

for fear of death. And thus in the long run, all slavish work realizes not the Master's will, but the will—at first unconscious—of the Slave, who—finally—succeeds where the Master—necessarily—fails. Therefore, it is indeed the originally dependent, serving, and slavish Consciousness that in the end realizes and reveals the ideal of autonomous Self-Consciousness and is thus its "truth."]

Alexandre Kojève Introduction to the Reading of Hegel

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SUMMARY OF THE FIRST SIX CHAPTERS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT

Complete Text of the First Three Lectures
of the Academic Year 1937-1938

We still have the last two chapters of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* to read. Chapter VII is entitled "Religion"; Chapter VIII, "Das absolute Wissen," absolute Knowledge. This "absolute Knowledge" is nothing other than the complete System of Hegelian philosophy or "Science," which Hegel expounded later in the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*. In Chapter VIII, then, the problem is not to develop the *content* of absolute Knowledge. It is concerned only with this Knowledge itself, as a kind of "faculty." It is concerned with showing what this *Knowledge* must be, what the Man must be who is endowed with a Knowledge that permits him completely and adequately to reveal the *totality* of existing Being. In particular, it will be concerned with differentiating this absolute philosophical Knowledge from *another* Knowledge, which also claims to be absolute—the Knowledge implied in the Christian revelation and the theology that follows from it. Therefore, one of the principal themes of Chapter VIII is the comparison between Hegelian philosophy or "Science" and the Christian religion.

Now, in order to understand fully the essential character of these two phenomena and of the relations between them, one must consider them in their genesis.

The genesis of Christianity, of the "absolute Religion," starting from the most "primitive" religion, is described in Chapter VII. As for the genesis of Hegel's philosophy, one can say that the whole *Phenomenology*—and particularly Chapters I through VI, which we have already read—is nothing but a description of the genesis that culminates in the production of the *Phenomenology*,

I think, incarnated in me, Hegel. Therefore, I am not only a thinking being; I am also—and above all—Hegel. What, then, is this Hegel?"

To begin with, he is a man of flesh and blood, who *knows* that he is such. Next, this man does not float in empty space. He is seated on a chair, at a table, writing with a pen on paper. And he *knows* that all these objects did not fall from the sky; he knows that those things are products of something called human *work*. He also knows that this work is carried out in a human *World*, in the bosom of a Nature in which he himself participates. And this World is present in his mind at the very moment when he writes to answer his "What am I?" Thus, for example, he hears sounds from afar. But he does not hear mere *sounds*. He *knows* in addition that these sounds are cannon shots, and he knows that the cannons too are products of some *Work*, manufactured in this case for a *Fight* to the death between men. But there is still more. He knows that he is hearing shots from Napoleon's cannons at the Battle of Jena. Hence he knows that he lives in a World in which Napoleon is acting.

Now, this is something that Descartes, Plato, and so many other philosophers did *not* know, *could* not know. And is it not because of this that Hegel attains that absolute Knowledge to which his predecessors *vainly* aspired?

Perhaps. But why then is it *Hegel* who attains it, and not some other of his contemporaries, all of whom know that there is a man named Napoleon? But *how* do they know him? Do they *truly* know him? Do they know *what* Napoleon is? Do they *understand* him?

Now, in fact, what is it to "understand" Napoleon, other than to understand him as the one who perfects the ideal of the French Revolution by *realizing* it? And can one understand this idea, this Revolution, without understanding the ideology of the *Aufklärung*, the Enlightenment? Generally speaking, to understand Napoleon is to understand him in relation to the whole of anterior historical evolution, to understand the whole of universal history. Now, almost none of the philosophers contemporary with Hegel posed this problem for himself. And none of them, except Hegel, resolved it. For Hegel is the only one able to accept, and to justify, Napoleon's existence—that is, to "deduce" it from the first principles

of his philosophy, his anthropology, his conception of history. The others consider themselves obliged to condemn Napoleon, that is, to condemn the historical *reality*; and their philosophical systems—by that very fact—are all condemned by that reality.

Is he not this *Hegel*, a thinker endowed with an *absolute* Knowledge, because on the one hand, he *lives* in Napoleon's time, and, on the other, is the *only* one to *understand* him?

This is precisely what Hegel says in the *Phenomenology*.

Absolute Knowledge became—*objectively*—possible because in and by Napoleon the *real* process of historical evolution, in the course of which man *created* new Worlds and *transformed* himself by creating them, came to its end. To reveal *this* World, therefore, is to reveal *the* World—that is, to reveal being in the *completed* totality of its spatial-temporal existence. And—*subjectively*—absolute Knowledge became possible because a man named Hegel was able to understand the *World* in which he lived and to understand *himself* as living in and understanding this World. Like each of his contemporaries, Hegel was a microcosm, who incorporated in *his* particular being the completed *totality* of the spatial-temporal realization of *universal* being. But he was the only one to *understand* himself as this whole, to give a correct and complete answer to the Cartesian question, "What am I?" By understanding himself through the understanding of the *totality* of the anthropogenetic historical process, which ends with Napoleon and his contemporaries, and by understanding this process through his understanding of *himself*, Hegel caused the completed whole of the universal real process to penetrate into his individual consciousness, and then he penetrated this consciousness. Thus this consciousness became just as total, as universal, as the process that it revealed by understanding itself; and this fully self-conscious consciousness is absolute Knowledge, which, by being developed in discourse, will form the content of absolute *philosophy* or Science, of that *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* that contains the sum of all possible knowledge.

Descartes' philosophy is insufficient because the answer that it gives to the "What am I?" was insufficient, incomplete from the beginning. To be sure, Descartes *could* not realize absolute, Hegelian philosophy. At the moment when he lived, history was not yet completed. Even if he had *fully* understood himself, then,

he would have conceived only a *part* of the human reality, and his system founded on this understanding of himself would necessarily be insufficient and false, to the extent that it lays claim to *totality*, as every system worthy of the name must. But it must also be said that Descartes—for reasons that Hegel explains—erred in answering his initial question. And that is why his answer, "I am a *thinking* being," is not only too summary, but also false, because it is one-sided.

Starting with "I think," Descartes fixed his attention only on the "think," completely neglecting the "I." Now, this I is essential. For Man, and consequently the Philosopher, is not only Consciousness, but also—and above all—*Self-Consciousness*. Man is not only a being that *thinks*—i.e., reveals Being by *Logos*, by *Speech* formed of words that have a *meaning*. He reveals in addition—also by *Speech*—the being that *reveals* Being, the being that he himself is, the revealing being that he *opposes* to the revealed being by giving it the name *Ich* or *Selbst*, I or Self.

To be sure, there is no human existence without *Bewusstsein*, without *Consciousness* of the external world. But for there *truly* to be human existence, capable of becoming a *philosophic* existence, there must also be *Self-Consciousness*. And for there to be *Self-Consciousness*, *Selbst-bewusstsein*, there must be this *Selbst*, this specifically human thing that is revealed by man and reveals itself when man says, "I. . . ."

Before analyzing the "I think," before proceeding to the Kantian theory of *knowledge*—i.e., of the relation between the (conscious) *subject* and the (conceived) object, one must ask what this subject is that is revealed in and by the I of "I think." One must ask when, why, and how man is led to say "I. . . ."

For there to be *Self-Consciousness*, there must—first of all—be *Consciousness*. In other words, there must be revelation of Being by *Speech*, if only by the one word *Sein*, Being—revelation of a Being that will later be called "*objective, external, non-human being*," "World," "Nature," and so on, but for the moment is still *neutral*, since as yet there is no *Self-Consciousness* and consequently no opposition of subject to object, of I to non-I, of the human to the natural.

Hegel studies the most elementary form of *Consciousness*, of knowledge of Being, and of its revelation by *Speech*, in Chapter I,

Summary of the First Six Chapters of the Phenomenology of Spirit

given the name "Sensual Certainty" (*sinnliche Gewissheit*). I shall not repeat what he says there. What interests us for the moment is that, starting from *this* *Consciousness*, from *this* knowledge, there is no way to reach *Self-Consciousness*. To reach it, one must start from something *other* than *contemplative* knowledge of Being, other than its *passive* revelation, which leaves Being as it is in itself, independent of the knowledge that reveals it.

Indeed, we all know that the man who attentively *contemplates* a thing, who wants to see it as it is without changing anything, is "*absorbed*," so to speak, by this contemplation—that is, by this *thing*. He *forgets himself*, he thinks only about the *thing* being contemplated; he thinks neither about his *contemplation*, nor—and even less—about himself, his "I," his *Selbst*. The more he is conscious of the *thing*, the less he is conscious of *himself*. He may perhaps talk about the thing, but he will never talk about himself; in his discourse, the word "I" will not occur.

For this word to appear, something other than purely passive contemplation, which only *reveals* Being, must also be present. And this other thing, according to Hegel, is *Desire, Begierde*, of which he speaks in the beginning of Chapter IV.

Indeed, when man experiences a desire, when he is hungry, for example, and wants to eat, and when he becomes aware of it, he necessarily becomes aware of *himself*. Desire is always revealed as *my* desire, and to reveal desire, one must use the word "I." Man is *absorbed* by his contemplation of the thing in vain; as soon as *desire* for that thing is born, he will immediately be "brought back to *himself*." Suddenly, he will see that, in addition to the thing, there is his contemplation, there is *himself*, which is *not* that thing. And the thing appears to him as an *object* (*Gegenstand*), as an *external* reality, which is not in him, which is not *he* but a *non-I*. Hence, it is not purely cognitive and passive contemplation that is at the base of *Self-Consciousness*—i.e., of truly *human* existence (and therefore—in the end—of philosophical existence), but *Desire*. (And, in parenthesis, that is why human existence is possible only where there is something called *Leben*, biological, *animal* life. For there is no *Desire* without *Life*.)

Now, what is *Desire*—one need only think of the desire called "hunger"—but the desire to *transform* the contemplated thing by an action, to overcome it in its being that is unrelated to mine

and independent of me, to *negate* it in its independence, and to assimilate it to myself, to make it *mine*, to absorb it in and by my *I*? For Self-Consciousness, and hence philosophy, to exist, then, there must be in Man not only *positive*, passive contemplation, which merely *reveals* being, but also *negating* Desire, and hence *Action* that *transforms* the given being. The human *I* must be an *I of Desire*—that is, an *active I*, a *negating I*, an *I* that *transforms* Being and creates a new being by destroying the given being.

Now, what is the *I of Desire*—the *I of a hungry man*, for example—but an *emptiness* greedy for content; an emptiness that wants to be filled by what is full, to be filled by *emptying* this fullness, to put itself—once it is filled—in the place of this fullness, to occupy with *its* fullness the emptiness caused by overcoming the fullness that was *not* its own? Therefore, to speak generally: if the true (absolute) philosophy, unlike Kantian and pre-Kantian philosophy, is not a philosophy of *Consciousness*, but rather a philosophy of *Self-Consciousness*, a philosophy *conscious* of itself, taking account of itself, justifying itself, *knowing* itself to be absolute and revealed by itself to itself as such, then the Philosopher must—Man must—in the very foundation of his being not only be passive and positive *contemplation*, but also be active and negating *Desire*. Now, if he is to be so, he cannot be a *Being* that is, that is eternally *identical* to itself, that is *self-sufficient*. Man must be an emptiness, a nothingness, which is not a pure nothingness (*reines Nichts*), but something that is to the extent that it *annihilates* Being, in order to realize itself at the expense of Being and to nihilate *in* being. Man is negating *Action*, which transforms given Being and, by transforming it, transforms itself. Man is what he is only to the extent that he *becomes* what he is; his true *Being* (*Sein*) is *Becoming* (*Werden*), *Time*, *History*; and he *becomes*, he is History only in and by *Action* that negates the given, the Action of Fighting and of Work—of the Work that finally produces the table on which Hegel writes his *Phenomenology*, and of the Fight that is finally that Battle of Jena whose sounds he hears while writing the *Phenomenology*. And that is why, in answering the “What am I?” Hegel had to take account of both that table and those sounds.

There is no human existence without Consciousness or without Self-Consciousness—that is, without revelation of Being by Speech

or without Desire that reveals and creates the *I*. That is why, in the *Phenomenology*—i.e., in phenomenological *anthropology*—the elementary possibility of *revelation* of given Being by Speech (implied in the Chapter “Sensual Certainty”) on the one hand, and on the other, *Action* that destroys or negates given Being (Action that arises from and because of Desire), are two irreducible givens, which the *Phenomenology* presupposes as its *premises*. But these premises are not sufficient.

The analysis that uncovers the constituent role of Desire enables us to understand why human existence is possible only with an animal existence as its basis: a stone or a plant (having no Desire) never attains Self-Consciousness and consequently philosophy. But animals do not attain it either. *Animal Desire*, therefore, is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition of human and philosophical existence. And here is why.

Animal Desire—hunger, for example—and the action that flows from it, negate, destroy the natural given. By negating it, modifying it, making it its own, the animal raises itself above this given. According to Hegel, the animal realizes and reveals its *superiority* to plants by eating them. But by feeding on plants, the animal *depends* on them and hence does not manage truly to go beyond them. Generally speaking, the greedy emptiness—or the *I*—that is revealed by *biological* Desire is filled—by the *biological* action that flows from it—only with a *natural*, biological content. Therefore, the *I*, or the pseudo-*I*, realized by the active satisfaction of this Desire, is just as *natural*, biological, material, as that toward which the Desire and the Action are directed. The Animal raises itself above the Nature that is negated in its animal Desire only to fall back into it immediately by the satisfaction of this Desire. Accordingly, the Animal attains only *Selbst-gefühl*, *Sentiment* of self, but not *Selbst-bewusstsein*, *Self-Consciousness*—that is, it cannot *speak* of itself, it cannot say “I. . . .” And this is so because the Animal does not really transcend itself as *given*—i.e., as body; it does not rise *above* itself in order to *come back* toward itself; it has no *distance* with respect to itself in order to *contemplate* itself.

For Self-Consciousness to exist, for philosophy to exist, there must be *transcendence* of self with respect to self as *given*. And this is possible, according to Hegel, only if Desire is directed not

toward a *given* being, but toward a *nonbeing*. To desire Being is to fill oneself with this given Being, to enslave oneself to it. To desire non-Being is to liberate oneself from Being, to realize one's autonomy, one's Freedom. To be anthropogenetic, then, Desire must be directed toward a nonbeing—that is, toward another *Desire*, another greedy emptiness, another *I*. For Desire is *absence* of Being, (to be hungry is to be *deprived* of food); it is a Nothingness that *withlates* in Being, and not a Being that *is*. In other words, Action that is destined to satisfy an animal Desire, which is directed toward a given, existing *thing*, never succeeds in realizing a *human*, self-conscious *I*. Desire is human—or, more exactly, “humanizing,” “anthropogenetic”—only provided that it is directed toward another *Desire* and an *other* Desire. To be *human*, man must act not for the sake of subjugating a *thing*, but for the sake of subjugating another *Desire* (for the thing). The man who desires a thing humanly acts not so much to possess the *thing* as to make another *recognize* his *right*—as will be said later—to that thing, to make another recognize him as the *owner* of the thing. And he does this—in the final analysis—in order to make the other recognize his *superiority* over the other. It is only Desire of such a *Recognition* (*Anerkennung*), it is only Action that flows from such a Desire, that creates, realizes, and reveals a *human*, non-biological *I*.

Therefore, the *Phenomenology* must accept a third irreducible premise: the existence of *several* Desires that can desire one another mutually, each of which wants to negate, to assimilate, to make its own, to subjugate, the other Desire as Desire. This *multiplicity* of Desires is just as “undeducible” as the fact of Desire itself. By accepting it, one can already foresee, or understand (“deduce”), what human existence will be.

If, on the one hand—as Hegel says—Self-Consciousness and Man in general are, finally, nothing but Desire that tries to be satisfied by being recognized by another Desire in its *exclusive* right to satisfaction, it is obvious that Man can be fully realized and revealed—that is, be definitively *satisfied*—only by realizing a universal Recognition. Now if—on the other hand—there is a *multiplicity* of these Desires for universal Recognition, it is obvious that the Action that is born of these Desires can—at least in the beginning—be nothing but a life and death *Fight* (*Kampf auf*

Leben und Tod). A *Fight*, since each will want to subjugate the other, *all* the others, by a negating, destroying *action*. A life and *death* Fight because Desire that is directed toward a Desire directed toward a Desire *goes beyond* the biological given, so that Action carried out for the sake of this Desire is not limited by this given. In other words, Man will risk his biological *life* to satisfy his *nonbiological* Desire. And Hegel says that the being that is incapable of putting its life in danger in order to attain ends that are not immediately vital—i.e. the being that cannot risk its life in a Fight for *Recognition*, in a fight for pure *prestige*—is *not* a truly *human* being.

Therefore, human, historical, self-conscious existence is possible only where there are, or—at least—where there have been, bloody fights, wars for prestige. And thus it was the sounds of one of these Fights that Hegel heard while finishing his *Phenomenology*, in which he became conscious of himself by answering his question “What am I?”

But it is obvious that the three already-mentioned premises in the *Phenomenology* are not sufficient to explain the possibility of the Battle of Jena. Indeed, if *all* men were as I have just said, every Fight for prestige would end in the death of at least one of the adversaries. That is to say, finally, there would remain *only one* man in the world, and—according to Hegel—he would no longer be, he would not be, a *human* being, since the human *reality* is nothing but the fact of the *recognition* of one man by *another* man.

To explain the fact of the Battle of Jena, the fact of the *History* that that battle completes, one must therefore posit a fourth and last irreducible premise in the *Phenomenology*. One must suppose that the Fight ends in such a way that *both* adversaries remain alive. Now, if this is to occur, one must suppose that one of the adversaries *gives in* to the other and submits to him, recognizing him without being recognized by him. One must suppose that the Fight ends in the victory of the one who is ready to go *all the way* over the one who—faced with death—does not manage to raise himself above his biological instinct of preservation (identity). To use Hegel's terminology, one must suppose that there is a victor who becomes the *Master* of the vanquished; or, if one prefers, a vanquished who becomes the *Slave* of the victor. The existence of

a difference between Master and Slave or, more exactly, the *possibility* of a difference between *future* Master and *future* Slave is the fourth and last premise of the *Phenomenology*.

The vanquished has subordinated his *human* desire for *Recognition* to the *biological* desire to preserve his *life*: this is what determines and reveals—to him and to the victor—his inferiority. The victor has risked his *life* for a *nomvital* end: and this is what determines and reveals—to him and to the vanquished—his superiority over biological life and, consequently, over the vanquished. Thus, the difference between Master and Slave is *realized* in the existence of the victor and of the vanquished, and it is *recognized* by both of them.

The Master's superiority over Nature, founded on the risk of his life in the Fight for prestige, is realized by the fact of the Slave's *Work*. This *Work* is placed between the Master and Nature. The Slave transforms the *given* conditions of existence so as to make them *conform* to the Master's demands. Nature, transformed by the Slave's *Work*, *serves* the Master, without his needing to serve it in turn. The enslaving side of the interaction with Nature falls to the lot of the Slave: by enslaving the Slave and forcing him to work, the Master enslaves Nature and thus *realizes* his freedom in Nature. Thus the Master's existence can remain exclusively *warlike*: he fights, but does not work. As for the Slave, his existence is reduced to *Work* (*Arbeit*) which he executes in the Master's *Service* (*Dienst*). He works, but does not fight. And according to Hegel, only action carried out in another's service is *Work* (*Arbeit*) in the proper sense of the word: an essentially human and humanizing action. The being that acts to satisfy its *own* instincts, which—as such—are always *natural*, does not rise above Nature: it remains a *natural* being, an animal. But by acting to satisfy an instinct that is *not* my own, I am acting in relation to what is not—for me—instinct. I am acting in relation to an *idea*, a *nombiological* end. And it is this transformation of Nature in relation to a *nommaterial idea* that is *Work* in the proper sense of the word: *Work* that creates a nonnatural, technical, humanized World adapted to the *human* Desire of a being that has *demonstrated* and realized its superiority to Nature by risking its life for the *nombiological* end of Recognition. And it is only this *Work*

that could finally produce the *table* on which Hegel wrote his *Phenomenology* and which was a part of the content of the I that he analyzed in answering his question, "What am I?"

Generally speaking, by accepting the four premises mentioned above, namely: (1) the existence of the revelation of given Being by Speech, (2) the existence of a Desire engendering an Action that *negates*, transforms, given Being, (3) the existence of *several* Desires, which can desire one another mutually, and (4) the existence of a *possibility* of difference between the Desires of (future) Masters and the Desires of (future) Slaves—by accepting these four premises, we understand the possibility of a *historical* process, of a *History*, which is, in its totality, the history of the Fights and the Work that finally ended in the wars of Napoleon and the table on which Hegel wrote the *Phenomenology* in order to understand both those wars and that table. Inversely, in order to explain the possibility of the *Phenomenology*, which is written on a *table* and which explains the wars of Napoleon, we must suppose the four premises mentioned.¹

In fine, then, we can say this: Man was born and History began with the first Fight that ended in the appearance of a Master and a Slave. That is to say that Man—at his origin—is always either Master or Slave; and that true Man can exist only where there is a Master and a Slave. (If they are to be *human*, they must be at least *two* in number.) And universal history, the history of the interaction between men and of their interaction with Nature, is the history of the interaction between warlike Masters and working Slaves. Consequently, History stops at the moment when the difference, the opposition, between Master and Slave disappears: at the moment when the Master will cease to be Master, because

¹ We could try to deduce the first premise from the other three: Speech (*Logos*) that reveals Being is born in and from the Slave's Self-Consciousness (through Work). As for the fourth premise, it postulates the act of *freedom*. For nothing *predisposes* the future Master to Mastery, just as nothing *predisposes* the future Slave to Slavery; each can (freely) create himself as Master or Slave. What is *given*, therefore, is not the *difference* between Master and Slave, but the free act that *creates* it. Now, the *free* act is by definition "undeducible." Here, then, we have what is indeed an absolute *premise*. All we can say is that without the primordial free act that creates Mastery and Slavery, history and philosophy could not exist. Now, this act in turn presupposes a multiplicity of Desires that *desire one another mutually*.

he will no longer have a Slave; and the Slave will cease to be Slave, because he will no longer have a Master (although the Slave will not become Master in turn, since he will have no Slave).

Now, according to Hegel, it is in and by the wars of Napoleon, and, in particular, the Battle of Jena, that this completion of History is realized through the dialectical overcoming (*Aufheben*) of both the Master and the Slave. Consequently, the presence of the Battle of Jena in Hegel's consciousness is of capital importance. It is because Hegel hears the sounds of that battle that he can know that History is being completed or has been completed, that—consequently—*his* conception of the World is a *total* conception, that *his* knowledge is an *absolute* knowledge.

However, to *know* this, to know that he is the thinker who can realize the absolute Science, he must *know* that the Napoleonic Wars realize the dialectical synthesis of the Master and the Slave. And to know this, he must know: on the one hand, what the *essence* (*Wesen*) of the Master and the Slave is; and—on the other—how and why History, which began with the “first” Fight for prestige, ended in the wars of Napoleon.

The analysis of the essential character of the Master-Slave opposition—that is, of the motive principle of the historical process—is found in Chapter IV. And as for the analysis of the historical process itself, it is given in Chapter VI.

History, that universal human process that conditioned the coming of Hegel, of the thinker endowed with an *absolute* Knowledge, a process that that thinker must *understand* in and by a *Phenomenology* before he can realize this absolute Knowledge in the “System of Science”—universal history, therefore, is nothing but the history of the *dialectical*—i.e., *active*—relation between Mastery and Slavery. Hence, History will be completed at the moment when the synthesis of the Master and the Slave is realized, that synthesis that is the whole Man, the Citizen of the universal and homogeneous State created by Napoleon.

This conception, according to which History is a dialectic or an *interaction* of Mastery and Slavery, permits us to understand the *meaning* of the division of the historical process into three great periods (of very unequal lengths, incidentally). If History begins with the fight after which a Master *dominates* a Slave, the first historical period must certainly be the one in which human exist-

ence is entirely determined by the existence of the *Master*. Throughout this period, then, it is *Mastery* that will reveal its essence by realizing its existential possibilities through Action. But if History is only a dialectic of Mastery *and* Slavery, this latter too must be entirely revealed by being completely realized through Action. Therefore, the first period must be completed by a second, in which human existence will be determined by *slavish* existence. Finally, if the end of History is the *synthesis* of Mastery and Slavery, and the *understanding* of that synthesis, these two periods must be followed by a third, during which human existence, in some sense neutralized, synthetic, reveals itself to itself by actively realizing its own *possibilities*. But this time, these possibilities also imply the possibility of understanding oneself fully and definitively—that is, perfectly.

But of course, in order to write Chapter VI, in order to understand what History is, it is not sufficient to know that History has three periods. One must also know what each of them is, one must understand the *why* and the *how* of each of them and of the transition from one to another. Now, to understand this, one must know what is the *Wesen*, the essential-reality, of Mastery and Slavery, what is the essence of the two principles which, in their interaction, are going to realize the process being studied. And this analysis of the Master as such and of the Slave as such is made in Section B of Chapter IV.

Let us begin with the Master.

The Master is the man who went all the way in a Fight for prestige, who risked his *life* in order to be *recognized* in his absolute superiority by *another* man. That is, to his *real*, natural biological life he preferred something *ideal*, spiritual, nonbiological: the fact of being *anerkannt*, of being *recognized* in and by a *consciousness*, of bearing the *name* of “Master,” of being called “Master.” Thus, he “brought to light,” proved (*bewährt*), realized, and revealed his *superiority* over biological existence, over *his* biological existence, over the natural World in general and over everything that knows itself and that he knows to be *bound* to this World, in particular, over the Slave. This superiority, at first purely *ideal*, which consists in the mental fact of being recognized and of knowing that he is recognized as Master by the Slave, is *realized* and materialized through the Slave's *Work*. The Master, who was

able to force the Slave to *recognize* him as Master, can also force the Slave to *work* for him, to yield the result of his *Action* to him. Thus, the Master no longer needs to make any effort to satisfy his (natural) desires. The *enslaving* side of this satisfaction has passed to the Slave: the Master, by dominating the working Slave, dominates Nature and lives in it as *Master*. Now, to preserve oneself in Nature without fighting against it is to live in *Genuss*, in Enjoyment. And the enjoyment that one obtains without making any effort is *Last*, Pleasure. The life of the Masters, to the extent that it is not bloody Fighting, Fighting for prestige with human beings, is a life of pleasure.

At first glance, it seems that the Master realizes the peak of human existence, being the man who is fully satisfied (*befriedigt*), in and by his real existence, by what he is. Now in fact, this is not at all the case.

What is this man, what does he *want* to be, if not a Master? It was to become *Master*, to be *Master* that he risked his life, and not to live a life of pleasure. Now, what he wanted by engaging in the fight was to be recognized by *another*—that is, by someone *other* than himself but who is *like him*, by *another man*. But in fact, at the end of the Fight, he is recognized only by a *Slave*. To be a *man*, he wanted to be recognized by another man. But if to be a man is to be *Master*, the Slave is not a man, and to be recognized by a Slave is not to be recognized by a *man*. He would have to be recognized by another Master. But this is impossible, since—by definition—the Master prefers death to slavish recognition of another's superiority. In short, the Master never succeeds in realizing his end, the end for which he risks his very life. The Master can be satisfied only in and by death, *his* death or the death of his adversary. But one cannot be *befriedigt* (fully satisfied) by what *is*, by what one *is*, in and by *death*. For death *is* not, the dead man *is* not. And what *is*, what lives, is only a Slave. Now, is it worthwhile to risk one's life in order to know that one is recognized by a *Slave*? Obviously not. And that is why, to the extent that the Master is not made brutish by his pleasure and enjoyment, when he takes account of what his *true* end and the motive of his *actions*—i.e., his warlike actions—are, he will *not*, he will *never* be *befriedigt*, satisfied by what *is*, by what *he is*.

In other words, Mastery is an existential impasse. The Master

can either make himself *brutish* in pleasure or *die* on the field of battle as Master, but he cannot *live consciously* with the knowledge that he is *satisfied* by what he *is*. Now, it is only conscious satisfaction, *Befriedigung*, that can complete History, for only the Man who *knows* he is *satisfied* by what he is no longer strives to go beyond himself, to go beyond what he is and what is, through Action that transforms Nature, through Action that creates History. If History must be *completed*, if absolute Knowledge must be possible, it is only the Slave who can do it, by attaining Satisfaction. And that is why Hegel says that the "truth" (= revealed reality) of the Master is the Slave. The human ideal, born in the Master, can be *realized* and revealed, can become *Wahrheit* (truth), only in and by Slavery.

To be able to stop and understand himself, a man must be *satisfied*. And for this, of course, he must *cease* to be a Slave. But to be able to cease being *Slave*, he must have *been* a Slave. And since there are Slaves only where there is a Master, Mastery, while itself an *impasse*, is "justified" as a *necessary* stage of the historical existence that leads to the absolute Science of Hegel. The Master appears only for the sake of engendering the Slave who "overcomes" (*aufhebt*) him as Master, while thereby "overcoming" himself as Slave. And this Slave who has been "overcome" is the one who will be satisfied by what he *is* and will understand that he is satisfied in and by Hegel's philosophy, in and by the *Phenomenology*. The Master is only the "catalyst" of the History that will be realized, completed, and "revealed" by the Slave or the ex-Slave who has become a Citizen.

But let us first see what the Slave is in the *beginning*, the Slave of the *Master*, the Slave not yet satisfied by the Citizenship that realizes and reveals his Freedom.

Man became a Slave because he feared death. To be sure, on the one hand this fear (*Furcht*) reveals his dependence with respect to Nature and thus justifies his dependence with respect to the Master, who *dominates* Nature. But on the other hand, this same fear—according to Hegel—has a positive value, which conditions the Slave's *superiority* to the Master. Through animal fear of death (*Angst*) the Slave experienced the dread or the Terror (*Furcht*) of Nothingness, of his nothingness. He caught a glimpse of himself as nothingness, he understood that his whole existence was but a

“surpassed,” “overcome” (*aufgehoben*) death—a Nothingness maintained in Being. Now—we have seen it and shall see it again—the profound basis of Hegelian anthropology is formed by this idea that Man is not a Being that is in an eternal identity to itself in Space, but a Nothingness that *negates* as Time in spatial Being, through the *negation* of this Being—through the negation or transformation of the given, starting from an idea or an ideal that does *not yet exist*, that is still nothingness (a “project”)—through negation that is called the *Action* (*Tat*) of Fighting and of Work (*Kampf und Arbeit*). Hence the Slave, who—through fear of death—grasps the (human) Nothingness that is at the foundation of his (natural) Being, understands himself, understands Man, better than the Master does. From the “first” Fight, the Slave has an intuition of the human reality, and that is the profound reason that it is finally he, and not the Master, who will complete History by revealing the truth of Man, by revealing his reality through Hegelian Science.

But—still thanks to the Master—the Slave has another advantage, conditioned by the fact that he *works* and that he works in the *service* (*Dienst*) of *another*, that he *serves* another by *working*. To work for *another* is to act contrary to the *instincts* that drive man to satisfy his *own* needs. There is no *instinct* that forces the Slave to work for the Master. If he does it, it is from *fear* of the Master. But *this* fear is not the same as the fear he experienced at the moment of the Fight: the danger is no longer *immediate*; the Slave only *knows* that the Master can kill him; he does not *see* him in a murderous posture. In other words, the Slave who *works* for the Master represses his *instincts* in relation to an *idea*, a *concept*.² And that is precisely what makes his activity a specifically *human* activity, a *Work*, an *Arbeit*. By acting, he negates, he transforms the given, Nature, his Nature; and he does it in relation to an *idea*, to what does not *exist* in the biological sense of the word, in relation to the idea of a *Master*—i.e., to an essentially *social*, human, historical notion. Now, to be able to transform the natural given in relation to a *nonnatural* idea is to possess a *technique*. And the

² According to Hegel, Concept (*Begriff*) and Understanding (*Verstand*) are born of the Slave's Work, whereas sensual Knowledge (*sinnliche Gewissheit*) is an irreducible given. But one could try to deduce *all* human understanding from Work.

idea that engenders a technique is a *scientific* idea, a scientific concept. Finally, to possess scientific concepts is to be endowed with Understanding, *Verstand*, the faculty of *abstract* notions.

Understanding, abstract thought, science, technique, the arts—all these, then, have their origin in the forced work of the Slave. Therefore, the Slave, and not the Master, is the one who realizes all that has to do with these things; in particular Newtonian physics (which so impressed Kant), that physics of Force and of Law, which—according to Hegel—are in the final analysis the force of the victor in the Fight for prestige and the law of the Master who is recognized by the Slave.

But these are not the only advantages procured by Work; Work will also open the way to Freedom or—more exactly—to liberation.

Indeed, the Master realized his freedom by surmounting his *instinct* to live in the Fight. Now, by working for *another*, the Slave too surmounts his *instincts*, and—by thereby raising himself to thought, to science, to technique, by transforming Nature in relation to an idea—he too succeeds in dominating Nature and his “Nature”—that is, the same Nature that dominated him at the moment of the Fight and made him the Slave of the Master. Through his Work, therefore, the Slave comes to the same result to which the Master comes by risking his life in the Fight: he no longer depends on the given, natural conditions of existence; he *modifies* them, starting from the idea he has of himself. In becoming *conscious* of this fact, therefore, he becomes conscious of his *freedom* (*Freiheit*), his autonomy (*Selbständigkeit*). And, by using the *thought* that arises from his Work, he forms the abstract *notion* of the Freedom that has been realized in him by this same Work.

To be sure, in the Slave properly so-called this *notion* of Freedom does not yet correspond to a true *reality*. He frees himself mentally only thanks to *forced* work, only because he is the Slave of a Master. And he *remains* in fact this Slave. Thus he frees himself, so to speak, only to be a Slave freely, to be still more a Slave than he was before having formed the *idea* of Freedom. However, the insufficiency of the Slave is at the same time his perfection: this is because he is not actually free, because he has an *idea* of Freedom, an idea that is *not* realized but that can be realized by the conscious and voluntary transformation of given existence, by

the active abolition of Slavery. The Master, on the other hand, is free; his idea of Freedom is not *abstract*. That is why it is not an *idea* in the proper sense of the word: an *ideal* to realize. And that is why the Master never succeeds in going beyond the freedom that is realized in *himself* and the insufficiency of *that* freedom. Progress in the realization of Freedom can be carried out only by the Slave, who begins with a *nonrealized* ideal of Freedom. And it is because he has an *ideal*, an *abstract* idea, that progress in the *realization* of Freedom can be completed by an *understanding* of Freedom, by the birth of the *absolute Idea* (*absolute Idee*) of human Freedom, revealed in and by absolute Knowledge.

Generally speaking, it is the Slave, and only he, who can realize a *progress*, who can go beyond the *given* and—in particular—the given that he himself is. On the one hand, as I just said, possessing the *idea* of Freedom and *not being* free, he is led to transform the given (social) conditions of his existence—that is, to realize a historical progress. Furthermore—and this is the important point—this progress has a meaning for him which it does not and cannot have for the Master. The Master's freedom, engendered in and by the Fight, is an impasse. To realize it, he must make it recognized by a *Slave*, he must transform whoever is to recognize it into a *Slave*. Now, my freedom ceases to be a dream, an illusion, an abstract idea, only to the extent that it is *universally recognized* by those whom I recognize as worthy of recognizing it. And this is precisely what the Master can *never* obtain. His freedom, to be sure, is recognized. Therefore, it is *real*. But it is recognized only by Slaves. Therefore, it is insufficient in its reality, it cannot *satisfy* him who realizes it. And yet, as long as it remains a Master's freedom, the situation cannot be otherwise. On the other hand, if—at the start—the Slave's freedom is recognized by no one but himself, if, consequently, it is purely *abstract*, it can end in being *realized* and in being realized in its *perfection*. For the Slave *recognizes* the human reality and dignity of the Master. Therefore, it is sufficient for him to impose his liberty on the Master in order to attain the definitive Satisfaction that *mutual* Recognition gives and thus to stop the historical process.

Of course, in order to do this, he must fight against the Master, that is to say—precisely—he must cease to be a Slave, surmount his fear of death. He must become *other* than what he is. Now, in

contrast to the warlike Master who will always remain what he already is—i.e., Master—the working Slave can change, and he actually does change, thanks to his work.

The human Action of the Master reduces to risking his life. Now, the risk of life is the same at all times and in all places. The risk itself is what counts, and it does not matter whether a stone ax or a machine gun is being used. Accordingly, it is not the Fight as such, the risk of life, but *Work* that one day produces a machine gun, and no longer an ax. The purely warlike attitude of the Master does not vary throughout the centuries, and therefore it cannot engender a historical change. Without the Slave's Work, the "first" Fight would be reproduced indefinitely: nothing would change in it; it would change nothing in the Master; hence nothing would change in Man, through Man, for Man; the World would remain identical to itself, it would be Nature and not a human, historical World.

Quite different is the situation created by Work. Man who works *transforms* given Nature. Hence, if he repeats his act, he repeats it in *different* conditions, and thus his act itself will be different. After making the first ax, man can use it to make a second one, which, by that very fact, will be another, a better ax. Production transforms the means of production; the modification of means simplifies production; and so on. Where there is Work, then, there is necessarily change, progress, historical evolution.³

Historical evolution. For what changes as a result of Work is not only the natural World; it is also—and even especially—Man himself. Man, in the beginning, depends on the given, natural conditions of his existence. To be sure, he can rise above these conditions by risking his life in a Fight for prestige. But in this risk he somehow negates the *totality* of these conditions, which are still the same; he negates them *en masse*, without modifying them, and this negation is always the same. Accordingly, the freedom that he creates in and by this act of negation does not depend on the particular forms of the given. It is only by rising above the given conditions through negation brought about in and by *Work*

³ A manufactured object incarnates an idea (a "project") which is independent of the material *hic et nunc*; that is why these objects can be "exchanged." Hence the birth of an "economic," specifically human World, in which money, capital, interest, salary, and so on appear.

that Man remains in contact with the concrete, which varies with space and time. That is why he changes himself by transforming the World.

The scheme of historical evolution, therefore, is as follows: At the start, the future Master and the future Slave are both determined by a given, natural World independent of them: hence they are not yet truly human, historical beings. Then, by risking his life, the Master raises himself above given Nature, above his given (animal) "nature," and becomes a human being, a being that creates itself in and by its conscious negating Action. Then, he forces the Slave to work. The latter changes the real given World. Hence he too raises himself above Nature, above his (animal) "nature," since he succeeds in making it other than it was. To be sure, the Slave, like the Master, like Man in general, is determined by the real World. But since this World has been *changed*, he changes as well.⁴ And since it was *he* who changed the World, it is *he* who changes himself, whereas the Master changes only through the Slave. Therefore, the historical process, the historical becoming of the human being, is the product of the working Slave and not of the waitlike Master. To be sure, without the Master, there would have been no History; but only because without him there would have been no Slave and hence no Work.

Therefore—once more—thanks to his Work, the Slave *can* change and become other than he is, that is, he can—finally—cease to be a Slave. Work is *Bildung*, in the double meaning of the word: on the one hand, it forms, transforms the World, humanizes it by making it more adapted to Man; on the other, it transforms, forms, educates man, it humanizes him by bringing him into greater conformity with the *idea* that he has of himself, an idea that—in the beginning—is only an *abstract* idea, an *ideal*. If then, at the start, in the given World the Slave had a fearful "*nature*" and *had* to submit to the Master, to the strong man, it does not mean that this will *always* be the case. Thanks to his work, *he* can become other; and, thanks to his work, the *World* can become other. And

⁴ Animals also have (pseudo) techniques: the first spider changed the World by weaving the first web. Hence it would be better to say: the World changes essentially (and becomes human) through "exchange," which is possible only as a result of Work that realizes a "project."

Summary of the First Six Chapters of the Phenomenology of Spirit

this is what actually took place, as universal history and, finally, the French Revolution and Napoleon show.

This creative education of Man by work (*Bildung*) creates History—i.e., human *Time*. Work *is* Time, and that is why it necessarily exists *in* time: it requires time. The transformation of the Slave, which will allow him to surmount his dread, his fear of the Master, by surmounting the terror of death—this transformation is long and painful. In the beginning, the Slave who—by his Work—raised himself to the abstract *idea* of his Freedom, does not succeed in *realizing* it, because he does not yet dare to *act* with a view to this realization, that is to say, he does not dare to fight against the Master and to risk his life in a Fight for Freedom.

Thus it is that, before *realizing* Freedom, the Slave imagines a series of ideologies, by which he seeks to justify himself, to justify his slavery, to reconcile the *ideal* of Freedom with the *fact* of Slavery.

The first of these Slave's ideologies is Stoicism. The Slave tries to persuade himself that he is *actually* free simply by *knowing* that he is free—that is, by having the abstract *idea* of Freedom. The *real* conditions of existence would have no importance at all: no matter whether one be a Roman emperor or a Slave, rich or poor, sick or healthy; it is sufficient to have the *idea* of freedom, or more precisely, of autonomy, of absolute independence of all *given* conditions of existence. (Whence—in parentheses—the modern variant of Stoicism, of which Hegel speaks in Chapter V: freedom is identified with freedom of *thought*; the State is called free when one can *speak* freely in it; so long as *this* freedom is safeguarded, nothing need be changed in that State.)

Hegel's criticism, or, more exactly, his explanation of the fact that Man did not stop at this Stoic solution which is so satisfying at first sight, can appear unconvincing and bizarre. Hegel says that Man abandons Stoicism because, as a Stoic, he is *bored*. The Stoic ideology was invented to justify the Slave's inaction, his refusal to *fight* to *realize* his libertarian ideal. Thus this ideology prevents Man from acting: it obliges him to be content with *talking*. Now, says Hegel, all discourse that remains discourse ends in *boring* Man.

This objection—or explanation—is simplistic only at first sight. In fact, it has a profound metaphysical basis. Man is not a Being