

## When Love of Knowing Becomes Actual Knowing: Heidegger and Gadamer on Hegel's *die Sache Selbst*

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### I. Introduction: the Post-Hegelian "Identity Crisis"

The purpose of Plato's investigation of justice in the ideal *polis* of the *Republic* is neither to formulate an abstract conception of justice in itself nor to work out a blueprint for the perfectly just state. Rather, through the contemplation of an ideal social/political order where justice might be found "writ large," Plato intends to bring about the actualization of justice in the "polity" of the individual soul (*Republic* IV, 434 e). It must be kept in mind, of course, that, while possessing a notion of the individual, the Greeks lacked our modern, Cartesian conception of subjectivity, burdened as it is with the existential task of creating and sustaining a meaningful cosmos. But precisely for this reason the ancients had a clearer perspective of the synergistic and mutually determinative dialectic that conjoins the individual and the state, a conjunction grounded in the ethical. This can be seen, Hegel suggests, in terms of the "unwritten and infallible law" (*ungeschriebenes und untrügliches Recht*) that Antigone takes to be the "law of the gods" which "is right because it is what is right," placing the individual "within the ethical substance; and this substance is thus the *essence* of self-consciousness."<sup>1</sup>

It is with the Greeks, then, that we find Hegel's paradigm for *die Sache selbst*—that dialectical unity of subject and object (particular and universal, citizen and state) concretely articulated as ethical action. In this connection, speaking in the context of Hegel's "philosophy of action," A. S. Walton's recent assessment of the importance of "individual agency" within the social and practical context of Hegelian philosophy, raises a vital question for those Hegelians today who would philosophize "beyond" Hegel. Walton asks: "Does the Hegelian edifice of recommended social practices and institutions provide an adequate vehicle for the development and expression of the self-

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1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. by J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952), pp. 311-312, (hereafter 'PhG'); *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A. V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 261-262. References to the English text follow the slash in all citations.

determining subjectivity it purports to serve?"<sup>2</sup> This essay intends to shed some light on that question.

To begin, let us consider this peculiar phrase, *die Sache selbst*. In his lectures on Hegel's *Phenomenology*, Heidegger suggests that *die Sache selbst* is "too immediate to describe" and therefore, "perhaps impossible to grasp philosophically."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, this is consistent with the fact that *die Sache selbst* is pre-eminently a lived and living reality and not something which can ever be rendered adequately clear and distinct in language guided by the principles of identity and non-contradiction. Nevertheless, J. N. Findlay has suggested the term "thing" or "thing itself" (in the English sense of "doing one's thing") or the word "cause" as "something I fight for." K. R. Dove has suggested the word "situation."<sup>4</sup> J. B. Baillie uses various terms throughout his translation of the *Phenomenology*, including "the real intent," "the main intent," "the real business at issue," "the real subject-matter" and "the main concern," while A. V. Miller uses "the real issue," "the 'matter in hand' itself," "the 'heart of the matter,'" etc., depending on the context. And Howard P. Kainz has offered the neologism "Subjective/Objective Individuality" as a way of expressing the sense of Hegel's phrase.<sup>5</sup> Although all of these insightful translations are helpful with certain contexts, the phrase will be for the most part purposefully left untranslated here, with the understanding that it is exactly the purpose of this essay to "translate," that is, to "interpret" *die Sache selbst* insofar as it indicates an infinite approximation toward the fulfillment of its truth—a movement which, as I will try to show, is at the same time the embodiment or actualization of the end toward which it is moving: philosophy, as the life of thought conceived by Hegel. Or, to put this another way, what self-consciousness achieves at the "culmination" of the process of reason is pre-eminently a philosophical way of life, a *living in* the truth of *die Sache selbst* rather than a grasping to conquer it as something which is other than itself.

When the spirit of philosophical reflection does not culminate in ethical action, when *theōria* is divorced from *praxis*, when *phronēsis* is dominated by a social/political ideology based on *technē* as the path to the ultimate good, or when a dogmatic concern for method asserts itself over an infinite hermeneutic search for understanding, then philosophy will find itself caught up in the kind of "identity crisis" that has characterized post-Hegelian thought. During this period the competing claims of empirical and materialistic interpretations of science and history (grounded in a revival of Kantian epistemology) on the one hand, and the rise of various ontological formulations on the other, can be

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2. A. S. Walton, "Hegel: Individual Agency and Social Context" in *Hegel's Philosophy of Action*, ed. by Lawrence S. Stepelevich and David Lamb (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1983), p. 91.

3. Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, Abteilung<sup>2</sup>: *Vorlesungen 1923-1944*, Band 32, *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1980), pp. 74-75.

4. *The Legacy of Hegel*, Proceedings of the Marquette Hegel Symposium, 1970, ed. by J. J. O'Malley, et al. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), pp. 258-260.

5. Howard P. Kainz, *Hegel's "Phenomenology," Part 1: Analysis and Commentary* (University, Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1976), p. 126; see also: Howard P. Kainz, *Hegel's "Phenomenology," Part 2* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1983).

traced back to a critical preoccupation with *die Sache selbst* in the form of that central and well-known tenet of Hegelian idealism found in the preface to the *Philosophie des Rechts*: "*Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig.*"<sup>6</sup> In fact, in his recent history of post-Idealist philosophy, Herbert Schnädelbach goes so far as to claim that "the provocation contained in this sentence has determined the character of the argument with Hegel right up to the present day, and one could write a sound history of this argument by following the guiding thread of the history of this sentence."<sup>7</sup> Utilizing the philosophy of Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer, the considerably more modest intention of this essay is to outline an approach to the relationship between thought and being in terms of *die Sache selbst*, viewed within the context of, and as a positive response to, the "crisis" of idealist thought after Hegel.

That philosophy in the post-idealist period can be depicted as suffering from an "identity crisis" is confirmed in its incessant preoccupation with questioning the nature and purpose of its own activity. One can understand, for example, the competing claims of "Young" and "Old" Hegelians or the conflict between *Lebensphilosophie* and the "new" empiricism to be basically a grappling with the question: "What is Philosophy?" And perhaps this is as it should be. For we learn from Hegel that it is the first (and last) task of the philosopher to come to know exactly what the philosopher's task is. Thus we find Hegel offering the following account of his own philosophical aspirations at the outset of his system in the preface to the *Phenomenology*:

The true shape in which truth exists can only be the scientific system of such truth. To help bring philosophy closer to the form of Science, to the goal where it can lay aside the title "*love of knowing*" and be *actual knowing*—that is what I have set myself to do. (*PhG*, pp. 12/3).

Hegel's claim in this passage suggests that the development of spirit has progressed to the point where it can be expressed systematically and self-consciously in the form of "Science." Now this term, *Wissenschaft*, in the Hegelian sense, should not be confused with the objectivistic goal of the particular sciences as these developed within the neo-Kantian framework after Hegel. Rather, Hegelian "Science" is the ultimate achievement of philosophy in its self-conscious expression as absolute knowing, both in its form and its content—that is to say, where the scientific *expression* of the absolute "would indeed at the same time be the accomplishing of it" (*PhG*, pp. 12/4). As Quentin Lauer points out, the *Phenomenology* is "Science" in the sense that the method Hegel elaborates in that text is "the only method capable of penetrating to the very interior of reality rather than standing outside of it and inferring what that interior must be."<sup>8</sup> This radical and dynamic conception of

6. G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse*, (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981), p. 25.

7. Herbert Schnädelbach, *Philosophy In Germany 1831-1933*, trans. by Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 6.

8. Quentin Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit"* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1976), p. 270.

Science offers a clue to what Hegel means by *die Sache selbst* of philosophy. In order to understand this fundamental "goal," however, we shall begin by explicating the frequently misunderstood notion of Hegelian Science in terms of the correlative expression Hegel employs in the above citation; i.e., what is intended by "love of knowing" becoming "actual knowing." This will be done with the help of Heidegger's analysis of the vital position of Heraclitus in the history of philosophy.

## II. Heraclitus and the "Fall" from Innocence

For Heidegger, more explicitly than for Hegel, philosophy is unquestionably a Greek phenomenon. But this statement must be immediately qualified since Plato and Aristotle were certainly Greeks. Yet, according to Heidegger, their *philosophia* is already a quantum leap away from the *philosophos* of Heraclitus. "The word *philosophos*," Heidegger says in *Was ist das—die Philosophie?*, "was presumably coined by Heraclitus."<sup>9</sup> Heidegger does not cite any of the Heraclitean fragments specifically, but he is undoubtedly referring to Fragment 35 ("Men who love wisdom [*sophon*] must be inquirers into very many things indeed") and Fragment 41 ("That which is wise [*sophon*] is one: to understand the purpose which steers all things through all things").<sup>10</sup> The word *sophon* in these fragments Heidegger understands as a *harmonia* with the *logos*. But the *logos* of Heraclitus is not the *logos* of Plato or Aristotle. The adjective *philosophos* for Heraclitus has not yet become the noun *philosophia* as it is found in later Greek thinking; *to sophon* is still an immediate process, an unmitigated, "loving" way of being-in-the-world where, as it will later come to know itself in Hegel, "Notion corresponds (*entspricht*) to object and object to Notion" (*PhG*, pp. 69/51). Heidegger says:

An *aner philosophos* is *hos philei to sophon*, he who loves the *sophon*; *philein*, to love, signifies here, in the Heraclitean sense, *homolegein*, to speak [*sprechen*] in the way in which the Logos speaks, in correspondence [*entsprechen*] with the Logos. This correspondence is in accord with the *sophon*. Accordance is *harmonia*. (*WP*, p. 47).<sup>11</sup>

For Heraclitus, thought and being have not yet been cleft by the politics of desire.

Thus all was well with the *sophon* of Heraclitus. But then something happened. The "astonishingness of this most astonishing thing," Heidegger says, had to be rescued and protected "against the attack of Sophist reasoning which always had ready for everything an answer which was comprehensible to

9. Martin Heidegger, *Was ist das—die Philosophie?* (Pfullingen: Neske 1956); *What is Philosophy?*, bilingual edition, trans. by W. Kluback and J. T. Wilde (New Haven: College and University Press, n.d.), p. 47, (hereafter 'WP').

10. Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to The Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 47.

11. Cf. Hegel's notion of *die Sprache* in *PhG*, pp. 362ff./308ff.; 458-59/395-96.

everyone and which they put on the market" (*WP*, p. 51). Enter the apologists of the *sophon*: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and the entire onto-theological philosophical tradition up to Hegel—where a new turn of the wheel finally takes place. The necessity of rescuing and protecting the commercialization of Heraclitean wisdom (*sophon*), Heidegger claims, brought about the distillation of *philosophia* from *philosophos*. What was once the celebration of the dehiscence of Being in beings—that attunement or co-responsiveness which was the immediate revelation of the divine origin of the *logos*—now falls prey to the forgetfulness of being (*Seinsvergessenheit*) and becomes an abstract product, a need to separate one thing from another in accordance with the rationalistic principles of identity and non-contradiction. The Sophists, in their theft of Heraclitus' cosmic fire, unleashed the Pandoran *pharmakon*. And in this primordial "fall" from innocence, the *philein* (loving) of the Heraclitean *aner philosophos* is transformed into the erotic promiscuity of a *philosophia* which no longer knows the immediate conjugal fulfillment for which it now yearns and strives:

Because the loving is no longer an original harmony with the *sophon* but is a particular striving towards the *sophon*, the loving of the *sophon* becomes "*philosophia*." The striving is determined by Eros. (*WP*, p. 51).

One way of understanding what Hegel is saying in the *Phenomenology* is to view the philosophical system he envisages as an overcoming of this sophistic rift which took place in Greece 2500 years ago and which has determined Western metaphysical history ever since as an onto-theological yearning for the "forgotten" origin of Being. If we understand this rift as marking the beginning of classical philosophy, then it becomes clearer how Hegel's system is the fitting conclusion of this long process of thought.

Alexandre Kojève alludes to this epochal determination in terms of the distinction between "the Wise One" and "the Philosopher" in his commentary on the nature of Hegel's absolute knowledge. For Heraclitus, of course, there was no real distinction between the ideal of the *sophon* and the achievement of *philosophos*. This distinction (the "ontological distinction") first arises as such in Plato and is superseded yet preserved (*aufgehoben*) in Hegel's dialectic. Kojève sets up the problem in the following manner:

In that which concerns the *definition* of the Wise One (*du Sage*) and the Philosopher, Plato, who marks the beginning of classical philosophy, is in agreement with Hegel, who demarcates the end. On the question of the Wise One, the only fundamental difference possible is that which subsists between Hegel and Plato. That is to say, while accepting the ideal of the Wise One and the Platonic-Hegelian definition of the Wise One, one can either affirm or deny the possibility of *realizing* Wisdom, of *effectively* becoming a Wise One after having been a Philosopher."<sup>12</sup>

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12. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la Lecture de Hegel: Leçon sur la Phénoménologie de l'Esprit*, ed. by Raymond Queneau, (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), p. 283, (hereafter 'ILH'). All translations are my own.

In these developments there is an original oneness of spirit with itself—but a naive oneness—and a sophistic “fall” from this simple self-identification of logos and language. If, for Heraclitus, the Being of beings was a simple unity of becoming within a divine cosmos where, as Hegel says, the “meaning of all that is [was] hung on the thread of light by which it was linked to that heaven,” then the sophists’ commercialization of the *sophon* has made wisdom into a spiritual commodity to be bought and sold in the marketplace, so that, “by the little which now satisfies Spirit, we can measure the extent of its loss” (*Pbg*, pp. 14/5). Thus the philosophical project which Hegel sets for himself—the foundation of which is laid out in the *Phenomenology*—is to raise the fallen *philosophos* of Heraclitus to a self-conscious scientific system of truth which is no longer a *yearning* for knowledge but *actual* knowledge itself—what Kojève calls “the possibility of *realizing* one day the ideal of Wisdom” (*ILH*, p. 286).

One might conclude from this interpretation of the place of Heraclitus in the history of philosophy, that philosophy has thus come to an end in Hegel. But the idea of an end as a final conclusion becomes as problematic as the idea of a beginning within a dialectical framework where ends *are* beginnings and beginnings *are* equally and necessarily ends.<sup>13</sup> If we can accept Heidegger’s interpretation of Heraclitus and apply this to Hegel, then it is not *philosophos* which has come to an end, but *philosophia*. What Hegel calls the “demanding and supplying of superficial explanations” (*PbG*, pp. 11/2) is the activity of sophistic reasoning against which “actual” philosophy has had to strive, and which, through both an internal and an external necessity, finally comes full term in Hegel. If, therefore, *actual* philosophy (*philosophos*) came to an end with Heraclitus, it begins again and achieves self-conscious fulfillment with Hegel. Yet now, 180 years after the publication of the *Phenomenology*, it is necessary to go “beyond” Hegel as well; for Hegel’s philosophy, as is clear from the foregoing discussion, is a *living* embodiment of *die Sache selbst* whose speculative “Saying” (to use Heideggerian terminology) perpetually surpasses that which is said. In other words: “To philosophize, as a Hegelian, is to take up, develop, and apply the dialectical methodology of Hegel to a point that would extend beyond the limits found in Hegel himself.”<sup>14</sup> What does this mean for the “Hegelian” philosopher today?

### III. Philosophical Self-Transformation

Both Hegel and Heidegger—in the spirit of Heraclitus—answer the above question in a similar fashion: We must do philosophy by entering into it, by tarrying with it, by speaking out of and into the context of the age in which we live. Such original “speaking” necessarily proscribes any form of domination or

13. “The movement [of spirit] is the circle that returns into itself, the circle that presupposes its beginning and reaches it only at the end” (*PbG*, pp. 559/488). Cf. *ILH*, “*Deuxième Conférence*,” pp. 287-291; also, Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*, § 32–9th ed.—(Tübingen: Neimeyer, 1960), p. 153.

14. *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology*, ed. by Lawrence S. Stepelevich, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. ix.

slavish discipleship. If one follows a worthy teacher then one does so not by meticulously reconstructing the particular movements of that teacher in a fawning duplication and repetition of the same. That is not true discipleship at all—a point which Hegel makes elegantly clear in his analysis of lordship and bondage (*PbG*, pp. 141-150/111-119). At best, such philosophizing will lead to the dissatisfaction of a consciousness separated from itself, at once stoical, then skeptical, and ultimately dependent upon some external authority to which it will remain hopelessly indentured, thus rendering itself unable to speak in its own proper voice (*PbG*, pp. 151-171/119-138). Neither do true masters seek such slavish disciples. Rather, in keeping with Hegel's insight that "philosophy must beware of the wish to be edifying" (*PbG*, pp. 14/6), they seek other true masters who, like themselves, have gotten beyond the limits of manipulative edification, beyond mere understanding, who have entered into the realm of the universal. Here, to be a Hegelian is not to be a Hegelian—all in good Hegelian fashion, of course.

In *Was ist das—die Philosophie?*—an essay whose motivation is similar to that of Hegel's *Phenomenology* in its reflection upon its own content as being the real issue of what it is all about—Heidegger addresses the question of what it means to be a philosopher and how a philosopher ought to go about doing philosophy:

When we ask, "What is Philosophy?" then we are speaking *about* philosophy. By asking in this way we are obviously taking a stand above and, therefore, outside of philosophy. But the aim of our question is to enter *into* philosophy, to tarry in it, to conduct ourselves in its manner, that is, to "philosophize" (*WP*, p. 21).

Now this attitude of wanting to enter into the process of philosophy, this loving of knowledge which must become *actual* knowledge, raises the question of a (or "the") starting point. If we are not to do philosophy by repeating mimetically what has already been done or thought, if we are not to fall into the hollow-drum syndrome of the unhappy consciousness, then we must first of all be concerned about where we are to begin. We are not merely interested in "differentiating and passing judgment" on Hegel's project. As Hegel himself tells us, that would be too easy:

For instead of getting involved in the real issue (*die Sache selbst*), this kind of activity is always beyond it; instead of tarrying with it, and losing itself in it, this kind of knowing is forever grasping at something new; it remains essentially preoccupied with itself instead of being preoccupied with the real issue and surrendering to it (*PbG*, pp. 11/3).

*Die Sache selbst* of Hegel's systematic, scientific philosophy demands a movement from speaking *about* philosophy to actually *doing* philosophy. This doing or making is a self-reflective *poiēsis* where the one who does the making is simultaneously made by what he or she makes, so that, as Kojève points out, a certain openness and willingness to be changed is required in the same way that

an "argument is convincing only for those who are *willing* to be convinced (who are *open* [accessibles] to conviction through reasoning)" (*ILH*, p. 275). It is not incidental that Hegel introduces the notion of *die Sache selbst* in the preface to the *Phenomenology*, because this concern is crucial to his entire philosophical project. We can only be doing genuine philosophy when we are involved from the start with the real issue of philosophy, i.e., when we are open and willing to let philosophy "do" us. This means being willing to change and grow by taking the risk of unmasking the false security of "natural consciousness" and penetrating our deepest fears along what Hegel calls the "highway of despair" (*PbG*, pp. 67/49) in order that we might, in turn, be penetrated by the highest truth.<sup>15</sup> Philosophy is not a task of grasping; it is either a "therapeutic" adventuring or it is not philosophy.

We have already sketched out above the historical developments—what Hegel calls the "external necessity"—through which spirit has passed from a naive identification or unity to self-conscious knowledge. But *recognition* of this is not enough. We must also see that there is an inner necessity of the movement of dialectical spirit with which we must achieve harmonious correspondence if we are to pass beyond *love* of knowing to *actual* knowing. Let us examine the necessity of this inner movement more closely.

In *Gelassenheit*, Heidegger discusses the form in which we ought to go about doing genuine philosophy in a manner which is similar to Hegel's suggestion that *die Sache selbst* of philosophy demands a surrendering to the movement of spirit in such a way that we are "doing" philosophy as much as philosophy is "doing" us. Heidegger says that "it is enough if we dwell on what lies close and meditate on what is closest," for the subject matter (*Sache*) of philosophy must be that which "concerns us personally, affects us and, indeed, touches us in our very nature."<sup>16</sup> Both Hegel and Heidegger suggest that *die Sache selbst* of philosophy necessitates a kind of inner, existential surrender to the movement of philosophical spirit and that this surrendering can be characterized as a "tarrying," a fundamental letting-go and letting-be (*Gelassenheit*) which, though apparently simple to achieve, involves the great risk of self-transformation, of always seeking the "something more" of what we can become. "Philosophers," Kojève suggests, "change, then, in *knowing* what they must *not* be and in *knowing* what they *must* become. That is to say, in their changes they make *progress*" (*ILH*, p. 281). This willingness to be changed by the speaking of the philosophical word is intrinsic to the historical development of spirit. It is what has been ascribed to the political thought of Herbert Marcuse, for instance, as a form of individual and collective "therapy."<sup>17</sup>

The nature of philosophy as an *actual* loving—a theme which engaged Hegel in his youth through the so-called "mystical dimension" of dialectic

15. Citing one of Hegel's letters, Kojève points out that Hegel's own *Weg der Verzweiflung* involved "a period of total depression that he lived through between the twenty-fifth and thirtieth years of his life," a few years before publishing *PbG* (*ILH*, p. 441).

16. Martin Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959); *Discourse On Thinking*, trans. by J. M. Anderson and E. H. Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 47.

17. Gertrude A. Steuernagel, *Political Philosophy as Therapy: Marcuse Reconsidered* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979).

tic<sup>18</sup>—requires that one not try to *possess* the actuality of the concept but rather that one give oneself over to it, die to it, be carried along by it, and finally be reborn through it. As Hegel says, “the life of Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it,” converting this negativity—through “a magical power” (*die Zauberkraft*)—into the positive being of the subject (*PhG*, pp. 29-30/19).<sup>19</sup> From the linguistic perspective of hermeneutic theory this inner movement of self-consciousness within the external movement of reason in history finds its paradigm in the notion of dialogical discourse or conversation.

#### IV. The Hegelian Heritage of Hermeneutics

In *Truth and Method*, a text which draws heavily upon Hegel, although it is also critical of the supposed pretense to closure in Hegel's speculative “eschatology,” Hans-Georg Gadamer characterizes the “to and fro” movement of dialectic in terms of a conversational process or “the logic of question and answer.”<sup>20</sup> Developed as a linguistic elaboration of “the maieutic productivity of the Socratic dialogue” (*WM*, pp. 350/331), Gadamer's “dialectical hermeneutics”—from a Hegelian perspective—stands within the idealist philosophical tradition and yet at the same time—in good dialectical fashion—transcends and continues this tradition in a creative manner. What is particularly refreshing about Gadamer, and what links his hermeneutic *praxis* to the fundamental, transformative spirit of action in the Hegelian dialectic, is his clear willingness to practice what he preaches. Thus, in order to fully understand Gadamer's indebtedness to Hegel, one must read *Truth and Method* in terms of the expanded Hegelian horizon of his more recent work.

Gadamer's latest collection of hermeneutic essays, *Reason in the Age of Science*, indicates a decisive turn away from his earlier position regarding Hegel: “. . . in *Truth and Method* I have proceeded . . . onesidedly in a profiling manner . . . to be sure with Hegel, to whom for this reason I have devoted further studies and whose challenge I try to pose to myself . . . wherever I can.”<sup>21</sup> Although Gadamer retains his basic hermeneutic principles in *Reason in the Age of Science*, he develops a broadened perspective of his hermeneutic project. This becomes particularly evident in his assessment of the Hegelian notion of objective spirit—the concrete manifestation of universal reason in social and political institutions—in terms of the plight of post-idealist subjectivism.

18. See George Plimpton Adams, *The Mystical Element in Hegel's Early Theological Writings* (Berkeley: University Press, 1910), reprinted in *The Philosophy of Hegel*, ed. by H. S. Harris (New York: Garland, 1984).

19. Cf. “L'Idée de la Mort dans la Philosophie de Hegel,” (*ILH*, Appendix 2, pp. 527-573).

20. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960), pp. 351 ff., (hereafter '*WM*'); *Truth and Method*, trans. and ed. by G. Barden and J. Cumming (New York: Crossroad, 1982), pp. 332 ff.

21. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*, trans. by Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982), p. 63, (hereafter '*RAS*'). For a thorough analysis of this text see my review article in *Auslegung*, 11 (1984): 417-424.

For Gadamer, Hegel's concept of the objectification of absolute spirit stands in the tradition of what the Greeks attempted to speak in the word *nous* (*RAS*, pp. 18, 35), a notion which, by virtue of its radical otherness, puts the modern idea of self-conscious subjectivity into a more realistic perspective. "The thrust of the theory of the objective spirit," Gadamer comments, "is that not the consciousness of the individual but a common and normative reality that surpasses the awareness of the individual is the foundation of our life in state and society" (*RAS*, p. 31; cf. p. 53). This "Hegelian turn" is a pivotal move on Gadamer's part. A rationality wholly lodged in subjective self-consciousness demands of that finite subjectivity an epistemological and ontological ideal which it is unable to provide, leaving subjectivity alienated from itself and grasping at a domination of the supposed source of that alienation through the manipulation and objectification of the natural, social, political, economic, and cultural spheres. Thus arises a thoughtless technology based on abstract theory. Instead of alleviating the conditions of alienation, this dehumanizing action of technological reason further exacerbates the situation (*RAS*, pp. 83-86). In contrast to this, Gadamer wants to show that a hermeneutic, dialogical conception of Hegelian reason—removed from the "bad" eschatological metaphysics of onto-theology—is the narrow course threading its way through the Scylla of subjective idealism and the Charybdis of relativistic subjectivism toward a hermeneutic appropriation of true knowledge.

One begins to see that Gadamer's key hermeneutical concepts of "effective-history" (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) and "the fusion of horizons" (*Horizontverschmelzung*), expounded in *Truth and Method* (*WM*, pp. 284-290/267-273), cannot be separated from ethical and practical philosophy (*RAS*, p. 111) and, as such, resemble the dialectical unfolding of Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* as a concretization of *die Sache selbst* in the family, social life, and political states. Indeed, insofar as philosophical hermeneutics is the scion of legal hermeneutics (*WM*, pp. 293/275), it is clearly related to the interpretative articulation of what Hegel calls *das Recht als solches* in the *Enzyklopädie*.<sup>22</sup> As in the model of genuine conversation, there is an expressive aspect of *der objektive Geist* which perpetually surpasses subjective self-consciousness toward the other in "a dialectical radicalization of the subject matter," and which thus always grips subjectivity more than subjectivity ever grasps it.<sup>23</sup> Openness to this surpassing quality of the rational, which Gadamer locates pre-eminently in Greek thought and sees revived in Hegel, is the dialectical cornerstone of hermeneutic self-consciousness conceived as "mutual recognition" (*RAS*, pp. 32-33) within a synergistic intersubjectivity where the unobtainable whole is always greater than the sum of its parts. Thus Gadamer now denies that "bad infinity" (*RAS*, p. 59) of an absolute historical closure with which, he claims, "overzealous epigones" have burdened Hegel's philosophy (*RAS*, p. 38)—an epigonic misconstrual which, as David C. Hoy points out in his analysis of Heidegger's critique of Hegel, has created a "terminologically frozen"

22. G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, ed. by F. Nicolini and O. Pöggeler (Hamburg: Meiner, 1969), p. 391.

23. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegels Dialektik: Fünf hermeneutische Studien* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971), p. 29; *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. by P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 32.

interpretation of Hegel that has occluded the kind of productive mediation between these thinkers which can be found in the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer.<sup>24</sup> To ask the question of the absolute transparency of self-understanding is already to have taken the first step out of the ongoing interrogative dwelling which we are, and to have moved decisively toward that false idealism of totalitarian control which is the central corruption of contemporary technological self-consciousness manifested in its commitment to a blind and anesthetizing form of self-surpassing which it labels "progress" (*RAS*, p. 105).

Gadamer's dialectical hermeneutics, building on the inescapable situatedness of the individual in a dynamic history which preforms consciousness, calls for a "fundamental sort of openness" (an openness which has the structure of a question) in order to hear and appropriate the truth manifested within this ongoing tradition. It is this openness, this surrendering and tarrying, this willingness to place our preconceptions and prejudices in a risky situation, that characterizes the consciousness of dialectical hermeneutics as an orientation to *die Sache selbst* of philosophy. This openness is an attitude of fundamental trust in the authority of the tradition, or, as Hegel might say, it is an inner surrendering to the external necessity of historical *Geist*. It involves a kind of hermeneutic "faith" which, like Socrates, knows that it does not know—as Gadamer points out—and, because of this intrinsic "determinate negation," is willing to take the risk of being changed by the truth which is disclosed through the text (*WM*, pp. 343-44/324-25).

The "hermeneutic priority of the question," the exposure of oneself required by genuine dialogue, and the experiential ground of self-understanding—concepts which are central to Gadamer's formulation of hermeneutic self-consciousness—reflect Hegel's "being preoccupied with the real issue (*die Sache selbst*) and surrendering to it" (*PbG*, pp. 11/3). The focus here is on openness, listening and receptivity as the first step of interpretative understanding. It is a matter of the right attitude needed for entering into a meaningful conversation. As Gadamer says, one must be willing "not to talk at cross-purposes . . . [or] out-argue the other person . . ." because dialectic consists not in trying to discover the weakness of what is said, but in bringing out its real strength." Therefore, the person who is practicing the art of dialectic is not a person who strives to win every argument. Rather, this person strives "to preserve his orientation toward openness" (*WM*, pp. 349-50/330-31). It is this willingness to surrender to the authority of the self-conscious movement of the dialectical process itself—even if one appears to come off the worse in an argument in the judgment of those listening to it—that clearly distinguishes it from that superficial kind of ratiocination which Hegel repudiates as mere "differentiating and passing judgment on various thinkers . . ." (*PbG*, pp. 11/3). The hermeneutic of appropriation, in the form of this surrendering, is to know not only who one *is* as self-conscious being, but to know also the *limit* of this as well; for "to know one's limit is to know how to sacrifice oneself," Hegel tells us (*PbG*, pp. 563/492). It is precisely this self-sacrifice—where "Spirit displays the process of its becoming Spirit"—that is the ongoing self-actualization of

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24. David C. Hoy, "The Owl and the Poet; Heidegger's Critique of Hegel," *Boundary 2*, 4 (1976): 404 ff. Hoy concludes that "what must be criticized most is not Hegel's thought but the interpretation of it that . . . misleads Heidegger" (p. 407).

nature, history and the subject, toward the goal of the full revelation of the absolute.

Thus the hermeneutic actualization of *die Sache selbst* underlying Hegelian dialectic stands over and against the will to power of that thinking which remains lodged in a desire to prove that it is "right" and every other is "wrong." Such intellectual narcissism is the sure mark of an identity crisis of thought. It is one thing to subscribe to the dialectical method *theoretically*, but *practicing* this method, incorporating it as a philosophical *way of life*, is another matter entirely. The collection and command of great amounts of trivial data is of no consequence here. The ability to evaluate and judge philosophical systems, to disseminate an endless play of differences, or to exercise the most erudite commentary upon those differences, is mere intellectual promiscuity if this activity is not propaedeutic to an *actual* entering into the infinite dialectical conversation of universal spirit. Without this final "conversion" to "the divine origin of things," as the Stranger requires of Theaetetus in Plato's *Sophist*, we are, at best, only being made ready to live the genuine philosophical life. Without this fundamental *metanoia*, this "Calvary" where the love of knowing becomes actual knowing, the dialogue cannot go on.

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