (a small 'encyclopedia') in order to provide the necessary background to the play. See Schmidt, op. cit., p. 627.

204 With regard to the main characters being called 'Ich' und 'Er', Allen Speight (op.cit., pp. 79) suggests that '[t]he straightforward identification of the dialogue partners by first- and third-person pronouns already suggests that [...] a dialectic between first- and third-person perspectives on agency will be of great concern here.' Yet, in the dialogue both characters speak from their first-person perspective (there is no reported speech). There is, of course, the narrator, who provides comment on the proceedings, but we mostly get to hear the 'Er' immediately. Diderot's use of these pronouns could well be explained by his aim to present a world in which we come across 'types' rather than distinct individuals. Diderot's point is precisely that in the world the 'Er' and the 'Ich' occupy, which is not only highly conventional but also a world in which

definitive judgement: in his eyes, the nephew is a ‘Zusammensetzung von Hochsinn und Niederträchtigkeit, von Menschenverstand und Unsinn, die Begriffe vom Ehrbaren und Unehrbaren müssen ganz wunderbar in seinem Kopf durcheinandergehn: denn, er zeigt, was ihm die Natur an guten Eigenschaften gegeben hat, ohne Prahlerei, und was sie ihm an schlechten gab, ohne Scham.’<sup>205</sup> The ‘Ich’ is presented as a character that can do no other than judge the world – and thus can be seen as representative of the world of *Bildung* – but also as feeling a need to be complete, to mention all there is to know.<sup>206</sup> The nephew – in the description given by the ‘Ich’ – on his part represents *Bildung* in its being a world of deceit and imposture, in which it is impossible to speak the truth, as its spirit is the ‘Verkehrung aller Begriffe und Realitäten, der allgemeine Betrug seiner selbst und anderen; und die Schamlosigkeit diesen Betrug zu sagen, ist eben darum die größte Wahrheit.’<sup>207</sup>

Not only in this example, but throughout the text, both the ‘Ich’ and the ‘Er’ appear to be such fitting examples of the two forms of consciousness in the ‘Welt der Bildung’ that we are made to wonder whether Hegel had already thought through his analysis of the alienated world of *Bildung* by the time he started reading Diderot – so that the nephew and the philosopher should indeed be seen as ideal illustrations – or whether his analysis was instigated and inspired by his reading of *Rameaus Neffe*, so that we should rather see his use of the text as an appropriation, incorporation or, as I would like to argue, dialogical development of Diderot’s portrayal of contemporary French culture.

In the actual dialogue in *Rameau’s Neffe*, we see that the ‘Ich’ (whom the nephew flip-pantly addresses as ‘mein Herr Philosoph’) not only finds it difficult to pin down the nephew’s character, but that he also finds that he is equally unable to say what the nephew looks like, as he is sometimes skinny, sometimes fat, occasionally dressed in rags, yet dressed impeccably the next morning, so that we might be tempted to take him ‘für einen ordentlichen Mensch’.<sup>208</sup> The nephew is ultimately ‘a man without substance’,<sup>209</sup> who is never fully part of society, even though he is maintained by society (he only eats when he gets himself invited to a meal). He is – and plays the role of – the outsider, who is simultaneously able to take up any position within society and to expose and ridicule the conventions that hold the social world together. The ‘Ich’ is ready to admit that without the interventions of people such as the nephew, we would understand much less about society and ourselves:

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almost every action takes place in a public sphere (and is judged immediately), it is virtually impossible to become, and thus to be seen as, who you truly are.

205 *Rameaus Neffe*, p. 3.

206 And thus being a representative of the spirit of the Enlightenment, with its ambition for encyclopedic knowledge. The portrayal of the ‘Ich’ may thus also contain an element of irony that is aimed at Diderot himself.

207 *PhdG*, p. 387. *GW IX*, p. 283. Cf. the discussion of this passage on p. 146 ff above.

208 *Rameaus Neffe*, p. 4.

209 See Pinkard, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, p. 164.



ihr Charakter [sticht] von den gewöhnlichen ab und sie [unterbrechen] die lästige Einformigkeit, die wir durch unsre Erziehung, unsre gesellschaftliche Konventionen, unsre hergebrachten Anständigkeiten eingeführt haben. Kommt ein solcher in eine Gesellschaft, so ist er ein Krümchen Sauerteig, das das Ganze hebt und jedem einen Teil seiner natürlichen Individualität zurückgibt. Er schüttelt, er bewegt, bringt Lob oder Tadel zur Sprache, treibt die Wahrheit hervor, macht rechtliche Leute kenntlich, entlarvt die Schelme, und da horcht ein Vernünftiger zu und sonder seine Leute.<sup>210</sup>

Diderot's metaphor of the sourdough is intriguing: even though the nephew is a highly artificial character who excels in opera and pantomime (which he uses to 'interrupt' the monotony of our habitual lives), the sourdough image suggests that his actions are so effective because of their belonging to – and producing – nature, and thus allow for the movement that can liberate members of society from convention and restore part of their natural individuality. The intricate interaction between artificiality and nature is also one of Hegel's keenest interests, who – as we already saw – claims that our true nature can only be found through a process of alienation.<sup>211</sup> Hegel's view of *Bildung* as alienation, however, seems to differ from the observation made by the 'Ich' in that, for Hegel, the alienation that takes place as a result of our being immersed in culture is a necessary condition for the development of our true nature. Our "true" nature is thus different from the "raw" immediate nature consciousness takes itself to possess as a "given", whereas the 'Ich' – in a more Rousseauian vein – appears to suggest that, in society, we have become alienated from a nature that is immediately given to each individual, and that it is through our becoming conscious of this alienation (effected by the nephew's antics) that we are able to (partly) return to this nature. Hegel's elaboration, in which he stresses that the inherent goal of the process of *Bildung* can only be the production of a general nature – both of spirit and of the individual self – can be read as a reply to this claim: 'Zweck und Inhalt desselben [of 'das Selbst', AG] gehört allein der allgemeinen Substanz selbst an und kann nur ein Allgemeines sein; die Besonderheit einer Natur, die Zweck und Inhalt wird, ist etwas *Unmächtiges* und *Unwirkliches*; sie ist eine *Art*, die sich vergeblich und lächerlich abmüht, sich ins Werk zu setzen; sie ist der Widerspruch, dem Besonderen die Wirklichkeit zu geben, die unmittelbar das Allgemeine ist.'<sup>212</sup> In Hegel's eyes, people such as the 'Ich' are wrong in seeing the return to (part of) an individual nature as the main goal of actions such as the nephew's; if this were their only goal these actions would indeed be 'vergeblich' and merely 'lächerlich'.

210 Ibid., pp. 4-5.

211 The metaphor is slightly reminiscent of Hegel's remark at the start of his discussion of the *Welt der Bildung*: 'Seine wahre *ursprüngliche Natur* und Substanz ist der Geist der *Entfremdung* des *natürlichen Seins*.' Cf. the discussion on p. 122 ff.

212 *PhdG*, p. 364. *GWIX*, p. 268.



The exchange with Diderot's text becomes explicit when Hegel addresses the issue of conceiving of 'das Allgemeine' as an 'Art': in quoting *Rameau's Neffe*,<sup>213</sup> the sentence can be read as an attempt to answer and nuance the claim made in this text: 'Art ist nicht ganz dasselbe, was *Espèce*, "von allen Spitznamen der fürchterlichste; denn er bezeichnet die Mittelmäßigkeit und drückt die höchste Stufe der Verachtung aus."<sup>214</sup> From the start of the *Bildung* section Hegel thus appears to structure his discussion partly by means of a dialogical interchange with Diderot's text.<sup>215</sup> This interchange continues in Hegel's discussion of the interaction between 'das zerrissene Bewußtsein' and 'das ehrliche Bewußtsein' (which bears close resemblance to the 'Er' and the 'Ich'), in which Hegel – like Diderot – not only focuses on the two forms of consciousness being involved in a world of infinite judgement and dissimulation, but also on how this world is reflected in the language that is used by these two characters.<sup>216</sup>

In *Rameaus Neffe*, Diderot presents the interaction between the 'Ich' and the 'Er' as one in which both are intrigued by the other, but also betray a failure to understand this other. Not only that, the nephew admits that he has no idea who he is himself ('Der Teufel hole mich, wenn Ich im Grunde weiß, wer Ich bin'<sup>217</sup>), as he always plays the role he is expected to play in a particular social setting:

Ich war ihr kleiner Rameau, ihr artiger Rameau, ihr Rameau der Narr, der Unverschämte, der Unwissende, der Faule, der Fresser, der Schalksnarr, das große Tier. Jedes dieses Beiwörter galt mir ein Lächeln, eine Liebkosung, einen kleinen Schlag auf die Achsel, eine Ohrfeige, einen Fußtritt, bei Tafel einen guten Bissen, den man mir auf den Teller warf, nach Tische eine Freiheit, die ich mir nahm, als wenn es nichts bedeutete, denn ich bin ohne Bedeutung, Man macht aus mir, vor mir, mit mir alles, was man will, ohne das er mir auffällt.<sup>218</sup>

In their discussion, the 'Ich', in spite of the nephew's protestations to the contrary (and his depiction of the roles he plays), increasingly convinces himself that – at heart – the nephew possesses a tender soul: 'ungeachtet Eurer Rolle, die so elend, verworfen,

213 Although Hegel indicates – by means of inverted comma's – that the phrase is a quotation, he never mentions the source of the text. Cf. the discussion of Hegel's adaptation of Diderot's text on p. 156 ff.

214 *PhdG*, pp. 364-365. *GW IX*, p. 268. Hegel's rather nuanced and tentative phrasing 'nicht ganz dasselbe' may be explained by a wish to do justice to the positions presented by Diderot's text, and to subsequently develop these positions (and his own) dialogically.

215 As Smith (*The Spirit and Its Letter*, p. 210) points out, Hegel's discussion of *Bildung* as a world of alienation is more or less framed between two (indirect) quotations from *Le Neveu de Rameau*: the first being the reference to the '*Espèce*' quoted above and the second being the reference to the nephew in his role as insane musician on *PhdG*, p. 387. *GW IX*, pp. 283-284.

216 As we already saw above, the language used by the 'Ich' is characterized by its being judgemental and encyclopedic, whereas the 'Er's use of language reveals the inherent duplicity of his world: 'Er bringt Lob und Tadel zur Sprache', and in doing so reveals the truth (as being neither one thing nor the other, but the interaction of both): '[Er] treibt die Wahrheit hervor'.

217 *Rameaus Neffe*, p. 40.

218 *Rameaus Neffe*, p. 14.

niederträchtig und abscheulich ist, habt Ihr im Grunde eine zarte Seele.<sup>219</sup> Again, Diderot – and this may well have inspired Hegel's portrayal of 'das einfache Bewußtsein' – presents the philosopher as someone who is continuously at pains to judge whatever he is presented with.<sup>220</sup>

The 'Ich' not only finds it very difficult to judge the nephew's actions, he appears to be similarly bewildered by his language, and admits to being at a loss whether he should take the nephew's words as 'Ironie oder Wahrheit': 'Laßt mich bekennen, ich unterscheide nicht, ob Ihr redlicher- oder boshafterweise redet. Ich bin ein gerader Mann, seid so gut und geht aufrichtig mit mir zu Werke, laßt Eure Kunst beiseite.'<sup>221</sup> The nephew has understood the duplicitous nature of society, and has adopted its equally duplicitous language (and in being ironical, is simultaneously true to the essence of his world).<sup>222</sup> The philosopher's words, on the other hand, appear to be direct and straightforward, but are equally ironical, albeit in a different sense: unlike the nephew, the philosopher is unaware of the irony of what he says. The philosopher takes himself to be honest, and presents himself as such, but fails to understand – and here lies the irony of his words – that his position is just as much a role as those taken on by the nephew. He equally fails to understand that the nephew is not merely 'boshaft', as he cannot but be 'redlich' in order to function in society, and that a clear-cut either/or judgement is too simple.

If we now turn to Hegel's discussion of 'das ehrliche Bewußtsein' and its language, we see that it contains many verbal echoes from Diderot's text,<sup>223</sup> and that it can indeed be read as a further elaboration on the character of the 'Ich' and its world:<sup>224</sup>

wenn [...] das gerade Bewußtsein das Gute und das Edle, das sich in seiner Äußerung Gleichhaltende [...] auf die einzige Weise, die hier möglich ist, in Schutz nimmt [...], so hat dies Bewußtsein, indem es zu widersprechen meinte, damit nur den Inhalt der Rede des Geistes in eine triviale Wesen zusammengefaßt, welche gedankenlos, indem sie das *Gegenteil* des Edlen und Guten zur *Bedingung* und *Notwendigkeit* des Edlen und Guten macht, etwas anderes zu sagen meint als dies, daß das edel und gut Genannte in seinem Wesen das Verkehrte seiner selbst, so wie das Schlechte umgekehrt das Vortreffliche ist.<sup>225</sup>

219 *Rameaus Neffe*, p. 39.

220 The words used by 'das ehrliche Bewußtsein' to voice his judgements indeed appear to echo those of the 'Ich': 'schändlich', 'niederträchtig' (*PhdG*, p. 388, *GW IX*, p. 284). Another aspect the philosopher shares with honest consciousness is the assumption that an outward manifestation presupposes an inner, 'given' core: the philosopher 'takes' the nephew to have a good heart.

221 *Rameaus Neffe*, pp. 38-39.

222 Cf. the discussion of 'das zerrissene Bewußtsein' in section 4.3.2.

223 Cf. Hegel's use of the word 'gerade' in the quotation that follows.

224 As I will argue below, in the light of both the placement (cf. n. 215) and the abundance of references and allusions to *Rameaus Neffe*, the 'Welt der Bildung' section as a whole can be seen as Hegel's dialogical elaboration of Diderot's text.

225 *PhdG*, p. 388. *GW IX*, p. 284.

‘Hier’ can be taken either to refer to ‘die Welt der Bildung’ as a whole, or, more directly, to Diderot’s depiction of the ‘Ich’ as the self-proclaimed honest philosopher who opposes himself to a world he sees as both artful and vile. Through Hegel’s elaboration, ‘gerade’ is turned into an example of the duplicitous language of the spirit of *Bildung*: whereas the philosopher simply takes himself to be honest, and is not aware of the problematic aspects involved in his position, Hegel fully develops these aspects and in doing so reveals that ‘gerade’ should also be read as indicating a dogmatic consciousness that can only think along straight (‘gerade’) lines, and for whom the world is either ‘good’ or ‘bad’. As Hegel shows, what ‘das gerade Bewußtsein’ fails to see is that, since ‘good’ and ‘bad’ can only be understood in relation to each other, they are not absolute but relative values: something is ‘good’ or ‘bad’ only in a particular context, through which what was thought to be inherently good (such as sacrificing yourself for the general good) can be perverted (‘verkehrt’) and shown to be bad from a different perspective (sacrificing yourself involves complete disregard for your individual perspective).<sup>226</sup> Similarly, the philosopher’s remark that he is unable to make a judgement (‘ich unterscheide nicht’) reveals that judging the world is precisely what he does, and this irony is further developed, both in Hegel’s text by his elaboration on honest consciousness as a character involved in continuous judgement, but also by Diderot himself, as the ‘Er’ reveals that the people he consorts with have indeed understood that things are not always what they seem, and that it is more important to be seen as good than to merely proclaim that you are good. The nephew ironically adds, and this remark is also echoed by Hegel,<sup>227</sup> that it is important to add an ‘honest face’ when you want to be believed: ‘Und dann haben wir auch so durchdrungene Mienen, ein so wahrhaftes Aussehen.’<sup>228</sup>

Hegel’s discussion of ‘das gerade Bewußtsein’ not only shows the ‘Verkehrung’ inherent in its monosyllabic judgements,<sup>229</sup> but also focuses on its predilection for anecdotes or examples, with which it aims to show that absolute values actually exist:

Ersetzt das einfache Bewußtsein diesen geistlosen *Gedanken* durch die *Wirklichkeit* des Vortrefflichen, indem es dasselbe in dem *Beispiele* eines fingierten Falles oder auch eine wahre Anekdote aufführt und so zeigt, daß es kein leerer Name, sondern *vorhanden* ist, so steht die *allgemeine* Wirklichkeit des verkehrten Tuns der ganzen realen Welt entgegen, worin jedes Beispiel nur etwas ganz Vereinzelt, eine *Espèce*

226 Hegel thus also develops the irony of the philosopher’s judgement of *himself* as ‘ein gerader Mann’: it is impossible to tell what you are from your particular perspective. On Hegel’s analysis of ‘Selbstaussagen’, cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, pp. 369-373.

227 See *PhdG*, p. 365, *GW IX*, p. 268, on ‘die ehrliche Miene’. Cf. the discussion of this passage on p. 124. In the context of the remarks in *Rameaus Neffe*, Hegel’s words on the ‘German’ consciousness cannot be read other than highly ironical.

228 *Rameaus Neffe*, p. 39.

229 Cf. p. 147.

ausmacht; und das Dasein des Guten und Edlen als eine einzelne Anekdote, sei sie fingiert oder wahr, darstellen, ist das Bitterste, was von ihm gesagt werden kann.<sup>230</sup>

Not only does this passage contain a verbal echo from *Rameaus Neffe* ('Espèce'), it also reflects the way the 'Ich' contributes to the dialogue. Apart from very short affirmations ('Es ist wahr', 'So ist's auch', 'Das ist sehr ermüdend') or questions, the philosopher occasionally comes up with (rather boring) stories about people who appear to have acted with only the best interest of others in mind.<sup>231</sup> Hegel's remarks can thus, again, be seen as an elaboration of what is implicit in Diderot's portrayal of the 'Ich'. What is problematic about honest consciousness' use of examples, Hegel argues, is that they are presented as entirely individual and exceptional cases, completely cut off from any context, and which have to be simply accepted as 'Angaben' of moral excellence. In its reliance on *Einzelfälle*, honest consciousness also contradicts its basic assumption of the good as being eternal and unchangeable,<sup>232</sup> in relation to which the experience made by individual consciousness is seen as completely inessential and irrelevant (as that which 'nur beiherspielt').<sup>233</sup> In spite of the 'Verkehrung' of its position, 'das einfache Bewußtsein' still fails to see it needs to interact with what it takes – and judges – to be (in) essential, and that in order to do so it will have to allow both what it takes to be the essence and its example to play their part in the 'vermittelnde Bewegung' that ultimately constitutes truth.

If the references to Diderot in the discussion of the way simple consciousness expresses itself (apart from the 'Espèce') are still rather oblique and indirect, in order to illustrate the polyphonic language of 'das zerrissene Bewußtsein', Hegel explicitly quotes from *Rameaus Neffe*: 'Diese Rede ist die Verrücktheit des Musikers, der "dreißig Arien, italienische, französische, tragische, komische, von aller Art Charakter, häufte und vermischte; bald mit einem tiefen Baß stieg er bis in die Hölle, dann zog er die Kehle zusammen, und mit einem Fistelton zerriß er die Höhe der Lüfte ..., wechselweise rasend, besänftigt, gebieterisch und spöttisch.'<sup>234</sup> The nephew is able to adopt any voice, any

230 *PhdG*, p. 388. *GW IX*, pp. 284-285.

231 Cf. *Rameaus Neffe*, pp. 30-31, where the philosopher tells about an acquaintance of his who had been disinherited, but who immediately came to his parents' rescue after they had been treated harshly by his elder brother.

232 See *PhdG*, p. 367, *GW IX*, p. 269-270. Cf. the discussion of this passage on p. 73. See also James Hulbert, 'Diderot in the Text of Hegel: A Question of Intertextuality', *Studies in Romanticism*, Vol. 22 (Boston University, 1983), p. 287: 'Because the simple consciousness [...] has been made the spokesman for the excellent, the good and the noble, as that which *endures unchangingly*, it supposedly reveals the illusory nature of that vision of continuity the moment that it introduces an isolated case to support its arguments.'

233 On the specific nature of examples in Hegel's thought, and their importance, cf. ch. 3, pp. 99-101.

234 *PhdG*, p. 387, *GW IX*, pp. 284-285. In *Rameaus Neffe*, the passage continues with the 'Ich' again resorting to a very suggestive 'Selbstgespräch' in which he aims to investigate the feelings evoked by the nephew's performance: 'Bewunderte ich ihn? Ja, ich bewunderte. War ich gerührt und mitleidig? Ich war gerührt und mitleidig, doch ein lächerlicher Zug war in dieser Gefühle verschmolzen und nahm ihnen ihre Natur.' (p. 59) Even in a dialogue with himself, the 'Ich' cannot but be repetitive, and fails to add anything new. Although he admits to being confused about the precise nature of his feelings, this confusion does not make him

style, so that we never know who or what we are listening to, and, like the philosopher, never know whether we can take him seriously.<sup>235</sup> In order to reveal the disrupted nature of both itself and the society it lives in, 'das zerrissene Bewußtsein' actively disrupts and mixes up everything,<sup>236</sup> so that it becomes impossible to draw any definitive conclusions with regard to what is authentic or true. Yet even though the nephew has understood that what is true can never lie in a single example, as it is not a 'bleibende Wesenheit', he does not (or cannot) move beyond his disruptive stance in which he 'wechselweise' takes on different voices and fails to produce any interaction within the 'Verkehrung aller Begriffe und Realitäten' he has brought about. What is still needed is an interaction with what presents itself that allows the different voices within spirit to make themselves heard 'zugleich', rather than 'wechselweise', so that an interaction can indeed take place.

If we can now conclude that a greater part of Hegel's discussion of the *Welt der Bildung* can be read as an exchange with Diderot's text (via Goethe's translation), how exactly are we meant to interpret this interaction? Hegel, as we saw above, appears to do more than just simply use Diderot's portraits of the nephew and the philosopher as examples of the two forms of consciousness that represent this world. Both Diderot and Hegel aim to show that the two characters remain locked within their own particular perspectives on the world – and do no more than judge, reject, mock or repeat what the other says – and that they both fail to understand that they can only develop themselves and their particular outlook if they critically interact with each other and with themselves. Hegel's incorporation of *Rameaus Neffe* goes beyond mere quotation or repetition and can be seen as an attempt to answer – or, rather, nuance and further elaborate on – the issues raised by Diderot's text. What Hegel's text thus tries to achieve is to move beyond the *Welt der Bildung* precisely by dialogically interacting with one of its most eloquent representations, and in doing so aim to reveal that it is only by means of such interaction that we can go forward.<sup>237</sup> The *Bildung* of spirit, Hegel appears to suggest, can only truly

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leave his either/ or outlook. For the 'Ich', there is such a thing as 'ihre Natur', and any confusion is simply attributed to the nephew's performance, who is simultaneously serious and playful.

235 Speight convincingly stresses the self-conscious aspect of the nephew's performance: 'what "playing with a mask" means is that an actor is both "in" and "out" of a role within a play, both imitator and spectator.' (op. cit., p. 79, cf. also p. 82). What is not possible for the nephew, however, is to move beyond being either an imitator or a spectator.

236 '[er] zerriß' is Goethe's translation of 'il déchirait'.

237 In this respect, I therefore do not agree with Jauss, who argues that Hegel merely makes use of the Diderot text in order to illustrate 'die dialektische Überwindung des *entfremdeten Geistes*' – which for Jauss is also illustrated by the fact that, in Hegel's text, Diderot's dialogue is turned into a form of indirect discourse. Thus, Jauss argues, the antithesis that manifests itself in *Le Neveu de Rameau* is resolved in the *Phänomenologie*: 'indem Hegel die antagonistischen Individuen Diderots zu Gestalten der allgemeinen Dialektik der Geschichte erhebt, geht der Dialog in den erzählenden Diskurs der *Phänomenologie* über und löst sich die Antithese der Standpunkte in Schritte auf dem Weg des Geistes zu sich selbst auf. Erst die Auflösung der dialogischen Beziehung von *Moi* und *Lui* macht die ersten Person Diderots zum naiven ehrlichen, die zweite zum zerrissenen, aber *sich selbst klaren* Bewußtsein und erhöht die Tragik des Neffen, kein Genie zu sein, zum Leiden an der Gesellschaft, die ihren Selbstwiderspruch noch nicht erkennt.' (op. cit., p. 476). This interpretation does justice neither to Diderot nor to Hegel: Diderot frequently intimates that the nephew has a thorough understanding of his own position and predicament (cf. the discussion on p. 155),

take place when it interacts with *Bildung*, with the ways in which spirit has externalized itself. For consciousness as the protagonist, this involves interaction with a particular cultural formation such as the highly artificial society of prerevolutionary France, while for the phenomenologist 'wir', in which Hegel as the author is implicated, this involves an exchange with texts that capture and express a particular formation of spirit.<sup>238</sup>

As most commentators on Hegel's interaction with *Rameaus Neffe* have indicated,<sup>239</sup> Hegel mostly refers to *Rameaus Neffe* by means of liberal paraphrase or rather loose quotation,<sup>240</sup> and, in fact, never explicitly mentions either Diderot or the name of his dialogue. Speight interestingly argues that Hegel does so to emphasize the theatricality of the *Welt der Bildung*, in which individuals are identified by the roles they play and are seen merely as anonymous types: 'Like the simple third- and first person pronouns that characterize the interlocutors in Diderot's dialogue, Hegel's rendering of the "chatter" of agency in the world of culture is one of anonymous and self-constructed selves.'<sup>241</sup> However, Hegel's rather relaxed attitude towards the original might also be explained by his continuous rejection of there being a pure given we can be immediately acquainted with. Through his particular appropriation of the text – which had already been mediated by Goethe's translation – Hegel aims to show that there is no such thing as a text we have immediate access to, and which we can immediately understand. The language of *Bildung*, the 'Rede des Geistes von und über sich selbst', is essentially someone else's language, and is either (by 'das einfache Bewußtsein') simply adopted and repeated, or, in the case of 'das zerrissene Bewußtsein', perverted and disrupted in order to reveal the disruption brought about by adapting to the world of culture.<sup>242</sup> Hegel's particular use of Diderot's text can be seen, as David Price argues, as '[instantiating] the very argument

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which is simultaneously a comment on contemporary society, and it is precisely this aspect that Hegel further develops (through dialogical interaction rather than mere appropriation, as I have argued above).

238 The *Phänomenologie* both explicitly and implicitly interacts with a great number of texts and/or their authors: the Bible, *Antigone*, *Faust* (or, rather, most of Goethe's works), Kant, Rousseau, Dante's *La Divina Commedia* etc., etc. As in the case of Diderot, he hardly ever mentions the author, which Smith (op. cit., p. 171) explains thus: 'Hegel rarely mentions philosophers, especially contemporaries by name. Rather, he treats the struggle of philosophers for authority before an audience as an interplay of systematic discourses which has a necessity beyond authorship.' For an interesting discussion of Hegel's method, and his 'parasitical' employment of literary sources (specifically of Aristophanes), see Karin de Boer, 'The Eternal Irony of the Community: Aristophanian Echoes in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*', *Inquiry* Vol. 52, No 4 (August 2009), pp. 311-334.

239 E.g. Speight (op. cit., p. 82), Jauss (op. cit., p. 488 ff.), Hulbert (op. cit., pp. 278-280).

240 Not many commentators, however, have revealed the sheer abundance of (verbal) echoes from Diderot's text. Hegel's presentation of 'das gerade Bewußtsein', which I discussed above, is just one of these echoes, but there are many more. An interesting example is Hegel's discussion of 'der (einsame) Monarch', who towards the end of *Rameaus Neffe* is introduced (by the nephew) as the only member in society who does not need to adopt a particular role ('In einem ganzen Königreiche gibt es nur einen Menschen, der grad vor sich hingeht, den Souverän, das übrige alles nimmt Positionen') and can simply do as he pleases. The philosopher disagrees and argues that even the monarch depends on society, and cannot but adopt a particular position. See *Rameaus Neffe*, p. 74. Smith (*The Spirit and Its Letter*, pp. 209-210) provides an interesting discussion of this passage.

241 Speight, p. 82.

242 Kristeva (op. cit.), pp. 200-201 and p. 204, emphasizes the fragmented (and even spasmodic) nature of the nephew's language.



he presents in the section “Culture”. [...] Hegel’s method of narrative construction performs [the] alienating or externalizing process [of *Bildung*, AG] by taking on and re-inscribing the text of Diderot. Hegel establishes an intertextual dialectic through which the already written words of Diderot mold and give voice to Hegel’s own writing.<sup>243</sup> Yet, as I have argued above, Hegel’s ‘intertextual dialectic’ also aims to move beyond being an instantiation of the process of alienation and externalization characteristic of the world of *Bildung*. Hegel’s text is neither a mere ‘monosyllabic’ repetition (i.e. literal quotation) nor a pure disruption of Diderot’s text, but rather aims at the dialogical development of the issues and tensions raised in *Rameaus Neffe*.<sup>244</sup> One of the effects of this dialogical interaction is that the two texts mediate and change each other: not only the meaning of words (‘gerade’) and concepts, such as ‘Art’, is informed by the (implicit) exchange with Diderot’s text, but we also saw that the irony of a number of words or expressions (such as ‘die ehrliche Miene’) is developed through interaction with the other text.

Finally, it could be argued that the function *Rameaus Neffe* performs in Hegel’s *Phänomenologie* bears a striking resemblance to the role played by the nephew in Diderot’s dialogue: the role of ‘the Other’, the strange element who, like the ‘sourdough’, actively stirs

243 David W. Price, ‘Hegel’s Intertextual Dialectic: Diderot’s *Le Neveu de Rameau* in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*,’ in Jon Stewart (ed.), *The Phenomenology of Spirit Reader* (New York: SUNY Press, 1998), p. 277. In this sense, Hegel can be said to be involved in the type of writing Bakhtin called ‘ventriloquism’, in the sense that he writes ‘through’ language rather than in language that is seen as an immediate given. Cf. the discussion on ch. 3, p. 83. Cf. also Smith, op. cit., p. 207: ‘With the highest form of alienation – rhetorical mastery of Otherness, that is, of all modes of expression and the ability to appropriate and invert any rhetorical position – the individual reaches the highest form of *Bildung*. The Spirit arrives at its true form only after it has passed through this process of self-loss (*Zerrissenheit*) in the language of others.’

244 In the sections that follow the discussion of *Bildung*, Hegel continues to interact with Diderot’s text. In the section on the Enlightenment Hegel starts by looking back on the experience of the two forms of consciousness that represent the *Welt der Bildung*, by making use of a rather violent image (disrupted consciousness is said to be ‘durch alle Momente ihres Daseins hindurch gerädert und an allen Knöcheln zerschlagen’, *PhdG*, p. 399, *GW IX*, p. 292). In the next section, where Hegel discusses the battle between faith and Enlightenment, he again intimates the violent character of the experience. The spirit of Enlightenment is said to spread itself like a disease (an ‘Ansteckung’, cf. the discussion of this metaphor in n. 019) and then to simply shove faith aside. This sentence again contains a quotation from *Rameaus Neffe*: ‘nun ein unsichtbarer und unbemerkter Geist, durchschleicht sie die edlen Teile durch und durch und hat sich bald aller Eingeweide und Glieder des bewußtlosen Götzen gründlich bemächtigt, und ‘an einem schönen Morgen gibt sie mit dem Ellbogen dem Kameraden einen Schub, und Bautz, Baradautz! Der Götze liegt am Boden.’ (*PhdG*, p. 403, *GW IX*, pp. 295-296) Again, Hegel not only quotes Diderot but dialogically develops this passage by allowing the voice of the Enlightenment to react, a voice that optimistically intimates that ultimately a ‘fine morning’ will lie in store ‘dessen Mittag nicht blutig ist’. Hegel’s irony in this passage is obvious when he suggests that the Enlightenment’s trust in the power of knowledge (which Hegel subtly suggests to be in doubt since ‘man weiß nicht wie’) is simply faith in a different guise: ‘– An einem schönen Morgen, dessen Mittag nicht blutig ist, wenn die Ansteckung alle Organe des geistiges Lebens durchdrungen hat; nur das Gedächtnis bewahrt dann noch als eine, man weiß nicht wie, vergangene Geschichte die tote Weise der vorigen Gestalt des Geistes auf; und die neue, für die Anbetung erhöhte Schlange der Weisheit hat auf diese Weise nur eine welke Haut schmerzlos abgestreift.’ (*PhdG*, pp. 403-404, *GW IX*, p. 296). It is only by allowing for an interaction between the different voices or shapes in which a previous shape is not simply treated as dead skin and discarded can spirit ultimately come into its own. It is only from the perspective of the phenomenological we, therefore, that this passage is truly dialogical. Cf. Pahl, op. cit., pp. 175-177, who convincingly argues that it is precisely the disruptive aspect of consciousness’ experience (and the concomitant emotion of absolute fear) that allows for mediation between shapes of consciousness.



things up and thus allows for further development.<sup>245</sup> In *Rameaus Neffe*, the nephew explains that his role (and perhaps the 'Ich's role as well) is ultimately that of the fool: 'Es gibt keine Beßre Rolle bei den Großen als die Rolle des Narren. Lange gab es einen wirklich betitelten Narren des Königs; niemals hat jemand den Titel eines Weisen des Königs getragen. Ich bin der Narr Bertins und mehrere andern, Eurer vielleicht in diesem Augenblick, vielleicht seid Ihr der meine. Wer weise wäre, hätte keine Narren, wer einen Narren hat, ist nicht weise, und ist er nicht weise, so ist er ein Narr, und vielleicht wäre der König der Narr seines Narren.'<sup>246</sup> Bakhtin, in his essay 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel' extensively discusses the function of the fool and puts forward the following observation, which sheds an interesting light on the role – and the words – of the nephew:

They [the rogue, clown and fool] are life's maskers; their being coincides with their role, and outside this role they simply do not exist.

Essential to these three figures is a distinctive feature that is as well a privilege – the right to be "other" in this world, the right not to make common cause with any single one of the categories that life makes available; none of these categories quite suits them, they see the underside and the falseness of every situation. Therefore, they can exploit any position they choose, but only as a mask. [...] They re-establish the public nature of the human figure: the entire being of characters such as these is, after all, utterly on the surface; everything is brought out on to the square, so to speak; their entire function consists in externalizing things (true enough, it is not their own being they externalize, but a reflected alien being – however, that is all they have).<sup>247</sup>

What the fool does is reveal the masquerading and falsity of the world he lives in by bringing it to light and by exposing the pretentiousness of its truth claims. What the fool also exposes is the pretense that there ultimately is a true, authentic and purely individual self that we can return to after having gone through the *Welt der Bildung*. The 'Rückkehr in das Selbst' is rather the reverse: it is a relinquishing of the idea of such a determinate self, through which we allow ourselves to become part of – or return to – the self as an intersubjective and interactive generality.

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245 Cf. Smith, op. cit, p. 215, who suggests that Hegel walks on a tightrope between a dialogical and a monological approach: 'because Hegel requires an Other to attain understanding, he is just as "dialogic" as Diderot and their common model, Socrates; and yet he always threatens to collapse into monological dialectics since that Other becomes appropriated to his own discourse.' As I argued before (e.g. in section 3.4.1), Hegel appears to escape this threat by the inclusion of an 'emergent' position within the text, a 'wir' that dialogically develops in the course of the *Phänomenologie*.

246 *Rameaus Neffe*, p. 43.

247 Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 159-160.

What the fool does not do is pretend that he can lay claim to the truth; all that he can hope for is that his actions will ultimately contribute to a better understanding of who and what we are. Significantly, Diderot's dialogue is open ended: 'Der lacht wohl, der zuletzt lacht.'<sup>248</sup> I would argue that this open ended approach to the truth characterizes not only the exchange with *Rameaus Neffe* but Hegel's dialectical method in general: it is only through a continuous dialogical questioning, modifying and adjustment that the truth – as that which is produced by the 'vermittelnde Bewegung' of different perspectives – will ultimately come to the fore.<sup>249</sup> It is this dialogical aspect that – as we saw above – is absent in the world of *Bildung*, and which, as I will discuss in the next chapter, is still shown to lack when consciousness presents itself in the shape of conscience, but which will ultimately manifest itself in the spirit of reconciliation.

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<sup>248</sup> *Rameaus Neffe*, p. 77.

<sup>249</sup> I therefore do not agree with Schmidt (op. cit., p. 642), who argues that Hegel's interpretation of *Rameaus Neffe* suggests that the nephew ultimately 'wins' the discussion: 'Where Diderot closed the dialogue without deciding who had carried the argument, in Hegel's transformation of the dialogue the Nephew has the last laugh, while the "peaceful consciousness" is reduced to silence.'



## Chapter 5 From beautiful soul to absolute knowing: from empty ‘Selbstgespräch’ to spirit speaking with its other

In the previous chapter we saw that in the world of *Bildung* consciousness finds itself caught up in a world – and language – of judgement from which it is unable to escape, and which does not allow for the development of a self it can recognize as its own. The only means available of not becoming implicated in the practice of judging and being judged appeared to be to take up an ironical stance and to pervert the world of judgement. We also saw, however, that this approach does not allow for any constructive communication between the two predominant forms of consciousness: ‘das ehrliche Bewußtsein’ and ‘das zerrissene Bewußtsein’. The question that does remain is therefore in what way consciousness is to express itself so that it is able to communicate and interact – with itself and with its world – in such a way that it allows for the development of a self, a world and a language it can recognize as its own. How can that which was disrupted and torn apart in the world of judgement be made to interact in a meaningful way? What do we need in order to move beyond the world of judgement? Again, an answer is provided by language, which, when the practice of judgement is driven to an extreme by consciousness in the shape of *die schöne Seele*, reveals its potentiality as a mediating force, and ultimately allows for reconciliation of consciousness with its other. In this chapter I will discuss in what way Hegel’s discussion of consciousness’ experience in its final shapes – as conscience (and the beautiful soul as its most extreme manifestation), as religion and as absolute knowing – provides us with possible strategies through which we can transform language into a medium in which ‘Geist verhält sich zu sich selbst’, in which all the voices that make up spirit can really speak to and with each other.

### 5.1 Das Gewissen. Die schöne Seele, das Böse und seine Verzeihung: conscience as self speaking to the self

After going through the world of ethical life – in which spirit feels immediately at home but does not yet develop a sense of self – and the world of *Bildung* in which spirit arrives at an alienated or disrupted sense of self, the chapter on *Geist* ends with a discussion of (Kantian) morality, as the formation of spirit in which *Geist* does ultimately acquire self-consciousness (‘Der seiner selbst gewisse Geist’) when it – as conscience – comes to see itself as a being that feels it is able to act completely in accordance with its own convictions. As the title suggests, Hegel in this section mainly focuses on a particular

and rather extreme manifestation of conscience, i.e. that of the ‘beautiful soul,’<sup>1</sup> whose beauty appears to reside in a strictly personal autonomy and a concomitant refusal to allow the purity of what it sees as its authentic duty and motives to be corrupted by action. We will come to see that its development entails that, as beautiful soul, consciousness finds it is unable to return to an authentic and strictly individual self that it assumed to be immediately given. It is precisely this form of selfhood – which the beautiful soul religiously clings to – that will have to be relinquished in order to come to a self we can recognize as belonging to all.

The title also suggests that there is a dialogical aspect to the dialectics of conscience – conscience as a form of “Selbstgespräch” – which ultimately produces a reconciliation (‘Verzeihung’). However, this (possibility of) reconciliation is only attained at the very end, since the beautiful soul for a long time stubbornly refuses to speak to anything but itself and is afraid to open up to other perspectives. Hegel’s discussion of the beautiful soul – with its harsh judgements and esoteric language, its ultimate silencing and the breaking of its hard heart – appears to preclude a dialogical development of experience. The ultimate reconciliation with its other – the form of consciousness the beautiful soul condemned as being depraved and beyond repair – consists of nothing but ‘Ja’, so that it appears that we are left guessing as to how – and in what language – we are to proceed. It is clear that we have to move beyond the world and the language of judgement, and to transform our language in such a way that we can further develop and arrive at a ‘Rückkehr in das Selbst’ that allows us to fully recognize and acknowledge ourselves, but how are we to do this? The first section of this chapter, on Hegel’s analysis of conscience, will mainly discuss how we are not to do this, and what we can learn from that.

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1 Throughout the *Geist* chapter, Hegel develops his thoughts (partly) by means of an interaction with literary works: *Antigone* in the *Sittlichkeit* section and, as we saw above, *Rameaus Neffe* in the discussion of *Bildung*. In discussing the (Romantic) conception of the beautiful soul, Hegel alludes to many (contemporary) works in which this idea is developed. For an interesting discussion of the question whether Hegel’s discussion of the beautiful soul is to be interpreted as a form of critique of contemporary thought and literature or as an example that allows him to systematically develop his position, see Dietmar Köhler, ‘Hegels Gewissensdialektik’ in Dietmar Köhler/ Otto Pöggeler (hrsg.), *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006), pp. 211-227. I tend to agree with Köhler, who argues that Hegel uses contemporary sources not in order to simply attack them, but rather as illustrations, that are to be seen ‘als paradigmatisch für den Erfahrungsprozeß des moralischen Bewußtseins’ (p. 217) and which thus allow Hegel to introduce the reader ‘in die unterschiedlichen “Etappen” der Erfahrungsgeschichte des Bewußtseins und damit zugleich wesentliche Grundbegriffe einer “Philosophie des Geistes” [zu] explizieren.’ (pp. 217-218). In the chapter on *Bildung* I also argued that Hegel is not so much interested in criticizing a particular culture, but rather in the question what studying a particular culture can reveal about the dialectical development of *Geist*, and that he wants us to understand that such processes are not specifically linked to a particular (historical) culture but may also be found in our own. Hegel’s (alleged) sources in his discussion of the beautiful soul, and the use he makes of it, will be discussed in more detail below.

### 5.1.1 Conscience as *Geist's* 'return to itself'

In the first two parts of the section on morality, Hegel discusses what he calls the 'moralische Weltanschauung', a formation of consciousness that sees itself as both having the freedom and the ability to determine itself in accordance with what it considers the right thing to be done. According to the moral worldview – of which Hegel seems to see Kantian moral philosophy as the most important representative – the individual is completely self-legislating and has a duty to perform that which it has rationally determined to be authoritative for itself (and in which it is to completely set aside its natural inclinations, and purely listen to the voice of reason).<sup>2</sup> Hegel emphasizes that the moral worldview ultimately gets entangled in paradoxes, when it becomes clear that consciousness is unable to reconcile its purely subjective stance on what is to be done with the demand that its subjective reason for acting be universalized and is valid from an objective point of view.<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of the conscience section, Hegel summarizes the situation as follows:

Die Antinomie der moralischen Weltanschauung, daß es ein moralisches Bewußtsein gibt und daß es keines gibt, – oder daß das Gelten der Pflicht ein Jenseits des Bewußtseins ist und umgekehrt nur in ihm stattfindet, war in die Vorstellung zusammengefaßt worden, worin das nichtmoralische Bewußtsein für moralisch gelte, sein zufälliges Wissen und Wollen für vollwichtig angenommen und die Glückseligkeit ihm aus Gnade zuteil werde. Diese sich selbst widersprechende Vorstellung nahm das moralische Bewußtsein nicht über sich, sondern verlegte sie in ein ihm anderes Wesen.<sup>4</sup>

The individual consciousness finds that it can never be purely moral in that it always finds that its actions are tainted by its natural inclinations: it always needs a sensuous motivation in order to perform what it sees as its duty. Besides, in performing its duty in the hope that it will be rewarded with happiness (which can only be granted as an act of grace; if we were certain of the outcome we would not perform duty for duty's sake), it also posits a purely moral being as a transcendent ideal (a *Jenseits*) that is both capable of granting happiness and of validating duty as a moral law that is to hold for all.

2 Although many key elements of Kantian moral doctrine (and phrases such as 'ein *ganzes Nest* gedankenloser Widersprüche' (*PhdG*, p. 453, *GW IX*, p. 332), which echoes Kant's remark (*KrV*, B 637) that 'ein ganzes Nest von dialektischen Anmaßungen' lies hidden in the cosmological argument) are included in the moral worldview, Hegel's main interest is not to specifically attack Kant, but rather to show why a view such as Kant's is ultimately in need of further development. Cf. Köhler, op. cit., p. 218. A discussion of the question whether or not Hegel does justice to Kant's moral philosophy lies beyond the scope of this study. On this question, see also Köhler, op. cit., p. 213.

3 As Pinkard explains, "[m]orality" is objective and valid for all agents; it is also something for the sake of which an individual is to put aside his own particular interests; yet moral reasons are supposed to be posited by the individual from his own subjective point of view. [...] The "moral worldview" thus takes authoritative reasons both as transcending the individual and as not transcending the individual.' Pinkard, *The Sociality of Reason*, p. 203.

4 *PhdG*, p. 464. *GW IX*, pp. 340-341.

A way out of this contradiction may be found in the (romantic) focus on individual and concrete conscience as a means of self-determination.<sup>5</sup> As conscience, spirit feels it has found a way to unite the two perspectives (the subjective and the objective, or the personal and the impersonal), and thus to attain self-consciousness within itself: 'es ist *in sich selbst* der einfache, seiner gewisse Geist'.<sup>6</sup> In its probing of itself, consciousness shifts away from a conception of a self that – as duty – is purely rational, formal and anonymous (and thus purely empty, Hegel continuously emphasises),<sup>7</sup> and which is completely opposed to whatever natural inclinations an individual consciousness may have, to a self that is actual ('wirklich') and concrete: 'Es ist so in sich zurückgekehrt, *konkreter* moralischer Geist, der nicht am Bewußtsein der reinen Pflicht sich einen leeren Maßstab gibt, welcher dem wirklichen Bewußtsein entgegengesetzt wäre, sondern die reine Pflicht ebenso wie die ihr entgegengesetzte Natur sind aufgehobene Momente: er ist in unmittelbare Einheit sich *verwirklichendes moralisches* Wesen und die Handlung unmittelbar *konkrete* moralische Gestalt'.<sup>8</sup> As conscience, consciousness is not so much focused on the deliberation of which duty it should perform (in which it feels it has to choose from a number of "given" and still abstract duties), but rather on the concrete act, in which *its* duty is actualized.<sup>9</sup> Consciousness acts as it sees fit in a particular case, and tries to do justice to what it has come to believe the right thing to do.<sup>10</sup> In acting, it

5 For a clear and concise exposition of the way romantic thought developed towards an appeal to conscience as a way of resolving the paradoxes inherent in the moral worldview, see Pinkard, *The Sociality of Reason*, pp. 208-213.

6 *PhdG*, p. 464. *GW IX*, p. 340. On this passage, see Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd.2, p. 618: 'Der Gedanke des Gewissens soll nun die Selbstbeurteilung des Handelnden mit der Fremdbeurteilung durch einen vorgestellten Gott als Instanz des wahrhaft Guten verbinden. Im Anruf des Gewissens soll ich mich selbst so beurteilen, wie wenn ich von außen, von anderen beurteilt wurde.'

7 See e.g. *PhdG*, p. 466, *GW IX*, p. 342: 'Als Gewissen erst hat es in seiner *Selbstgewißheit* den *Inhalt* für die vorhin leere Pflicht sowie für das leere Recht und den leeren allgemeinen Willen.'

8 *PhdG*, p. 466. *GW IX*, p. 342. This self is what Hegel calls 'das dritte Selbst' and is the self that both reflects and sublates the self that emerged from the world of 'Sittlichkeit', the empty 'Person' we came across in Hegel's discussion of the 'Rechtszustand' (see the discussion on pp. 116-117 above) and 'das zerrissene Selbst' of the 'Welt der Bildung', that had a sense of a personal self, but still found itself completely opposed to the particular culture by which it had been formed, and thus could only have a negative relation to its culture. As conscience, this third self has an understanding of itself as being formed by – and thus to belong to – a particular tradition but is also able to critically reflect both on itself and its culture. It is thus both conventional and critical, and also 'post-conventional and post-critical,' as Stekeler-Weithofer explains: 'Hegels dritte Stufe ist eine Person des Gewissens, die weder bloß konservativ denkt und handelt, noch autonomistisch-revolutionär. Eine 'gewissenhafte' Person kennt die provinzielle Lage ihrer Eigenperspektive, gerade auch in ihrer Geschichtlichkeit und der Eigenprägung durch die Tradition. Sie unterwirft sich der Bindekraft der Normativität einer Kulturtradition, welche sie allererst zu der Person macht, die sie ist, aber dies nicht blindlings [as in the 'Welt der Sittlichkeit', AG], sondern im Wissen darum, dass es auf freies Eigenurteil und freies Handeln ankommt: Nur in der Performance durch die personalen Subjekte werden und bleiben ethische Praxisformen real. Die gewissenhafte Person prüft also sowohl traditional vorgegeben Formen des Urteilens und Handelns als auch ihre eigene Gefühle und Neigungen, samt allen unmittelbaren Einfällen möglicher Kritik.' Stekeler, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, pp. 626-627.

9 *PhdG*, p. 467. *GW IX*, p. 343: 'Das Gewissen ist [...] einfaches pflichtmäßiges Handeln, das nicht diese oder jene Pflicht erfüllt, sondern das konkrete Rechte weiß und tut. Es ist überhaupt erst das moralische Handeln als Handeln, worin das vorhergehende tatlose Bewußtsein der Moralität übergegangen ist.'

10 Stekeler-Weithofer (*Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 635) rightly stresses that in acting as conscience, an individual consciousness is perfectly aware that its knowledge is fallible and corrigible: 'Der Handelnde wägt nicht alles Möglich ab, sondern versucht [...] so zu handeln, wie er es insgesamt für richtig halt, wobei er



becomes aware of the difference between the reality that presents itself and the reality it wants to bring about. It thus, in the act, comes to see what particular duty it is that it wants to fulfil, and it understands this duty as its own: 'Indem ich wirklich handle, bin ich mir eben eines *Anderen*, einer *Wirklichkeit*, die vorhanden ist, und einer, die ich hervorbringen will, bewußt, habe einen *bestimmten* Zweck und erfülle eine *bestimmte* Pflicht.'<sup>11</sup> Through actualization, duty ceases to be an abstract generality to which consciousness finds itself opposed: 'Die Pflicht ist nicht mehr das dem Selbst gegenüber tretende Allgemeine, sondern ist gewußt, in dieser Getrenntheit kein Gelten zu haben; es ist jetzt das Gesetz, das um des Selbsts willen, nicht um dessen Willen das Selbst ist.'<sup>12</sup>

The act not only allows individual consciousness to find out what its particular duty is and to acknowledge it as its own, but is also the medium through which duty becomes a '*Sein für Anderes*,'<sup>13</sup> and can as such be acknowledged by others: 'Das Tun ist [...] das Übersetzen seines *einzelnen* Inhalts in das *gegenständliche* Element, worin er allgemein und anerkannt ist, und eben dies, daß er anerkannt ist, macht die Handlung zur Wirklichkeit.'<sup>14</sup> The use of 'Übersetzen' – through its denotation of 'to translate' – already

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nicht irgendwelche herbeigeredete Pflichten erfüllt oder nicht erfüllt, sondern "das konkret [sic] Rechte weiß und tut" – wohl wissend, dass sein endliches Wissen fallibel und kritisierbar ist, samt dem Tun.' As Hegel adds a few sentences later, what is known as conscience can never be an objective, impersonal truth, but is the conviction that belongs to an individual consciousness: 'Das Gewissen hat *für sich selbst* seine Wahrheit an der unmittelbaren Gewißheit seiner selbst. Diese *unmittelbare konkrete Gewißheit* selbst ist das Wesen; sie nach dem Gegensatze des Bewußtseins betrachtet, so ist die eigene unmittelbare *Einzelheit* der Inhalt des moralischen Tuns; und die *Form* desselben ist eben dieses Selbst als reine Bewegung, nämlich als das *Wissen* oder die *eigene Überzeugung*.' (PhdG, p. 468, GW IX, p. 343)

11 PhdG, p. 468. GW IX, p. 343. What Hegel thus wants to emphasize is that we do not simply set out with a duty that we are immediately aware of; what our duty is reveals itself in its actualization.

12 PhdG, p. 469. GW IX, p. 344. The latter clause is an echo from a letter from Jacobi to Fichte: 'das Gesetz [ist] um des Menschen willen (sic) gemacht, nicht der Mensch um des Gesetzes willen.' *Jacobi an Fichte*, p. 23. Jacobi again hints at Marc 2:27. (See the annotation of this passage (p. 612) in the *Meiner* edition (1988) of the *Phänomenologie*.) Again, we see Hegel develop the dialectics inherent in the experience of a particular formation of consciousness by means of an intertextual dialogue. In writing a text that is not just a presentation of Hegel's own thought, but which also presents itself as a repository of contemporary and traditional thought, the text can be seen as an instantiation of language as the 'Dasein des Geistes', an aspect that Hegel, as we will see below, will bring into focus in relation to the language of conscience. In the sentence quoted above Hegel also brings into play the etymology of 'Gewissen': as conscience, consciousness acts on the basis of what it knows (what is 'gewußt') to be right, and this conviction is simultaneously something that it is immediately aware of (and as such is a certainty, a 'Gewißheit'). Cf. the lemma in *DWB* on 'Gewissen': 'Hegel stellt seine Begriffsbestimmung ganz auf die etymologische Grundlage [...]', and in doing so is supposed to have been inspired by Fichte, who in his *Sittenlehre* even identified 'Gewissen' and 'Bewußtsein': 'Die formale Bedingung der Moralität unserer Handlungen, oder ihre vorzugsweise sogenannte Moralität besteht darin, dass man sich schlechtin um des Gewissens willen zu dem, was dasselbe fodert, entschliesze. Das Gewissen aber ist das unmittelbare Bewusstsein unserer bestimmten Pflicht.' Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Das System der Sittenlehre*, hrsg. Manfred Zahn (Hamburg: Meiner, 1963), p. 169. In the discussion of conscience and its language, Hegel will further elaborate on the etymological roots of 'Gewissen'.

13 PhdG, p. 469. GW IX, p. 344. Again, as in the sense-certainty section, Hegel plays with the word 'Sein': something can only truly be when it is not simply 'mein' but is accessible to all, and thus also becomes an other to which I find myself opposed: 'Dies *Ansich* ['pure' duty, AG] trennt sich auch im Bewußtsein von jener unmittelbaren Einheit mit dem Fürsichsein [what I consider to be my particular duty, AG]; so gegenüber tretend ist es *Sein*, *Sein für Anderes*.'

14 PhdG, p. 470. GW IX, p. 345.

intimates that the voicing – the expression in language – of what consciousness takes to be its duty is an essential aspect of a conscientious act,<sup>15</sup> and allows for explicit recognition of its action, both by others and itself.<sup>16</sup> In focusing on conscience, moral judgement becomes a practice that not only involves the individual – it is no longer autonomous self-judgement – but involves us all, and helps us to explicate what we understand by duty.<sup>17</sup> Conscience thus also comes to refer to that which is generally and collectively known (as *con-scientia*) and acknowledged as the right thing to do.<sup>18</sup> In the shape of conscience, consciousness is now able to arrive at a sense of self that is both individual and general, and of its judgements as also implying the views of others.

### 5.1.2 Leaving the world of judgement?

Through conscientious actions, consciousness arrives at a comprehensive understanding of itself. It knows itself to be part of a tradition through which it is and has been shaped and which it can acknowledge as its own and, besides, is able to critically engage with both itself and the world of which it is a part. It is thus able to move beyond the simple and dismissive judgements of ‘das ehrliche Bewußtsein’ for whom – precisely because it failed to engage with what it judged – both itself and its world remained empty abstractions. As in the *Bildung* section,<sup>19</sup> Hegel reflects on the nature of consciousness’ judgements: ‘[Die] *Sache selbst* war dort [in the ‘Welt der Bildung’, AG] *Prädikat*; im Gewissen aber erst ist sie *Subjekt*, das alle Momente des Bewußtseins an ihm gesetzt

- 15 Cf. *PhdG*, p. 481, *GW IX*, p. 353: ‘Durch [das] Aussprechen wird das Selbst zum Geltenden und die Handlung zur ausführenden Tat.’ Cf. chapter 2, p. 51 ff. ‘Übersetzen’ hints at the transformation that takes place by means of (linguistic) expression, through which consciousness becomes aware that it is unable to express what it takes to be its particular duty, i.e. as an inner voice it is immediately aware of. On language as the ‘translation’ of spirit, cf. Hyppolite, *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l’Esprit*, p. 494: ‘Dès le premier moment de la conscience, la certitude sensible, le langage nous a révélé sa nature, il dit l’universel et lui confère une présence sensible, il est la traduction authentique de l’esprit.’
- 16 Hegel stresses that the moral worldview lacks this element of acknowledgement by others: ‘Das moralische Selbstbewußtsein hat dies Moment des Anerkanntseins, des *reinen Bewußtseins*, welches *da ist*, nicht und ist dadurch überhaupt nicht handelndes, nicht verwirklichendes.’ Moral consciousness only judges itself according to the standards of what it has rationally determined to be its duty. Kant is clearly a proponent of this view when he gives the following definition of conscience: ‘*Das Gewissen ist ein Bewußtsein, das für sich selbst Pflicht ist.*’ He elaborates as follows: ‘Man könnte das Gewissen auch so definieren: es ist *die sich selbst richtende moralische Urteilstkraft.*’ Immanuel Kant, *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft*, hrsg. Bettina Stangneth (Hamburg: Meiner, 2003), pp. 250-251.
- 17 *PhdG*, p. 470. *GW IX*, p. 345: ‘das als Pflicht gewußte vollführt sich und kommt zur Wirklichkeit, weil eben das Pflichtmäßige das Allgemeine aller Selbstbewußtsein[e], das Anerkannte und also Seiende ist.’
- 18 Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer’s commentary on the ambivalent nature of conscience: ‘Das Gewissen ist als moralisches Selbstbewußtsein das “Selbst mit Wissen” über die Bedingungen der Erfüllung impliziter und expliziter Normen des sittlichen Guten. [...] Im Begriff des Gewissens wird zugleich die Ambivalenz der vorgegebener Normen und der Selbstbeurteilung ihrer Bindekraft noch einmal klar. Diese betrifft auch die Unterwerfung des Subjekts unter die ethische Normativitäten des gemeinsamen Lebens und die Eigenbeurteilung des Subjekts in ihrer Spannung zu Fremdbeurteilungen.’ Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd.2, pp. 621-622.
- 19 See the discussion on language in the ‘Welt der Bildung’ above, in sections 4.2.2 and 4.3.2, on ‘das zerreiße Urteilen’ that was merely a ‘speaking about’ an individual in complete isolation from its context and in which there was no connection between subject and predicate.

hat und für welches alle diese Momente, Substantialität überhaupt, äußeres Dasein und Wesen des Denkens in dieser Gewißheit seiner selbst enthalten sind.<sup>20</sup> It is as conscience that consciousness can see itself as not just being judgement, as merely applying predicates to a content to which it remains indifferent, but as *Schluß*,<sup>21</sup> as the conclusion of the interaction involved in 'das Allgemeine aller Selbstbewußtsein[e]'; of the active acknowledgement of both its individual perspective and the world to which it belongs (its 'substance'). Yet, even if consciousness is now aware of itself as *Schluß*, its being a conclusion of a mediating movement is still only a potentiality. As we will see in the rest of this section, the dialectical movement of conscience ultimately reveals that, although consciousness is now aware of itself as containing all its 'moments' within itself and that it, as its subject, can act as a mediating force, in actuality this subject is not yet recognized as the 'Selbstheit Aller', as the expression of a self that is shared with others.

Hegel starts discussing the difficulties consciousness – as conscience – is faced with by focusing on its deciding what to do in a particular case. One of the problems is that the decision consciousness makes is always made from a particular perspective: it is impossible to know the complete context of its case and to take all the relevant aspects into account.<sup>22</sup> Another problem is that consciousness finds that, since there are always different aspects to a particular case, it has to decide between a number of duties: 'Das zum Handeln schreitende Gewissen bezieht sich auf die vielen Seiten des Falles. Dieser schlägt sich auseinander und ebenso die Beziehung des reinen Bewußtsein auf ihn, wodurch die Mannigfaltigkeit des Falles eine Mannigfaltigkeit von *Pflichten* ist. – Das Gewissen weiß, daß es unter ihnen zu wählen und zu entscheiden hat; denn keine ist in ihrer Bestimmtheit oder in ihrem Inhalte absolut, sondern nur die *reine Pflicht*.'<sup>23</sup> Conscience understands it has to make a decision, and as such has to fulfil a 'pure duty', but as soon as it moves into action – and thus fulfils a particular duty – it finds that it can do so only by immediately relying on itself, on what it has come to regard as 'good' or 'bad'.<sup>24</sup> As soon as consciousness acts according to what it sees as its duty, it finds

20 *PhdG*, p. 471. *GW IX*, p. 345.

21 Cf. p. 131 above.

22 As conscience, consciousness is aware of this, and is ultimately convinced that even if *its* knowledge is imperfect, it is still sufficient since it is *its* knowledge. See *PhdG*, p. 472, *GW IX*, p. 346: Das gewissenhafte Bewußtsein ist [sich] dieser Natur der Sache und seines Verhältnisses zu ihr bewußt und weiß, daß es den Fall, in dem es handelt, nicht nach geforderten Allgemeinheit kennt und daß sein Vorgeben dieser gewissenhaften Erwägung aller Umstände nichtig ist. Diese Kenntnis und Erwägung aller Umstände aber ist nicht gar nicht vorhanden; allein nur als *Moment*, als etwas, das nur für andere ist; und sein unvollständiges Wissen, weil es *sein* Wissen ist, gilt ihm als hinreichendes vollkommenes Wissen.'

23 *PhdG*, p. 472. *GW IX*, p. 346. 'schlägt sich auseinander' suggests that, in having to distinguish to what particular duty it is to commit itself, consciousness is still being disruptive.

24 Hegel emphasizes that this self is not so much a merely rational self, but rather a sensuous, empirical self: 'Es bestimmt *aus sich selbst*; der Kreis des Selbsts aber, worin die Bestimmtheit als solche fällt, ist die sogenannte Sinnlichkeit; einen Inhalt aus der unmittelbaren Gewißheit seiner selbst zu haben, findet sie nichts bei der Hand als sie.' (*PhdG*, p. 473, *GW IX*, p. 347). As Stekeler-Weithofer explains, what is to be found in this empirical self are not merely 'Triebe und Neigungen', but also intuitive associations or memories: 'Die freie, gewissenhaft, verantwortliche Person urteilt 'aus sich selbst' heraus. Dabei sind ihr die naheliegenden Optionen rein sinnlich gegenwärtig: Sie ergeben sich entweder aus der Situation, aus den sinnlich

that it is open to criticism, since in fulfilling a particular duty, it also violates ('verletzt') other duties.<sup>25</sup> Whatever duty consciousness decides to fulfil, its actions always bear '*der Makel der Bestimmtheit*,'<sup>26</sup> – it simply has to make a choice, and its choice always has determinate content – through which what 'die reine Pflicht' and 'das reine Wissen' are tainted. 'Makel der Bestimmtheit' can also be read in a different way: as a lack of further determination, as a need to engage with other voices than just its own.<sup>27</sup>

In acting conscientiously, consciousness finds that there is no strict demarcation between what it – based on its own convictions – considers to be its duty and 'das allgemeine Beste', since, as conscience, it takes itself to incorporate the perspective of what is best for all in its own decision. In fact, Hegel argues, that is what conscience actually is: 'seine [of conscience, AG] *Wirklichkeit* ist eben nur dies, im Zusammenhange mit anderen zu sein und zu leben; sein einzelner Genuß hat wesentlich die Bedeutung, damit anderen das seinige preiszugeben und ihnen zum Erwerb ihres Genusses zu verhelfen. In der Erfüllung der Pflicht gegen den Einzelnen, also gegen sich, wird also auch die gegen das Allgemeine erfüllt.'<sup>28</sup> Again, Hegel emphasizes that conscience is that which unites individual self-consciousness – which will have to sacrifice whatever it sees as belonging to its particular self –<sup>29</sup> with others.<sup>30</sup> As conscience, consciousness has thus developed a self that is related to others, yet, as we will see in its further progress, this does not imply

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gegenwärtigen Neigungen, aber auch aus dem gegenwärtigen oder symbolische vergegenwärtigbaren Wissen. Dazu gehören etwa auch Erinnerungen oder Einfälle, Imaginationen, die auch durch Werbung von außen getriggert sein können. Der aktuelle Kreis der realen Optionen ist in gewissem Sinn 'empirisch', in Wahrnehmung und Repräsentation gegeben.' Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 659. 'Das Gewissen' thus comes to resemble Herder's concept of 'Besonnenheit' as the '*die ganze Haushaltung seiner sinnlichen und erkennenden und wollenden Natur*'. Cf. ch. 1, pp. 4-5.

25 See *PhdG*, p. 474. *GW IX*, p. 347. 'Verletzt' also intimates that consciousness still causes harm to what is to be an interactive unity. Hegel discusses a few examples to show how this might work out in practice: when an individual increases his property, for instance, he may do so in order to have an insurance that he will be able to look after himself and his family in the future, while others might judge that his duty should lie not with himself or his family, but with society as a whole.

26 *PhdG*, p. 474. *GW IX*, p. 348.

27 On 'Makel', see the relevant lemma in the *Goethe Wörterbuch*.

28 *PhdG*, p. 475. *GW IX*, pp. 348-349. Hegel shows that conscience, in determining its action on the basis of its own convictions, is able to move beyond both the formality of Kantian ethics, but also beyond the formality of utilitarian moral calculus: 'Die *Erwägung* und *Vergleichung* der Pflichten, welche hier einträte, liefe auf die Berechnung des Vorteils hinaus, den das Allgemeine von einer Handlung hätte; aber teils fällt die Moralität hierdurch der notwendigen *Zufälligkeit* der *Einsicht* anheim, teils ist es gerade das Wesen des Gewissens, dies *Berechnen* und *Erwägen abzuschneiden* und ohne solche Gründe aus sich zu entscheiden.' (*PhdG*, pp. 475-476, *GW IX*, p. 349) Again, as in the section on *Bildung*, Hegel critically engages with particular formations of consciousness by 'quoting' their economic vocabulary, and thus reveals that truly thinking about what is best for all is out of reach for those who merely talk about this in terms of 'Vorteil'.

29 'gegen den Einzelnen' (and the same goes for 'gegen den Allgemeinen') can thus be read in two ways: as 'towards itself' but also as 'against itself'.

30 *PhdG*, pp. 476-477. *GW IX*, p. 349: 'Dies Sein [conscience as being both immediate self-certainty and *Sein für Anderes*, AG] ist das Element, wodurch das Gewissen unmittelbar mit allen Selbstbewußtsein[en] in der Beziehung der Gleichheit steht; und die Bedeutung dieser Beziehung ist nicht das selbstlose Gesetz, sondern das Selbst des Gewissens.' Again, Hegel thus stresses that conscience is essentially a knowing that is shared. Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, p. 673: 'Das Mit-Wissen des Gewissens und damit das volle Selbst einer gewissenhaften Person steht [...] immer auch in *Beziehung zu dem, was andere wissen (sollen oder können)*.'

that consciousness has understood itself in this way, and is able to express itself in such a way that it is 'im Zusammenhange mit anderen'.

The development of conscience reveals that one of the reasons that it fails to truly engage with others is that it is still caught up in a practice – and language – of judgement and dissemblance. This latter aspect is elaborated on in Hegel's further analysis of 'Verstellung'. In assessing the moral character of an action, it is simply impossible to know with certainty whether the motive that is said to inspire a particular action, is indeed the motive consciousness takes to be its own: 'Was er ihnen [the "others", AG] also hinstellt, verstellt er auch wieder oder vielmehr hat es unmittelbar verstellt. Denn seine *Wirklichkeit* ist ihm nicht diese hinausgestellte Pflicht und Bestimmung, sondern diejenige, welche er in der absoluten Gewißheit seiner selbst hat.'<sup>31</sup> This time, in contrast with 'die Verstellung' that occurred in the moral worldview,<sup>32</sup> not only consciousness, but also the "others", who are witness to the act and confer judgement on it, are involved: 'Was es ihnen hinstellt, wissen sie selbst zu verstellen; es ist ein solches, wodurch nur das *Selbst* eines anderen ausgedrückt ist, nicht ihr eigenes; sie [...] müssen es in ihrem eigenen Bewußtsein auflösen, durch Urteilen und Erklären zunichte machen, um ihr Selbst zu erhalten.'<sup>33</sup> Even though the essence of conscience was shown to lie in its being a self that stood in a relation to other selves, rather than in a selfless law,<sup>34</sup> this self, therefore, is not yet a self that is recognized as a self that belongs to all. What is presented as a conscientious act is still seen as firmly belonging to someone else's self ('das *Selbst* eines anderen', AG). There does not appear to be a possibility of any communication with this particular self, and the only means available to the "others" to obtain ('erhalten'<sup>35</sup>) a sense of a self they can recognize (in relation to the conscientious act) is – in judging the act to spring from an alleged motive (which they can only produce from within their own experience) – to destroy the self implicit in the conscientious act and supplant it with their own. The act thus loses its essence (its being the expression of a self that is

31 *PhdG*, p. 477. *GW IX*, p. 350.

32 In the section immediately preceding the discussion of conscience, called 'die Verstellung', Hegel had argued that the paradoxes inherent in the moral worldview, because of which it failed to reconcile its individual 'Vorstellung' of what it believes to be right with a transcendent moral law, led to a continuous shifting ('Verstellung') between the two points of view. 'Verstellung' also means 'dissemblance': the individual may present his reasons as being in accordance with an objective moral law, but there is no way of being certain that this in fact the case. Cf. Pinkard, *The Sociality of Reason*, p. 203: 'If there is no way within the terms set by the "moral worldview" to reconcile these kinds of opposing claims, then in order to accommodate himself to this opposition, an agent participating in this worldview must dissemble about the point of view from which he is speaking and shift back and forth between the two points of view. That is, in giving an account of how he takes his representation (*Vorstellung*) "within" himself to be certified by himself as authoritative – that is, as being a representation of a moral law that transcends him and is valid independently of whether he *subjectively takes it* to be valid – the "moral agent" is led to shift and dissemble (*Verstellen*) in his accounts of just what it is that make his moral reasons authoritative for him and others.' Hegel now suggests that, as conscience, consciousness is not exempt from the problem of 'Verstellung'. Cf. also Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd.2, p. 676.

33 *PhdG*, p. 478. *GW IX*, p. 350.

34 *PhdG*, pp. 476-477. *GW IX*, p. 349. See the discussion of this passage above.

35 On Hegel's use of 'erhalten', cf. ch. 3, p. 94.

recognized by all) and is turned into an actuality that no one acknowledges as the expression of a self that is shared with others:

Was als Pflicht gelten und anerkannt werden soll, ist es allein durch das Wissen und die Überzeugung davon als von der Pflicht, durch das Wesen seiner selbst in der Tat. Wenn die Tat aufhört, dieses Selbst an ihr zu haben, hört sie auf, das zu sein, was allein ihr Wesen ist. Ihr Dasein, von diesem Bewußtsein verlassen, wäre eine gemeine Wirklichkeit, und die Handlung erschiene uns als ein Vollbringen seiner Lust und Begierde.<sup>36</sup>

If it becomes impossible to acknowledge a particular act as inspired by the motive of a particular self – who simultaneously recognizes this act as belonging to itself by taking full responsibility for it (and thus claim it as ‘mein’) – the reality brought about by the act is simultaneously one that we fail to recognize as the expression of ‘die Selbstheit Aller’, and which we therefore cannot partake in or communicate with. Instead of a reality that is meaningful in the sense that it can be shared, it becomes a trite, coarse and vulgar everyday reality, that we simply take to be the expression of a particular lust or desire. ‘Gemein’ in this context thus refers to what is common, what we are all aware of and simply accept or dismiss, but which completely lacks the interaction through which it would be an ‘Allgemeinheit’ in which we are actively involved and which we can recognize as the reflection of ‘die Selbstheit Aller’.<sup>37</sup> The ‘Dasein’ of acts in which we fail to distinguish any conscious self (since they are, or come across as, ‘vom [...] Bewußtsein verlassen’) is not what should be there: ‘Was *da sein* soll, ist hier allein Wesenheit dadurch, daß es als sich selbst aussprechende Individualität *gewußt* wird; und dies *Gewußtsein* ist es, was das Anerkannte ist und was, *als solches*, *Dasein* haben soll.’<sup>38</sup> Only through voicing itself can consciousness acknowledge a particular act as springing from its intentions, and can it be acknowledged as such by others.<sup>39</sup> What is to be acknowledged is thus not the act as such, but self-consciousness, which, as we saw above, is ultimately a general

36 *PhdG*, p. 478. *GW IX*, p. 350.

37 Cf. the ‘Vorrede’ to the *Phänomenologie*, when Hegel contrasts the trivial knowledge of natural consciousness (that we come across ‘im ruhigeren Bette des gesunden Menschenverstandes’, *PhdG*, p. 64, *GW IX*, p. 47) with true knowing, that can only be produced through active and critical involvement, and can never simply accept what it is presented with: ‘Wahre Gedanken und wissenschaftliche Einsicht ist nur in der Arbeit des Begriffs zu gewinnen. Er allein kann die Allgemeinheit des Wissens hervorbringen, welche weder die gemeine Unbestimmtheit und Dürftigkeit des gemeinen Menschenverstandes, sondern gebildete und vollständige Erkenntnis, noch die ungemeine Allgemeinheit der durch Trägheit und Eigendünkel von Genie sich verderbenden Anlage der Vernunft [those “happy few” who claim to have an immediate access to the truth through feeling, intuition or revelation, AG] sondern die zu ihrer einheimischen Form gediehene Wahrheit [ist], – welche fähig ist, das Eigentum aller selbstbewußten Vernunft zu sein.’ (*PhdG*, p. 65, *GW IX*, p. 48)

38 *PhdG*, p. 478. *GW IX*, p. 351.

39 And it is thus, as Stekeler-Weithofer argues, that we can ultimately speak of (conscientious) action: ‘Erst in der freien tätigen Anerkennung einer Pflicht etwa als Folge eines Versprechens oder schon einer eigenen Absichtserklärung wird aus dem Tun ein Handeln.’ See Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd.2, p. 679.



self-consciousness, a 'Selbstheit Aller'.<sup>40</sup> Hegel then continues to argue that it is only in and through language that this self-consciousness can be developed.

## 5.2 'Sprache als das Dasein des Geistes'

Whereas in the *Bildung* section language was still 'der Rede des Geistes von und über sich selbst' – language still remained firmly tied to a particular perspective because of which it was not yet a speaking *with* each other, but merely a speaking *about* others or ourselves –<sup>41</sup> language now presents itself as a medium to reflect and become the 'Dasein des Geistes'.<sup>42</sup> As 'Dasein des Geistes' it is to be the expression of a particular self, but also of the way this self is understood by others: '[Die Sprache] ist das sich von sich selbst abtrennende Selbst, das als reines Ich=Ich sich gegenständlich wird, in dieser Gegenständlichkeit sich ebenso als *dieses* Selbst erhält, wie es unmittelbar mit den anderen zusammenfließt und *ihr* Selbstbewußtsein ist; es vernimmt ebenso sich, als es von den anderen vernommen wird, und das Vernehmen ist eben das *zum Selbst gewordene Dasein*'.<sup>43</sup> In expressing its conviction in language (and asserting itself as 'Ich'), consciousness – in its shape of conscience – finds that it both gains and loses itself: it ceases to be a purely individual self and, in having externalized itself through expressing itself in language, through a medium in which *Geist* manifests itself as an intersubjective entity, retrieves its self as mediated.<sup>44</sup> Not only consciousness, but also language can thus be further developed:

40 PhdG, p. 478, GW IX, p. 351: 'Das Element des Bestehens ist das allgemeine Selbstbewußtsein; was in dieses Element tritt, kann nicht die *Wirkung* der Handlung sein; diese hält nicht darin aus und erhält kein Bleiben, sondern nur das Selbstbewußtsein ist das Anerkannte und gewinnt die Wirklichkeit.'

41 Cf. the discussion of language in the 'Welt der Bildung' in section 4.3.

42 PhdG, p. 478, GW IX, p. 351: 'Wir sehen hiermit wieder die Sprache als das Dasein des Geistes. Sie ist das *für andere* seiende Selbstbewußtsein welches unmittelbar als solches vorhanden und als *dieses* allgemeines ist.'

43 PhdG, pp. 478-479, GW IX, p. 351. Pinkard translates 'Vernehmen' as 'interrogation' which seems too strong a word, and misses Hegel's point that our initial awareness of ourselves as a 'Selbst Aller' occurs through hearing. In 'Vernehmen', however, we are not only meant to be passive, and Hegel definitely wants to bring into play more active denotations of the word. In 'Vernehmen' we are meant to actively involve ourselves with what has been said in order to come to an understanding both of what is said and of ourselves. Hegel's remarks are strongly reminiscent of Herder's discussion of 'Vernunft' as deriving from 'Vernehmen' ('Theoretisch und praktisch ist Vernunft nichts als etwas *Vernommenes*', *Ideen*, p. 144). Both for Herder and Hegel, it is through 'Vernehmen' that 'Vernunft' is developed. On Herder, see ch.1, p. 8. Expressing itself in language is also a process in which consciousness commingles ('zusammenfließt') with others. 'Zusammenfließt' is also suggestive of what happens in the process in which 'vernehmen' develops from hearing to understanding, in the process in which vowels and consonants cease to be individual items, and merge into words (and words into sentences). Cf. the discussion of this aspect in relation to Hegel's remarks on names in the *Jenaer System Entwürfe*, ch. 2, section 2.2.4.

44 '[A]ls', in the sentence quoted above, has a twofold sense: it can both mean 'when' and 'in the way that'. Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd.2, p. 681: 'Mein Selbstbewusstsein ist sprachlich vermitteltes Wissen von mir selbst, wirksam im performativen Modus der Selbstgewissheit.' On this passage, cf. also Comay, *Mourning Sickness*, p. 105, who similarly argues that language teaches us an important lesson about the nature of subjectivity: it is through its expressing itself in language that individual consciousness comes to understand that in order to realize itself as subject, it has to give up the idea of a purely individual subjectivity.



Der Inhalt, den die Sprache hier gewonnen, ist nicht mehr das verkehrte und verkehrende und zerrissene Selbst der Welt der Bildung, sondern der in sich zurückgekehrte, seiner und in seinem Selbst seiner Wahrheit oder seines Anerkennens gewisse und als dieses Wissen anerkannte Geist. Die Sprache des sittlichen Geistes ist das Befehl und die Klage, die mehr eine Träne über die Notwendigkeit ist; das moralische Bewußtsein hingegen ist noch *stumm*, bei sich in seinem Innern verschlossen, denn in ihm ist das Selbst noch nicht Dasein, sondern das Dasein und das *Selbst* stehen erst in äußerer Beziehung aufeinander. Die Sprache tritt nur als die Mitte selbständiger und anerkannter Selbstbewußtsein[e] hervor und das *daseiende Selbst* ist unmittelbar allgemeines, vielfaches und in dieser Vielheit einfaches Anerkanntsein. Der Inhalt der Sprache des Gewissens ist *das sich als Wesen wissende Selbst*. Dies allein spricht sie aus, und dieses Aussprechen ist die wahre Wirklichkeit des Tuns und das Gelten der Handlung.<sup>45</sup>

As conscience, consciousness has made a further return to its self: from the perverted self of the *Welt der Bildung*, from the abstract, transcendental self of the (Kantian) moral law, it has now found a concrete and empirical self, a self that is firmly rooted in its world, and it is from this self that it derives its personal convictions as to how it should act. Whereas as ‘das moralische Bewußtsein’ this self had to remain silent (‘stumm’), silenced by the voice of the moral law, consciousness now feels it has to voice its conviction in order to have what it sees as its particular duty recognized by others, and to thus turn its conviction into an actuality. Language now presents itself (‘tritt hervor’) as the mediating ground between all individual and independent selves. Yet, in having withdrawn into itself (‘in sich zurückgekehrt’) language has not yet been developed into a truly comprehensive self. It is significant that Hegel, again, uses a theatrical metaphor and thereby suggests that this is the shape in which language now appears, and that it has not yet been allowed to develop its full potential. In order to become a *Mitte* that is more than a forum in which these selves can come to meet – which is what it at this point just (‘nur’) is – these selves will have to renounce their independence (‘Selbständigkeit’) and their claim to being purely individual selves, and interact with what is presented in order to actively produce a *Mitte* that is more than the ground that makes mediation possible, and is also understood as the result of this interaction.<sup>46</sup>

What is clear at this stage, however, is that what is acknowledged is not simply the act, but rather the conviction (which must be voiced in order to be recognized as such) on which a particular act is based.<sup>47</sup> In declaring to act out of the conviction that it acts

45 *PhdG*, p. 479. *GW IX*, p. 351.

46 Throughout this section, theatrical metaphors again abound (‘Verstellung’, ‘Szene’, ‘Entlarvung’) and are both suggestive of the aspect of dissemblance inherent in conscience (cf. the discussion on p. 173 above), and the need to take up a different perspective through which we can ultimately come to an acknowledgment both of the other and of ourselves.

47 *PhdG*, p. 479. *GW IX*, p. 351: ‘Das Bewußtsein spricht seine *Überzeugung* aus; diese *Überzeugung* ist es, worin allein die Handlung Pflicht ist; sie *gilt* auch allein dadurch als Pflicht, daß die *Überzeugung* ausgesprochen

dutifully, consciousness simultaneously wills that each self acts accordingly, i.e. that each self acts on the basis of what it deems the right thing to do.<sup>48</sup> Again, Hegel emphasizes that ‘das allgemeine Selbstbewußtsein’ cannot be linked to any content, to any particular duty, since that is purely individual and arbitrary, but can only be found in the declaration of its conviction that it is right: ‘[das allgemeine Selbst] is es nicht in dem *Inhalt* der Handlung, denn dieser ist um seiner *Bestimmtheit* willen an sich gleichgültig; sondern die Allgemeinheit liegt in der Form derselben; diese Form ist es, welche als wirklich zu setzen ist; sie ist das *Selbst*, das als solches in der Sprache wirklich ist, sich als das Wahre aussagt, eben darin alle Selbst anerkannt und von ihnen anerkannt wird.’<sup>49</sup> What still remains to be achieved, therefore, is that this, as yet, formal generality is to be developed into a self that, as language, is the expression of the concrete interaction of a community of selves that acknowledge both each other and themselves, and that are simultaneously prepared to give up whatever determinate self they took themselves to have. Yet, in what follows, we will see that consciousness is only interested in the acknowledgement of those who simply confirm its particular point of view.

### 5.3 From moral genius to the beautiful soul: consciousness’ ultimate retreat into itself

Conscience, in listening to the voice of its convictions, feels that it elevates itself beyond any specific law, considers itself sublime and develops into what Hegel rather flippantly calls moral genius:

Das Gewissen also in der Majestät seiner Erhabenheit über das bestimmte Gesetz und jeden Inhalt der Pflicht legt den beliebigen Inhalt in sein Wissen und Wollen; es ist die moralische Genialität, welche die innere Stimme ihres unmittelbares Wissen als göttliche Stimme weiß, und indem sie an diesem Wissen ebenso unmittelbar das Dasein weiß, ist sie die göttliche Schöpferkraft [...].<sup>50</sup>

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wird. Denn das allgemeine Selbstbewußtsein ist frei von der *nur seienden bestimmten* Handlung; sie als *Dasein* gilt ihm nichts, sondern die *Überzeugung*, daß sie Pflicht ist, und diese ist in der Sprache wirklich.’

48 *PhdG*, p. 480, *GW IX*, p. 352: ‘Das Aussprechen dieser Versicherung hebt an sich selbst die Form seiner Besonderheit auf; es anerkennt darin die *notwendige Allgemeinheit des Selbsts*; indem es sich *Gewissen* nennt, nennt es sich reines Sichselbstwissen und reines abstraktes Wollen, d.h. es nennt sich ein allgemeines Wissen und Wollen, das die anderen anerkennt, ihnen *gleich* ist, denn sie sind eben dies reine Sichwissen und Wollen, und das darum auch von ihnen anerkannt wird.’

49 *PhdG*, pp. 480-481. *GW IX*, p. 352. Martin Luther’s declaration in Worms (when he refuses to detract most of his writings) can be seen as a “prototype” of such a declaration: ‘denn weder dem Papst noch den Konzilien allein glaube ich, da es feststeht, daß sie öfter geirrt und sich selbst widersprochen haben, so bin ich durch die Stellen der heiligen Schrift, die ich angeführt habe, überwunden in meinem Gewissen und gefangen in dem Worte Gottes. Daher kann und will ich nichts widerrufen, weil wider das Gewissen etwas zu tun weder sicher noch heilsam ist. Gott helfe mir, Amen!’ ([www.luther.de](http://www.luther.de), retrieval date: 11-12-2018). Cf. also Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd.2, p. 687.

50 *PhdG*, p. 481. *GW IX*, p. 352

Hegel's choice of words again echoes Kant,<sup>51</sup> who, in the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*, praises duty as follows: 'Pflicht! Du erhabener großer Name, der du nichts Beliebtes, was Einschmeichelung bei sich führt, in dir fassest, sondern Unterwerfung verlangst, doch auch nichts drohest, was natürliche Abneigung im Gemüte erregte und schreckte, um den Willen zu bewegen, sondern bloß ein Gesetz aufstellst, welches von selbst im Gemüte Eingang findet, und doch sich selbst wider Willen Verehrung (wenn gleich nicht immer Befolgung) erwirbt, vor dem alle Neigungen verstummen' (KpV A154). In Kant, however, the voice of duty (or reason) is completely opposed to the individual's inner voice (since, for Kant, in this voice our particular drives and inclinations (*Neigungen*) make themselves heard). The individual must silence its own voice and submit to the voice of reason, not inspired by any feeling such as love, but solely by respect for the moral law. Hegel's use of 'beliebig' as a word the moral genius might use to describe his conduct, may be inspired by Kant's 'beliebt': the moral genius, precisely because it is elevated above any determinate duty, feels it is able to completely succumb to its inner voice, and thus to select any content it likes and loves (the main denotation of 'beliebig' is 'arbitrary', but, just as 'beliebt', also finds its roots in 'belieben' which means 'to inspire or to feel love').<sup>52</sup> Hegel's choice of the word suggests a latent desire in the moral genius to provide an answer to the shortcomings of Kantian moral consciousness, but also contains a strong sense of irony: the moral genius – in feeling that it only has to look within to determine its 'Wissen and Wollen' – is liable to an "anything goes" mentality. Besides, in being convinced that it has the power – since the source of morality lies within itself – to make any particular content determine its actions, it comes to attribute divine qualities to itself.<sup>53</sup> As moral genius, consciousness' return to itself thus turns into a rather narcissistic endeavour: in celebrating its creative powers, and in taking its inner voice to be a divine voice, it comes to see its actions as a 'Gottesdienst in sich selbst; den ihr Handeln ist das Anschauen dieser ihren eigenen Göttlichkeit.'<sup>54</sup>

Yet, even though, as moral genius, consciousness increasingly withdraws within itself, and is ultimately involved in nothing but a solipsistic and lonely 'Selbstgespräch', it is still part of a community:

Dieser einsame Gottesdienst ist zugleich wesentlich der Gottesdienst einer Gemeinde, und das reine innere sich selbst Wissen und Vernehmen geht zum Momente des Bewußtseins fort. Die Anschauung seiner ist sein gegenständliches

51 Although Speight contends that the 'majesty' of consciousness is a verbal echo from Jacobi's *Woldemar*. See Speight, op. cit., p. 98. Speight sees Jacobi's novel as the main source of inspiration for Hegel's discussion of the beautiful soul. On the question of the historical background of Hegel's portrait of 'die schöne Seele', see the next section.

52 Cf. the relevant lemmas in *Adelung*.

53 As Beiser calls it, 'moral genius is the narcissism of the moral standpoint.' Frederick C. Beiser, "Morality" in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* in Kenneth A. Westphal (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 222.

54 *PhdG*, p. 481. *GW IX*, p. 353.

Dasein, und das Aussprechen seines Wissens und Wollens als eines *Allgemeinen*. [...] Die Wirklichkeit und das Bestehen seines Tuns ist das allgemeine Selbstbewußtsein; das Aussprechen des Gewissens aber setzt die Gewißheit seiner selbst als reines und dadurch als allgemeines Selbst; die anderen lassen die Handlung um dieser Rede willen, worin das Selbst und das Wesen ausgedrückt und anerkannt ist, gelten.<sup>55</sup>

This community, however, has now become a congregation (*Gemeinde*) of like-minded souls,<sup>56</sup> for whom what is acknowledged is not a self as a *Mitte* in which there is critical examination and development of what is held to be the right thing to do. What is celebrated is rather the purity of their immediate inner voice ('das reine innere sich selbst Wissen'). Only if the "others" within this community are convinced that an action is motivated by such purity, will the action be acknowledged. Hegel's syntax in the final clause subtly adumbrates consciousness' further withdrawal into itself as beautiful soul, a shape of consciousness that is so possessed by the purity of its inner self that it cannot bring itself to act, and whose talk is thus merely 'tatloses Reden'.<sup>57</sup> <sup>025</sup> We first read 'die anderen lassen die Handlung um dieser Rede willen', which suggests that the action is held to be of no account (since it is left aside), and only at the very end of the clause become aware of the 'gelten'.

**025** Hegel's use of 'Rede' again suggests that it is not yet 'Sprache': 'Rede' is mere talk from within a particular perspective: it allows consciousness to become aware of itself (or others) but is not a means to achieve self-understanding.

In the community of moral geniuses there is no interaction in the sense of a critical questioning – and dialogical development – of what each holds to be its authentic self, just a reciprocal reassuring ('gegenseitige Versicherung') through which both the individual and the community fail to be developed. As moral genius, consciousness withdraws into its self-enclosed community in which it remains convinced of the purity of its heart, and shuns the public sphere ('das Offenbare') in which it runs the risk of having to actually critically examine and develop itself, and thus to contaminate its purity: '[dies Gewissen] ist zwar *unmittelbar* seinem Geist und Herzen, seinem Selbst gegenwärtig;

55 *PhdG*, p. 481. *GW IX*, p. 353.

56 The suggestion is very much that this community is by no means open to all (not '*allgemein*'), but is a self-enclosed world of moral geniuses, who all hold that they have to be true to what they see as their authentic, untainted selves, and thus hold that what they have to celebrate in their congregation is that each member is aware of their inner voice (and thus of what is '*mein*'). Again, there is no interaction, just mutual reassurance of each other's purity. Cf. Pinkard, *The Sociality of Reason*, p. 213: 'This "solitary worship service" as Hegels sarcastically calls the "moral genius's" exploration of his own subjectivity, would be in actuality also a *communal* worship service, with each declaring to the other the purity of his heart and the authenticity of his convictions, and the community existing in this reciprocal assurance of each other's conscientiousness.' Hegel's sarcasm indeed is biting when he discusses the way the members of this community hold themselves to be related to each other: 'Der Geist und die Substanz ihrer Verbindung ist also die gegenseitige Versicherung von ihrer Gewissenhaftigkeit, guten Absichten, das Erfreuen über diese wechselseitige Reinheit und das Laben an der Herrlichkeit des Wissens und Aussprechens, des Hegens und Pflagens solcher Vortrefflichkeit.' (*PhdG*, p. 481, *GW IX*, p. 353)

57 *PhdG*, p. 489. *GW IX*, p. 359. Cf. the discussion on p. 188.

aber das Offenbare, sein wirkliches Bewußtsein und die vermittelnde Bewegung ist ihm ein Anderes als jenes verborgene Innere und die Unmittelbarkeit des gegenwärtigen Wesens.<sup>58</sup> It wants to protect and hide the purity of its inner self and refuses any form of mediation, of involving itself with others, and instead continuously seeks an immediate revelation (and confirmation) of the divine voice that it assumes to lie hidden within itself. Consciousness thus excludes itself from embarking on a relationship with others through which all involved would be developed, of being part of a ‘vermittelnde Bewegung’.<sup>59</sup> Ultimately, consciousness feels that what self-consciousness is about is to focus completely on what it holds to be its inner, authentic, self and shun any contact with the outside world: ‘Wir sehen hiermit das Selbstbewußtsein in sein Innersten zurückgegangen, dem alle Äußerlichkeit als solche verschwindet, – in die Anschauung des Ich=Ich, worin dieses Ich alle Wesenheit und Dasein ist.’<sup>60</sup> What consciousness has achieved as conscience is indeed self-consciousness, but only of what is equal to itself; there is no interaction with different perspectives, with what is other-than-itself.

#### 5.4 The beautiful soul as hard heart and its failure to communicate

This form of consciousness, whose self – as pure interiority – is its complete world, and whose language falls apart so that it is ultimately reduced to silence, is what Hegel refers to as ‘eine unglückliche sogenannte *schöne Seele*’.<sup>61</sup> The ‘sogenannt’ implies that it is a term that is used by others to indicate a particular outlook on the world,<sup>62</sup> and indeed, the beautiful soul was a term most of Hegel’s contemporary readers would have been familiar with, since it was a rather popular concept in the (Romantic) literature of his day, from Rousseau’s *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse* and Wieland’s *Agathon* to Novalis’ *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* and Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Lehrjahre*.<sup>63</sup> It was a highly

58 *PhdG*, pp. 481-482. *GW IX*, p. 353.

59 *PhdG*, p. 482. *GW IX*, p. 353: ‘denn diejenige Beziehung [the relationship consciousness shuns, AG] ist eine *vermittelnde*, worin die Bezogenen nicht ein und dasselbe, sondern ein *Anderes* für einander und nur in einem Dritten eins sind.’

60 *PhdG*, p. 482. *GW IX*, pp. 353-354.

61 *PhdG*, p. 484. *GW IX*, p. 355.

62 And also suggests an ironical stance with regard to the beautiful soul. Cf. H.S. Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder II: The Odyssey of Spirit* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), p. 484. For Harris, the adjective ‘unhappy’ ‘fleshes out’ the irony; yet, it could also be argued that Hegel’s position is rather one of pity, in that the beautiful soul has at this stage come to an awareness of its own emptiness (‘Bewußtsein der Leerheit’), yet is unable to do anything about it and is doomed to simply vanish. ‘Sogenannt’ may also contain an element of irony directed at contemporary views that have not (yet) seen that the ‘*schöne Seele*’ is not beautiful at all, but that its highly exclusive moral stance ultimately makes it a sad and lonely figure.

63 A detailed account of the possible (literary) sources of Hegel’s portrayal of the beautiful soul lies beyond the scope of this study. For such an account, see Robert E. Norton, *The Beautiful Soul: Aesthetic Morality in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 246-282, who convincingly argues that Hegel ‘did not maintain a simple or even static relationship to the notion of the beautiful soul’. (op.cit, p. 264). Norton not only discusses the section on the beautiful soul in the *Phänomenologie*, but also refers to Hegel’s early religious essays in order to show that, already in those youthful works written immediately after leaving the *Tübinger Stift*, it was Hegel’s aim to go beyond the Pietist emphasis on interiority and purity of conscience and the purely rational morality of Kant, and argue for a type of moral beauty that

idealized figure in which moral and aesthetic perfection were combined and which, paradoxically, had to refrain from action, precisely because of its perfection.<sup>64</sup> Yet, as Norton convincingly argues, Hegel 'was not speaking of any particular instantiation of the ideal, nor was he referring to a specific historical personage. He was, instead, addressing the dilemma of eighteenth-century moral philosophy as a whole, merely symbolized by its most representative invention.'<sup>65</sup> It is indeed significant, that, with Schiller as an important exception, the beautiful soul finds its expression in literary fiction: it is nothing but words, and shuns the world of action.<sup>66</sup>

Hegel begins his discussion of the beautiful soul by showing that retreating within itself not only implies that this particular form of consciousness loses contact with the world it lives in, but ultimately entails the loss of its self, as there is nothing to be conscious of. All that remains are empty abstractions:

[Das Selbstbewußtsein] versinkt in diesem Begriffe seiner selbst, denn es ist auf die Spitze seiner Extreme getrieben, und zwar so, daß die unterschiedenen Momente, wodurch es real oder noch *Bewußtsein* ist, nicht für uns nur diese Extreme sind,

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was to combine rationality with sensuality (with 'love' as a mediating force between the two), and thought with action. See also Moltke Gram, 'Moral and Literary Ideals in Hegel's Critique of the Moral Worldview' in Jon Stewart (ed.), *The Phenomenology of Spirit Reader* (New York: SUNY Press, 1998), pp. 307-333, who interprets Hegel's account mainly as a criticism of early Romantic and *Sturm und Drang* conceptions of the beautiful soul. For a similar account, see Emanuel Hirsch, 'Die Beisetzung der Romantiker in Hegels Phänomenologie' in Hans Dietrich Fulda und Dietrich Henrich (Hrsg), *Materialien zu 'Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes'* (Frankfurt am Main, 1973), pp. 245-265, who sees Novalis, Hölderlin and Jacobi as the main sources of inspiration for Hegel's account of the beautiful soul. Speight (op. cit., pp. 94-121) sees Jacobi's *Woldemar* as the main source of inspiration, since forgiveness is a dominant theme in this novel, and this also comes to play a prominent role in the conclusion of Hegel's account when he discusses the notion of reconciliation. Hegel's brief remarks on Novalis – as an example of an author who turned Fichte's subjective idealism into a mere longing – in his lectures on the history of philosophy are often cited as evidence that Hegel's discussion is mainly aimed at Novalis, since it is there that Hegel explicitly refers to the notion of a beautiful soul. See Hegel's remarks in the *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III (Werke 20)* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986), p. 418: 'Die Subjektivität besteht im Mangel, aber Triebe nach einem Festen, und bleibt so *Sehnsucht*. Diese Sehnsucht einer *schönen Seele* stellt sich in Novalis' Schriften dar. Diese Subjektivität bleibt Sehnsucht, kommt nicht zum Substantiellen und hält sich auf diesem Standpunkt fest.' Hegel states that what is to be found in Novalis' works is the longing of a beautiful soul. It is thus not, as Beiser contends, Novalis himself that is presented as a beautiful soul. See Beiser, "Morality" in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 223: 'at one point [in the lectures, AG] Hegel even describes Novalis as a beautiful soul.'

64 Norton presents Schiller as one of the clearest expressions of both the ideal and its shortcomings. See op. cit., p. 279: 'it was Schiller who, owing to [his] acuity of mind, coupled with his even more profound need to believe in the idea (of the beautiful soul as the paradigm of moral beauty, AG) had shown the strains of upholding it with unforgiving, though unintentional clarity. At the end of his essay "Über Anmut und Würde," Schiller himself came to the realization that the beautiful soul could maintain its carefully calibrated equilibrium of reason and sensuality only when it remains in a state of calm passivity. As soon as it had to engage actively with the world around it – as soon as it attempts to become a viable moral force – it has to relinquish precisely those qualities which constitute its very character.'

65 Norton, op. cit., p. 280.

66 Cf. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 194: 'the spontaneously pure conscience turns from action to talk, to the expression in literature of its own inner convictions, but which it can never act out for fear of losing this sense of its purity and universality.'



sondern das, was es für sich und was an ihm *an sich* und was an ihm *Dasein* ist, zu Abstraktionen verflüchtigt, die keinen Halt, keine Substanz mehr für dies Bewußtsein selbst haben; und alles, was bisher für das Bewußtsein Wesen war, ist in diese Abstraktionen zurückgegangen.<sup>67</sup>

The paradoxical quest of the beautiful soul, which ultimately fails to find itself since it lacks all embodiment and has dissolved ('verflüchtigt'), is emphasized by contrasting images: it sinks down – or drowns ('versinkt') – in its being a pure concept while simultaneously being driven to the peak ('die Spitze') of its extremity.<sup>68</sup> The latter image – which was also used for the 'einsame Monarch' – <sup>69</sup> further reinforces the essential loneliness of consciousness at this stage: it has reached a point no one else can join or attain. Its essence lies in its vanishing, its losing of its self: 'Zu dieser Reinheit geläutert, ist das Bewußtsein seine ärmste Gestalt, und die Armut, die seinen einzigen Besitz ausmacht, ist selbst ein Verschwinden.'<sup>70</sup> The beautiful soul has created its world on the basis of its own individual autonomy, of its own innermost convictions, which, Hegel again stresses, consist of nothing but talk. All that it can be conscious of are the dying echoes of its own voice: 'die absolute Gewißheit seiner selbst schlägt ihr also als Bewußtsein unmittelbar in ein Austönen, in Gegenständlichkeit seines Fürsichseins um; aber die erschaffene Welt ist seine *Rede*, die es ebenso unmittelbar vernommen und deren Echo nur zu ihm zurückkommt.'<sup>71</sup> What is lacking in this return to itself is any form of mediation, since there is nothing other than itself – as consciousness has not differentiated itself from itself –<sup>72</sup> that it can interact and communicate with: 'Diese Rückkehr hat daher nicht die Bedeutung, daß es *an* und *für sich* darin ist; den das Wesen ist ihm kein *Ansich*, sondern

67 *PhdG*, p. 482. *GW IX*, p. 354.

68 Cf. the contrasting metaphors at the end of the *Bildung* section, where disrupted consciousness' soul was said to be both an empty abyss and mere superficiality. See the discussion in ch. 4, p. 142.

69 Cf. p. 139 above.

70 *PhdG*, pp. 482-483. *GW IX*, p. 354. Of course, for Hegel 'verschwinden' is an integral aspect of what something truly is (e.g. the famous example of the flower in the *Vorrede*: 'Die Knospe verschwindet in dem Hervorbrechen der Blüte' (*PhdG*, p. 12, *GW IX*, p. 10), but the problem with the beautiful soul is that disappearing is its very essence.

71 *PhdG*, pp. 483. *GW IX*, p. 354. Cf. Hegel's presentation of 'das zerrissene Bewußtsein' (discussed on p. 145 above) as a form of consciousness whose expressions 'verklingen' and leave behind nothing of substance, and whose language has thus become 'Rede' rather than 'Sprache'. On 'Rede', cf. n. 023.

72 I do not completely agree with Stekeler-Weithofer's interpretation of this passage, which in his view indicates that Hegel wants to show us that consciousness is mistaken in ascribing an 'an sich' and 'Dasein' to itself. See Stekeler, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 693: 'Das Wesen das ich bin, ist für mich kein vorstellbares Ansich, sondern ich bin es selbst. [...] Es ist auch irreführend, dem Wesen Dasein zuzuschreiben. Im Vollzug ist es eine Vollzugsform, eine Prozessform, keine Entität. Eine gegenständliche Entität korrespondiert nie als eine Art Negativbild dem wirklichen Selbst. Ein bloßer Gegenstand der Rede hat gar nicht die real wirkende "Kraft der Entäußerung" so wenig, wie eine Zahl oder ein anderer rein abstrakter Gegenstand.' Although Stekeler is right in stressing that Hegel wants us to understand that we are mistaken when we see 'the self', or 'the soul', as an entity, and that it instead should be understood in terms of a process or enactment ('Vollzug') – in which the self is, and becomes, 'das wirkliche Selbst' – Hegel's main point in this passage – especially in the light of what follows – appears to be that, in the case of the beautiful soul, there is nothing that is 'wirklich' – and thus nothing which consciousness can compare to what it takes to be its essence. In order not to see itself as a fixed entity or (static) object, it first has to make itself into an object (by externalizing itself), and take upon itself the full consequence of being.



es selbst; ebensowenig hat es *Dasein*, den das Gegenständliche kommt nicht dazu, ein Negatives des wirklichen Selbst zu sein, so wie dieses nicht zu Wirklichkeit [kommt].<sup>73</sup> In its shape of beautiful soul, consciousness has never been active, has never produced anything, has never had the courage to externalize itself and thus turn itself into an object that can be further developed:

Es fehlt ihm die Kraft der Entäußerung, die Kraft, sich zum Dinge zu machen und das Sein zu ertragen. Es lebt in die Angst, die Herrlichkeit seines Innern durch Handlung und Dasein zu beflecken; und um die Reinheit seines Herzens zu bewahren, flieht es die Berührung der Wirklichkeit und beharrt in der eigensinnigen Kraftlosigkeit, seinem zur letzten Abstraktion zugespitzten Selbst zu entsagen und sich Substantialität zu geben oder sein Denken in Sein zu verwandeln und sich dem absoluten Unterschiede anzuvertrauen.<sup>74</sup>

Hegel's discussion of the 'schöne Seele' appears to emphasize purity rather than beauty, or rather, its being pure and untainted is what constitutes its beauty. In order to maintain its purity, it flees ('flieht' again suggesting the ethereal, evanescent nature of the beautiful soul) contact ('Berührung') with (corporeal) reality. 'Berührung' not only hints at a possible disturbance or tainting of its purity (which was already suggested by 'beflecken') through interaction with anything other than its own soul,<sup>75</sup> but also

73 *PhdG*, p. 483. *GW IX*, p. 354.

74 *PhdG*, pp. 483-484. *GW IX*, p. 354.

75 One of the likely sources of inspiration for Hegel's discussion of the beautiful soul, the sixth part of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre*, entitled 'Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele', is a portrait of a woman who, in order to completely devote herself to developing her personality in accordance with her innermost convictions, is shown to increasingly become divorced from her sensuous nature. In fact, her spiritual awakening – at the age of eight – is brought about by illness: 'Mit dem Anfange des achten Jahres bekam ich einen Blutsturz und in dem Augenblick war meine Seele ganz Empfindung und Gedächtnis'. See Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 2009), p. 373. Ultimately, her renunciation of the senses – coupled with her fragile health – makes her feel alienated from her own body: 'Ich hielt mich bei meiner schwachen Gesundheit still, und bei einer ruhigen Lebensart ziemlich in Gleichgewicht, ich fürchtete den Tod nicht, ja ich wünschte zu sterben, aber ich fühlte in der Stille, daß mir Gott Zeit gebe, meine Seele zu untersuchen und ihm immer näher zu kommen. In den vielen schlaflosen Nächten habe ich besonders etwas empfunden, das ich eben nicht deutlich beschreiben kann. Es war als wenn meine Seele ohne Gesellschaft des Körpers dächte, sie sah den Körper selbst als ein, ihr fremdes, Wesen an, wie man etwa ein Kleid ansieht. Sie stellte sich mit einer außerordentlichen Lebhaftigkeit die vergangenen Zeiten und Begebenheiten vor, und fühlte daraus, was folgen werde. Alle diese Zeiten sind dahin, was folgt wird auch dahin gehen; der Körper wird wie ein Kleid zerreißen, aber Ich, das wohlbekannte Ich, Ich bin.' (op. cit. pp. 432-433) Interestingly, Goethe in this passage also emphasizes her being quiet and silent, and having difficulties to express herself adequately in language. Throughout the story, loss of language becomes a dominant motif, e.g. 'Bei diesen Empfindungen verlassen uns die Worte' (op. cit. p. 411) and is sometimes even directly linked to bodily frailty: 'ich hustete heftig, und war so heiser daß ich keinen lauten Ton hervorbringen konnte.' (op. cit. p. 429) As we will see, Hegel also discusses the aspect of the degeneration of language in relation to the beautiful soul. On these aspects of Goethe's portrait of the beautiful soul, also in relation to Hegel's discussion, cf. Norton, p. 259 ff. In his letters, Hegel refers to having read 'Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele', and the few remarks he makes on his reading experience indicate that he may have read Goethe's work, although he might also refer to a work written by Friederike Helene Unger, with the title *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele von ihr selbst geschrieben* (1806). See *Briefe von und an Hegel*, Band III, hrsg. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1954, p. 359).

suggests that, as beautiful soul, consciousness refuses to be set in motion, refuses any development of itself.<sup>76</sup> What it is, and what it produces, is ultimately nothing: 'Der hohle Gegenstand, den es sich erzeugt, erfüllt es daher nun mit dem Bewußtsein der Leerheit; sein Tun ist das Sehnen!'<sup>77</sup> Its activity is nothing but a striving to ultimately disappear, and its return to itself results in a loss of self: 'in dem Werden seiner selbst zum wesenslosen Gegenstande [verliert es] sich nur und, über diesen Verlust hinaus und zurück zu sich fallend, [findet es] sich als verlorenes.'<sup>78</sup> Instead of a 'bacchantische Taumel', its life is silent and insubstantial, it is '[das] stille Zusammenfließen der marklosen Wesenheiten des verflüchtigten Lebens.'<sup>79</sup> Yet, Hegel adds, not only should we consider the beautiful soul's return to itself as a self-emptying or self-loss, but we should also try and understand what its (lack of) activity can tell us about conscience as an actuality (the '*Wirklichkeit* des Gewissens'), about conscience as a general practice. Precisely in seeing its retreat from the sensuous world as the only way in which it can do justice to the purity of its individual convictions, in being silent, the beautiful soul defies the essence of conscience:

Das *gegenständliche* Moment in diesem Bewußtsein hat sich oben als allgemeines Bewußtsein bestimmt; das sich selbst wissende Wissen ist als *dieses* Selbst unterschieden von anderen Selbst; die Sprache, in der sich alle gegenseitig als gewissenhaft handelnd anerkennen, diese allgemeine Gleichheit zerfällt in die Ungleichheit des einzelnen Fürsichseins, jedes Bewußtsein ist aus seiner Allgemeinheit ebenso schlechthin in sich reflektiert; hierdurch tritt der Gegensatz der Einzelheit gegen die anderen Einzelnen und gegen das Allgemeine notwendig ein [...].<sup>80</sup>

Rather than being part of a generality, the beautiful soul only knows itself (and thus ultimately nothing) and, as this individual self, is completely separated from other selves, or 'das Selbst' as a generality in which each self can find acknowledgement. Language thus ceases to be the medium in which consciousness is able to find itself reflected as a generality, through which it can come to an understanding of itself as part of a generality, and degenerates into an incoherent collection of private – and increasingly

76 And, of course, also bars itself from any emotional involvement with the world it lives in. '(Be)rühren' is a verb that Hegel frequently uses to indicate the process through which being is developed into thought. Cf. *PhdG*, p. 526, *GW IX*, p. 386: 'Das stille Wesen der selbstlosen Natur gewinnt in seiner Frucht die Stufe, worin sie, sich selbst zubereitend und verdaut, sich dem selbstischen Leben darbietet; sie erreicht in der Nützlichkeit, gegessen und getrunken werden zu können, ihre höchste Vollkommenheit; denn sie ist darin Möglichkeit einer höheren Existenz und berührt das geistige Dasein.' Only through partaking in what presents itself can both selfless Natur and *Geist* be developed, and it is from this process (or rather, the reverse process in which thought is externalized into being) that the beautiful soul excludes itself.

77 *PhdG*, p. 484. *GW IX*, pp. 354-355.

78 *PhdG*, p. 484. *GW IX*, p. 355. It loses itself in its striving, in its soaring upwards, and, in falling back, paradoxically becomes aware that it lacks any center of gravity of its own. Hegel elaborates on the image of falling in the next paragraph – which will be discussed in some detail below – where language is said to 'fall apart' ('zerfallen').

79 *PhdG*, p. 484. *GW IX*, p. 355.

80 *PhdG*, p. 484. *GW IX*, p. 355.

silent – voices, each of which is solipsistically concerned with its own individual self.<sup>81</sup> 026

In claiming to be conscientious, and in only expressing its convictions without any concrete action, the beautiful soul thus ultimately becomes guilty of hypocrisy ('Heuchelei'). What it sees as its duty lies solely in its words: 'die Pflicht liegt nur in den Worten und gilt als Sein für Anderes.'<sup>82</sup> Moreover, Hegel contends, in opposing itself as 'Einzelheit' to 'die Allgemeinheit' – while hypocritically appearing to partake of this generality by expressing what it sees as its duty – consciousness also becomes evil.<sup>83</sup>

The beautiful soul's hypocrisy is also reflected in its language, since what it says is not what it does. This pretense can and should be revealed: 'Die *Bewegung* dieses Gegensatzes ist zunächst die formelle Herstellung der Gleichheit zwischen dem, was das Böse an sich ist und was es ausspricht; es muß zum Vorschein kommen, daß es böse und so sein Dasein seinem Wesen gleich [ist], die *Heuchelei* muß *entlarvt* werden.'<sup>84</sup> Significantly, Hegel uses the word 'Gegensatz': what the beautiful soul utters is nothing but opposition to the generality it has fled, and thus betrays a refusal to be developed by embarking on a further questioning and dialogical development of both itself and this generality. This refusal is thus ultimately a disdain for language, a refusal to acknowledge language as a medium in which the generality can come to express and develop itself, since, in its shape of beautiful soul, consciousness merely (mis)uses language to suit its own purposes:

Allein sie [die Heuchelei, AG] ist zugleich aus diesem Anerkennen der Sprache [...] heraus und in sich reflektiert, und darin, daß sie das *Ansichseiende* nur als ein *Sein für Anderes* gebraucht, ist vielmehr die eigene Verachtung desselben und die Darstellung seiner Wesenlosigkeit für alle enthalten. Denn was sich als ein äußerliches Werkzeug gebrauchen läßt, zeigt sich als ein Ding, das keine eigene Schwere in sich hat.<sup>85</sup> 027

**026** Hegel's use of 'zerfallen' to indicate the process in which language ceases to be a generality links up his use of the verb 'fallen' – which was used to capture the beautiful soul's striving for purity as a motion in which it ultimately loses its grasp of itself and falls back into a void – in the previous paragraph. 'Zerfallen' can mean 'to fall apart', or 'to break up' (which is reminiscent of the 'zersplittern' that Hegel used in the 'Rechtszustand' section to describe the breaking up of the 'Allgemeinheit' into an atomistic collection of formal persons) into small parts, but also 'to dissolve' through which it becomes linked to the beautiful soul being essentially a 'vanishing' ('Verschwinden') which expires ('verglimmt') and disappears and dissolves into thin air ('schwindet als ein gestaltloser Dunst, der sich in Luft auflöst'). Finally, 'zerfallen' can also mean 'to perish' or 'to become undone due to illness', which links up with the beautiful soul's lack of substance, since it is ultimately a 'stille[s] Zusammenfließen der marklosen Wesenheiten des verflüchtigten Lebens.'

**027** By placing the word 'allein' – which is here used to indicate a contradiction to what was said before ('only' or 'yet'), i.e. that consciousness acknowledges language as a medium in which it finds acknowledgement of the self in opposition to itself (the opposition between what it says and what it does) – at the beginning of the sentence, Hegel stresses that consciousness is now fully on its own.

81 Again, we are reminded of the plurality of 'I's in the sense-certainty section, who all claim a particular 'this'. In this case, however, consciousness' knowledge claims are silent instead of the cacophonous exchange in sense-certainty. Cf. *PhdG*, p. 484, *GW IX*, p. 355.

82 *PhdG*, p. 484. *GW IX*, p. 355.

83 *PhdG*, p. 485. *GW IX*, pp. 355-356.

84 *PhdG*, p. 485. *GW IX*, p. 356. In opposing itself to others and excluding others by calling them 'bad', consciousness reveals itself to be bad itself, and is thus equal to what it expresses.

85 *PhdG*, p. 486. *GW IX*, p. 356.

The disdain consciousness shows for language – by merely using it as an instrument to further its own interest – is simultaneously disdain for itself. Through its meaningless expressions of its convictions the emptiness of its language, but also of itself, is fully on display ('Darstellung seiner Wesenlosigkeit'). Both have no centre of gravity, and thus lack any power through which they are held together ('keine eigene Schwere'<sup>86</sup>) or are able to hold or attract the attention of others. It has thus become impossible to achieve a 'Rückkehr in das Selbst'; consciousness denies itself any form of development of itself or of its language: it cannot but remain fixed in its one-sided assertions and its opposition to others: 'so bleibt in dieser einseitigen Versicherung der Gleichheit [through which it suggests that it means what it says, AG] seine Ungleichheit mit dem Anderen, da ja dieses sie nicht glaubt und nicht anerkennt.'<sup>87</sup> As beautiful soul, or indeed any manifestation of a moral worldview in which the individual solely professes to act on the basis of what it sees as *its* duty, consciousness completely perverts the essence of conscience: 'Wer darum sagt, daß er nach *seinem* Gesetze und Gewissen gegen die anderen handle, sagt in der Tat, daß er sie mißbraucht. Aber das *wirkliche* Gewissen ist nicht dieses Beharren auf dem Wissen und Willen, der dem Allgemeinen sich entgegensetzt, sondern das Allgemeine ist das Element seines *Daseins*, und seine Sprache sagt sein Tun als die *anerkannte* Pflicht aus.'<sup>88</sup> Conscience cannot reside in mere talk about the purity of its intentions, but acts, and its language expresses and acknowledges what it sees as its duty *in the act*.<sup>89</sup>

#### 5.4.1 'Urteil' as 'Teilung'

Even though the beautiful soul betrayed an utter disdain for language, which it treated as an instrument to serve its purely private interest, we also saw that language at the same time reveals itself as a medium through which the beautiful soul's insincerity can be revealed. Yet, it appears that the unmasking of the beautiful soul's hypocrisy cannot be brought about through a simple judgement: 'Ebensowenig ist das Beharren des allgemeinen Bewußtseins auf seinem Urteile Entlarvung und Auflösung der Heuchelei. – Indem es gegen sie schlecht, niederträchtig usf. ausruft, beruft es sich in solchem Urteil auf *sein* Gesetz, wie das *böse* Bewußtsein auf das *seinige*.'<sup>90</sup> In doing so 'das allgemeine Bewußtsein' would make itself equal to the beautiful soul, or rather, its return to the self would be a regression, a 'falling back', to a previous shape of consciousness, i.e. 'das

86 Cf. p. 184 above, on the description of the beautiful soul's movement as both a soaring and a falling back (to nothing). Pinkard's translation of 'Schwere' as 'weight' does not fully capture the aspect of gravity.

87 *PhdG*, p. 486. *GW IX*, p. 356.

88 *PhdG*, p. 486. *GW IX*, p. 357. Again, Hegel moves beyond Kant's categorical imperative, as Stekeler-Weithofer clearly explains: 'Es reicht also keineswegs zu behaupten, dass ich will, dass meine Maxime ein allgemeines Gesetz werde. Es muss schon mit den wirklich etablierten Normen und dem realen Wollen der anderen Personen verträglich sein und das muss ich wenigstens gewissenhaft geprüft haben, nicht bloß subjektive ehrlich glauben.' Stekeler, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 702.

89 Cf. the discussion of the importance of acting and acknowledgement for conscience on pp. 170-171 above.

90 *PhdG*, p. 487. *GW IX*, p. 357. Cf. the discussion in section 4.3.2.

ehrliche Bewußtsein' in the world of *Bildung*, which remained locked within its own judgements. General consciousness would thus be equally guilty of hypocrisy, and its language a mere name-calling or shouting match ('ausrufen').<sup>91</sup> There still appears to be no communication, no form of dialogue through which individual and general consciousness can come to a mutual understanding and development of each other, rather than through opposing statements: 'jenes tritt im Gegensatz gegen dieses'.<sup>92</sup>

Before returning to the question in what way general consciousness is to interact with the beautiful soul, so that it becomes aware of its hypocrisy but is not rejected, Hegel further develops the nature of the judgements expressed by the beautiful soul, now called 'das beurteilende Bewußtsein'. This form of consciousness expresses its judgements without further inquiring into the motives 'das handelnde Bewußtsein' may have for a particular action, but simply attributes a motive based on its particular interpretation of the action it judges: 'Das beurteilende Bewußtsein bleibt nun nicht bei jener Seite der Pflicht und bei dem Wissen des Handelnden davon, daß dies seine Pflicht, das Verhältnis und der Stand seiner Wirklichkeit sei, stehen. Sondern es halt sich an die andere Seite [the action it observes and judges, AG], spielt die Handlung in das Innere hinein und erklärt sie aus ihrer von ihr selbst verschiedenen *Absicht* und eigennützigen Triebfeder'.<sup>93</sup> In doing so, it again shows its own moral depravity:

Dies beurteilende Bewußtsein ist hiermit selbst *niederträchtig*, weil es die Handlung teilt und ihre Ungleichheit mit ihr selbst hervorbringt und festhält. Es ist ferner *Heuchelei*, weil es solches Beurteilen nicht für eine *andere Manier*, böse zu sein, sondern für das *rechte Bewußtsein* der Handlung ausgibt, in dieser seiner Unwirklichkeit und Eitelkeit des Gut-und Besserwissens sich selbst über die heruntergemachte Taten hinaufsetzt und sein tatloses Reden für eine vortreffliche *Wirklichkeit* genommen wissen will.<sup>94</sup>

In claiming to be right with regard to the motive it attributes to a particular action, 'das beurteilende Bewußtsein' is not only guilty of hypocrisy, but also of perversion: it debases someone else's actions while assuming that its own idle talk – its lack of reality – is taken as an example of morally excellent reality.

91 Judging consciousness – in the world of *Bildung* – does not even make an effort to formulate a full judgement; it just throws single predicates ('niederträchtig', 'schlecht') at ('gegen') the consciousness it sees as bad. Cf. Pahl, op. cit., pp. 200-201. Interestingly, Pahl argues that the confession ('Ich bin's') completes the judgement: 'The acting consciousness acknowledges the judging consciousness by pronouncing the other half of its judgment; it finishes the other's speech act. [...] The judgment (*Urteil*) is literally divided (*geteilt*) between the two figures.' The acting consciousness thus appears to express a wish to be (re)united with its other, but is coldheartedly refused. On Hegel's critique of monosyllabic judgements in the world of *Bildung*, cf. the discussion in ch.4, p. 157 ff.

92 *PhdG*, p. 487. *GW IX*, p. 357.

93 *PhdG*, p. 488. *GW IX*, p. 358. Hegel gives a number of examples, e.g. an action that leads to subsequent fame is said to spring from a lust for fame. 'Spielen' suggests that judging consciousness is not seriously involved with the other, is merely involved in play-acting, and arbitrarily attributes a particular motive to an action.

94 *PhdG*, p. 489. *GW IX*, p. 359.

A possible alternative to the lack of interaction effected by the use of exclusive judgements is suggested by Hegel's further analysis of the beautiful soul's perversion. Hegel emphasizes the disruption implicit in the practice of judging – a prominent aspect of the world of *Bildung* –<sup>95</sup> but simultaneously reveals that a judgement also implies the possibility of connection. In its shape of 'das beurteilende Bewußtsein' it is said to be base 'weil es die Handlung teilt', a clause that can be interpreted in two ways. First, judging consciousness divides ('teilt') the action in an outer that it perceives and an inner motive it attributes, and which thus does not belong to the consciousness that is judged. It subsequently condemns the act and posits its motive as being entirely different from its own immaculate moral disposition, so that it sets itself apart from the consciousness it judges. Yet, 'teilt' can also mean 'to share', which ironically suggests that through attributing a motive to someone else's action 'das beurteilende Bewußtsein' becomes complicit in this action. Moreover, in being judgemental, the beautiful soul is by no means completely 'tatlos': it uses the other as an instrument to secure its own superior moral position.<sup>96</sup> In claiming to know why the other acted in a particular way, the beautiful soul also makes itself equal to the consciousness it judges. This latter consciousness thus does not only feel completely dismissed by the judgement, but is also aware of a sense of continuity, of equality with judging consciousness: 'Dieses findet sich von jenem nicht nur aufgefaßt als ein Fremdes und mit ihm Ungleiches, sondern vielmehr jenes nach dessen eigener Beschaffenheit mit ihm gleich.'<sup>97</sup> Even though this continuity is not what 'das beurteilende Bewußtsein' intended, as it is effected by a judgement intended to be exclusive and dismissive, it still opens up the possibility of interaction with what the consciousness it aims to reject.

Acting consciousness aims at further developing the equality it has become aware of through a confession, by means of which it hopes to open up the possibility of communication, so that this equality can be mutually expressed, and acknowledged by means of the other's answer: 'Diese Gleichheit sich anschauend und sie *aussprechend, gesteht* es sich ihm ein und erwartet ebenso, daß das Andere, wie es sich in der Tat ihm gleichgestellt hat, so auch seine *Rede* erwidern werde.'<sup>98</sup> For Hegel, a confession is thus not so much a form of self-judgement through which we deprecate and dismiss ourselves, but is rather a positive act in that it is an acknowledgement of language as 'Dasein des

95 See sections 4.2.2 and 4.3.2.

96 The beautiful soul thus proves even more guilty of hypocrisy: it professes not to act in order to secure the purity of its soul, yet acts nonetheless.

97 *PhdG*, p. 489. *GW IX*, p. 359. Cf. Robert Bernasconi, 'Hegel and Levinas: The Possibility of Forgiveness and Reconciliation,' in *Archivio di Filosofia* 54, p. 338: 'It is the recognition of identity which is the subject of confession. Confession is the renunciation of particularity, rather than its expression.' Precisely because the beautiful soul wants to cling to its particularity at all costs, it refuses to acknowledge the confession.

98 *PhdG*, pp. 489-490. *GW IX*, p. 359. Again, Hegel uses 'in der Tat' in such a way that it not only means 'indeed' but also 'in the act', which suggests that, in being judgemental, the beautiful soul ceases to be completely passive. It is also suggested that, if it is to answer 'das handelnde Bewußtsein', it will do so in its meaningless and instrumental 'Rede', rather than in 'Sprache' in which mutual acknowledgement can become a reality.



Geistes' – through which both forms of consciousness can develop a sense of a self that is shared – and is expressed in the hope of being reciprocated, so that the equality implicit in the confession can become a reality:

Sein Geständnis ist nicht eine Erniedrigung, Demütigung, Wegwerfung im Verhältnisse gegen das Andere; denn dieses Aussprechen ist nicht das einseitige, wodurch es seine *Ungleichheit* mit ihm setzte, sondern allein um der Anschauung der *Gleichheit* des Anderen willen mit ihm spricht es sich, es spricht *ihre Gleichheit* von seiner Seite in seinem Geständnisse aus und spricht sie darum aus, weil die Sprache das *Dasein* des Geistes als unmittelbares Selbsts ist; es erwartet also, daß das Andere das Seinige zu diesem Dasein beitrage.<sup>99</sup>

The exchange between the two forms of consciousness, however, fails to develop into a dialogue,<sup>100</sup> as the hope of hearing an answer is shattered by the beautiful soul, who firmly rejects this attempt at communication, does not answer and thus proves to have a hard heart: 'Allein auf diesem Eingeständnis des Bösen: *Ich bin's*, erfolgt nicht diese Erwiderung des gleichen Geständnisses. So war es mit jenem Urteilen nicht gemeint; im Gegenteil! Es stößt diese Gemeinschaft von sich und ist das harte Herz, das für sich ist und die Kontinuität mit dem Anderen verwirft.'<sup>101</sup> Again, as in the *Bildung* section, it becomes clear that a judgement is used in order to exclude rather than include,<sup>102</sup> and that it is still not capable of being developed into an inclusive 'Schluss'.<sup>103</sup> Both forms of consciousness are thus completely on their own through the beautiful soul's refusal to communicate:

99 *PhdG*, p. 490. *GW IX*, p. 359.

100 This is not how Taylor sees it: '[The] reciprocal necessity for sacrifice of universal [represented by the beautiful soul, AG] and particular [represented by the acting and confessing consciousness, AG] Hegel presents here in the last pages on *Geist* in the form of a kind of dialogue.' Yet it is only at the very end, as we will see below, will there be the beginning of a dialogical interaction in which both forms of consciousness are involved. Taylor, *Hegel*, pp. 194-195.

101 *PhdG*, p. 490. *GW IX*, p. 359. Intriguingly, Stekeler-Weithofer takes the 'es' in the last sentence to refer to the consciousness that confesses, for which I see no justification in the text, since the sentence before, and the reference to the hard heart, clearly seem to suggest that the judging consciousness is the one that refutes the other. See Stekeler, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd.2, pp. 711-712: 'Der Verbrecher gibt also öffentlich bekannt, was er in seinem eigenen Mitwissen gemäß getan hat: Er hat die "Gemeinschaft von sich" gestößt. Der Verbrecher gesteht also ein, daß er in seinem Handeln (bisher) "die Kontinuität mit den Anderen verwirft." Even though the offender's deed can be interpreted as a rejection of the common good, his confession, as Hegel will argue a few sentences later, should be seen as an attempt to restore the continuity and equality with others. Comay (*Mourning Sickness*, p. 123) also has misgivings about the ultimate motivation for the confession: 'The original intention (*Meinung*) of the confession was to establish reciprocity with the confes-sant. The divestment turns out to be a secret investment awaiting return. What I really "meant," in confessing, was to shore up what is "mine" – a narcissism reflected in the egocentric grammar of the confessional performative: *Ich bin's*.' Again, I would argue that Hegel aims to show that the confession is precisely the renunciation of what is mine (which can be said to reinforced by the form of the confession: 'es' – becoming even more insignificant by being reduced to a single vowel, or even a single letter 's') – can be anything; the particularity of the deed thus becomes insignificant).

102 And thus proves to divisive, to be guilty of 'Teilung'.

103 Cf. the discussion on p. 131 above.



[es] [the beautiful soul, AG] verweigert [sich], ihre Mitteilung mit ihm zu setzen, mit ihm, der schon in seinem Bekenntnisse dem *abgesonderten Fürsichsein* entsagte und sich als aufgehobene Besonderheit und hierdurch als die Kontinuität mit dem Anderen, als Allgemeines setzte. Das Andere aber behält *an ihm selbst* sich sein nicht mitteilendes Fürsichseins bevor: an dem Bekennenden behält es eben dasselbe, was aber von diesem schon abgeworfen ist.<sup>104</sup>

Not only does the beautiful soul refuse to interact and become part of a generality, it also (falsely) attributes this refusal to the acting consciousness even though – through its confession – it has already relinquished its ‘nicht mitteilendes Fürsichsein’.<sup>105</sup> In doing so, Hegel argues, the beautiful soul ultimately proves to be a form of consciousness that not only has an empty soul, but also proves to be completely cut off from *Geist*, and in fact actively renounces being part of communal spirit.<sup>106</sup> It refuses to listen to and acknowledge the other’s attempt at communication (‘Mitteilung’),<sup>107</sup> and in doing so also fails to acknowledge its power to forgive the other’s wrongs. Again, the denial to acknowledge (being part of) *Geist* also proves to be a denial of the full power and potential of language (to manifest spirit): ‘Zugleich erkennt es nicht den Widerspruch, den es begeht, die Abwerfung, die *in der Rede* geschehen ist, nicht für das wahre Abwerfen gelten zu lassen, während es selbst die Gewißheit seines Geistes nicht in einer wirklichen Handlung, sondern in seinem Innern und dessen Dasein in der *Rede* seines Urteils hat.’<sup>108</sup> The beautiful soul fails to acknowledge that it contradicts itself when it denies to grant forgiveness by arguing that the confession is merely verbal, while being merely verbal – and not allowing its *Rede* to develop into *Sprache* – is its very essence. In doing so it fails to accord power to both the confessor’s language and its own, and to the potential inherent in its contradiction, which thus fails to be resolved. It bars both itself and the confessing consciousness from finding mutual acknowledgement in language, which would allow both to achieve a positive ‘return to the self’, and to develop an understanding and acknowledgement of each other’s deeds.<sup>109</sup> In keeping its language for itself, and in refusing to answer those who request to be heard, the beautiful soul not only maintains

104 *PhdG*, pp. 490-491. *GW IX*, p. 360.

105 And in doing so, aims to restore its continuity with others (see n. 102 above), and allow for its further development.

106 *PhdG*, p. 491. *GW IX*, p. 360: ‘Es zeigt sich dadurch als das geistverlassene und den Geist verleugnende Bewußtsein, denn es erkennt nicht, daß der Geist in der absoluten Gewißheit seiner selbst über alle Tat und Wirklichkeit Meister [ist], und sie abwerfen und ungeschehen machen kann.’

107 As Stekeler-Weithofer emphasizes, we again see that, for Hegel, *Vernunft* is directly related to an active listening to others (‘Vernehmen’). See Stekeler, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 715: ‘In Hegels Dialektik wird dagegen [as opposed to Kant’s formal and abstract reasoning, a reasoning we find it difficult to acknowledge, AG], dass die Vernunft im Vernehmen der anderen, im Hören auf die anderen Personen und im Versuch der gemeinsamen Aufhebung konkreter Dissonanzen in der Kommunikation und Kooperation besteht, nicht in einem Appell an ein Perfektionsideal harmonischer Übereinstimmung subjektiver Urteile in einem idealen Konsens.’

108 *PhdG*, p. 491. *GW IX*, p. 360.

109 *PhdG*, p. 491. *GW IX*, p. 360: ‘Es ist es also selbst, das die Rückkehr des Anderen aus der Tat in das geistige Dasein der Rede und in die Gleichheit des Geistes hemmt und durch diese Härte die Ungleichheit hervorbringt, welche noch vorhanden ist.’

the inequality between itself and others, even though the 'noch' suggests that the beautiful soul's refusal is not the last word. It ultimately denies itself: '[sie] kann nicht zur angeschauten Einheit ihrer selbst im Anderen [i.e. in language, AG], nicht zum Dasein gelangen; die Gleichheit kommt daher nur negativ, als ein geistloses Sein, zustande.'<sup>110</sup> In clinging to its contradiction, in refusing to acknowledge any position other than its own, in only using language as a means to listen to itself rather than communicate with others, the beautiful soul fails to produce anything other than an empty nothing ('das leere Nichts') and is doomed to vanish: 'Die wirklichkeitslose schöne Seele [...] ist also, als Bewußtsein dieses Widerspruchs in seiner unversöhnten Unmittelbarkeit, zur Verücktheit zerrütet und zerfließt in sehnsüchtiger Schwindsucht.'<sup>111</sup> In being unable to return to itself, it loses its sanity (becomes 'verrückt') and can only long for complete disappearance.

### 5.4.2 The breaking of the hard heart and its reconciliation

Given the emphatic refusal of the beautiful soul to enter into communication and its ultimate bodily and mental breakdown, all hope for any form of reconciliation appears to be lost. Nevertheless, in the final three pages of the *Geist* section, Hegel argues that a reconciliation between the two forms of consciousness, or between the abstract universal (the judging consciousness) and the concrete particular (the acting consciousness) is still possible.<sup>112</sup> In becoming aware that, in disappearing, in refusing to externalize itself, it is ultimately doomed to nothing and that it needs the acknowledgement of the other in order to be (part of) something, the beautiful soul comes to understand that it must surrender its unforgiving position and allow its hard heart to be broken: 'Das Brechen des harten Herzens und seine Erhebung zur Allgemeinheit ist dieselbe Bewegung, welche an

110 *PhdG*, p. 491. Cf. Bernasconi, op. cit., p. 339: 'the denial of the Other in silence was a denial of itself.'

111 *PhdG*, p. 491. *GW IX*, p. 360.

112 Most commentators (e.g. Pinkard, Stekeler-Weithofer, Beiser) fail to address this very sudden transition. Comay, however, analyzes this 'rushing toward reconciliation' in detail, and argues that it is not simply surprising but 'crucial' that 'forgiveness does not follow confession either spontaneously or in a timely fashion.' Forgiveness thus does not come as a response, or as 'the result of a dialogical encounter', but is a radical break with the past, and thus, in Comay's eyes, represents 'Hegel's most intransigently Protestant maneuver; an 'updating of [...] Luther's attack on the various corruptions he thought to have indelibly tainted the sacrament of auricular confession' – a confession that might even be forced.' Comay, *Mourning Sickness*, p. 125 ff. It is therefore significant that only through violent action, a sudden rupture in the form of the breaking of the beautiful soul's heart, that consciousness finds it is capable of granting forgiveness. I agree with Comay that forgiveness is thus not to be seen as 'the result of a dialogical encounter', but would like to argue – which I will do in more detail in the section on absolute knowing – that it functions as the opening up of the possibility of dialogical interaction. Comay's view is more sombre, as in her view the 'untimeliness' of the forgiveness 'will leave a permanent shadow over the reconciliation offered.' (Ibid., p. 127) Hirsch also addresses the suddenness of the transition: he claims that the opposition between the hard heart and the confessing consciousness is 'der tiefste Gegensatz, den die *Phänomenologie* und überhaupt Hegels Philosophie kennt,' and that this deep divide cannot be overcome other than by a vehement and abrupt transition: 'Die Entzweiung tritt auf den Gipfel. Dem entspricht nun auch eine seltene Schroffheit des Übergangs.' (Hirsch, op. cit., pp. 258-259)

dem Bewußtsein ausgedrückt war, das sich selbst bekannte.<sup>113</sup> In confessing its deed, the acting consciousness made itself known,<sup>114</sup> 028 acknowledged its own deed, and in doing so hoped for acknowledgement of the other. Judging consciousness now understands that it needs to reciprocate this acknowledgement, since its refusal of the other implies its own disappearance.

**028** 'Bekennen' means 'to acknowledge' (esp. God), 'to confess' or 'to avow', yet has its roots in 'kennen', and one of its original meanings was 'to make known' or 'to be known as', and Hegel's use of the word appears to suggest that we are to take into consideration all these meanings.

Hegel follows with what appears to be a very reassuring comment for the hard heart that has just been broken: 'Die Wunden des Geistes heilen, ohne daß Narben bleiben; die Tat ist nicht das Unvergängliche, sondern wird von dem Geiste in sich zurückgenommen, und die Seite der Einzelheit, die an ihr, es sei als Absicht oder als daseiende Negativität und Schranke derselben vorhanden ist, ist das unmittelbar Verschwindende.'<sup>115</sup> However, this "healing" can only occur if the individual is prepared to fully surrender the self it sees as belonging to itself in order to become part of *Geist*. In that sense, of course, the beautiful soul, 'as the unmittelbar Verschwindende', also presents a task spirit will have to fulfil: we will never be able to come to a full reconciliation, or reach the stage of absolute knowing, by assuming that there is somehow a determinate self we can return to. It is only by relinquishing the idea of such a self – the 'Ensagung des Fürsichseins' – that consciousness is able to be part of spirit as a 'mitteilendes Fürsichsein': spirit in which there is true communion and communication, and which does not limit itself to one particular shape, but is the continuous interaction and transformation of those shapes. We are to acknowledge our deeds without remaining with them, and forgive those committed by others without cherishing the wounds that have been inflicted ('Die Tat ist nicht das Unvergängliche'),<sup>116</sup> it is up to those partaking in *Geist* to heal the suffering that has been caused by being prepared to forgive.<sup>117</sup>

113 *PhdG*, p. 492. *GW IX*, p. 360.

114 See the relevant lemma in *DWB*.

115 *PhdG*, p. 492. *GW IX*, pp. 360-361. Intriguingly, although a number of commentators (e.g. Hirsch and Gram) take the beautiful soul's final stages to suggest either Hölderlin (because of the 'Verrücktheit') or Novalis (the 'sehnsüchtiger Schwindsucht' is taken to refer to Novalis' consumption), there is no mention of the possible inspiration for the first clause of this sentence, Novalis' 'Die Poesie heilt die Wunden, die der Verstand schlägt' (*Fragmente und Studien*, 1799). An even more direct reference to this clause can be found in the *Enzyklopedie*: '[Das Denken] ist es, welches die Wunde schlägt und dieselbe auch heilt.' (*Enz.* § 24, Zusatz 3) Hegel's point is clear: the romantic answer Novalis gives is not enough – although it is allowed to resonate – as the *Entzweiung* between subject and object of thought can, in Hegel's eyes, only truly be overcome by thought itself.

116 See also Comay, *Mourning Sickness*, p. 133: 'The event is historicized: instead of determining the future, the past is freed to receive a new meaning from the future.'

117 With regard to this sentence, Bernasconi wonders whether it should be read as a reply to the hard heart: 'Is it possible to read the remark as a response to "breaking of the hard heart". But if that is what it is, would it not be supremely arrogant and presumptuous?' (op. cit., p. 344) I would like to argue that it should not be read as a conclusive statement ('this is what happens in *Geist*'), and in that sense is not arrogant or presumptuous, but rather as a call that is both an invitation to be an active part of spirit, and as a summons to ensure that the wounds of spirit can heal in such a way that there are no inflexible and fully congealed scars ('this is what we are to make happen in *Geist*').

In order to do so the hard heart needs to acknowledge the other's confession, but also its own wrong (and thus also acknowledge that it is guilty of a deed), which consisted in turning its back on the other and sticking to its own dismissive judgement.<sup>118</sup> Both forms of consciousness have thus come to an awareness that they are still one-sided and that they need the other in order to overcome their being separated and produce a whole.<sup>119</sup> The positive aspect of the harsh judgement is that it invites the acting consciousness to confess and thus to externalize itself, but this is not enough: 'Jenes Böse setzt diese Entäußerung seiner oder sich als Moment, hervorgerufen in das bekennende Dasein durch die Anschauung seiner selbst im Anderen. Diesem Anderen aber muß, wie jenem sein einseitiges, nicht anerkanntes Dasein des besonderen Fürsichseins, so ihm sein einseitiges, nicht anerkanntes Urteil brechen [...].'<sup>120</sup> <sup>029</sup> In becoming aware that its judgement was an act after all, and that it did affect the other, judging consciousness recognizes that it is just as wrong as the one it accused. It finally prepared to renounce its isolation and the divisive aspect of its judgement: 'Dieses [judging consciousness, AG] entsagt aber dem teilenden Gedanken und der Härte des an ihm [its judgement as a 'teilende Gedanke', AG] festhaltenden Fürsichseins darum, weil es in der Tat sich selbst im Ersten [the accused consciousness, AG] anschaut.'<sup>121</sup> The beautiful soul understands that it needs to relinquish its clinging to its inner purity and its refusal to become part of reality, and it does so by expressing its forgiveness of the other:

**029** 'Hervorlocken' suggests an aspect of stealth in the beautiful soul's judgement: it provokes the other into a confession with no intention to become part of 'das bekennende Dasein' itself. From the outset, the beautiful soul's judgement is wrong itself: in using the other, provoking the other and turning its back on the other. From the perspective of the acting consciousness, however, the confession is made because it is aware that its act has certain repercussions for others (is a 'Mitteilung') and it thus acknowledges the perspective (and judgement) of the other. It does not feel tricked, but makes a sincere attempt to re-establish its being part of a community.

Die Verzeihung, die es dem ersten widerfahren läßt, ist die Verzichtleistung auf sich, auf sein *unwirkliches* Wesen, dem es jenes Andere, das *wirkliches* Handeln war, gleichsetzt und es, das von der Bestimmung, die das Handeln im Gedanken erhielt, Böses genannt wurde, als gut anerkannt oder vielmehr diesen Unterschied des bestimmten Gedankens und sein fürsichseiendes bestimmendes Urteil fahren läßt, wie das Andere das fürsichseiende Bestimmen der Handlung.<sup>122</sup>

118 See *PhdG*, p. 490, *GW IX*, p. 359: 'Dasjenige, das sich bekannte, sieht sich zurückgestoßen und das Andere im Unrecht, welches das Heraustreten seines Innern in der Rede verweigert und dem Bösen die Schönheit seiner Seele, dem Bekenntnisse aber den steifen Nacken des sich gleichbleibenden Charakters und die Stummheit, sich in sich zu behalten und sich nicht gegen einen anderen wegzuwerfen, entgegensetzt.'

119 *PhdG*, p. 492, *GW IX*, p. 361: 'Das verwirklichende *Selbst*, die Form seiner Handlung, ist nur ein *Moment* des Ganzen und ebenso das durch Urteil bestimmende und den Unterscheid der einzelnen und allgemeinen Seite des Handelns festsetzende Wissen.'

120 *PhdG*, p. 492, *GW IX*, p. 361.

121 *PhdG*, p. 492, *GW IX*, p. 361.

122 *PhdG*, p. 492, *GW IX*, p. 361. Bernasconi points out that Hegel plays with the connection between 'Verzeihung' and 'Verzicht': reconciliation implies renunciation. See Bernasconi, op. cit., p. 340.

The act of forgiveness allows the beautiful soul to let go of what it now understands to be its 'unreal' self – of its consisting of nothing but convictions and judgements – and to be equal – since it has finally committed a positive act – to the acting consciousness. In the forgiveness of its act the latter is now acknowledged as good after all,<sup>123</sup> or, more importantly, the either/ or distinction of good versus bad is relinquished, since it has also, again, become clear that a person or a person's deeds can never be considered absolutely good or bad.<sup>124</sup> In forgiving and being forgiven both forms of consciousness can come to reconciliation and are able to become part of *Geist* as a community in which each is prepared to be actively involved in 'Mitteilung'.<sup>125</sup> In order to see this reconciliation as the expression of communal spirit, Hegel adds, it has to be expressed verbally: 'Das Wort der Versöhnung ist der *daseiende Geist*, der das reine Wissen seiner selbst als *allgemeines Wesens* in seinem Gegenteile, in dem reinen Wissen seiner selbst als der absolut in sich seienden *Einzelheit* anschaut, – ein gegenseitiges Anerkennen, welches der *absolute Geist* ist.'<sup>125</sup>

030 'Mitteilung' in the sense of (verbal) communication, but also in the sense of the breaking up or shattering of determinate selves or forms of consciousness into parts that can freely be combined into a whole again.

Judging consciousness has now understood that its judgement needs completion – that 'Urteil' needs 'Gegenteil' – in order to be further developed and become a reality in which it can be recognized and in which it can recognize itself as actively involved, rather than 'das leere Nichts'. Absolute spirit is thus literally the spirit of reconciliation,<sup>126</sup> in which there is a continuous to-and-fro between different perspectives, a continuous questioning of both itself and all involved through inclusion of the 'Gegensatz': 'Er [absolute spirit, AG] tritt ins Dasein nur auf der Spitze, auf welcher sein reines Wissen von sich selbst der Gegensatz und Wechsel mit sich selbst ist.'<sup>127</sup>

Yet, even though both forms of consciousness are now aware that acknowledgment can only be mutual and involves the destruction of any particular shape consciousness assumed to be its own, Hegel argues that more is required in order to develop this awareness into a form of self-consciousness that can be recognized and acknowledged by both: 'Aber noch ist es [this knowing of the other and itself which is still perceived as a 'Gegensatz', AG] nicht *Selbstbewußtsein*. Diese Verwirklichung hat es in der Bewegung dieses Gegensatzes. Denn dieser Gegensatz ist vielmehr selbst die *indiskrete Kontinuität* und *Gleichheit* des Ich=Ich; und jedes *für sich* eben durch den Widerspruch seiner reinen Allgemeinheit, welche zugleich seiner Gleichheit mit dem Anderen noch widerstrebt und

123 Not only because it has confessed its deed, but also because it is now clear that someone's deeds should not be equated with what someone essentially is. 'Ich bin's' should thus take another form, e.g. 'I have done the deed.' In fact, this is what Judas says in Luther's translation of the Bible: 'Ich habe gesündigt' (Matth. 27:4).

124 Cf. Hegel's remarks on 'good' and 'bad' in the *Bildung* section, which are discussed in sections 4.2.2 and 4.3.2.

125 *PhdG*, p. 493. *GW IX*, p. 361.

126 'Absolvere' not only means 'to finish', 'to complete' or 'to set free' ('to become loose from') but also 'to forgive': a priest grants absolution to the sinner who confesses.

127 *PhdG*, p. 493. *GW IX*, p. 361.

sich davon absondert, hebt an ihm selbst sich auf.<sup>128</sup> Rather than a mere affirmation of each other's positions – through which the reconciliation would ultimately remain nothing but a verbal confirmation of these positions (“I am (thus)”, “You are (so)”) – the two are to develop what is still implicit in their ‘Gegensatz’ by talking with, rather than to each other, and to actively listen to what the other has to say. Only then can we form a community with the other which is no longer a collection of discrete, atomized selves, but is rather an ‘indiskrete Kontinuität’.<sup>129</sup> ‘Indiskret’ not only reinforces the aspect of continuity, but also suggests that consciousness should not keep itself to itself, but can only be developed if it is allowed, or allows itself, to speak, and thus open up to others.

Hegel thus shows that being conscientious ultimately involves a continuous exchange between what each individual consciousness (‘jedes für sich’) takes to be the right thing to do and the perspectives of others. This exchange should entail more than the individual consciousness conversing discretely with itself.<sup>130</sup> Through reconciliation as active acknowledgement of, and involvement with, both itself and its other, consciousness is able to move beyond its particular perspective and to manifest itself as an ‘Ich’ that is a plurality, and in which it no longer clings to a particular shape of itself: ‘Das versöhnende *Ja*, worin beide Ich [judging consciousness and acting consciousness, AG] von ihrem entgegengesetzten *Dasein* ablassen, ist das *Dasein* des zur Zweiheit ausgedehnten *Ichs*, das darin sich gleich bleibt und in seiner vollkommenen Entäußerung und Gegenteil die Gewißheit seiner selbst hat; – es ist der erscheinenden Gott mitten unter ihnen, die sich als das reine Wissen wissen.’<sup>131</sup> Morality ultimately involves not just having a moral outlook (‘die moralische Weltanschauung’) or being in possession of an immaculate interior. The act of forgiveness – and the subsequent need for reconciliation – allows us to understand that we can only truly be moral when – through a dialogical development of ‘Satz’ and ‘Gegensatz’, of ‘Urteil’ and ‘Gegenteil’ – we actively engage with the other with which we form the ‘zur Zweiheit ausgedehnten Ichs’.

128 *PhdG*, p. 494. *GWIX*, p. 362.

129 On Hegel's use of ‘diskret’, cf. p. 119 above. The totality that is ultimately produced is thus one in which, precisely because it consists of shattered and fragmented forms, there are no rigid demarcations (no ‘Narben’ that are set and fixed), but rather porous and fluid boundaries, in which all kinds of connections can be made.

130 Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 726: ‘Ein bloßes Selbstgespräch samt Selbstanklage oder dann auch als Reue und (stille) Bitte um Verzeihung (an Gott gerichtet und damit bloß an sich selbst) reicht nicht aus. [...] Die Absicht, wieder der allgemeinen Normativität gemäß gewissenhaft zu leben, muss explizit gemacht sein. [...] Der rechte Vollzug von Selbstkontrolle kann nicht rein subjektiv bleiben – was sich dann auch in den Massen an Tagebüchern, persönlichen Bekenntnissen in Briefen und Autobiographien ab dem 18. Jahrhundert zeigt, mit denen man sich einer potentiellen Öffentlichkeit präsentiert und eben so auf sich über den Umweg eines potentiellen Wir reflektiert.’ The literary figure of the beautiful soul was indeed often presented by means of its confessions. Cf. n. 75 above.

131 *PhdG*, p. 494. *GWIX*, p. 362.



In order to do so, however, we appear to initially have no more at our disposal than just one word: 'Ja'.<sup>132</sup> The need ultimately felt by consciousness to externalize itself ('sich zum Sein zu entäußern und in Wirklichkeit umzuschlagen'<sup>133</sup>), which is simultaneously an emptying out of everything that it assumed to belong itself, apparently also has far-reaching consequences for language as the 'Dasein des Geistes'. The act of forgiving and reconciling not only implies that we dare to allow ourselves to be completely transformed (in the movement 'worin beide Ich von ihrem entgegengesetzten Dasein ablassen'<sup>134</sup>) but also implies the need for a transformation of language in that we are now aware that its truth can never reside in a simple word or sentence the meaning of which we take for granted, but always requires movement ('[die] Bewegung des Gegensatzes') through which other perspectives can be developed.<sup>135</sup> Only by being fully involved with the other and with our language can we help to bring about a community that is truly 'Wir', and in which the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation can become a reality. God's Kingdom on earth is to be made a reality by ourselves,<sup>136</sup> rather than through an act of grace from an impenetrable *Jenseits*. What we still need, however, is insight in the ways in which this transformation of ourselves and our language is to take shape.

132 Comay stresses the emptiness of 'Spirit's last monosyllable': 'The "reconciling yes" functions as an empty performative: it is a communication without a message, without any content to communicate other than the fact that there is, or could be, communication, [...] a purely ceremonial formula whose only function is to 'prolong or reestablish contact.' Comay, *Mourning Sickness*, p. 131. I would argue that although the 'yes' is indeed a performative, it does contain a very strong message (and has required the violent breaking of the hard heart) as it indicates that there is indeed a way forward, which is, to quote Comay again, that 'the isolated subject of moral conscience [...] yield to the substance of the community, which in turn, however, must "resubjectify" itself.' (Comay, *Mourning Sickness*, p. 133) This 'resubjectification' of both consciousness and spirit, as we will see in the next section, involves a (continuous) transformation both of ourselves and the community we live in, but also entails a transformation of the ways in which spirit objectifies itself, in language, art, religion or in thought. In my view this transformation is thus not as radical as in Comay's interpretation, since in her view the 'resubjectification' involves 'shredding every vestige of positivity.'

133 *PhdG*, p. 491. *GW IX*, p. 360.

134 *PhdG*, p. 494. *GW IX*, p. 362.

135 Cf. Speight, op. cit. 117-121, who argues that Hegel's language of forgiveness (which for Speight is Hegel's appropriation of the language of forgiveness in Jacobi's novel *Woldemar*) is essentially 'revisionist' and allows for the inclusion of both an impersonal 'standard' and (possible or actual) particular motivations. I would argue that the final movement of reconciliation is not so much 'revisionist' but radical in that it suggests that we should allow for a transformation of the language we assumed to be simply given, and that initially both forms of consciousness cannot say anything other than 'Ja'. As I will argue below, this transformation does not imply that we are to develop a completely new language, but rather that we are to interact with the language we have been given in such a way that it becomes a continuously evolving totality in which we are able to recognize ourselves.

136 Through active reconciliation with the other, Hegel suggests, we allow Christ's teachings to become a reality, and give substance to the spirit of his words, which are echoed in the final sentence: 'der erscheinende Gott mitten unter ihnen' suggests Matthew 18:20: 'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' From the 'Gottesdienst in sich selbst', which was a celebration of the purity of its inner, 'divine' voice (see p. 179 above), consciousness is now able to celebrate being part of a community in which not only like-minded souls make themselves heard (as in the 'Gemeinde') but in which there is interaction with, and acknowledgement of, a variety of perspectives.



## 5.5 Absolute knowing as the dialogical transformation of *Geist* and its language

In the final chapter of the *Phänomenologie*, Hegel aims to show that ultimately *Geist* is able to come to a comprehensive grasp (*Begriff*) of itself after having experienced all the shapes in which it presented itself in the course of its development, and finally return to itself in the domain of pure thought. Even though absolute knowing as the culmination of this dialectical development can indeed be interpreted as a form of resolution, it is a resolution that is – as we have learned from the experience made by the beautiful soul – ultimately attained by spirit's complete relinquishing ('*Entäußerung*') of its former shapes and thus entails a fundamental transformation of subjectivity. As I will argue in this section, the standpoint of absolute knowing does not imply that consciousness' development has come to a standstill, and that it has reached a vantage point from which it is able to proclaim its monologic conclusions. Rather, its subject, absolute spirit, is now able to freely allow thought to dialogically develop the infinity of its possibilities. This opening up of thought implies, as we already saw, a transformation of language, which will have to be developed from judgmental and exclusive to an inclusive and constantly evolving totality, in which thought is able to freely express itself. In this development, as we will see below, reader and text are still implicated. In order to track the final stage in spirit's development in its context, I will first discuss the final transition of the *Phänomenologie*, in which spirit makes its ultimate move from *Vorstellung* to *Begriff*.

### 5.5.1 Moving from religion towards absolute knowing

Towards the end of the chapter on religion, Hegel describes the final return of spirit to itself as follows:

Die aufgehobene unmittelbare Gegenwart des selbstbewußten Wesens ist es als allgemeines Selbstbewußtsein; dieser Begriff des aufgehobenen einzelnen Selbsts, das absolutes Wesen ist, drückt daher unmittelbar die Konstituierung einer Gemeinde aus, die bisher im Vorstellen verweilend, jetzt in sich, als in das Selbst, zurückkehrt; und der Geist geht somit aus dem zweiten Elemente seiner Bestimmung, dem Vorstellen, in das *dritte*, das Selbstbewußtsein als solches über.<sup>137</sup>

In religion, *Geist* is experienced as an entity that transcends the particular perspective of individual consciousness, and as such unites people that are part of a religious community. Although religious consciousness feels it can partake of *Geist*, its participation is felt to depend on an act of grace bestowed by a transcendent God. Its access to spirit is determined by the symbolic representations it is given by its religion, by the images it is

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<sup>137</sup> *PhdG*, p. 566. *GWIX*, p. 415.

presented with and by the stories it is told.<sup>138</sup> Ultimately, it is both through the death of God as a spiritual entity with a determinate shape (whether it is of an omnipotent Father, or of Christ as God Incarnate), and through the relinquishing or killing off of our particular hold on the world as an individual consciousness that *Geist* can return to itself as a form of self-consciousness in which it can completely recognize itself and to which it fully belongs.<sup>139</sup> It is this movement which the beautiful soul blatantly refused, and which ultimately entailed the complete loss of its self. It not only lost its particular self through madness or illness, but also through barring itself from communion with all involved in *Geist* and thus from returning to itself as part of a generality. Consciousness is now able to come to an understanding of itself and a reconciliation with itself, without being dependent on an act of grace. In having come into itself as absolute spirit, the development of itself in thought and the ultimate reconciliation with all the shapes that constitute *Geist* is a task which can ultimately be accomplished by itself. Hegel's phrase 'Konstituierung einer Gemeinde' suggests that it is only now that it can be properly understood what is involved in being a community or congregation: it is an active corporation rather than a contemplative club.<sup>031</sup> From the 'Gemeinde' of beautiful souls, whose idea of a community was rather exclusive and sectarian, aimed at reinforcing rather than challenging and developing what each individual participant took to be right, we have now arrived at a community of members that are actively involved in the formation of a congregation, and who have come to see this as a continuous task.

**031** The entry on 'konstituieren' in the *Goethe Wörterbuch* shows that the original meaning of the word (as derived from Latin 'constituo') was 'to found' (a community) in the sense of establishing a form of organization with accompanying rules and regulations (hence 'constitution' as the fundamental law on which a legal system rests), but that its use in Hegel's time was much broader: it could also mean (esp. in relation to nature) 'to present itself as a unity or totality' (so that each part, or shape, of e.g. a plant is seen as contributing to what the plant essentially is). A further meaning that Hegel might want to bring into play is 'to question' or even 'to confront' ('zur Rede stellen, befragen') which suggests that a community can only truly come into its own if there is a continuous (critical and dialogical) exchange between the parts that make up the whole.

In reflecting on the way the representations of *Geist* have developed Hegel suggests that we can only arrive at a conceptual and inclusive understanding (*Begriff*) by means of a critical examination of our *Vorstellungen*, and of what we express and communicate in our representations: 'Betrachten wir noch die Art, wie jenes Vorstellen sich in seinem Fortgange benimmt, so sehen wir zuerst dies ausgedrückt, daß das göttliche Wesen die

138 In religion *Geist* is thus able to find itself in the world, but its unity with its substance can only be revealed as an immediate awareness, as a unity that can be felt, but not yet understood: it is represented as something we become aware of – and get hold of and use – through and with our bodies, as the natural, organic beings that we (also) are, but which is not yet available through reason: its 'einfache Wesen' is thus 'als brauchbares Ding nicht nur das Dasein das gesehen, gefühlt, gerochen, geschmeckt wird, sondern ist auch Gegenstand der Begierde und wird durch den wirklichen Genuß eins mit dem Selbst [...]. (*PhdG*, pp. 526-527, *GW IX*, p. 368).

139 *PhdG*, p. 565-566, *GW IX*, p. 415: '– dasjenige also, dem nicht das Fürsichsein [of spirit as a general entity, AG], sondern das Einfache als das Wesen gilt, ist es, das sich selbst entäußert, in den Tod geht und dadurch das absolute Wesen mit sich selbst versöhnt. [...] dadurch ist das Wesen in ihr sich selbst geworden; das unmittelbare Dasein der Wirklichkeit hat aufgehört, ein ihm fremdes oder äußerliches zu sein, indem es aufgehobenes, allgemeines ist; dieser Tod ist daher sein Erstehen als Geist.'

menschliche Natur annimmt. Darin ist schon *ausgesprochen*, daß *an sich* beide nicht getrennt sind [...].<sup>140</sup> In developing this thought Hegel explains that it is only through reflection on what the life and death of Christ represent that we can partake of, and develop, its spiritual essence, and ultimately understand that there is an original unity of 'göttliches Wesen' and 'menschliche Natur'.<sup>141</sup> The return to the original unity is at the same time a reconciliation between what from the perspective of religion was seen as God (the absolute good) and man as his creation (who had been granted free will, and thus the possibility to do wrong). Ultimately, reconciliation can thus only be fully achieved in self-conscious *Geist*, in spirit that knows itself as enjoying freedom (and understands that it lies in the nature of freedom that it can be abused), and as being both able and willing (since it understands that all that partake in *Geist* are free) to forgive those who go astray.<sup>142</sup> 'To err is human, to forgive divine'.<sup>143</sup> as part of self-conscious *Geist*, we understand ourselves as being capable of both. A conceptual understanding of what is involved in the reconciliation of God and man, of good and evil will reveal the nature of their unity: '– Indem das Böse *dasselbe* ist, was das Gute, ist eben das Böse nicht Böses noch das Gute Gutes, sondern beide sind vielmehr aufgehoben, das Böse überhaupt das insichseiende Fürsichsein und das Gute das selbstlose Einfache. Indem so beide nach ihrem Begriffe *ausgesprochen* [my italics, AG] werden, erhellt zugleich ihre Einheit; denn das insichseiende Fürsichsein ist das einfache Wissen; und das selbstlose Einfache ist ebenso das reine und in sich seiende Fürsichsein.'<sup>144</sup> There is no such thing as absolute good or evil we can have access to prior to our coming to know: both are now understood as attributes that characterize particular perspectives on choices that have been made and actions that have been taken. What is (initially) seen as evil is an action taken to further a purely private interest, whereas what is deemed good is what is done on the basis of a purely altruistic motive. If this understanding is expressed in words ('ausgesprochen'), *Geist* is enabled to reflect on the fact that this understanding (*Begriff*) is in need of further development, since it is still one-sided and fails to grasp that both perspectives already contain its other, and are thus also a unity. What is implicit in the 'evil' action is an awareness of its subjectivity ('das einfache Wissen'); what is lacking is development of this subjectivity into a 'Wir'. To act in the interest of the 'Wir' is the sole motivation of the 'good' action, while it fails to grasp that 'Wir' is also a subject with an interest and is by no means just 'das selbstlose Einfache'.<sup>145</sup>

140 *PhdG*, p. 566. *GW IX*, p. 415.

141 *PhdG*, p. 567. *GW IX*, pp. 415-416: 'Diese Vorstellung, die auf diese Weise nich unmittelbar und daher nicht geistig ist oder die menschliche Gestalt des Wesens nur erst als eine besondere, noch nicht allgemeine weiß, wird für dies Bewußtsein geistig in der Bewegung des gestalteten Wesens, sein unmittelbares Dasein wieder aufzuopfern und zum Wesen zurückzukehren; das Wesen als *in sich reflektiertes* ist erst der Geist. – Die Versöhnung des göttlichen Wesen mit dem *Anderen* überhaupt und bestimmt mit dem *Gedanken* desselben, dem *Bösen*, ist also hierin vorgestellt.'

142 Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd 2, pp. 937-938.

143 Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*.

144 *PhdG*, p. 567. *GW IX*, p. 416.

145 Cf. the discussion of moral judgements in the *Welt der Bildung*, see section 4.3.2.

As in the sense-certainty section, it becomes clear that ‘die Sprache ist das Wahrhaftere’:<sup>146</sup> when a particular perspective aims to express its *Meinung* or its particular *Begriff*, it fails as it does so in language that reveals itself to be a generality that is already mediated and is the deposit of the interaction of a multitude of different perspectives. Language thus allows for the development of those aspects of a *Begriff* that are still implicit and are to be developed. This explains Hegel’s demand for a verbal reaction (‘[es] muß gesagt werden’) so that the *Begriff* can be extended and eventually completed: ‘– Sosehr daher gesagt werden muß, daß nach ihrem Begriffe das Gute und Böse, d.h. insofern sie nicht das Gute und das Böse sind, *dasselbe* sind, ebensosehr muß also gesagt werden, daß sie *nicht* dasselbe, sondern schlechthin *verschieden* sind, denn das einfache Fürsichsein oder auch das reine Wissen sind gleicher Weise die reine Negativität oder der absolute Unterschied an ihnen selbst.’<sup>147</sup> Good and evil are the same in that neither of them are absolutes: both are always relative to a particular perspective. They are different in the sense that, in making a decision, a fully autonomous subject can distinguish (makes ‘der absolute Unterschied’) between different courses of action, with different outcomes. It is important that both sentences, ‘Satz’ and ‘Gegensatz’ (‘good and evil are the same’ and ‘good and evil are different’) be uttered, Hegel continues: ‘– Erst diese beiden Sätze vollenden das Ganze.’<sup>148</sup> What is even more important is that it should be understood that the truth never resides in one sentence or in one particular reading of a sentence: ‘indem beide [those who dogmatically cling to a particular ‘Satz’, AG] gleich recht haben, haben beide gleich unrecht, und ihr Unrecht besteht darin, solche abstrakte Formen, wie *dasselbe* und *nicht dasselbe*, die *Identität* und die *Nicht-Identität*, für etwas Wahres, Festes, Wirkliches zu nehmen und auf ihnen zu beruhen. Nicht das eine oder das andere hat Wahrheit, sondern eben ihre Bewegung.’<sup>149</sup> Truth cannot be found in Platonic forms or rigid logical schemes: it is only through interactive movement, through a continuous questioning and taking up different positions, that it can be produced. For Hegel, as we already saw, this can only occur in fully self-conscious spirit: ‘[...] es ist der Geist, worin beide abstrakte Seiten [of a divine being and nature, AG], wie sie in Wahrheit sind, nämlich als *aufgehobene* gesetzt sind, – ein Setzen, das nicht durch das Urteil und das geistlose *Ist*, die Kopula desselben, ausgedrückt werden kann.’<sup>150</sup>

Not only have ‘God’ and ‘Nature’ now ceased to be abstract truths that inhabit an impenetrable *Jenseits*,<sup>151</sup> since we now grasp them as being part of spirit, we find that

146 *PhdG*, p. 85. *GW IX*, p. 65.

147 *PhdG*, p. 567. *GW IX*, p. 416.

148 *PhdG*, p. 567. *GW IX*, p. 416. Significantly, Hegel uses a dash to start this sentence (an idiosyncrasy he resorts to quite frequently, especially in the latter parts, see also the two previous quotations), which suggests that these sentences are uttered after a pause of thought, as replies to what was uttered before. I will return to Hegel’s use of the dash in more detail in the next section.

149 *PhdG*, pp. 567-568. *GW IX*, p. 416. Cf. Hegel’s early formulation (in the *Differenzschrift*) of the absolute: ‘[d]as Absolute selbst aber ist darum die Identität der Identität und der Nicht-Identität; Entgegensetzen und Einssein ist zugleich in ihm. *Jenaer Schriften 1801-1807 (Werke 2)*, p. 96. *GW IV*, p. 64.

150 *PhdG*, p. 568. *GW IX*, p. 416.

151 See the quotation on p. 199 above.

the nature of 'Setzen' has changed as well, and reflecting on this change also allows us insight in the way in which language can be further developed. 'Setzen' is no longer the Fichtean positing of 'Ich=Ich' as an original act that constitutes self-consciousness, or Kant's synthetic *a priori* as, to use Hegel's words, '[das] Produkt Entgegengesetzter'.<sup>152</sup> Both, in Hegel's eyes, failed to understand that such a positing requires an original unity (*Sein*) as principle through which it is united. 'Setzen', like 'das göttliche Wesen' and 'die Natur', is equally sublated in the movement through which truth is produced, and ceases to be an activity that fixates and pins down thought. This 'Setzen', the free movement of thought that knows itself as the 'Wir' that is both subject and substance, cannot, Hegel argues, be expressed by a merely formal judgement. He thus again stresses the need for speculative thought and language, through which the 'other' of a sentence is explicated, through which '*Sein*' ceases to be just a copula,<sup>153</sup> and truth can be revealed as a totality in which there is continuous interaction. Hegel acknowledges this is a hard task, as we tend to think of God, nature, good, evil as givens, as entities that simply are what they are, and which can therefore be left as what we take them to be: 'Die Schwierigkeit, die in diesen Begriffen stattfindet, ist allein das Festhalten am *Ist* und das Vergessen des Denkens, worin die Momente ebenso *sind* als *nicht sind*, – nur die Bewegung sind, die der Geist ist.'<sup>154</sup> True thought does not forget,<sup>155</sup> and involves itself with all the moments that contribute to either its object or to itself, to self-conscious spirit as the mediated generality in which all possible perspectives find themselves reflected. Although it does not forget, spirit as the subject of true thought, through its movement, allows consciousness to forgive (both the other perspective which it took to be mistaken in its judgement and itself for remaining caught up in the realm of representations) and to reconcile itself with being part of spirit as the true communion of thought.<sup>156</sup> Again Hegel stresses that it is only now that spirit has come into its own as 'Gemeinde' and grasps itself as having the task to develop as thought what used to be mere representations (of God, good, evil,

152 *Glauben und Wissen in Jenaer Schriften 1801-1807 (Werke 2)*, p. 305. *GW IV*, p. 327.

153 In *Glauben und Wissen* Hegel already conveys this thought in similar fashion. In Hegel's view, the solution to Kant's question: 'Wie sind synthetische Urteile a priori möglich?' is to be found in Kant's work, but only at the end, and can therefore not provide a true *a priori*. See *Jenaer Schriften 1801-1807 (Werke 2)*, p. 307, *GW IV*, p. 328: 'So hat Kant in Wahrheit seine Frage: wie sind synthetische Urteile a priori möglich? gelöst. Sie sind möglich durch die ursprüngliche Identität von Ungleichartigem, aus welcher als dem Unbedingten sie selbst, als in die Form eines Urteils getrennt erscheinendes Subjekt und Prädikat, Besonderes und Allgemeines erst sich sondert. Das Vernünftige oder, wie Kant sich ausdrückt, das Apriorische dieses Urteils, die absolute Identität als Mittelbegriff stellt sich aber nicht im Urteil nicht, sondern im Schluß dar; im Urteil ist sie nur die Kopula "Ist", ein Bewußtloses, und das Urteil selbst ist nur die überwiegende Erscheinung der Differenz.'

154 *PhdG*, p. 568. *GW IX*, pp. 416-417.

155 In contrast with natural consciousness: 'Das natürliche Bewußtseingeht deswegen auch zu diesem Resultate, was an ihr das Wahre ist, immer selbst fort und macht die Erfahrung darüber, aber vergißt es nur ebenso immer wieder und fängt die Bewegung von vorne an.' *PhdG*, p. 90. *GW IX*, pp. 68-69.

156 *PhdG*, p. 568, *GW IX*, p. 417: 'Diese geistige Einheit oder die Einheit, worin die Unterschied nur als Momente oder als aufgehobene sind, ist es, die für das vorstellende Bewußtsein in jener Versöhnung geworden, und indem sie die Allgemeinheit des Selbstbewußtseins ist, hat dies aufgehört, vorstellendes zu sein; die Bewegung ist in es zurückgegangen.'

etc.): 'Die Bewegung der Gemeinde als des Selbstbewußtseins, das sich von seiner Vorstellung unterscheidet, ist, das *hervorzubringen*, was *an sich* geworden ist.'<sup>157</sup>

The movement from representation to thought is brought about by the self as negativity: the self that distinguishes itself from the world it – as natural consciousness – felt at home in: 'das Selbst hat sich aus dieser Natürlichkeit sich zurückzuziehen und in sich zu gehen, das hieße, böse zu werden.'<sup>158</sup> Consciousness is initially evil in the sense that – as self – it is convinced that its particular perspective is what counts, that it has elevated itself above nature and that nature – 'vorgestellt' as a struggle for survival at the cost of others or as permeated with original sin – is evil: 'das Insichgehen besteht daher darin, *sich zu überzeugen*, daß das natürliche Dasein das Böse ist.'<sup>159</sup> In order to come to a full grasp of what it means to be evil, or indeed of any concept, this negativity – this full awareness that the self, as self, is something other than its world – should also be expressed so that it can contribute its share and come to an understanding of the role it plays in the formation of spirit and the production of knowing.<sup>160</sup>

An dem Inhalte muß dies moment des *Negativen* gleichfalls sich ausdrücken. Indem nämlich das Wesen *an sich* mit sich schon versöhnt und geistige Einheit ist, worin die Teile der Vorstellung *aufgehobene* oder *Momente* sind, so stellt sich dies dar, daß jeder Teil der Vorstellung hier die *entgegengesetzte* Bedeutung erhält, als er vorher hatte; jede Bedeutung vervollständigt sich dadurch an der andern, und der Inhalt ist dadurch erst ein geistiger; indem die Bestimmtheit ebensowohl ihre entgegengesetzte ist, ist die Einheit im Anderssein, das Geistige vollendet.<sup>161</sup>

Each determination, each voicing of a particular perspective ('Bestimmtheit') requires opposition from and fulfillment by what it is not: nature is not simply 'good' or 'bad', nor is focus on the self simply 'good' or 'bad'. Being part of self-conscious spirit requires that we set ourselves the task to continuously allow for the development and voicing of those other perspectives, so that *Geist* is truly and explicitly the self of all, a self in which we are prepared to let go of our particular perspective. It is in this way that the 'Vorstellung' of Christ as the incarnation of God, his crucifixion and his resurrection should be understood: 'Das Ergreifen dieser Vorstellung drückt nun bestimmter [with more precision as it contains more voices, AG] dasjenige aus, was vorhin in ihr das geistige Auferstehen genannt wurde, oder das Werden seines einzelnen Selbstbewußtsein zum Allgemeinen oder zur Gemeinde.[...] Der vom Selbst ergriffene Tod des Mittlers ist das Aufheben

157 *PhdG*, p. 568. *GW IX*, p. 417.

158 *PhdG*, p. 569. *GW IX*, p. 417.

159 *Ibid.*

160 By opposing itself to natural spirit and inflicting harm on the general perspective, the negativity of the self thus produces 'die Wunden des Geistes'; and it is only by allowing for a letting go of its particularity, and by understanding that each particular perspective is to contribute to the whole, that no scars remain. Cf. the discussion on p. 192 ff.

161 *PhdG*, p. 569. *GW IX*, p. 417.



seiner *Gegenständlichkeit* oder seines *besonderen Fürsichseins*; dies *besondere* Fürsichsein ist allgemeines Selbstbewußtsein geworden.<sup>162</sup> In understanding what Christ represents, he ceases to be equal to his representation, to the pictures we are presented in church, and becomes much more than that: we come to grasp his individual death, his letting go of his particularity, as allowing for the eventual coming to be of general spirit, as the mediation of all the individual voices that contribute to it, and which thus live on, even though they equally have to relinquish their particular individuality.<sup>163</sup> Yet, in what way can we actively bring about this mediation of spirit – and in what language – other than by being prepared to let go of our purely individual perspective?

### 5.5.2 Spirit as mediation of itself

Spirit has now become aware of itself as spirit: ‘So ist also der Geist *sich selbst* wissender Geist; er weiß *sich*; das, was ihm Gegenstand ist, ist, oder seine Vorstellung ist der wahre absolute *Inhalt*; er drückt, wie wir sahen, den Geist selbst aus.’<sup>164</sup> What there is to know, the object of knowledge, has become subject, and ‘ist’, which holds center stage in this sentence, has now ceased to be a mere copula, and has become the expression of spirit as active being, as movement. Although this is apparent to “us”, to the phenomenologist, spirit itself – although it may be aware of the potential of language to allow for self-expression and mediation of all that is involved in spirit – does not yet know how to bring this about. Hegel’s discussion of the final stages of spirit’s transition from religion to absolute knowing reveals that this final transition is essentially a movement of reconciliation.

Having liberated itself from being subjected to representations – whether they be the images of a transcendent God or the schemes of formal logic – that place an external constraint on its thinking, spirit is now able to think (for) itself. What spirit is, is what it knows, and what it knows really is: ‘er ist auch *wirklicher* Geist.’<sup>165</sup> *Sein* can never merely be an abstract and indifferent object of thought, but also has to be an actuality,<sup>166</sup> and in self-conscious and thinking *Geist*, this has now been achieved. *Sein* is the collective movement through which we become (and have become) *Geist*: ‘Er ist dies [wirklicher Geist, AG], indem er die drei Elemente [as natural, as representing, and as thinking

162 *PhdG*, pp. 570–571. *GW IX*, p. 418.

163 As Stekeler succinctly puts it: ‘Das geistige Auferstehen ist ein Weiterleben in der Gemeinschaft, ein Weg oder ein Entwicklungsprozeß vom Ich zum Wir.’ Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 951.

164 *PhdG*, p. 572. *GW IX*, p. 419.

165 *PhdG*, p. 572. *GW IX*, p. 419. I think it is in this sense that Hegel’s (in)famous dictum in the *Rechtsphilosophie*: ‘Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig’ is to be interpreted. G.W.F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts (Werke 7)* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), p. 24. *GW XIV*, I, p. 14.

166 Which is why ‘*Sein*, reines *Sein*’ in the *Logik* does not contain a verb. *WdL*, p. 82. *GW XI*, p. 43. Pure being, without any determination, is nothing at all, an empty abstraction. True being is not pure at all, but is contaminated with, and determined by, all the things we collectively do, make and say.



spirit, AG] seiner Natur durchläuft; diese Bewegung durch sich selbst hindurch macht seine Wirklichkeit aus; – was sich bewegt, ist er, er ist das Subjekt der Bewegung, und er ist ebenso *das Bewegen* selbst oder die Substanz, durch welche das Subjekt hindurchgeht.<sup>167</sup> Spirit is a movement,<sup>168</sup> a process that is caused by itself, but is also a continuous process in and through which it comes to know itself ('durch sich selbst hindurch'),<sup>169</sup> both as subject (the 'Wir' to which all the 'I's involved have contributed and are contributing) and as substance (the ways in which spirit manifests itself as a community and in the productions of its movement).<sup>169</sup>

**032** It is in motion, but the word *Bewegung* also refers to a group, a collective that is stirred by a shared motive. *Bewegung*, like *Rührung*, also suggests emotional involvement with being part of *Geist*.

The movement through religious consciousness has not only shown that spirit can only truly be if it is prepared to relinquish its tenacious clinging to its particular outlook (the spirit 'der dem Bösen verzeiht und darin zugleich von seiner eigenen Einfachheit und harten Unwandelbarkeit abläßt'<sup>170</sup>) and to see that it needs the other perspective in order to come to true knowing as the mediation of those perspectives ('Erkennen als das *Ja* zwischen diesen Extremen'<sup>171</sup>), but has also revealed that religion was a necessary stage in spirit's becoming aware of itself as accessible ('offenbar') to all.<sup>172</sup> Absolute being has thus ceased to be an entity that is revealed to consciousness through an act of grace, but is 'offenbar' in the sense that it is open to everyone who has become part of the shared enterprise that is spirit. The structure of the final clause of this sentence (with the central placement of the sub-clause 'ist wie es das Subjekt ist, so auch die Substanz' and the emphasis on the penultimate 'ist') is suggestive of the way in which the nature and understanding of *Sein* has developed in the course of spirit's development: it is no longer that which we are immediately granted and can only accept as a gift.<sup>173</sup> This might explain why Hegel left out 'ist' in the sub-clause ('dem das absolute Wesen offenbar'): religious consciousness merely accepts the gift of (absolute) being without actively involving itself with it through thought. 'Sein' has now come to refer to the way in which spirit actively manifests itself as movement ('*ist* also selbst der Geist'), is no

167 *PhdG*, p. 572. *GW IX*, p. 419.

168 Cf. the discussion of sense-certainty's experience as a 'working through' of the perspectives of which it is made up ('wir kommen hindurch dahin') in section 3.4.4.

169 As we will come to see more explicitly in the next section, this process is not to be thought of as linear or temporal, but rather as circular and infinite.

170 *PhdG*, p. 572. *GW IX*, p. 420.

171 *Ibid.*

172 *PhdG*, pp. 572-573, *GW 9*, p. 420: 'diesen Begriff [of spirit as it has come into its own through being religious spirit, AG] *schaut* das religiöse Bewußtsein, dem das absolute Wesen offenbar [ist], *an*, und hebt die *Unterscheidung* seines *Selbsts* von seinem *Angeschauten* auf, ist wie es das Subjekt ist, so auch die Substanz und *ist* also selbst der Geist, eben weil und insofern es diese Bewegung ist.'

173 The complete sentence reads as follows: 'Wie uns der Begriff des Geistes geworden war, als wir in die Religion eintraten, nämlich als die Bewegung des seiner selbst gewissen Geistes, der dem Bösen verzeiht und darin zugleich von seiner eigenen Einfachheit und harten Unwandelbarkeit abläßt, oder die Bewegung, daß das absolut *Entgegengesetzte* sich als *dasselbe* erkennt und dies Erkennen als das *Ja* zwischen diesen Extremen hervorbricht, – diesen Begriff *schaut* das religiöse Bewußtsein, dem das absolute Wesen offenbar, *an*, – ist, wie es das Subjekt ist, so auch die Substanz und *ist* also selbst der Geist, eben weil und insofern es diese Bewegung ist.' *PhdG*, pp. 572-573. *GW IX*, pp. 419-420.

longer 'unwandelbar', and has dissolved the separation between subject and substance, between self and what it intuits.

However, the reconciliation between self and being is still a representation for religious consciousness, and is not an act that can be brought about by itself. It is projected onto a distant beyond: 'seine Befriedigung bleibt also selbst mit dem Gegensatze eines Jenseits behaftet. Seine eigene Versöhnung tritt daher als ein *Fernes* in sein Bewußtsein ein'.<sup>174</sup> In positing itself as opposed to absolute being it still cannot enter into a meaningful, productive communication with what is, since it remains locked within itself and can only hope it is ultimately granted a reply ('a Gegensatz'). As religious consciousness, as part of a *Gemeinde* that is not yet fully self-conscious, it feels connected with its other through an eternal love,<sup>175</sup> but still has to develop this connection in thought:

Ihre Versöhnung ist daher im ihren Herzen, aber mit ihrem Bewußtsein noch entzweit und ihre Wirklichkeit noch gebrochen. Was als das *Ansich* oder die Seite der *reinen Vermittlung* in ihr Bewußtsein tritt, ist die jenseits liegende Versöhnung; was aber als *gegenwärtig*, als die Seite der *Unmittelbarkeit* und des *Daseins*, ist die Welt, die ihre Verklärung noch zu gewarten hat'.<sup>176</sup>

As part of religious spirit, individual consciousness is aware that it belongs to spirit, and feels part of a community that transcends its particular perspective. It has not yet grasped that, as part of spirit, it plays its part in the mediation of reality, and can thus equally play a part in the explication of its world. This would allow consciousness to come to an understanding that its reconciliation is dependent on itself and that what it needs to reconcile itself with is its present world, a world that it – as being part of spirit – now understands to be of its own making. The nature of the process through which consciousness gains insight in itself and its relation to spirit is intimated by the words 'Verklärung' and 'gewarten': religious consciousness feels it has to wait or hope ('gewarten') for a transfiguration ('Verklärung') of the defective present world into a hereafter in which we are granted eternal salvation. Yet, both words do not only have religious denotations: 'gewarten' can also mean 'to observe', 'to enter into a connection with' or 'to explain', while 'Verklärung' is also used in the sense of 'explanation' or 'presentation'.<sup>177</sup> In the process in which spirit becomes fully self-conscious, Hegel thus suggests, spirit develops the way it communes with its essence, absolute being, in that it no longer passively accepts what it sees as immediately given, but is actively involved with what it now understands to be a world that is completely mediated by its own determinations of the world. Through this same process it develops its understanding of language, which it increasingly comes to see as the 'Dasein des Geistes', as the reflection of the ways in

174 *PhdG*, p. 574. *GW* 9, pp. 420-421.

175 *PhdG*, p. 574, *GW* IX, p. 421: 'die ewige Liebe, die sie nur *fühlt*'.

176 *PhdG*, p. 574. *GW* IX, p. 421.

177 See the relevant lemmas in *DWB*.

which spirit's relation to its world have evolved. In becoming fully self-conscious, spirit develops the ability to transform language into a medium in which there is continuous interchange between all the perspectives of which language is the deposit, and which thus comes to reflect its 'Dasein' as self-conscious spirit, and through which it comes to an understanding of itself as being essentially movement.

Hegel wants us to understand that as part of self-conscious spirit, in the process of explicating the world and ourselves, we simultaneously transform it, and come to see ourselves as responsible for bringing about a world in which we can be reconciled with what we are. This transformation is, as we saw above, not only a transformation of our world and of ourselves, but also of our language. Not only has spirit as absolute being ceased to be an object that inhabits an impenetrable beyond that can only be approached by means of representations (and in that sense God is dead), but simultaneously language, as its prime means of expression, is no longer something we simply receive as given, and subsequently treat as having a fixed content, which somehow resides beyond its materialization in words. It has now been revealed as a living, continuously evolving whole for the explication and realization of which we are responsible. The process of 'Verklärung' can now be understood as one in which we are not dependent on the grace of God, but rather as a communion and communication with ourselves (as spirit). The transfiguration that is brought about does not produce a completely new spirit, or a completely new language, but is the continuous enfolding of what there already is, of all that has contributed to what spirit and language now are. The responsibility lies with us to make spirit and its language alive again – to do justice to their being essentially movement – through our continuous involvement.

### 5.5.3 Speaking and listening to itself: spirit as self-explication

In discussing the nature of the movement through which spirit comes to its ultimate return to itself, Hegel also explicitly reflects on the way spirit comes to communicate with itself. When spirit is initially represented as a transcendent eternal being, the word 'Geist' is taken to have a meaning that is fixed and which we simply have to accept and leave as it is. Yet, for Hegel, this is not what spirit truly is: 'der Geist ist dies, nicht Bedeutung, nicht das Innere, sondern das Wirkliche zu sein. Das einfache ewige Wesen daher würde nur dem leeren Worte nach Geist sein, wenn es bei der Vorstellung und dem Ausdrücke des einfachen ewigen Wesens bliebe.'<sup>178</sup> Again, Hegel insists, words and concepts do not already have a meaning that is given and fixed, but are to be understood as continuously evolving in a process for which we, as part of spirit, are responsible. In doing so we not only reveal and give meaning to words and concepts, but also transform spirit into a meaningful unity. As part of self-conscious spirit, in having an understanding of

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178 *PhdG*, pp. 558-559. *GW IX*, p. 410.

ourselves of being involved in spirit, we thus also have to set ourselves the task of the explication of spirit. The movement through which we come to understand and explicate ourselves as spirit distinguishes itself in three 'moments':

Es unterscheiden sich also die drei Momente, des *Wesens*, des *Fürsichseins*, welches das Anderssein des Wesens ist und für welches das Wesen ist, und des *Fürsichseins* oder Sichselbstwissens *im Anderen*. Das Wesen schaut nur sich selbst in seinem Fürsichsein an; es ist in dieser Entäußerung nur bei sich; das Fürsichsein, das sich von dem Wesen ausschließt, ist das *Wissen des Wesens seiner selbst*; es ist das Wort, das ausgesprochen den Aussprechenden entäußert und ausgeleert zurückläßt, und nur dieses Sichselbstvernehmen ist das Dasein des Wortes. So daß die Unterschiede, die gemacht sind, ebenso unmittelbar aufgelöst, als sie gemacht, und ebenso unmittelbar gemacht, als sie aufgelöst sind, und das Wahre und Wirkliche eben diese in sich kreisende Bewegung ist. Diese Bewegung in sich selbst spricht das absolute Wesen als *Geist* aus; das absolute Wesen, das nicht als Geist erfaßt wird, ist nur das abstrakte Leere, so wie der Geist, der nicht als diese Bewegung erfaßt wird, nur ein leeres Wort ist.<sup>179</sup>

Each spiritual being (*Wesen*) is a self-moving and self-conscious entity that is aware of, and can reflect on, the way it evolves and realizes itself in the world. In externalizing itself, through its actions and words, it not only becomes an object for itself (*Fürsichsein*) but also for others (*im Anderen*) with whom it interacts. Initially, all that a spiritual being sees or intuits ('schaut an') is what it assumes to be its particular self ('nur sich selbst'). Yet, through externalizing itself through the medium of language it allows itself to develop into an other, into a being it does not immediately recognize as itself.<sup>180</sup> It is only thus, Hegel again emphasizes, that spirit can ultimately come to self-knowledge (*Wissen des Wesens seiner Selbst*) rather than to a mere intuition of itself. In uttering what it sees as its purely individual conviction, the reflection of a perspective that solely belongs to the self that speaks ('de[r] Aussprechende'), individual consciousness again finds that its words cease to be just its words, but instead belong to all.<sup>181</sup> Actively listening to itself ('Sichselbstvernehmen'),<sup>182</sup> rather than just seeing the reflection of itself, thus becomes a very rich experience in which the self is transformed from what was initially seen as purely individual to a general self – *Geist* – that is accessible to all. It teaches consciousness that it can only come to an understanding of itself as (part of) a

179 *PhdG*, p. 559. *GW IX*, p. 410.

180 'im Anderen' thus refers to consciousness' coming to know itself through the recognition of another perspective, but also to the medium within which this occurs, i.e. language. Cf. also consciousness' experience in the 'Welt der Bildung', in which consciousness felt that it could only externalize itself by means of pre-established roles (in which it also felt forced to adopt a particular language), and because of which it felt that it had to relinquish what it took to be its true self, an inner core that it immediately possessed and from which it became alienated through the process of *Bildung*. See the discussion in section 4.2.2 above.

181 Cf. Hegel's discussion of the inherently mediated nature of language in the sense-certainty section or in the section on conscience.

182 Cf. the remarks on 'vernehmen' on p. 136.

spiritual being if it dares to let go of its individual grasp of the world and empty itself of its private representation of itself, of what it deems to be its self as its own innermost core. In emptying out ('ausleeren') its particular self it discovers that spirit is not an empty word at all, but a living and moving totality that is continuously produced through its active involvement with 'abstrakte Bedeutung[en]' – both of itself and its words and concepts – that it used to merely accept.

The movement of 'Sichselbstvernehmen' is thus a process in which what was taken to be a full and finished product we are immediately acquainted with and accept as given – both the individual self, spirit, and language – is transformed and replenished. In a process of active listening to what is expressed, we are able to bring about the riches that lie stored within language (i.e. all the meanings words have come to be equipped with), but, most importantly, to be the medium through which spirit is actively acknowledged and recognized, as belonging to us rather than to a transcendent God.<sup>183</sup> Spirit's final return to its self, in which it actively involves itself with the way it manifests itself through language thus entails that both self and language can now truly be what they are, which is why Hegel states that 'dieses Sichselbstvernehmen ist das Dasein des Wortes.' Both are in continuous movement, in which distinctions are both made and dissolved, as neither the self nor its expression, language, can be pinned down and determined as having a meaning that is simple, fixed and 'sich selbst gleich'. Each distinction that is or has been made, each judgement, each correction of a particular perspective contributes to what spirit, for Hegel, essentially is: a movement within itself ('Bewegung in sich selbst') – a movement of speaking to and listening to itself – in which these distinctions are both acknowledged and allowed to be in continuous flux.

What is thus required of those who partake of absolute spirit is a relation to both themselves and to language that allows for this movement. We are to involve ourselves with both on the understanding that 'Sichselbstvernehmen' is an activity in which we continuously allow all the voices that contribute – and have contributed – to who and what we are – both as collective and as individual spiritual beings – to make themselves heard. The transformation of both subject and of language as its expression thus does not imply a radical move into completely new territory, in which both self and language will have to be changed completely, but instead is one in which we are expected to change our relation or our involvement with what presents itself to us, so that both subject and language can truly become what they already are. We have to dare to transform the practice of 'Vorstellen', in which we cling to the safety of particular representations we recognize because they were familiar, and move to a 'begreifendes Denken' – a thinking that encompasses all the movements of thought and thus also comes to know itself – in which

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183 This passage can thus be seen as Hegel's elaboration of John 1:1: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' Through the movement of 'Sichselbstvernehmen', the word is no longer one that only belongs to God – who then gives it to man – but comes to belong to the collective human spirit that has now achieved self-consciousness.

we can ultimately only fully recognize ourselves and each other if we are prepared to give up our particular hold of what we deem to be our individual selves, and of spirit and its manifestations. In the next section we will see that even though Hegel claims that in absolute knowing thought is fully transparent to itself, that it has finally managed to elevate itself to ‘das sich selbst klare und sehnsuchtslose Gebiet der Vernunft’,<sup>184</sup> this by no means entails that thought can then be left as it is, but is rather a call for those part of absolute spirit to continuously develop the infinity of connections that are to be made between all these moments, and that this also implies that it equally allows its language to continuously transform itself.

## 5.6 Absolute knowing as the continuous transformation of thought, subjectivity and language

In one of the last pages of the *Phänomenologie* Hegel writes: ‘In dem Wissen [i.e. absolute knowing, AG] hat also der Geist die Bewegung seines Gestaltens beschlossen [...]’.<sup>185</sup> This sentence could be taken to indicate that, now that spirit has come to the end of its journey, now that it has achieved the ultimate return to itself, it can finally come to rest and contemplate its true shape in tranquillity. Yet, we also come to understand that even though spirit has now reached the standpoint of absolute knowing, through having critically interacted with historically significant ways in which it knew of the world, its knowing is still essentially movement. Spirit is now able to understand its movement not just as a movement towards: it is not merely a development that culminates in a knowing that is fully conscious of how and what it knows, of how it and its knowing have come to be, and which can then be left as it is. Spirit – and its knowing of itself – has now also become a movement *within* itself.<sup>186</sup> *Geist* is now free to move and form itself within a domain it has come to recognize as fully belonging to itself. In coming to a full understanding of itself as movement, *Geist* comes to the conclusion that its movement is ongoing and infinite, and that its being essentially movement also implies that absolute knowing can only be communicated in language that is continuously (set) in motion, a language in which, as we will see, there can never be ‘a last word’, and in which spirit can be – and is to be – in continuous dialogue with itself.

### 5.6.1 ‘Das Aufheben dieser bloßen Form’

The chapter sets out by revealing that in order to arrive at the final stage of absolute knowing, there is still one task that awaits spirit. As religious spirit, as we saw above, *Geist* is already absolute as spiritual being, yet has not fully recognized itself as its

184 *Glauben und Wissen*, p. 299. *GW IV*, p. 323.

185 *PhdG*, p. 588. *GW IX*, p. 431.

186 *Beschlossen*, as we saw earlier, can also be taken to mean enclosed within. Cf. chapter four, n. 100.

subject. We still have to develop a comprehensive self-consciousness of ourselves as the spiritual beings that we are, and of *Geist* as the manifestation of our active involvement with each other and with our world. For religious spirit, the absolute was present, but only as the content of its representations:

Der Geist der offenbaren Religion hat sein Bewußtsein als solches noch nicht überwunden, oder, was dasselbe ist, sein wirkliches Selbstbewußtsein ist nicht der Gegenstand seines Bewußtseins; er selbst überhaupt und die in ihm sich unterscheidenden Momente fallen in das Vorstellen und in die Form der Gegenständlichkeit. Der *Inhalt* des Vorstellens ist der absolute Geist; und es ist allein noch um das Aufheben dieser bloßen Form zu tun [...].<sup>187</sup>

In coming to recognize itself as both subject and substance, and thus develop *Geist* as self-consciousness in actuality ('sein wirkliches Bewußtsein'), spirit has to critically engage with representations of absolute being as a particular object with a determinate form, and to understand that they are not simply given, but that they are *its* representations.<sup>188</sup> Moreover, Hegel wants us to understand that, in order to move from *Vorstellung* to *Begriff*, we have to dare to completely give up the idea of form as fixed, determinate and easily recognizable.

Absolute knowing entails 'das Aufheben [der] bloßen Form', which we should not take as a call to relinquish the idea of form completely, but as a challenge to engage in such a way with what we want to come to know that it is never pinned down in accordance with a particular conception of ourselves but is continuously allowed to develop through the interaction of – and with – all the particular moments or shapes of which it is made up. I therefore do not fully agree with Comay and Ruda, who see absolute knowing as a domain in which we have to completely give up whatever notions of subjectivity or form we had: 'All given structures and all structured givenness of experience have been relinquished.'<sup>189</sup> In my interpretation, Hegel wants us to interact with the 'given' forms and structures in such a way that they are truly 'aufgehoben', in the sense that in their continuous interaction they are both preserved – and thus recognized as having had an essential contribution to absolute knowing – and made fluid: we should understand that all previous forms and structures, in their being determinate, present a one-sided picture of knowing.<sup>190</sup> The transformation in absolute knowing is to take place with and within

187 *PhdG*, p. 575. *GW IX*, p. 422.

188 As Stekeler points out, leaving behind the representations of spirit as a particular object not only entails that we no longer see general spirit as God, but also that we give up the idea of a soul as the object of subjective spirit. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 963.

189 *Op. cit.*, p. 4. See also Comay, *Mourning Sickness*, p. 133.

190 My view is thus much closer to Särkela's, who argues that Hegel's method of immanent critique implies continuous transformation of both the method and the self we started out with. Cf. Särkela, *op. cit.*, p. 96: 'Was dann [when we dare to relinquish the idea of there being a fixed and unchangeable method we can set out with at the start of our critical involvement with knowing, AG] vorliegt, ist kein vorausgesetztes Modell mehr, sondern zwei vorausgesetzte Verpflichtungen, die in der kritischen Praxis von der kritischen Praxis



all the shapes – with both their content and their form – that have now been collected, rather than to produce a radically new form. What we have to do is to recognize ourselves in, and as, the continuous formation of thought, and thus allow form to become movement.

In this movement we continuously shift perspective – in the full understanding that subjectivity entails perspectivity – from individual to general and *vice versa*. It is thus that the object of knowing becomes available as the ‘Totalität seiner Bestimmungen’:<sup>191</sup>

Der Gegenstand ist also teils *unmittelbares* Sein oder ein Ding überhaupt, was dem unmittelbaren Bewußtsein entspricht; teils ein Anderswerden seiner, sein Verhältnis oder *Sein für Anderes* und *Fürsichsein*, die Bestimmtheit, was der Wahrnehmung, teils *Wesen* oder als Allgemeines, was dem Verstande entspricht. Er ist, als Ganzes, *der Schluß oder die Bewegung des Allgemeinen* (my italics, AG) durch die Bestimmung zur Einzelheit, wie die umgekehrte, von der Einzelheit durch sie als aufgehobene oder die Bestimmung zum Allgemeinen.<sup>192</sup>

Again, it becomes clear that Hegel sees the conclusion (‘Schluß’) of the process through which spirit ultimately arrives at the stage of knowing itself absolutely in terms of an ongoing movement, in which all previous ways of relating to itself and to the way it knew of the world find themselves reflected (and ‘enclosed’) and are united in absolute spirit. Both subject and object of knowing are taken up in a process of reciprocal development, through which both are continuously changed. The totality that is available in absolute knowing is the continuous interaction with its *Bestimmungen*, a ‘Sichselbstvernehmen’ of all the voices of which it is made up, and that have contributed to its coming to be.<sup>193</sup>

Ultimately, Hegel argues, the movement through which *Geist* becomes fully conscious of itself, and of how and what it knows, is also one of reconciliation between the general and the individual: ‘Dies sind die Momente [i.e. all the shapes of consciousness and formations of spirit that were discussed in the *Phänomenologie*, AG], aus denen sich die Versöhnung des Geistes mit seinem eigentlichen Bewußtsein zusammensetzt; sie für sich sind einzeln, und ihre geistige Einheit allein ist es, welche die Kraft dieser Versöhnung ausmacht.’<sup>194</sup> In absolute knowing, the individual finds itself recognized for its contribution to bringing about a unity, and reconciliation is now fully understood as what it is: as the willingness to always actively take into account the perspective of both the general and the individual. This movement works in two directions: *Geist* as generality allows the individual the freedom to voice its particular outlook, fully engages with it,

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einzuholen sind, nämlich die, die Methode der Ermittlung der Ermittlung für radikal veränderbar und das die Ermittlung ermittelnde Selbst für transformationsoffen zu halten.’

191 *PhdG*, p. 576. *GW IX*, p. 422.

192 *PhdG*, p. 576. *GW IX*, pp. 422-423.

193 On spirit as ‘Sichselbstvernehmen’, see p. 207 above.

194 *PhdG*, p. 578. *GW IX*, p. 424.

and acknowledges its contribution to the whole of knowing, while the individual is prepared to stand corrected and to acknowledge that knowing is ultimately a communal enterprise. It is only through active reconciliation that *Geist* ultimately knows itself as a unity: 'Das letzte dieser Momente ist aber notwendig diese Einheit selbst und verbindet, wie erhellt, sie in der Tat alle in sich.'<sup>195</sup> *Geist* is now aware of itself as a movement that is also a continuous unification ('Vereinigung'),<sup>196</sup> and this unification of all its moments also allows it to unify its knowing, so that it is able to arrive at an 'Einheit des Begriffs'.<sup>197</sup> In discussing absolute knowing as unification, the emphasis continuously shifts and highlights a different aspect. Hegel speaks of a unification of spirit and consciousness, of subject and object, of individual and general, of form and content, and thus emphasizes the fluidity of the form of absolute knowing: we cannot determine it as *one* form of unification.

The 'Einheit des Begriffs' that we are ultimately to produce already announced itself in the final shape of self-consciousness, in the self-knowledge of the beautiful soul:

[Die einfache Einheit des Begriffs] ist an der Seite des Selbstbewußtseins selbst auch schon vorhanden; aber wie im Vorhergehenden vorgekommen, hat er wie alle übrigen Momente die Form, eine *besondere Gestalt des Bewußtseins* zu sein. – Er ist also derjenige Teil der Gestalt des seiner selbst gewissen Geistes der in seinem Begriffe stehenbleibt und die *schöne Seele* genannt wurde. Sie ist nämlich sein Wissen von sich selbst, in seiner reinen durchsichtigen Einheit, – das Selbstbewußtsein, das dieses reine Wissen von dem *reinen Insichsein* als den Geist weiß, nicht nur die Anschauung des Göttlichen, sondern die Selbstanschauung desselben.<sup>198</sup>

As beautiful soul, as pure interiority, individual consciousness knew itself to be in complete accordance with its convictions – which it revered as if they were the voice of God – and as such had developed its consciousness of itself to its extreme.<sup>199</sup> Yet, even though it was in possession of an 'Einheit des Begriffs', the beautiful soul, in its tenacious clinging to its being a particular shape of consciousness, was unable to move beyond itself and was doomed to a standstill – 'Er [bleibt] in seinem Begriffe stehen' – in which it could only occupy itself with itself. In its being fully conscious of itself, the beautiful soul is purely transparent to itself, with the strong implication that its *Begriff* is ultimately empty, since there is nothing that can be distinguished. Hegel again insists that in the shape of beautiful soul, knowing can only be sterile and is ultimately doomed to vanish, and that it needs (inter)action and movement in order to develop itself fully. As absolute knowing, spirit needs to remain in movement:

195 *PhdG*, p. 578. *GW IX*, p. 424.

196 The word 'Vereinigung' further reinforces the aspect of spirit being a 'Bewegung': it is a collective that is in motion. Cf. n. 032 above.

197 *PhdG*, p. 580. *GW IX*, p. 425.

198 *PhdG*, p. 580. *GW IX*, pp. 425–426.

199 See the discussion of the beautiful soul in section 5.4.1.

Indem dieser Begriff sich seiner Realisierung entgegensetzt festhält, ist er die einseitige Gestalt, deren Verschwinden in leeren Dunst, aber auch ihre positive Entäußerung und Fortbewegung wir sahen. Durch diese Realisierung hebt sich das Auf-sich-beharren dieses gegenstandslosen Bewußtseins, die *Bestimmtheit* des Begriffs gegen seine *Erfüllung* auf; sein Selbstbewußtsein gewinnt der Form der Allgemeinheit, und was ihm bleibt, ist sein wahrhafter Begriff oder der Begriff, der seine Realisierung gewonnen; es ist in seiner Wahrheit, nämlich in der Einheit mit seiner Entäußerung.<sup>200</sup>

Eventually, by allowing its hard heart to be broken, the beautiful soul gave up its remaining with – and within – itself ('das Auf-sich-beharren'), and through its externalization, through its becoming immersed in – and fulfilled by – intersubjective practices, its particular *Begriff* ceases to be determinate.<sup>201</sup> Knowing does not already have content that can immediately be grasped and determined, but is to be produced through a continuous and never-ending process of involvement with what is initially seen as external, with the ways we realize ourselves through our active and concrete involvement in existing practices. It is only by acting *in* the world, and communicating *with* it, that the unity of spirit's understanding of itself ceases to be simple ('einfach') and can be developed in all its complexity and concreteness. 'Erfüllung,' like 'Schluß,' is not to be thought of as a definitive moment in which spirit has become so full of itself that it can come to rest,<sup>202</sup> but rather as a continuous process in which spirit – and its knowing – is fulfilled by actively engaging with itself in its otherness, with the ways it has externalized itself: 'das Selbst führt das Leben des absoluten Geistes durch.'<sup>203</sup> There is no such thing as an eternal essence of spirit that we can hope to return to,<sup>204</sup> and spirit is now understood to reveal itself in the ways we externalize ourselves and are involved in concrete action: 'diese Gestalt [of active spirit, AG] ist, wie wir sehen, jener einfache Begriff, der aber sein ewiges *Wesen*

200 *PhdG*, p. 580. *GWIX*, p. 426.

201 As Pippin shows, this externalization is 'internally' driven – in the sense that the hard heart, for instance, could not do anything other than break and move on to active reconciliation – and is to be seen as a clarification of Hegel's 'logic of experience': 'such experience does not function as an independent validator or external test but as helping to fix or realize or "fulfill" the determinacy of some self-understanding or conceptual content itself. Experiential manifestations are not "instances" of such content, or examples; such dimensions *make up* the concept's content.' Robert Pippin, 'The "logic of experience" as "absolute knowledge" in Dean Moyar and Michael Quante (eds), *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 219. Cf. Hegel's discussion of relation between *Wesen* and *Beispiel* in the sense-certainty section (*PhdG*, p. 83, *GWIX*, p. 64).

202 In both the religion chapter and the chapter on absolute knowing, there is an abundance of eating and drinking metaphors.

203 *PhdG*, p. 581. *GWIX*, p. 426. This sentence is taken from a passage in which Hegel explains that the 'Erfüllung' was partly accomplished in conscientious action (as form), and partly in religion (as content). What still remains to be done is the unification of both aspects. Jesus can be seen as the first to achieve this, and in that sense the sentence above can be read as a summons to follow his example, and to see spirit's journey as a secular *Imitatio Christi*.

204 Either of ourselves as having an essential 'character' or 'soul' that determines who we are, or of the holy spirit we have been given by a transcendent God.

aufgibt, *da ist* oder handelt.<sup>205</sup> Spirit has to actively engage itself with itself, which as we already saw in the *Jenaer Systementwürfe* ('Geist verhält sich zu sich selbst'),<sup>206</sup> is essentially through an active listening and critical explication of all the voices inherent in it.

Through conscious and conscientious activity ('bewußtes Tun'),<sup>207</sup> both the acting subject and its *Begriff*, the "given" norms which govern its actions and judgements, lose their determinacy and cease to be caught up in an opposition:

Der eine der beiden Teile des Gegensatzes ist die Ungleichheit des *In-sich-in-seiner-Einzelheit*-Seins gegen die Allgemeinheit, – der andere die Ungleichheit seiner abstrakten Allgemeinheit gegen das Selbst; jenes stirbt seinem Fürsichsein ab und entäußert, bekennt sich; dieses entsagt der Härte seiner abstrakten Allgemeinheit und stirbt damit seinem unlebendigen Selbst und seiner unbewegten Allgemeinheit ab; so daß also jenes durch das Moment der Allgemeinheit, die Wesen ist, und dieses durch die Allgemeinheit, die Selbst ist, sich ergänzt hat. Durch diese Bewegung des Handelns ist der Geist – der so erst Geist ist, daß er *da ist*, sein Dasein in den *Gedanken* und dadurch in die absolute *Entgegensetzung* erhebt und aus dieser eben durch sie und in ihr selbst zurückkehrt, – als reine Allgemeinheit des Wissens, welches Selbstbewußtseins ist, – als Selbstbewußtsein, das einfache Einheit des Wissens ist, hervortreten.<sup>208</sup>

It is only through this movement of action that spirit can return to itself as a concrete reality, as a spirit that is there. *Geist* is not simply pure thought but can be recognized as both the expression and the development of thought through a process in which what an individual consciousness sees as its particular norm, as content that belongs to its "inner nature" (its 'Fürsichsein'), is mediated by what is generally held to be the right thing to do. In this process of dialogical checking and correcting – as the interaction of what are initially taken to be fixed 'Gegensätze' – both individual and general norms are explicated and further developed, and come to be seen as interdependent.

As we already saw,<sup>209</sup> in this process both the individual and general subject have to be prepared to renounce what each took to be its immutable essence. Hegel presents this renunciation by means of a rather violent *oxymoron*: the individual is to "kill off" its purely private conception of itself ('stirbt seinem Fürsichsein ab'), while 'die Allgemeinheit' – as the unquestioned acceptance of 'this is simply how things are generally and traditionally done' – is to kill its being an abstraction and its 'unlebendige[s] Selbst'.

205 *PhdG*, p. 581. *GW IX*, p. 426. I would like to argue that the 'wir' in this sentence is to be read as the 'emergent' or 'philosophical' we: it is only now – through interaction with what the phenomenology of spirit has revealed up to this moment – that 'we' are able to draw this conclusion.

206 See ch. 2, p. 59.

207 *PhdG*, p. 581. *GW IX*, p. 426.

208 *PhdG*, pp. 581-582, *GW IX*, p. 427.

209 See e.g. the discussion of the 'ausleeren' of the subject on p. 208 above.

Even though the imagery suggests a radical and revolutionary change, I would argue that Hegel is not advocating a transformation of the subject that entails its complete death – and a subsequent rebuilding in which all preconceptions of what form it should take are left behind –<sup>210</sup> but rather a transformation within, so that the forms that were taken to be fixed and rigid ('die Härte seiner abstrakten Allgemeinheit') are made fluid and accessible, and a new, living form can ensue from within the interaction of previous forms of subjectivity. Rather than reject, we have to reshape what presents itself by making a new whole ('Ergänzung') from what was in need of further development. 'Ergänzung' is not to be seen as a process of adding to, but rather as the explicit fulfilment of what there already was.<sup>033</sup>

Conscientious action and expression demands of the individual subject that it kills off what it thought it was, and also allows the subject to make itself known as what it really is. Significantly, Hegel uses the word 'bekennt' for the expression of conscientious action: consciousness confesses that it is the one that acts, and thus acknowledges its actions to be its own and to reveal who it is. In making itself known by openly presenting itself to the world and thus allowing itself to interact with it, by saying "Here I am, and these are my actions", it is possible to move beyond the one-sided judgments both individual consciousness and general spirit were caught up in. 'Bekennen' suggests that its externalization does not just take place through action, but also through words. Similarly, general spirit lets go of its former shape through 'Entsagung', which also intimates verbal expression.<sup>211</sup> 'Der Geist [der] *da ist*' thus also entails an opening up to the other's language, of taking an interest in what each has to say, and of ceasing to be indifferent ('unbewegt'). It thus allows the 'Gegensätze' to be further developed and aims at forming new wholes by explicating (through 'Ergänzung') what was, as yet, left unsaid. This spirit really is, has made itself

**033** In Hölderlin's novel *Hyperion*, this thought is expressed by Hyperion's beloved Diotima: '[w]er jenen Geist hat, sagte Diotima tröstend, dem stehet Athen noch, wie ein blühender Fruchtbaum. Der Künstler ergänzt den Torso sich leicht.' Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Gedichte und Hyperion*, p. 564. See also Hölderlin's essay 'Der Grund zum Empedokles' in Hölderlin, *Theoretische Schriften*, p. 82. 'Ergänzung' thus links up with words such as 'Erfüllung' and 'Vollendung', with which Hegel also aims to capture this process. Again, Hölderlin can be seen a source of inspiration. For Hölderlin, the artistic process is one of 'Ergänzung' through which the totality that presents itself to the artist is developed into a totality in what is potentially alive is developed and made whole. What presents itself is thus allowed to become fully alive, and can be experienced as such. In the poetic act, which for Hölderlin is also an act of remembrance, all parts are made into a coherent and meaningful whole. In doing so, the poet articulates, and in doing so fulfils, what is already there before him.

210 Cf. Comay and Ruda, op. cit. p. 18: 'Hegel's innovation is to show how the project of transcendental philosophy must culminate in a radical emptying out of the transcendental conditions of subjectivity itself. The point is not to add stuff but rather to *subtract* – to bring formalization to a pitch so as to let matter itself appear in its incompleteness and inconsistency. [...] Hegel divests the first person in all its situatedness and dilation – the "I that is we" – of its last shred of positive substantiality.' Yet, as becomes clear from the quotation above, Hegel does not suggest we 'kill off' all that makes up our subjectivity, but merely that which we take to be 'determinate' – as either belonging purely to the individual ('*seinem* [my italics, AG] Fürsichsein') or to the general. From 'bestimmt' as determinate in the sense of definitive and not allowing for further development, we have to move to a conception of ourselves and our knowing as the continuously evolving result of the interaction of the *Bestimmungen* – both implicit and explicit – inherent in us.

211 On 'Entsagung', see ch. 4, p. 125, n. 70.

into what it is, and can express itself as such. It is no longer what it is said to be, is no longer caught up in judgements that it does not recognize.<sup>212</sup>

### 5.6.2 Experience as a transformative movement

From the vantage point that has now been reached that which was initially taken to be the richest form of knowing – the immediate awareness of sense certainty –<sup>213</sup> can now be seen as what it really is: as the form of knowing that – in its lacking any determinate content – sets spirit in motion so that it will ultimately be able to enrich its content.<sup>214</sup> Spirit comes to see its task as one it necessarily has to fulfil in order to complete itself: '[als] die Notwendigkeit, den Anteil, den das Selbstbewußtsein an dem Bewußtsein hat, zu bereichern, die *Unmittelbarkeit des Ansich*, – die Form, in der die Substanz im Bewußtsein ist, – in Bewegung zu setzen oder umgekehrt das Ansich als das *Innerliche* genommen, das was erst *innerlich* ist, zu realisieren und zu offenbaren, – d.h. es der Gewißheit seiner selbst zu vindizieren.'<sup>215</sup> If it simply left what presented itself as immediacy, nothing would happen other than a 'Bacchantische Täumel', in which nothing can be distinguished and nothing can be known. Yet, in becoming aware that it is consciousness that takes its certainty to *be* immediate – through what was deemed to be the *an sich* of the object has now ('erst') become the "inner" of itself – it becomes possible to express ('offenbaren') the *an sich*, as it is now to be found within consciousness itself.<sup>216</sup> By acting and by publicly accounting for what it takes its knowing to be, and in being prepared to check and correct itself, consciousness is able to justify ('vindizieren') its convictions.

It is only through interaction with ourselves and with all that presents itself, Hegel argues, that we can truly have an experience:

Es muß aus diesem Grunde gesagt werden, daß nichts gewußt wird, was nicht in der *Erfahrung* ist oder, wie dasselbe auch ausgedrückt wird, was nicht als *gefühlte Wahrheit, als innerlich geoffenbartes Ewiges, als geglaubtes Heiliges*, oder welche Ausdrücke sonst gebraucht werden, vorhanden ist. Denn die Erfahrung ist eben dies, daß der Inhalt – und er ist der Geist – *an sich*, Substanz und also *Gegenstand des Bewußtseins* ist. Diese Substanz aber, die der Geist ist, ist das *Werden* seiner zu

212 Spirit has thus reached the level of 'das begreifende Denken': it fully recognizes itself in its understanding of itself. Cf. the 'Vorrede' to the *PhdG*, p. 57, *GW IX*, p. 42: 'Indem der Begriff das eigene Selbst des Gegenstandes ist, das sich als *sein Werden* darstellt, ist er nicht ein ruhendes Subjekt, das unbewegt die Akzidenzen trägt, sondern der sich bewegende und seine Bestimmungen in sich zurücknehmende Begriff.'

213 See ch. 3, p. 98.

214 And, as Hegel suggests towards the very end of the *Phänomenologie*, is also the form of knowing in which 'wir' find our origin: '[...] das *sinnliche Bewußtsein*, – der Anfang, von dem wir ausgegangen'. *PhdG*, p. 590. *GW IX*, p. 432.

215 *PhdG*, p. 585, *GW IX*, p. 429.

216 Again, 'offenbaren' is shown to be spirit's revelation to itself; it has to make itself public to make itself known. Cf. the discussion on p. 217.

dem, was er *an sich* ist; und erst als dies sich in sich reflektierendes Werden ist er an sich in Wahrheit der Geist. Er ist an sich die Bewegung, die das Erkennen ist, – die Verwandlung jenes *Ansich* in das *Fürsich*, der *Substanz* in das *Subjekt*, des Gegenstandes des *Bewußtseins* in Gegenstand des *Selbstbewußtseins*, d.h. in ebensoehr aufgehobenen Gegenstand oder in den *Begriff*.<sup>217</sup>

It is only now that we are able to understand the full import of the claim that ‘nichts gewußt wird, was nicht in der Erfahrung ist’: it is only as fully self-conscious spirit – in which there is a continuous questioning and further development of the ways in which we – as spiritual beings – have come to express our understanding of the world we live in – that we can profess to be part of what knowing truly is. Experience is not merely the totality of all the moments – all the shapes of consciousness – of which spirit is made up. It is not just its past, but also the continuous movement through which a true *Begriff* – in which all the perspectives that contribute to its coming to be are included – is produced. Experience is thus also the awareness of being involved in this movement and, as such, does contain an aspect of immediate inspiration or revelation: it is indeed also a ‘gefühlte Wahrheit’ or an ‘*innerlich geoffenbartes Ewiges*’.<sup>218</sup> At the same time, it is a truth that can be known, and of which an account can be given, as an infinite totality fully self-conscious spirit is to reveal to itself. All those involved in spirit are to set themselves the task of making themselves heard, and to account for their knowing, but also to allow all the other voices implicit in spirit to make themselves heard, in order to engage with and critically develop what is expressed in a process of continuous *Bestimmung*.

The first sentence of the passage quoted above: ‘[N]ichts [wird] gewußt, was nicht in der *Erfahrung* ist’, can be taken as an example of the way in which this task is accomplished. It can be read as the dialogical development of a whole range of views on the relation between knowledge and experience: from Aristotle to Thomas Aquinas’ ‘*nihil in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*’<sup>219</sup> from Locke (‘In [Experience] all our Knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself’<sup>220</sup>) to Kant (‘In dem Ganzen aller möglichen Erfahrung liegen aber alle unsere Erkenntnisse, und in der allgemeinen Beziehung auf dieselbe besteht die transzendente Wahrheit, die vor aller empirischen vorhergeht, und sie möglich macht’<sup>221</sup>), and of the views of philosophers such as Eschenmayer or Jacobi, for whom the foundation of thought was to be found in an immediate feeling or act of faith.<sup>222</sup> ‘Nichts [wird] gewußt was nicht in der Erfahrung ist’ is only true

217 *PhdG*, p. 585 *GW IX*, p. 429.

218 And which thus entails another form of self-loss: this self-loss is not about the relinquishing of its particular point of view in order to become part of knowing as a whole, but about the loss of a conscious self, as there is only feeling and intuition. Cf. Pippin, ‘The “logic of experience” as “absolute knowledge”’, p. 213.

219 Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 2 a. 3 arg. 19.

220 John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Ch.1, § 2.

221 *KrV*, B185.

222 See the annotation of this passage (p. 620) in the *Meiner* edition (1988) of the *Phänomenologie*. See also Stekeler, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 1006, who also hints at echoes from Hume and Leibniz. Stekeler also points



if we make it true, by interacting with – and making explicit – all that is expressed in it, and by thus developing the concept of experience.

Experience – and knowing – has been shown to be a joint venture, a communal effort in which we explicate and develop what is implicit in all the ways we – either ‘nach der Gewohnheit’ or as received wisdom – relate to our world. The task that self-conscious spirit is now able to set itself is to be involved in knowing in such a way that there is continuous actualization of what is known. Knowing is then experienced not just as a movement, but also as a continuous transformation (‘Verwandlung’) of both subject and object: neither can ultimately be determined according to fixed categories.

Not only is there continuous transformation, but also continuous differentiation now that spirit has become fully conscious of itself: ‘der Geist [ist] also notwendig dieses Unterscheiden in sich.’<sup>223</sup> We are not to think of absolute knowing as conclusive, as the proclaiming of ‘letzte Wahrheiten’ by a spirit that is fully transparent to itself. Rather, there is a concluding movement in which the objects of spirit are distinguished by means of an ongoing process of determination. Spirit’s ‘Vollendung’ can thus only occur *after* it has fully externalized itself, after it has realized itself in the world and made itself into an object of reflection, and has thus allowed for the development of self-conscious spirit: ‘Die vollendete gegenständliche Darstellung ist erst zugleich die Reflexion derselben oder das Werden derselben zum Selbst. – Ehe daher der Geist nicht *an sich*, nicht als Weltgeist sich vollendet, kann er nicht als *selbstbewußter* Geist seine Vollendung erreichen.’<sup>224</sup> In the end, it is only as self-conscious spirit that we come to *Wissenschaft* as the ‘Vollendung’ of spirit: to a knowing that is conscious of the ways it knows and that can therefore critically examine its knowing,<sup>225</sup> and is able to express this knowing: ‘Der

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out the ironical identification of empiricism and religion, who both lay claim to an immediate starting point.

223 *PhdG*, p. 585. *GW IX*, p. 429.

224 *PhdG*, p. 585. *GW IX*, pp. 429–430. Stekeler-Weithofer takes the ‘vollendete gegenständliche Darstellung’ to refer to our logical modelling of the world, and hence to ‘das Gesamtsystem generischer Sätze und generischer Unterscheidungen bzw. Schlussformen, also unseres Begriffssystems, wie wir es in seinen neueren Teilen in einer eigens eingerichteten Institution, der Wissenschaft, entwickeln und kontrollieren.’ Stekeler, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 1009. Although I completely agree with Stekeler’s insistent emphasis that Hegel’s absolute spirit is not to be interpreted in such a way that we see Hegel ultimately succumb to, or smuggle in, some form of dogmatic metaphysics, so that we ultimately *do* end up with the transcendent being as a starting point which precludes a complete return to a self that we recognize as ours, I would argue that the ‘vollendete gegenständliche Darstellung’ not only refers to the ways we know of the world, to *Wissenschaft* (which does not come into its own until it spirit has become fully conscious of itself) but also to the ways we grasp the world in art and religion, and to the ways we manifest ourselves in our actions and in our communication.

225 See Stekeler, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 1010: ‘Erst in der kritischen Philosophie, die sich auch noch kritisch gegen die Restdogmatismen der wissenschaftlichen Aufklärung und ihres halbierten Begriffs von Naturwissenschaft und Welt als bloßer äußerer Natur richtet, wird ein wahres Wissen von uns selbst und unserem Wissen möglich. Das verlangt auch die Überwindung der bloß instrumentell-pragmatischen Perspektive der “Nützlichkeit”’. By critically examining the ways in which it knows of itself, knowing has also come to understand what it is to be critical, and has come to see critique as an ongoing process. See also

Inhalt der Religion spricht darum früher in der Zeit als die Wissenschaft es aus was der *Geist ist*; aber diese ist allein sein wahres Wissen von ihm selbst.<sup>226</sup>

### 5.6.3 Experience as expression and active alienation

Experience is ultimately to be understood as an ongoing movement in which spirit as self-conscious subject is able to critically engage with its past, with all that has contributed to the making of itself, and in which it never pins down either itself or its object, but continues to question itself and makes itself account for what it knows. An important aspect of experience for Hegel is therefore that is expressed, that it is made public, and that it can be communicated to – and by – all those who partake in spirit. In religion spirit was revealed in a ‘Gemeinde’ in which people experienced being part of a whole, and in which they could celebrate spirit as being present in the community they belonged to. However, it was not yet possible to truly communicate this experience, as people had not yet come to see spirit as belonging to themselves. Spirit was still seen as a ‘dumpfes Selbst’, a vaguely apprehended entity expressing itself through muffled sounds.<sup>227</sup> It was experienced as external to itself, and as a self that spirit also felt estranged from (‘das Fremdsein’). The question therefore presents itself how spirit’s experience of itself is to be expressed so that it both comes to be owned and shared by those who participate in spirit *and* does justice to its being a process of continual critical examination, differentiation and transformation.

Part of the answer is implied in Hegel’s remark on how spirit is to proceed if it wants to overcome its ‘dumpfes Selbst’. In order to clarify what it vaguely intuitively – yet also dogmatically or religiously clings to as ‘given’ – spirit needs to give up all hope of external help, whether from a transcendent God or an immediate sense-certainty:

Erst nachdem es die Hoffnung aufgegeben, auf eine äußerliche, d.h. fremde Weise das Fremdsein aufzuheben, wendet es sich, weil die aufgehobene fremde Weise die Rückkehr ins Selbstbewußtsein ist, an sich selbst, an seine eigene Welt und Gegenwart, entdeckt sie als sein Eigentum und hat somit den ersten Schritt getan, aus der *Intellektualwelt* herabzusteigen oder vielmehr deren abstraktes Element mit dem wirklichen Selbst zu begeistern.<sup>228</sup>

The movement that is to be made is one in which we return to ourselves by means of an ‘aufgehobene fremde Weise’, for which we ourselves are responsible. Through this

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Särkela, who argues that Hegel’s concept of experience also involves an ‘Erfahrung der Kritik’. Särkela, op. cit., esp. pp. 75-138.

226 PhdG, p. 586. GW IX, p. 430.

227 PhdG, p. 586. GW IX, p. 430. ‘Dumpf’ refers to that which presents itself vaguely, as that which cannot be determined, neither as sight nor as sound.

228 PhdG, p. 586. GW IX, p. 430.

approach, we no longer see as strange that which we discover in our experience, but come to recognize it as belonging to ourselves. Yet, at the same time, and this became abundantly clear in the *Bildung* section, feeling alienated, becoming estranged from what we are used to accept as given, is essential if we are to truly have an experience. 'Das Fremdsein aufzuheben' thus entails not only that spirit is no longer seen as an entity that is external to ourselves (so that we now feel familiar with it), but also implies that we are to make 'being strange' an essential aspect of who we are, both as individuals and as a community, and to see it as an activity we are responsible for. We thus have to express our experience in such a way that we inspire a sense of wonder in what we used to, 'nach der Gewohnheit', simply accept as given, or to alienate ourselves from those convictions, those traditional views, we were completely familiar with and took for granted, so that we can critically question and develop what is implicit in those views. Actualization, which involves linguistic expression, is an essential aspect of what experience is: there is no such thing as pure being, or pure content, we can have an experience of, and which exists independently of, and prior to, experience.<sup>229</sup> What we used to think of as given can now be thought of as produced, as developed within experience as a concrete and ongoing process to which we actively contribute.<sup>230</sup> Hegel summarizes what we have now learned about the way in which we are to be active:<sup>231</sup>

Der Geist aber hat sich uns gezeigt, weder nur das Zurückziehen des Selbstbewußtseins in seine reine Innerlichkeit zu sein, noch die bloße Versenkung desselben in die Substanz und das Nichtsein seines Unterschieds, sondern *diese Bewegung* des Selbsts, das sich seiner selbst entäußert und sich in seine Substanz versenkt, und ebenso als Subjekt aus ihr in sich gegangen ist, und sie zum Gegenstande und Inhalte gemacht, als es diesen Unterschied der Gegenständlichkeit und des Inhalts aufhebt.<sup>232</sup>

We are to continuously take up a different stance, continuously shift position in order to do justice to ourselves and to our knowing as being essentially movement. The sentence

229 Hegel also suggests that to think of, and to speak about, 'pure content' as belonging to a *Jenseits*, and of being simply given (or completely inaccessible as the *Ding an sich*) is intellectual laziness, an unwillingness to take up the 'Arbeit des Begriffs': 'Wenn doch von einem Inhalte gesprochen werden sollte, so wäre es teils nur, um ihm in den leeren Abgrund des Absoluten zu werfen, teils wäre er äußerlich aus der sinnlichen Wahrnehmung aufgerafft; das Wissen schiene zu Dingen, dem Unterschiede von ihm selbst, und dem Unterschiede mannigfaltiger Dinge gekommen zu sein, ohne das man begriffe, wie und woher.' *PhdG*, p. 587. *GW IX*, p. 431.

230 And in doing so we allow spirit to 'come down to earth'; it is no longer grasped as belonging to a transcendent God or the realm of Platonic forms (the '*Intellektualwelt*').

231 Significantly, Hegel starts the sentence with 'Der Geist hat sich uns gezeigt': it is through the collective effort of all those involved in the philosophical 'wir' – in which there is continuous reflexion on and development of the ways in which consciousness presents its knowing of the world – that we have now come to this understanding of the nature of our involvement. We are not to read a sentence as a summary Hegel simply presents to us as an 'Angabe' of his views. Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 1010.

232 *PhdG*, pp. 587-588. *GW IX*, p. 431.

reflects and expresses this movement: its paratactical structure,<sup>233</sup> in which the parts are connected by 'weder', 'noch', 'sondern' and 'und' and thus stand in an insubordinate relation to each other, suggests that all parts (or moments) are equally important in making up the whole, and that in each part of the sentence we come to realize a different aspect of the whole, which in itself would never be enough (suggested by the words 'nur' and 'noch'). It is both differentiation and the sublation of difference; it is both the outward movement of self-expression and the inward movement of coming to know itself, and it is both relinquishing its particularity in order to be part of knowing as a generality ('die [...] Versenkung in der Substanz') and critically engaging with this generality.<sup>234</sup> One of the differences that is sublated is the one between object and content ('Gegenständlichkeit' and 'Inhalt'): both are now understood as produced by the 'Bewegung des Selbsts'. The form an object is given is what the object is: it is not an 'outer' shape of an inner core that exists beyond, or prior to, its being an object. Similarly, there is no content independent of the 'Gegenständlichkeit' of the sentence; its content is developed by a process in which the reader immerses her- or himself in the substance of the sentence, and becomes aware that its 'self', its content, is indeed a movement in which there is simultaneous and continuous differentiation and sublation of the parts of which it is made up.

The 'Aufhebung dieser bloßen Form' that characterizes absolute knowing thus entails both the transformative movement of the self as its subject, and of the language in which it expresses and presents itself. We see that Hegel's remarks on the nature of this movement imply that it is a process in which we can no longer cling to the notion of form – either of knowing, the self or of language – as determinate. At the same time, we come to understand that we also have to be an active participant in this process by taking upon ourselves the production of 'Fremdsein': we have to alienate ourselves from what we are inclined to take for granted and of having a immediately recognizable form by "making it strange". In doing so, we challenge ourselves to interact with whatever determinate form of ourselves, our knowing or our language we are presented with (either by ourselves or by others). Ultimately, we do arrive at a reconciliation of all these particular forms as moments in the spiritual unity ('die geistige Einheit') that holds together this process, but we also become aware that this unity is not a culminating point in which we can come to rest, but is rather a unifying movement ('Vereinigung'),<sup>235</sup> in which there is continuous interplay of the moments of which it is made up. As I will discuss in the next section, this open-ended character of absolute knowing also extends itself to its language, which betrays a refusal to come up with a definitive conclusion or last word. I will also discuss in what way we are to interpret the open-ended and infinite character

233 On Hegel's use of parataxis, and the influence Hölderlin exerted on his style, see ch. 2, p. 40.

234 Stekeler-Weithofer convincingly argues that this passage can also be read as describing the movement of individual selves. In leading my life, I express myself through my actions and in the way I communicate with others, and in doing so immerse myself in concrete social practices. This interaction with 'substance' then allows me not only to critically reflect on those practices and the particular roles that it offers me, but also on who I am as a person. See Stekeler, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, pp. 1018-1019.

235 On 'Vereinigung' see n. 196 above.

of absolute knowing and will argue that it does not imply that there are no limits to its movement, but, rather, that these limits are set by absolute spirit itself.

#### 5.6.4 'Nur-'

As we already saw in Hegel's summary of spirit's activity as the 'Bewegung des Selbsts', in which there is continuous interaction between individual selves and *Geist* as the general reflection and unification of these selves, we can only come to knowing by means of externalization – of revealing ourselves – and of thus forming ourselves and *Geist* into an object with concrete content ('sie zum Gegenstande und Inhalte macht'). We also saw that this formation is to be continuous – through the 'Aufhebung [der] bloßen Form' – and also involves an aspect of active alienation. This first step in this process is set when individual consciousness is made to reflect on its relation to the norms, traditions and accepted forms of knowing to which it takes itself to immediately belong:

Jene erste Reflexion aus der Unmittelbarkeit ist das Sichunterscheiden des Subjekts von seiner Substanz oder der sich entzweiende Begriff, das Insichgehen und Werden des reinen Ich. Indem dieser Unterschied das reine Tun des Ich=Ich ist, ist der Begriff die Notwendigkeit und das Aufgehen des *Daseins*, das die Substanz zu seinem Wesen hat und für sich besteht. Aber das Bestehen des *Daseins* für sich ist der in der Bestimmtheit gesetzte Begriff und dadurch ebenso seine Bewegung *an ihm selbst* [...].<sup>236</sup>

There is no I, no subject that can simply be posited prior to concrete experiences (in being *there*, as 'Dasein') in which we find ourselves opposed to our substance, to the ways in which we are accustomed to look at the world, so that we are challenged to critically examine those views. It is only possible to become an 'I', a recognizable self, by learning from these experiences, by questioning ourselves – and being questioned – on why we do the things we do, and on the ways in which we express ourselves. It is only through such a process that we can come to an understanding of who we are, both as general spirit and as individual selves.

This process of becoming a self is also said to be an inward movement (an 'Insichgehen'): again, there is no inner core that we can be immediately acquainted with and which we can expect to define and determine who and what we are. What we are as selves is to be developed by opening ourselves up to experience and by reflecting on our experience, and in doing so form a self we can recognize as ours, while simultaneously acknowledging that this self is involved in continuous 'Verwandlung', with no determinate and

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236 *PhdG*, p. 588. *GWIX*, p. 431.

stable 'inner' as its outcome.<sup>237</sup> 'Aufgehen' further reinforces the twofold nature of this process: we can only come to a comprehensive understanding of ourselves and of our knowing by 'emerging' as concrete existence, in which we manifest ourselves as spiritual beings and express our particular grasp of ourselves and the world, yet this is simultaneously a process in which we, as particular selves, are 'submerged' and taken up in general spirit. Our becoming part of general spirit is not just a transformation of ourselves, but also of spirit, and again we are to think of a continuous movement within spirit, rather than a movement towards a state of absolute knowing in which *Geist* can come to rest as it has now become fully transparent to itself.<sup>238</sup> Absolute spirit's self-reflections are merely deceptive inactivity: 'das Wissen besteht vielmehr in dieser scheinbaren Untätigkeit, welche nur betrachtet, wie das Unterschiedene sich an ihm selbst bewegt und in seine Einheit zurückkehrt.'<sup>239</sup> Its apparent inactivity is rather an allowing of movement and differentiation to take place freely within itself, and which continues to enrich and complete its knowing of itself, and confirms its being a unity.

If we now return to the sentence quoted in part at the beginning of section 5.7,<sup>240</sup> and add its restrictive subclause, we find that in an important sense absolute knowing – in involving itself with its differences – has completed its movement: 'In dem Wissen hat also der Geist die Bewegung seines Gestaltens beschlossen, insofern dasselbe mit dem unüberwundenen Unterschiede des Bewußtseins behaftet ist.'<sup>241</sup> There is no longer an insuperable gap to be overcome between spirit and particular shapes of consciousness, in that both are recognized as having contributed to fully self-conscious and comprehensive knowing. Spirit, in having developed its *Begriff* of itself through its interactions with what it used to consider as fully other to itself, has now come to contain ('beschlossen')

237 As Comay and Ruda rightly stress, one the transformative aspects of absolute knowing is that it is a continuous exposition of itself in which any distinction between 'outer' and 'inner' is dissolved. Cf. Comay and Ruda, op. cit. p. 22. '*Auslegung* [the exposition and self-interpretation of the absolute, AG] is not the revelation of an essence that would preexist its own exposition; it is not the expression of an inner meaning, the excavation of a buried treasure, or the extraction of a hidden content. It rather undoes the very distinction between surface and depth, outer and inner, explicit and implicit [...]' What I do not fully agree with is the suggestion that there is no content to start with. As we saw above, the content of absolute knowing is the totality of its representations, of its forms of 'Gegenständlichkeit', of its *Bestimmungen*. The transformation in absolute knowing, in my view, is thus not as radical as Comay and Ruda interpret it. See also n. 132 of this chapter. Yet, the transformation, as is also suggested by Hegel's term 'Verwandlung' does contain an element of "making strange".

238 Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd.2, p. 1020: 'Im Dasein ist jeder von uns [...]' "der in der Bestimmtheit gesetzte Begriff". Wir sind Begriffswesen. [...] Wir sind es vermöge des Begriffs, also des generischen Wissens, das in der Sprache sozusagen enkodiert ist. Real aber ist der Geist immer nur im konkreten, geistbestimmten, Dasein der einzelnen Personen. Doch gerade dadurch bleibt der allgemeine Geist, das Begriffssystem, nicht einfach fest, sondern bewegt sich. Jeder von uns trägt schon in seinem Gebrauch etwas dazu bei, zumeist wenig, aber immerhin, etwa in der Verfestigung von Konventionen oder Normen oder, im Gegenteil, der Verflüssigung und Auflösung mangels Befolgung.' 'Begriff' thus refers both to generic knowing, which belongs to *Geist*, and to the concrete manifestations of knowing by individual 'Begriffswesen'. Hence Hegel talks about 'der sich entzweigende Begriff'.

239 *PhdG*, p. 588. *GW IX*, p. 431.

240 See p. 209 above.

241 *PhdG*, p. 588. *GW IX*, pp. 413-432.

difference within itself, and in this sense is still *in* movement. Knowing has come fully into its own, each shape of consciousness is now understood as being a specific contribution to knowing, and knowing can now call itself *Wissenschaft*:

Indem also der Geist den Begriff gewonnen, entfaltet er das Dasein und Bewegung in diesem Äther seines Lebens und ist *Wissenschaft*. Die Momente seiner Bewegung stellen sich in ihr nicht mehr als bestimmte *Gestalten des Bewußtseins* dar, sondern, indem der Unterschied desselben in das Selbst zurückgegangen, als *bestimmte Begriffe* und als die organische, in sich selbst gegründete Bewegung derselben.<sup>242</sup>

We have moved from ‘bestimmte Gestalten’ to ‘bestimmte Begriffe’: from forms of consciousness that took themselves – or were taken as – determinate, to a comprehensive conceptual understanding as the continuously evolving result of all the voices of which it is made up.

*Geist* is now completely able to develop and explicate itself, as it is fully conscious of the ways in which it knows, and is able to check and correct itself with regard to what it knows. Now that its phenomenology has been concluded, now that it has collected and united its moments in self-conscious thought, spirit as *Wissenschaft* can freely develop the inherent differentiation within itself, rather than occupy itself with the fixed oppositions in which these shapes initially presented themselves:

Die reinen Begriffe der Wissenschaft in dieser Form von Gestalten des Bewußtseins zu erkennen, macht die Seite ihrer Realität aus, nach welcher ihr Wesen, der Begriff, der in ihr in seiner *einfachen* Vermittlung als *Denken* gesetzt ist, die Momente dieser Vermittlung auseinanderschlägt und nach dem inneren Gegensatze sich darstellt.<sup>243</sup>

Spirit now completely understands the ‘Gegensatz’ as belonging to itself, and grasps that it needs the continuous interaction with itself – which, I argue, is to be interpreted essentially as a process of continuous questioning, checking and correcting – to ensure that its mediation of itself is never at rest, and allows all those who partake of spirit to be actively involved in – and contribute to – the ‘Arbeit des Begriffs’. This can only occur if spirit as *Wissenschaft* expresses its knowing, so that it comes to be part of the public domain and can be consciously and conscientiously interacted with: ‘Die Wissenschaft enthält in ihr selbst diese Notwendigkeit, der Form des reinen Begriffs sich zu entäußern, und den Übergang des Begriffs ins *Bewußtsein*.’<sup>244</sup> Being part of self-conscious knowing entails that each particular perspective – including that of absolute knowing – is aware of its fallibility, is modest in its pretensions and knows its limits: ‘Das Wissen kennt nicht nur sich, sondern auch das Negative seiner selbst oder seine Grenze. Seine Grenze

242 *PhdG*, p. 588. *GW IX*, p. 432.

243 *PhdG*, p. 589. *GW IX*, p. 432. The resolution is thus not a standstill or a consensus, but rather a movement in which the differences are not negated or smoothed over, but made productive.

244 *PhdG*, p. 589. *GW IX*, p. 432. Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 1027.



wissen, heißt sich aufzuopfern zu wissen.<sup>245</sup> Self-conscious knowing is not only absolute in its transformative power, but is also absolute in its ability to set clear and well-defined limits to itself. It knows its limits as having been produced by itself, to have evolved from the interaction with all the shapes of which it is made up and as the explication of its implicit normative constraints. These limits can therefore be recognized as belonging to all those who partake of spirit, rather than as pre-ordained ('vorausgesetzt') or given standards.<sup>246</sup> Moreover, as these limits have emerged from the interaction with concrete social and historical practices, they are the reflection of an autonomy that is firmly embedded in those practices, rather than of the formal and abstract autonomy of Kant's pure reason.

Knowing its limits, and recognizing itself in these limits as the continuously evolving determinations thought imposes itself, is one aspect of absolute knowing. The other aspect is that absolute spirit, its subject, knows itself as concrete content (its 'Substanz') and is able to recognize itself in the ways in which it manifested itself in history, in the ways in which people shaped their world through deeds and words:

Die andere Seite [...] seines Werdens, die *Geschichte*, ist das *wissende*, sich *vermittelnde* Werden – der an die Zeit entäußerte Geist [...]. Indem seine Vollendung darin besteht, das, was *er ist*, seine Substanz, vollkommen zu *wissen*, so ist dies Wissen sein *Insichgehen*, in welchem er sein Dasein verläßt und seine Gestalt der Erinnerung übergibt. In seinem Insichgehen ist er in der Nacht seines Selbstbewußtseins versunken, sein verschwundenes Dasein aber ist in ihr aufbewahrt; und dies aufgehobene Dasein – das vorige, aber aus dem Wissen neugeborene – ist das neue Dasein, eine neue Welt und Geistesgestalt.<sup>247</sup>

245 *PhdG*, p. 590. *GW IX*, p. 433. As Stekeler-Weithofer argues, this call for modesty and self-sacrifice is not only addressed at individuals, but extends to knowing as a totality, and is to act as a safeguard against *Wissenschaft* as a utopian and dogmatic scientism: '[Es ist eine] Forderung nach einer Bescheidenheit, erstens im Verhältnis zwischen der Einzelperson zu allen anderen Personen, zweitens in Bezug auf die enge Reichweite des schon allgemein gesetzten generischen Wissens und drittens auch in Bezug auf den Wissensfortschritt.' Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 1028. Stekeler argues that it is the sin of scientism to move beyond its limits, to engage in unfounded speculation about, for instance, the possibility of eternal life, and thus to cease to be self-conscious knowing: 'Man kann der Ideologie des Szientismus zufolge nicht wissen, was sich als unmöglich zu wissen oder zu bewerkstelligen herausstellen werde. [...] Daher fällt auch die szientistische Wissenschaft in den Aberglauben einer naiven Religion zurück, welche reale Möglichkeiten von bloß verbalen Fiktionen und Utopien nicht zu unterscheiden weiß.'

246 Again, I do not fully agree with Comay and Ruda, who argue that the sacrifice of the subject is total and implies a complete and utter self-loss so that the subject is left without any bearings whatsoever. Cf. Comay and Ruda, op. cit., p. 23: 'Thinking does not ground, justify, recover, or consolidate in an act of transcendental return-to-itself. It rather "loses itself": it relinquishes the certainty of its own agency and even of the agent underpinning this agency as it circles around the abyssal foundations of its own practice.' The subject indeed comes to understand that it cannot return to any determinate self, since in its final shape of absolute knowing the subject is in continuous movement. Yet Hegel's point is that, since this movement consists in the *Aufhebung* of its previous shapes, the subject does recognize itself in its knowing (and is 'in seinem Anderssein [...] bei sich'), and understands its movement as an essential element of itself, since without it its quest would never have started.

247 *PhdG*, p. 590. *GW IX*, p. 433.

Returning to itself may initially be perceived as a groping around in the dark ('in der Nacht seines Selbstbewußtseins'), without any determinate signposts,<sup>248</sup> since, as we saw earlier, becoming part of absolute knowing involves relinquishing whatever determinate shape we assumed ourselves to have. Hegel now wants us to understand that although 'die Rückkehr in das Selbst' does involve a surrender of its particular 'Dasein', this by no means implies that consciousness is now completely lost. Absolute knowing as a fulfilling ('Vollendung') of itself, of coming to know itself as substance, is an act of recollection. This act is not a mere retrieval of its past, but is a creative act in which what lies in store in collective spirit – its history, its collective and mostly implicit knowledge – is reproduced and given a new shape.

In order to bring this about, we – in the role of the subject of spirit's continuous education of itself – are to approach our history *as if* it were completely new and unrecognizable, in order to proceed without any determinate and fixed conclusions as to what this shape of spirit is to be like: 'In ihr [this new world of spirit] hat er ebenso unbefangen von vorn bei ihrer Unmittelbarkeit anzufangen und sich von ihr auf wieder großzuziehen, als ob alles Vorhergehende für ihn verloren wäre und er aus der Erfahrung der früheren Geister nichts gelernt hätte.'<sup>249</sup> Yet, although our approach has to be open and unprejudiced, spirit, in its interacting with itself, is thus not an empty shell, a formal 'I',<sup>250</sup> but as the '*Ich, das Wir, und Wir, das Ich ist*', does have content as the residue, or memory, of the collective experience of 'früheren Geister': 'Aber die *Er-innerung* hat sie aufbewahrt und ist das Innere und die in der Tat höhere Form der Substanz.'<sup>251</sup> The hyphenation suggests that this collective memory is simultaneously a process of inwardization, of actively producing an inner from which spirit is now to form itself as knowing it can fully recognize: 'Wenn also dieser Geist seine Bildung, von sich nur auszugehen scheinend, wieder von vorn anfängt, so ist es zugleich auf einer höheren Stufe, daß er anfängt.'<sup>252</sup> Hegel characterizes the ultimate goal of spirit's coming to know itself and its knowing as a revelation of all that lies in store within itself.<sup>253</sup> Yet, we are not to understand the 'Offenbarung' merely as an insight that suddenly befalls us, but also as an active process of communication, of 'Mitteilung': we are to open up and make public all that we find has contributed to what we have come to be.

248 As Hegel puts it in the *Vorrede*, embarking on the 'Weg des Zweifels' implies that we cannot proceed by relying on 'vorgesteckte Stationen'. *PhdG*, p. 72. *GW IX*, p. 55.

249 *PhdG*, pp. 590-591. *GW IX*, p. 433.

250 Again, we can read these lines as a (meta)critique of Kant's critical project. Reason is to be fully autonomous, Hegel admits, but its being autonomous should not imply a radical break with its social and historical context.

251 *Ibid.*

252 *PhdG*, p. 591. *GW IX*, p. 433. On this passage, cf. Donald Verene, who interprets the 'Er-innerung' as the internalization of spirit's images of itself (of its previous shapes as a 'Galerie von Bildern'), as the basis of its *Bildung* of itself as absolute knowing, in which spirit develops its collective images as concepts. See Donald Phillip Verene, *Hegel's Recollection: A Study of Images in the Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: SUNY Press, 1983), p. 5.

253 *PhdG*, p. 591. *GW IX*, p. 433: 'Ihr Ziel ist die Offenbarung der Tiefe, und diese ist *der absolute Begriff*; diese Offenbarung ist hiemit das Aufheben seiner Tiefe oder seine *Ausdehnung*, die Negativität dieses insich-seienden Ich, welche seine Entäußerung oder Substanz ist [...].'

We thus become acquainted with what we used to perceive as other to ourselves, as a world we see as foreign to ourselves, as the negativity of the 'I' that only knew itself as 'I' within its particular shape of knowing. Again, this is a process of 'Verwandlung' in which inner becomes outer, in which what used to be a dark and foreign depth has been – and is being – transformed into a surface that is present and open to all that are involved in the practice of knowing. Through this practice, we are, in turn, enabled to give depth to knowing, and to fully develop its potential as 'der absolute Begriff'. Openness is thus an essential aspect of absolute knowing, as Stekeler-Weithofer also argues: 'Es geht um die tiefe Einsicht in das Offene des Geistes, dass wir einen Blick für das Offene haben und in die Tiefe der Möglichkeiten sehen können, für welche die Augen und das präsentliche Erkennen ganz blind sind.'<sup>254</sup> Stekeler sees the emphasis on 'Offenbarung' also as a call for transparency ('Plädoyer für Durchsichtigkeit'<sup>255</sup>), although I would like to argue that the 'sich selbst klare Vernunft' does not achieve complete transparency, since in that case it would not be aware of anything, as there would be nothing to see. Rather, absolute knowing is to be seen as a continuous process of *becoming* transparent.

In the penultimate sentence Hegel again emphasizes that, also in its final shape, spirit is on the move, in a journey that is both inward and outward. 'Das Absolute Wissen' is shown to have a twofold character, in that it is both *Wissenschaft* of its logical organisation as self, and an active remembering of all the *Erscheinungen* that presented itself during *Geist's* journey to self-knowledge: '[d]as Ziel, das absolute Wissen, oder der sich als Geist wissende Geist hat zu seinem Wege die Erinnerung der Geister, wie sie an ihnen selbst sind und die Organisation ihres Reichs vollbringen. Ihre Aufbewahrung nach der Seite ihres freien, in der Form der Zufälligkeit erscheinenden Daseins ist die Geschichte, nach der Seite ihre begriffenen Organisation aber die *Wissenschaft des erscheinenden Wissens* [...].'<sup>256</sup>

Absolute knowing is a continuous interaction of spirit with itself, a movement of continuous disclosure, in which self and substance never cease to open up to each other. In the final sentence, Hegel stresses the infinite character of this process and leaves the last word to Schiller, and in doing so simultaneously suggests the impossibility – or resists the possibility – of ever coming up with a definitive conclusion, a final statement of what spirit or its knowing is: '[...] beide zusammen, die begriffene Geschichte, bilden die Erinnerung und die Schädelstätte des absoluten Geistes, die Wirklichkeit, Wahrheit und Gewißheit seines Throns, ohne den er das leblose Einsame wäre; nur –

Aus dem Kelche dieses Geisterreiches  
Schäumt ihm seine Unendlichkeit.'<sup>257</sup>

<sup>254</sup> Cf. Stekeler, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, p. 1034.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1035.

<sup>256</sup> *PhdG*, p. 591. *GW IX*, pp. 433-434.

<sup>257</sup> *PhdG*, p. 591. *GW IX*, p. 434.

As Pahl points out, Hegel's last word is 'nur', and in her interpretation this 'nur' is indicative of isolation and dejection, which is reinforced by its position between 'a semicolon on its right side and a dash on its left': '[Nur]' is a lonely word and a sad word – a signifier of restriction, disappointment, and finitude.<sup>258</sup> However, rather than signifying an inability to finish,<sup>259</sup> or of engaging negatively with itself in its final shape – as 'begriffene Geschichte' – I would like to argue that the final 'nur' is suggestive of a continuous engagement of thought with itself, of the opening up of thought as being a 'true infinite',<sup>260</sup> and of an invitation to the reader to become part of this process.<sup>261</sup> The final dash further reinforces this opening up, and can be read as an invitation to those involved in the process of thought to be responsive to all possible ways in which thought can be developed. As Comay and Ruda convincingly argue, the function of the dash is ambiguous, in that it both acts as a temporary break to thought, a suspension which forces us to pause and reconsider, but also as an invitation to move on, and to continue to interact with what offers itself to thought.<sup>262</sup>

Every dash introduces a moment of uncertainty in reading. [...] Its orientation is simultaneously retrospective and prospective. [...] Unlike the period, which arrives just once in every sentence, and unlike parentheses or quotation marks, which come only in pairs, the dash can either stand alone or in tandem. As such, it can signal a definitive breaking off, a temporary digression, or an emphatic clarification. Does

258 Pahl, op. cit., p. 98. Cf. Comay and Ruda, op. cit., p. 81.

259 Although, as is well known, the *Phänomenologie* was finished in a great hurry. See Pinkard, *Hegel*, pp. 227-230.

260 Verene convincingly interprets Hegel's interaction with Schiller's text as an indirect commentary (or, as I will argue below, a dialogical development) of Schiller's notion of infinity. In his poem 'Die Freundschaft', Schiller paints 'a double portrait of the divine: of divine mastery by its powers to create a spiritual realm, but also of divine failure to create a likeness, a companion. The divine is left with its own infinity as companion [and] is thrown back into its own movement. [...] In his quotation [...] at the end of the *Phenomenology* Hegel modifies the last two lines of the poem [by substituting] "dieses Geisterreiches" for "des ganzen Seelenreiches: and "seine Unendlichkeit" for "die Unendlichkeit" [...]. The infinity Schiller leaves us with suggests what Hegel in the *Science of Logic* calls the "bad infinite" (*Schlecht-Unendliche*), the infinite that just goes on and on. By transposing the line to "his" (*seine*) infinity, Hegel suggests the "true infinite" (*wahrhaft Unendliche*), the infinite of an existing whole that systematically and determinately recapitulates itself. What is recapitulated is the *Geisterreich*, the realm of spirit in all of its various moments and stages that is presented in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.' Verene, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

261 In the *Enzyklopädie* Hegel also discusses the aspect of thought's being a 'nur', and comments: 'Man sagt gewöhnlich, die Logik habe es nur mit *Formen* zu tun und ihren *Inhalt* anderswo herzunehmen. Die logischen Gedanken sind indes kein *Nur* gegen allen anderen Inhalt, sondern aller andere Inhalt ist nur ein *Nur* gegen dieselben. Sie sind der an und für sich seiende Grund von allem.' *Enz. I*, § 24, Zus. 2, p. 85. Thought is not involved with form as completely distinct from its content (and which is thus applied externally); its form is developed from within its active engagement with its content. In this case, too, 'nur' does not merely imply a restriction to thought, but rather an invitation to occupy itself with all that it has to offer, and to recognize its content as its own.

262 Although Comay and Ruda speak of a 'forward' and 'prospective' movement, I would rather argue that the movement of thought is one within itself (an 'Insichgehen'). Yet, in a significant sense the movement is forward, in that the dash points towards Hegel's *Logik*, which, as Comay and Ruda emphasize, also contains a significant dash ('*Sein, reines Sein, – ohne alle weitere Bestimmung*', *WdL*, p. 82, *GW XI*, p. 43). I agree with Comay and Ruda that there is no really problematic transition from *Phänomenologie* to *Logik*: both deal with the 'in sich selbst gegründete Bewegung' in which concepts are formed and related to each other.

the punctuation mark a break, an interruption, a continuation, a detour, a hesitation, a prolongation, a premature termination? It both suspends speech and drives it forward. It scatters and connects. It corrects and confirms. [...] It points in all possible directions: continuation, detour and deviation [...].<sup>263</sup>

The dash can be read as the instigation of a continuous dialogue: between the two aspects of absolute knowing that together ('beide zusammen') form 'die begriffene Geschichte', between all those involved in the practice of knowing – and who are recognized as having contributed to absolute spirit – with absolute spirit, and which is thus no longer considered a 'leblose Einsame',<sup>264</sup> but as a 'wir' that actively moves into thought, and finally, between the reader and the text. In the final sentence Hegel acts both as author (of the *Phänomenologie*) and as reader (of Schiller's poem),<sup>265</sup> and the question presents itself how we are to read Hegel's interaction with Schiller's text. As many commentators pointed out, Hegel does not really leave the last word to Schiller,<sup>266</sup> but rather speaks with Schiller. The dash suggests that the final lines can be read as a kind of afterthought, a subtle differentiation of what was said before, but the lines themselves reveal that Hegel's interaction with Schiller is much more intense, in that he significantly transforms Schiller's lines.<sup>267</sup> Not only are the lines presented without the context of the rest of the poem (or even of the stanza these lines conclude), so that the reader is invited to (re)consider the lines in the context of the *Phänomenologie*, but Hegel also changes nearly every word of the original lines.<sup>268</sup> Rather than make the lines merely suit his own purposes, and fit his argument on the nature of absolute spirit, I would argue that Hegel's transformations are inspired by a need to (re)consider Schiller's words – and thus to do them full justice

263 Comay and Ruda, op. cit., pp. 55-56. Comay and Ruda also point out the ambiguous nature of the German word for dash – 'Gedankenstrich' – as being both 'a pause *in* and *for* thought', as being both a temporary erasure and a drawing back of thought onto itself. See op. cit., p. 55.

264 Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, pp. 1036-1037: 'Ohne die Realität des Menschen, die gelebt haben oder leben, wäre "der Geist" leerer Name, im Bild gesprochen "das leblose Einsame". Nicht also Engel umstehen den Thron des Geistes, sondern Menschen.' We are also reminded of Hegel's discussion of absolute monarchy in his discussion of *Bildung*, where the monarch was indeed lonely in being completely isolated from those in his power. Now, finally, after having come to recognize ourselves as active contributors to absolute spirit, we are no longer merely in its power, but are free to actively develop its potential.

265 Although it could be argued that throughout the *Phänomenologie*, Hegel also acts as reader: of Kant, of Goethe, of the Bible, of Dante, of Sophocles, of Rousseau, of Diderot, of Plato, of Aristotle, of Spinoza, of Locke, etc., etc., etc.

266 Cf. Verene, op. cit., pp. 6-7, Pahl, op. cit., pp. 85-99, and Comay and Ruda, op. cit., pp. 71-75. See also Rebecca Comay, 'Hegel's Last Words: Mourning and Melancholia at the End of the *Phenomenology*', in Joshua Nichols and Amy Swiffen, eds, *The End(s) of History: Questioning the Stakes of Historical Reason* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 141-160.

267 Cf. n. 261 above. See also Comay, 'Hegel's last words', pp. 149-151. Hegel finishes the *Enzyklopädie* in a similar way, by giving the last word to Aristotle, with a (literal) quotation from the *Metaphysics*.

268 The full last stanza of Schiller's poem reads thus:

Freundlos was der grosse Weltenmeister,  
Fühlte *Mangel* – darum schuf er Geister  
Sel'ge Spiegel seiner Seligkeit! –  
Fand das höchste Wesen schon kein gleiches  
Aus dem Kelch des ganzen Seelenreiches  
Schäumt ihm – die Unendlichkeit.

in the sense that we have to interpret these words anew –<sup>269</sup> by “making them strange”. Doing so produces a sense of alienation in the reader from what they thought they knew – his contemporary readers may well have been familiar with ‘Die Freundschaft’ – and challenges the reader to allow the two texts to interact, and thus opens up the text for further interpretation. The reader thus becomes an active participant in the enfolding of the infinity that spirit – both as *Wissenschaft* and in the way it manifested itself in poems such as ‘die Freundschaft’ – has to offer. In an important sense, Hegel leaves the last word to the reader, and, in doing so, simultaneously reveals the impossibility of coming up with a definitive last word. As Pahl convincingly argues, both Hegel’s alteration of Schiller’s lines and his refusal to close out the *Phänomenologie* with a definitive statement reveal that absolute truth cannot be grasped in a single sentence. This were to pin it down as static and fail to capture its being essentially movement:

Looking back at the Hegelian text from the vantage point of the two verses at the end, we come to understand that the truth of absolute knowledge is not the kind of truth that can be simply written down. Rather, it is like the truth that we encountered at the very beginning of the book – in the chapter on “sense certainty” – the truth that was lost by writing it down. Absolute knowledge is “only” the kind of truth that one cannot hold onto by preserving it unchanged. Or better – and this would be reading this sentence backward from the end – absolute knowledge acknowledges that its truth changes with every utterance. It knows itself to be the kind of truth that is altered by being written down and altered by being read.<sup>270</sup>

Absolute knowing is the continuous transformation of both what is known – of all the shapes that together make up the totality of knowing – and of its subject. This transformation – ‘das Aufheben [der] bloßen Form’ – is experienced as a release from the strictures of the determinate shapes we assumed not only knowing to have, but also our particular selves and *Geist* as their unifying spirit: ‘dieses Entlassen seiner aus der Form seines Selbsts ist die höchste Freiheit und Sicherheit seines Wissens von sich.’<sup>271</sup> The *Phänomenologie*’s last lines intimate that the freedom that has finally been won – after the strenuous ‘Arbeit des Begriffs’ – is also to extend to language. Language is to be presented – and interacted with – in such a way that it is given freedom – and thus gives freedom to the reader –<sup>272</sup> and no longer belongs to a particular voice – whether it is Schiller’s or Hegel’s. Its truth is to be developed through the continuous interaction

269 Cf. Pahl, op. cit., pp. 96-97. Pahl suggests that Hegel’s interaction with Schiller’s text can even be considered an act of friendship in that the two texts do not stand opposed to each other: ‘neither of them speaks alone here – each gains voice through the other and each twists the other’s words.’

270 Pahl, op. cit., pp. 98-99. Cf. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels PhdG*, Bd. 2, pp. 967-968: ‘Das Allgemeine präsentiert sich zwar immer statisch, da unsere generische Sätze als Inferenzformen ‘ewige’, ‘zeitlose’, Geltung beanspruchen. Das generische Allgemeine ist aber real nur als Moment im Werden oder Seinsvollzug.’

271 *PhdG*, p. 590. *GW IX*, p. 432.

272 Cf. Pahl, op. cit., p. 99: ‘This (the *Phänomenologie*’s final sentence, AG) is the point where the *Phenomenology* sets the reader free.’

of – and with – these voices. The presentation should thus prepare and invite the reader to become part of this process, and in doing so allow for a continuous transformation of both text and reader. In leaving the last word to the reader,<sup>273</sup> the reader becomes aware that there is no such thing as a last word,<sup>274</sup> and that every reading will continue to develop, enrich and transform all that lies in store in the text.

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273 Not only is this effected by the 'nur' and the dash, and by Hegel's transformation of Schiller's text, but also by the final sentence's paratactical character and its occasional failing syntax. As Pahl points out (op. cit., p. 89), the pronoun 'den' in the final phrase is rather odd, since grammatically it can only refer to throne. It would be more in line with Hegel's argument if it referred to either 'die Erinnerung und die Schädelstätte' or to 'die Wirklichkeit, Wahrheit, Gewißheit', yet these words are all feminine.

274 Which, interestingly, is also the conclusion of Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau*. See ch.4, p. 163.





# Conclusion

In this study I have argued that the dialectical development of experience in Hegel's texts is to be seen as a process that is both dialogical and transformative. In this process we are in continuous interaction with what presents itself: with who we are, with what we profess to know, with the way in which we express our knowing, or with what is other-than-ourselves. This interaction is dialogical in the sense that it requires a continuous checking and correcting of our perspectives through a taking up of perspectives other than our own. It is also dialogical in that it demands that we are always prepared to account for what we know and to take responsibility for our knowing. It is transformative in the sense that there is continuous development of our knowing, of ourselves and of the language in which our knowing is expressed. In being involved in this process we become aware that we have to relinquish any determinate conceptions of experience, ourselves, our knowing and – which has been the focus of this study – our language.

The dialogical and transformative interaction with what presents itself involves, as we have seen, both reader and text. Since we – as readers – are implied in the 'Wir' that – in the course of the *Phänomenologie* – is developed as the subject of knowing, we are to critically interact with the text. We have to explicate the plurality of voices and the 'Gegensätze' implicit in the words and sentences we are presented with and, in doing so, discover that there is no single, determinate meaning of a sentence or a text, but that these different voices and 'Gegensätze' just as much contribute to the meaning of the (parts of) the text, as what we initially took the text to mean.

Focusing on the dialogical interaction that is brought about by the central position that Hegel accords to language, on his highly sensitive approach to language-related issues, and on the equally sensitive and subtle ways in which Hegel uses language to present (his) thought has allowed for a rethinking and further development of a) Hegel's concept of experience and its relation to language; b) Hegel's notion of 'Bestimmung'; c) the ways in which the *Phänomenologie* can be characterized as a dialogical work, d) Hegel's thought and language as being "open" and transformative, and e) the relation between transformation and alienation.

## Language and the development of experience

The development of consciousness' experience into a comprehensive self-conscious knowing has been shown to depend on language in many ways. We have seen that language presents itself as 'das Wahrhaftere', as a medium that can tell us a lot about our knowing and about ourselves. Yet, we have also seen that, on several occasions, language is still wanting, is still in need of further development, and that we are to interact with language in order to transform it into a medium that allows for a full grasp of the truth.

In the shape of sense-certainty, for example, consciousness experiences that whenever it tries to express its particular knowing of its object – knowledge it takes to be immediate, concrete and certain – it is defeated by language. It becomes aware that words such as ‘here’ and ‘now’ are generalities and fail to capture what sense-certainty sees as its concrete and immediate experience. Consciousness thus finds that its initial certainty is developed into nothing but a *Meinung*, an intuition that belongs to no-one but itself. Expressing its particular claim in language simultaneously allows this *Meinung* to enter an area in which it ceases to be purely ‘mein’ and opens itself up to an audience – which involves both the observing consciousness in the text and the reader of the text – that is thus enabled to critically engage with what is said. Even though the initial voicing aims at expressing consciousness’ certainty – and thus assumes the recognition by others to consist in agreement – the actual voicing allows for critical questioning and correction. Active engagement with what is said, as we have seen, not only consists in an attempt to address and correct the deficiencies of a particular shape of consciousness, but also entails a critical questioning of the audience’s own presuppositions and assumptions, and, hence, of knowing as a generality.

The example of ‘das ehrliche Bewußtsein’ in the *Bildung* section – a shape of consciousness that remains locked within its judgements of the world and does not allow for any interaction with what is judged – reveals that merely expressing value judgements (“good!”, “bad!”) is not the way in which we can truly come to know, since these judgements place a firm barrier between the subject and its world. We come to understand that language that consists of nothing but judgements excludes other perspectives from partaking, makes the world stand still (“this is what it is”): the only way forward is through allowing our particular judgements to be questioned and developed. We also come to understand that this is a continual process: it requires a constant and mutual effort to account for what is known, and the example of the ‘schöne Seele’ shows that refusing to become part of this process – which the beautiful soul sees as a possible threat to its inner purity – is doomed to lead to the destruction of consciousness and to the silencing of its voice. An important lesson to be learned in the ‘Wissenschaft der Erfahrung des Bewußtseins’ is thus that what consciousness experiences can only truly be known and understood if its experience is allowed to be developed through dialogical interaction.

The development of experience thus requires continuous interaction with what is (initially) expressed. It occurs by means of a questioning of the opinion or judgement we are presented with in order to clarify and develop what is expressed – which we ‘naturally’ assume to have a fixed and determinate meaning – and to make it understood. This questioning is not to lead to a rejection (no either/or): we are to understand the nature of experience in such a way that we are to develop the potential of what initially presents itself as the ‘truth’ of a particular form of consciousness through a continuous checking, correcting and nuancing of what is said. Both what presents itself, as the expression of a particular form of knowing, and what we initially ‘take’ this expression to mean are just

as much part of the truth as its subsequent development. What expresses itself initially is “good” in that it functions as the start of a process, but is “bad” if taken as dogmatically and definitive, either by the protagonist consciousness or by ‘Wir’ as its audience.

### **(Self)determination as ‘Bestimmung’**

The determination of experience as a dialogical process is, I have argued, one in which the word ‘Bestimmung’ should also be taken literally, as referring to the voicing by a particular shape of consciousness of its perspective on what presents itself in its experience. Hence, the further determination of experience requires active involvement with what is voiced: both by critically engaging with what is expressed and heard and by allowing other voices to make themselves heard can we come to know what presents itself in experience. ‘Bestimmung’ is thus closely related to the process of ‘sich verständigen’ – of making understood and of coming to a mutual understanding – and is an essential aspect of Hegel’s concept of *Vernunft*. For Hegel, reason is not, as it is for Kant, an *a priori* faculty, the principles of which can be investigated and criticized independent of what presents itself in experience. Rather, as Herder had already argued, *Vernunft* develops from what is ‘vernommen’, and is thus dependent on experience. Although Hegel agrees with Kant that reason is determined by itself, he aims to show that this cannot be a purely formal exercise since, in that case, reason would ultimately return to the very abstraction it set out with. We have seen that this self-determination cannot be a mute affair but requires continuous self-expression and dialogical interaction.

The dialogical development of what is implicit in experience – which can only occur in and through language – can thus also be seen – in contrast with interpretations, such as Pippin’s, that see Hegel as being mainly engaged with developing answers to questions raised by Kant – as Hegel’s development of Herder’s metacritical challenge to Kant’s work. It can even be argued – a question I have, however, not been able to address in this study – that Hegel’s dialogical approach will also allow us to rethink what it means to be critical, so that we can come to understand critique as a practice that involves transformation of the notion of critique and of the critical subject (the ‘Wir’). This question is of prime concern in Särkela’s recent work on Hegel’s notion of critique, yet I would like to add that, if we take Hegel at his word, we find that this transformation can only be brought about through an ongoing dialogue and continuous interaction with the language in which critique is expressed.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Already in the introduction to the *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie*, Hegel presented critique in terms of an ongoing dialogue, and claims that the outcome of the process of critique is not to be the rejection or replacement of philosophical views/ expressions of what knowing is. If critique were to proceed in this way, it would be a mere power game and it would fail to reveal its connection with, its being part of, true philosophy. In simply dismissing what it takes to be deficient, critique cannot express itself other than through words with which it stamps its authority: ‘ihr [of Kritik, AG] Ausspruch erscheint als ein einseitiger Macht-spruch, – eine Stellung, welche, da ihr Tun objektiv sein soll, unmittelbar ihrem Wesen widerspricht; ihr

‘Bestimmung’ as a process of dialogical interaction allows implicit voices to make themselves heard, including those voices that have been silenced by history, and which have been refused or ignored by our ‘nach der Gewohnheit’ perspective. This polyphonic aspect of Hegel’s concept of ‘Bestimmung’ bears close resemblance to Bakhtin’s *heteroglossia*, in which there is an incessant interaction of different voices, different languages and speech types. No voices are to be rejected in advance, without taking an interest in what they aim to express: all perspectives, in one way or another, should be able to contribute to the determination of knowing. ‘Bestimmung’ thus also implies that those involved are prepared to commit themselves: taking part in knowing as a cooperative and ongoing process demands that we are willing to – and dare to – express ourselves, but also that we are to allow and enable others to do so.

The voicing of experience not only allows for the development of the object that presents itself in experience, but also enables the knowing subject – whether it is in the shape of individual consciousness or of intersubjective *Geist* – to determine itself. Throughout the *Phänomenologie*, we have seen that it is necessary for consciousness to express and reveal itself, and to engage with others – whether it is with other forms of consciousness or with ‘Wir’ as its audience – in order to develop itself. The example of the ‘schöne Seele’ reveals that if we fail to do this, we only hear the echoes of our own voice and are ultimately doomed to disappear.

Coming to understand what is entailed in the process of ‘Bestimmung’ – its being a continual process of dialogical development – has also been shown to have repercussions for the role of judgements in the development of knowing. The practice of ‘Urteilen’ – predominant in the world of *Bildung* – precludes any form of dialogical interaction and produces a world that is both divisive and disruptive. It betrays a profound indifference to what presents itself in experience and both presupposes and results in a ‘Trennung’ from what can be known. The failing communication between the two forms of consciousness in the *Welt der Bildung* reveals that the way forward – exemplified by Hegel’s intertextual dialogue with Diderot’s *Le Neveu de Rameau* at the end of the *Bildung* section – is through ‘Mitteilung’ – as an interaction in which all those who participate are actively acknowledged – rather than ‘Urteil’. The determining movement ultimately leads to a conclusion (‘Schluss’), but we are to understand this conclusion as a concluding movement in which all parts are taken up,<sup>2</sup> rather than a definitive endpoint which can be left

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Urteil ist eine Appellation an die Idee der Philosophie, die aber, weil sie nicht von dem Gegenpart anerkannt wird, für diesen ein fremder Gerichtshof ist.’ *Jenaer Schriften 1801-1807 (Werke 2)*, pp. 173-174. *GW IV*, p. 118-119. The interaction with what presents itself as philosophy is not to deny the other – through which it also denies (‘widerspricht’) itself – with a mere appeal to what philosophy is to be. Critique is to engage itself with what is expressed, and is to do this not through contradiction, by speaking against the other, but by speaking with what it recognizes in the other. Its ‘Ausspruch’ will then not appear as a ‘Machtspruch’, but as an invitation for development, for a reply, so that thought is allowed to further enfold itself.

2 See *PhdG*, p. 373. *GW IX*, p. 274: ‘Durch diese Bewegung [the movement of mediation, AG] wird das Allgemeine mit dem Dasein überhaupt zusammengeschlossen.’

as it is. 'Das Wahre ist das Ganze':<sup>3</sup> not as a collection of all possible judgements, but as the continuous mediation of *Geist* with its object and with itself, as a process of continuous self-explication.<sup>4</sup>

Determination through exclusive (and one-sided) judgements is thus to be changed into a determining process that is interactive and inclusive, in which there is a continual accounting for – and checking of – the contributions made to knowing. The process of 'Bestimmung' is not to be understood as a "speaking about" but rather as a "speaking with" what presents itself. One of the saddest characters in the *Welt der Bildung* is the 'einsame Monarch' – an absolute ruler completely isolated from his people – who is nothing but what other people call him. Representations of what something or someone is are always to be questioned and checked, always to be interacted with, and not to be applied externally.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, throughout the *Phänomenologie* we have seen that the development of experience and the determination of what presents itself in experience can only take place through a careful consideration of examples ('was beiherspielt'). There is no "essence" of what presents itself in experience, prior to its manifestations: what something is reveals itself through interaction with its manifestations. We need continuous interaction with examples in order to make our *Begriff* complete,<sup>6</sup> and to develop it as a concrete totality. What initially appears to be merely an example, an inessential action which takes places at the edge of the centre stage (the 'Beispiel'), in being concrete, allows for the determination of knowing which, without the interaction with concrete examples, would prove to be an utter abstraction.<sup>7</sup> We have to open ourselves up to what presents itself in experience – interact with it without any preconceived notions and without being judgmental – so that we are ultimately able to develop what is essential, both in our knowing and in ourselves, and to understand both our knowing and ourselves to be in continuous movement.

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3 *PhdG*, p. 24. *GW IX*, p. 19.

4 *PhdG*, p. 24. *GW IX*, p. 19.: 'Das Ganze ist aber nur das durch seine Entwicklung sich vollendende Wesen.' Hegel's use of a present participle as adjective ('sich vollendende') reveals that the truth is not a static totality, but one in which there is continuous movement.

5 As this would free us 'von der Mühe der Wissenschaft' and merely give us 'das Ansehen eines ernsthaften und eifrigen Bemühens', and knowing would thus never go beyond a practice of 'mit Antworten auf alles dieses sich herumzuplacken.' *PhdG*, p. 70. *GW IX*, p. 55.

6 As the example of 'das ehrliche Bewußtsein' in the *Bildung* section reveals, it is important that we consider a plurality of examples, and not just remain with one, and take this to be the essence of what presents itself. See ch. 4, pp. 145-146.

7 See *PhdG*, p. 83. *GW IX*, p. 64: 'Eine wirkliche sinnliche Gewißheit ist nicht nur diese reine Unmittelbarkeit, sondern ein *Beispiel* derselben.' What consciousness – in its shape of sense-certainty – took to be knowledge that is infinitely rich and concrete, proves to be 'die abstrakteste und ärmste Wahrheit.' (*ibid.*)

## The *Phänomenologie* as a dialogical work

We have seen, especially in the discussion of the *Phänomenologie*, that Hegel's text demands that we – as readers – interact with the specific way in which Hegel presents (his) thought. First of all, in using an array of forms of dialogical writing in order to interact with the reader, Hegel refuses to provide us a definitive answer to the question what a dialogue is. In resisting any form of determinate genre classification – it is and is not a dialogue, it is and is not a *Bildungsroman*, it is and is not an 'Odyssee of the Spirit' (*nostos*) either –<sup>8</sup> the *Phänomenologie* evokes a questioning and critical attitude in the reader. In this sense, Hegel's presentation can be called dialogical in the Bakhtinian sense: for Bakhtin, a (literary) work is dialogical when it resists classification, when it raises questions with regard to the way in which we are used to reading a work and opens up new ways of reading.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the *Phänomenologie*, we have seen that forms of dialogical development take place with and within the text. Through interaction with their context – both within and without the text – words are allowed to reveal the meanings they have historically come to be endowed with, to interact with what Bakhtin calls 'the already uttered'.<sup>10</sup> We find that we have to resist an either/or interpretation of words, and that we have to take them both literally and metaphorically. In doing so, we come to understand the process of 'Verständigung' as a "making understood" in which we have to play an active role by questioning and developing what is expressed, and find that actual "work" is involved in 'das wirkliche Erkennen'.<sup>11</sup> We experience that knowing is essentially a movement in which we are to be actively involved and to which we are to contribute by working our way through what we are presented with. We thus become aware that 'das wirkliche Erkennen' also has to be taken literally, that it does not just mean "real" or "truly" – which

8 For a discussion of the question whether or not the *Phänomenologie* can be characterized as a *Bildungsroman*, see ch. 3, p. 76-77. There is also a tradition – with Jean Wahl, Emmanuel Levinas and Henry Harris as famous representatives – of interpreting this work as an example of *nostos*, in which protagonist consciousness embarks on a journey similar to the one made by Odysseus. Depending on the definition of *nostos* that is used – whether it is a tale of home-coming (from Troy) or of saving oneself from destruction – a number of *nostos* motifs certainly play a role in the *Phänomenologie*: a journey – with many detours – that is also a return, alienation and recognition, the hero saving himself from destruction, and the explication of experience through telling, through explication in language. An important difference with the *Phänomenologie* is that the *nostos* tale culminates in reaching a point where movement stops, whereas 'das wirkliche Erkennen' continues to be movement. A further discussion of this aspect lies beyond the scope of this study, but for a very interesting analysis of the meaning of *nostos* – and of the question in which ways the *Odyssee* is to be characterized as a *nostos* tale, see Anna Bonifazi, 'Inquiring into *Nostos* and Its Cognates', *American Journal of Philology*, Vol. 130, No. 4, pp. 481-510.

9 For a discussion of Bakhtin's theory, see section 3.3.

10 See ch. 3, p. 81.

11 On 'sich verständigen', cf. the first sentence of the introduction to the *Phänomenologie*: 'Es ist eine natürliche Vorstellung, daß, ehe in der Philosophie an die Sache selbst, nämlich an das wirkliche Erkennen dessen, was in Wahrheit ist, gegangen wird, es notwendig sei, vorher über das Erkennen sich zu verständigen, das als das Werkzeug, wodurch man des Absoluten sich bemächtigt, oder als Mittel, durch welches hindurch man es erblicke, betrachtet wird.' *PhdG*, p. 68. *GW IX*, p. 53. On its cognate 'verständlich', see the discussion in ch. 3, p. 93.



may well be what natural consciousness takes it to be –<sup>12</sup> but rather refers to a knowing which can only be real by playing our part in its production. Knowing that is ‘wirklich’ is knowing that is in act (‘in der Tat’), that is expressed, and which can and should be interacted with in order to develop its full potential, and in which all that is involved in knowing is “at work”.

Part of this work, as we have seen, depends on the reader, who is given an essential role in the explication of the text. Sentences are not to be read dogmatically, as expressions of fixed and determinate judgements, but each ‘Satz’ is to be developed by enfolding the ‘Gegensätze’ implicit in it. The ‘Gegensatz’ is not to be taken as a one-sided assertion and decided rejection of what the ‘Satz’ is taken to mean, so that the original ‘Satz’ is simply left as it has been found. Rather, as we have seen, a ‘Satz’ is ultimately to be understood as the expression of a reconciling movement which works towards a knowing in which there is continuous checking and correcting of what is expressed, so that both ‘Satz’ and its ‘Gegensätze’ are included in it. Hegel’s approach aims at bringing about a reading in which sentences are no longer taken as determinate and final and are no longer interpreted as ‘endgültig’. There never is a definitive last word, never a final reading. ‘Oder, was dasselbe ist’: we always have to be prepared to reconsider and return to what we are – or were – presented with and allow it to develop itself in different ways.

Hegel’s text can also be called dialogical in the Bakhtinian sense in that there not only is a continual questioning and development of past or contemporary voices, but the text – and by implication ‘das wirkliche Erkennen’ as its subject – is also open to future development, to what has not yet been said. What the text has to offer is not just what Hegel put into it, but also depends on the exchange with the various assumptions and backgrounds the reader brings to the text.

Finally, although my focus in this study has been mainly on the *Phänomenologie* and on some of Hegel’s early work, I would like to suggest that it might also be a fruitful exercise to read the *Wissenschaft der Logik* in a similar way and to discover what we can learn from the ways in which this specific text interacts with the reader, and from the ways in which Hegel makes use of rhetoric in order to develop a philosophical argument. ‘*Sein, reines Sein* – ohne alle weitere Bestimmung’,<sup>13</sup> is, of course, a case in point, with its suggestive dash,<sup>14</sup> and its lacking a copula. The sentence allows us to become aware that, if we were to add the copula ‘ist’, we would have admitted to the *Dasein* of being, and would have determined it as such. Through actively involving ourselves with the text, we thus experience that ‘reines Sein’ contains nothing that can be developed, that clarity cannot be presupposed, and that interaction can only occur with what still requires clarification.

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12 See, again, the opening sentence of the introduction to the *Phänomenologie*: ‘Es ist eine natürliche Vorstellung [...]’. See the note above for the complete sentence.

13 *WdL*, p. 82, *GW XI*, p. 43

14 See also ch. 5, p. 228, n. 262.

## Mediation, openness and transformation

We have also seen that, in voicing its perspective, consciousness experiences that it is impossible to speak just as itself.<sup>034</sup> Language reveals itself as essentially a mediated generality, and the reflection of the various ways in which *Geist* finds itself in the world.

The determination of experience through voicing also makes us aware of the fluid nature of mediation: each individual voice dies away, yet what is said – its meaning – remains as part of a generality, belongs to this generality, and is further determined by this generality. Foreshadowing Wittgenstein, the *Phänomenologie* reveals that there is no such thing as a purely private language. Rather, consciousness and spirit find themselves faced with the task to transform language from an abstract into a concrete generality, in which all perspectives are actively acknowledged and can thus recognize themselves.

034 As T.S. Eliot put it in 'The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock': 'It is impossible to say just what I mean!' Prufrock could well figure as a character in the *Phänomenologie*: not only is he constantly frustrated in his attempts to express what he deems to be his purely individual stance, he also finds that, in the judgmental eyes and language of others, he is determined as a being incapable of further development. He discovers that 'formulation' and 'fixing' by others – who speak about him rather than with him – is not the way forward as it does not allow for self-determination and self-expression:

The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,  
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,  
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,  
Then how should I begin  
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?  
And how should I presume?

See T.S. Eliot, *Selected Poems* (London: faber and faber, 1954), p. 13.

We have also seen that knowing 'was in Wahrheit ist'<sup>15</sup> can only be brought about through a process of 'Selbstdarstellung' and 'Offenbarung',<sup>16</sup> in which we should be prepared to open ourselves up to what we do not (immediately) recognize as belonging to ourselves. From the start, consciousness experiences that it has to express its particular perspective on the world in order to develop it into an object that can be known, both by others and by itself. This expression of its knowing takes place in a medium – language – that reveals itself as a generality that is in principle – as it is the 'common' language we all share – accessible and open to all, but which still has to be transformed into a general form of interaction that actively acknowledges both its and the other's perspective. In order to bring about this openness as active acknowledgement, each perspective should be prepared to publicly ('offenbar') account for itself and to adopt full responsibility for being part of *Geist* as the subject of knowing. It also has to be prepared to relinquish its particular perspective on the world and give up its convictions on what it deems to be its true and inner self. Withdrawing into its own world, and a consequent take-it-or-leave-it ("this is what it is", "this is who I am") attitude, as we saw in the example of the beautiful soul, ultimately implies the complete destruction of both self and knowing.

15 *PhdG*, p. 68. *GW IX*, p. 53.

16 Cf. ch. 3, p. 204 ff. In ch.1 we saw that this aspect was also prominent in Herder's notion of 'Lebendiges Daseyn' as 'ein sich selbst in Raum und Zeit innerer Kräfte zusammenfassendes, offenbarendes Daseyn' (ch.1, p. 17).

That the process of 'Bestimmung' is to be seen as an opening up does not imply, I have argued, that we are to see this process as a radical opening up of knowing – such as defended by Comay and Ruda – in which previous shapes of knowing, and individual selves, have to submit completely to the movement of absolute knowing, in which we are to 'shred every vestige of positivity',<sup>17</sup> and in which even the notion of form or limit becomes unstable. Rather, opening up to what is other-than-itself is to be understood as a process in which there are indeed limits to our knowing, to what we are or can be, or to what we do. These limits are to be developed in the process of engaging with what (initially) presents itself as other-than-itself. Autonomy is thus not a formal principle we can simply set out with, self-determination is not the result of a strictly individual 'Selbstgespräch' as it is in Kant,<sup>18</sup> but has to be produced through a continuous checking and correcting of ourselves, for which we need other voices than just our own. We do not have an authentic voice to begin with – one that we can immediately recognize as our own – yet the process of 'Selbstbestimmung' allows us to develop a voice – both our individual voice and the voice of intersubjective *Geist* – we can ultimately recognize as our own.

This process thus also demands that we are prepared to allow for a breaking open and transformation of the determinate selves we took ourselves – both as individual and as spirit – to be. In the process of 'Selbstbestimmung' there are no set and rigid boundaries between all the parts that make up the totality of spirit or the individual self: all parts are allowed to interact and form a whole by becoming porous and indiscrete. Self-determination thus involves the dissolution of demarcations, of rigid differentiation, and demands that we continue to speak to and with ourselves. The process of 'Selbstbestimmung' is an opening up to what is other in – or than – ourselves and can only occur if we are prepared to adapt and change. Occasionally – as we saw in the breaking of consciousness' hard heart or the disruption in the world of *Bildung* – it even requires force or violence: at times we are made to give up particular representations of what we take to be our true selves or of how things really are that are dear to us and which we are loath to give up.

Coming to know ourselves as (belonging to) spirit not only involves, as we have seen, a transformation of ourselves, but also of our understanding of *Geist* and of what it means to us. From dualistic conceptions of body and soul, or of spirit as a gift that is bestowed on us as an act of grace from a transcendent God, we have come to see *Geist* (or our individual 'souls') as (having been) formed by ourselves. We have come to understand that the spirit of reconciliation does not come upon us, but is a task we set ourselves and which we are responsible for. Through our active involvement with what presents itself as spirit we are able to move beyond all the representations we have of spirit and to transform *Geist* into *Begriff*.

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17 Comay, *Mourning Sickness*, p. 13. Cf. e.g. the discussion in ch. 5, p. 196.

18 Cf. the discussion of the dialectics of conscience in section 5.1.

Knowing as ‘das wirkliche Erkennen’ is a fully self-conscious knowing, a knowing that has experienced what is involved in knowing, and which knows itself as transformation (‘Verwandlung’). It is the active and continuous movement of the totality of what is within experience – which is also a making heard of all the voices implicit in it –<sup>19</sup> in which we, as knowing subject, can fully recognize ourselves, while simultaneously understanding that we have to let go of any determinate conceptions of who and what we are. Even in its absolute shape, in which it has become self-enclosed and has developed a complete *Begriff* of itself, the movement of knowing is open-ended in the sense that it continues to challenge and question itself, to make itself account for itself, and, in doing so, allow all its implicit voices to make themselves heard. There is not and cannot be a last word, no final (‘endgültig’) judgement, as this would make the movement of thought come to a standstill.

Finally, the development of experience into comprehensive knowing also involves an opening up – and transformation – of language. We have seen that, throughout the *Phänomenologie*, consciousness experiences that its conception of what language is – and does – changes – and that it has to adapt itself accordingly. For sense-certainty, language reveals itself as a mediated generality in which what was held to be immediate and strictly individual cannot be expressed. In the world of *Bildung*, language has been appropriated by a particular culture, or is linked to a particular role, and becomes highly exclusive and judgmental, a development that ultimately culminates in the shape of the beautiful soul, with a language so exclusive that it only hears the echoes of its own voice. After the breaking of its hard heart, consciousness experiences that the only way forward is through confirmation (‘Ja’) of what presents itself in experience, and to include and interact with what is other-than-itself. This affirmative and performative ‘Ja’ can be seen as the instigation of a transformation of language – within absolute knowing – that is to turn language into a generality that we know to be inclusive, in which there is a continuous and active explication of all the *Bestimmungen* that lie in store within it, and in which meaning is never pinned down but is allowed to be in constant movement.

We have also seen that consciousness’ experience shows that language has an essentially oxymoronic and duplicitous character. Language both veils and reveals ‘was in Wahrheit ist’: we have to take language at “face value”, but also allow other perspectives inherent in words and sentences to reveal themselves. Hegel’s presentation, precisely because it initially appears to obscure what it aims to present – of being guilty of the charges issued by Beiser et al. of being unnecessarily opaque and impenetrable,<sup>20</sup> has been shown to allow us to become aware that words that initially appeared familiar and which we assumed to have a meaning we could accept as “given” and to “speak for itself”, such as ‘Vorstellung’, ‘Begriff’ or ‘wirklich’, become unstable if we allow them to interact

19 And as such a ‘revelation’ or ‘opening up’ of spirit (‘als innerlich geoffenbartes Ewiges’) for which we now understand ourselves to be responsible.

20 Cf the introduction, p. xvi.

with their (and our) context, and that we constantly have to return to the words we are presented with in order to reconsider and develop their meaning. We come to understand that language can never be fully transparent, as that would put a halt to thought and obstruct its being essentially movement.<sup>21</sup> Thought is and remains a continuous process of clarification, of 'Verständigung', of continuously accounting for what is ultimately recognized to be its own, but which can never be simply accepted as such and left as it is, as thought's 'final word'. Language is ultimately transparent, although not in the sense that it has become completely unambiguous. It is transparent in the sense that thought is now able to completely recognize itself in it, and that all the determining voices that are inherent in it can be explicated and interacted with.

The ultimate transformation of language – in absolute knowing – is to take place within the language we already have, which is to become what it already is: a mediated generality which reflects our collective experience. We are not to sever the link with experience, with the ways in which knowing has manifested itself in the course of history and develop a language that is merely a formal instrument (as it is in formal logic and semantics). We are to develop the language that we all share and initially use unthinkingly into a fully mediated generality in which we are able to come to a full *Begriff* of who and what we are. In this process of making language our own we simultaneously relinquish our hold on the particular language we assumed to be in possession of: each perspective should be allowed to find itself reflected and acknowledged in language that thus becomes a truly general medium. Acknowledgement can only be granted when each perspective is prepared to account for itself, to dialogically engage with what is other-than-itself, and to relinquish any determinate conception of what it took itself, its knowing or its language to be.

Finally, we have seen that the dialogical development of what presents itself also implies a transformation of both reader and text. In attempting to make the text our own, we often find ourselves forced to remain with what is said, to ask ourselves whose voice we are hearing, or whose voice we attribute to a particular word, phrase or sentence, in order to develop those voices and allow them to interact, both with each other and with ourselves. In making a text our own, we become aware that a text can never really be our own, that it does not belong to any perspective in particular. By giving the reader responsibility for developing the text, Hegel allows his text to be transformed by each and every reading, and to let his text go. This attitude to text also manifests itself in Hegel's own reading, and in his 'loose' interaction with texts. Quoting literally, to leave the text as it is, would betray an indifference to what is said and betray an unwillingness to actively engage with a particular perspective, and to see his own reading as definitive.<sup>22</sup> An implication

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21 The example of 'das gerade Bewußtsein' revealed the problems inherent in taking language to be straightforward. See ch. 4, p. 167.

22 For Werner Hamacher, reading Hegel is thus both a repetition – or confirmation – of Hegel (and of ourselves) and a killing of Hegel. See Werner Hamacher, *Pleroma – Reading in Hegel* (Stanford: Stanford University

of this reading of Hegel, of there never being a definitive answer to what the text tells us, is of course that there are still many voices implicit in the text that can be made to speak, so that their potential contribution to knowing – and to our understanding of Hegel – can be further developed. In this study I have focused primarily on Herder and his *Metakritik*, on Diderot, and to a lesser extent on Kant and Hölderlin. Especially Hegel's interaction with the latter – on the relation between judgement and being and on the ways in which language can capture and express the interaction between man and nature, between subject and object of experience – would deserve further research. And there are other interactions that could be explored: with Goethe – on 'die schöne Seele', on transformation (Hegel's transformation of Goethe's notion of 'Verwandlung'), on *Bildung* – or with Dante, Spinoza or Rousseau, to mention but a few.

## Transformation through alienation

The process of coming to know requires that we experience a sense of wonder, a lack or need (*Bedürfnis*),<sup>23</sup> or estrangement from what we naturally assumed to be acquainted with, from what we simply accept as 'natürliche' Vorstellungen. In the discussion of consciousness' experience in the world of *Bildung*, we saw that, for Hegel, we can only learn by adopting particular roles and by adapting to a particular culture in order to discover what we are not and, in doing so, develop who and what we are. In this process, we have seen that we can only make ourselves "explicit" through interaction with voices that are not our own, yet which we can ultimately acknowledge as belonging to ourselves, when we are able to recognize their having contributed to who and what we are.<sup>24</sup>

Not being in possession of an authentic self to begin with implies the necessity of role-play for the development of consciousness, which, we have seen, is already an important aspect of the development of consciousness' experience as sense-certainty. In order to get to know consciousness in its shape of sense-certainty, observing consciousness takes up its perspective and questions itself on its (vicarious) experience. What something is, or who we are, can, in Hegel's eyes, only be developed by interacting with the ways in which what is presents itself.

Yet we have also seen that alienation, for Hegel, is a process that demands our activity. We can only truly get to know something – including ourselves – by 'making strange' what we

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Press, 1998), pp. 9-11. In doing so the text is transformed and no longer belongs to anyone in particular: 'From any reading that would understand him Hegel demands that it take his life. [...] The life of which reading robs him and which must also be preserved by this reading is now in immortal form.'

23 Cf. ch. 2, esp. pp. 33-38.

24 Hegel's concept of alienation is thus a transformation both of Rousseau's concept of alienation – where culture was seen as the force that alienated us from our natural, authentic selves – which, Hegel argues we do not have – and Herder's, which also presupposed an inner, authentic self (an 'Idiom') which we initially – as we see ourselves through the eyes of others – are unable to recognize as our own. Cf. ch. 1, p. 24.

are inclined to take for granted and which we take to have an immediately recognizable shape.<sup>25</sup> Interacting with what initially presents itself as ‘natürliche Vorstellung’, for example, involves that it is developed not just as natural, but also as artificial, and as being both a representation and a continuous performance. In the process of interacting with what presents itself, we also become aware that it works the other way round, that we become familiar with what initially appeared strange, and which we are ultimately able to recognize as belonging to *Geist*. Active estrangement has also been shown to be an essential aspect of the reading process: developing the meaning of a text often requires that we are prepared to read the text in ways that initially appear strange – e.g. by taking words such as ‘wirklich’ literally – but which ultimately prove to be productive.<sup>26</sup>

In absolute knowing we will ultimately arrive at a point where, as we can read in the final sentence of the introduction to the *Phänomenologie*, knowing ‘seinen Schein ablegt, mit Fremdartigem, das nur für es und als ein Anderes ist, behaftet zu sein, oder wo die Erscheinung dem Wesen gleich wird’.<sup>27</sup> This does not imply that the presentation (*Erscheinung*) – in being completely identical to its essence – has come to an end, or that otherness or alienation ceases to play a role. What has been produced is a knowing that we recognize as belonging to ourselves – but which – in actively allowing it to appear in its strangeness, continues to invite us to engage with it, so that the ‘Gespräch [das] wir sind’ can continue to make itself heard.<sup>28</sup>

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25 Cf. ch. 5, p. 221.

26 In reading Hegel, it helps being a reader whose native language is Dutch: for me most German words appear familiar, but I always have to check whether this sense of familiarity is justified, and in checking dictionaries I stumble upon all kinds of interesting denotations, that enrich my original, ‘natural’ reading.

27 *PhdG*, p. 81. *GW IX*, p. 62.

28 From Hölderlin’s poem ‘Friedensfeier’: ‘Viel hat von Morgen an,  
Seit ein Gespräch wir sind und hören voneinander,  
Erfahren der Mensch [...]’





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## Summary (in Dutch)

In de Hegelreceptie bestaat een lange en invloedrijke traditie die Hegel presenteert als een starre, gesloten en autoritaire systeemdenker. In de ogen van denkers als Feuerbach en Kierkegaard, of Arendt en Benhabib, is Hegels dialectiek in essentie een monoloog van een alwetend subject met zichzelf, waarbij weinig tot geen openheid is voor interactie met wat zich presenteert als anders. Deze dissertatie betoogt dat Hegels denken – en vooral zijn omgang met en uiterst bewuste gebruik van taal – juist veel dialogische aspecten in zich draagt en dat er sprake is van een voortdurende interactie met andere vormen van denken, met andere teksten, met taal en vooral ook met de lezer. Door specifiek de nadruk te leggen op Hegels interactie met de lezer – waarbij ik veelvuldig gebruik maak van methodieken uit de literatuurwetenschap zoals *close reading* en Bakhtin's *dialogiek* – is de benadering van dit proefschrift een aanvulling op – en verrijking van – recente Hegel interpretaties waarbij de dialogische aspecten van diens denken eveneens centraal staan.

Deze lezing van Hegel, als een dialogisch denker die zowel een centrale plaats toekent aan taal als aan de rol van de lezer, maakt het allereerst mogelijk om Hegels concept van ervaring verder te ontwikkelen. Het proces van 'Bestimmung', waarin en waardoor wat zich aandient in de ervaring wordt ontwikkeld, is niet alleen een beweging waardoor de ervaring nader wordt bepaald, maar vooral ook een dialogisch proces waarin wij letterlijk onze stem ('Stimme') moeten gebruiken en het gesprek dienen aan te gaan met andere stemmen. Daarbij moeten we de bereidheid tonen om aan de ene kant verantwoording af te leggen voor wat we zeggen en aan de andere kant onze particuliere meningen ('Meinungen') los te laten en aan te passen. De uiteindelijk uitkomst of doel (een andere betekenis van 'Bestimmung') van dit proces is niet een definitieve, vaststaande waarheid waarin er niets meer gezegd hoeft te worden. In wat Hegel het 'absolute weten' noemt is er volledig begrip, maar blijft een voortdurende interactie tussen subject en object van weten nodig om wat begrepen wordt te verhelderen, te actualiseren en betekenisvol te maken.

Daarnaast biedt deze lezing de mogelijkheid om de rol die taal speelt in Hegels denken opnieuw te bezien. Hegels bespiegelingen over taal, maar vooral zijn specifieke taalgebruik – waarbij hij tal van stijlmiddelen inzet – laten zien dat we niet alleen veel van taal kunnen leren als de weerslag van vormen van ervaring, van de manier waarop we denken, of van traditionele opvattingen van weten. Door specifiek aandacht te besteden aan de interactie tussen Hegels tekst en de lezer zien we dat taal ook een middel is om ervaring te bewerkstelligen, en ons zo deelgenoot kan maken van het proces van weten. Hegels teksten geven ruimte voor een proces van voortdurende 'Bestimmung', van het ontwikkelen van de betekenis van de tekst, maar ook van de stem van de filosofie, een stem waarin we ons weten kunnen uitdrukken en waarin we de veelvuldigheid aan stemmen die aan dat weten bijdragen kunnen herkennen en erkennen.

Het eerste hoofdstuk bespreekt de relatie tussen taal, denken en ervaring in het werk van Johann Gottfried Herder, dat als een belangrijke achtergrond voor Hegels denken kan worden gezien. Herder pleit – vooral in zijn *Metakritik* – voor een opvatting van de rede die niet – zoals bij Kant – los staat van taal en ervaring. Een belangrijke implicatie van Herders opvatting van de rede, als een zich organisch ontwikkelend geheel dat wortelt in taal en ervaring en waar het kennend subject ook onderdeel van uitmaakt, is dat, om tot begrip te komen van wat de rede inhoudt, zij zichzelf moet onderwerpen aan een kritisch en dialogisch zelfonderzoek, door de manieren waarin onze ervaring wordt weerspiegeld in taal te bevragen. Een ander aspect dat voor het denken van Hegel relevant blijkt, is Herders nadruk op ervaring als ‘lebendiges Daseyn’, van een concrete en actieve deelname aan de wereld om ons heen als de essentie van ervaring. Taal is voor Herder ook een ‘lebendiges Daseyn’: het kan alleen maar uiting geven aan een zich voortdurend ontwikkelend, levendig en concreet proces als het zelf ook levendig en concreet is. Voor Herder heeft dit belangrijke implicaties voor de taal waarin de filosofie zich presenteert: de taal van de filosofie kan geen definitieve, statische standpunten verwoorden, maar dient een interactie aan te gaan met wat er aan denken in taal voorhanden is en de lezer actief bij dat proces te betrekken.

Hoofdstuk twee behandelt Hegels denken over de relatie tussen taal, ervaring en denken in zijn vroege werk. In dat werk uit Hegel kritiek op de contemporaine filosofie (Kant, Fichte), die in zijn ogen tekort schiet: er is sprake van een ‘Bedürfnis’ (gebrek, behoefte) in die filosofie. In dit hoofdstuk bespreek ik dat de ‘Bedürfnis der Philosophie’ voor Hegel ook impliceert dat de taal (nog) behoeftig is: taal is een medium dat de weerslag is van een gemeenschappelijk weten, waarmee wij in interactie moeten om dat weten verder te ontwikkelen, om zo taal ook daadwerkelijk tot een gemeenschappelijk medium te maken. Hegel zet taal ook in om een gevoel van ‘Bedürfnis’ bij de lezer op te wekken, en om ons bewust te maken van het feit dat wij taal niet simpelweg als gegeven moeten accepteren, maar ermee in interactie moeten om verder te ontwikkelen wat er aan weten en ervaring voorhanden is. Zo komen we bovendien tot begrip van wie en wat wij zelf zijn.

In hoofdstuk drie bespreek ik allereerst wat het begrip ‘dialogisch’ inhoudt, aan de hand van (1) een analyse van het wezen van de filosofische dialoog, (2) Hegels eigen opmerkingen over dat genre (waarin hij zich zeer kritisch uit) en (3) een bespreking van Bakhtins theorie van de *dialogiek*. Bakhtin, die Hegels dialectiek verwierp als volstrekt monologisch en zich daarmee in de traditie van Feuerbach en Kierkegaard plaatste, pleitte voor een weten – en schrijven – waarin verschillende stemmen voortdurend met elkaar in interactie gaan en blijven. Ik laat zien dat in een aantal opzichten Hegels *Phänomenologie des Geistes* kan worden beschouwd als dialogisch in de betekenis die Bakhtin aan dat woord geeft: in Hegels weigering om aan de criteria van een bepaald genre te voldoen, in de interactie die de tekst – en de individuele woorden daarin – aangaat met de context, en in het voortdurende bewustzijn dat taal altijd bemiddeld is, altijd de weerslag is van het perspectief waaraan het toebehoort. Het tweede deel van het hoofdstuk

behandelt Hegels presentatie van de 'zintuiglijke zekerheid' in de *Phänomenologie des Geistes*: Hegel maakt hierin inzichtelijk hoe er op dit niveau al sprake is van een weten – en een taal – die bemiddeld is. Hij doet dat o.a. middels een dialogische interactie tussen verschillende vormen van bewustzijn (het bewustzijn als 'zintuiglijke zekerheid' en een observerend bewustzijn), waarbij het bewustzijn niet alleen inzicht krijgt in de tekortkomingen van het eigen weten – dat slechts een 'Meinung' is die louter aan het perspectief van het zintuiglijk weten toebehoort – maar vooral in wat het kan leren van de manier waarop een bepaalde vorm van weten wordt uitgedrukt in taal. Taal is in Hegels ogen 'das Wahrhaftere': een medium waarvan wij veel kunnen leren, maar waarmee wij ook in interactie moeten om het nog 'waarachtiger' te maken. Die interactie strekt zich uit tot de lezer, die niet alleen toeschouwer is, maar ook onderdeel van het 'Wir'; het intersubjectieve en zich dialogisch ontwikkelende subject van het weten.

In hoofdstuk vier staat de vraag centraal wat er gebeurt op het moment dat een bepaalde vorm van bewustzijn zich aan het proces van 'Bestimmung' wil onttrekken en weigert om een dialogische interactie aan te gaan met de ervaring die het opdoet, en met de stemmen die daarin opklinken. Een andere vraag is wat er gebeurt op het moment dat een vorm van bewustzijn die interactie niet aan kan gaan omdat de cultuur waar het toe behoort exclusief en restrictief is, en geen andere perspectieven duldt. Ik bespreek deze twee vragen in de context van Hegels analyse van de wereld van *Bildung*, een wereld van rigide sociale rollen en praktijken, die zich manifesteert, zo laat Hegel zien, als een wereld van vervreemding, veroordeling en uitsluiting. Hegels uitvoerige bespreking van de taal van de twee dominante vormen van bewustzijn in de wereld van *Bildung* – het 'eerlijke' bewustzijn en het 'verscheurde' bewustzijn – laat zien dat er tussen deze twee vormen van bewustzijn geen enkele vorm van dialogische interactie is, en dat zij gevangen blijven in een wereld die veroordeelt en exclusief is. Toch opent zich in Hegels bespreking van *Bildung* ook de mogelijkheid om wel te komen tot een inclusieve taal en een dialogische interactie, en wel op drie manieren: in de behoefte die het 'verscheurde' bewustzijn voelt om zich open te stellen voor de wereld waar het van vervreemd is geraakt, in de – hoewel in dit hoofdstuk zeer spaarzame – interactie met de lezer, en vooral ook in de interactie die Hegels tekst aangaat met andere teksten, waarvan *Le Neveu de Rameau* van Diderot de belangrijkste is. Een analyse van die interactie laat zien dat Hegel die tekst niet slechts gebruikt als voorbeeld van de wereld van *Bildung*, maar vooral om een intertextuele dialoog aan te gaan met de thema's en vragen die Diderot presenteert. Geen van beide teksten krijgt daarbij het laatste woord, en Hegels tekst illustreert zo dat we om het weten en onszelf verder te kunnen ontwikkelen een open houding nodig hebben, waarbij we bereid moeten zijn ons vooringenomen standpunt los te laten.

Het laatste hoofdstuk gaat over de vraag hoe – en in hoeverre – het bewustzijn zich zo kan uitdrukken (in taal) dat het in staat blijkt op een betekenisvolle en productieve manier te communiceren met zichzelf en met de wereld om zich heen en uiteindelijk kan komen tot een volledig begrip van die wereld en zichzelf, en van de manier waarop het daarvan

weet heeft. Een analyse van de laatste delen van de *Phänomenologie des Geistes* – het geweten, religie en het absolute weten – laat zien dat een dergelijke interactie alleen tot stand kan komen als wij bereid zijn om definitieve concepties van onszelf, onze taal en ons weten op te geven. Vervreemding blijft daarbij een rol spelen, maar wordt iets waarvoor wij zelf zorg dragen, om ons zo over dat wat we eerst simpelweg als gegeven beschouwden, te verwonderen en er vervolgens een interactie mee aan te gaan. Zelfs in het absolute weten is er geen sprake van een definitief eindpunt, maar blijft er een voortdurende beweging waarbij het subject van weten zichzelf blijft bevragen en verantwoorden om zo alle stemmen die in dat weten besloten liggen te doen opklinken. Er kan daarin nooit sprake zijn van een laatste woord, want dat zou de beweging van het denken en van onszelf ('wij zijn immers een gesprek') tot stilstand brengen.

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