Does History Make Sense?

Hegel on the Historical Shapes of Justice

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To Susan

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Substances and Subjects?

The nature of temporal human subjectivity itself did not imply on its own that the French Revolution had to happen. Nor did it imply that Rome had to collapse, nor that feudal monarchy had to fade out into constitutional monarchy.

Even if there were such a thing as a people who just happened to possess a standing desire to achieve freedom—of the kind that the mythical *Germanen* were supposed to have had but which needed to be disciplined into the rule of law—such a standing desire itself would not guarantee that those events had to take place. There is no argument—or at least no discernibly good argument—in Hegel that supports the conclusion that these events, or even ones similarly like them, had to occur by virtue of some kind of metaphysical / causal necessity. Thus, the only conclusion is that the French Revolution, indeed the whole path to modernity, was not necessary at least in the sense that it did not have to happen in any conceptual sense implied by the very nature of subjectivity, *Geist,* itself. The modern world was not willed by fate.

Where then is Hegel's case for any kind of necessity in history?

Hegel's broad claims for his philosophy of history have to do with the

success or failure of some other big claims he makes. First and foremost is the claim made in the *Phenomenology* that everything hangs on apprehending and expressing the true not just as *substance* but equally as well as *subject*"—as Hegel stresses, it is not just "some things" but "everything" depends on that view.[1]

This has several sides to it. First, there is the extended argument of the *Science of Logic* that a comprehension of the objectivity of things requires an equal comprehension of the subjectivity of the subjects making the judgments about objectivity. This is not the claim that the existence of things depends on the existence of minds, nor even that the existence of "mere" things is somehow "perfected" by the addition of minded creatures to the furniture of the universe. According to the *Logic,* very roughly, to make sense of things, we necessarily judge in two general ways—in terms of "Being" or "Essence," that is, by pointing out, classifying, generalizing, or counting; and by explaining things in terms of some underlying condition that is not immediately apparent in the mere observation of them and which ultimately requires various modal concepts (possibility, necessity, etc.) to make sense of itself. These two metaphysical structures of making sense of things require us to make sense of making sense, to look at the conditions in which we can say that sense has genuinely been made. (That is the logic of "Concept," and is thus capstone to the three "books" of the *Logic:* Being, Essence, Concept.) This thereby requires us to understand the role of the "concept" in making sense, and that way of speaking of the necessity of the "concept" works out into speaking of the necessity of self-consciousness in judgment.[2] To put it more in the form of slogans: Without an account of self-conscious subjectivity, we cannot make sense of how we could make sense of objectivity (which is very different from claiming that without our conceptual activities, there could be no such things as rocks and sea salt).[3] The *Logic* has to do with the intelligibility of our judgments about the world and the intelligibility of those judgments themselves.[4]

Second, given the *Logic's* account, Hegel's case for some kind of conceptual necessity in history comes down in part to his case for how it is necessary to move from making sense of things to making sense of making sense and how the conditions for that kind of reflection depended the formation of new institutions and practices in history. Hegel first made that kind of

argument in the 1807 *Phenomenology* as the introduction to the standpoint of the *Logic* (or, as he also put it there, as the "ladder" one climbed to arrive at such a standpoint).

Third, there is also Hegel's more general argument that there are not merely sets of finite ends in history, there are also infinite ends at work. The most basic is that of the infinite end of self-comprehension.[5] Such an end is not one for which the other ends are simply means to it, nor is the final infinite end inclusive of all those other ends—not everything is an instance of a striving for self-comprehension—nor are those other ends approximations to that end. Such an infinite end can be actualized and manifested at various times in better or worse ways.

Fourth, if the move from "substance" to "subject" requires an infinite end to make sense of itself, that leaves it open as to whether a further case can be made that there has actually been a form of progress in actualizing that end in history—that we comprehend more clearly what it would mean to be actualizing that end. Hegel's argument is that although world history is not a "Whig" story of steady and unrelenting progress, there is nonetheless progress that has been made. This has come to pass through the ways in which people, working out of their own path-dependent ways of comprehending things, have been compelled to understand themselves not merely as creatures simply caught and swept up in a temporal river but as each possessing a kind of capacity for self-reflection and limited subjectivity in practical life.[6]

As Hegel realizes, one of the more contentious aspects of the view he put forth in his *Philosophy of Right* is that this work systematically reconstructs the "elements" out of which the modern social and political order builds itself. The obvious questions are: Why those elements and not others, and why those elements in that particular shape and not other shapes? Hegel's short answer: History. That in turn raises the equally obvious set of questions about the putative rationality of those elements themselves and whether they even can be rationally brought together or whether the clashes among them make a habitable modern life impossible. For example, Marxists who followed in Hegel's wake accused him of reconstructing merely the elements of an order based on bourgeois private property, itself based on the exploitation of the laboring classes, which falsely declared itself to be a system of freedom. Even if one rejects the specifically Marxist accusation,

the overall charge is still obvious.[7] Another obvious worry is whether the pressures to assemble the "elements" that are on the plate because of path-dependent history inevitably push Hegel's theory into collapsing into a kind of self-defeating relativist historicism.

Like any path-dependent view, Hegel's philosophy of history has to start from some point from which the path takes shape, and the worry is about the arbitrariness of such a starting point. As we have seen, although his account embraces all of world history—involving some particularly unsatisfactory chapters on Africa, China, India, Persia, and Egypt—his real starting point is ancient Greece, which lays down the starting point from which the path in which he is interested supposedly begins.[8] Even if one grants that there is a logic to what develops out of such a starting point, that it was that particular point which developed as the starting point cannot itself be a matter of logic.

There are two reasons for taking this arbitrary starting point. One is retrospective and comes out of Hegel's more systematic, theoretical approach. On that approach, found in the *Logic,* there is an argument to the effect that the logic of the concept (aptly called by Hegel the "subjective" logic) is that of correct inferences and mappings of various coherences. A subject is an entity that, to put most abstractly, moves in the space of such reasons and is more than merely an individuated entity (as in "Being") that manifests itself in various appearances and causes itself to act by virtue of its intentions (as in "Essence"). A subject is both of those things, but as living in a normative space, it is also not just those things, and its self-conception of itself as such a normative creature changes the way it thinks of its individuation and of the way it manifests itself.[9] A self-conscious subject is not just an individuated being causing itself to act with an element of self-consciousness and rationality added onto it. Our being is transformed by our self-consciousness. We are rational animals, not animals with rationality bolted down onto our organic lives.[10] Although we are what we are only in terms of a collective enterprise, we are also individuals who manifest our inwardness in certain ways and who are responsive to reasons (the logic of the concept), and ultimately to ideas of what it is to be a "true" subject (to which we shall return).

Ultimately, the logic of Hegel's *Logic* pushes it to an "Idea" of itself—roughly, the unity of metaphysical and more concrete concepts—as such an individuated normative creature that is embodied in a particular social

space in a historical period. When it acquires such an "Idea" of itself, agency becomes explicitly "subjectivity." That is just what first shows up as a live option, so Hegel thought, in Greece. The shape it specifically took was indeed contingent and shaped by all kinds of arbitrary factors, but the "elements" of such a conception of subjectivity as self-consciousness were now elements on the agenda of world history.

That itself at least raises the suspicion that it might just amount to little more than a kind of self-celebration, something like the idea that the real contribution of such past shapes of life was just to be the Mini-Me's of us. It also does nothing to assuage any further worry that however we judge the Greeks to be, it is a matter of huge amounts of historical contingency that those same Greeks were subordinated by the Romans, and that "Europe" resulted out of the cataclysms resulting from the collapse of Roman imperialism and the failures of feudal monarchy thereafter.

True Subjectivity?

The second reason for the arbitrary starting point in Greece has to do with the philosophy of history itself. Greece is Hegel's real starting point because it is the arbitrary place where, on his account, what became the agenda of world history began. It is in Greece that the concept of freedom makes its first appearance on the historical stage. It does this at first negatively, namely, as the concept of what it is that the slave has lost or that of which he is deprived (as in Aristotle's earlier cited dictum that "it is the mark of a free man not to live at another's beck and call").[11] It receives its positive meaning as "self-sufficiency," independence, which again is captured by Aristotle's fundamental conception that political justice is only to be "found among men who share their life with a view to self-sufficiency, men who are free and either proportionately or arithmetically equal."[12] To be independent, one had to be able to be free from dirty work and thereby able to participate as an equal in the life of the polis. Greek freedom thus ultimately meant "being your own person." However, Greek freedom not only was continuous with slavery, it required it. Greek practice simply obscured the fact that when all is said and done, that slavery is the subjection of people by force into being the tools and instruments of others.[13] In terms of the "Idea" of freedom, freedom as individual independence runs directly into the fact that

in the unity of concept and reality, some can be independent only if others are dependent on them.

The Greeks did not, of course, invent slavery. Many other societies used slaves (or at least some form of forced labor) to do the dirty work or perhaps even to give some people the pathological psychological pleasure of having the power to dispose of others. The Greeks, however, made it especially problematic to have slaves because they, the Greeks, also developed the ideas of freedom and political self-rule. For example, for Hegel, just as it was for many other commentators since, it was clear that Aristotle's defense of natural slavery (on the basis of some people lacking the capacity for full deliberation) ran headlong into conflict with Aristotle's own views that "since slaves are people and share in rational principle, it seems absurd to say they have no virtue."[14] Greek thought and Greek life ran into a nonavoidable conflict with each other, and it was not a conflict they could resolve within their own terms.

For that reason, although the Greeks came upon a novel concept, that of freedom, they did not have its true "Idea"—that "Idea" of freedom, Hegel says, "was not possessed by the Greeks and the Romans, Plato and Aristotle, also not by the Stoics. On the contrary, they knew that people were actually free only through birth (as citizens of Athenians or Sparta), or by way of strength of character, through higher education, or through philosophy (the wise are free also in chains and as slaves)."[15] They understood that being free was to be your own person, but they did not comprehend that one could genuinely be one's own person only in a world where all were entitled to be their own persons. In the Greek conception, one was free if one could participate as a citizen in the deliberations in the polis since only in such practice were one's actions the manifestations of one's own thoughts and not subject to the external authority of another person. No Greek citizen was required to say to another citizen, "Thy will be done." Such a status was possible for those citizens because of Greek slavery.

The Greek concept of subjectivity required freedom, and thus it also required slavery. The free person was free only in possessing authority over others who in turn had no claim to authority vis-à-vis him, but that freedom became fully real only when he was able with other such free men (women being excluded) to participate in the democratic participation in the polis. In that context, free of being commanded by any others in the polis, he was free to be his own person in terms of what he acquiesced in and what he

struggled for by means of speech and rhetoric and not violence. This tension-laden system was held together by an archaic sense of justice that depended on their being a cosmic order to things that laid out offices for each such that it underwrote the hope that if each were do what was absolutely required of them in their office, the whole would spontaneously harmonize with itself. Why that was the case and not something else was itself beyond the grasp of reason. It was just the way things eternally were.

The concept of free but natural agency thus took on a determinate historical shape. A just order involved equality, even though the cosmic order held that the natural differences among individuals mandated that those of different orders receive their due in highly different ways. Subjectivity assumed a particular historical shape: The true shape of subjectivity was for that view that of a self-sufficient male individual who emerged out of private life and actualized his freedom in his public participation in a small, face-to-face democracy in which the only rule was that of spontaneity and persuasion. Only such men manifested true subjectivity.[16]

Hegel's conception of true subjectivity rests on his conception of how subjectivity is established in his *Logic* as consisting of an individual substance occupying a principled space of reasons and exercising its powers within it. As this is fleshed out—as it is made more concrete, as Hegel would prefer to put it—it becomes the conception of a historically bound subject who, moving within a determinate social space, is constrained by her past, absorbed in her present web of commitments, and oriented to her future. The "Idea" of subjectivity is thus the concept of what would be the true realization of such a concept of subjectivity, that is, what would be the best actualization of such a concept in certain determinate historical conditions.[17] (This is Hegel's post-Kantian transformation of the Aristotelian conception of what makes for the most flourishing, best-realized conception of a human.) The concept of subjectivity, as living in a normative social space, cannot do without such a conception of what constitutes better and worse realizations of that concept since being a rational subject and bringing oneself under the concept of rational subject are one and the same for the self-conscious primates we are. Thus, he says what might otherwise be rather puzzling: "This Idea itself is as such the actuality of people, not something that they thereby *have* but something that they *are*."[18]

What undoes the Greek conception of subjectivity is the way it is pushed into its own ultimate unintelligibility. The Greek conception was, in the somewhat idiosyncratic Hegelian sense, not fully actual, that is, was not fully *wirklich* in that it did not have the right kind of effectiveness. It is not that its general "concept" of itself was at odds with itself in any obvious way (so that would show up clearly in an analysis of itself). It is that its "Idea" of itself—its concept as actualized, as the "unity of the concept and objectivity"—could not intelligibly be conceived. For the Greeks, as for the Romans, and as for most of European civilization (along with its offshoots in North and South America and the Antipodes), freedom meant command of others without being oneself commanded by them, and that conception was the worm in the apple for all of them.

It was a matter of contingency that Rome appeared on the scene, and it was equally a contingent matter that Rome took up various Greek achievements in the way it did. However, that it did set in motion a kind of logic to the Greek conceptions of self-sufficiency, freedom, and slavery. That much of Roman civilization survived through its transformation into Christianity is equally contingent. However, that path that was taken from pagan Greece to imperial Rome to Christian "Europe" had a logic to it which involved the development of a different ideal of justice as having to do with something new, the "infinite worth" of each individual, whether master or slave. As Hegel phrases it,

> For in the Christian world, the subject is not to be grasped as a mere accident of the divinity but as an *infinite end* in himself, so that here the universal end, divine justice in pronouncing damnation or salvation, may appear at the same time as an immanent matter, as the eternal interest and being of the singular individual himself. . . . in relation to God and in the Kingdom of God he is in and for himself an end in himself.[19]

However, that it was also equally contingent that this became the core as what came to be "Europe" turned out to be even more contingent than Hegel himself thought. The freedom-loving, loutish *Germanen* supposedly took up the central idea of Christian freedom and laid the roots for the

development of an infinite concern with justice into a concern with justice as realizing the freedom of all. They were, unfortunately, a myth.

Nonetheless, if Hegel's arguments about mastery and servitude work, they serve to show how the conception of freedom as complete independence (and thus as requiring command over others) itself breaks down under its own weight as it tries to make sense of itself especially in light of the resistance on the part of the oppressed or those who were left out of the story.[20] It also shows the very powerful motives that those who are "masters" would need to have to distract themselves and to obstruct any deep effort to make sense of themselves. Once the Greeks had put freedom on the map as a way of thinking about justice, there was a push toward justice as equality and as the mutual recognition of the freedom of all, an actualization of the ideal of each being "his or her own person"—or, in Hegel's own terms: "These rights, demanded in the name of what we have described as the absolute end of reason and as self-conscious freedom, are thereby classed as absolute ends like those of religion, ethics, and morality."[21] After that, it was a matter of contingency that "freedom" got taken up and worked into the web of commitments so that it became the watchword of modern life. There was no necessity in history that such events had to transpire the way they did, but there was a necessity to the argument that only such a conclusion would have made ultimate sense and would have represented progress in the comprehension of subjectivity.

The way things makes sense is a matter for the *Logic,* of what the conditions of intelligibility are in the first place. What the *Logic* cannot determine are all the particular ways and paths the items of world history had to follow for it to end up making sense in just that way. For the Hegelian system, it is a contingent fact about history that it does make such sense, but the way it makes sense is not itself a contingent factor.

In Hegel's radical historical view, the claim that "all are free" is retrospectively true even though in earlier periods, it could not be seen to be true, nor was it a practical possibility at those times. For those operating under the demands of an order of thoughts in which only "some are free," it seemed to be false that "all are free," and it was true in that specific practical order that not all were or could be in actuality free. So the thought would have gone: If the economy requires slaves, or if the feudal order requires natural subordination, then it simply could not be true that "all are free." What

turned out to be false was that order itself, and it came to be false when it could no longer be in self-agreement, when it broke down on its own terms. The older order of "some are free" failed not because it failed to live up to its ideal—in many ways, it more than succeeded and left in its wake great monuments to itself—but because its ideal turned out itself to be false. Only when "spirit" has changed and the resulting concatenation of passion and principle has also thereby changed, can it be actually true that "all are free," true not merely as a concept (a possibility) but as an "Idea," as a reality.[22]

Rather than arguing for an unchanging core to ethics or morality that is timeless, Hegel opts for the idea that the only timeless core is that of subjectivity in the more abstract conception to be found in the *Logic,* which itself develops the claim that such universal concepts must particularize themselves to be intelligible. We bring the form of self-consciousness (that is, of "being-for-itself") to bear on our lives, and that formal distinction makes us into rational animals, not just animals with rationality tacked on.[23] This is a "form" from which determinate contents follow historically. The moral dimension emerges out of the ways in which various shapes of life provoked within themselves struggles for recognition, which themselves distilled into arbitrary constellations of power and command (into various relations of mastery and servitude).

One of the innovations of the Greek world was in effect to provoke the establishment of "morality" as reasons whose authority binds all rational subjects, not just those of a more limited, "ethical" community.[24] However, as the concept of morality came more and more into conflict with the realities of politics—involving the structure of rulership and therefore of the real authority of command—the result was another innovation, that of the political ideal of "all are free," that nobody by nature was required to live under the arbitrary compulsion of another. What counted as justice shifted its shape from justice in a "cosmic order of things" to "justice as an organization of freedom," and that itself was embedded within the larger purpose of spirit's making sense of what it is to be spirit. The eternal "Idea" of justice is that of an order where everybody is where they are meant to be. In the modern world, that is an order that emerges from the institutional life of freedom and does not reflect a kind of cosmic ordering of things. (In what would most likely be surprising to Hegel himself, "justice as freedom" has since his own time even widened out into a critique of racial and gender injustice.)

Unlike the sphere of nature, history is the arena where "spirit"—as human collective mindedness—can innovate with regard to its truths. The laws of motion in nature remain true whatever spirit does, but the status of subjectivity depends on spirit's own work. For spirit, although not for nature, Hegel subscribes to Goethe's idea (which Goethe puts in the mouth of Faust): *Im Anfang war die Tat*—for history, in the beginning was the deed (and not the "word," as the Gospel of John has it).[25]

Justice and Self-Knowledge in History?

To put to work a metaphor that if pressed would pop like a soap bubble: Hegel has a kind of "big bang" conception of the development of the ethical and the moral. There is an unchanging principled core to subjectivity that underlies the way history developed so as to make it retrospectively true that each subject possesses an inherent standing. That core has to do with the "form of self-consciousness" that we bring to experience and action. He underlines this very point in his lecture notes:

> The religiosity and ethicality of a restricted sphere of life (for example, that of a shepherd or peasant) in their concentrated inwardness and limitation to a few simple situations of life, have infinite worth; they are just as valuable as those which accompany a high degree of knowledge and a life with a wide range of relationships and actions. This inner focal point . . . remains untouched [and protected from] the noisy clamor of world history, and not only from external and temporary changes, but also from those produced by the absolute necessity of the concept of freedom itself.[26]

This "untouched inner center" emerges as of "infinite worth" only in history as the emergence of human mindedness takes its shape, working out its relations of independence and dependence in the context of the natural dependencies already there in human nature. The "untouched inner focal point" is what, so Hegel thinks, is the "unmoved mover" of the value that rational subjectivity possesses.[27] It is where the argument stops in the normal regress of reason-giving. It functions a bit like a first principle, except that

what follows from it is what historically follows in the path-dependent course of events that make up human history.[28] The idea is that once moral beings have made their appearance on the planet, new areas of value show up that are not merely harms to interests or well-being narrowly conceived but show up as maltreatments of the things to which a rational being must be committed (that is, to those matters which they come to find in historical time are practically unavoidable). There is, however, no getting behind this principled core to derive it from some prenormative state. As Hegel scribbled in a note to himself, the formation of people into subjects "is historical, i.e., belongs in time, in the history before freedom."[29] There is no "basic action" that establishes at some identifiable point when human life becomes "spirit." As spirit, human life is always, already in historical time as a problem to itself.

For subjects to come to see themselves and each other as "infinite ends" required a struggle and a demand that others recognize them as such and that such a form of equal and reciprocal recognition required a proper institutional and practical context if it was ever to be real and not just a "mere" ideal. The Christian conception had us all as sons and daughters of God working to carry out the will of the father. In that context, we remained somewhat passive, receiving our due from a sovereign ruler. When we demanded recognition from others, we became agents, not merely passive recipients of justice. Subjects had to struggle to become equal, in which individuals become moral persons as well as being agents and demand that others treat them as such. Without that "inner focal point," that would not be possible. Without the development of the proper practices and institutions, it could never become actual. Without history, people could never become their "Idea."

The obscure origins of the history of reason-giving and reason-demanding primates are a metaphorical "big bang" of subjectivity.[30] That consists in bringing the "form of self-consciousness" to work within the context of rational animality. A metaphorical space of reasons has developed out of that origin into a mixture of logic and contingency, and new reasons appear as old ones go out of existence. Nor can just any ethical or moral set of considerations be developed. They emerge out of the human space of reasons, and they remain in it. The "universal" becomes more specific, and although the paths that particularization takes are contingent on a variety of

factors, the overall shape of the paths is subject to the demands of intelligibility. The concrete specifications of the more general normative demands of the "true" and the "good" depend on the kinds of things that do not show up, except at the most abstract level, in a *Logic*.[31] However, it is in the *Logic* that the concept of such a principled entity, a "thinking subject," is to be given its status as the "first principle"—the "infinite end" at work in history—and it is in the works that systematically follow the *Logic* that this principled creature takes shape as perceiving a world around it and as demanding recognition from other subjects.[32] (However, to finally pop the soap bubble: the space of reasons is not "expanding" as the universe seemed to do after the big bang. It has, however, been shape-shifting in terms of how it retrospectively reshapes itself.)

Hegel's insistence on the details of history is thereby not ancillary to his project. It is part of his theory that the relation between our most basic concepts and that of empirical reality is not in all cases that of a general rule and its applications. (That is an appropriate matter for the more day-to-day operations of the intellect, not for the kinds of metaphysical clashes that emerge out of the employment of our rational powers—it belongs to what he calls "the understanding," as distinguished from "reason.") What counts as a practical reason is the significance that things have for creatures, which depends on the possibilities open to such creatures, and since self-conscious subjects change their possibilities in history, what will be a reason for them will also change.[33] Reasons are thus part of life, not for any particularly metaphysically abstruse grounds, but because significance (and the possibility of failure) only arise against the background of the development of life itself. On this view, the hare indeed has a reason to start running when it sees the hawk descending, and the mantis has a reason to move when it detects its prey. What neither the hare nor the mantis has is the ability to put those reasons into anything like an inferential articulation, a narrative account, or even a pictorial showing. That is a capacity that, as far as we know, only self-conscious primates possess. Only self-conscious primates can stich *"Gründe"* (reasons) into *"Vernunft"* (reason), not because "reason" is something that such primates "have" in addition to their self-consciousness. They are self-conscious reasoners, which is not an external property that these primates "have" but a statement of what they as self-conscious primates "are." As Hegel himself states it, people "are" their "Idea."[34] Their

"Idea" is always full of tensions and potential breakdowns. Reason's metaphysical clashes become in history the clashes we have about who we, the genus that is aware of itself as a genus, are.[35]

What renders such self-conscious primates so very problematic is that they are also historical creatures, whose possibilities change for them by virtue of the institutions and practices they themselves develop, and who therefore make what counts as a reason into a moving target for reason itself. What counts as a reason for them depends on what possibilities they have, which depends on the kinds of bodies they have and on where they stand in a historical line. In each of those developments, subjectivity has a kind of Aristotelian "functionalist" standing: what it is to be a good subject is to be he or she who fulfills his or her function well, and that function of subjectivity itself concretely metamorphoses over historical time. "True" human subjectivity is that which fulfills its "function" best, and such a conception of "best" has developed in history. It reaches its high point of development when each person can be their own person, and that is possible only in certain types of social, moral, and political order.[36] In such social, moral, and political orders, there are the goods which constitute the elements of a satisfying life—a life, as we said, in which there are things of importance within the real powers of real subjects to achieve and thus are not merely possibilities available only in daydreams or ethereal longings for a better future.

It seems therefore that Hegel rejects a widespread and common conception of what it means to be in possession of concepts. On the commonplace view nowadays, possession of a concept means that one can use a word in the appropriate way—that is, a concept is thought to be something like a rule, and if one has mastered the rule and its application, then one is in full possession of the concept. Thus, if one can use the word, "moral," or "red," or "action" in comprehensible English (or the equivalents in some other language) in a publically approvable way, one fully possesses the concept. On that view, there can be, of course, expert users of concepts—only the lawyer can tell if you have really signed something that is a contract—but even in those cases, if one knows how to apply a given concept-rule in the appropriate speech situations, one is said to possess the concept fully.

Hegel holds, on the other hand, that at least for some concepts—those involving what he calls speculative thought, that is, the basic concepts that

make up the shadowy world of the "unconditioned"—there can be publically validated uses of the concept that are incomplete or not yet fully developed uses.[37] In those cases, one can use the word but not in the full sense, which itself only emerges at points in the future where it is more developed.[38] The concepts that fill out the speculative realm can be refined by being developed in ways that bring out implications and features that are not present in the original use, implications that only show up as the concepts are developed in practice.

Paradigmatic for this kind of development is the way in which the key concepts relating to the nature of subjectivity itself are developed in history. The original use of a concept for something having to do with the "unconditioned" is our conception of the object "in itself." As this conception of the object "in itself" develops in history, its internal tensions—even its contradictions—become more evident as the pressures such tensions put on self-conscious individuals and communities becomes less tolerable. As that happens, the concept itself comes up for grabs, and as it comes up for more contested use and development—as, in Hegel's language, it becomes "posited"—it comes to have features not originally present in its original usage but which build on and modify that usage. It is one thing to say that there have been basic conceptual changes in history—lots of people besides Hegel believe that—but, in many cases, these changes are conceived as responses to empirical difficulties with the concept, not the way in which use of concepts can be actualized in better or worse shapes. Rather, the speculative concepts themselves develop over time such that our possession of them discloses a different set of possibilities for us and thus a new concatenation of reasons.

The existent public criteria in any period for possessing a speculative concept and mastering it therefore do not exhaust its meaning. As these concepts develop historically, we sharpen and distill our grasp on the world they purport to disclose. The refinement of a concept "in itself" shows up as a refinement of our grasp of the authoritative nature of things, and, in Hegel's terms, therefore as a developmental grasp of the "absolute." Changes in the speculative concepts do not simply make explicit what was already there, nor are they the result of a more fine-grained analysis of the concept. Hegel puts this idea to use in his various metaphors hovering around the term, "organic": Failure, for example, to act on a reason has to be explained

in one way similar to the way we explain disease—as something lying in the nature of things that prevents (or places barriers to) the organism's fitting the standards the lie within its shape of life. In the case of rational subjectivity, some of the problems with subjectivity do not lie in external factors (as in disease) thwarting the appropriate functioning of our powers of knowledge and action. Our powers can be thwarted in themselves when they impose impossible conditions on themselves or make the lives lived in terms of those reasons unlivable. This is where dialectic arises, not when we simply find ourselves holding incompatible empirical commitments. On the Hegelian view, that our speculative concepts in some cases can be not merely changed but rather more nearly brought to completion in terms of their own logic is itself generated out of the practical failures of a purely rule-following conception of concepts.

For Hegel in particular, this move to a view of the use of terms that commits us to the surprising thesis that mastery of a "speculative" term does not mean that oneself or anybody else in one's social realm fully understands the term. The more nearly complete comprehension is something that arises out the failure of the rule-bound civilizations of the past to make a place for any kind of deeper criticism of the rules. (For Hegel, that takes place in his mythical versions of Africa, China, and India.) That these civilizations were not the rule-bound, rigid shapes of life that Hegel took them to be does indeed invalidate that part of his history but not his more general point, which has to do with the way in which Greek slave society put freedom at center stage and thus brought to full light the tensions between Greek political life, self-sufficiency, compelled labor, and the goods of individuality. At that point in history, the speculative concepts showed up in a more nearly full view, and that made a difference in the way those worries about making sense of things became embedded in the comprehension of power and empire in Rome, and in the failures of "Europe," as self-consciously fashioning itself in light of "Rome," to make good on such ideas.

It is out of those failures that the language of true subjectivity acquires its dynamic such that it becomes more self-consciously an open question about what it is to be a true subject. That puzzle about true subjectivity itself comes to center stage in modern life, where the term becomes articulated as freedom manifested in, variously and in different contexts, self-development, authenticity, and noninterference, and as it comes to understand that freedom

is part of being one's own person, being, as Hegel puts it, *"bei sich,"* at one with oneself, in one's actions.[39] That an infinite end can be specified in many different ways is at the heart of an infinite end. That it has been specified in these ways, such that there is a story of limited progress to be told cannot be read off of a mere analysis of that end. It requires turning to the facts of history to see if that kind of philosophical significance can be found in it, but one must have an account of what philosophical significance is in order to see if we find it.[40]

On Hegel's account, the movement of European history has led to the view that what turned out to be really at work in its background is a struggle over and a concern with justice, which in its development in history has turned into a conception of justice as requiring freedom.[41] The demand for justice eventually became a demand for emancipation.

This freedom within justice is not a finite goal for which, for example, current people must be sacrificed, since such a sacrifice in fact contradicts the concept of justice itself as it has developed. Nor is justice a goal like happiness, for which some will almost certainly have to be made unhappy so that others can be happy. Nor is it even something like Aristotle's infinite end of *Eudaimonia*. In fact, Aristotle, like all the ancients, thought that for this end to be actualized, some would have to be denied such flourishing, and even perhaps some have to be incapable of achieving it at all, namely, the natural slaves.[42] There is nothing in the logic of *Eudaimonia* that implies that all must have it. The defectiveness of that interpretation meant, or so Hegel argues, that the ancients really did not understand freedom very much at all in failing to see its connection to universality and therefore justice in a broader sense.[43] The ancients, so we could put it, had conceptions of freedom, but they did not comprehend it. For them, it was ultimately an awareness of what slaves lost and what it was that those who were not slaves possessed. They did not fully articulate that view, and thus, they lacked its proper "Idea." It follows from what Hegel says, since for him, "the only difference between African and Asiatic peoples and those of Greece, Rome and modern times is just this: That the latter know that they are free, that this exists for them. The former are also free, but they do not know it, and they do not exist as free,"[44] and since the "Idea" of freedom "was not possessed by the Greeks and the Romans, Plato and Aristotle, also not by the Stoics,"[45] it follows that once "the new, final banner was unfurled . . . that of the flag of

the free spirit which is at one with itself . . . the flag under which we serve and which we bear,"[46] the major turning point in world history has to do with the advantages gained by modern Europeans who have come to comprehend the "eternal justice" of their world as consisting in a kind of commitment to the equal freedom of all. It is modern history—roughly that starting around 1687 or 1789, depending on whether one marks it at Newton's *Principia* or the French Revolution—that forms the most distinctive breaking point in history.

The Building Blocks of the Modern World?

Hegel was not, however, arguing that everything was therefore completely in order in the modern world. What he was after was the nonetheless audacious claim that in modern Europe as a whole, all the relevant parts, as it were, were in order and ready for assembly for a more nearly reconciled life. The particular "elements" for assembly consisted of the modern doctrines of rights to life, liberty, and property; the idea of a universalistic morality that relies heavily on finding one's place in a universal moral system; and the more determinate social formations of the modern family, civil society, and constitutional state that anchor the lives within those practices and give them a determinate purpose and shape. These "elements" make up the body of the considered moral and ethical judgments of modern people and the proprieties of the practices in which they are engaged.

In particular, he thought that although "rights" and "morality" were more or less the cornerstones of the building blocks of modern life, the shapes of ethical life (family, civil society, and state) were also the fundamental ways in which a modern shape of life could get a grip on human passions such that it would matter—and matter deeply—to people whether they lived in a modern world. Modern morality is fundamentally monadic in its structure. It represents the will "reflected into itself," defining its own rules of the right. Our relations to others within the modern "moral" system is thus mediated via these monadically understood obligations as resting on something like a system of rules. In its own self-understanding, the modern moral subject is thus fundamentally aimed at the status of rational independence and is thus ultimately driven to asserting claims about inviolable personal conscience as to how these monadically understood moral rules are to

be interpreted and how they are to result in determinate obligations. On the other hand, in "ethical life," we have dyadic relations embodied in practices that enact the ways in which we are deeply dependent on others even for this very moral independence. Ethical relations are more like relations of justice—the "greatest" of the virtues," as Aristotle called it—as the ways in which we express and live our dependencies on others in nonetheless free ways. Ultimately, the motivations for the system of morality, taken as finding one's place in a universal system of rules, end up aiming at something abstract such as "the good," but that motivation itself withers when it is divorced from more determinate, "dyadically" conceived goods. Only such dyadic goods—those of ethical life, *Sittlichkeit*—can make the motivations to place oneself truly in the space of reasons within the system of universalistic morality and can thereby sustain such moral motivation. The form of self-consciousness, reflected into itself and striving to be moral from within its own resources, is driven out of itself to the goods presented to the will by others, and, as self-consciousness, both responds to those goods and is aware of itself as responding to those goods without there having to be any further reflective act. Hegel remarks that "from these reasons the moral must be taken into account prior to the ethical, although the moral puts itself forward in ethical life, as it were, only as an illness of the ethical."[47] To respond to moral reasons as reasons, one needs the practices of "ethical life" as embodying a kind of self-conscious practical know-how as involving the form of self-consciousness without there having to be a separate reflective act of consciousness.

Hegel's claim was not that the goods to be found in those ethical shapes represented something that people naturally wanted, nor that they seamlessly fit certain natural passions, but that they gave an appropriate purposiveness to an intelligible and concrete shape of life within the conditions of modernity. They took on the logical shape of self-conscious "life" for those people. Just as the natural species defines the goods for the individuals that fall under it, *Geist*, or self-conscious life, divides itself into various self-conscious "species"—the shapes of ethical life—within which certain matters function as the good of that "species." For Hegel, the modern bourgeois family, for example, and the ethos surrounding were not the natural expressions of some deep unchanging human nature. The bourgeois family did, however, give a determinate shape to sexual desire, to the demands of children

and child raising, to issues of fidelity and trust, to the issues of faithfulness in generational continuities, and so forth. The shape it supposedly provides makes sense within (and only really within) the larger context of modern life and its other goods (the rule of law, constitutionalism, civil society, progress in the arts and sciences, etc.) along with its fitting into a scheme of rights and morality. Likewise, the characteristic virtues and vices of the modern subject where "careers are open to talent" and where the competitive nature of a market economy puts pressure on the development of one's character is not something that is natural to humans, such that barring some type of external obstacle, people will naturally develop into those kinds of characters. Such characters are integrally related to the bundle of goods that form the basic purposes which constitute such a society, and with issues about whether it is even good at all to be such a person, or whether such a life is ultimately genuinely inhabitable.

Hegel's view is thus neither the naïve nor the utopian view that, in the right social arrangements, duty and desire neatly fall into line with each other in such practices. His view is rather that the goods, rights, and duties embodied in the practices and institutions surrounding the modern family, the hurly-burly of market-driven civil society, and the contested politics of a constitutional state give people various ends that together structure a satisfying life that fully expresses both our independence from, and dependence on, each other. Parents may, for example, be frustrated with the recalcitrant child and may even feel aggrieved that because of that, they cannot do what they want to do; but on Hegel's terms, they can feel "satisfied" that in attending to the children's needs, they have acted in light of important ends to which they have committed themselves and that those ends can stand up to the acid test of reflection if they are so subjected. They are free in that they have made what really matters in the world into effective elements of their own lives, and for them to do that, a certain ensemble of passion and principle must be in place. That is, in carrying out those ends, they most likely have run up against the grain of certain desires of their own from time to time, but they have performed actions that mattered, that were up to them, for reasons of which they were conscious, and which, from the standpoint of a whole life, make sense (so that they have not committed themselves to a fool's errand). In acting on them as ends, sometimes in accordance with their other wants and sometimes not, they display and actualize their freedom.

They are at one with themselves in all the divisions and fissures that such a life brings with it.

It is a central part of Hegel's thesis that the concrete form in which justice is given a determinate shape and put into practice depends on the shape of life—the shape of "spirit"—in which it is enmeshed. The necessity that follows from the "Idea" of the proper and good ordering among people—of what counts as the proper order in a world containing subjects who are free—is different in a Greek conception of there being a cosmic order to things and the modern conception of subjects living in a disenchanted world. In one respect, it amounts to Hegel's own historicizing of Aristotle's claim that the virtue of citizens is relative to the constitution in question.[48]

The conclusion that one can draw from Hegel's conception of the modern concept is that just as the "master" and "servant" at the initial stages of the *Phenomenology* may be coming at each other from different systems, by virtue of the struggle, their own subjectivity (and therefore the final ends guiding their lives) become implicated with each in a shared enterprise. After the European imperialism of the nineteenth century had extended its grip all over the world, world history became even more definitively "world" history, even in a way that Hegel himself could not—and perhaps even did not want—to grasp. Just as the destinies of master and servant had become inseparable in his own system, the destinies of the world's people became more closely intertwined.

To many of Hegel's contemporaries, it was certainly not at all clear whether all the "elements" he singled out were themselves in order and, for many, it was not clear that these were indeed the right "elements" at all. Moreover, there were competing ways—both theoretical and practical—as to how these "elements" were to be combined and what, if any, the relations of subordination should be among them. The elements are what is given to us by history, and there are obviously different ways of arranging them into a picture of what modern life should look like. Utilitarianism, for example, offers one way, a holistic-oriented balancing and weighing of competing goods offers yet another, and Kantian theories of the "right" offer yet another way, and so forth.

Hegel took it as the task of his own philosophy to aid in resolving that question of how the "elements" are to be understood and ordered. (That is

why his book on the topic, the *Philosophy of Right,* claims to provide the *"Grundlinien,"* the base, as it were, on which a solid figure stands, or to shift the metaphor, the baselines in which a game is played.) The various "elements" are given a systematic treatment in terms of what significance they have for people operating within those practices with their associated values such that their attempts to make sense of what they are doing, as that takes concrete shape in practical activity and of what it means to be engaged in such a practice, can be put into a systematic shape. Hegel's own theory is, of course, one account of how these building blocks—these basic collective ends—are to be combined, how are they are to be explicated, and so forth, but it may not be the only account, and his own account is at least relatively independent of his account of how history led to this.[49]

Hegel's systematic account of how the "elements" were to be combined with each other was intended to show that certain combinations should be seen as rationally ruled out (and that failure to do so theoretically would eventuate in some kind of practical failure in the world of institutions and practices). Shapes of life that think of themselves as operating in a social space bounded only by exercising and respecting the basic rights of life, liberty, and property will find themselves in practical situations that are always threatening to descend into futility unless they move on to understanding themselves as not merely exercising and respecting rights but also as acting and judging from a moral point of view. Once they have taken on that extended understanding of what they are doing, they also change their understanding of what they were doing in the first place. The initial self-understanding is thereby "sublated"—it is put aside in its original form and preserved in a new form.

Hegel's own more daring claim was that a group that only understood itself as a community of moral subjects respecting each other's rights would itself generate its own contradictions unless it were associated with a more comprehensive view of how moral practice works in a social order of families, markets, civil associations, and representative constitutional government. In other words, only the whole consisting of rights, duties, and social goods would turn out to be intelligible, even though that particular whole had the elements it had because of the particular shape history had taken. Moreover, those elements and their arrangement were not just a fortuitous outcome.

That arrangement had an intelligibility to itself as resulting from the fortuitous circumstances of history. Such an order would be just and would be the proper "habitat" for the kinds of rational subject-primates we are.

Hegel was not making the argument that the world in which he lived was therefore already in order. Much of it was obviously not. As Hegel himself noted about the accusation against his own philosophy that it assumed everything was in a nice and tidy arrangement: "And who is not clever enough to see a great deal in his own surroundings which is in fact not what it ought to be?"[50]

To take one of the more salient ways in which the "Idea" can be at odds with itself: For centuries, people in the West (and beyond) took slavery to be problematic yet nonetheless legitimate.[51] The conventional wisdom, including that of some of the most prominent philosophers, was that the economy, the social world itself, simply could not work without such forced labor. In Hegel's own day, North America proclaimed itself to be the land of freedom, but its freedom rested on its use of its slaves. So Hegel's account went, the contradiction at work in such modern slave societies—between slavery as an economic necessity and a moral evil—had now, historically, been shown to be "sublated." The roots of the breakdown of the modern slave society were therefore now firmly planted. The "Idea" with its norm that "all are free" was at odds with the purported reality of the economic and social world—the so-called fact that some must forced to labor for others, and they do this best when they are owned as tools for the satisfaction of other's purposes. As the "Idea" had developed, that so-called fact came to be seen as what it was, namely, as merely a so-called fact, that is, not a fact at all. There was no possibility of reconciling the reality of slavery with the "Idea" of freedom.[52]

This of course did not mean, nor did Hegel take it to mean, that the slave societies of the new world were going to immediately vanish. The powerful economic interests of slave owners and of those who, although they did not own slaves, still benefitted from the goods that a slave society could offer them, meant that slavery would have to be abolished by force, not merely by argument. The institutions of American southern slavery also meshed well with the modern financial tools of free-market societies, so there was no "modernist-economic" impulse per se coming in from the outside to undo slavery.[53]

Nonetheless, however powerful the interests of the slave owners were and however much it suited others not to think about it, the practice no longer made any moral sense except for those for whom freedom still meant that others had to be radically dependent on them. Nor did Hegel take it to mean that markets on their own did all the work needed and could be relied upon to bring to an end that kind of human and moral horror. He certainly thought that for a market to be part of a "civil" society—a society based on decency in interaction—there had to be regulations on the working of the market that protected water supplies, food supplies, attended to public health and, among other things, continually restructured itself away from the practices of misleading and exploitative exchanges. Hegel took himself to have shown that the enduring ancient argument—that slavery's economic necessity simply had to be acknowledged alongside any squeamishness about its moral disagreeableness in some kind of "it is necessary, so make the best of it" way—had already fallen apart.[54] The economic necessity of slavery could no longer be a real issue, and its moral horror was clear to those thinking rationally.[55] In effect, existing slave societies could at that point only appeal to the primitive self-interest of slaveholders and to spurious theories of "natural slavery," which had now become clearly indefensible in terms of any rational conception of human subjectivity.[56]

Necessity in History?

Did Hegel make his case for necessity in history? If he has made his case for these theses about self-consciousness, the necessity for its always taking a determinate shape (Hegel's claim about the unity of the universal and the particular), about its determinate shape arising in a path-dependent way; and if his investigation of the facts supports the view that we have moved from a world in which there was no real "Idea" of freedom to a world in which the "Idea" is that "all are free," then his philosophical interpretation of history as developing different metaphysics of subjectivity can stake a claim for itself. It is more than simply an interpretative claim that from the standpoint we now occupy in the temporal river, we can make a plausible case that this is what it has all been about. It is the more audacious claim that a certain kind of "absolute" has come into view, and that is the view of the infinite end at work in all human life and in history itself. In saying that the

state is the "absolute purpose of reason," Hegel is not engaging in state worship (although in light of later developments, he certainly could have used less inflammatory language).[57] He is rather saying that the modern concatenation of rights, moral duties, and social goods that are held together by something like the modern constitutionalist state is itself a rational end, something that can inform a whole variety of individual actions without all particular persons actually having its as her intention to promote just that end. The purpose of modern life is, in part, to effect the transition from individuals as those who are subjected to a royal or aristocratic order into "citizens" of a modern state, and there can be no citizens without such states. The state, as the "final purpose" of such life, sets the boundaries of what enterprises are rational. If one of the conditions of practical reason is that he who wills the end must will the appropriate means, the other enterprises of modern life that would make it impossible to sustain the aim of equal citizenship—such as lack of appropriate means of life or the denial of basic rights—must be acknowledged to be irrational. For Hegel, patriarchal families were one such irrational enterprise.[58]

Hegel himself recognized that the abstraction, "the state," was itself perhaps too thin to secure allegiance to itself, and thus he thought that the additional motivation for giving allegiance to such an abstraction had to come from the appropriate religion as the realm of "feeling" or "passion" so that a workable conception of a wider, shared good could get a grip within the fragile psychologies of individual people. The possibility that such passions might become murderous had, he thought, been securely circumscribed by the exhaustion brought on by the carnage of the "wars of religion" in Europe. As a result, confessional pluralism was now an accepted fact of life, or at least so he thought, and the more violent motivations brought on by religious difference had thus been effectively silenced. The hindsight afforded to later generations lets us see that Hegel rather substantially underestimated the potential for murderous violence that the nation-state under the cover of "nationalism" could provoke. However, that the state, taken on the model of the European nation-state, might have outlived its time in the sun is also compatible with its once having been the appropriate particularization of such an "infinite end." A different particularized concatenation of rights, morals, and goods might be the true "infinite end" at work in modern history since Hegel's time.[59]

If the philosophical case can be made that the post-Kantian conception of self-consciousness and its importance cannot be found fully explicitly in the premodern world, and if that conception of self-consciousness makes a difference to self-conscious beings about how they lead their lives or think about their own institutions (and if that is buttressed by the conception of subjectivity as embedded in a fundamental historicity about itself), then the case for such an infinite end at work in history can also be made.

However, Hegel did not make his case for Africa, Asia, and the other "Orientals" he groups with those he thought lived in merely "impulse-driven" or "rule-following" civilizations. Since he got that part wrong, a substantial portion of his philosophy of history is deficient in terms of the measures Hegel himself set up to evaluate those claims. Indeed, if there are different structures of subjectivity at work in those shapes of life, then the philosophical comprehension of history would also have to change. Hegel would have to go back to the drawing board. This would greatly affect his claim to necessity in history: If the "Africans" and "Orientals" were not just failed rule-followers, then it remains entirely possible that a better examination of their own history would put different conceptions of subjectivity on the table for philosophical consideration. It would also mean that Hegel's view of the "elements" for the assembly of the modern world need a better case for themselves than Hegel has made. That they are what European history had handed down to itself by 1820, and that they were rational developments out of earlier European failures, would not be enough. That consideration would show that his system is still open, not merely in that it not the "end of history," but that it is not closed off even in the ways Hegel himself might have thought it was.

There are, of course, a good many of Hegel's other more specific theses that do not fare well in later light. Fortunately, Hegel himself already built a case for his other major philosophical conclusions about whether in our accounts of the world, we must move from substance to subjectivity—that we may not be content to make sense of things without having to make sense of making sense—and it is there that his core claims about history stand or fall. Our self-conscious lives began long ago with a comprehension of ourselves as "substance," as natural beings and as part of the larger cosmic order of things, and under the pressures we have put on ourselves, we have been compelled to understand our lives also as "subject," as agential,

self-conscious, and bound to each other. History itself is about the particulars and details of that past and how it came to be practically unavoidable to see ourselves as "subject."

Hegel's account avoids falling into a careless historicism by virtue of its appeal to the infinite ends at work in subjectivity, but it maintains its strong historicist commitment by virtue of the way in which Hegel takes himself to have shown that the universal has to particularize itself—a thesis we could formulate rather abstractly as the notion that for speculative (philosophical) concepts, meaning is determined by use but not exhausted by use, such that within a certain historical development, such concepts can be developed into better actualizations. Hegel's type of philosophical history is not an a priori theory about how those historical particulars were necessitated to line up with each other, nor is it some happy-talk Whig account of progress, nor is it a self-congratulatory tale of progressive enlightenment and error-correction, nor is it the explication of any laws of history or any claims about how various regimes inevitably converge at some final point or inevitably lead to a certain result.[60]

It is rather an examination of the metaphysical contours of subjectivity and how the self-interpreting, self-developing collective human enterprise has moved from one such shape to another in terms of deeper logic of sense-making and how that meant that subjectivity itself had reshaped itself over the course of history. It is not a thesis about what constitutes true causality in history, nor is it even a thesis that unintelligibility causes such breakdowns. Hegel's philosophy of history is concerned with what various things mean to subjects, individually and collectively, in the historical configurations into which they are thrown. Subjects may indeed be caught in the wake of forces that they cannot control or only vaguely understand, and they may be operating in terms whose implications they do not fully grasp or comprehend at all. However, the Hegelian concern is with what it means for those subjects to be caught in that vortex yet still be acting self-consciously, and not with determining the causal conditions of the vortex into which they might be thrown.

The Hegelian philosophy of history argues that there is progress in history in the area concerning the bases of human subordination and the sense in which agents acquire and sustain an understanding of recognition—the Hegelian shorthand of "from one is free to some are free to all are free."

That in turn requires a comprehension of what it is to be a subject in the first place, and, so Hegel's thesis goes, that is itself, surprising as at first it sounds, a social and historically indexed status. In philosophical history, different shapes of subjectivity itself show up for our view. In such a philosophical history, we come to comprehend the reason why some things are on the ethical and moral agenda and why some things fall off the agenda altogether and what difference falling off and on makes to the rationality of what is left on the agenda, since we should, by the end, have a more comprehensive understanding of what concatenations of subjectivity go best with what kinds of institutions and practices.

The necessity that is to be found in history as philosophically comprehended is only that of the necessity of making sense of things and making sense of making sense and whatever necessity those two activities bring in their wake. These views about subjectivity depend on Hegel's more speculative claim that the "universal particularizes itself," that the sense of subjectivity we seek cannot be determined apart from the ways in which it has been concretely embodied. Philosophy as done only by the philosopher and history as done only by the historian turn out, in the Hegelian story, each to be one-sided. In those matters, the "abstract" and the "decidedly concrete" are the two sides that require the full coin for each to be intelligible. Each answers the question, "What does it mean to be human?" from different angles, and only the two together add up to a real figure.

History at first looks like what Hegel calls the "bad infinite": "A vast spectacle of events and actions, of infinitely varied constellations of nations, states, and individuals, in restless succession."[61] But, so Hegel's claim goes, as we understand the principle of the series—the infinite end of collective self-comprehension and different ways of being a human subject—the series becomes intelligible, not in all its details and certainly not in terms of predicting the future. We simply comprehend its point as it has emerged in the series itself: Self-comprehension of what it is to be a temporal, self-conscious being and a struggle over the right terms of our lives with each other. This takes shape in the various "shapes of spirit," the concrete concatenations of human biological and cultural life as these shapes themselves shift their shape over the centuries. As the people living though these developments and unfoldings try to make sense of this, they give shape to an "Idea" that itself ultimately has come to take the shape of justice as based on the principle

that "all are free." This is a freedom in which a modern form of independence has taken root within a modern web of dependencies which is the very condition for that kind of independence and which is only real, effective—"actual," as Hegel would say—within those webs of dependencies. In its paradigmatic modern form, such a relation to self is mediated everywhere by our relations to others and within which ultimately the reality of being one's own person in civil, decent concert with others as mediated by the right set of institutions and practices is the object of the satisfactions of social and individual existence. To comprehend that requires looking at the details of the paths on which we are dependent for having brought us to where we are, whenever we undertake to determine what we might become. Even though justice and freedom have very rarely been front and center in the "restless succession" of human history, nonetheless, as components of a conflicted striving for collective self-comprehension and thus for recognition, they have emerged as what the struggles have all been about.[62]