Cultural Memory in the Present

MOURNING SICKNESS

HEGEL AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Rebecca Comay

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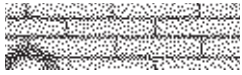

Mieke Bal and Hent de Vries, Editors

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Hegel and the French Revolution

Rebecca Comay

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For Emilio and Yoyo

Catastrophe—to have missed the opportunity.

WALTER BENJAMIN, *Passagenwerk*

Contents

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Abbreviations

Where a citation gives both German and English sources, the relevant quotation is from the existing English translation, occasionally modified.

Ak	Immanuel Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften* (facsimile of the standard "Akademie" edition of Kant's works published by the Königlich-Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1902–), 23 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968–)
AP	Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798), trans. and ed. Robert B. Louden (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006)
CF	Immanuel Kant, *Conflict of the Faculties* (1798), in *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and ed. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
CJ	Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)
CPrR	Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), in id. *Practical Philosophy,* trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
Enz	G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (*Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*) (1817–1830), 3 vols., in id., *Werke*, vols. 8–10. References to the Encyclopedia will be given by paragraph number, except where the length of the paragraph justifies including a page number. The supplementary "additions" (*Zusätze*) incorporated into the later editions of the work will be indicated by the abbreviation *Z* after the paragraph number, while Hegel's "remarks" (*Anmerkungen*) will be indicated by *A*.

EPW *The Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, ed. and trans. Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

ETW G. W. F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox et al. (1948; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971)

KA Friedrich Schlegel, *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, ed. Ernst Behler et al. (Munich: F. Schöningh, 1958–2006), 35 vols.

MM Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), in id., *Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

PhG G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), in id., *Werke*, vol.3; trans. A. V. Miller as *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). All references to this text will be by paragraph number.

PhH G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (1837; New York: Dover, 1956)

PhM G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind. Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830), trans. William Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971)

PhNa G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature* (1830), 3 vols., ed. and trans. M. J. Petry (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970)

PhR G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1820), ed. Allen Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

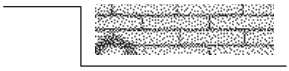
PP Immanuel Kant, "Toward perpetual peace" (1795), in id., *Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

RR Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793), trans. George di Giovanni, in Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

Schriften Novalis, *Schriften. Die Werke Friedrich von Hardenbergs*, eds. Paul Kluckholm and Richard Samuel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1960–1988), 6 vols.

SE	Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, ed. and trans. James Strachey et al., 24 vols. (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953-74)
TP	Immanuel Kant, "On the common saying: that may be correct in theory, but it is of no use in practice" (1793), in id., *Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
VGP	G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 3 vols., in id., *Werke*, vols. 18–20
VPG	G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, in id., *Werke*, vol. 12
VPR	G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts: Die Vorlesungen von 1819/20 in einer Nachschrift*, ed. Dieter Henrich (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983)
Werke	G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke*, 20 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970)

MOURNING SICKNESS



Introduction

French Revolution, German Misère

> Only our most distant descendents will be able to decide whether we should be praised or reproached for first working out our philosophy before working out our revolution.
>
> HEINE, *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany*

A well-rehearsed story about German intellectuals around 1800 goes something like this. Gazing across the Rhine at the chaos and carnage, German philosophy congratulates itself for having preempted such turmoil on its own soil. Germany doesn't need that kind of revolution: it has already experienced a far more shattering one of its own. Having long established its own brand of radicalism in the form of the Protestant Reformation, Germany has already outstripped, at a spiritual level, anything the French could accomplish in practical terms.

Having successfully gone through its own upheaval, Germany recognizes its own image in the French revolutionary struggle and is poised to extract from the Revolution an energy blocked to those caught up in its whirl. This affinity allows it to affirm solidarity with the Revolution and even to enjoy a vicarious thrill in its terrors, while managing to soften its ultimate impact. Germany lays claim to the revolutionary legacy even as it denies any immediate link to the event. By insisting on its own radical pedigree, it is able to position itself as the French Revolution's predecessor, successor, and most faithful contemporary. It can celebrate, surpass, and mourn, at a distance, what was never its own to experience firsthand. The

project of German idealism—autonomy in all colors, shapes, and sizes—becomes the virtual precursor and prolongation of the political event.

Observing a thinly disguised blend of anxiety, envy, and schadenfreude, critics from Marx and Engels onward will declare such an attitude to be typical of the "German misery." *Die deutsche Misère*: the mélange of languages is suggestive, as so often in Marx, of a jarring dissonance—an intractable conflict between national cultures, between theory and practice, mind and body, contemplation and action, spirit and letter, and ultimately between historical epochs forced, both by circumstances and by magnetic attraction, into allergic proximity. *Misère* (the word, with its majuscule, is strictly speaking neither French nor German) stands here above all for a historical discordance. The Revolution not only highlights the startling contrast between the breathtaking modernity of France and the general decrepitude of a Germany still mired in the swamplands of feudal absolutism—the various political, social, economic, and technological delays that seem to consign it to the backwaters of history—"a dusty fact in the historical lumber-room of modern nations."[1] It also throws into relief a persistent misalignment both between and within the various strands of German experience—a blend of intellectual precocity and political retardation that sets the pace for its peculiar transition to modernity. "We are the *philosophical* contemporaries of the modern age without being its *historical* contemporaries," Marx comments.[2] This discrepancy between theoretical audacity and practical docility—intense philosophical intimacy with an event that is regarded as either politically repugnant or pragmatically unthinkable—reveals far more than ambivalence, inconsistency, hypocrisy, or the regression of German culture from the lofty heights of speculation into "beer-swilling philistinism."[3] (This last insult was recurrent in the radical literature of the 1840s, as the forces of repression and censorship swelled, revolutionary hopes sagged, and the cosmopolitan ambitions of German idealism gave way to virulent forms of nationalism and parochial self-interest. "A German's patriotism," writes Heine, "means that his heart contracts and shrinks like leather in the cold.")[4] The discrepancy points to a seemingly incorrigible temporal slippage. German history scans as a dissonant counterpoint of divergent rhythms running along separate tracks, each set to a different tempo and a different beat. Racing forever ahead of an event to which it can never catch up, forever Achilles to the tortoise, Germany, around 1800, presents the perfect model of historical nonsynchronicity.

Misère in this sense names not only a temporal but also a modal disturbance. It captures the chronic distemper or bad *mood*—in every sense—that marks German modernity as a repetitive failure of actuality and action. History no longer reveals itself as the progressive actualization of potentials within the causal continuum of time; it presents a minefield of counterfactual possibilities that become legible only retroactively in the light of their repeated nonrealization. Possibility can appear only as a lost possibility, a lapsed possibility, a ruined possibility, even an impossibility, and the future as already passed—the predicament is close to what Walter Benjamin will famously identify as "hope in the past." Germany is in the melancholic position of mourning the loss of what it had never experienced as such (it is only in losing the object that it establishes a relationship with it in the first place)—an "impossible mourning," in Derrida's sense. This is how Marx describes the sepulchral political atmosphere of the 1840s: Germany finds itself in the peculiar situation of having to suffer restoration without having gone through its own revolution; it encounters freedom only on the day of freedom's own funeral. "German history prides itself upon a development which no other nation has previously accomplished. . . . We have shared in the restoration of modern nations without ever sharing in their revolutions . . . we have only once kept company with liberty and that was on the *day of its burial*."[5]

The French Revolution in this way sets the tempo against which German history will henceforth read as a dreary chronicle of missed opportunities, expired deadlines, betrayed promises, and thwarted hopes. The absence of a "French Revolution" in Germany will, for Marxist (and not only Marxist) historiography after 1840, become the template for a series of historical elisions, reaching back to the short circuit of the Reformation (Luther's betrayal of his own radicalism in the face of the peasant rebellions) and pointing forward to two more centuries of fateful omissions and delays. The void produces a kind of negative force field or vortex into which so many other lapsed moments, both past and future, will be drawn. Through the prism of the Revolution, German history will appear as a rubble heap of missed opportunities, blocked potentials, and brutal regressions to the most authoritarian structures of the past (1525, 1815, 1830, 1848, 1870, 1918, 1945 . . .). The structure is strictly traumatic: Germany's experience of modernity is registered as a missed experience. The encounter with the French Revolution introduces anachronism—trauma itself—

as a henceforth ineluctable feature of historical and political experience. German philosophy around 1800 presents both the theorization and the ideological expression of this traumatic lateness: symptom, legitimation, consolation.

I'm not a historian. My intention is not to explore the empirical features of Germany's lateness—its delayed break with feudal absolutism, the delayed development of its bourgeois class, its delayed industrialization, its delayed unification as a nation-state, the delayed onset of its imperial enterprise, its delayed exposure to liberal democracy, and so on—or to mark the specific signposts along its "special pathway" to modernity: the infamous German *Sonderweg*. Such issues will emerge with particular starkness in postwar discussions of the persistent recrudescence of anachronism—the strange "noncontemporaneity of the contemporary" (Ernst Bloch)—that provided such a fertile climate for the growth of Nazism, for its peculiar culture of "reactionary modernism," and for its own perverse sense of revolution.[6] I won't be going there. Nor will I address the related topic of "divided memories"—the tug of competing genealogies, unmastered pasts, and unclaimed heritages that dominates recent historical discussion of the peculiarities of postwar and eventually post-Wall German culture. And by "trauma," I don't mean anything psychological.

My interest is philosophical: to explore trauma as a modal, temporal, and above all a historical category, with the "German misery" as its exemplary model and Hegel, of all people, its most lucid theorist. At the risk of abstraction I would hazard that the *Misère* identified by Marx is neither special nor German, or, rather, that we're all special: every family is unhappy, but in its own special way. We are all miserable—temporal misfits, marooned from our own present, burdened with a legacy that is not ours to inherit, mourning the loss of what was never ours to relinquish, driven by the pressure of secondhand desires, handed-down fantasies, and borrowed hopes. The German encounter with the French Revolution is an extreme case of the structural anachronism that afflicts all historical experience. The clocks are never synchronized, the schedules never coordinated, every epoch is a discordant mix of divergent rhythms, unequal durations, and variable speeds.

It is this traumatic dissonance that determines our fundamental sociability: because the present is never caught up to itself, we encounter history virtually, vicariously, voyeuristically—forever latecomers and pre-

cursors to our experiences, outsiders to our most intimate affairs. We are burdened with the unfinished projects of others, which impinge with the brutal opacity of "enigmatic signifiers"—untimely relics of a forgotten era and intrusive reminders of a future foreclosed. And we burden others in turn with the detritus of our own unfinished business. Simultaneously underachieving and overreaching (we demand at once too little and too much of ourselves), constantly racing ahead of what we know and yet forever lagging behind our own insights, we console ourselves for what we've missed, shrink back from what we've achieved, and strain to harmonize the disparate strands of our historical consciousness by supplying ourselves with imaginary pedigrees, family romances, and phantom solidarities. Historical experience is nothing but this grinding nonsynchronicity, together with a fruitless effort to evade, efface, and rectify it: we measure ourselves against standards to which we cannot adhere and that do not themselves cohere, and subject ourselves to timetables to which we cannot adjust and that we keep trying vainly to adjust. The experience of "revolution in one country" makes this syncopation painfully explicit.

This is why the French Revolution will remain the burning center of Hegel's philosophy: the event crystallizes the untimeliness of historical experience. The task of philosophy is to explicate this untimeliness. This is of course not the standard reading. Absolute knowing is usually either discarded as metaphysical flotsam (the "deflationary," usually liberal, approach) or reviled as an exercise in legitimation—a final recalibration of the clocks in some kind of unitary present in which the burden of the past is discharged and its uneven rhythms adjusted to the measure of universal progressive history. Hegel's "Protestant" interpretation of the French Revolution has for this reason usually been taken to be either foolishness or symptomatic of the German ideology—an attempt to sublimate the event as a "glorious mental dawn" whose light shines most splendidly in the twilight zone of philosophical reflection.[7] (This was the caricature initiated by the left Hegelians in the 1840s and made popular by Jürgen Habermas in recent times: Hegel loves the French Revolution so much he needs to purge it of the revolutionaries.)[8] But Hegel forces us to take seriously the logic at work in this ideology. He lays out the traumatic structure clearly in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), and pursues its consequences to the end. Ideology arises from the very structure of experience: it expresses the opacity that binds us together as human. Consciousness is

nothing but its own noncoincidence with itself—a repetitive struggle to define and position itself in a world to which it will not conform. Anachronism is its signature: experience is continually outbidding itself, perpetually making demands that it (i.e., the world) is unequipped to realize and unprepared to recognize, and comprehension inevitably comes too late to make a difference, if only because the stakes have already changed. Absolute knowing is the exposition of this delay. Its mandate is to make explicit the structural dissonance of experience. If philosophy makes any claim to universality, this is not because it synchronizes the calendars or provides intellectual compensation for its own tardiness. Its contribution is rather to formalize the necessity of the delay, together with the inventive strategies with which such a delay itself is invariably disguised, ignored, glamorized, or rationalized.

This is why, for Hegel, the French Revolution will remain a "knot" (*Philosophy of History*)—it leaves a residue for future generations. Although my reading differs from conventional readings that deplore the capaciousness of absolute knowing—its ability to absorb and profit from the most recalcitrant material (evil, idiocy, excrement, etc.)—it is not my ambition to point to some kind of inassimilable remainder to the system, a moment of excess or exteriority to reason. My aim is rather to explore the ways in which the seeming exception constitutes the norm: revolutionary negativity is simultaneously a limit to experience and its paradigmatic logic. This is why the French Revolution appears at once unbridgeably distant and uncannily familiar.

Philosophy diagnoses the "German misery" even as it inevitably perpetuates it. Hegel shares the usual fantasies of his epoch, but adds a dose of clarity and critique to the ideological brew. This is what makes him singularly interesting among his contemporaries. He shows how a fantasy can be simultaneously enjoyed and deconstructed. In the long-awaited (and strangely anticlimactic) finale of the "Spirit" chapter in the *Phenomenology*—this will be the topic of my final chapter—thinking will be forced to confront the costs of its own lateness.

Hegel's philosophy thus poses an immediate challenge. How to conceptualize lateness without assuming the stable reference point of a uniform and continuous time frame from which to take the measure of the delay? The issue is normative: can the concept of delay be thought without introducing a linear, additive, progressive—in every way *outdated*—model

of time and history? If the French Revolution is the epochal marker of modernity—a "world" event in that it sets the schedule and tempo against which past and future history is henceforth measured—this is not because it provides a fixed or objective (strictly speaking, ahistorical) standard of comparison, but rather because it introduces untimeliness itself as an ineluctable condition of historical experience. The "French" Revolution that provides the measure of "German" untimeliness is itself untimely. (Marx himself came to see this by the time he moved to Paris and began to contemplate the Revolution at closer quarters.) There is no right time or "ripe time" for revolution (or there would be no need of one). The Revolution always arrives too soon (conditions are never ready) and too late (it lags forever behind its own initiative). Like the short-lived decimal clock, the 10-day week, or the new republican calendar that was introduced belatedly, in the Year II, by order of the Convention (after weeks and months of vacillation about when the new era had actually started, what was to mark the beginning, what would establish the terms of measurement, and what exactly was to be commemorated), the Revolution immediately became obsolete. In this slippage both the finitude and the fecundity of the event come sharply into view. It is anachronism that produces both the singularity of the Revolution and its terrible insufficiency—both its irrepressible novelty and its insufferable need for repetition.

1

Missed Revolutions

Translation, Transmission, Trauma

". . . an impossibly speedy motion"

In 1792, the Enlightenment writer Joachim Heinrich Campe noted that after centuries of exposure, the Latin loanword "Revolution" remained a foreign body in the German language—inassimilable, without exact equivalent, a stumbling block to translation and appropriation. Despite the abundance of available German words conveying more or less the same idea ("upheaval," "rebellion," "overthrow," "insurrection"), attempts at paraphrase kept faltering. "Revolution" was neither *eindeutschbar* or *verdeutschbar*: despite its age, it could not be integrated, and despite its familiarity, it yielded no precise synonym. Campe reflects on the weighty sonority of the various German synonyms: *Umschwung, Umwälzung, Umänderung, Umschaffung*—thickly packed consonants sitting like boulders in the mouth, needing effort, patience, time to roll them over. German sounds move as slowly as German constitutions change: they trudge behind the open syllables of the romance language, just as German political life lags behind the lightning speed of French revolutionary transformation. Neither deed nor word could keep pace with this "impossibly light and speedy motion."[1]

The remark appears in Campe's prize-winning essay submitted earlier that year to a contest, sponsored by the Prussian Academy of Sciences, on the question, "Is complete purity of language possible in general and for the German language in particular?" Campe's response is a steamy nation-

alist manifesto proposing to purge the German language of foreign contaminants, a proposal he would almost immediately put into practice with an ambitious dictionary project of "Germanification" (*Verdeutschung*), in which he sought to replace, wherever possible, every word of foreign extraction (which meant at that time mainly French and Latin) with an existing German equivalent or, where necessary, a neologism.[2]

The issue was not a new one, although the terms of the antagonism were constantly shifting. The specific resistance to the French language easily goes back to a reaction against the prestige of French in eighteenth-century German court culture, while a more general antipathy to things Latin dates at least from the Reformation. Luther's translation of the Vulgate had explicitly set out to liberate the living spirit of Scripture from the deadly literalism of the Roman Catholic Church. The very idea of Germanness, *Deutschheit*, was already linked here to the proto-Enlightenment ideal of clarity and accessibility, *Deutlichkeit*—a publicity bound to the immediacy of oral speech and to the open circulation of street and market.[3] We might say that *Deutschheit* supplied the radiant middle term between the luminous poles of religion (Revelation) and reason (Enlightenment).

By the time Campe issued his salvo, the revolutionary wars were raging, and Germany's situation was perilous. "Germany is a state no more," Hegel would announce within a few years, adding that actually, strictly speaking, it never had been a state, not a real one, not a nation to live or die for, that it lacked the essential drive to unity, that at least since the Peace of Westphalia, if not before, the German nation had been in a condition of "organized statelessness"—a lifeless aggregate, a heap of stones—ravaged by its obdurate individualism, political fragmentation, and centrifugal tendency to dispersion.[4] This had been a common theme well before 1800. As early as 1667, Pufendorf had already remarked on the "irregular and monster-shaped body" of the Holy Roman Empire—awkward, ungainly, incurably weakened by "disease and convulsion."[5] Even the Reich's admirers noted its moribund condition—a "clumsy mass" (Johannes von Müller), a leaking ship (Friedrich Karl von Moser).[6]

Campe himself was no antirevolutionary. The same year the Prussian Academy commended his patriotism, the French Assemblée nationale paid tribute to his cosmopolitanism. In 1792, he was named honorary citizen of the newborn Republic for contributions to the *genre humain* (along with, among others, Friedrich Klopstock, George Washington, Thomas Paine,

and a certain "sieur Giller, publiciste allemand"—i.e., Schiller). In the summer of 1789, as the first wave of French émigrés was already streaming in panic toward Germany, Campe had traveled upstream to witness firsthand the "astounding drama" unfolding in Paris. For one rapturous year, he had relayed his impressions in a widely read series of open letters published in the liberal *Braunschweiger Journal*. Campe describes himself repeatedly as swimming against the current—pushing against a barrage of warnings from friends and family and even against his own initial sense of revulsion as he forces his way through the dank and depressing outskirts of Paris toward the effervescent city center. He describes the Revolution as an irresistible flood sweeping aside ossified ideas and structures, and transforming Frenchmen overnight into virtuous Greeks and Romans.

By 1792, the tide had turned, the roads of Europe were swarming with émigrés, refugees, and soldiers, the flood had begun to erode linguistic as well as geographical boundaries, and the German language was awash with foreign borrowings. Meanwhile, back in Paris, the slaughter had begun, and Campe, like most of his compatriots, had long decamped from the scene. His manifesto of 1792 is itself a testimony to the irresistibility of the French attraction, and not simply by virtue of its passionate intensity. Wieland remarks on the "linguistic Jacobinism" of the project. The strange rigor of Campe's proposal derives in large part from the French idea of sovereignty, with its norm of homogeneity, transparency, and legibility, and exhibits the general ambiguity of German cultural nationalism around 1800: how to construct an autonomy forged in the image of the oppressor?

By 1806, Napoleon's army would have conquered the territories on both sides of the Rhine, annexed Austria and Prussia, and put an official end to the thousand-year-old Holy Roman Empire and thus to Germany's symbolic claim, such as it was, to world-historical significance. The stakes had mounted. A year after the battle of Jena, Campe issues a second manifesto. If the French troops cannot be ejected, the Germans can at least take a cue from their example; they can turn back the invasion of foreign words that have burrowed through the ramparts of the German language, and extract from the restored transparency of their own language a consoling image of national integrity. Disaster can be converted into an occasion for spiritual renewal. The shattered nation will find refuge in the plenitude of the mother tongue. "In our times, which are pregnant with misfortune, or

rather have been in labor for years, bearing only ruin, [the German language is] the last remaining hope that the German name will not completely disappear from the annals of mankind, and the last reason to believe that future reunification in an autonomous people is a possibility."[7] Observe the gendered problematic: botched pregnancy and triumphant rebirth, grievous travail and fruitful labor—the miraculous regeneration of the body politic through an event of immaculate conception.[8] The *Fremdwort* is an indelible residue of rape and miscegenation. To secure the name and honor of the fatherland requires restoring the virginal body of the mother tongue by ejecting the bastard progeny of the foreign assailant. Linguistic purity might thus compensate for the loss of political autonomy—both a surrogate for and a conduit to national self-determination.

The theme is familiar. It would run through the rhetoric of the *Kulturnation* in pre-Bismarck Germany: the substitution of cultural for political accomplishment and the sublime conversion of practical impotence into spiritual triumph. Germany's insistence on its linguistic and spiritual immunity to foreign influence became most vocal at the moment when Germany itself was most tangibly and materially affected. By 1792, Germany's history would be inextricably embroiled with that of France. For Goethe, it was the battle of Valmy that inaugurated a "new epoch in universal history," insofar as the French Revolution would henceforth assume cosmopolitan, or at least European, and above all German proportions. The defensive revolutionary war against "the king of Bohemia and Hungary" would quickly take an expansionist turn, which would continue unabated for some fifteen years. For Germany in particular the experience of the French Revolution would become inseparable from the experience of military occupation. Napoleon's announcement, after Brumaire, that the Revolution was "finished," its essential principles secured, would be swiftly followed by a series of conquests that paved the way for the imperial refashioning of Germany and its precipitation into a modernity as pervasive as it was unprepared.

After the defeat by Napoleon, the search for intellectual capital to offset Germany's political submission would take the form of a cultural nationalism that evoked the most potent of the Revolution's resources—universities would be restructured, museums would be founded, national heritages invented—and the ambiguities of the project would become manifest, above all in Prussia. By reinventing itself as a unitary spiritual

collective, Germany would not only survive the humiliation of foreign occupation but profit from the unprecedented opportunity that this presented. Cultural reform would prepare the nation for the dramatic social innovations that accompanied Napoleon's arrival by forging a citizenry equipped for the liberal institutions of the modern age. It would allow Germany to absorb the fruits of the French Revolution without having to undergo the turmoil of actual revolution. (This was the liberal version of German cultural patriotism around 1800. There were, of course, reactionary versions, but those are not important for my narrative.)

Fichte's notorious *Reden an die deutsche Nation* [*sic*], delivered in the winter of 1807/1808 in French-occupied Berlin, is exemplary and just the counterpart of his earlier Jacobin manifesto, which it vehemently repudiates. The burying of the dead letter of French culture—mechanization, stagnation, infection (the mixed metaphors are Fichte's own)—requires an incorporation of this culture, in that Fichte attributes to cosmopolitan German humanity the ability to love and comprehend the foreigner better than the foreigner understands himself. Nowhere is the ambivalence of this mimetic rivalry more palpable than in the German idealist reception of Rousseau, against whom Fichte would eventually fulminate, in the *Staatslehre*, for offering a haphazard and utterly unphilosophical solution to the problem of state power. "It is not surprising that, starting out from such principles, [the French Revolution] proceeded as it did."[9] By 1800, Fichte had declared the French Revolution burned out, its possibilities exhausted in a single explosive blast, leaving Germany as the sole agent of cosmopolitan (as usual in such discussions, this meant European) regeneration.

Fichte identifies Germany as the true heir of the Revolution by virtue of a drive to self-determination—life itself—that he locates, in the absence of political unity or autonomy, at the heart of language.[10] Developing autonomously in supposedly uninterrupted continuity, and unpolluted by foreign contaminants, the German *Ursprache* incarnates the transcendental project of free self-fashioning: it presents a collective analogue of the self-positing ego. Fichte had already noted the elective affinity between this foundational freedom and that recently inaugurated in France.[11] In the act of asserting its immunity from French influence, the German language proves to be more French, in effect, than polyglot French itself.

What is it about revolution—the Revolution (is it one or many?)—that thwarts translation even as it seems to stimulate it? Revolution is at once the occasion, the inspiration, and the impediment to Germany's own spiritual self-affirmation. The word itself implants a kernel of opacity within the pellucid purity of the mother tongue—a shibboleth marking the limits of assimilation. The perceived sluggishness of the German tongue is, in this context, more than just another symptom of the nation's infamous belatedness—its stalled development, its retarded modernity, the anachronism that has reduced it to a dusty stage prop—a "powdered wig within the historical junk room of modern nations." The delay also reveals something crucial about the rhythm of translation. While resisting every attempt at paraphrase, the word "Revolution" is lodged within the host language with tenacity of a native kind. A permanent outside on the inside, it can be neither granted citizenship (*eingebürgert*), to use Campe's own ubiquitous political metaphor, nor deported. It persists like a *Gastarbeiter*, at once feared and needed, within the domestic economy of the mother tongue. It remains most foreign just where it appears to be most permanently installed. Translation falters despite or because of the fact that it has always already occurred.

Trivial as it may seem (even within his own lifetime his pedantry was ridiculed), Campe's hesitation touches on a predicament at the heart of language. It points to a structural impediment to translation that may nonetheless prove to be the most stubborn presupposition of translation. Despite the startling literalism of the example, the issue is not only translation in the narrow sense, or even exclusively to do with language. It concerns the more general problem of *translatio*: transfer, transference, transmission, transport, the circulation of things, ideas, and power within the global continuum of space and time. And it raises the question of boundaries and borders. It complicates the geopolitical boundary between nations, the historical boundary between epochs, the metaphysical boundary between body and spirit, the theological boundary between death and life. It points to a residue of materiality within language—an "instance of the letter" that complicates any fantasy of translation as a regulated metabolic exchange, transfer, or passage, *metapherein*, from idiom to idiom, from sense to sense, from matter to meaning, from letter to spirit, and back again. It disturbs the metaphysical foundation of such a transaction by undermining the very notion of commensurability or equivalence, and in this way aggravates every

notion of semantic appropriation. It troubles the imperial fantasy sustaining the idea of translation since Saint Jerome—translation as an act of military plunder, the transport of meaning from one language to another like a prisoner taken by right of conquest. "Like some conqueror, [one] marches the original text, a captive, into [one's] native language [quasi captivos sensus in suam linguam, victoris jure transposuit] . . ."[12]

Translatio imperii

Rome is no longer in Rome . . .

Song composed for the triumphal entry into Paris of plundered art from Italy during the 1798 Fête de la Liberté

For Germany, around 1800, perched between two empires, between the crumbling of the Holy Roman Empire and the occupying forces of Napoleon, this plunderous fantasy was both charged and complex. The traffic was moving hard and fast in both directions. Translation promised not only a retroactive fortification against invasion, but a preemptive takeover of the assailant's forces. It hinted of a symbolic reversal of imperial power: the transformation of vanquished into victors, colonized into colonizers, within the inverted empire of signs. While the French troops were carting off spoils of war by the wagonload, the German scholar hauled in foreign words.[13] Inventory against inventory, column against column, parade against parade: Campe's dictionary presents the perfect mirror image of the revolutionary Louvre. Boxed and labeled, encased in wax and plaster, the looted artworks traveled like sacred relics across land and sea, down canal and river, through countryside and village, and eventually through the streets of Paris, where their arrival was celebrated as a victorious homecoming. "These immortal works are no longer on foreign soil."[14] Through the serried ranks of the alphabet passed the triumphal procession of words. Ranked and ordered, the foreign words were lined up on the left in Latin typeface as they awaited their ceremonial divestiture, their German equivalents marshaled on the right in Gothic font.

We need not be distracted by the superficial contrast between the physical relocation of things in space and the lexical transformation of words on the page. The two movements of translation are symmetrical. The objects have already turned into their own effigies, while in their pal-

pable foreignness the words exhibit the obduracy of hard matter. It is a card catalogue that is paraded before the crowds thronging the Champ de Mars: not the things themselves (the artifacts are fragile, and must remain wrapped and crated), but their names, an acquisitions list, a series of titles organized by the scholars and curators of the Louvre with encyclopedic efficiency, arranged with military precision, and displayed aloft on signs and banners.[15] And it is shards of physical being that are lined up alphabetically in the left-hand margins of the page: not meaning, which is rapidly slipping out of view, but the remnants of signification—an array of atomized sounds and letters, arbitrarily ordered, jostling for the reader's attention.

One can detect in this "post-colonial fantasy" the delayed echo of an earlier imperial topos. The medieval ideology of *translatio imperii* had inextricably connected genealogical transmission to geographical conquest, temporal extension to spatial expansion: empire is defined as the uninterrupted relay of dynastic legitimacy and authority, without leakage or loss of symbolic potency, across territorial lines. This is how the Roman empire, and then the Roman Church, and then the various monarchies of Europe had all sought to bolster their authority in the face of crisis, each time referring their legitimacy to the pedigree of an infallible providential source. Uncreated, imperishable, without beginning or limit, self-engendered, self-surviving, without predecessor or successor: empire has the metaphysical perpetuity of an Aristotelian form. "Imperium numquam moritur." The empire never dies.[16] But it travels and transforms. While remaining indestructible, the empire undergoes multiple "translations" as its center keeps moving and as its shape and meaning shift. After the fall of the Roman empire, the prestige of the *urbs aeterna* (Jupiter's prophetic vision, in the *Aeneid*) is transferred to the terrestrial glory of the *respublica Christiana*, en route to its eventual but indefinitely deferred eschatological resurrection as the *civitas Dei*. Like a phoenix rising continually from the flames, the empire vanishes only to return, wresting victory from defeat, accumulating and consolidating sovereignty as it migrates from site to site, from epoch to epoch—from Troy to Rome, then on to Rome's subsequent incarnations, restorations, and re-editions: France, Germany, England, or whoever else can lay claim to the imperial mantel. This is the Virgil-inspired version of the story. Another rendition, inspired by Jewish and Christian apocalyptic sources, takes as its starting point the parallel between the days of creation, the ages of man, and the ages of the world, mapping a slightly

different itinerary. The torch passes from the Babylonians to the Persians to the Macedonians to the Greeks and once more to the Romans. As the last age of the world, last stage of man, Rome remains invincible even as its center of power migrates: from Byzantium to the Franks, from the Franks to the Lombards, from the Lombards to the Germans . . . Translation in the narrow sense, that is, the translation of texts, the transmission of learning, and the diffusion of tradition (*translatio studii et verbi*), plays a special ideological role in this epic transfer. The construction of a continuous cultural legacy helps soften the abruptness of transition, fill the vacuum of interregnum, and mask the violence of conquest. Translation provides a transitional space in which the displacements of empire can be endured at a figural level: it allows loss to become virtual or "metaphorical"—a *translatio* of *translatio*. We could consider this second-order translation a work of mourning.

According to its own complicated self-mythology, Germany plays an ambiguous and ever-changing role in this drama of legitimation. It has resisted, transformed, prolonged, enhanced, challenged, and confounded the Roman imperial mission. All these historic roles mingle discordantly around 1800. The Germans have defied empire: in the depths of the Teutoberg forest, Hermann's band of warriors repulsed the invading troops of Publius Quinctilius Varus, halting the Roman conquest of northern Europe. The Germans have transformed empire: with the sack of Rome, the restless Goths brought down the pagan universe, indirectly enabling the ideological transformation to universal Christendom.[17] The Germans have laid claim to empire: with the pope's crowning of Charlemagne as *Imperator Augustus*, on Christmas Day, 800, the torch passed from Byzantium to Franconia, and with the accession of Otto I, in 962, the imperium found its explicit center in the Holy Roman Empire (explicitly named, as of 1512, the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation: Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation).[18] And Germany has redefined the terms of empire. While denouncing the legal fiction of *translatio imperii*, Luther slyly adapts the scheme to promote his own vision of Germany's special world historical mission. He ridicules the fiction of the Holy Roman Empire as a naked license to plunder: nominal prestige might have been handed over to the German emperor, but all the goods kept returning to fill the coffers of St. Peter's.[19] But Luther never entirely relinquishes the idea of *translatio*. He reformulates it, countering the genealogical fiction of continuity—the idea of an unbroken chain

passing from an ancestral Rome to the present—with an announcement of spiritual rupture. It is no longer secular power that is to be transferred but a spiritual privilege: no longer *translatio imperii*, but *translatio evangelii*—an exclusive claim to the Word. Grace, writes Luther, is a traveling object. Its sojourn is provisional, and its departure irreversible and abrupt:

> Oh my beloved Germans . . . gather in the harvest while there is sunshine and fair weather; make use of God's grace while it is there! For you should know that God's word and grace is like a passing shower of rain [*ein fahrender Platz regen*] which does not return where it has once been. It has been with the Jews, but when it's gone it's gone, and now they have nothing. Paul brought it to the Greeks; but again when it's gone it's gone, and now they have the Turk. Rome and the Latin lands also had it, but when it's gone it's gone, and now they have the pope. And you Germans need not think that you will have it forever, for ingratitude and contempt will not keep it. Therefore seize it and hold it fast, whoever can.[20]

By 1806, the symbolic equation of the Roman and the Napoleonic empires will have become explicit for all parties, and Germany's role in the drama burdensome. "We are the people subjugated by the Romans," writes Heinrich von Kleist. "The goal is to pillage Europe in order to enrich France."[21] A complex translation maneuver is in the offing.

Copernican and Other Revolutions

> It is very improbable that the Revolution will ever cease; to all appearances it is eternal. One does not have to be in Paris . . .
>
> FRIEDRICH SCHLEGEL, *Philosophische Lehrjahre*

This is what the German *translatio* begins to look like around 1800. According to the "German ideology" (let's use Marx's term for the moment), a revolution in thought would have come, by varying degrees, to precede, succeed, enhance, temper, comprehend, accommodate, preempt and eventually to upstage a political revolution whose defining feature had come to be identified with its irredeemable violence: the inexorable slide from 1789 to 1793. According to this ideology, familiar from Schiller to Thomas Mann, Germany could both domesticate and dispense with revolution by virtue of a previous spiritual upheaval that had already achieved the rationality to which the French could only aspire clumsily, violently, impatiently, through their precipitous acting out. Having already been

there in theory, Germany could put off until doomsday the grab for practical fulfillment—the infinite task.

Having undergone its Reformation, that is, Germany might escape the tumult at its gates and serve as the Revolution's most lucid and dispassionate observer. Having achieved freedom in matters *of* religion, the Germans have no need to assert their freedom *from* a religion whose institutional hold has become as diffuse as its secular authority is attenuated. The insurgence against Rome had already loosened the deadly grip of absolutism, leaving the political realm to evolve immanently, without impediment or disruption, confining dissidence to the sphere of thought. Luther's momentous separation of the "two kingdoms" had prepared the ground not only for the emancipation of conscience from institutional authority but also for its marginalization in the political arena. Such a split enables a convergence of spiritual defiance and practical compliance—an inference Luther had apparently taken to heart when he allied himself in 1525 with the ruling princes and supported the vicious suppression of the peasant uprisings that his own rebelliousness had to a large extent inspired. This dissonance defines the German ideology around 1800: "argue, but obey. . ."

An advance dose of spiritual rebellion will thus have immunized Germany against further upheaval. Luther had administered the first inoculation, and Kant the most recent booster. Vaccination measures are here supplemented by the cordon sanitaire of cultural difference. The medical analogy, however anachronistic, is entirely appropriate. On both sides of the Rhine, and with both negative and positive inflections, the Revolution itself will be described as a roiling natural disaster—an earthquake, a flood, an avalanche, a shipwreck, a hurricane, a fire, a comet, a meteor, a global climate change, a crashing mountain, a volcano, a horde of Hottentots or Amazons (almost immediately, the threat becomes raced and gendered), and eventually as a ravaging epidemic, a plague whose feverish delirium threatens to overflow natural and national borders as well as the social boundaries of class, gender, race, age and status.[22] The eruption of freedom is marked from the outset as an irresistible upsurge of blind, elemental nature. The irony will not be lost on Hannah Arendt, for one, who will identify in this short-circuit between freedom and nature the inaugural antinomy of revolutionary modernity.[23] Having long been exposed to the bacillus, Germany is singularly poised to check the onslaught of the illness, even extracting from the disease a reserve of vital effervescence unavailable to those in its acute

phase. Poison turns into gift. The toxin that triggered the illness would provide its cure. Luther had ignited the first spark of a conflagration from whose flames Germany might, from a safe distance, continue to draw warmth. Immune to the virus of revolution, Germany can become its sublime carrier.

Germany thus sets out to quarantine the political threat of revolution while siphoning off its intensity for thought: crisis is harnessed to the project of critical critique. Around 1800, the Reformation is explicitly tethered to the agenda of preemptive cultural reform. Political revolution might be forestalled by a "total revolution in sensibility" (Schiller), a "revolution in thinking" (Kant)—a radical reversal of orientation and agency in the light of which literal inversions of power in the social world seem at once catastrophic—bloodthirsty, barbaric—and in the end curiously ineffective. In this light, the French Revolution is seen to be at once far too grandiose and far too modest: risking everything, it dares nothing. What might appear as rapturous upheaval and rupture is repeatedly demystified as regressive and reactionary—a return to ground zero and the reversion of history to mythic nature: the chronic cycle of generation and corruption, the repetitive orbit of the stars and the planets, the perpetual circulation of days, years, and seasons, the Sisyphean return of the same. To assume authorship of the laws is to defy the transcendence of Law—to close the metaphysical hiatus on which the law's very authority rests—and therefore to succumb to the tyranny of stagnant nature. Thus the regression of the willing subject to the wasteland of *status naturalis*, and the reduction of human freedom to the empty "freedom of a turnspit."

History in this way collapses into nature, and nature in turn into farce. The modernist figure of revolution as unpredictable historical fracture slides into the traditional astronomical figure of revolution as irresistible cyclical recurrence, while this latter figure of circularity in turn shifts from a consoling image of stability into a mocking image of meaninglessness and futility: one more spin of the wheel, a vain overturning awaiting its own overturning. By the late eighteenth century, the word "revolution" (*re-volutio*) pointed to both rupture and repetition, and the semantic strain was beginning to be felt.[24] The idea of revolution started to oscillate—it *revolved*—between these two irreconcilable extremes. "Progressive, constantly expanding evolution is the very stuff of history," Novalis declared;[25] but it was necessary to prevent the revolutionary's burden—the stone of Sisyphus—from rolling back down the mountain, to hold it at the summit

by some kind of "heavenly attraction."[26] The Revolution had to be saved from its propensity to vicious circular recurrence by being transported into a territory and an idiom at once familiar and unknown. Only in being repeated or rephrased could it salvage its unrepeatable kernel. Only by submitting to translation could it achieve its singular and untranslatable truth. Only by traveling could it be kept securely in place.

"The Magic Wand of Analogy"

By the mid-1790s, Kant's Copernican revolution had been retroactively interpreted to have both anticipated and eclipsed the political cataclysm whose shocking impact was being simultaneously intensified and absorbed on the far side of the Rhine. Heine would later remark, only half in jest, that Kant had in any case far surpassed Robespierre in intellectual terrorism: the guillotine had killed only a pathetic fat king, who had lost his head anyway, but the axe of reason had already slain deism itself throughout Germany.[27] For Fichte, the deliverance from the tyranny of the thing-in-itself, the last residue of unmediated positivity, would both prefigure and outstrip any deliverance from social bondage.[28] Friedrich Schlegel regarded the French Revolution as the "marvelous allegory" of "another greater, more rapid, more comprehensive revolution which has taken place in the innermost part of the human spirit."[29] The Revolution would be both magnified and miniaturized: dispersed into an infinite array of repetitions and reflections, it would be drawn into an "unbroken chain of inner revolutions" (note the oxymoron), while discontinuity would be absorbed into the absolute continuum of art.[30]

The aesthetic correlatives to political revolution are various, and can be vague, but they all ultimately rest on the idea of the autonomous self-legislation of the work of art. Schiller sets the agenda in the *Letters on Aesthetic Education*, when he discovers in the experience of art the freedom that founders in every leap into immediate political action: only through beauty do we inch our way toward freedom. Schlegel and Novalis extend Schiller's claim in unexpected ways when they transfer this freedom from the artist or spectator to the artwork itself, which learns to display itself as uninterrupted productivity—pure initiative and infinite becoming. "The essence of the modern consists in a *creation out of nothing*."[31] The artwork bursts forth in its unprecedented originality, severed from all antecedent grounds,

conditions, and conventions, as it stages an endlessly protracted act of self-generation or autopoiesis—which however only amounts, logically speaking, to a process of unceasing self-mortification. The work can demonstrate its inexhaustible incipience only by marking its own structural incompletion. Unending birth is here indistinguishable from a perpetual stillbirth, an ongoing miscarriage, an infinite abortion. Agency is in one blow both aggrandized and strangely humiliated. In the Romantic fragment, sketch becomes ruin: every project turns into an advance testimony to its own defeat. But catastrophe can also serve to preempt an even greater disaster. The ruin forestalls the apocalypse by marking it as always already under way.

"Revolution" thus takes on a variety of meanings. It can indicate a formal liberation of language from the strictures of syntax and grammar, from the hierarchies of plot and character or from the confines of genre and medium. Schlegel writes of "a republican speech which is its own law and end into itself, and which all the parts are free citizens and have the right to vote." It can imply an emancipation from the burden of reference: the work reflexively recoils from every context as it turns toward the process of its own production. Or it can imply a release from the privileges and the fetters of individual authorship—a turn to collective production, as theorized in the Romantic notion of "philosophizing together," or *symphilosophein*, and attempted in various (largely failed) attempts at collaboration, such as the journal projects at Jena. Whatever the emphasis, the new age defines itself in terms of a radical self-invention, oriented toward the eventual production of a book of universal significance: the Book. "The new Bible must be for the Germans what the Revolution was for the French."[32] With his literary agenda sliding into an explicitly theological one, Schlegel hints at the ineluctable Lutheran pedigree of the Romantic project. Yet another translation project is in the works. "The French Revolution will become universal only through the German."[33]

Noch nicht und doch schon . . .

> . . . what I consider true of the Germans: they are of the day before yesterday and the day after tomorrow—they have as yet no today.
>
> NIETZSCHE, *Beyond Good and Evil*

What is at stake in this obsessive mapping of correspondences and correlations? There is an immediate paradox: the French Revolution presents

itself as both relative and absolute—at once incomparable and uncannily familiar. Schlegel pronounces it both "the model of revolutions" (*das Urbild der Revolutionen*) and "*the* Revolution" (*die Revolution schlechthin*), both exemplary prototype and inimitable exception—a class that seeks to embrace everything and yet ultimately admits only itself as its sole member.[34] The Revolution provokes repetition even while it exhausts its own concept, rendering subsequent renditions at once mandatory, superfluous, and insufficient. The "magic wand of analogy" (Novalis) in one blow domesticates the Revolution and underscores its recalcitrance to assimilation.[35] Like an enigmatic signifier, the event stimulates a "drive to translation" (the phrase, again, is Novalis's) that it necessarily frustrates. The unprecedented strangeness of the French Revolution—its novelty, its contingency, its shocking incongruity—is exaggerated and denied as Germany seeks to absorb this "peculiar crisis" (Herder) within a prior and future upheaval of thought.[36]

Note the paradoxical temporality. The new is the déjà vu is the perpetually not yet. Always familiar and yet forever awaited, the present unfolds into both a memory and a promise. The Revolution splays out simultaneously toward past and future—a cataract diverted from the cliff edge of a present left vacant, invulnerable, and intact. The crisis is already over: we've already had our revolution—there is nothing (left) to fear. Or, the crisis is forever pending: the real revolution is yet to come—there is nothing (yet) to fear. Already here, forever elsewhere. . . Translation in one blow asserts the inassimilable foreignness of the Revolution and disarms it by repatriating it as already long under way. "Them, but not us," Klopstock intones, with admiration, with envy, with shame, and eventually, as the heads start falling, with an unmistakable tinge of schadenfreude (1793 would be the year of his official recantation: "Mein Irrtum"). Novalis, whose own ambivalence about the Revolution would eventually lead him, unlike most of his compatriots, to repudiate it precisely for having prolonged the atomizing individualism of the Reformation, cannot conceal a tinge of proprietary pride when he writes that "the best that the French have gained from their revolution is a portion of Germanness."[37] These two gestures—exclusion and appropriation—are reciprocally entailed.

Germany thus comes to define itself in relationship to France as simultaneously precursor and survivor. Having long rehearsed an event it can forever continue to anticipate, Germany offers the French a mirror in which to discern an image of a counterfactual past and future. What

might have happened, or not have happened, if France had gone through the Reformation? (This will be the question obsessively posed by French liberal historians during the Restoration, who will attribute the turbulent course of the Revolution to a fundamental lack of spiritual preparation.) And conversely: France offers Germany a screen memory of its own traumatic history—a Medusa shield to ward off the petrifying legacy of its own still undischarged past. The ransacked cathedrals of revolutionary France will become a repository for the debris of Germany's own unfinished battles, still visible in the ruins of the religious wars still scarring the German landscape. The Revolution thus provides a way to extend the official amnesia that had marked the end of the Thirty Years' War: the second article of the Peace of Westphalia had mandated that "all that has passed on one side and the other shall be entirely abolished in such a way that all . . . shall be buried in eternal oblivion." The vicarious experience of bloodshed beyond its own borders helps Germany forget its own history of atrocities as well as the territorial and confessional schisms that continue to torment it. Observing the cracked and striated surface of post-Westphalian Germany, its intricate network of territorial and confessional jurisdictions, the jurist Justus Möser had remarked that the country seemed to be composed of nothing but boundaries.[38] The external border between Germany and France thus serves to elide the internal fissures dividing Germany from itself, allowing it to construct a fiction of its own unified national past. The construction of the Revolution as a Roman Catholic debacle will help Germany put an end to what Hegel will describe as the "long, eventful and terrible night of the Middle Ages."[39] Philosophy will thus come to identify Germany as a Protestant nation, and freedom itself as a "northern" principle.

Germany is to the French Revolution, then, as Achilles to the tortoise—forever postponing its encounter with an object that it has already overtaken, and constantly running ahead of a thing with which it can never quite catch up.[40] The Revolution in this light functions, psychoanalytically, as the inaccessible, impossible Real, and the "German ideology" as the fantasy that keeps forever circling around it. Philosophy nourishes itself by continually displacing the obscure object of desire—too far, too close, eternally remembered and perpetually anticipated, forever unattainable because always already achieved. German idealism is in this sense nothing but the staging of a chronically missed encounter. Such fantasy

defines the "German *Misère*" around 1800. What Marx calls German ideology might be understood as a kind of trauma.

Translation as Trauma

> . . . monotonous flow of an hourglass that eternally empties and turns itself over. . . . There is no progress, alas, but merely vulgar revisions and reprints. Such are the exemplars, the ostensible "original editions," of all the worlds to come.
>
> AUGUSTE BLANQUI, *L'Éternité par les astres*

In the "Athenæum Fragments," Friedrich Schlegel draws up a series of analogies that mask a secret hierarchy: the French revolution is an Urtext that is both generated and eclipsed by the proliferation of minor textual aftereffects—the endless stream of commentaries, interpretations, annotations, revisions, variations, imitations, emendations, abbreviations, expositions, elucidations, translations—the comet's tail of "little books" that inconspicuously accompany it.

> The French Revolution, Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, and Goethe's [*Wilhelm*] *Meister* are the greatest tendencies [*Tendenzen*] of the age. Whoever is offended by this juxtaposition, whoever takes seriously only a revolution that is noisy and materialistic, has still not elevated himself to the broader, higher perspective on the history of mankind. Even in our shabby cultural histories, which usually resemble a collection of variants with running commentary for a lost classical text, many a little book has played a larger role than anything done by the noisy multitude, who took no notice of it at the time.[41]

Major and minor, primary and secondary, switch roles here—a reversal of chronological and phenomenological sequence that challenges the ontological priority of the origin as such. History is a variorum edition in which the text disappears under the weight of its own marginalia. This trope of *hysteron proteron*—the (literally) "preposterous" figure of last things first[42]—is consistent with the early Romantic theory of criticism: a work proves to be a by-product of its own aftermath, subsequent to its own supplement, generated retroactively by the textual overflow that will eventually efface it. "Notes are philological epigrams; translations are philological mimes; many commentaries, where the text is only the obstacle [*Anstoß*] or the not-I, are philological idylls."[43] The allusion in this last passage (by Schlegel) is unmistakably to Fichte's self-positing transcen-

dental ego. The Romantic text generates endless onion skins of commentary, just as the "I think (that I think . . .)" secretes layers of critical self-reflection—a reflexivity captured in Schlegel's famous image of the text as an "infinite succession of mirrors."[44] The Urtext, like the Fichtean *Anstoß*, here functions both as impediment and impetus to further displays of reflexive doubling. The "obstacle," like Dr. Johnson's stone, is less a shocking intrusion of irrefragable immediacy—the brute pressure of an uninterpretable fact or positivity—than a kind of metaphysical stage prop enabling ever greater feats of metatextual virtuosity.

The structure illustrates perfectly the psychoanalytic logic of trauma—the dissolution of the event into a missed event and the hypertrophic investment in the trivial, the nonevent, the negligible remainder. Freud will discern in this delay the basic rhythm of human experience—a perpetual syncopation between originary inscription and subsequent transcription, translation, or re-edition. The textual metaphors are Freud's own and should be read as literally as possible. Translation (*Übersetzung*) implies not only a spatial relay of psychic energy (*Besetzung*) from one occupation zone to another but an economic inflation—an overinvestment or hypercathexis (*Überbesetzung*) in the trifling aftermath of an intensity originally unmarked.[45] Trauma marks a caesura in which the linear order of time is thrown out of sequence. We compound this temporal disorientation every time we try to quarantine trauma by displacing it to a buried past or a distant future.

The event is, by this strategy, at once acknowledged and disavowed. Its pressure is both registered and elided by being either consigned to the depths of the immemorial or pushed off to a future forever pending. Translation registers this strictly perverse relationship to an imperative all the more urgent for coming always too late.

2

The Kantian Theater

> As happened lately, in all the clarity of modern times, with the French Revolution, that gruesome and . . . superfluous farce, into which, however, noble and enthusiastic spectators all over Europe interpreted from a distance their own indignations and raptures so long and so passionately that the text disappeared beneath the interpretation . . .
>
> NIETZSCHE, *Beyond Good and Evil*

German writers at the end of the eighteenth century described the French Revolution as a drama for which their front-row seats rendered them ideal spectators. In his third *Critique* (1790), Kant had already formalized the logic whereby terror experienced at a slight distance yields the sublime satisfaction of moral self-enhancement—a logic that he would explicitly apply within a few years in the *Conflict of the Faculties* (written in 1795) to the contemporary situation of Germany as it gazed across the river with disinterested interest at the "misery and atrocities" from which it drew the moral capital of its own rational humanity. "With what exaltation the uninvolved public looking on sympathized then without the slightest intention of assisting."[1]

Humanity thus discovers itself as witness to an event that Kant elsewhere in the very same epoch represents as culminating in nothing less than the abyssal, unrepresentable, unthinkable, impossible, the coldly legalized illegality of the king's execution threatening to present a diabolical inversion of the social order—a complete "overturning" of the concept of right, a "suicide" of the state, an "abyss" in which reason threatens to lose

itself, an ineffaceable stain, *crimen immortale, inexpiabile*, a transgression so absolute that it seems to preclude forgiveness either in this world or the world to come. This is how Kant will describe the Revolution in a strange and wildly convoluted footnote in the *Metaphysics of Morals* (1797), where the event's impact on the spectator appears to be as stupefying as, in the *Conflict of the Faculties*, it is said to be uplifting. "Of all the atrocities involved in overthrowing a state by rebellion . . . [i]t is the formal execution of the monarch that strikes horror in a soul filled with the idea of human rights, a horror that one feels *repeatedly as soon as and as often* as one thinks of such scenes as the fate of Charles I or Louis XVI." In the face of this spectacle, time both contracts and shatters. It shrinks into a pure present in which there is no delay between stimulus and response, no interval to buffer the relay from idea to affect; and it splinters into an unending series of repetitive traumatic flashbacks: both image and emotion keep arising, unbidden, simultaneously, repeatedly, and often.[2]

The disparity between the two texts cannot be written off as ambivalence, inconsistency, or simply as a function of political caution or self-censorship (or even, as some readers have suggested, senility). Nor can it be attributed to a difference in focus—a split, for example, between a philosophy of history tethered to a pacifying vision of progress and a political philosophy unhinged by the rush of contemporary events. Kant's hesitancy around the French Revolution crystallizes a broader tension pervading his system as a whole—a conflict between competing metaphysical commitments that runs through the various domains of his philosophy (moral, scientific, aesthetic, political)—a conflict between an "evolutionist" commitment to gradualism (a Leibnizian attachment to the "great chain of being" in various guises: the infinite divisibility and absolute indestructibility of the spatial and temporal plenum, biological preformationism, the imperceptible shadings between species, the inevitability of continuous historic progress) and a "creationist" commitment to discontinuity and discreteness, a fascination with ex nihilo beginnings, precipitous ruptures, and unforeseeable transitions (biological epigenesis, moral regeneration, aesthetic genius).[3] It might be tempting to split the differences by assigning one side to the beautiful plenitude of nature, the other to the sublime spontaneity of freedom, but things don't always align quite that way.

Crimen inexpiabile

> It seems to me that we never find anything in history but what we put there ourselves. . . . The French Revolution looks to me like a rich canvas painted on a great text: the rights of man and the dignity of man.
>
> FICHTE, *Beitrag zur Berichtigung der Urtheile des Publikums über die französische Revolution*

How does horrified fascination turn into moral exaltation? Everything will rest on an aesthetic of reception resilient enough to convert the mark of immemorial disaster—cipher of the undischargeable, uneraseable, unforgettable, illegible—into the signifier of commemoration: to translate traumatic inscription into hermeneutic transcription while banishing the inexpungeable residue to the negligible wasteland of a footnote. It is a question of transcribing the semiotic wild card of the *inexpiabile* within the apodeictic legibility of what the *Conflict of the Faculties* celebrates as a *signum rememorativum, demonstrativum, prognostikon*—equally indelible or "unforgettable," says Kant, but for precisely the opposite reason—whereby our anamnestic solidarity (with ourselves) inspires confidence in our own moral progress.[4]

Memory is to be transfigured from a mechanical, stammering compulsion into a free act of judgment[5]—it must pass from traumatic repetition to reconciling remembrance. And time comes unstuck as it unfolds into an array of past and future possibilities. In its synoptic clarity, the sign functions as a *hypotyposis*, in the sense laid out in the *Critique of Judgment*: the analogical presentation of a totality that remains strictly inaccessible to sensible experience, and that would otherwise require an impossible providential perspective.[6] The present moment becomes vivid to itself in offering a glimpse of a future—a "fragment" (*Stück*)—in the light of which history suddenly presents itself as an unbroken totality, and past and future are simultaneously redeemed: "The human race has always been in progress towards the better and will continue to do so henceforth." History becomes retroactively legible as already oriented or "tending"—the "sign" points or signals (*zeichnet*)—to a destination to come: *signum rememorativum, demonstrativum, prognostikon*.[7]

From *crimen* to *signum*: as so often, the intrusion of Latin suggests in both cases the pressure of something alien, inexplicable and inassimilable, but this strangeness is not unequivocally negative, and it is indeed this very

equivocation that will prove most disturbing. What is required is not simply a purification, cancellation, or undoing of the deed, not a clearing of the slate or an effacement of traces, but rather a rewriting and even overwriting. It is a question of multiplying rather than erasing the stigmata—a shift of focus from one scriptural register to another, from one indelibility to another, from one memory trace to another. From the riveting spectacle of the crime—"an abyss that irretrievably swallows everything" (Ak 6: 322n; *MM* 464n)—the reader's gaze is redirected to a palimpsest of marks, signals, and mnemonic inscriptions, each vying for his exegetical attention.

The crime is *inexpiable*: although historical, the event has the stubborn persistence of a metaphysical characteristic. Its recalcitrance is even more intractable than that of radical evil—that other indelible blemish that Kant famously describes, in the *Religion*, as the "foul stain" of our blighted humanity, the "inextirpable guilt" attaching to our irremediable finitude.[8] This latter kind of indelibility is relatively (by Kant's own severe standards) unproblematic, and throws into relief the special fixity associated with the regicide. There is a generic sense in which all transgression is inextirpable, just as every misdoing is, in a relatively straightforward, hyper-Protestant kind of way, inexpiable: no penitential ceremony, sacrificial ritual, or confessional performance—no "good work"—can wipe out the infinite debt incurred by our free and rational decision to embrace evil.[9] Arising from our own freedom, every moral debt is by definition strictly irredeemable; there is no possible reparation that might counteract or compensate for our transgressions. To discharge our sin demands of us nothing less than an act of radical conversion—"a total change of heart."[10] Irreparability is indeed the very key to morality. It is the persistence of evil that sustains human freedom by supplying a permanent "whetstone" on which duty can continually sharpen its own unappeasable demands.[11] Evil exerts a ceaseless counterpressure, without which morality itself would collapse into what Kant elsewhere famously describes as the "freedom of a turnspit" (see Ak 5: 97; *CPrR* 218).

But Kant finds in the regicide a more troubling indelibility—an evil even more "radical" than radical evil, a *crimen* even more *inexpiabile*. While radical evil of the garden-variety sort both permits and demands moral regeneration, the regicide blocks every possibility of such redemption. The crime obliterates every residue of self-identity that could be carried over as the basis for a new beginning: it severs the thread of life of the

body politic. This is why Kant compares the event to a suicide. The crime introduces into the continuum of history the void of a permanent interregnum: "it involves a principle that would have to make it impossible to regenerate [*wiederzeugen*] a state that had been overthrown" (Ak 6: 322n; *MM* 465n; trans. modified). Revolution is at once the principle of reversibility—total overturning or catastrophe—and the principle of irreversible fixation. It introduces the twin specters of irrecuperable transience and incontrovertible, monumental persistence.

But this stony fixity also presents a negative image of yet another form of intransigence. It conjures up the ineffaceable authority of moral freedom itself—the inscrutable, irresistible and indeed indelible "fact of reason"[12]—together with its political analogue, a republic regulated by the "eternal norm" of human rights.[13] This imprint is precisely what the *Conflict of Faculties* attempts to read beneath the ineffaceable inscription of the crime. In viewing the Revolution from the perspective of one whose interest in the event is untainted by partisan self-interest (there is nothing to gain and everything to lose by a public display of enthusiasm), we catch a glimpse of the law that both unifies us as a species and binds time itself into a unity. The "character of the human race" suddenly becomes visible "as a whole and all at once [*im ganzen und zugleich*]" (Ak 7: 85; *CF* 302)—a temporal contraction that occurs, like moral decision itself, punctually, promptly, without delay.[14] We confront the ineffaceable mark of the Other's irredeemable misdeed with the inextinguishable idea of our own unconditional morality—a shift from the incorrigible to the incontrovertible. Traumatic persistence is overwritten by the ineffaceable insistence of the moral law within.

We can discern here the embryo of our own contemporary ethics of witness, together with much of its hyperbole. Hegel is absolutely correct, as we shall see, to anticipate Heidegger in identifying the Kantian project as presupposing a room with a good view[15]: morality is an optical apparatus, a "moral worldview" (*moralische Weltanschauung*)—ultimately, a theatrical image of the world (*Weltbild*), in which, with a small shift of lighting, auditorium turns into a stage and spectator into spectacle. The real drama is unfolding in the stalls, where the audience turns out to be both better rehearsed and more interesting than the players on center stage. For the vicarious moral subject, every window on the world becomes a mirror into the interiority of the self-willing self. The modern subject turns the whole

world into a picture, but only ultimately so as to put itself into the center of the picture: this, in a nutshell, will be Hegel's eventual diagnosis of the envious provincialism sustaining the capaciousness of the critical, cosmopolitan worldview. We shall return to this.

Shipwreck with Spectator

> We watch the French Revolution as we watch a shipwreck at sea from the safety of the shore.
>
> HERDER, *Briefe, die Fortschritte der Humanität betreffend* (first draft, 1792)

Kant's analytic of the sublime had established the basic logic. To experience fearfulness without fear is to entertain the counterfactual possibility of the impossible—to engage the fantasy of self-annihilation, parried from the "safe place" of one who can afford to traverse the fantasy, to go the whole way, and who can thus transcend the limits of experience through the moral affirmation of his own supersensible vocation (Ak 5: 261; *CJ* 144). Kant thus extends the aesthetics of terror advanced earlier in Edmund Burke's *Enquiry* (1757)—the conversion of terror into invigorating "delight" and of impotence into a "swelling" of internal power.[16] To enjoy fearfulness without fear is to rewrite physical failure as spiritual triumph, to translate external coercion into an occasion for self-legislation, and in this way to rewrite the mortal finitude of the frail, suffering body as the infinitude of moral freedom—all this from the slightly patrician perspective of one already released from the anxious coils of self-preservation: "it is impossible to like terror that we take seriously."[17] For Kant, the difference between fearfulness with and without fear has as its religious counterpart the difference between superstition as a slave morality and a religion bound within the confines of reason.[18] Craven trembling before a deity reified as irresistible natural domination is superseded by an exultant identification with the potency of thought itself. In the subject's shiver of self-affirmation, we see at once a victory over and a vestige of the body's primordial shudder in the face of thunderous, raging nature.

Decades after the great Lisbon earthquake, that tremor needed to be stilled. Kant had originally attempted to contain the theological shock waves of that earlier cataclysm by erecting a metaphysical barrier between the physical and the moral universes. In 1756, a year after the event, he had set out to demystify the disaster by referring it directly to the laws of

physical causality. By purging natural catastrophe of moral significance, he had secured in the heaving landscape of the earth a foothold for scientific investigation—a chance to extract opportunity from the wreckage while protecting the creator God from charges of malignancy or incompetence. "Our feet [are] on the cause."[19] In the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant returns to the scene of the disaster with a more ambitious agenda. No longer content with simply explaining the catastrophe, he now tries to harness its energy—a shift of perspective from the naturalist to the moralist, and a transformation of the protective barrier into a dam that not only staves off the ravaging flood (to shift the metaphor only slightly) but manages also to channel, extract, and store its virulence for future profit.

In the *Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant moves beyond the Alpine hike to consider the moral investment in *historical* catastrophe as the chance for humanity to affirm its own inalienable predisposition or "tendency" to moral improvement. The rocky landscape of the *Critique of Judgment* has within a few short years been transposed into the political landscape of contemporary Europe. It is no longer the threat of nature—mortality—that needs to be captured, but an even more thrilling danger: freedom itself contains the seeds of its own destruction. The wilderness is within. History is threatening to collapse into the brutality of lawless nature. It is a question of neutralizing the political actuality of terror, the seemingly seamless slide from revolutionary activism to anarchic bloodshed, such that the French republican experiment can be sanitized of its founding violence, even if only in the eyes of its beholders. From shock to awe: the trauma of the phenomenal event is telepathically bound in the viewer's admiration for the moral law within. It is the "disinterested [or unselfish, *uneigennützige*] sympathy" of spectators before the "games [or dramas, *Spiele*] of great revolutions" (the text makes it clear who the spectators are and who the players) that provides the "hint" or "sign" that history is unfolding in a continuous advance toward the better (Ak 7: 84–85; *CF* 301–2).

One might say, to invoke the framework of the third *Critique*, that the stage play of history provides the stimulus for the invigorating *free play* of the human faculties: the real theater is within. The mind is at play (judgment is unconstrained by preexistent concepts, laws, or maxims; like a revolution, it continually reinvents the rules it follows), but play is tethered to the most serious of agendas. The subject contemplating the scene

from the security of a safe place is able to behold itself as a spectatorial collective unified by the *sensus communis* of moral humanity. The revolution is constructed as a theatrical event, as a spectacular event, and above all as a media event—a drama staged before a distant and diffuse audience brought together through the channels of print communication. The viewing public is a reading public, a *Leserwelt*: the enlightened, critical collective forged in the modern public sphere—the coffeehouse, the salon, the reading club, and above all the rapidly proliferating press, whose freedom and transparency Kant elsewhere celebrates as the condition of civic freedom, "sole palladium of the people's rights."[20] Every reader is distant not only from the events in France but from every other reader, this latter separation providing the critical distance that is to protect him from the deceptions of oratory and the seductions of demagoguery. The very medium that seems to isolate every reader in solitary reflection is precisely what unifies the public as a virtual collective whose gaze is directed simultaneously outward, to the historical drama unfolding elsewhere, and inward, to the sign of cosmopolitan humanity imprinted within its own interior—"a moral character" in every sense.[21]

Witnessing the Revolution not only presupposes a *revolution in reading*—the explosion of print culture in the late eighteenth century, nowhere more self-consciously experienced than in Germany, where in the absence of a developed industrial economy the consumer culture tended to favor the virtual and vicarious consumption of texts and images,[22] and where geographical dispersion and political decentralization made it nearly impossible to impose strict censorship over the literary market.[23] The various aspects of this "reading revolution" have been much discussed—a proliferation of publications, a multiplication of channels of distribution, an expansion of literacy across class and gender boundaries and beyond urban centers, a diversification of genres, a transformation of reading practices from "intensive" (slow, concentrated, reverential) to "extensive" (speedy, distracted, disenchanted), an accelerated sense of time's passage, and even the fashioning of a new kind of reader's body: sedentary, immobile, voracious.[24]

These changes also produce a *revolutionary reading*—an activity that reverses, Copernican-style, the direction of the critical gaze. "The mode of thinking of the spectators reveals itself publicly," Kant writes.[25] The readership puts itself on view by making its own point of view public. As it reads,

the collective performatively produces itself as the enlightened *Publikum*, about which it wants only to keep on reading. By presenting itself in the act of reading, the reading public both supplies its own reading material and makes sure that it never runs out of reading matter: the text it produces is infinitely self-reproducing. For the publicity generated is in turn fraught with "danger" (Kant repeats this twice), that is, accompanied by that strange mixture of discomfort and opportunity implicit in every encounter with disaster. The spectator risks "serious disadvantage" (*Nachteil*) should his participation (*Teilnehmung*) be discovered—and herein precisely lies his ultimate advantage. Danger is neither contained within the borders of another country nor rendered entirely virtual through being converted into printed matter. The whiff of repression allows the reader to display his own indifference to the exigencies of self-preservation—sublimity to the second power. (Were the press to be a palladium of human rights, there would be no opportunity for such heroics.)

Kant's "fourth *Critique*" is in this way, as Hannah Arendt and Jean-François Lyotard suggest, already implicit in the third: political judgment is an extension of the aesthetic judgment that simultaneously finds and founds the cosmopolitan collective as the *sensus communis* of the enlarged community; judgment performatively invents what it discovers.[26] By relinquishing any material interest in the Revolution, the spectator can reclaim its potency and intensity. He participates, or takes part in the event, without being partisan, precisely by communicating or imparting (*mitteilen*) his enthusiasm in public—a communication of communicability itself in that what is conveyed in this virtualization is the very promise or possibility of community.[27]

Revolution is in this way relinquished, mourned, and resurrected. Renounced at a local level, no longer constrained by national frontiers, partial interests or partisan commitments, or trivialized by the contagious effects of fanaticism or empathy, the event is reinstated in the spectator's surge of moral self-exaltation. Revolution in one country expands into "die Revolution schlechtin" (Schlegel): revolution as such, in general, as an Idea. The noumenal content of the Revolution is salvaged from its ragged phenomenal expression: freedom is transported from the realm of appearances, where it seems destined to keep foundering, to the realm of morality where it finds a secure footing. The idea of universal human rights and dignity is legible to the spectator of the French Revolution in a way

blocked to the participants by virtue of their pathological self-interest. The revolutionary event is eclipsed by its own witnessing—the spectatorship of the event is already, says Kant, the event—and witnessing in turn by its own self-witnessing. The *Ereignis* is an *Eräugnen*:[28] an event viewed from the vantage point of those eyewitnesses able to convert mesmerizing visual impression into clairvoyant legible inscription, spectacle into sign, seeing into reading, and inspection into introspection. And in the face of such self-witnessing, the contingent success or failure of the actual revolution becomes for Kant somewhat irrelevant, as does moreover the possibility of its repetition:

> The revolution of a gifted people which we have seen unfolding in our day may succeed or miscarry; it may be filled with miseries and atrocities to the point where a right-thinking man, were he boldly to hope to execute it successfully the second time, would never resolve to make the experiment at such cost—this revolution, I say, nevertheless finds in the hearts of all spectators (who are not engaged in the game itself) a wishful *participation* that borders closely on enthusiasm [*die nahe an Enthusiasm grenzt*], the very expression of which is fraught with danger; this sympathy, therefore, can have no other cause than a moral predisposition in the human race. (Ak 7: 85; *CF* 302)

The Abyss of Form

And so in the *Conflict of the Faculties*, it is not the Revolution itself but the neighbor's near (the "almost" is critical: we are already at two degrees of separation) enthusiasm for it that furnishes the ultimate proof of humanity's own uninterrupted advance toward the better. In a single blow Kant absorbs revolutionary rupture into the continuous reform of the moral spectator, while dispensing with the need to import democratic principles onto German soil.[29]

In the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant experiments briefly with a somewhat bolder tactic: he attempts to save the Revolution for the revolutionaries themselves by injecting continuity into the political front as well. He defers the actual onset of revolution proper to the latest possible moment, in an effort to confine the crisis to the king's trial and execution in the winter of 1792–93. As for all the drama preceding that—the storming of the Bastille, the self-creation of the National Assembly, even the suspension of monarchy and the inauguration of the republic in 1792—Kant seeks to

absorb all these ruptures and unpredictable reversals into the causal continuum of history. Louis XVI simply made an "enormous error of judgment," in 1789, when to solve a fiscal crisis, he convoked an assembly of the people, whose co-presence would logically annihilate (*vernichten*) him as ruler. By transferring authority to the popular assembly, the king had authored his own "misfortune" (*Unglück*) in initiating an irreversible transfer of sovereignty to the people who would inevitably dethrone him.[30] Despite appearances, the people's seizure of sovereignty is by this argument less a revolution than a reaction—a passive event, in conformity with preexistent legality, already regulated by the king's prior speech act of convocation. *He invited them.* . . . Everything that would follow, with one little exception, could be contained within the king's original performative: they could change the guest list, the venue, the agenda, whatever, but the king remains author of his self-dispossession—even his abdication, stupidly self-initiated, remains his own. Kant does not pursue this line of thought, which introduces the possibility of a transformation internal to monarchy itself—a reversal initiated from above, legal and self-inflicted, a revolution without revolution. Kant entertains this last possibility momentarily only to dismiss it, without argument, on the decidedly un-Kantian grounds of expediency: "even if the sovereign decided to transform itself into a democracy, it could still do the people a wrong, since the people could abhor [*verabscheuen*] such a constitution and find one of its other forms more to its advantage."[31]

Kant at this point gives up his attempt to dilute the revolutionary import of the Revolution. Having found no plausible accommodation, the event is exiled to the purgatory of footnotes, where it is subjected to further sanitizing measures.[32] Although Kant again and again declares the very idea of revolution to be not only reprehensible but strictly unthinkable—both a moral and a logical impossibility, in that it contradicts the very idea of right to which it consecrates itself—the pressure of the Revolution continues to be felt.

Why impossible? In prohibiting revolution—the French Revolution, all revolution, the very idea of revolution—Kant is appealing not to utilitarian considerations (arguing, for example, that acts of rebellion are detrimental to public safety or civic order) but, as usual, to logical consistency. Beyond the specific historical question as to whether and when exactly the French Revolution happened, backfired, or failed to happen,

beyond the concrete threats of bloodshed, suffering or destruction, the idea of revolution presents Kant with an unsettling conceptual challenge. Its impossibility rests on a series of performative self-contradictions that he will never cease to explore. Kant's arguments against revolution are various and scattered—none very good—appealing to everything from positive law to divine commandment.[33] They invoke an ascending series of formal tautologies centered on issues of jurisprudence. (As Kant himself makes very explicit, this formalism makes his arguments equally applicable to counterrevolutions, coups d'état, and restorations, and some readers have even claimed that Kant's chaotic attack on revolution is actually a veiled attempt to protect the Revolution from counterrevolutionary reaction.) "Once a revolution has succeeded and a new constitution has been established, the lack of legitimacy with which it began and has been implemented cannot release the subjects from complying with the new order of things."[34]

It comes down to this: *revolution is against the law* (!)—not just against actually existing laws, but against lawfulness as such, against the very idea of public law, against the irresistibility of the moral law,[35] and ultimately against the sacral authority of the Law itself in its unbreachable transcendence. Revolution is illegal both de facto (there can be no positive legislation authorizing the suspension of this legislation) and de jure (there can be no right to suspend right as such). And it is at odds, at a pragmatic level, with the "transcendental formula of public right," Kant's version of the political categorical imperative: "all actions relating to the rights of others are wrong if their maxim is incompatible with publicity" (Ak 8: 381; *PP* 347). Every revolution requires clandestine efforts that undermine the commitment to transparency on which any appeal to legitimacy rests.

Because every revolution is an explicit normative claim, a contest not only over the claims to particular and predefined rights but over the very terms of right, its implications are inherently universal. The resistance to a given regime involves a kind of negative infinite judgment directed toward the very premise of governance as such: to defy this particular sovereign is to deny the principle of sovereignty on which the social contract rests. To rebel against this particular constitution means to "annihilate any constitution and to eradicate the condition in which alone people can be in possession of rights generally" (Ak 8: 299; *TP* 298). Revolution marks the place where the very distinction between legality and legitimacy, between

positive law and rational (or natural) law, becomes indiscernible, as does the distinction between law itself and the divine commandment to which Kant also, uncharacteristically, ends up appealing. At moments, revolution becomes a quasi-theological impossibility, with the distinct whiff of an Oedipal transgression. Kant warns that even to investigate the historical genesis of sovereign power, to suspend the grip of law if only long enough to contemplate the idea of law's illegal origin in a founding act of violence, is already to place yourself outside the law, to put yourself in the position of the original legislator, to become your own progenitor, in effect, and thus tantamount to blasphemy and treason—both a "pointless" (*zweckleere*) and yet most "dangerous" speculation.

> Whether a state began with an actual contract of submission (*pactum subiectonis civilis*) as a fact, or whether power came first and law arrived only afterwards, or even whether they should have followed in this order: for a people already subject to civil law these subtle reasonings [*Vernünfteleien*] are altogether pointless and, moreover, threaten a state with danger. If a subject, having pondered [*ergrübelt*] over the ultimate origin of the authority now ruling, wanted to resist this authority, he would be punished, got rid of, or expelled (as an outlaw, *exlex*) in accordance with the laws of this authority, that is, with every right.—A law that is so holy (inviolable) that it is already a crime even to call it into doubt in a practical way, and so to suspend its effect for a moment, is represented [*vorgestellt*] as if it must have arisen not from human beings but from some highest, flawless lawgiver; and that is what the saying "All authority is from God" means. (Ak 6: 318; *MM* 462, trans. modified)[36]

The Revolution, then, both did not—could not—and yet did, irrefragably, occur: "As far as we can see, it is *impossible* for a human being to commit a crime of this kind" (Ak 6: 321n; *MM* 464n). In the very note in which he appears to exile the revolutionary event as an affront to rational humanity, Kant continues to downplay its significance. He wonders, sotto voce, whether the unthinkable-impossible might not somehow be accommodated: are there no circumstances in which even regicide might be reconciled with continuous evolutionary reform? Kant emphasizes that it is not the simple fact of the king's murder that "strikes horror in a soul filled with the idea of human rights." (Curiously, the only objection to the revolution that Kant takes seriously is one inspired by the principles of the revolution.) A random assassination attempt, for example, could be accommodated as the exception that proves the rule—a pathological erup-

tion of natural drives (hate, jealousy, revenge) that poses no real challenge either to the hegemony of the moral will or to the constitution modeled in its image. An execution motivated by fear of counterrevolutionary reprisal could be conceptually tolerated as a lapse motivated by self-interest.[37] Neither crime would undermine the organizing rationality of the state, which can easily survive an attack on the monarch's physical body by virtue of the political theology of the king's two bodies: "Dignitas non moritur." The king never dies. In a stable and statutory state ("a state in the strict sense of the word"), "law itself rules and depends on no particular person."[38] The spiritual institution of monarchy should be as little jeopardized by the contingency of the king's murder as by the inevitability of his fleshly demise.

What threatens to defy thought, on the other hand, like an "abyss that irretrievably swallows everything," is the "formal execution" of the king authorized by a legally sanctioned process that in its very punctiliousness can only overturn by assuming the formality of the law as such. It was not only this or that king, or even kingship in general, but the law itself—lawfulness—that was put to death on January 20, 1793. Kant's analysis suggests the intriguing possibility of a kind of sublime in reverse: a rigid adherence to "form" can only culminate in the wasteland of the formless. It signals the reversal of the idealist itinerary: the purest freedom collapses into the moral desert of appearances. This principled commitment to anarchic groundlessness, a formal commitment to the formless, releases a crescendo of escalating abstractions. The death sentence is sufficient to turn what would otherwise be the incidental murder of an individual monarch into the eradication of a dynasty, the destruction of a particular dynasty into the abolition of monarchy as an institution, the destruction of a state institution into the obliteration of the state as such, and the defiance of the law into the demolition of the possibility of any law—an irreversible reversion to *status naturalis*.

With the regicide, the gap closes between the king's two bodies. The king's death can mean nothing less than the self-inflicted death of the state as such—a "suicide" of reason, from which, however, a surd of sovereignty seems magically to have been extracted. This event is invested with all the prestige and mystery of the incarnation. Absolute monarchy is retroactively consummated at the moment of the king's ever-so-ordinary execution. Louis becomes absolute monarch the instant he dies convicted as Citizen Capet. In becoming nothing, he becomes everything. The king

has to die both as king, for the monstrously exceptional crime of having been king, and at the same instant as the insignificant banality named Louis Capet. In becoming everything, he becomes nothing. The execution is thus the demonstration of a miracle: it makes publicly visible what is unviewable, unthinkable, and strictly impossible—the ex nihilo self-production of sovereignty at the very moment of its self-destruction. With the public execution of the monarch, the people bear witness to the impossible. They become witnesses at their own birth. But since they derive their entire legitimacy from the devastated sovereignty of the monarch, what they are viewing is also the spectacle of their own annihilation. They became witnesses at their own funeral.[39]

This is why, for Kant, it is the king's trial that presents the traumatic kernel of the French Revolution. The real terror predates the Terror. Kant shows no particular interest in the carnage, the chaos, or even in the explicit dismantling of the legal apparatus, starting in March 1793, when, in the name of public safety, the Convention instituted an "extraordinary revolutionary tribunal" to deal with crimes against the republic, unleashing the chain of emergency measures that would climax in the infamous law of 22 Prairial (June 10, 1794)—the point at which all procedural niceties became officially dispensable and even the formal semblance of justice superfluous. The trial of Louis XVI, with its juridical minutiae and meticulous dramaturgy, preoccupies Kant far more than the atrocities perpetrated by spontaneous mob action or committed at the point when the regime had already explicitly jettisoned legality for reasons of expediency. The preliminary discussions of the delegates in the Convention during the weeks leading up to the trial pose the question with obsessive clarity: how could one judge a king who was by definition above the law, and according to a legal system that would both de facto and de jure rule out his conviction? What the trial needed to establish, infinitely more important than the contingent guilt of the accused, was the retroactive justification of the trial that would presume to judge him. It was not simply a question of applying a law to a crime that had not been identified as such when it was committed—a standard dilemma that arises in international criminal law when judging previous regimes for crimes against humanity: "nullum crimen sine lege." (This was the objection made by Raymond de Sèze, a counsel for the defense, in his speech of December 26, 1792.) The retroactivity at work was far more severe. The judgment not only had to generate the law to which it

appealed in identifying a crime that could not have preexisted the conviction. It also had to establish the sovereign ground of legislation, together with the authority of the Convention to judge and even to accuse the king in the first place.

Regicide was in this sense, for the revolutionaries, not just an optional expedient. It alone secured the legitimacy of the trial, by extracting, from the body of the accused, the sovereign authority necessary to have arraigned him. Only Louis's execution could justify his conviction, and only his conviction could justify the fact that he had been put on trial. Saint-Just and Robespierre tried to cut through this circularity when they impatiently dismissed the swirl of constitutional and procedural debates that raged throughout the fall of 1792 (could the king be tried, what exactly was the charge, who was to judge, on what grounds, etc.) as hair-splitting casuistry. "A people does not judge in the manner of courts of law; it does not hand down sentences but hurls down thunderbolts."[40] Revolutionary justice calls for summary execution: "You do not have a verdict to give for or against a man, but a measure to take for public safety."[41] To give Louis the dignity of an ordinary trial would already be to concede too much, in that it would effectively acquit him of the ultimate crime—that of having been king in the first place—and thus, as Robespierre famously put it, to "want revolution without a revolution," to want revolution while leaving the terms of sovereignty intact, a concession that would effectively put the revolution itself on trial.[42] "No man can reign innocently," announced Saint-Just.[43]

What repels and fascinates Kant about the king's trial is that it reveals an illegality that seems to be both internal to the law and the key to its foundational authority. It stakes out the precarious border zone between two incommensurable orders—the fragile point where justice hangs in the balance between legitimacy and power. What the trial exposes is the "future anterior" of a rule that will have been invented only upon being executed, and the circularity of a syllogism that will have justified its antecedent only from its conclusion. It marks the point where Benjamin's distinction between law-founding and law-maintaining power—the "republican" distinction between legislative and executive power—is in danger of collapsing. The logical and juridical syncope that reproduces the verdict in the charge is within a hair's breadth of the "swift, severe, inflexible justice" (the phrase is Robespierre's) that would, within a year, accelerate the passage from denunciation to death to the instant of a

falling blade.[44] Chronological sequence—the linear, irreversible time of nature—is not only suspended, as when the mathematical sublime does violence to the inner sense. Time is not just contracted, arrested, or interrupted: it is twisted and reversed. The Revolution marks a traumatic fold in the order of experience.

Diabolical?

The trial points to a constitutive anarchy within the law itself—a misdeed or even a non-deed, *Untat*, which while remaining strictly *un-doable* nonetheless is not *undo-able* (cf Ak 6: 321n; *MM* 464n). It cannot be done, and yet it cannot be undone. Kant is pointing to the aporia of revolutionary renewal. This is the paradox unleashed when the project of regeneration, in Mona Ozouf's phrase, drops its genitive—no longer regeneration *of* the monarchy, *of* the nation, *of* the administration (as in the old regime and even in the early years of the revolution), no longer stabilized by the existence of what is regenerated—and becomes regeneration pure and simple: infinite, intransitive, untethered from every object.[45] If there is no limit to what can and must be renovated—the calendar will be reset, cities will be renamed, "everything must be republicanized"—this is because in order to sustain its own generativity, the revolution must keep destroying whatever it generates, calling into question even its own most prodigious powers of self-invention. The audacity of the project is thus already a confession of failure: no object can survive the revolutionary act, and no such act can outlast the moment of its own invention. This monstrous productivity also accounts for the genealogical paradox that was to obsess the Revolution and underpin its strange sense of patrimony: the judgment that stripped the "last king of France" of his paternity was precisely what created the possibility of a revolutionary lineage.

The regicide inflicts a fatal wound on the body politic; it ruptures the vital process of reproduction and transmission on which both the survival of the French state and the living chain of progressive universal history depend. Seen from abroad, the performance interrupts not only the ceremonial procession of the Bourbon dynasty, but the epic pageantry of *translatio* on a cosmopolitan scale. It ruins the genealogical drama of legitimation in which the spectator might see his own image reflected in the ongoing destiny of the collective. It blocks that self-image, even as it puts on view what

must remain strictly unviewable: "*As far as we can see*, it is impossible for a human being to commit a crime of this kind, a formally evil (wholly pointless) crime; and yet it is not to be ignored in a system of morals (although it is only *the idea of the most extreme evil* [die bloße Idee des Äußerst-Bösen])" (Ak 6: 322n; *MM* 464n; emphasis mine).

With this apparently disinterested act of subversion—insubordination for its own sake, without mitigating motive—there arises the unthinkable possibility of evil for the sake of evil, "pointless" or "useless" (*nutzlos*) evil, formally indistinguishable from an act of duty: Saint-Just's willing executioners make the free choice of the evil maxim their categorical, unconditional principle. The regicide exemplifies the paradox of diabolical evil that Kant had already introduced briefly, in the *Religion*, but only in order to dismiss it, in similar terms, as "absolutely impossible." By "diabolical," Kant means a negativity internal to reason itself—a disturbance even more explosive than the negativity that had already fractured reason by making the choice of evil a free and rational decision (this is what makes evil "radical" or inextirpable: it is rooted in our very humanity). Diabolical evil is more than a simple bifurcation within reason (a negativity that would still be secured within reason's limits): it is a self-repulsion of reason against reason, an internal fissure that turns reason itself inside out, an "evil reason, as it were"—evil as such (*Bosheit*) rather than a particular mode of evil (*Bösartigkeit*)—a desire to transgress for the sole purpose of transgression, unperturbed by pathological incentives, uncontaminated by self-regard or self-gratification, indifferent to consequences, undistracted by temptation, clear-eyed, unsentimental, scrupulous in its honesty, unswerving in its commitment—in other words, the very image of moral purity and rigor.[46] Diabolical evil is *impossible*, says Kant: it "contains too much," in that it implies an integrity of which no human being is capable—but it is precisely this inhuman excess that must surely be maintained, if only to safeguard the idea of pure moral duty on which the very idea of humanity depends. It is only fidelity to the impossible—the idea of a strictly unrealizable moral purity—that prevents morality itself from sliding into hedonism, eudaemonism, fanaticism, in short, collusion with the existent.

The "*idea* of the most extreme evil" is just that: it functions as a kind of negative regulative Idea, without which the law's essential purity would be oriented, filled in, or rendered substantial—that is, defiled. The purity of diabolical evil not only mirrors but sustains the purity of moral duty:

it purges purity itself of all positive content or determinacy, including not only the idea of moral destiny but even the determinate opposition of good and evil. It prevents duty itself from becoming reified as a transcendent force over which I have no power and to which no responsibility, just as it prevents freedom from becoming hypostatized as a transcendent goal or destiny for the sake of which, rather than from which, I act. (This was Fouquier-Tinville's self-defence in 1795: "It is not I who ought to be facing the tribunal. . . . I only acted in the spirit of the laws passed by a Convention invested with all powers." Eichmann would famously echo this in Jerusalem: "I was just doing my duty.")

Gilles Deleuze insists that this is ultimately what it means to pry the moral law away from divine commandment. "The law no longer has its foundation in some higher principle from which it would derive its authority but is self-grounded and valid solely by virtue of its own form."[47] It is only by maintaining the formal indiscernibility between good and evil that the performative force of law can be maintained in the absence of specific ordinance or injunction: a commitment to law as such, to the form of law, law in general, the barest possibility of law, but also to the monstrous prodigality of a law that must be rearticulated every time it is applied, rejustified and reinvented whenever it is executed, a lawfulness in excess of law—or even, phrased differently, lawfulness without law, *Gesetzmäßigkeit ohne Gesetz*.

What the king's trial made painfully visible was the originality of a law that had to invent itself in the absence of any precursor; from this performative self-fashioning derived the event's essentially theatrical character. New laws were generated in the very moment of being executed, and it was only the "formal" or ceremonial quality of the trial that sustained, by institutionalizing, the revolutionary fiction of self-generation. In staging a show trial where the law was invoked as pure form without antecedent content—sheer "force of law without signification" (to recall Walter Benjamin's discussion of Kafka)—the revolutionaries were observing to the letter what Kant himself had emphasized when insisting on the unbridgeable disconnection between legality and morality.[48] By insisting on the need to follow the letter of the law while acting "from" a disinterested respect for its spirit, Kant had also confirmed that at the visible level of particular actions and decisions, our fidelity to the law is only an attachment to the letter.

But this literalism introduces into the domain of appearances its own kind of purity—a theater of form and formalization of appearance in

which the staging of appearance for its own sake allows the law to display its inaugural power of self-invention. Stripped of preexistent meaning, the law can only appear as a kind of cipher for which the key has been lost or not yet discovered. In its formality the law is no more than a dead letter, whose opacity points to the traumatic pressure of a not yet legible demand and an already vanishing authority. "Travesty" names the very theatricality from which Kant himself elsewhere derives the sublime pleasure of spectatorial enthusiasm.

Kant in the end leaves it undecided whether the trial was "show" or real, whether the regicide was murder or execution, and even, finally, what the difference might be. In the very last lines of the footnote in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant declares that the ultimate motive for the crime must have been fear rather than cold-blooded principle—ordinary murder dressed up in the cloak of justice. Kant's readers (at least the small minority who take diabolical evil seriously) reproach him for losing his nerve at just this point: in pathologizing the criminals, he trivializes their act and shrinks back from the abyss opened up by his own formalism. He exorcises the demon he has just conjured up.[49] But he can't quite seem to let it go. In a surprising turnabout, he adds that even this verdict fails to protect either actors or spectators from the abyss. The interminable footnote continues: "But this disguising of the deed miscarries [*verunglückt*]; such a presumption on the people's part is *still worse than murder*, since it involves a principle that would have to make it impossible to generate again a state that had been overthrown" (Ak 6: 322n; *MM* 465n). Another onion skin has been unpeeled, and the situation is now reversed: it turns out to be a case of legality hiding behind the appearance (Kant himself has discerned it, after all) of pathology. Despite its pathological appearance, then, the crime can never be quite impure enough, the murder never quite murderous enough: even the veneer of legality is enough to contaminate the deed with a tinge of disinterestedness—a taint of purity—that makes it "still worse than murder."

Kant does not draw out the most unsettling implications of this last move, which comes perilously close to effacing the distinction between radical and diabolical evil. For if the very *appearance* of legality is enough to make the crime diabolical, then almost any transgression would surely qualify: is not radical evil itself—ordinary, everyday evil—defined precisely as the moral masquerade that hides pathological motivations behind a façade

of righteousness? Is it only "bad luck" that pushes the crime from the radical to the diabolical, from the realm of all-too-human pathological perversity into the abyss of unspeakable, impossible, even-worse-than-murderous disaster? This would shift the criterion of moral evaluation from inner to outer, from agency to outcome, from intention to contingent consequence—a turn to moral luck. And what exactly was the misfortune; how was it that the disguise misfired (*verunglückte*)? Was it that the ruse was unconvincing, that in this case murder brazenly revealed itself as such; or was it rather that the disguise succeeded all too well, to the point where appearance became everything, dissolving the act itself into ungrounded, empty apparition, without a residual core of meaning or intention? In either case the founding opposition between appearance and reality, between legality and morality, between theatrical performance and inscrutable moral intention, between the visible and the invisible, would become incoherent.

Kant leaves this thought hovering. "As far as we can see, it is impossible for a human being to commit a crime of this kind . . . and yet it cannot be passed over [*nicht zu übergehen*] in a system of morals." Neither inside nor outside, the Revolution hovers at the margins of the system—untranslatable, intransmissible, unsurpassable. Although logically incoherent, even rationally nonexistent, the crime can be neither ignored nor superseded, neither passed over nor passed on. Excluded from every legacy, it is left to linger, without proper burial, in the underworld of footnotes.

Moral Revolution

But this is not quite the end of the story. For all Kant's attempts to quarantine the virulent negativity of the event, he is still not quite prepared to relinquish the Revolution's resources. In a further move, he attempts to siphon revolution away from the homogeneous spatiotemporal continuum—"Natura non facit saltum"—in order to reclaim its potency for morality. If freedom must be accumulated gradually in the domain of experience, this is ultimately so it can be acquired in one blow (but at every instant) in the noumenal domain. Strictly speaking, every act is like a revolution. It bursts through the linear continuum of time with the explosive potency of a new beginning. Just as every transgression has the gravity of the original Fall—it must be detached from every antecedent or context, and judged "as if the human being had just fallen into it directly

from the state of innocence" (Ak 6: 41; *RR* 86)—so too every moral action has the inaugural significance of a rebirth or resurrection. And this abruptness applies not only to particular moral actions but to moral disposition generally: to become good, to acquire a "moral character"—to "fix" or stabilize the basic maxims of our willing such that duty rather than self-interest henceforth consistently motivates our actions—this is irreversibly to reverse the order of incentives governing our practical existence. (To the consternation of many readers, including, as we shall see, Hegel, Kant resorts to a curiously traditional Christian and even pietist vocabulary at the very moment he wants to stress the absolutely unmediated character of this transformation, as if the newness of the event can be registered only by the familiarity of the idiom.) Kant explicitly describes this act of conversion as a "revolution."[50]

This is a direct consequence of Kant's rigorism: there are no moral intermediates, nothing more-or-less, approximate, piecemeal, mixed, eclectic, or indifferent about the value to be assigned either to the act or to the moral condition of the agent. Every verdict must adhere to a strictly binary measure—good or evil—and an absolute caesura separates the "before" and "after" of the transitionless transition to autonomy. Regardless of the requisite degree of cultivation, training, habituation, or effort, the decisive moment of change is as abrupt and unrehearsable as the transition from nonexistence to existence. The passage to maturity, or *Mündigkeit* (this is what is at stake), defies every naturalistic model of development, growth, or maturation. There are no partial installments, halfway measures, or gradual stages; short of total transformation, all efforts at improvement are fleeting, evanescent, a shadow-play of constantly disappearing impressions.[51] In the *Anthropology*, Kant compares the transition to an explosion. "Education, examples, and teaching generally cannot bring about this firmness and persistence in principles *gradually*, but only, as it were, by a kind of explosion [*Explosion*] which happens *one* time [*auf einmal*]."[52]

We might also compare it to an act of writing. I acquire a "character." I "fix" (*fixieren*) or imprint upon the wavering instability of feeling, mood or natural temperament the firmness of coherent principle.[53] I impose a formal consistency on my willing, without which all my actions remain episodic, contingent, ungrounded, as fleeting and formless as "a swarm of gnats" (Ak 7: 290; *AP* 190). It is character that ultimately overcomes the amorphous vagueness of the "foul stain." Radical evil remains ineffaceable,

an ever-present obstacle to achievement, but it fades into a shadowy background against which the indelible imprint of my character stands out all the more clearly. On its murky surface I come to inscribe the "distinguishing mark" of my rational humanity (Ak 7: 285; *AP* 185). The stain becomes a blank page on which I trace my signature.

The moment of conversion is also like a signature in its radical performativity: it has the solemnity of an oath, writes Kant, as well as its ineffaceable singularity "The grounding of character is like a kind of rebirth, a certain solemnity of taking a vow to oneself, which makes . . . the moment when this transformation took place unforgettable to him, like the beginning of a new epoch [den Zeitpunkt, da diese Umwandlung in ihm vorging, gleich einer neuen Epoche ihm unvergeßlich mache]." The eruption of morality into the flux of temporal experience leaves a permanent mark on time and bears its indelible stamp: "Perhaps there are only a few who have attempted this revolution before the age of thirty, and fewer still who have firmly established it before they are forty."[54]

Evolution and revolution thus prove to be logically inseparable. A moral "revolution"—Kant underlines the term—requires as its phenomenal counterpart an incremental acculturation of the embodied agent. The ex nihilo birth of freedom presupposes the slow and steady improvement of the sentient subject as it develops in partial installments from worse to better. And vice versa: the uninterrupted disciplining of the embodied subject presupposes for its orientation and consistency the constant possibility of a noumenal self-transformation: moral conversion is at once total and in need of incessant reactivation. Moral revolution is thus not only compatible with but implies affective, libidinal, behavioral and political "reformation," just as freedom of thought both accommodates and even calls for political obedience. (A Lutheran premise no doubt sustains this last inference.)

The dialectic rests on the opposition between noumenon and phenomenon, eternity and time, being and becoming, as on the perspectival split between divine and human spectatorship. It is again a question of theater—a shift of viewpoint as we pass from the "drama of great revolutions" to the "great drama of religious change on earth."[55] What from a finite standpoint can be grasped only as continuous amelioration and ac-

cumulation reveals itself sub specie aeternitatis as a matter of perpetual discontinuity and disjunction. The cosmopolitan spectator of the *Conflict of the Faculties* absorbs political agitation as the occasion for his own uninterrupted self-enhancement: in the eyes of man, revolution is rewritten as reform. The divine spectator negates this negation by discerning in the seamless continuum of self-improvement the incessant pressure of moral interruption: in the eyes of God, reform is rewritten as revolution.

[A] revolution is necessary in the mode of thought but a gradual reformation in the mode of sense. . . . That is: if by a single and unalterable decision a human being reverses the supreme ground of his maxims by which he was an evil human being (and thereby puts on a "new man"), he is to this extent, by principle and attitude of mind, a subject receptive to the good; but he is a good human being only in incessant laboring and becoming, i.e. he can hope—in view of the purity of the principle which he has adopted as the supreme maxim of his power of choice, and in view of the stability of this principle—to find himself upon the *good (though narrow) path of constant progress from bad to better*. For him who penetrates to the intelligible ground of the heart (the ground of all the maxims of the power of choice), for him to whom this endless progress is a unity, i.e. for God, this is the same as actually being a good human being (pleasing to him); *and to this extent the change can be considered a revolution.* (Ak 6: 47–48; *RR* 92, emphasis mine)

Kant thus condemns political insurrection, in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, in almost exactly the same terms as he celebrates morality in the *Religion*. Despite their opposing valences, both ruptures are described identically as a radical break with the order of experience—an event of untrammeled originality in which we witness the self-production of the law in its pure spontaneity. Freedom appears in each case as a moment of sheer heterogeneity: a break with the natural order in which nature nonetheless surprisingly manages, for better or worse, to reassert itself. *Political revolution* leaps away from a history organized as second nature toward a freedom that turns out, however, to be indistinguishable from the most anarchic nature. Striving to reinvent the law, revolution breaks with law, only to fall back into the abyss of natural necessity. *Moral revolution* leaps away from the natural order of experience into a freedom that turns out to have the inextinguishable force of nature. *Extremes meet* as unconditional morality surges forth to match the terrifying indeterminacy of the *status naturalis*. Kant's description of the unmediated transition from the realm

of necessity to the realm of freedom echoes the biblical language of the French revolutionaries:

> [T]hat a human being should become not merely *legally* good but *morally* good . . . that, so long as the foundation of the maxims of the human being remains impure, cannot be effected through gradual *reform* but must rather be effected through a *revolution* in the disposition of the human being (a transition to the maxim of holiness of disposition). And so a "new man" can come about only through a kind of rebirth, as it were a new creation (John 3:5; cf Genesis 1:2) and a change of heart. (Ak 6: 47; *Rel* 92)

Another Scene

And so it goes. "Them, but not us"—Friedrich Klopstock's phrase—was to be the refrain for an entire generation: the conversion of the trauma of the missed opportunity into the felix culpa of disaster forestalled. The logic is ultimately Aristotelian: terror is purged through a vicarious catharsis secured by aesthetic distance. Kant's analytic of the dynamic sublime is perhaps the first fully modern theory of the tragic, in that it links the experience of catharsis to the heroic self-production of the subject by way of the fantasy of its own annihilation. By 1790, it was already showing signs of strain, both for Kant and for his fellow travelers. As the theater of revolution turned into a theater of war, there was an increasingly anxious effort to maintain a spectatorial distance through the construction of an increasingly tenuous national, political, and cultural frontier. The effort subjected the idea of the sublime to its most severe challenge: how to contain or localize the experience of unboundedness within the boundaries of the nation?[56] The question opens onto the most compelling aporia of the sublime: the necessity of demarcating the conceptual limits of an event defined by limitlessness (*Unbegrenztheit*). (Minimally, as Derrida and others have shown, this arises with the initial task of distinguishing the sublime from, for example, the beautiful). The aporia of revolution in one country is just one aspect of this problem.

The strain became all the greater as terror institutionalized itself as the official order of the day. At this point, the scene of suffering, formally contained in Aristotelian tragedy, threatened to pervade the totality of the spectacle. At this point, too, the radiant transparency of the revolutionary festival gave way to the perfunctory, banal nonspectacle of the guillotine.

The democratic collapse of the distinction between actor, role, and spectator (on the scaffold everyone can be a player, but each player performs the same role, and only once) requires the elimination of illusionistic distance and the blockage of every spectatorial response.

Paradoxically, the guillotine both inspired theatricality (as an instrument of mass edification, it required full visibility and spectatorship) and yet resisted every attempt at visualization. It stimulated a desire for spectacle that it systematically frustrated. It called for a witnessing that it forcibly prohibited. This ambivalence captures the general crisis of representation at the end of the ancien régime. Michel Foucault has marked the historical transition from one scopic regime to another—the moment when the spectacular juridical apparatus of absolute monarchy gave way to the disciplinary mechanisms of modern bureaucracy, when sovereign power relinquished its need to display itself everywhere, like the sun, and instead learned to operate invisibly, microscopically, anonymously, efficiently, through the diffuse, disenchanted, neutral machinery of surveillance.[57] The elaborate dramaturgy of the public executions (the procession of the tumbrel, the approach to the scaffold, the hush of the crowd, the monstration of the severed head) could not quite conceal the fact that the guillotine offered precious little to feed the gaze. Even as the idea of decapitation proved endlessly inspiring to the popular visual imagination—images of ghostly apparitions, severed heads, and hungry cannibal machines circulated everywhere, in prints and posters, in sideshows and phantasmagoria, in puppet shows and magic lanterns, in children's toys and women's fashion, in paperweights and kitchen gadgets[58]—the drabness of the spectacle was becoming depressingly clear to all. Onlookers complained that they could *see nothing*, that the executioners blocked the view, that it was all over before it began, that there was no time for moral uplift. "There is no tragedy for them, they don't have *time* to be moved," Restif de la Bretonne commented.[59] The prodigious efficiency of the operation simultaneously drew crowds, who came eager to see justice done, the apparatus tested and speed records broken, and provoked an increasingly disappointed response. Camille Desmoulins predicted that the show's success would spell its failure: the better the machine performed, the less it offered. He replied to Marat's boast that he would, if necessary, strike down five hundred, five thousand, twenty thousand in a heartbeat: "Monsieur Marat . . . you are the dramaturge of journalists; the Danaïds,

the Barmecides are nothing beside your tragedies. You slit the throat of every character in the play, right down to the prompter. Are you unaware, then, that excess in tragedy goes flat?"[60]

And here, finally, the sublime Greek couple of pity and terror gives way to pitiless terror—for Michelet, the king's execution marked the day when pity had become a mockery[61]—or, more terrifying yet, to a pity indistinguishable from terror. In the tenderness of a Robespierre, Victor Hugo detects the self-annulment of pity—pity perfecting and consuming itself as the inexorable cruelty of the blade. "C'est par excès d'amour qu'ils abhorrent . . . / Et par miséricorde ils sont inexorables."[62] For Arendt, it is just this terrifying surfeit of pity, Robespierre's unwavering, selfless love and compassion for *les misérables*—the people united, indivisible, indistinguishable in their virtuous misfortune—that would ultimately distinguish the Jacobin revolution from its American precursor. Arendt argues that it is the ideology of pity that spells the fatal collapse of political rationality into sentimental passivity and the regression of freedom into the sphere of natural compulsion.[63] The revolutionary convergence of pity and terror marks the limit of the tragic: at this zero degree of identification, catharsis becomes indistinguishable from purge.

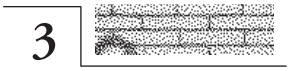
While the games of analogy proliferated, the nonsynchronicity was becoming burdensome, and the intellectual contortions painful. In any case, there was this awkward little detail: the French troops were advancing and the German Jacobins were getting restive. By 1792, the official discourse of dispassionate observation did not manage to drown out an increasingly excited outpouring in the German press describing in lascivious detail cannibalistic orgies in which raging furies (usually women) were observed thronging around the guillotine as they gorged on the still warm, quivering flesh of the victims—this from a German eyewitness report published in 1792 in a prominent German liberal periodical, *Minerva*, to which Hegel and many others subscribed.[64] The French and English papers were equally ebullient.[65] These widely circulated reports were taken dead seriously—even Fichte, who objected to the manipulative sensationalism of the media, did not cast doubts on their basic veracity—and inspired anything but a disinterested response.[66] Klopstock wondered whether the Germans would become so "consumed" by the spectacle of such atrocities

that they might "forget everything that once attracted them to the French Revolution."[67]

Reading about the terror did not always neutralize it. Consuming and being consumed by the culture industry would become a vicarious extension of revolutionary cannibalism. The publicity machine that was to have buffered the disruption was threatening to run amok. Revolution was brewing through the channels that were to have contained it. As the new dawn turned into a hurricane, an earthquake, a swarm of Hottentots, a horde of Amazons (how effortlessly fantasies of a vengeful nature fuse with anxieties about race and gender), the protective barrier had sprung a leak. The antidote against the infection was turning into a new kind of infection, remedy into illness, immunity into a kind of autoimmunity, in which the body politic had begun to turn against itself, destroying its own means of self-protection through over-exposure and addiction.[68] A character in Goethe's unfinished novella "Die Reise der Söhne Megaprazons" (1792) announces that the real "fever of the time" (*Zeitfeber*) is "newspaper fever" (*Zeitungsfeber*), a malignant air-borne virus threatening to contaminate the foundations of both family and state.[69] Friedrich Gentz, Burke's German translator and promoter, joined a chorus of culture critics from across the political spectrum in lamenting the reading disease (*Lesewut*, *Lesesucht*, *Lesefieber*, *Zuvielleserei*) that had overtaken the German populace—the swirl of quickly consumable books and periodicals, whose availability gave everyone an air of easy expertise, whose blurring of fiction and reality made it so easy to dream up new societies overnight, and whose impermanence mirrored the chronic instability of a world in which constitutions were continually "introduced and thrown away like a change of clothing."[70] The new is the eternal return of fashion; as so often, there was a gender as well as class subtext to the anxiety. In a transparent dig at Kant, Gentz remarks that the hysteria of the contemporary reading scene undermined any secure position from which the spectator (*Zuschauer*) might exercise his capacity for critical reflection.[71]

Germany would soon enough in any case find itself embroiled in its own war on terror. In 1819, Karl Sand, a radical member of the Burschenschaft, a patriotic student fraternity, assassinated the conservative satirist and playwright August von Kotzebue. The event crystallized a fatal ambiguity of German nationalism in the post-Napoleonic period. It exposed an intractable split between an emergent German nationalism and the

forces of Prussian reaction. The tension between democratic and dynastic models of sovereignty was already palpable in the competing images of the wars of liberation against Napoleon—*Freiheitskriege* or *Befreiungskriege* ("freedom wars" or "liberation wars")—and revealed the ambiguous legacy of the Revolution in Restoration Germany. The resulting crisis was taken as a pretext, in the Carlsbad Decrees of 1819, to outlaw, among other things, "demagoguery," defined as academic practices "subversive of the principles of the existing political institutions." Counterterrorism would become the order of the day. No one would grasp the meaning of this crackdown better than Hegel.



The Corpse of Faith

Rien.

LOUIS XVI, diary entry for July 14, 1789

Revolution or Reform?

Hegel's version of the story is at once orthodox and unpredictable. We'll get to the eccentric part in the next chapter. His orthodox commitments are most explicit in the Berlin lectures, where he attributes the various turmoils of the Revolution to the traumatic effects of a delayed secularization: France is acting out its unresolved relationship to its own absolutist past. By staging its political revolution without having undergone a prior religious awakening, its emancipatory efforts inevitably remain infantile and ineffective. "It is a false principle . . . that there can be a Revolution without a Reformation."[1] Germany's privilege is to have reversed the sequence. Having essentially won the fight against religious orthodoxy, it can manage its political issues with minimum upheaval, leaving itself free to seek its most important battles in the arena of pure thought. This was a common theme around 1800, at least in the north of Germany, where a preoccupation with Protestant identity was often combined with a misplaced confidence in the benevolence of the ruling princes.[2] There are other versions of the argument, nationalist and naturalist narratives invoking differences between national characters, styles, mentalities, or psyches—temperamental contrasts between the hot-headed French and the phlegmatic Germans, cultural contrasts between the cold-rationalist French and the

spiritual-dreamy Germans, geographical differences of climate, landscape, atmosphere, and so on—but these are not philosophically interesting. The issue is historical.

Hegel's Berlin account of the French Revolution implicitly draws on his earlier attempt, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, to derive revolutionary violence from the legacy of an incomplete or arrested Enlightenment. The Terror betrays the virulence of a rationality enthralled by the fanaticism it keeps trying to beat down. Such reactivity—abstract negativity at its most truculent—had condemned the culture of the French Enlightenment to an unceasing symbiosis of myth and self-mystifying disenchantment. It kept feeding on what it destroyed and annihilating what nourished it. Germany would have already long cut through this sterile circle of abstraction. The "northern principle"—Lutheran freedom of thought—had inoculated the nation against political upheaval, having achieved a rationality surpassing anything attainable by pure enlightenment alone. The Reformation had already cleansed faith of its oppressive otherworldliness, inspiring a tranquil confidence both in religion and in the secular institutions that religion nourished. Having established freedom of individual conscience as its own sovereign principle, religion in Germany could not only tolerate modern political freedom but supply its foundation.

Hegel thus appears to rehearse the familiar trope of preemptive cultural transformation: Germany is invulnerable to the Revolution because it has already undergone a more profound, exciting, robust, in every way better revolution of its own. The lapsed opportunity is not in Germany but in France. Having missed out on the Reformation, the French have bypassed the critical moment of spiritual emancipation, and are thus condemned to spin out endless new variations of rebellious compliance. Their rage betrays a cringing passion for an authority that is, from a historical perspective, already long obsolete. Their utopianism masks a secret conservatism, behind which lurks an intractable despair: the attempt to "bring heaven down to earth" only reinstates a hallucinatory otherworldliness that leaves the earthly realm uncontested. The Revolution is thus marked by a fundamental anachronism. Sustaining its manic drive to novelty is the seething melancholia of a subject gripped by the phantasm of an ungrieved past.

Hegel here anticipates (and at times in fact inspires) the liberal French historians of the Restoration and July Monarchy periods (from de Staël and Constant to Michelet, Quinet, and Guizot) who will identify the Revolution's short-circuit with the prior failure of the French Protestant Reformation. As early as 1798, de Staël had identified republicanism with the spirit of Protestantism (this was of course the very charge leveled by the Revolution's royalist detractors, from Chateaubriand and Bonald to de Maistre and onward),[3] attributing the Terror to the resurgence of a fanaticism born of arrested development. A question of bad timing: "The republic arrived in France before the Enlightenment, which should have laid the ground for it."[4] This will be precisely Michelet's verdict: the Revolution lacked foundation. "It lacked the religious revolution . . . from which it could have found support, strength, and depth." "Sterile with dogma, fertile with laws," the revolutionary project was stillborn even while it spawned a monstrous progeny of dead forms.[5] Despite its manifest affinities to the radical spirit of the Reformation (and despite its intellectual debt, via Rousseau, to Calvinism, or to the "Protestant-like" strands within the French Jansenist tradition), the Revolution was cut off from the legacy that could most have nourished it, and rejected the living patrimony to which it could have laid claim.[6] Quinet and Guizot are more specific: the disasters of 1793 all transpired under the shadow of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. "Half of France is missing," writes Quinet. Exiled or silenced by centuries of oppression, the Huguenot legacy has been amputated from the nation's body—"twice decapitated"—a phantom reminder of squandered opportunities and irretrievable ideals.[7] This is why the French Revolution will be seen to measure up poorly beside other revolutionary enterprises—in England, Holland, or America—in which the prior success of a religious revolution had prevented politics from turning into a new religion. "By the late eighteenth century it was already too late."[8] Having missed its own dress rehearsal, the Revolution is condemned to stage impotent farces that could only pander to an ossified tradition. What strikes Quinet is thus not the Revolution's audacity but its timidity. Rushing to accomplish everything all at once, it has failed to keep pace with the most long-standing achievement of its neighbors, and ended up regressing to the most archaic pieties. Witness its pontiffs, its anathemas, its inquisitions, its martyrs, its massacres, its miracles, its unholy crusades: "Luther would have laughed."[9]

Dead Right

With the Reformation, Hegel suggests, religion and reason would have already achieved a mutual accommodation, allowing Germany to sidestep the endless oscillation between disenchantment and mystification that would define the dialectic of Enlightenment in France. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel stages this destructive dialectic with some relish as he analyzes the collapse of the feudal order of the ancien regime. This crisis is only the most recent and spectacular in a long history of catastrophes, but it makes explicit the contradictions driving Spirit to this point. This is why the French Revolution will assume pivotal philosophical significance for Hegel. It crystallizes an entire history. It brings European history to a head by exposing the impossible pressure of secularization that has plagued collective existence from the start.

The Revolution brings modernity to its turning point by reactivating the unfinished project of antiquity. It inherits the theological-political crisis of legitimacy that had ruined the illusory tranquility of the Greek polis. Hegel's analysis of *Sittlichkeit* had shattered every nostalgia for an original transparency and plenitude. The beautiful polis turns out to have been a fragile edifice constructed on the hidden fault line between two irreconcilable orders. Beauty sustained the fiction of equilibrium by masking the dissonance between competing grounds of legitimacy—divine and human, sacred and secular, Antigone's law and Creon's. Beauty was in this sense the first aesthetic ideology: it supplied the suture or hyphen of the theological-political.

This is Hegel's response to lingering eighteenth-century German hellenophilic aesthetic fantasies, including his own, about a magical affinity between a modern Germany and its radiant classical precursor. His rebuke has an immediate political sting; it ruins any fantasy of bypassing the violence of the French revolutionary experiment by returning to the bliss of an imaginary republican freedom à la grecque. This was a common enough fantasy around 1800: "They are what we were; they are what we should become again . . ." (Schiller). The German effort to enjoy the French Revolution as a drama seen from afar would involve an increasingly anachronistic effort to forge a specular identification with an ancestral source. The family romance with Greece allowed modern

Germany to extract from the French experiment the image of a sanitized republican ideal; it helped neutralize the content of the Revolution that it was determined to make its own. The young Hegel, in Stuttgart and Tübingen, had deliriously engaged such fantasies.[10] In Jena he would leave them forever wilted. This is why the clash between Antigone and Creon is paradigmatic: the spectacle blocks every nostalgia for communitarian harmony. The tragedy brings to the surface the explosive antagonism sustaining the political order and reveals its toxic aftermath. The rotting corpse of Polyneices will be a permanent reminder of what remains unburied and unmourned in every struggle for legitimacy.

The task of modernity will be to explore this fissure. The rubble of *Sittlichkeit* had revealed what all ruins do, namely that the world is constructed. If the polis looked beautiful, this is because it was already artifice and artifact—the product of construction and as such susceptible to unmaking or deconstruction. Modernity begins with this corrosively denaturalizing insight. This is why its setting is the demolition zone left upon the collapse of Greek *Sittlichkeit*, as the rift became a chasm, the gods fled, the dead sank into oblivion, and the world disintegrated into a heap of isolated particles and scattered stage props—"cold, soulless atoms." The only way of imparting unity to this pulverized universe was through the abstract force of a law stripped of all legitimacy (and thus requiring for its execution the military prowess of a ruler whose own authority had been reduced to an ostentatious display of destructive, orgiastic excess) (*PhG* §481). This is how Hegel sums up the accomplishments of the Roman Empire—"a miserable life of worms."[11] Hegel is the last one to belittle these worms. The achievement of the *imperium* remains colossal: it makes chillingly explicit the profundity of the disenchantment.

Modernity takes ruination (*Verwüstung*) as its foundation (*PhG* §472). The world in which we find ourselves is a manufactured one, beauty is a masquerade (the Roman citizen is thus a "person" or persona, a mask or theatrical impersonation, and the state a spectacular one),[12] and we must henceforth invent what we discover. This is why the modern world defines itself explicitly as "culture" (*Bildung*): it is our way of registering that we place ourselves in a world of our own making (*PhG* §484). The task of Spirit will be to reconstruct an existence amid the debris of empire.

Erasures

Hegel sees in the Terror the return of a repressed fanaticism. Terror marks the modern crisis of secularization: it expresses the vicissitudes of a superstition that has been insulted, assaulted, and persecuted and thereby prolonged, exaggerated, and perverted by a rationality blind to its own reasons and above all to its fascinated complicity with its victim. Absolute-freedom-and-terror (Hegel's conjunction is really an apposition, or identity) is the political expression of Spirit's own fall into abstraction as it tries to respond to the disintegration of the symbolic order of the ancien régime.

Absolute monarchy had culminated in a scene of symbolic devastation: Hegel describes the court of Versailles as a swarm of courtiers clustering like "ornaments" around the throne of a shadow king whose name had come to mean everything, and therefore nothing (*PhG* §511). Having expropriated the entire subjectivity of the nation ("L'État, c'est moi"), the monarch had revealed the truth that he was, in fact, the dazzling emptiness of an image projected by a populace whose efforts to sustain the political order through ceremonial display and spectacle had only eviscerated the power it sought to bolster. Flattery—the language of this masquerade—represented at once the hypertrophy of speech, a desperate appeal to universality, and the immediate self-deconstruction of this claim as performative self-contradiction. In naming you king, I give myself to you, I give you my very self, all subjectivity is yours: you are everything and everyone. But precisely because I deprive myself, I have nothing left to give, I deprive you of the very subjectivity I bequeath to you, it is only my nothingness I am transmitting: you are nothing. In making you everything I make you nothing. I name you, but your power is nominal—an "empty name" (*PhG* §512). Hegel has just identified the basic paradox of the gift: either the gift is not really a gift (I want something in return), or there is no gift (I have nothing of my own to give). The sacrifice must be a vain one—something for nothing—or it is not a sacrifice. Flattery expresses the chronic *ressentiment* of those in bondage to a non-master: it reveals the core paradox, the real economic problem, of every masochism. The masquerade, becoming explicit, had thus given way to yet another performance, as the scene shifted to the rancorously funny world of Rameau's nephew, the nameless virtuoso in Diderot's dialogue of the same name, whose self-conscious theatricality was expressed as a parasitic inability to sustain a coherent po-

sition, role, or identity. Hegel takes this chaotic or "disrupted" subjectivity to be exemplary of the modern age (*PhG* §520). From the arrogant, rather tiresome perspective of a precocious, free-floating intellectual, the nephew had tried to expose the truth behind the shadow world of meaningless words and hollow gestures—to find meaning, laughter, and even a perverse grandeur in generating spectacle from the wreckage—before succumbing inevitably to the abyss himself (*PhG* §§521–22).

Enter "insight" (the figure of Enlightenment), together with its shadow brother "faith," to which insight attaches itself with increasingly ambivalent desperation, as both try to regain a foothold and to restore equilibrium to a fragmented social order by peering respectively through and beyond the rubble of the existing world (*PhG* §529). But, and this is the linchpin of Hegel's argument, in this flight from objectivity, reason catastrophically perpetuates its own collusion with the faith it keeps wanting to disown. Such complicity betrays itself in the blind fanaticism of insight's attacks on the delusion it would extirpate, and is illustrated perfectly by the orgiastic festivals of de-Christianization staged throughout France in the early 1790s. The Temple of Reason was consecrated with great fanfare in Paris, in the fall of 1793, in the former cathedral of Notre-Dame. The sacral darkness of the church had been banished by brilliantly arranged stage lighting that, at the climax of the celebration, turned the spotlight on a young actress from the Opéra impersonating Reason, dressed in Roman gown and garlands.[13]

Hegel's analysis of the dialectic of disenchantment is wicked, unflinching, and has its own inquisitorial aggressivity. His depiction captures the spiral of revolutionary iconoclasm and its desperate attempts to control the fetishistic circle of self-reifying negation. These strategies are worth rehearsing: from the decapitation of kings and nobles to the defacement and destruction of churches and monuments; from the renaming of streets and citizens to the recalibration of clock and calendar; from the plunder and dislocation of artworks to their recontextualization in the newly founded national museums that would simultaneously preserve and destroy them. The museum is a compromise formation. It tries to solve the dilemma posed by revolutionary vandalism: it permits the preservation of symbolic forms within a disenchanted space in which detached

aesthetic judgment replaces religious veneration.[14] The ambivalence over the museum's drift to monumentality, the eventual reinstatement of cultic aura through the production of surplus exhibition value, would be registered in recurrent fantasies of the museum in ruins, victim of time's own depredations. The paradox of a revolutionary museum—the creation of a heritage of modernity—did not go unmarked. Hubert Robert's paintings of the rubble of desecrated churches would immediately be supplemented by futuristic visions of the revolutionary Louvre in ruins (paintings that now, of course, hang securely in the Louvre).

In a further twist, the iconoclastic drive was directed against the iconoclasm that had immediately congealed into yet another dogmatism: erasures were erased, the twenty-four-hour day was reinstated, Robespierre would condemn atheism itself as a new "fanaticism." In June 1794, to purge the last vestige of idolatry and above all the newest idolatry of Reason itself, Robespierre assigned Jacques-Louis David the task of choreographing the Festival of the Supreme Being. Following the revolutionary tradition of ritual destruction, the celebration featured the spectacular burning of a colossal plaster statue of Atheism, from which a charred statue of Wisdom eventually emerged. According to Michelet, the ritual included the burning of an effigy of Nothing—yet another positivity painstakingly constructed so as to be annihilated.[15]

The circle would be unending. Destruction itself would soon enough need to be commemorated. How to preserve the radical negativity of the revolutionary event? How to transmit the amnesiac rupture within history—to initiate a tradition of the impossibility of tradition? Our contemporary obsession with anti-monuments, by now a slightly weary topic in the memory industry, begins right here. Failing to keep pace with the events, revolutionary artifacts became instantly obsolete, thus needing to be destroyed, and the destruction in turn to be commemorated, sacralized, and eternalized, the ruins carefully preserved in their desecrated condition. Images would proliferate representing the violent destruction of images—scenes of passion involving smashing, burning, pillaging images, but also trampling, tearing, biting, chewing, swallowing images, or collecting the fragments, piling up the debris into monumental pyramids to form the foundation stones of a new order.[16] An incident in the spring of 1793 made the theological stakes explicit. By order of the Convention, a bronze tablet representing the first version of the Declaration of the Rights of Man was disinterred from its

burial place in the foundation of a projected monument to Liberty on the site of the demolished Bastille, together with a copper tablet representing the equally short-lived 1791 Constitution. (As if to foreshadow their own destruction, both the Declaration and the Constitution were typically represented during the revolutionary years in the shape of the round-headed tablets of the Ten Commandments.) The exhumed documents were declared obsolete and ceremonially mutilated, their broken fragments deposited for perpetuity in the National Archives (where they can still be seen) as a "historical monument"—a memorial to institutionalized oblivion.[17]

Hegel insists that it makes no difference in this context whether reason's assault on its adversary works like a traumatic lesion or like an infection—that is, whether the attack is by way of missiles launched from a safe distance or by way of an insidious viral contamination against which "every remedy adopted only aggravates the disease" (for faith to argue back, to give reasons against reason, is only to identify with the aggressor and thus already to concede defeat) (*PhG* §545). In either case, reason's mortification of its presumed antithesis leaves as legacy for future generations the stench of the unburied dead—Creon's unending legacy to posterity. At one point Hegel describes the French Enlightenment as a kind of germ warfare (the infection metaphor is familiar from Voltaire and others) whose casualties are all the more serious for going unmarked.[18] Enlightenment spreads its disease like a "perfume in an unresisting atmosphere," and its vanquished enemies silently collect like ghosts.

> "One fine morning it gives its comrade a shove with the elbow and bang! crash! the idol lies on the floor." "One fine morning" whose noon is bloodless if the infection has penetrated to every organ of spiritual life. Memory alone then still preserves the dead form of the Spirit's previous shape as a vanished history, vanished *one knows not how*. And the new serpent of wisdom raised on high for admiration has in this way painlessly cast merely a withered skin. (*PhG* §545, emphasis mine)

I shall return to this "dead form" of a superstition cast off or abjected "one knows not how" and what is at stake in this not-knowing. Hegel has just explicitly identified Enlightenment as melancholia.

German philosophy, according to Hegel, would have already cut through this circle: having both enlightened and been enlightened by religion, it might be spared the indignity of regressing back into an ever

more mystified (because demystified) form of it. Protestant Germany has achieved the mutual accommodation of religion and reason through its spiritual freedom, and ultimately through the state apparatus that will come—with a stretch—to express this freedom. Absolute knowing registers this accommodation.

Terror as Melancholia

Hegel's depiction of the difference between the two national styles of Enlightenment—the difference between the German *Aufklärung* (self-understood as reason's own self-clarification) and the French *lumières* (self-misunderstood as reason's illumination of an opaquely irrational other)—might be explicated in terms of the difference between mourning and melancholia.

In the first case, reason is able to absorb, relinquish, and surpass a religion that has already on its own terms undertaken the transition to conceptual clarity. Philosophy commemorates and discharges its debt to a religion whose message is recognized as so compatible that its essential figures can be recycled in the transparent medium of thought. This is why the *Phenomenology* concludes by raising a toast to (Hegel's philosophical rephrasing of) Schiller's poetic reworking of the eucharistic formula: "From the chalice of this realm of spirits foams forth for Him his own infinitude."[19] By the time its own task is concluded, philosophy will have internalized Christianity so thoroughly that it can afford to part from it without loss.

In the second case, reason disavows its own identity with the faith it castigates, and in so doing prolongs the object as a stony relic or foreign body blocking thought. Insight's secret identification with what it keeps disowning as an illegitimate changeling (*Wechselbalg*) or impostor incites it to repudiate the rationality both of its object and thus ultimately of itself as persecutory subject (*PhG* §550): "Enlightenment is not very enlightened about itself" (§556). Its contempt expresses its own hidden fundamentalism—an empty ritual of disenchantment that must turn eventually against itself. Hegel repeatedly anticipates Freud's terminology as he investigates Enlightenment's inquisitorial agenda: disavowal (*Verleugnung*),[20] perversion (*Verkehrung*),[21] splitting (*Trennung, Entzweiung*),[22] isolation (*Isolierung*),[23] the stubborn forgetting (*Vergessen*) of the lost object[24]—the catalogue details the defensive apparatus of a subject bent on sustaining

itself on what it gives up. The melancholia afflicting Enlightenment condemns it to disown the violence it perpetrates on a faith whose grief is matched only by insight's own manic jubilation: Enlightenment fails to register faith's losses as its own. Enlightenment's blindness matches Creon's in the stubbornness of its refusal to give the dead a proper burial; from the tyrant's disrespect for the divine law, we have passed to the *philosophes'* desecration of divinity as such. Hegel sharply notes the contrast between insight's stupid euphoria and faith's despair. While faith slumps morosely before the rubble of a world stripped of significance, Enlightenment exultantly sets up shop. Hegel gives an evocative description of faith's anxious wandering from nothing to nothing:

> Faith has lost the content which filled its element, and collapses into a state in which it moves listlessly to and fro within itself. It has been expelled from its kingdom; or, this kingdom has been ransacked, since the waking consciousness has monopolized every distinction and expansion of it and has vindicated earth's ownership of every portion of it and given them back to earth. Yet faith is not on that account satisfied, for this illumination has everywhere brought to light only single, separate entities, so that what speaks to Spirit is only a reality without substance and a finitude forsaken by Spirit. Since faith is without any content and it cannot remain in this void, or since, in going beyond the finite which is the sole content, it finds only the void, it is a *sheer yearning*, its truth an empty beyond, for which a fitting content can no longer be found, for everything is bestowed elsewhere . . . (*PhG* §573)

Hegel slyly suggests that faith's afflictions will inevitably come to haunt Enlightenment itself, whose own sun will soon enough be blackened by faith's losses. "We shall see whether Enlightenment can remain satisfied: that yearning of the troubled spirit which mourns over the loss of its spiritual world lurks in the background. Enlightenment itself bears within it this blemish [*Makel*] of an unsatisfied yearning" (§573). The stain is the blind spot generated by insight's own phobic drive to purity (§548). It appears in the nostalgic residues of magical thinking that keep resurfacing whenever Enlightenment is forced to reclaim a relationship to the world it has just demolished, to propose a positive agenda, for example, by confronting the irritating but inevitable question, "What next?" (§557). These mystical remnants appear either as the mystification of the lost object in the form of reified negativity (the hypostasis of the supreme being, devoid of predicates: this is Enlightenment's version of negative theology) or—

the logical flip side—as the turgid materialism that makes do with lukewarm "leftover" matter (which is all that remains once spiritual meaning has been evicted from the mundane realm). As it splits into the twin abstractions of deism and materialism, Enlightenment internalizes its previous struggle with faith as if it needs to prove its opponent's ultimate irrelevance. Enlightenment starts frantically arguing with itself in a manic display of self-sufficiency as it tries to rewrite its most pathetic failure, its inability to engage (to "convert") its interlocutor, as its supreme good fortune. The empty dispute within Enlightenment (what's left? pure being? pure matter? does it even matter?) displaces the fruitless struggle for recognition, which Enlightenment itself has every reason to forget: "The interest which was divided between itself and the other party now falls entirely within itself, and the other party is forgotten, because that interest finds within itself the antithesis which occupies its attention. At the same time, however, it has been raised into the higher victorious element in which it exhibits itself in a clarified form. So that the schism that arises in one of the parties and seems to be a misfortune [*Unglück*], demonstrates rather that party's good fortune [*Glück*]" (*PhG* §575).

But this very split within Enlightenment only serves to commemorate Enlightenment's own unfinished struggle with its unmourned adversary, and displays this unfinishedness like an open wound. Insight's timorous trembling (*Erzittern* [*PhG* §579]), as it oscillates between the undifferentiated poles of empty being and empty matter, mirrors faith's own "listless unconscious weaving" (*dumpfes bewußtlos Weben*) as it genuflects despairingly before its own crumbling ground.[25] What both insight and faith toss away like an "empty husk" is the "missing moment of presence"—consummated objectivity, the rationally mediated reality of the world as such. Only this presence would have the power to transform the mechanical, empty spinning of a forlorn, isolated subject into a circle of fulfillment or self-return (§579). This interminable, idle weaving is Penelopean in its tenacity; it expresses a fidelity to an object that can neither be acknowledged nor entirely relinquished. This double bind is the "entanglement" (*Verwicklung*) on which Enlightenment will eventually trip—a thicket of confusions that serves to obscure the measure of what is at stake (§548). It barely conceals the anarchy that is about to be unleashed as the community splinters again into an aggregate of atoms glued together by the indifferent force of law. The empty squabble within Enlightenment

marks the disintegration of the binding power of religion (*religare*) and the fracturing of the social bond.

Everything that follows can be attributed to Enlightenment's disavowed grief for the lost object. Utilitarianism is the first stop along the way. Hegel describes this as the relentless consumerism that appropriates, manipulates, and exploits the last shred of objectivity, including that of the social world. The human community will be reduced to a collective survival mechanism regulated by a tepid pleasure principle dedicated to the rule of maximum reciprocal serviceability: the gang or "troop" (*Trupp*) rampaging like animals in the garden of Eden—Hegel's startling anticipation of Nietzsche's description of utilitarianism as a herd morality. "One hand washes the other" (§560). Hegel darkly suggests that this collective self-regulation is a thinly veiled defense against what lies beyond the pleasure principle. This is why utilitarianism is a slave ideology: I learn to wait. I pace my pleasure, I dilute it, I diversify it, I experiment with it, I count it, I parcel it into bite-sized units, I want it to last forever, I make *use* of the world so as to curb my own unappeasable desire to consume it, to destroy it, to *use it up*. The utilitarian social contract is therefore designed to produce a maximum of happiness: it tries to give a term or measure to desire, to prolong pleasure within "natural" limits, which amounts to reducing it to the thinnest terms of self-preservation: pleasure can be enhanced only by stretching it out into the empty bad infinite of self-reproduction—sheer animal survival. "'Measure' or proportion has the function of preventing pleasure in its variety and duration from being cut short; i.e., the function of 'measure' is immoderation" (*PhG* §560). And at this point Hegel's narrative takes on an intensity unmatched elsewhere in his writing. The entire precipitation into terror is contained in reason's campaign against a world it can neither accommodate nor quite, in the end, give up.

Of Kings and Cabbages

Having defined itself as negative, reason is set to embark on an annihilating mission that will culminate in a "fury of destruction." The retreat from objectivity escalates as Spirit progressively moves from the demystification, manipulation, and instrumentalization of singular existence to its eventual prosecution, and extermination: this is how Hegel describes the unstoppable movement from insight through utility to the

self-transparency of the general will. The shift from the ideology of utilitarianism to that of revolutionary freedom is the almost indiscernible, but critical transition from a subject that still needs to project at least an "empty show of objectivity" (*PhG* §583)—it has to treat the object "*as if* it were something alien" (§586, emphasis mine), if only in order to have something tangible and durable enough to make use of—to a subject whose withdrawal from objectivity is seemingly complete. Terror replaces the minimal utilitarian aesthetic, the "as if" fiction of serviceability, with a negative aesthetic in which the object is conjured up only under erasure, that is, as if it were already dead or nonexistent. Absolute freedom effaces even the vestigial trace of difference still implicit in instrumental reason, as the illusion of utility yields to a delirious potlatch of useless, meaningless destruction. With an exquisite Nietzschean sensitivity Hegel smells a rat: the stench of the corpse of the abandoned object keeps wafting up from the open grave of the world: "The individual consciousness itself is directly in its own eyes that which had [previously] had only a *semblance* of an antithesis; it is universal consciousness and will. The *beyond* of this its actual existence hovers over the corpse of the vanished independence of real being, or the being of faith, merely as the exhalation of a stale gas, of the vacuous *Être suprême*" (*PhG* §586).

Absolute freedom *is* terror. It is the infinite melancholia of a self that knows no other. It can recognize no obstacle, no externality, no mediating agency, no local nuance or detour that might delay or dilute the passage from individuality to totality, from part to whole, from citizen to state, and back again: the individual will fuses with the universal will immediately, totally, continuously, without residue. With the installation of mass sovereignty as a sovereignty of immediacy the die is irreversibly cast: reading Rousseau in 1789 is already enough to commit you to an "endless reversibility of democracy and dictatorship" within a fellowship of terror (the last phrase is Alain Badiou's).[26]

Direct democracy is only one of its many features. Hegel identifies as the latter's outcome the oscillation between the rock and the hard place of dictatorship ("a simple, inflexible cold universality"), on the one hand, and—look how the terms of Hegel's description are almost identical—anarchy ("the discrete, absolute, hard rigidity and self-willed atomism of actual self-consciousness"), on the other (§590). Abstract individualism is the abiding principle—the scary link, as far as Hegel is concerned, between

the disparate ideologies of revolutionary decisionism, social contractarianism, and free-market liberalism. These are the options once life turns into a relay between the immediacies of each and all.

It is Hegel's animosity to this abstraction that links his seemingly disconnected and often perplexing attacks on Rousseau, on the English Reform Bill, and on the July Revolution of 1830, just as it underpins his notorious attack on representative democracy. But his analysis also offers a way of accounting for the puzzling and oft-noted ambiguity running through the Declaration of the Rights of Man—the seemingly intractable tension between private and public liberty, between the rights of man and the rights of citizen, between the right of each (against all) and the right of all (against each)—a tension only partially explicable in terms of the Revolution's own split pedigree between a home-grown Gallic absolutism and an imported Anglo-Dutch liberalism.[27]

Hegel sees both positions as two sides of the same abstraction. This is why he outrages readers by so casually and carelessly dismissing Rousseau's anxious distinction between the *volonté de tous* and the *volonté générale*—it's all the same (*PhR* §258). Aggregate or fusion: in the end it makes no difference whether you arrive at the collective calmly and reasonably, consensually, by adding up the bits, counting the votes, trading in this chip for that, or whether you get there straightaway, magically, by melting everything immediately into one big, hot, stupid lump. Either way: abstraction. Either way: death. Either way, the world falls prey to the destructive passion of the melancholic, isolated subject—the "insatiable greed of subjectivity, which gathers up and consumes everything within the simple source of the pure ego" (*PhR* §26). Whether you count them or discount them, the things just keep on disintegrating, and people too—corpses vanishing into thin air.

Paranoia is another essential feature. In the binary universe of the will, difference is legible only as opposition, and opposition itself becomes indistinguishable from treason. This is why all distinction eventually assumes the insidious appearance of a *complot aristocratique*, a unitary plot whose predictability is as reassuring as it is disturbing. In the certainty of its uncertainty, the Terror serves the stabilizing function of all paranoia: it gives consistency and security—meaning, purpose, even existence—to a world otherwise untethered, unknowable, and strictly inadmissible. (Needless to say, as every paranoiac knows, the fact that

fantasy invariably serves a function in no way diminishes the fact that the threats are also real, tangible, and ever-present; France was swarming with counterrevolutionary agitation.) As the enemy becomes ever more diffuse, the signs of criminality proliferate—you fall under suspicion if you are a former aristocrat; if you are the brother, sister, father, daughter of a former aristocrat; if you are seen consorting with a former aristocrat; if you are seen dissenting openly; if you are not seen dissenting openly (which merely proves that you are a hypocrite); if you are found acting, speaking, writing against the Republic; if you are not found acting (etc.) against it, but not appearing to be doing anything for it either; if you are found skipping your section meetings (and pretending that you're just too busy)—and the catalogue of crimes expands with ever more startling concreteness: acts of treason will include not wearing the tricolor cockade, wearing the wrong color cockade, manufacturing defective ropes, manufacturing shoes that are smaller than a certain size, or made of calfskin, or styled in the "English manner". . .[28]

The more universal the law, the more episodic and idiosyncratic its elaboration. The more the law contracts into a single abstract principle, the more it keeps splintering into a series of improvised and isolated directives; there is no way of applying or executing the law without producing a brand-new law invented specially for the occasion: exceptionality is generated by the very system that excludes it. But this means that the detail in turn is capable of generating the law that bans it: every gesture points to the same crime, and every transgression elicits the identical sanction. "Everywhere I see the same vices, the same cabals, the same methods and calumny," Robespierre declaims[29]—a web of intrigue that in its homogeneity presents the mirror image of the indivisible, egalitarian nation. The idea of an "aristocratic plot" does more than just inflame older religious obsessions about an inscrutable, ever-lurking evil, and it goes beyond reactivating the bogeymen of the ancien régime (the cabal of Jesuits, Jansenists, Jews, Freemasons, etc.).[30] It serves a specifically modern function. It secures the unity of the democratic nation by providing the continuous counterforce of a stable and coherent threat. "We need great acts of treason; therein lies our salvation."[31] In its very indeterminacy, the conspiracy—by 1791, the word was used officially in the singular[32]—supplies determinacy, direction and even a sense of tradition for a history that wants to know none; it gathers history into an unbroken succession of ever-repeated crimes.

Non-revolution or anti-revolution thus come to be legible only as counterrevolution, just as foreign war and civil war, *l'ennemi du dehors* and *l'ennemi du dedans*, and criminality and treason will eventually coalesce: this porosity turns politics itself into a continuation of war by other means.[33] This is why the rules of war will be suspended for captured soldiers (the enemy is criminalized as a conspirator), while the citizen will be treated as an enemy and subjected to military sanctions. The outside is on the inside and the enemy is always already inside the gate. Polyneices is the prototype of the disowned other: a foreign body engendered through the repression that summarily expels it.

The Law of Suspects is thus, for Hegel, not a contingent deviation from the Revolution but its quintessential expression. It finds its material corollary in the mass production of corpses, the theoretical sniffing out of alterity implying its practical snuffing out in the will's own tautological self-encounter. The guillotine serves both to highlight and to cancel the phantom objectivity created by the Law of Suspects, according to which imaginary counterfactual intentions assume the status of objective guilt. Suspicion is both the epistemology and the poetics of a world devoid of enduring objects—alterity has to be constructed and denounced as if discovered, if only in order to be refuted, purged, and reinvented—and decapitation is at once the literalization, the allegorization, and the repetitive self-deconstruction of this aporetic, circular epistemology.

The guillotine also presents an aesthetic challenge. It generates a virtual theater and a theater of virtualization—a spectacle of the unspectacular where objects are conjured up in their disappearance, disappearance is materialized, and repetition itself acquires an aura. Michelet, a fine Hegelian, detects in the conceptual sterility of the Terror a secret craving for singularity: the fear of faction masks an even greater terror that, at bottom, everything is always and everywhere just the same. "The fury of the parties could not mask the quality of life contained within their doctrines. Because they were zealous scholastics, they could all the more easily proscribe one another in that given that there was no fundamental difference between them they could be certain of the nuances that separated them only if they introduced the *distinguo of death*."[34] The culture of the guillotine reveals the imaginative possibilities released by this purely formal idea of a distinction without a difference. Its laconism inspires a profusion of miscellaneous detail. In its rigidity, the machine provides the armature for an ever more

inventive stream of possibilities—eyewitness accounts, anecdotes, jokes, scientific speculations, psychiatric case histories, cartoons, toys, mousetraps, bread slicers, fashion statements, and theatrical performances.[35] (It produces a thirst for trivia and stimulates a compulsive desire to make lists.) It is the guillotine that has remained to this day the mesmerizing emblem of the French Revolution, not the spectacular mass drownings at Nantes or the mass executions at Lyon, despite their much greater efficiency and far more flamboyant libidinous energy. Hegel is the first to notice the strange mixture of thrill and boredom. Repetitive, inexpressive, featureless, the scaffold becomes at once a setting, a stage prop and the leading player (personified invariably as dripping female—Sainte Guillotine, holy mother, *vagina dentata*, etc.) of a continuous drama in which the pornographic keeps alternating with the grotesque, the uncanny with the carnivalesque, the maudlin with the magical, the ghoulish with the prosaic, the orgiastic with the disgusting, and the boring with the even more boring. Boredom is not just the antithesis of fascination; Hegel suggests that they are the same.

Hegel's philosophical exegesis of the guillotine goes beyond Foucault's unforgettable description, in *Discipline and Punish*, of the transition from lurid Baroque "festivals of cruelty" to the numbing efficiency of modern punishment—the shift from the theatrical extravaganzas of public torture to the modern production of the criminal's body as an undifferentiated instrument on which punishment can be administered within the transparency of a homogeneous penal regime. Hegel's interest is not only in the modern disenchantment of death—its reduction to the anonymous numericity of a statistic, its submission to new routines of hygiene and efficiency—and the establishment of a new disciplinary apparatus. He is focused on a more intractable antinomy. His target is the paradox of a murder that strips away, not just the life, but the prior subjectivity of the victim. The elimination of face-to-face contact between victim and executioner ("the axe is seen rather than the hand that set it in motion")[36] is one aspect of this obliteration. The guillotine retroactively retracts the minimal recognition it concedes its victim (as worthy of suspicion in the first place) in that it directs itself toward an already annihilated nonentity. By stripping death of its intensity and singularity it provides a practical demonstration of the object's nullity. The guillotine's essential function is in this sense to render itself inessential or redundant. The cut effaces its own traces by offering a kind of "ontological argument" for nonexistence.

This is perhaps why, at the limit, revolutionary justice needed to be applied even to cadavers. It was not enough that even before the blade fell, the victim on the scaffold was already lying prostrate. As if to prove the uncertainty of the distinction between the living and the dead, even corpses had to be killed, and statues beheaded. The lifeless bodies of those who had tried to cheat the machine by committing suicide were propped up in the tumbrel alongside living victims and carried to the scaffold. The iteration suggests the multifarious logic of the death drive: every death is a second death; the dead are never quite dead enough; and even the dead are never safe. The quicklime that swallowed the corpse within the anonymity of the mass grave confirms that we are in the region of what Adorno calls the "philosopheme of pure identity"—death in its most unsublimated insignificance: modern death. Creon's Pyrrhic victory is near complete. Hegel names a death "which has no inner significance or filling, for what is negated is the empty point of the absolutely free self" (*PhG* §590). The machine perfects and ritualistically formalizes the evacuation of alterity that Hegel locates at the origin of modern democratic sovereignty. Thus Hegel's chilling description, so contemporary in its resonance, of the "cold, matter of fact annihilation of this existent self, from which nothing else can be taken away but its mere being" (§591).

Thus the famous cabbage heads—Hegel's startling anticipation of Heidegger's notorious comparison of the death camps to modern agribusiness. These will be the final crop of the utilitarian garden of Eden. "The sole work and deed of universal freedom is death, a death that has no inner significance or filling. . . . It is thus the coldest and meanest of all deaths, with no more significance than cutting off a head of cabbage or swallowing a mouthful of water" (§590). This is probably as close as it is possible to get, circa 1800, to what Adorno identifies as our contemporary situation—the impossible, Auschwitzean condition of "dying today."[37] The comparison is, however, insidious and should be resisted.[38]

Among the many paradoxes of the guillotine is that it simultaneously reinforces and erodes the distinction between dying and living. The moment of death is at once punctual, precise, and radically indeterminate: both incontestable and yet infinitely uncertain. Decapitation simultaneously provides an answer to the (at the time) prevalent fear of live burial and feeds this anxiety. The fall of the blade marks the transitionless transition from an already mortified existence to the posthumous mortality of

a subject for whom the ontological difference between life and death has already been eroded. The obsessive fantasies of posthumous survival entertained by the popular imaginary of the guillotine, which preoccupied both literature and medical science from the 1790s (and not only in France), are the inversion of the living death to which life itself had seemingly been reduced—hence the proliferation of blushing heads, talking heads, suffering heads, the heads that dreamed, screamed, bit, gnashed their teeth, grimaced, sneered, groaned, kissed, blinked, winked, returned the gaze, heads that could not stop remembering and reliving the moment of decapitation, the walking torsos, the disembodied body parts, the detached writing hands, the ghosts and ghouls and zombies that would populate memoirs, prints, broadsides, magic lantern shows, canvases, and the pages of gothic novels throughout Europe.[39]

These kinds of fantasies about the undead usually express counterrevolutionary sentiments. But there are revolutionary versions, too, anxieties about the "perennial vampires of liberty"—royalist specters who keep returning from the grave as creepy, headless trunks, or as parasites that threaten to invade the purified body of the Republic, or to decapitate the nation, reducing it to an anarchic assemblage of lifeless body parts—"limbs [that] want to walk without the direction of the head."[40]

Horror vacui

The Terror is thus neither explained away by Hegel on circumstantial grounds—the exceptional security measures improvised by a young republic struggling to sustain itself in the face of an extraordinary array of contingent pressures, from foreign wars to internal counterrevolutionary insurgencies, from bread shortages to whatever—nor mystified as some kind of inexplicable, diabolical, cataclysmic eruption. Unlike Kant (and unlike the liberal French historians of the 1830s), Hegel sees the Revolution as a block: the Terror cannot be surgically excised as a local anomaly, deformation, or betrayal of its founding principles; the Revolution does not splinter into essential and inessential, structural and incidental. Any attempt even to define the chronological boundaries of the Terror—to contain it within a sixteen-month interval as a temporary distortion or unfortunate deviation from the Revolution—runs the risk of prolonging the persecutory logic of the Terror. The paradox is exemplified by the virulence

of the Thermidorian counterterrorist reaction, with its official culture of denunciation, investigation, and prosecution (and its unofficial subculture of vigilante justice and gang violence); Thermidor is the prototype of every war on terrorism.[41] For Hegel, then, the Terror begins not with the Law of 22 Prairial (June 10, 1794), not with Law of Suspects (September 17, 1793), not with the regicide in January 1793, not with the king's arrest and trial in the fall of 1792, not with the September massacres of 1792, not with the riots at the Tuileries on August 10, 1792, not with the peasant revolt in July 1789, and not with the storming of the Bastille. Hegel backdates the Terror to the very onset of the revolution: June 17, 1789. This was the day the États généraux spontaneously and virtually unanimously recreated itself as the Assemblée nationale, sworn to perpetual and uninterrupted convocation, sole agent and embodiment of the nation's will.

With the Tennis Court Oath, the ex nihilo transition of the *tiers état* from "nothing" to "everything" was both affirmed and performatively accomplished: the oath both marked and made the people's transition from political nullity to the "complete nation" that it would retroactively determine itself to have always already been. Because it defined itself as structurally complete, the nation had to surgically eliminate what differed from it as an excrescence whose very existence was a contradiction. This is why the founding act of revolutionary democracy is the purge. This literalization of Abbé Sieyès's formula establishes political modernity as a fellowship of terror. With this gesture, "the undivided substance of absolute freedom ascends to the throne of the world without any power being able to resist it" (*PhG* §585).

In identifying the Terror with the origin of the Revolution, Hegel has inevitably been compared to Edmund Burke (whose *Reflections on the Revolution in France* had been almost immediately translated, and in Hegel's favorite journal), to Louis de Bonald and Hippolyte Taine (for whom the slide from the Revolution of liberty to the despotism of equality was predestined), and even to Joseph de Maistre (for whom the Terror was the providential punishment for the hubris of human self-assertion). Such comparisons only have a tiny degree of justice, even if Hegel's inexplicable savagery to Rousseau does nothing to discourage them (for the record, his rhetoric does stop short of Burke's hysterical denunciation of Rousseau as an "insane Socrates"). It is true that Hegel has much to account for, not least his general sourness about the July Revolution of 1830 and his per-

ceived docility in the face of the censors at Berlin—everything that was even within his lifetime to earn him a reputation as ideologue of the Restoration. Whatever the injustice of that particular charge, his embarrassing (one might say, abstract) tendency to conflate everything into the same soup of abstract negativity—terrorism, mysticism, Hinduism, Islamic fundamentalism, Rousseau, Thomas Müntzer, Anabaptism, Judaism, whatever—still gives one pause. Terror is not simply what you get when you put abstract ideas into practice—a tendency that both Burke and Hegel (as well as Tocqueville, Schiller, and so many others) identify as the occupational hazard of "French theory." Terror is itself abstraction: in flipping helplessly between "each" and "all" it can elaborate itself only as the repetitive production of nothing—the empty negativity of unworked death.

But it is precisely at this point that comparison with Burke proves irrelevant. Hegel's unflinching identification of the Terror as the inauguration of political modernity does not prevent him from affirming the Revolution in its entirety as inevitable, comprehensible, justifiable, horrible, thrilling, mind-numbingly boring, and infinitely productive. I'm not referring to Hegel's personal sensibilities (the legendary dance around the freedom tree, the annual toast on Bastille Day, and so on)—1789 without the rest, the standard reflex of the German intelligentsia. Hegel is almost unique among his contemporaries for having refused this kind of squeamish liberalism. And we cannot draw the line between endorsement and repudiation by giving ordinary, human explanations, such as age (the young student rhapsodic at Tübingen, the old man grouchy at Berlin), ambivalence, or even inconsistency. Hegel's palpable oscillation between an unqualified and lyrical "enthusiasm"—his (unmistakably Kantian) word—for the "tremendous spectacle" unfolding before the world and his unequivocal condemnation of this same event as "the most terrible and drastic" to have ever happened is expressed in the same breath; and this vacillation is moreover repeated constantly from 1794 to 1830.[42]

The deadly power that knows how to reduce heads to cabbages is, for Hegel, the same abstraction that governs the ideology of liberalism: Hegel describes the latter as a reduction of the community to an aggregate of "volitional atoms"—isolated individuals bound together in common pursuit of private ends. Hegel does not simply tolerate the former (the Terror) as the historical cost of the latter (liberalism)—the price paid by the French, for example, to enjoy the institutions of modern civil society, or for the

Germans to profit from the innovations brought in by Napoleon. (This is Joachim Ritter's influential reading: Hegel can unambivalently affirm the Revolution because he is able to extract a liberalism appropriate to the emergent bourgeois order—the rational kernel within the Revolution's wild shell.[43])

Hegel discerns another promise in this abstraction. Abstraction is also the power of interruption: it introduces a caesura into a history that has already congealed into second nature. Only in this way could "the idea of right assert its authority *all at once* [*mit* einem Male]"—the emphasis is Hegel's—that is, with an authority deriving from an instantaneous and total visibility. Only through such a moment of radical abstraction can the deadly stranglehold of tradition be loosened: revolution obliterates what has gone before, as if the past had not occurred, or was not determinative, or as if the future were already present—"as if the reconciliation between the divine and secular were now for the first time accomplished."[44] Without abstraction there would be no "monstrous power of the negative."Abstraction is the deadly capacity to cut into the continuum of being and bring existence to the point of unreality (*Unwirklichkeit* [*PhG* §32]).

In taking Absolute-freedom-and-terror as a package, Hegel comes close to those writers—from Tocqueville to Claude Lefort, François Furet, and Marcel Gauchet (an otherwise diverse crew)—who treat the French Revolution as one more episode in the *longue durée* of European absolutism: revolutionary democracy simultaneously interrupts and prolongs the theological-political heritage, and therein lie both its promise and its danger. Tocqueville recalls Mirabeau's reassuring letter to the king, less than a year into the Revolution, that "the modern idea of a single class of citizens on an equal footing" should help provide a smoother surface on which royal power might all the more easily apply itself.[45] Centralization provides the hinge between ancien régime and revolutionary modernity. The decisive shift—the "first revolution"—is therefore, by this reading, not the self-conscious transition from monarchy to republic, but rather the uneasy passage within monarchism itself from an older feudal apparatus, with its intricate corporate hierarchies and particularisms, to an absolute monarchy that by accumulating for itself all local privilege was able to reconfigure the body politic as a homogeneous mass capable of functioning as a unified,

collective subject. In the hypertrophy of the monarchy lies the germ of the modern egalitarian nation. For Tocqueville, then, it is Richelieu, not Rousseau, and certainly not Robespierre, who must be regarded as one of the very first authors of the Revolution.

Terror by this account betrays the resurgence of absolutism within a political framework that must disavow it—not a passing frenzy but, as Quinet writes, the "fixed temperament" of the Revolution, a character in which we can also discern the indelible imprint of tradition.[46] The paradox of the Jacobin dictatorship ("the despotism of liberty against tyranny") expresses the temporal dissonance that defines modernity. Terror marks the entanglement between modern liberty and the theological residue that sustains it. The regicide marks the symbolic inauguration of political modernity: it stages the instantaneous and total transfer of sovereignty from king to people. The fall of the blade marks the sublime instant separating (but in this way also fusing) before and after, ancien régime and revolutionary republic: "Le roi est mort—vive la patrie." This sacrificial logic was ceremonially enacted on January 21, 1793, in an event marked, according to all the narratives, by sacred pomp and ceremony. It was already formalized at the king's trial when Robespierre invoked the baptismal quality of the execution. "The king must die because the nation must live": an infinite investment in the sacral body of the king has to be maintained and even retroactively generated through the public staging of the king's absolute divestment. The regeneration of the people is the restoration of the nation's body through the expropriation of the expropriator. Only as the abject, humiliated body of Louis Capet does the king acquire the majesty sufficient to generate a republic. He gains his absolute status only at the moment of relinquishing it.

At the trial, Saint-Just argued that it was ultimately the ideology of royal inviolability that condemned Louis insofar as it explicitly located him outside the body politic: he was an *ennemi étranger*—a moral "monster," the abbé Grégoire added. Saint-Just himself would perversely be the first to insist on this fiction of sovereign immunity[47] when he refused the king's canny request for a civilian trial. Saint-Just was here exploiting a melancholic paradox that would preoccupy Sade, Nietzsche, and eventually Klossowski and Blanchot. How to kill a God who is, effectively, already long dead, who never actually did exist as such: how to mourn what is forever too late to mourn—what never was for the having?

The regicide marks what Daniel Arasse calls the perfect "syncope of sacrality": the banal death of Louis Capet is the consecration of the nation. From this baptism flow all the contradictions of modernity—the inaugural self-betrayal of democracy through ever more inventive modes of terror. Although Hegel barely pauses at the regicide, he is the first to identify in the negative theology of the guillotine the link between the terrors of modern democracy and the disavowed fundamentalism on which it rests. He is perhaps the first also to make the connection between this disavowal and the compulsive construction of fanaticism as the terrifying fundamentalism of the Other. War on terror is democracy's way of abjecting what remains its own darkest secret to itself. Insight needs faith: modern democracy is just the unfolding of their violent symbiosis through the melancholic staging of an ungrieved loss.

What Claude Lefort calls the "persistence of the theological-political" might be understood as a kind of fetishism: the empty place left by the evacuation of transcendence is filled by the self-production of the nation as power incarnate.[48] Lack is here simultaneously acknowledged and disavowed: the sacramental substitution of people for king serves to immediately close the gap the regicide opens up; this perverse substitution underpins every modern politics of fusion. Genuine democracy, in Lefort's terms, can establish itself only as an unending activity of defetishization—a ceaseless negotiation to maintain the empty place of power as an active vacancy rather than as the usual vacuum into which anything and everything might flow. One might understand this tenacity, a fidelity to absence as such, as a kind of mourning.

Hegel goes further: he establishes that the place was actually always empty. This is not simply about the reinstatement of absolutism through revolutionary dictatorship. Absolute monarchy was already an "empty name," a heap of ornaments clustering around an empty throne—legitimacy shrinking even as the emblems and props of power multiplied. It is this originary vacancy that modernity both covers up and transmits. Revolutionary purity brings into view precisely what it most denies: the emptiness at the heart of the symbolic order. This loss does not begin with the self-evacuation of absolute monarchy. The voiding of the king's name is just the delayed registration of the ruination into which beautiful *Sittlichkeit* was thrown—"swallowed up in the simple necessity of a blank destiny" (§477)—and with it every fantasy of communitarian substance.

No beautiful semblance masks this emptiness: not the tranquil beauty of the polis, not the Roman imperial mask of power, not the pageantry of Versailles, not the dazzle of Rameau's nephew, not the theater of the guillotine.

History must thus be understood here neither as the progressive accumulation of meaning nor as a deterioration from a substantial plenitude. It presents itself rather as the unconscious or blanked-out transmission of a void. Hegel is circling around the black hole that Benjamin will identify as the "sickness of tradition" (*die Erkrankung der Tradition*): tradition in the absence of every determinate content to be transmitted, transmission of the impossibility of transmission, transmission of transmissibility itself—that is, the transmission of trauma. Benjamin relates this sickness to the crisis of legitimacy described so meticulously by Kafka—the loss of legibility that occurs when the law appears in its pure performativity, stripped of antecedent meaning and authority: "truth is sacrificed for the sake of its transmissibility."[49] This loss is equally an opportunity in that it exposes history to its own radical indeterminacy and capacity for reinvention. For Hegel, the sickness had set in much earlier. The abyss of untrammeled revolutionary negativity is just the condensation and hyperbolic demonstration of the emptiness plaguing Spirit from the start. This emptiness reveals simultaneously Spirit's inaugural power of self-invention and the measure of its despair.

The Terror therefore does not function as the eruption of some kind of crazy excess or irrecuperable exception to the system (as a certain Bataille-inspired reading might suggest). Rather, the exception is in this case the rule: unworked negativity is less a distortion than the prototype and motor of Spirit's dialectic. Absolute-freedom-and-terror does not so much deviate from the trajectory of the *Phenomenology* as illuminate its essential logic. The flat death on the scaffold is both the culmination and the commentary on the entire history of Spirit to this point. It crystallizes by exaggerating to a point of absurdity what could have escaped no reader of Hegel: there never has been so far, in fact, a death that actually worked. Either the burial was blocked, like Polyneices'—society was not up to it—or the sacrifice proved vain, like the feudal knight's. In the dismembered body of the suspect, the accumulated debt of Spirit comes to a head: nonrecognition, nonproductivity, noncommemoration, nonredemption.

4 

Revolution at a Distance, or, Moral Terror

Hegel's wager is to discharge by consolidating this accumulated debt: to make this worklessness work in such a way that the slaughter bench of history might present itself as the Golgotha of Spirit, and melancholia supersede itself in mourning. In this light, he seeks to radicalize the Christian wager: he sharpens the antithesis between finite and infinite to the point of seemingly unbridgeable disjunction. The flat death on the scaffold puts symbolization to its most radical test, and in the extremity of its resistance, supplies the measure of Spirit's most prodigious power of recuperation. "[I]t is the pure positive because it is the pure negative; and the meaningless death, the unfilled negativity of the self, turns around [*umschlägt*] in its inner Notion into absolute positivity" (*PhG* §594). This is understandably the transition in the *Phenomenology* most reviled by Hegel's critics, who read in this arithmetic a sophisticated version of the German ideology—the sublime combination of resignation and opportunism that knows how to turn a profit from the most irreconcilable disaster. The "turnaround" is thus, for many, symptomatic of Hegel's own fall into positivism: political catastrophe slides into intellectual opportunity, and philosophy into an embrace of actually existing conditions. By translating the Terror into the thrilling terror of introspection, Hegel seems to out-Kant Kant: sublation proves to be a mode of sublimity and ultimately of submission. This is why for so many readers the transition from "absolute freedom" to "morality" will be the neuralgic kernel of the *Phenomenology*.

But this is just where Hegel's thought takes a surprising turn. Analyzing the German ideology even as he continues to entertain it, he will end up exploding it from within. Hegel does not simply indulge in this fantasy, any more than he seeks to demystify or "enlighten" it by launching grenades from the other shore. He demonstrates how it is constructed and sustained. Step by step, painstakingly, and as only one who knows the routine by heart is capable, Hegel sets out the building blocks of the German ideology.

Philosophical Thermidor

This is the story that follows the absolute-freedom-and-terror episode, as Spirit takes possession of its self-dispossession and comes to recognize its losses as its own. The bad infinite of suspicion makes terror both reflexive—terror inevitably comes to terrify even itself, to denounce and purge itself, turning executioner into victim—and in turn self-reflective. "[S]elf-consciousness *learns* what absolute freedom in effect is" (*PhG* §592).

The point is not to sublimate terror through catharsis or idealization. It is not death's intensity but its banality or "flatness" that needs to be refunctioned, and this precisely by retrieving in mechanicity itself an opportunity for spiritual advance: the ghost of autonomy wafts through the automatism of the apparatus. Reduced to its minimal spiritual significance, freedom reasserts itself as the infinite productivity of the blade. Repetitive, indefatigable, endlessly inventive in its applications, the guillotine puts on display the pure energy of the death drive. As the machine turns against itself, a fissure opens within subjectivity; this repetitive contraction announces the birth pangs of the modern self. The Thermidorean witch-hunt not only prolongs the circle of vengeance but, in setting itself apart from its own past, poses terror as a question even or especially to itself. It introduces into the immediacy of the general will the sliver of differentiation that will provide a minimal interval for reflection. All the aporias of transitional justice make a cameo appearance. With the arrest and summary execution of Robespierre, perpetrator fuses with victim and the circle of terror closes.

Hegel's interest, however, is not in Thermidor as such, at which he only blinks as a mere reflex of the Revolution, nor in the renewed political structures that were immediately to follow—the rearrangement of the

"spiritual 'masses'" under the Directorate and beyond, as the people clustered around and capitulated to new modes of authority. Hegel hurries past this latter episode as an intermezzo to distract both players and audience during the change of cast and scenery, a temporary respite for a subject still mired in abstraction:

> Out of this tumult, Spirit would be flung back to its starting point, to the ethical and real world of culture, merely refreshed and rejuvenated by the fear of the lord and master, which has again entered men's hearts. Spirit would have to traverse anew and continually repeat this cycle of necessity if the result were only the complete interpenetration of self-consciousness and Substance—an interpenetration in which self-consciousness . . . would desire to know itself not as this particular individual, but only as a universal. (*PhG* §594)

"Fear of the lord"—the slave's shattering encounter with mortality—had marked the baptism of self-consciousness. The chop of the blade has just reduced this fear to the flattest tonic—a mere "refreshment," Hegel writes, "with no more significance than cutting off a head of cabbage or swallowing a sip of water" (*PhG* §590).

This last image is overdetermined. In describing the guillotine this way, Hegel may be alluding to its inventor's much-ridiculed boast that the impact of the blade was painless—"nothing more than a slight sensation of coolness at the back of the neck."[1] James Schmidt reads an allusion to the mass drownings orchestrated at the height of the Terror by the deputy Jean-Baptiste Carrier in response to the uprisings at Nantes—exuberant ceremonies of "republican marriage" in which refractory priests and nuns were lashed together naked and thrown into the river Loire.[2] The suggestion is intriguing, although Hegel's emphasis on "flatness" does strike a somewhat different affective tone; what Hegel finds arresting about the sip of water is less its vulgarity or bad taste than its utter tastelessness, its blandness. It suggests the traumatic oblivion of those who must slake their thirst from the river Lethe. Hegel anticipates this image in the Preface to the *Phenomenology*, where he describes secular modernity as a wasteland of abstraction—a field of "empty husks" in which the subject seeks to replenish the void left by the loss of God by gorging on the sugary drivel of mysticism or the thin gruel of religious sentiment (*PhG* §7). This is far from the holy-sober of absolute knowing—the Bacchanalian ecstasy of commemoration in which, as Hegel famously writes, "no member is not drunk," and yet which yields the satisfaction of "transparent and simple repose" (*PhG* §47).

No such consolation for the modern subject, whose misery is expressed in the paltriness of its own desire: "The Spirit shows itself as so impoverished that, like a wanderer in the desert craving for a mere mouthful of water, it seems to crave for its refreshment only the bare feeling of the divine in general. By the little which now satisfies Spirit, we can measure the extent of its loss" (*PhG* §8).

Mona Ozouf describes Thermidor as a "labor of forgetfulness."[3] Rather than engaging in a mourning work that would inherit, surpass, and transmit the revolutionary legacy, the Thermidorians sought to normalize the event; the Revolution both elided its traumatic memories and suppressed its own utopian demands. For Hegel, such a drive to oblivion is structural: it expresses Spirit's resistance to its own irresistible self-surpassing; political reaction is here a variant of a more general conceptual inertia (*Trägheit*). The various regressions of the Thermidorian aftermath express the reflexive anxiety unleashed by the Terror—terror's own terror of itself, its logical inability to sustain itself, and the repeated short-circuiting of the Revolution to prerevolutionary positions.

This Sisyphean cycle echoes the comedy of forgetfulness that had inaugurated the epic theater of Spirit. The famous opening act of the *Phenomenology* features the burlesque of a subject mulishly clinging to its abstractions, in this case the belief in raw, unmediated sensory experience, as it lurches about ineffectually, brandishing its monosyllables ("This!" "Here!" "Now!") like talismans designed to ward off the irredeemable negativity at its core. Unprepared to recognize the truth of its own words, the subject is like a student forever writing his lines in disappearing ink. "[I]t is always reaching this result, learning from experience what is true in it; but equally it is always forgetting it and starting the movement all over again" (*PhG* §109). Beneath the slapstick Hegel discerns the thinly veiled melancholy of a subject dumbstruck by its narcissistic wounds; the loss of one's most cherished convictions turns every "pathway of doubt" (*Zweifel*) into a "pathway of despair" (*Verzweiflung*) (*PhG* §78). The despair is constitutive. It arises from the internal splitting or duplicity (*Zweifalt*) defining consciousness as such. Condemned to strike postures it cannot sustain, to measure itself against standards to which it cannot adhere and that do not themselves cohere, consciousness is inherently torn or "twofold"—doubtful, desperate, and despairing. Since it defines itself by its own cognitive commitments, it necessarily experiences every loss of certainty as "the loss

of its own self": the disarray is originary, irremediable, and self-reproducing. Chronically lagging behind its own insights, consciousness keeps on "forgetting" what it keeps inadvertently acknowledging and stubbornly repeating what it knows to be out of date. "[C]onsciousness suffers this violence at its own hand: it spoils its own limited satisfaction. When consciousness feels this violence, its anxiety may well make it retreat from the truth and strive to hold onto what it is in danger of losing. But it can find no peace. If it wishes to remain in a state of unthinking inertia, then thought troubles its thoughtlessness, and its own unrest disturbs its inertia" (*PhG* §80).

Hegel could not quite foresee, in 1806, the seemingly endless cycle of revolution and counterrevolutionary repression that would soon enough be unleashed (1830, 1848, 1870, and on), but he had already marked the specter of repetition at the heart of revolutionary regeneration.[4] As of 1806, the conceptual problems raised by politics can no longer be addressed by directly political means. The French Revolution finds its sequel in translation as it passes over to the "unreal world" of German philosophy.

". . . another land"

Hegel thus begins to rehearse the German ideology. He formalizes a model of genealogical succession: the transition from revolutionary France to philosophical Germany is inscribed within the trajectory of universal history. In the *Philosophy of History*, he will describe history as a "great day's work of Spirit," which takes its bearings from the solar trajectory. We must read the figure literally: the traveling is literally both a journey (a day-trip) and a labor (a travail). History is the story of continuously expanding epiphany—a perpetual relay of enlightenment through the global continuum of time and space. Like a torch transferred from hand to hand, like the sun moving across the firmament, like the imperial pageantry of the *oriens Augusti*, the Idea migrates over the centuries from one hegemonic center to the next—from Asia to Europe, from Greece to Rome, from Rome to France, and finally to the German present. Germany is commissioned to consummate the French revolutionary project, bringing history to a close. "We have received the higher call of Nature to be the conservers of the holy flame, just as the Eumolpidae in Athens had the conservation of the Eleusinian mysteries."[5] This is Hegel's spin on the medieval trope of *translatio imperii*—the irresistible transfer of dynastic legitimacy from generation to generation and from

land to land—a transmission inseparable from the conveyance of cultural capital through the philological labors of *translatio studii*: transliteration, translation, imitation, adaptation, the rephrasing and reworking of the cultural booty of the past.

But Hegel comes close to dismantling the German ideology even as he embellishes it. He points to a traumatic kernel at the heart of this well-rehearsed teleology. The deferral that drives the movement of imperial expansion will also void any possibility of eschatological fulfillment. In the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel links Spirit's mobility to a dangerous morbidity. If the Idea must continually relocate, if the torch must be constantly handed on, this is because its incandescence burns, or rather, to shift the metaphor, the poison must continually be expelled; history is the administration of a time-released toxin whose consumption is fatal to those who secrete it. "The life of a people ripens a certain fruit; its activity aims at the complete manifestation of the principle which it embodies. But this fruit does not fall back into the womb of the people that gave birth to it and ripened it; on the contrary, it becomes a bitter drink to it. It cannot leave it alone, for it has an infinite thirst for it; the taste of the drink is its annihilation."[6]

The image gives a startling twist to Hegel's more familiar description of experience as the organic growth of meaning from seed to blossom to fruit and back again (*PhG* §6). It is actually a small dose of death that is transmitted. The gift becomes, in the present, a kind of poison. To consume the fruit of the present, to experience one's own experience, would entail a mad *jouissance* within the short-circuit of time—at once thought's craving and its ruination. Hegel here essentially defines history as trans-generational trauma: experience is the belated and vicarious experience of the missed experience of the other.

Mixing metaphors yet again in the preface to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel describes history as a blend of the intangible and the intractable. Each generation absorbs the experiences of its precursors in "silhouette" and as "inorganic nature" (*PhG* §28). History can be encountered only as spectral, monochromatic, shrouded in shadow—a series of frozen snapshots, fleetingly apprehended (were it not for this acceleration, we would perpetually have to repeat the past in real time), belatedly absorbed. The past presents itself as at once an ephemeral trace to be deciphered and a stony burden that must be metabolized as food for thought (the only safely edible fruit is the inedible or inorganic one)—both shadow and stone.

History makes its appearance in the border zone between light and darkness—a shape made visible as a blind spot or absence of illumination. The silhouette is also an image of dismemberment: we engage with history only obliquely and in abbreviation—a series of disembodied faces, viewed in profile, inaccessible to direct frontal encounter. I will come back to this. (With this surprising mortuary image Hegel is also, perhaps involuntarily, evoking the guillotine as a figure of historical experience. Popularized by the Swiss physiognomist Johann Kaspar Lavater in the eighteenth century as a device for extracting the innermost character of the soul from the body's most extreme exteriority, the silhouette machine was sometimes compared to a guillotine.)[7]

Revolutionary inheritance displays the displacement characteristic of all experience. It specifies the axis of transgenerational trauma as a transnational one: this vicarious, convoluted transmission, memory of the immemorial, explicitly assumes a geopolitical form. For at this point, Spirit "leaves its self-destroying reality . . . and passes over into another land" (*PhG* §595)—the "unreal" world in which German philosophy will seek to discharge the burden of the Revolution by loosening the Enlightenment's compulsive attachment to the faith it continues to disavow. By articulating the rational truth of religion, philosophy will try to resolve the antinomy on which the Revolution had foundered. It sets out to resynchronize the clocks of history by supplying the Revolution's missing premise and thwarted promise: it will return the Revolution to the Reformation. The task of German idealism is thus the interrogation, commemoration, and redemption of the Revolution—absolute freedom and terror on trial. "Morality" is philosophical Thermidor.

From Terror to Anxiety

> I have placed my trust on Nothing now, Hurrah!
>
> GOETHE, "Vanitas! Vanitatum vanitas"

We can understand the shift from absolute freedom to morality as a vicarious binding of trauma: Germany tries to mourn a loss that France could only disavow, and thus to fulfill a project that on its own turf is condemned to compulsive repetition. "Absolute freedom leaves its self-destroying reality [*ihrer selbst zerstörenden Wirklichkeit*] and passes over

into another land . . . where, in this unreal world [*in dieser Unwirklichkeit*] freedom has the value of truth" (*PhG* §595). The virtual political landscape of Prussia, a zone of virgin occupation, in 1806, provides the perfect setting in which to undertake the formal virtualization of reality by the Kantian moral will. The nullified reality of French revolutionary existence finds its sequel in the irreality of German philosophical existence. As the will encounters itself as "pure unfilled negativity," Spirit comes to acknowledge its own nothingness as its very self—it symbolically assumes its own castration—and through this traumatic self-recognition learns to mediate the immediacy of absolute freedom.

I give this freedom form. More precisely: I demonstrate that absolute freedom is already form. "[I] reduce the antithesis to a transparent form" (*PhG* §595). I formalize or make explicit the formalism already implicit in the will's virtuosic ability to identify in the diversity of the world a tautological uniformity and to extract from sameness a parade of insidious distinctions. Thermidor brings to light the epistemological achievement of revolutionary denunciation: terror had pulverized the world into an infinite series of indistinguishable distinctions, through which subjectivity now discovers its own most virulent power of discrimination. If every difference amounts to the same difference, the same treachery, the same cabbage head, this is because it will turn out to have been subjectivity itself that makes all the difference. The distinction I prosecute is ultimately my own.

The transition repeats and clarifies the initial transition to self-consciousness in the early chapter on "Force and the Understanding." It had been the inexplicable pleasure of repetition that had awakened the subject to the intensity of its own agency. Having been reduced to "explaining" the world by reciting empty tautological formulas that revealed nothing, explained nothing, and ultimately spoke of nothing other than my own thirst for explanation, I was forced to confront the insistent reflexivity of my own desire: it turns out that it was really myself that I had all along been wanting to be talking about, and to. "The reason why 'explaining' affords so much satisfaction is because consciousness is . . . communing directly with itself, enjoying only itself; although it seems to be busy with something else, it is in fact occupied only with itself" (*PhG* §163). Thus the essential shift in dramaturgical perspective: the spectator discovers that it has already put itself on stage. What I am really watching, as I scrutinize the world, is my own command performance. "It is manifest

that behind the so-called curtain which is supposed to conceal the inner world, there is nothing to be seen unless *we* go behind it ourselves, as much in order that we may see, as that there might be something behind there which can be seen" (*PhG* §165).

The experience of the Terror had revealed the demonic dimension of such tautological repetition, but it will be the task of morality to confess to the dark side of this enjoyment. As the curtain of appearances again rises, we leave the spectral pageantry of suspicion—the theater of revolutionary surveillance with its ceaseless phantasmagoria of appearance and disappearance—to enter a theater of pure subjectivity in which the will openly scrutinizes itself in its own uninterrupted self-production. It is in the invisible theater of the self that I come to acknowledge the terrifying truth of the Terror. In my zeal to see through appearances, to render the world transparent, I have all the while been staring beyond it: what I have been gazing at with such fascination is the virulence of my own denunciatory desire. In "seeing through" (*durchschauen*) the object, I have already twice destroyed it: first, by reducing it to an object of utilitarian consumption (in using the object, I overlook its singular claim to existence); next, by peeling away its patriotic veneer (in unmasking its treacherous interior, I deprive the object of the very right to exist). Whether utilizing or scrutinizing the object, I reduce it to the transparent vehicle of my own self-encounter.

Absolute freedom thus reveals itself as pure speculation—nothing but the "gazing of the self into the self, the absolute seeing of itself doubled" (*PhG* §583). It is this empty shell of subjectivity, formal and formalistic, that must now step on stage, if only so that there might be something there for it to see. Having cleared the stage of all actors, dialogue, and costumes, I have put myself in the position of the last executioner in the famous Thermidorian print who, having executed everyone else, must finish off the job by staging his own execution. Stage manager, actor, and spectator all in one, I must learn to do the police in different voices.

The philosophical significance of 9 Thermidor, for Hegel, is that it demonstrates the essential reflexivity of terror; it reveals the logic behind that self-cannibalizing hunger. If Robespierre must die, if the executioner must be executed, this is not simply because he runs out of victims, but because only his elimination can express the infinite circularity of a freedom that

must learn to operate even in the absence of objects on which to practice. "Self-consciousness learns what absolute freedom in effect is" (*PhG* §592)—namely, that the objects of its destruction are artifacts of its own making: its vehemence is directed ultimately at itself. The will no longer seeks external objects to which to apply itself. Its negativity is intransitive, self-directed, and crystalline in its self-containment—a destructiveness so pure it has no need of anything to destroy. Radical loss thus congeals into the sublime acquisition of a subject who finds self-possession in its dispossession. Having nothing, I become everything—just like the *tiers état*. The void itself becomes a preemptive filling.

Terror is in this way retroactively integrated as the condition of possibility of the self-willing will. It announces the heroic rebirth of the subject from the trauma of its own annihilation. There is a fetishistic component. To suffer the loss of oneself is already to enjoy the consoling fiction that there is or was a self to be lost; we can only regret or fear losing what is there for the losing. And there is a temporal twist. In psychoanalytic terms, we could say that traumatic terror is being rewritten as preemptive anxiety. The shock of unprepared injury is absorbed by the retrospective anxiety that transforms the unmastered past into a pending future. The terrified nonsubject of absolute freedom is reborn as an anxious subject. And anxiety itself reassures us that we still have something to lose. Transforming past into future, anxiety teaches us how to mourn in advance.

To "stare the negative in the face," to recall Hegel's famous formula, is to engage in rhetorical prosopopoiea: I confront a death that through my own gaze acquires a face, a shape, a human countenance, thus reflecting back the image of my own freedom. To *face* death is to convert the *caput mortuum* of history into conceptual capital—to turn death mask, cipher of the most "terrifying unreality" (*furchtbare Unwirklichkeit*) into a cipher of remembrance. The subject learns to read its signature in the debris of its own devastation: "it wins its truth only when it finds itself in utter dismemberment" (*PhG* §32). Death is thus recuperated for remembrance, while memory itself is oriented toward a future forever pending; in being commemorated, death is preemptively staved off. The precipitous instantaneity of absolute freedom is here transformed into the distended slave time of deferral, inhibition, delay.

Spirit thus returns to work. The subject seeks to overcome the terror of its own transience through a sacrifice of particularity, compensated

by the thought of eventual redemption. The refurbished postrevolutionary will (Germany ca. 1800) is for this reason implicated, in all its phases, in an activity of postponement. The suspension of the object will imply a temporality of suspense—a dilatoriness that evokes the lingering hesitancy that Hegel discerns in the basic rhythm of all experience. Kant's ethics of postponement will, for Hegel, present a perverse and masochistic version of this lingering. Can Hegelian lingering—the famous "tarrying with the negative"—be differentiated from slave deferral? This question will drive the remainder of this book.

Morality as Slave Ideology

The problem of those who wait . . .

NIETZSCHE, *Beyond Good and Evil*

The retrieval of subjectivity out of its own impossibility involves the exhuming of the still lukewarm body of the slave, whose shudder before the prospect of extinction had betrayed not only his captivation by natural desire but also his initiation into the regime of self-consciousness and freedom. Hegel's account of the slave's self-dissolution before "the absolute master" (death) meshes almost perfectly with the Thermidorian image of the revolutionary subject forged in the crucible of its own destruction. Here is Hegel's celebrated description of the primal scene of self-consciousness—the slave is quaking in the face of a death that has the ineluctable force of castration (Miller's aggressively gendered translation is strange but irresistibly intriguing):

> [Servitude] does in fact contain within itself this truth of pure negativity . . . , for it has experienced this its own essential nature. For this consciousness has been fearful not of this or that particular thing or just at odd moments, but its whole being has been seized with dread; for it has experienced the fear of death, the absolute master. In that experience it has been quite unmanned [*aufgelöst*, literally "dissolved"], has trembled in every fibre of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations. (*PhG* §194, modified)

And here is Deputy Jean-Lambert Tallien, an architect of the Terror and one of its earliest and most opportunistic denouncers, analyzing the psychological and physiological effects of the Terror, in a speech to the Convention exactly one month after Robespierre's execution. Tallien's description

of the systematic disorientation induced by revolutionary terror resonates throughout the Thermidorian period, even chiming with the new psychiatric discourse that was in the process of being invented to address the painful legacy of the recent past:

> Terror is a pervasive involuntary trembling, an outer tremor that affects the most hidden fibres, that degrades man and assimilates him to beast; it is a collapse of all physical strength, a concussion [delivered] to all moral faculties; a disturbance of all ideas, an overthrow of all affections; it is a veritable disorganization of the soul.[8]

Contrary to what one might expect, Hegel's slave did not still his trembling through an appropriation of his own expropriated subjectivity, whether by a direct seizure of the means of production or by laying claim to the congealed humanity imprinted into the products of his own labor. It will take Marx to articulate such a strategy of liberation. The path described by Hegel is notoriously more roundabout. The slave could initially experience his own freedom only through a stoic renunciation of bodily desire, a defiance of natural existence, in which the slave ultimately prolonged his own servitude by miming the heroic self-assertion of the master. This is why Alexandre Kojève calls Stoicism the first ideology.[9] By converting bodily frustration into an expression of sovereign self-reliance, the slave justifies his own inaction: I am free as long as I know myself to be so.

The transition from absolute-freedom-and-terror to morality repeats, at a collective or social level, the earlier passage from lordship/bondage to Stoicism. Its various stumbling blocks will prove more or less the same. In each case the subject tries to absorb the terror of its own transience by suspending everything that had previously threatened to disempower it. The world becomes tolerable because irrelevant: I let it go free.[10] In suspending the world, I discover myself to be the infinite power whose freedom of annihilation applies above all to myself. I thus rewrite failure—mortality itself—as the very index of spiritual success. I refashion traumatic lack as preemptive negativity: a conceptual guillotine intervenes between self and self. Having evacuated every object, I evacuate myself, and thereby rediscover myself, in my nullity, as my own lost object. The will clings to itself to supply the phantom objectivity whose appearance it had previously kept conjuring up within the terrifying Fort-Da of denunciation and decapitation. In Nietzschean terms, the reflexive circuit of the will-to-will replaces the aggressive extroversion of the will-to-power. Preferring to will Noth-

ing rather than to will nothing, that is, not to will at all, the will ends up identifying with nothingness as both form and content. This of course is Nietzsche's definition of nihilism.

Kant as Terrorist

> How much blood and cruelty lie at the origin of all good things . . .
>
> NIETZSCHE, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

In this turn from Terror to Kant, Hegel is both his most conventional and his most inventive. If he comes very close to reproducing the standard German idealist understanding of the relation between philosophy and terror—Kantian-style freedom of the will as at once the explication, the negation, and the logical successor of revolutionary freedom—he also undermines this position: he will immediately argue that such freedom on its own terms does nothing to redeem the blocked promise of the Revolution. Hegel makes it bitterly clear that the sublime purity of the moral will can be no antidote to the terrifying purity of revolutionary virtue. He demonstrates that all the features of absolute freedom are carried over into Kantian morality: the obsessionality, the paranoia, the suspicion, the surveillance, the evaporation of objectivity within the sadistic vehemence of a subjectivity bent on reproducing itself within a world it must disregard.

Morality is thus prolongation of terror by other means. And Hegel goes farther: the violence will escalate even as Kant's followers from Schiller onward seek to soften the harshness of the critical project by reinjecting sensuousness into morality. The post-Kantian attempt to reunite the subject with the world, to resituate freedom, to give it back its legs, will only further deracinate it. The Romantic project converts Kantian asceticism into an aestheticism that continues cruelly to rewrite the terms of its own existence.

All this was only just starting to become visible to readers in France, where Kant somehow always managed to present an accurate barometer of the political climate. Invoked vaguely as a kindred spirit during the early years of the Revolution, Kant was imported almost immediately after Thermidor as an agent of normalization. Abbé Grégoire looked to his recently translated political writings as a source of legitimation for the republic.[11] Abbé Sieyès enlisted the first *Critique* to drive away the memory

of the Terror: Kantian epistemology promised to provide an alternative to the sensationalist psychologies utilized in the project of revolutionary regeneration.[12] Napoleon commissioned his resident philosopher, Charles de Villiers, to provide a précis of the critical project, in the hope that it might supply his regime with legitimacy and luster.[13] From her exile, Madame de Staël tried to rescue the French from the wasteland of empiricism by exporting back to France a misty version of transcendental philosophy.[14]

But it was Benjamin Constant who was the first to discover in Kant's writings both a chilling counterpart and a commentary on the most recent past. In 1798, he challenged Kant on his most terrifying pronouncement: the absolute and unwavering command to tell the truth no matter what. Kant's infamous example, slightly embellished by Constant, is that of the murderer knocking on the door of the house in which his potential victim is hiding. My unconditional duty is to unflinchingly answer the question as to the innocent man's whereabouts in full awareness of the lethal consequences. In the post-Thermidorean climate, such rigorous fidelity to the law could not fail to have had unnerving associations.[15]

In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel does not go quite as far as to indict Kant explicitly of terrorism. This had been the verdict just a few years earlier in "The Spirit of Christianity" (1799), where Hegel had fulminated against a vengeful and genocidal purism that he identified as a specifically Jewish form of terrorism, with which he also provocatively associated Kant. (The date and tone suggest as well a painful contemporary resonance.) In this early essay he describes a "most revolting" form of tyranny in which the severity of the law expresses itself in the jealous extirpation of all sensuousness, all particularity, all exteriority and all outsiders, culminating in nothing less than the vacuous worship of nothingness itself.[16] Hegel here explicitly identifies Judaism as a serial production of voids: the emptying out of sacred time through the forced inactivity of the Sabbath, the emptying out of sacred space in the Holy of Holies, the evacuation of desire itself as it adapts to the hollow imperatives of self-preservation.[17] Here an "oriental" terror of nature turns into the "most impious fury, the wildest fanaticism"—a blind rage against the world, which it petrifies, like Medusa, into dead matter—mere "stuff, loveless, without rights, accursed."[18] Hegel remarks that "the great *Trauerspiel* of the Jewish people is

no Greek tragedy": devoid of beauty, the drama arouses nothing but horror (*Abscheu*) in the face of shattering dereliction (*Verlassenheit*).[19]

By the *Phenomenology* Hegel has dropped this overtly anti-Semitic approach, but he does not appreciably soften his earlier position on Kant.[20] Hegel essentially reads Kant as a melancholic: duty is the failed renunciation that twists along the path of "dark and monkish asceticism," as Schiller had already put it.[21] The moral agent suspends the world so as to allow his own cruelty to it to continue unchecked. He prolongs attachment through the very vehemence of his detachment. We are barely a step away from Nietzsche's description of slave morality as the internalization of a prohibited aggression, and only a short one to Freud's account of the categorical imperative as the perpetuation of a grudgingly relinquished passion. From this premise, Adorno will proceed to argue that the ultimate truth of Kant is Sade: the severity of the moral law is most exquisitely demonstrated in scenarios of orgiastic discipline and meticulously orchestrated carnage.[22]

Hegel's critique of Kant is merciless and unremitting. The weakness of his argument has been often criticized and its vulgarity noted.[23] The accuracy of his reading is not the issue here: it's clumsy and can be mean-spirited, and is meant to appear so. It is a caricature, as is every other shape of Spirit, because this is Hegel's method: he brings experience into focus by reducing it to a "silhouette" (*PhG* §28)—an outline whose demonstrative power lies precisely in its aphoristic brevity. Silhouettes are both mnemonics and provocations: they are what we ultimately remember of the past, an assortment of textbook summaries, episodic flashbacks, and coarse reductions; and their lack of subtlety is also what challenges us to revisit this past. Their laconism irritates. They provoke resistance, which is another kind of engagement: they inspire a thirst for specification, amplification, modification, modulation. Hyperbole is the signature of the dialectic; it expresses the brinksmanship of an approach that reduces every position to its most impossible extremity. It brings every situation to its breaking point. Its strategy is not to instigate change but to precipitate crisis. If Hegel's discussion of Kant and company is particularly bombastic, this speaks to the palpable immediacy of the encounter, but the hyperbole itself is just part of the general strategy. When Adorno writes, in his own typically exaggerated fashion, that "nothing is true in psychoanalysis except the exaggerations," he could have been describing Hegel's

method.[24] Freud looks to the pathological to illuminate the normal: by making things coarser, he forces us to linger on what might otherwise escape our attention. Hegel illuminates the pathological within the normal. Exaggeration reveals uncomfortable features of experience that would otherwise be invisible. And the exaggeration itself demonstrates just what is most distinctive about the phenomenological method. It makes the artifice and artfulness of the whole procedure explicit: the "shapes (*Gestalten*) of experience" are just that, constructions and fabrications, not found but made—fictional positions, each bearing the indelible stamp of their manufacture.

So my intention is not to make either Kant or Hegel any more reasonable than necessary, or to correct the story, but if anything to exaggerate the conflict. Four features of Hegel's argument are notable for our purposes. First, Hegel's analysis reads like a psychoanalysis. Hegel's description of the contortions of the moral standpoint, whatever its own distortions, presents a textbook collection of drives, conflicts, defenses, and symptoms, all pointing to a disturbance in object relations, a fundamental failure to socialize, which will ultimately be the gist of Hegel's critique. Marooned in abstraction, the moral agent is cut off from the relationships, institutions, and historical traditions that nurture, constrain, and challenge it. The catalogue of Freudian concepts (and at times even vocabulary) marshaled by Hegel throughout this section is impressive: repression, perversion, isolation, splitting, disavowal, fetishism, projection, introjection, incorporation, masochism, mourning, melancholia, repetition, death drive. But there is nothing psychological or empirical about Hegel's approach. It is Kant's logic and not his motivations that preoccupy Hegel, and the pathology here is just the pathology of thinking itself.

Second, what Hegel identifies as the neuralgic points of Kantian morality are the very points Kant himself highlights to indicate the most profound challenges posed by his own philosophy. It does Kant no service, for these purposes, to protect him from Hegel's onslaught by softening the radicality of his formalism; for example, by showing how Kantian morality might be historicized, psychologized, anthropologized, or otherwise brought within the orbit of natural experience. Nor does it do Hegel any service, in this context, to help him fortify his argument so that it becomes more nuanced, less provocative, less strident, less, shall we say, austere.[25] When such projects are undertaken, it is for other purposes; to do so here

would break the momentum and blur the edges of my own narrative. Kant is the first to insist that the dualism at which Hegel bristles is insurmountable, the "moral gap" unbridgeable: the aporia that obsesses him is the scandal from which critique itself is born. The wound is irreparable: "No matter how far back we direct our attention to our moral state, we find that this state is no longer *res integra*."[26] So Kant readily concurs with Hegel: to negotiate the abyss of freedom, nothing less than a *salto mortale* would be required.[27] Kant in this sense resembles either a good analysand, who accepts the interpretation offered, or an infuriating one, who agrees all too readily, gamely conceding the analyst's point and even slyly anticipating it, while doggedly persisting in his beliefs, symptoms and behavior. Like the pervert, he admits to castration while remaining impervious to intervention: "Yes, I'm castrated! But anyway, as I was saying . . ." This is what makes the pervert strictly unanalyzable. "Je sais bien, mais quand même . . ."[28]

Third, Hegel holds Kant responsible for all his followers (who will in turn merge into an undifferentiated conglomerate). The transformation of ascetic ideology into an aesthetic ideology is already signaled, for Hegel, in the twofold failure of Kant's own moral theory. Kant fails doubly: he initiates an impossible situation, and having done so, he fails to follow through; he opens a wound he immediately proceeds to aggravate by applying ill-fitting sutures. Morality sustains its own abyssal emptiness through an imaginary system of supplementary postulates that function as all fetishes do—they mask the fissure they secretly acknowledge—an artifice whose hypocrisy will become explicit, emphatic, and eventually explosive. Having resorted to an imaginary solution, morality ends up captivated by its own theatricality. The moral law swells into the splendid expression of a genius whose sole mandate is to confirm his own infinite capacity for self-invention.

Fourth and finally: concealed in all this melodrama is the continuing crisis of investiture that defines modernity. Spirit's inner emigration to the "other land" of philosophical reflection has provided the last and most stubborn refuge for a secret inner monarch to reassert his majesty and authority over a realm of particularity whose inventory has by this point expanded to include, not only dissidents, aristocrats, and cabbages, but all of nature. The drama will not conclude until the final deposition scene, in which the king's ultimate degradation is staged, restaged, and self-staged and the stage set eventually dismantled. Only by submitting to its own dis-

integration through a spectacular act of self-divestment—an act that will need in turn to be purged of its own spectacularity and pathos—will Spirit declare itself to be officially, like Richard II, "undone." "With mine own tears I wash away my balm, / With mine own hands I give away my crown, / With my own tongue deny my sacred state, / With mine own breath release all duteous oaths: / All pomp and majesty I do foreswear."[29] But that will be the topic of my final chapter.

Hegel's argument proceeds in three steps.

First Step: Morality as Perversion

The first strand of Hegel's argument is relatively straightforward. To secure its own universality, freedom must define itself against a world of sensuous particularity, toward which it must nonetheless constantly keep turning to sustain this very self-definition. Morality is a struggle against a nature that in its recalcitrance must be enlisted if only to supply the energy necessary to resist it. Duty must solicit the sensibility it suppresses, just as morality must secretly hold out for the happiness toward which it must prove its indifference. My duty presupposes a gratification that it simultaneously prohibits. Since morality defines itself by its antagonism to natural causality, every actualization is self-refuting: to *be* moral is to undercut the very premise of morality as such. The very success of morality would spell its terminal collapse into the indifferent plenitude of transient nature. But since morality also requires a horizon of fulfillment for its coherence, it must postulate such realization as ultimately attainable—but only in the "dim remoteness" of an ever-receding future in which something like *jouissance* is maintained, if only virtually or fictitiously (I'll come back to this) and at an infinite delay (*PhG* §603). Kantian morality in this way oscillates between impossibility and redundancy. The moral law is either unattainable or a thinly veiled buttress for what is already the case anyway, and the moral agent betrays this contradiction in the contortions with which it simultaneously wards off and incites the irrepressible demands of nature both within and without.

Hegel here effectively identifies a perverse core in duty's endless rituals of postponement. The negativity at work here is strictly speaking less about repression than about disavowal. Like the fetishist who engages in

endless foreplay so as to defer the traumatic encounter with castration, the moral agent renounces gratification in the name of a consummation that must remain forever outstanding. I perpetually postpone an enjoyment that would vindicate my moral accomplishment, because any such vindication would deflate the significance of this very accomplishment and signal my own annihilation: in the absence of moral striving, I suffer moral death. I shall be able to accomplish my duty and to enjoy doing so later, elsewhere, as a dead person, and, ultimately (I'm coming to this) as someone else.

Death—the ultimate castration—is in one blow both courted and permanently deferred: its necessity is at once acknowledged and occluded. Moral procrastination is the mirror image of the guillotine's haste: where one postpones death to a forever receding future, the other declares death to be always already in the past. The postulate of immortality, like every postulate, functions as a fetish: it sustains the fiction of eventual fulfillment, while tacitly acknowledging that such fulfillment would be self-undermining. It promises completion but mortifyingly reminds us that achieving this would entail the disintegration both of morality and of the moral self. The "endless progress toward holiness" (Kant's phrase)[30] is tantamount to a death-driven regression to a vanishing point of existence: it points to the "fading" of the subject in the face of an impossible enjoyment. Progress is but a slow and secret detour to the aim of ultimate extinction. "To advance in morality," observes Hegel, "would really be to move toward its disappearance. . . . [T]he goal would be the nothingness or the abolition . . . of morality and consciousness itself; but to approach ever nearer to nothingness means to diminish" (*PhG* §622).

Morality itself is in this way at once affirmed and undermined. It is maintained under erasure by being postponed to an ever-receding future, and moreover by being delegated, continues Hegel, to an opaquely transcendent power, a big Other—God or some variant—whose "supernatural cooperation [*Mitwirkung*]" (Kant's words again) must repeatedly be enlisted, not only to provide for my eventual happiness, that is, to harmonize my duty with my natural desire, but also, argues Hegel, to specify and sanctify the manifold instances of the law itself.[31] Split between my own incompatible desires, I compulsively project this split outward. To sustain the moral purity of my action, I end up appealing to a "master and ruler of the world" (*PhG* §606), without whose presence every deed threatens

to remain untethered and ineffective, but whose "assistance" (*Beistand*) (Kant) just as surely strips the deed of moral integrity. At the limit, I assert myself "through the agency of [an]other consciousness" (*PhG* §607)—the "unknown supplement" (*Ergänzung*) that Kant (again, his own words) introduces to ground and orient our moral striving.[32] "An inscrutable outside power" (again, Kant)[33] exercises my freedom for me, and some holy being who is both me and more than me—"distinct from us yet present in our inmost being" (Kant)[34]—assumes ultimate authority for my acts and eventually even reaps the benefits. This demonstrates again, psychoanalytically, the logic of perversion: I act for and through the enjoyment of the Other, while the Other himself is reduced to the instrument of my own prohibited enjoyment. Hegel stresses the strictly imaginary nature of the bondage scenario (a point repeatedly underlined by Kant himself). "This interchange is at the same time only *imagined* [or *represented* (vorgestellt)]" (*PhG* §615). Pictures, as always, help alleviate our lack.

Autonomy thus collapses into an intractable heteronomy that not only reduces the desirous body into the "instrument or organ" of a punitive taskmaster (*PhG* §622) but turns morality itself into its own surrogate or semblance. Such a regression to instrumental reason is already signaled in the implicit appeal to quantification sustaining the fantasy of moral improvement. Duty's addictive craving for ever-increasing perfection ("if virtue is not rising it is unavoidably sinking," writes Kant: like capital, it must continually escalate in order to stay in place)[35] introduces into the moral domain itself a strange calculus of accumulation suggestive of the terms of mathematical or natural cognition. "'Advancing' as such, like 'diminishing,' would assume *quantitative* differences in morality; but there can be no question of these in it. In morality, as in consciousness, for which the moral purpose is *pure* duty, there cannot be any thought at all of difference, least of all the superficial one of quantity; there is only one virtue, only one pure duty, only one morality" (*PhG* §623).

God in this way becomes a prosthetic deus ex machina conjured up to plug the hole carved by duty itself. The religion that was to have been contained within reason's limits is ejected as an excrescence of irrational positivity. Hegel does not hesitate to call this residue of undigested faith a kind of bad faith. Both religion and morality are in this way simultaneously hypostatized and trivialized—the former regressing to superstition, the latter collapsing into a nervous play of poses and postures (*Stellungen*, *Verstellungen*)

that only betray the moral agent's ultimate lack of seriousness, either about its own task or about its own qualifications as moral taskmaster.

Second Step: Perversion as Aestheticism

The idiosyncrasies of Hegel's reading of Kant are less important for these purposes than the structure of splitting that he is targeting with relentless, Freudian-style precision. I have been peppering the last section with Kant's own words (Hegel himself only once directly quotes Kant in this chapter) if only to suggest that Hegel is here taking Kant's bait. Kant is nothing if not aware of the problem of fetishism. It is the problem of religious fetishism that preoccupies him, of course (idolatry, superstition, fanatical delusion) but the challenge is more or less the same: how to refuse the "escape route" (*Schleichweg*) of naturalism (Ak 6: 194; *RR* 209)—the frills, and props, and gadgets that keep promising shortcuts to freedom and to plug the abyss? Kant never stops worrying about fetishism, and never stops playing with it. Over above the moral postulates themselves, Hegel's overt target, Kant seems determined to confound the idea of autonomy by hinting of the inassimilable exteriority at work in every moral act—in the passages already quoted from the *Religion*, for example, where he keeps invoking grace as a kind of supernatural "assistance";[36] or in the *Metaphysics of Morals*, where he describes conscience itself as a kind of alien and persecutory intrusion;[37] or again, in a curious footnote (also in the *Religion*) in which Kant, apparently crumbling in the face of Schiller's onslaught, admits the presence of the graces—moral feelings—as delightful handmaidens to virtue.[38] I'm not going near the *Critique of Judgment*, with its promise of beautiful bridges, although this is where Hegel's entire argument is inexorably heading. These are of course the neuralgic points of Kant's moral philosophy, and they can be interpreted in any number of ways, inconsistency or faint-heartedness being the least compelling. Some readers see in such moments the mark of a genuine historical predicament arising at the crossroads of orthodoxy and Enlightenment; some see a sign of intellectual honesty; some see a baby step toward Hegel himself; some see deconstructive agility.[39] Hegel sees perversity.

And this is why. Duty's concession to an externality that it can neither tolerate nor relinquish condemns it to shuffle endlessly between incompatible commitments, whose connection it must keep ingeniously

obscuring. The syntax of morality is the disjointed parataxis of the fetishist, for whom every conjunction provokes a wild display of dissociation. "It is not conscious of this antithesis as regards either the form or the content; it does not relate and compare the sides of this antithesis with one another, but, in its development, rolls onwards, without being the Notion which holds the moments together" (*PhG* §611). Hegel's Kant speaks the idiom of pure perversion. "Enjoyment is *also* implied in morality" (*PhG* §602). The noncommittal "also" recalls the pointillist style of the "sophistry of perception." Salt can be one way and "also" another, both-white-and-also-salty, both-one-and-also-many, both-itself-and-also-not-itself—it can be, in fact, anything whatsoever, as long as I don't burden myself with either trying to connect the dots or dwelling on the contradiction (*PhG* §130). The pulverizing adverb "also" tacitly acknowledges the impossibility of the reconciliation to which it gestures. "It is true that there is [no moral self-consciousness] *yet, all the same*, it is allowed . . . to pass for one" (*PhG* §615, emphasis mine). "Je sais bien, mais . . ."

Dissemblance is to the moral worldview what skepticism had been to stoicism: an "insincere shuffling" between irreconcilable positions whose connection is systematically occluded (*PhG* §617). Skepticism had distracted itself with hyperstimulation: it blunted the edge of its own negativity by whipping it into "the dizziness of a perpetually self-engendered disorder." It neutralized contradiction by turning it into idle sport. "[Skepticism's] talk is . . . like the squabbling of stubborn children . . . who by contradicting *themselves* buy for themselves the pleasure of continually contradicting *one another*" (*PhG* §205). Morality trivializes its most burning contradictions by reducing them to abstract antinomies. It buries its specific negativity in "a 'whole nest' [*ein ganzes Nest*] of thoughtless contradictions"—global, indifferent, abstract (*PhG* §616). (*Ein ganzes Nest* is Kant's own phrase, imported from an entirely different context.) Trivialization, or "lack of seriousness," as Hegel calls it (Romantic irony is on the horizon) can be taken as a manic defense against the trauma of castration (*PhG* §617). The game is driven by a vengeful undercurrent—complaints about duty's own nonsatisfaction (*PhG* §601), envy at the happiness of the undeserving (*PhG* §625)—a ressentiment that resists the most strenuous effort to placate or disguise it through dissembling play.

The postulates of practical reason allow moral reason to conceal its own wounds, but in so doing, it only multiplies them. Its blind spots are

the ciphers of a prohibited enjoyment. The "also" in this sense functions as a kind of grammatical fetish—at once a disavowal of loss and a monument to the sacrifice required to have survived it.[40] The subject plasters over its own emptiness by introducing a split between this very emptiness and the prosthetic supplements it must keep enlisting to fill it—a cleavage that is in turn inevitably registered as an injury, needing further suture, and thus further splitting, and so on. The remedy brought in to domesticate the will's disfiguring negativity only reproduces this negativity. Every partition becomes a catastrophic fissure, every supplement a permanent memorial to absence.[41]

There seems to be no way out of this vicious circle. Hegel notes that every attempt to expose the hypocrisy of morality invariably perpetuates this hypocrisy. The recoil from dissimulation only leads to further dissimulation, and the first sign of this redoubling is performative contradiction: morality tries to disown a "pretended [*vorgegebene*] truth" (that is, the illusion of moral purity), which it nonetheless can't stop trying to pass off (*ausgeben*) as its own belief. The exercise of unmasking assumes the ascetic fantasy of pure insight and thus spells a regression to the dialectic of enlightenment. "The contempt for dissemblance would be already the first expression of hypocrisy" (*PhG* §631). Contempt is here the expression of moral revulsion. The body simultaneously recoils against its own suffering and confesses to the visceral energy already invested in this suffering; disgust is the body's way of abjecting the remnant of filthy pleasure sustaining the very fantasy of uncontaminated self-fulfillment.[42] Hegel again anticipates Nietzsche: nausea is the symptom of a failed renunciation. Mourning sickness betrays the sticky vestige of otherwordliness implicit in the feverish effort to overcome it.

Third Step: Aestheticism as Ideology

"Überzeugung ist unfruchtbar": Conviction is unfruitful.

WALTER BENJAMIN, *Einbahnstraße*

And all these problems will only be aggravated as Kantian morality passes almost indiscernibly into its tangled Fichtean, Schillerean, and Romantic phases (the various strands can be difficult to unravel in Hegel's narrative, and again, Hegel's caricature is offensive, and again, it doesn't matter), where the very same drive for purity will convict a refurbished moral conscience that in its bid for a restored immediacy fails to convince

others, or even, in the end, itself. The subject's unspoken need for recognition will be its ultimate undoing: I find myself fatally enmeshed in a language that is not my own, but that I cannot disown. As a Fichtean ethics of conviction (*Überzeugung*) passes into a Romantic ethics of self-creation (*Erzeugung*), the latent aestheticism of the moral worldview will become explicit. The virtuosic moral subject will bloat, promote, and eventually destroy itself as it engages in a frenzied overproduction (*Über-zeugung*) of signifiers that in the end leave everything unperturbed. Seeking to engender the law to which it consecrates itself, the moral genius produces only a bewildering excess of embryonic, unfinished works.

The Romantic turn to moral genius as an answer to the antinomies of Kantian morality will complete the conversion of politics into aesthetics, revolution into spectacle, and will definitively establish the German ideology around 1800 as an aesthetic of the beautiful. Hegel will in turn show beauty itself to be an infinitely destructive ideal. Romanticism will reiterate the founding gesture of *Sittlichkeit*, reactivate its contradictions, and will crystallize Spirit's entire trajectory to this point. Moral beauty is the final avatar of the beautiful freedom of a Greece that never was. Will the possibilities of the aesthetic be exhausted in aesthetic ideology?

Hegel turns first to Fichtean ethics, or some variant; again, accuracy is not exactly the point here, but Fichte's formulation, from the *Sittenlehre*, is as good as any: "Always act in accordance with your best conviction concerning your duty, or, act according to your own conscience."[43] Fichtean-style conscience (*Gewissen*) promises to stabilize the vacillations of Kantian duty by merging a steadfast moral certainty (*Gewissheit*) with the bumpy contingencies of singular, bodily existence. Conscience fuses knowledge and situation by affirming the integrity of the deed as "something that has standing and real existence [*Bestand und Dasein*]" (*PhG* §640). In its unwavering commitment to the "here" (*Da*), the existential immediacy of the moral situation, the conscientious subject has the fortitude to resist the fatal attraction of the Kantian "elsewhere" (*Fort*)—the lure of an imaginary fulfillment dangling forever beyond the reach of the moral present. That lugubrious game is over. But the trap is set: the translation from subjective intention into objective action implicates both deed and doer in a tangled communicative network, in which the gap between private certainty and

public recognition will be the undoing of conscience thus conceived. At the moment of resolute decision, the conscientious subject falls into paralyzing indecision and regresses to the deadly melancholia of moral duty.

Hegel's argument hinges on language. By virtue of its *Dasein*, its situated existence, every act of conscience requires validation within the speaking community. Language is "the very existence of Spirit" (*das Dasein des Geistes*), the medium in which subjectivity embodies and elaborates itself in the outside world (*PhG* §652). Language transmits subjectivity, writes Hegel, like an "infection" (*PhG* §508)—a virus passing from the speaker to the listener, in whom meaning resonates, and without whom language itself would disintegrate into empty, meaningless sonority. Left unheard, the word would become a lifeless residue; left uncomprehended, a vanished sound. I shall return to Hegel's deeply ambivalent image of illness, only pausing to note the strangeness of this infection whose basic function is to transmit life itself. Subjectivity is preserved, intensified, and disseminated like a communicable disease. The metaphor resumes Hegel's earlier image of Enlightenment as an irresistible airborne contagion (*PhG* §544), just as it anticipates his image of historical tradition as the unceasing transmission of a poison—a "bitter drink" (*PhH* 78). Neither the morbidity nor the perversity of the image should be downplayed. Subjectivity is fatal: the only way of surviving the disease is by passing it on. It is this transitivity that announces the doom of the conscientious subject. Squeamish about being contaminated and blind to its own toxicity, the moral genius is left with nobody but itself to infect, and ends up imploding in a fury of psychotic, tubercular silence.

Everything unfolds here from the basic axiom of communicability. "Consciousness declares its *conviction*; it is in this conviction alone that the action is a duty, and it is valid as a duty solely through the conviction being *declared*" (*PhG* §653). Conviction (*Überzeugung*), to be so, must be convincing: conscience is itself a performative act of testimony that must be publicly validated by a witness (*Zeuge*) through whom the action is "acknowledged and therefore actual" (*PhG* §647). *Freedom* (of conscientious decision) thus requires *equality* (in communication). Every act of conscience must be recognized as such by a community of likewise conscientious subjects (the Lutheran congregational community is implicit), without whom the agent would disintegrate under the centrifugal pressure of its own evanescent acts (cf. *PhG* §408). The conscientious subject achieves stability—

constancy, consistency, and status (*Bestand*, *Beständigkeit*, *Bestehen*)—only by identifying with the speaking community of those who recognize it (*PhG* §651–52). "Here I stand." Hegel proceeds to demonstrate that such *egaliberté* requires a fraternity that is strictly unobtainable within the present framework.

For what enables discursive equality proves here to be its undoing. Community reduces to the abstract equivalence of isolated moral claims whose incommensurability remains opaque and nonnegotiable. Dissonance arises in the very transparency of the recognition scene in which each act of conscience is acknowledged, but only from the jarring standpoint of one afflicted by the secret "blemish of determinacy" (*PhG* §645)—the stain of contingency and partisanship contaminating the moral universality of every conscientious deed. A split emerges between the *sujet d'énonciation* and the *sujet d'énoncé*—between the performative certainty of the declarative speech act and the constative uncertainty of the truth asserted. In its immediacy, the act of testimony falls victim to the basic performative contradiction familiar from the very beginning of sense-certainty. I pronounce the truth of where I stand, and my "saying" immediately exceeds the "said" to which I attest. The self-certainty of the conscientious subject cannot fail to induce "complete uncertainty" in the witness, who can observe only an uncontrollable slippage from thought to deed (*PhG* §648). The stability of the speaking subject is undermined by the evanescence of the act to which it testifies, which disintegrates as inexorably as the crumbling paper on which sense-certainty had scrawled its first halting monosyllables (*PhG* §110).

The fragility of the conscientious *Da* is as palpable as that of the sensuous "here" or "now." (As many have pointed out, this is indeed an experiment with "moral sense-certainty.") The moral shifter commits conscience to the very shiftlessness or shiftiness (*Verstellen*) it was to stabilize. The speaking subject "is not present at the point where others imagine it actually to be"—a dislocation that reduces every act of testimony to a dissembling chatter that keeps displacing (*verstellt*) every position it sets up (*hinstellt*) and puts forward (*hinausstellt*) as its own (*PhG* §648). I misplace the ground on which I take a stand; this topological slippage signals the evacuation of the moral subject at the climax of its self-affirmation. *Stellen* (placing) is virtually interchangeable with *Stehen* (standing) throughout this section, in which Hegel almost outstrips Heidegger in his relentless exegesis of the clotted idiom of the metaphysics of the will. The mindset

of conscience is effectively established as a setup—a pose, posture, and imposture—and any appeal to the moral authenticity of existential decision is demystified as, well, sheer jargon.[44]

Moral testimony in this way evacuates the public it summons. Asceticism resurfaces in the defiant self-affirmation of a subject who in giving itself the law ends up usurping the position not only of God the lawmaker but of God the creator, and ultimately God the judge and the redeemer.[45] This blasphemous trajectory marks the collapse of public conscience into raging solipsism. The autarchic Fichtean subject slides into the Romantic genius who in his blind attachment to the immediacy of the moral now-point continually recreates himself as if the world were perpetually starting over. Unconstrained by preexistent content and authorized by the unquenchable immediacy of his own feeling, the moral virtuoso enjoys a "divine creative power" in which surges the "spontaneity of life" itself (*PhG* §655).[46] The belief in moral immediacy is thus above all the fantasy of an incessant, ex nihilo beginning.

The moral initiative in this way passes immediately into an aesthetic one, and a certain death drive animates, so to speak, both agendas. Romantic genius stages the destructive reenactment of the act of creation through the perpetual unbinding of the finished work; the fragment marks a return to the tabula rasa and to the purity of the absolute beginning. The "spontaneity of life" is an endless detour toward death: creativity can only confirm itself through the suspension of every completion, which in its finality is experienced as tantamount to extinction. The terms of life and death have become infinitely reversible. On the one hand, the self-production of life as an incessant, ever-repeated beginning requires the infinite deferral of living form: the promise of organic plenitude or completion presents the threat of mortal termination. On the other hand, every effort to preempt such finality yields nothing but the mortifying proliferation of broken-off, abortive works: infinite birth can be sustained only as the repetition of an unending death. The choice between germination and fruition, between seminal beginnings and ripened ends, proves ultimately to be a null choice—either death or death.

This is what links the revolutionary *Nullpunkt* with the Romantic fragment: both present the phantasm of the absolute beginning as infinite and unmediated self-generation. We can now perceive the stubborn theological motor driving both. Schlegel perceives this affinity when he con-

nects the French Revolution to the infinite chain of "inner revolutions" that this singular event unleashes at a cultural level, and this is why he insists on the secret messianism at work in both events.[47] The Romantic fragment repeats the Revolution by formalizing its essential incompletion. The bad infinite of the Kantian "ought" (*Sollen*) mutates into the endless millenarian postponements of Romanticism—"this ongoing striving, this sacrifice of a certain present for one that is uncertain, other, better and ever better."[48] (The formulation is Hölderlin's, but it captures the obsession of an entire generation.)

Here as everywhere, Hegel deconstructs the fantasy of a tabula rasa as self-refuting. The beginning has always already begun: every blank page is overwritten by a network of prior mediations, every purity stained by the opaque contingency of a past beyond recall. Postponement is a weak defense to mask the fact that the subject has always already arrived too late. Romantic messianism no more fulfils the blocked promise of the Revolution than had the overtly voluntarist projects of Kant and Fichte. Utopia itself is the ideological shadow cast by an existence that goes unchallenged. (This is the benign point behind Hegel's much-rebuked refusal, in the *Philosophy of Right*, to "instruct the state how it ought to be," the many ambiguities of which refusal I shall consider in the next chapter). The conundrums of sense-certainty here acquire an avant-gardist aesthetic spin, whose apparent blasphemousness only obscures the subject's secret acquiescence to a reality that, however devastated, remains essentially untransformed. In arrogating for itself the omnipotence of the Creator, Romantic genius can manifest itself only as the relentless iconoclasm that shatters forms, unworks works, finds beauty in the unbeautiful—the Romantic cult of ruins and fragments—but in the end leaves everything in its place. The "tornness" (*Zerissenheit*) that had been tormenting self-alienated spirit comes to a climax, as the circle from Diderot to Schlegel closes. Incompletion is inherent in the hypertrophic drive to self-creation, and aestheticism culminates in an endless anesthetic of dissonant, abortive texts: from the dismembered body on the scaffold to the *disjecta membra* of the unfinished work.

Hegel's well-known later critique of Jena Romanticism is already in place here. Irony oscillates between the exquisite virtuosity that cultivates life itself as an artwork and the raging philistinism that indiscriminately transforms the entire universe into the projection of the self-creative self.[49]

Irony marks at once the hypertrophy of aestheticism and the "most inartistic of all principles"; the precious reduction of "everything" to an artwork is equivalent to vulgarity itself.[50] In Romanticism, the creative lust for novelty degenerates into a shameless consumerism, and aesthetic voluntarism into an embrace of actually existing conditions. The thrust of Hegel's diatribe is continuous from Jena to Berlin. Peculiar to the *Phenomenology* is the intriguing suggestion that the disfigurations of Romanticism had already been set in motion by Schiller. Schiller's attempt to soften the edge of Kantian rigorism through the phantasm of moral beauty had already introduced the discordant negativity and sublime reflexivity of the ironic worldview.

The circle between modernity and antiquity closes. The catastrophe of moral genius shatters the last vestige of the imaginary Graeco-German alliance. In foreclosing the Romantic cult of art, Hegel also neatly voids the eighteenth-century hellenophilic ideal of *kalokagathia* as an answer to the excesses of revolutionary modernity. Hegel allows no return from the desert of French abstraction; any fantasy of a return to the beautiful polis is a siren song along the one-way street of modernity. Schiller too had already begun to deconstruct such nostalgia even as he entertained it. The naïve *is* the sentimental: aesthetic harmony is the phantasm generated by modernity to embellish the experience of its own alienation.[51] Hegel goes one step further. The dream of beautiful morality is the modern fantasy of self-creation, and this fantasy is lethal. The labor pains of the subject are its death throes: self-generation and self-destruction converge.

Vaporized Subjectivity

> Providence has given . . . the Germans the empire of the air.
>
> JEAN PAUL, quoted by DE STAËL, quoted by CARLYLE in *Miscellanies*

Hegel's argument is ruthless and exhausting: he swiftly demonstrates how anarchic moral autarchy slides into a narcissistic aestheticism, aestheticism into a paralyzing purism, purism into a self-serving harangue that catastrophically fails to recognize itself in what it reviles. Hegel spares no irony in describing the fastidiousness of the moral onlooker whose self-admiration is matched only by his horror of engagement.[52] "It lives in dread of besmirching the splendor [*Herrlichkeit*] of its inner being by action and

an existence; and, in order to preserve the purity of its heart, it flees from contact with the actual world, and persists [*beharrt*] in its self-willed impotence to renounce its self which is reduced to the extreme of ultimate abstraction, and to give itself a substantial existence" (*PhG* §658).

Fear and trembling—the slavish terror of mortality—has invaded the precinct of the master, whose glory (*Herrlichkeit*) requires all the inhibitions and delays of servile existence. One must *work hard* (*beharren*) at critical unworking. In its striving for the immediacy of a pure beginning, life itself becomes a project interminably under way—an infinite task undertaken by valets for whom criticism has become a full-time job. The phobic attachment to beauty prolongs the brutal stringency of moral duty. Hypocrisy is perpetuated in the compulsive zeal to expose it always everywhere elsewhere. "Lacking strength, beauty *hates* the understanding," writes Hegel in the Preface, for demanding the impossible (*PhG* §32)—that is, to face death in its ravaging intensity—and this ressentiment will here seethe and spiral into murderous self-hatred. Fearing death, the Romantic virtuoso preemptively ruins his product and ultimately himself as he cultivates the unlived life, which has come to be his only creation. The anxious iconoclasm of the early Protestant Reformers resurfaces in the Romantic preoccupation with the medium of "Art" (in general)—a beauty too beautiful to be incarnated in any specific thing, work, or act—or, as Hegel had earlier mocked Schleiermacher's religion of beauty, "art forever without works of art."[53] Taking satisfaction in nonsatisfaction, the genius heroically assumes castration as his secret fetish: fragmentation becomes a alibi for its own denial. Impotence becomes accomplishment, and timidity, bravado: behind the flamboyant immoralism of *Lucinde*, Hegel observes the virginal figure of the beautiful soul in *Wilhelm Meister*—solitary, inward, forever striving—in whose background Nietzsche's figure of the immaculate perceiver is already stirring. Schlegel had already ridiculed the insufferable saintliness of Goethe's heroine, but Hegel in turn alerts us to the furtive monasticism sustaining the libertine's rebellious retreat to private life: from the cabbage heads of the Terror to the cultivation of one's own garden. Aestheticism and moralistic immoralism produce a common front for reactionary inertia.[54]

Transgressive genius is no answer to the pieties of an unregenerate religiosity. The conflict between faith and insight continues to rage despite Spirit's official emigration to that "other land" in which this antin-

omy was supposed to have been already superseded. It is ultimately the pietistic residue in German Protestantism that Hegel is determined to flush out,[55] the "poetry of grief" in which he had already managed to sniff out a secret "prose of satisfaction," in *Faith and Knowledge*, where he pointed to the complicity of self-abnegation and self-aggrandizement within contemporary Protestant culture.[56] Hegel slyly points out that the (Fichtean? Jacobian?) internalization of God does nothing to resolve the impasses of morality: the internal "divine voice" of conscience maintains its coercive exteriority to a subject enthralled by the abstract certainty of its own isolated existence.[57] God remains a *deus absconditus* to the self-divinizing subject that has "locked up" divinity within an interiority so hidden that it remains a secret even to the self (*PhG* §656). Hegel comes very close to naming the psychoanalytic logic of the crypt: the missing object is retained under lock and key and undigested within the inner cavity of the self-sundered self.[58]

Hegel could not of course have anticipated, in 1806, the complete theological-political package ridiculed by Nietzsche as the way "all Romantics end up, namely as Christians." He had yet to witness Schlegel's conversion to Catholicism, the full effulgence of romantic medievalism, let alone the various myths of national harmony aggressively recycled by the time of Metternich.[59] But the regression, already well under way in early Romanticism, of Kant's rational theology into a blasphemously self-indulgent piety is captured in Hegel's searing description of the steamy community of solipsists who keep "rejoicing over [their] mutual purity and the refreshing of themselves in the glory of knowing and uttering, of cherishing and fostering, such an excellent state of affairs" (*PhG* §656).

It will not take Hegel long to knock this about. To sustain the thrill of its "solitary divine worship" the beautiful soul must repudiate the "blemish of determinacy" (*PhG* §645)—the stain of idiosyncrasy, alterity, the myriad contingencies of corporeal sociability—which he persecutes with a fervor exceeding that of the Kantian moral police. The ecstatic communion of lovers (to take an example close at hand)[60] feeds off its hostility to the outside world and thus unfailingly reproduces what it rebukes. The sovereign privilege of *belonging* (to an amorous couple, a literary clique, a religious conventicle, or even to oneself as one's own best company) betrays its own episodic contingency and falls back into the morass of stupid, partial ends. "This zeal does the very opposite of what it means to do" (*PhG* §663). The accuser will be caught within the fire of his own denunciation, prolonging

particularism in the vehemence with which he insists on identifying it always and forever elsewhere. The hyperbolic humanism according to which "the law exists for the sake of the self" (*PhG* §639) is unmasked as the misanthropy against which Hegel had warned in the Preface, when he savagely attacked those who buttress their private conviction with oracular appeals to inspiration. Hegel had compared this brand of genius to the thuggish anti-intellectualism of "common sense": "[they] trample underfoot the roots of humanity" (*PhG* §69). This misanthropic hatred will blossom into a suicidal self-hatred.[61]

This is absolute-freedom-and-terror in reverse. The Jacobins had elided the difference between private and public by politicizing everything, from hairstyles to pronouns, as the object of state power. Romanticism responds by turning everything into a matter of personal decision. Absolute freedom had subjected morality to political surveillance; Romanticism counters by subjecting politics to moral scrutiny. And with this effacement of the distinction between politics and morality, the grounds of both collapse: both turn into a shadow-play of contingent postures—a matter of aesthetics. Every conflict amounts to nothing more than a dispute of taste. But aesthetic security measures are no less stringent than under the Terror (nor any more effective). Evil lurks everywhere for the self-divinizing subject, whose self-assurance is sustained only by an obsession with the spurious motives of the rest of all-too-human humanity. No man is a hero to the moral valet whose ressentiment affords the perfect vantage point from which to sniff out the depravities all around.[62]

The aesthetic plenitude that was to assuage the austerity of moral duty proves thus to be an empty one, or more precisely, the repressive aspect of beauty at last becomes explicit. In imposing on the world an aesthetic standard, the genius prolongs the cycle of destruction to the point of self-destruction, as conscience consumes itself in a passion of denunciation. Measuring every action, including his own, against a punishing ideal invented for the sole purpose of his own self-aggrandizement, the genius desists from action, taking his own "fine sentiments" to speak for themselves. His only duty is to talk about duty—a speech that falls into instant performative self-contradiction by remaining private, passive, and self-enclosed (*PhG* §664). Powerless to translate speech into action, and unable to acknowledge that speech, too, is a kind of action (an insufficient one, in this instance), the genius ends up with neither speech nor action. Refusing

either to acknowledge or to change the world, the genius becomes nothing but an empty vibrating vessel—a "hollow object which it has produced for itself," to which Hegel will apply his physician's hammer: subjectivity itself has become the latest idol (*PhG* §658).[63]

Cut off from the speaking community in which it finds itself, the genius becomes an echo to its own Narcissus. Stripped of significance, deprived of audience (since none has qualified for admission), speech vanishes into a trail of inarticulate sonority—a dying-out tone, a fading after-tone, an excess of tone, an "out-tone" (*Austönen*), a remnant of empty materiality within the acoustic illusion that is the self-made self (*PhG* §658).[64] In its unappeasable hunger for originality, language falls into repetition, imitation, and self-citation—an infinitely returning echo without an original to which to return. (We are very close to Nietzsche's description of modernity as a culture of pure reverberation—a hollow chamber in which "what was robust in the original can no longer be guessed. . . .")[65] In this vibration lurk both dread and promise—at once the vestige of a banished sensuous enjoyment and the last tremor of the Terror.[66]

Almost inaudible but unmistakeable is an echo of the ostinato of the unhappy consciousness—the "musical thinking" into which thought had once threatened to dissolve. Hegel had compared that earlier experience (his impression of medieval Christian culture) to a "formless jingling of bells, a mist of incense" (*PhG* §217). Those bells had tolled the death of rationality: thinking (*Denken*) deteriorated into blind devotion (*Andacht*) to dead saints and relics, and morbid remembrance (*Andenken*) of an irretrievable past. The obsession with relics demonstrates the literalism of all melancholy; the thirst for tangible sensuous immediacy confirms the intractable remoteness of the object of desire. In their rigid desire to "hold onto what has vanished," the pilgrims had confronted the empty grave of a departed life (*PhG* §217). Modern Protestant melancholia stages this medieval "Catholic" scenario in reverse.[67] Having engendered itself as its own divinity, the beautiful soul directs its nostalgia toward itself—a knight of faith forever traveling to the Holy Land within. It mourns itself as its own firstborn son. Its relics are the textual fragments in which it reads its creative omnipotence, its incense the "shapeless vapor" of its own vanished life. The self-seeking subject has become its own lost object.

In a last, desperate bid for satisfaction, loss congeals, becoming a fleeting fetishistic surrogate for itself, only to float off immediately in the

internal hemorrhage of the self. "Refined into this purity, consciousness exists in its poorest form, and the *poverty* which constitutes its sole *possession* is itself a *vanishing*" (*PhG* §657; emphases mine). The void carved by the missing object turns into a filling for itself: even absence provides its own bitter consolation. The empty self is the final creation of a subject whose agency knows no limit. The ego becomes a potter's vase, a well-wrought urn—an exquisite emptiness from which arises, but briefly, the promise of fulfillment.

> The hollow object which it has generated [*erzeugt*] for itself now *fills* it . . . with a sense of *emptiness*. Its activity is a yearning which merely *loses* itself as consciousness becomes an object devoid of substance, and, rising above this *loss*, and falling back on itself, *finds* itself only as a lost soul. In this transparent purity of its moments, an unhappy, so-called "beautiful soul," its light dies away within it, and it vanishes like a shapeless vapour that dissolves into thin air [*schwindet als ein gestaltloser Dunst, der sich in Luft auflöst*]. (*PhG* §658; emphases mine)

"So-called" beauty—the sculptural plenitude of the self—has just disintegrated into a formless vapor. (The scare quotes are essential: Hegel is nothing if not ironic in his depiction of the Romantic ironist.) The flight from the scatter of existence has ended up pulverizing the self into an infinity of atoms in a void—a mist in which floats the hazy vestige of the insight that had once spread through an unresisting atmosphere like a ravaging infection (cf. §545). Hegel had already, as we have noted, characterized communicative rationality as a vaporous contagion: meaning is transmitted from speaker to auditor like a communicable, airborne disease (*PhG* §508). In its contagious proximity, language exhibits the deferral constitutive of experience; it promises to bind by transferring, translating, and thus containing the carnal immediacy of transient speech within the ideal subjectivity of the auditor. The dead letter of the material signifier attains its spiritual afterlife in being comprehended and retained by the one who listens: "this vanishing is thus at once its abiding" (*PhG* §508). This resurrection is precisely what is preempted by the pyrotechnics of conscience as it spins about from *Überzeugung* (conviction) through *Zeugnis* (testimony) into beautiful *Erzeugnis* (creation or procreation). In the self-consuming speech acts of Romanticism, the creator eats his own words. To maintain the purity of its initiative, the work doubles over in self-commentary; it anticipates its own critique and thus blocks the mediation it secretly solicits.[68] By providing my own reading of my work, I void any possible con-

text of recognition: I incorporate the phantom auditor whom I had previously projected (if only in order to ratify my own conviction), and in so doing become my own phantom. Having become other to myself, I not only hear myself speak but I preemptively *hear myself hear*, if only to block others from so doing. This is, actually, psychosis. Language has become a terminal illness communicated from self to self (the "vanishing mediator," the interlocutor, has literally vanished here). As infection turns back on source, the subject gives birth to itself as an endlessly repeating stillbirth, while speech collapses into an empty resonating tone.

Although the specific allusion here appears to be to Novalis and the fatal tuberculosis that Hegel brutally declares to be his just reward (I shall come back to this), Hegel's description anticipates Baudelaire's depiction of spleen: the disintegration of the creative self under the bilious pressure of its own genius as it evaporates into the misty torpor of modern life. Ross Chambers describes spleen as "anger vaporized"[69]—a rage blocked by censors both external and internal and the compensatory overproduction of a language that drifts and decomposes like evanescent fog. The smoggy skies of Paris will reveal the blocked horizon of a world stripped of transcendence—no stars shine through the smudge. After 1848, Baudelaire will link the crisis of poetic originality to the trauma of the failed Revolution. Spleen expresses the self-dissolution of the self-willing will.Originality must henceforth be forged from the recycling of the *poncif* or stereotype, and the revolutionary beginning wrested from the missed opportunities of the recent past. Spleen, for Baudelaire, expresses the subject's most profound "depolitification" in the face of an intractable historical reality, even as it shatters any belief in the consolations of art as luminous transcendence.[70]

Back in Germany, Hegel's Romantics stage such a disenchantment some fifty years earlier and to equally devastating effect. The evaporation of the self-fashioning ego spells the disintegration of every revolutionary ideal. With the beautiful soul's final retreat into raging speechlessness, the melancholic undercurrent of Spirit's entire trajectory becomes explicit, hyperbolic, and ultimately psychotic. Reduced to pure judgment, to the criticism that exceeds and unworks the work to which it devotes itself, the moral genius annihilates the world in a blaze of hatred—Hyperion's spitting tirade against the idiocies of "molluscan existence."[71] The moral genius refuses to reciprocate the confession that he punishingly extracts from

others, and thus excludes himself from the speaking community to which he consecrates itself.

Stiff-necked silence is the flip side of the garrulousness that can only condemn what it will not recognize. It announces Spirit's spiral into suicidal disintegration. By exempting itself from its own moral judgment, the beautiful soul disowns the common humanity that this very judgment presupposes; this performative contradiction announces the ultimate sin against the Spirit. Silence in this context is equivalent to the most extreme blasphemy. The sullen withdrawal from the speaking community marks the nadir of *Geistesverlassenheit*, a total abandonment of and by the Holy Spirit, for which, biblically speaking, "there is no forgiveness either in this age or in the age to come" (Matt. 12:32). The phantasm of the beautiful new beginning is in the end, then, for Hegel, just as for Kant, the *crimen inexpiabile*—the unforgivable transgression, which must nonetheless somehow be forgiven.

As the beautiful soul becomes "conscious of its contradiction" (to wit, the antinomy between the universality to which it is devoted and the fanatic singularity of its devotion), it becomes "disordered to the point of madness, wastes away in yearning and pines away in consumption" (*PhG* §668). Hyperbole aside, the madness has a specific historical inflection. It expresses the predicament of a subject for whom transgression is unwitting, inescapable, and ineradicable. This in itself is not news; the experience of *Sittlichkeit* had long established that much.[72] What marks the special modernity of the experience is that guilt is now completely internal: there is no context of fate to which my transgression can be assigned or into which it can be absorbed. The fissure is internal, and the abyss within. Whatever the conceptual link between "madness" and "consumption"—between Hölderlin babbling in his tower and Novalis at his tubercular last gasp (for in these two directions the biographical signposts seem all irrefutably, cruelly, ludicrously to point)—the association is interesting not least because in both cases we are presented with an immediate convertibility of psyche and soma. Spirit collapses into the body it had repudiated, which in turn wafts away with the angelic ideality of evanescent air. The infinite contraction of a subjectivity withdrawn into itself (as Hegel later characterizes madness) presents the mirror image of the infinite dispersal of a body reduced to its elementary atomic particles so as to disappear without a trace.

Madness can be regarded as a hyperbole of self-consciousness plummeting downward to its natural bodily condition: infinitely ironic reflexivity collapses into the merely anthropological muteness of the "feeling soul."[73] *Schwindsucht*, consumption (I am speculating), is a hyperbole of flesh disintegrating upward into wind or *spiritus*: the body dissipates as if to become the breath it lacks. Both represent a kind of anarchism of the immediate, a disaggregation of the corporeal and cerebral systems into vanishing abstraction. Hegel's later accounts of mental and physical illness in the Berlin *Encyclopedia* clarify the connection. With a terminal disease such as consumption, the body fixes on an isolated organ: the system fails to mobilize to fight the disease because the illness has localized itself without engaging the circulatory system—curiously, it is the partial or limited nature of the disease that poses the mortal danger. And with madness, the psyche fixes on an isolated topic: the system fails to mobilize to buffer the obsession through symbolic mediations; thinking freezes and the whole world evaporates.[74] Both diseases in this sense resemble the hypertrophy of "civil society" at its most pulverized extreme;[75] they both indicate a breach of totality and a loss of any organizing center. Nature and spirit coalesce at the point of their most extreme abstraction. Out of breath, dispirited, uninspired, Spirit pauses to draw a final breath.

The unburied corpse of the beautiful polis will be displayed one last time in its putrid splendor. The vaporized body of the beautiful soul presents a challenge even beyond that of the rotting corpse of Polyneices: how to mourn a missing body, a body that has gone missing even to itself, spirited away, a body whose wounds will disappear without a trace, like Sade's Justine, forever young and beautiful, intact and virginal—a continually unwritten surface, unscarred despite an infinity of mutilations? How are we to commemorate Spirit's final act of self-erasure?

5 

Terrors of the Tabula Rasa

The "Spirit" chapter of the *Phenomenology* ends brusquely and with little fanfare: all is forgiven, the damage is undone, fraternity is established. Nowhere are Hegel's theological-political commitments more discomfiting than in this closing scene, which is as unelaborated as it seems to be unrehearsed: just when the dialectic explicitly affirms the possibility of radical self-invention and the self-generation of the social, Hegel seems to lapse into God-talk of the blandest kind. God seems to enter as a deus ex machina, an unworked relic from an ossified tradition. The miraculousness of the ending is striking, not least because it seems to point to a permanent predicament of secularization, a blockage of translation from the idiom of faith into the idiom of Enlightenment—the very failure of mourning to which Hegel had attributed the failure of the Revolution. It also has substantive implications: Hegel is rewriting the terms of sovereignty itself. The awkwardness illuminates the crisis of legitimacy that has been pressing since the vision of absolute freedom and the "transplanting of heaven to earth below" (*PhG* §581): what are the normative grounds of human sociability in the absence of the transcendent authority of the divine?

The guilty persistence of this loss has stained modernity from the outset with the "blemish of an unsatisfied yearning" (*PhG* §573). Enlightenment has been shadowed by a crime it is condemned to reenact through compulsive rituals of wiping and erasure. "Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? Who will wipe this blood off us? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?" Like Nietzsche's madman (or, rather, like

Lady Macbeth), the beautiful soul cannot stop washing and wiping as it fades into a somnambulist swoon of "yearning consumption." It wants to become the God it has vandalized, even while it knows the loss to be irredeemable, the guilt irreparable, and that every countermeasure aggravates the offense: how to erase the traces of erasure? And forgiveness repeats this circular obsessional ritual as it keeps rubbing and wiping, and in this way returning to the scene of the disaster.

Antinomies of Forgiveness

> Forgive me for forgiving you . . .
>
> MAURICE BLANCHOT, *L'écriture du désastre*

"The wounds of Spirit heal and leave no scars behind." Hegel's final flourish is apocalyptic in its extremity: out of the abyss of its abandonment, Spirit returns, the consumptive draws breath, speech is restored to the madman who had abjured it. Life is unexpectedly granted to one who has withdrawn from the circle of the living: intransigent beauty relinquishes its rage as it comes to recognize the other's inadequacy as its own. It is the judge's own refusal to confess that has proved to be the evil most urgently in need of confession; his censorious silence in the face of the other's disclosure constitutes the ultimate "rebellion against the Spirit" (*PhG* §667). Forgiveness in this context is above all a tacit second-order confession—a confession about nonconfession, and an appeal that the forgiver himself be forgiven, a gesture all the more poignant in that it remains unspoken and arrives too late. The judge belatedly consummates the other's confession by acknowledging his own ineluctable complicity in what he judges, if only by virtue of the furtive particularity of the very act of judgment: the ultimate evil lies in the moralizing gaze that discerns it always elsewhere. Hegel here again anticipates Freud and Nietzsche: the obsession with moral hygiene reeks of dirty voyeurism. The beautiful soul's refusal to act is an act in both senses: the decision is burdened by the contingency of every action, and moreover cloaks this defect in the garb of righteous indignation. The critic is so busy cataloguing the evil motivations all around him that he leaves off the list the malignant motive for the catalogue in the first place—a set that somehow forgot to include itself among its own members.

This eruption of disavowed particularity is the logical flip side of the sanguine indifference that, in disdaining "everything," only reproduces the monochromatic formalism of the understanding. "No action can escape such judgment" (*PhG* §665): the indiscriminateness with which the judge condemns the entire universe betrays a reactionary lack of critical reflexivity regarding the determinate contingencies both of the object and of the historic present from which judgment itself issues. The beautiful soul is thus the last avatar of the hollow skepticism lampooned by Hegel in the introduction to the *Phenomenology*—the judgment that feeds on what it denigrates, clings to what it castigates, and, like the literary critic who does not write, can assert its creativity only through a slavish denunciation of the existent.[1] Hegel had wasted no words demonstrating the essential conservatism behind the apparent radicalism of the skeptic: "The skepticism that ends up with the bare abstraction of nothingness or emptiness cannot get any further from there, but must wait to see whether something new comes along . . . in order to throw it too into the same empty abyss" (*PhG* §79).

Let's wait and see . . . We can discern in this paralysis the narcissistic suspension of the object. The negativity is preemptive and ultimately fainthearted; Hegel had called that kind of skepticism "shilly-shallying"—a mere jostling (*rütteln*) of positions (*PhG* §78). It is insufficiently "thoroughgoing." It is mired in performative contradiction: failing to submit my own suspicion to the punishing standard to which I subject the rest of the world, I end up acquiescing to whatever happens to be the case. Like anxiety, contempt is structurally free-floating, and this is what reveals its essential melancholia; it lacks a specific object on which to fasten. There is a narcissistic component: the repudiation of "everything" blunts the edge of any specific disappointment so as to secure the sufficiency of the isolated self. This can be understood as a refusal of mourning. Refusing to acknowledge my own adversary I spare myself the pain of relinquishing it; every specific loss is buried in a tidal wave of indeterminate despair. In my silence thunders the melancholic's lamentation for the "unknown object."[2]

This dialectic explains the ideological versatility of melancholia: an uncompromising rejection of the existent (nothing short of total transformation is tolerable) coupled with an easy accommodation to whatever happens to be the case (everything is equally terrible, so why bother . . .). Accepting nothing, I tolerate everything: the formalist impasse. It was this abstractness

that had linked the terrified patience of the slave with the impatient Terror of the Revolution: in both cases the object of terror was pervasive and undifferentiated, and in both cases this prepared a transition from radicalism to conformism—the retrieval of an unexpected harmony in dissonance and the slide from global dissatisfaction to a compliance with the existent. It was not "this or that" that was threatening or unsatisfactory, and so for the slave, as for the revolutionary, there could be no satisfaction in piecemeal tinkering or "skillful" reform (*PhG* §194).[3] But dissatisfaction so exquisite can be consoling: where it is nothing less than the whole universe that requires fixing, my most sublime gratification comes from the tenacity of my own displeasure. When nothing will do, I'll make do with nothing: precisely Nietzsche's formula for nihilism. This is the melancholia of the free-floating intellectual whose Jacobin-like suspicion of the world is matched only by an uncritical admiration for his own talent for disappointment. "He mistrusts everything but his own mistrust" (*PhG* §74).

But as usual, "the fear of error is itself the error" (*PhG* §74). Moral universality requires that I include myself as both needy and worthy of absolution. By repudiating speech, I have banished both myself and the other from the community of the living. Having failed to answer confession with confession, I have "hindered the other's return" from the guilty particularity of the deed to the universality of the collective: I have reinstated nonidentity ("evil" itself) at the very site where it ought logically to have been superseded (*PhG* §667). I have abandoned both myself and the other to a spiritual destitution in which the other's sacrifice is not only disregarded but twisted into an exercise in humiliation. For the "hindrance" or delay (*Hemmung*) refers not simply to an unfulfilled need but to an unrecognized demand. The issue is normative. The confessant's desire for a response was a claim to legitimation. Propelling every desire is a second-order desire to desire: what I desire above all is to be *entitled* to my own desire, and I want to enjoy this entitlement (and moreover to be entitled to do so, and so on). This anxious reflexivity is rooted in the fissured structure of self-consciousness, its compulsive self-scrutiny and incessant self-comparison to an ever-shifting standard that is itself, in turn, inexorably put into question.

The point is not simply that the confessant's desire is unrequited, but that its very legitimacy is challenged. His disappointment that his confession is not reciprocated suddenly casts a shadow of doubt on the

authenticity of the original confession.[4] It raises the specter of opportunism. Behind the manifest appeal to solidarity there wafts an unpleasant whiff of calculation. Was the confession motivated by an expectation of exculpation through the other's counterconfession, a distribution of guilt between confessant and confessor that might dilute the pungency of the original confession? I acknowledge my fault before you, but only insofar as you let me turn me into your accomplice—*tu quoque*. I confess, yes, to err is human, as you yourself, you of all people, must surely know. . . Seen in this light, the testimony becomes an admission without real liability: I am prepared to confess as long as it doesn't specifically implicate me. The transference thus functions forensically as a *translatio crimini*—a classic defense strategy (for example, in Cicero), whereby the charge is deflected by being "translated" to another party, including the accuser himself. The whole scene has been rehearsed in front of a mirror: the confessant has seduced himself into a confession on the basis of an imaginary identification with the confessor, and he wants to lure in the other similarly. "It is enticed into confessing by the vision of itself in the other" (*PhG* §669). Captivated by the prospect of easy intimacy, the confessant tries to draw in the other through his own disingenuous display of candor. This is the seductive allure of all confession—its theatricality and chronic tendency to hypocrisy: it always risks succumbing to the lure of narcissism.

The confessor's silence raises the suspicion that the confession was driven by the desire for spiritual payback. Every claim to validation risks regressing to the vulgar calculus of utilitarianism—mutual exoneration through shared admission. "One hand washes the other" (*PhG* §560). As in love (or maybe this is love), it is the demand for equality that thwarts the possibility of reciprocity. Transference provokes countertransference; the confession can only enrage the listener, who is asked to see his own guilt mirrored in the other's disclosure and is repelled by the thumping camaraderie of the performance. Justified or not (it matters little), the rebuke demystifies the unthinking market assumptions that can always threaten to corrupt our notions of reciprocity, even while it confirms the meanness (*Niedertracht*) of the judge who loftily sets himself above (*hinaufsetzen*) it all (*PhG* §666). Despite or because of its mean-spiritedness, the judge's silence contains a glimmer of critical, even emancipatory, potential. Without claiming any great dignity on its own terms, his disdain promises to free confession from the coils of narcissistic self-interest. Too late, and in

any case already contaminated with its own form of narcissism, his coldness forces a pause in the buzz of instrumental reason.

Consider the economics of the encounter. Confession is staged from the outset as a verbal sacrifice or un-saying (*Entsagung*) of autonomy—a renunciation (*Abwerfen*) that both is and is not to be understood as a throwing away (*Wegwerfung*) of subjectivity. Confession is an experiment with loss that stops short of flat-out abandon—a simultaneous affirmation and denial in which we can detect a trace of disavowal in the Freudian sense—*Verwerfung*. The confessant "expects that the other will contribute his part" to the transaction, that he will seal the deal by answering confession with confession, and it is this expectation that initially seems to dignify the transaction: it protects the confessor from debasement or degradation (*Erniedrigung*, *Demutigung*), at least in his own mind (*PhG* §§666–67). "He gives himself utterance solely on account of his having seen his identity with the other." The original intention (*Meinung*) of the confession was to establish reciprocity with the confessant. The divestment turns out to be a secret investment awaiting return. What I really "meant," in confessing, was to shore up what is "mine"—a narcissism reflected in the egocentric grammar of the confessional performative: *Ich bin*'s (*PhG* §667).

But, says Hegel, with a malicious pleasure, things do not turn out as intended, no indeed—"on the contrary!" *Im Gegenteil!* (*PhG* §667). The punctuation is unusually heavy-handed (at only one other point in the *Phenomenology* does the author intrude quite so bouncingly), and the staccato matches the accelerating tempo of the narrative. It speaks to an impatience and even anxiety about closure; we shall return to this. In repudiating such reciprocity, judgment proves at once stingy and profligate. The hard-hearted judge hoards his own subjectivity as private property that he is unwilling to alienate within the marketplace of communicative exchange. But in this rejection of community, the judge inevitably falls into a spiritual abandon in which he "throws away" (*verwirft*) any connection to the other, giving up both liberty and life itself. He shatters in a heap of broken fragments and (you can't die too many times) vanishes in a swoon of delirious tubercular consumption. "It does in fact surrender the being-for-self to which it so stubbornly clings; but what it brings forth is only the non-spiritual unity of mere being" (*PhG* §668).

Both faith and thus Enlightenment itself can now be rescued from insight's most boneheaded, but also most stupefying, most unanswerable,

charges. This attack had targetted the irrationality of sacrifice. Not only did it appear (the cold, thin voice of the understanding) to be senseless to "give away butter and eggs . . . without receiving anything in return" (*PhG* §556); it also seemed to be self-refuting. Anything less than total renunciation would only reinforce the particularity of the isolated self. This had at an even earlier moment been dramatized by the unhappy consciousness: I kept trying to erase my stubborn singularity by sacrificing everything to a transcendent cause, an opaque, impenetrable Other, but each time the gift was returned to sender. It's always *my* decision, *my* body, *my* faith, *my* offering, and anyway I'm saving the best for later. "The truth of the matter is that [I] have *not* renounced [my]self" (*PhG* §222). Hegel goes so far as to suggest gleefully, on Enlightenment's behalf, that even castration can be a defense against castration; the florid example of Origen shows how an all too literal injury can serve to preempt the ultimate traumatic wounding (*PhG* §570). Short of absolute knowing, total sacrifice will prove to be unthinkable. Either the sacrifice of individuality had required idiocy (the rote repetition of dull formulas, the dusty catechisms of a dead language), or it had involved the terrified evacuation of both mind and body: a heap of cabbage heads, a flat monosyllable, a banal show of death as boring, meaningless disaster. Hegel had described both these earlier moments (I am referring to the episodes of the unhappy consciousness and the Terror) almost identically in terms of a "total loss" without return.[5] But in both cases, the loss had proved to be a momentary expenditure in the service of conceptual profit. Catholic stupidity was transformed into the idea of rational inquiry: in mumbling the rosary, I temporarily divested myself of intellectual autonomy, but this proved to be to my ultimate advantage; I shed my obdurate singularity, and in my idiocy merged with the objective world. And the law of suspects was transcribed into the Kantian obsession with counterfactual intentions: I killed off the world but thereby encountered my own infinite capacity for moral freedom. The sacrifices had not been in vain. What appeared at the time to be total loss quickly proved to have been only relatively total. It turns out that there are degrees of loss, a hierarchy of trauma for which absolute knowing alone will supply the measure. Only in forgiveness does renunciation become so "totally" total that the subject breaks through its own narcissism and from the instrumental rationality on which it has always fed. "To know one's limit is to know how to sacrifice oneself" (*PhG* §807).

The standard objection (from Nietzsche to Bataille, from Kierkegaard to Levinas, from Marx to Adorno, from everyone to Derrida) to Hegel as a spiritual profiteer thus needs to be reconsidered. Absolute knowing is neither compensation, as in the redemption of a debt, nor fulfillment: the void is constitutive (which does not mean that it is not historically overdetermined). Rather than trying to plug the gap through the accumulation of conceptual surplus value, Hegel sets out to demystify the phantasms we find to fill it; the dialectic is in this sense best understood as a relentless counterfetishistic practice. Among the more subtle fantasies Hegel punctures is the melancholic reification of the lost object as an unattainable positivity: he demonstrates again and again that even loss can be a furtive source of consolation. The ultimate sacrifice is without payback in that it suspends every symbolic context in which it could be even recognized as a sacrifice; it voids every available standard of evaluation. Exposing the subject to its collective emptiness, it clears the slate for a new beginning. While appearing to eclipse all previous losses, this sacrifice makes no claim to redeem the lives squandered on the slaughter bench of history.

"Rushing Toward Reconciliation"

The final recognition scene is staged, in other words, as a missed encounter. The delay is structural, and will transform both forgiveness and the confession that occasioned it. It is crucial that forgiveness does not follow confession either spontaneously or in a timely fashion. Forgiveness is not the response to a request, an exchange of exoneration for admission, or the result of a dialogical encounter. This uncoupling of forgiveness from confession may represent Hegel's most intransigently Protestant maneuver, an updating of Luther's attempt to purge worship of its "whorish Babylonian" opportunism, nowhere more viscerally expressed than in Luther's attack on the spiritual marketplace of merit and remission and on the various corruptions he thought to have indelibly tainted the sacrament of auricular confession—an instrument of priestly coercion and a "breeding ground for profit and power."[6] But the implications are broader. Hegel is raising the suspicion that every confession might be a forced confession, a risk that would call the terms of recognition itself into question. Reciprocity is not a given: it would only refute itself as such. It arises from the most extreme failure to communicate, and it must confirm this failure as its continuous source. Far

from being either an empathic response or a reward for an all-too-human confession of finitude, forgiveness is only thinkable once the unforgivable has irreversibly occurred, and once it is established that the one most urgently in need of forgiveness is the forgiving agent. It is only on these terms that reconciliation is thinkable—guilt is universal and the whole world must shatter—and yet guilt remains singular, asymmetrical, and nontransferable. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive others." Hannah Arendt takes this to be the formula for political community.[7] Hegel's contribution is to strip away every measure of comparison from the "as" that binds us. This opens up a kind of Dostoevskyan and even Levinasian singularity: everyone is guilty of everything and for everyone, always, everywhere, but I more than anyone. What binds us to one another is precisely our failure to recognize one another, a blockage underscored by the untimeliness of the encounter. Recognition is possible only to the extent that it arrives too late.

The possibility of forgiveness is thus its impossibility. Derrida has exposed the aporetic kernel of forgiveness, a dilemma linked to the more general paradox of the gift. Forgiveness is either tautological (whatever can be forgiven is precisely that which needs no forgiving), or impossible (what must be forgiven is precisely that which prohibits all forgiveness), or both. Hegel links this paradox to a temporal aporia. It is the one who has nothing to give who is forcibly in the position of offering forgiveness; the exchange ("love," if this is what we are talking about) is initiated by one who has "fallen below the level of love," and it occurs only once it is too late to be enjoyed.[8] It is the steely refusal to match confession with confession that has condemned the judge to a spiritual destitution from which arises the possibility of a redemption all the more miraculous for arriving too late. The scene has the hyperbolic quality of Kafka's parable about the coming of the Messiah: the redeemer arrives not on the Day of Judgment, not on the "last" day, *am letzten Tag*, but on the day after his own arrival, *am allerletzten Tag*. He comes only when he is either unnecessary or insufficient, or both.[9]

Forgiveness thus confesses to its own (unforgivable) tendency to idealization. Having forcibly purified itself of its own phobic purity, the subject abandons the conceit that pardon is granted from the sovereign position of a priest, or pope, or king—a beautiful soul that might ultimately exempt itself from its own judgment. Forgiveness is the embrace of the permanent stain of particularity (the "evil") that both impedes and en-

ables all access to moral universality. In acknowledging this complicity, the subject seeks to complete the project of secularization by undoing the last vestige of otherworldliness: a chastened Enlightenment finally settles with a sobered faith. Hegel's expanded confessional culture assumes the infinite reversibility of guilt and absolution even while maintaining their asymmetry. The title of this final section, "Evil and its Forgiveness," contains a crucial ambiguity in that the genitive points in two directions. Evil already possesses forgiveness: forgiveness perpetuates evil in the act of absolving evil, and it bears the indelible stain of the struggle undertaken to achieve this. Every pardon generates another evil in need of pardon, the complicity is infinite, and suspicion must assume terrorist proportions. The offer of forgiveness comes from the one manifestly least qualified to provide it and it comes too late.

This untimeliness will leave a permanent shadow over the reconciliation offered. It will set the accelerated tempo of the resolution (the word of reconciliation "bursts forth" [*hervorbricht*] as if from nowhere [*PhG* §786]) and accounts for the extreme narrative compression of the account of absolute knowing, which the narrative of forgiveness essentially rehearses. Breathlessly abbreviated, the final chapter of the *Phenomenology* will begin by recapitulating in skeletal form the entire preceding trajectory of the book—a "shot from the pistol" that seems to display all the impatience against which Hegel had warned so impatiently in the Preface. At the very outset of the *Phenomenology* Hegel had rebuked the formulaic brusqueness of an approach that snatched at summaries and "overviews" (*Übersichten*); such shortcuts slice through the world and inevitably "overlook" (*übersehen*) its unfolding truth (*PhG* §53). In its own compulsion to synoptic clarity, absolute knowing must, if only for a moment, renounce the lingering immersion in detail that had determined the tempo and rhythm of prephilosophical consciousness and contributed to its persistent disorientation. Only in hindsight and through the prism of totality can a random "succession" of experiences be "raised into a scientific progression" (cf. *PhG* §87). Seen through the rearview mirror of philosophical reflection, the accumulated experiences of Spirit will flash by like fleeting snapshots, a series of highlights strung together without the connective tissue of narrative dilation. Having missed its own moment, Spirit is condemned to be forever straining to catch up to itself. It keeps sprinting toward a deadline that it has already missed.

There is something strangely exorbitant about the forgiveness scene: isn't the judge supposed to be offstage by now? Strictly speaking, the hard-hearted judge has already long gone under, his part played out, his fragments scattered: his muteness has already exiled him to the symbolic death of "madness" and to the biological death of yearning, tubercular "consumption" (*Schwindsucht*)—twice dead but not yet departed. Having been sentenced to an early disappearance (*Verschwinden*), the beautiful soul can only resurface as a spectral apparition, a Hunter Gracchus figure who having missed the moment of his own death somehow finds the inspiration, draws the breath, to continue speaking. The whole scene thus transpires in the Lacanian zone between the two deaths, but there is no glamor or consolation in the rubble—nothing to shield the subject from the horror of its own nullity. The beautiful soul is only "so-called beautiful" (*eine sogennante* schöne Seele [*PhG* §658])—an apparition of an appearance, the barest simulacrum of a semblance—and aesthetic ideology is exhausted. It is not the living circuit of communication that is reactivated in this fragile *conspiratio*. The subject returns to language only after having broken the communicative contract. It speaks as a shattered vessel, a "broken heart"—beauty petrified and smashed in the mirror of its own image (*PhG* §669). There is duress here, even a kind of extortion, but of a peculiar kind. It is no longer the slavish *fear* of death that forces my final capitulation to the social contract. The worst has already occurred. I am already as good as dead. I have nothing left to lose.

Despite or because of what Derrida aptly refers to, if all too hastily dismisses, as Hegel's own "rush toward the economy of a reconciliation"[10] (the rush is undeniable and deserves analysis: it correlates with the delay that precipitated it), Hegel's account of forgiveness has a bracingly contemporary edge. Its starting point is the surd of inexpiable finitude that both thwarts and stimulates every movement toward redemption. And it is disfigured by a traumatic temporality of delay. The irreversible (unforgivable) lag between confession and forgiveness dramatizes the deferral constitutive of experience. In this catastrophe is the exaggeration that, to paraphrase Adorno again, reveals the truth—namely, that experience is the experience of the impossibility of experience. Far from confirming the subject's immersion in a restricted economy of exchange, forgiveness has the exorbitance of the gift: it arrives unexpectedly, as from the future, and is drawn from the depleted reserves of one who has nothing left to give.

Forgiveness not only arrives too late to make a difference, but is not the response expected. What had been anticipated was a counterconfession from one still living. What is offered is the benediction of the undead.

That the scene of forgiveness has an overtly pneumatological, Christian appearance is not in itself, of course, an argument against it, but it does clarify the stakes. It is the sin against the Holy Spirit that Hegel is revisiting: the punishment is tantamount to the divine withholding of grace from one who has blasphemed by refusing the possibility of grace—the thorny exception to the Christian rule of unlimited, unconditional forgiveness (Matt. 12:32). In lifting the biblical exception, Hegel also sharply reverses Kant. Where Kant had problematized the idea of grace, even as he toyed with it, as unbearably compromising the infinity of moral striving, Hegel reinstates something like grace at its most improbable extreme. He introduces as the occasion for redemption the most intractable obstacle to redemption. Hegel appears here simultaneously at his most audacious and most insufferable: even the irredeemable gets drawn into the circuit of reconciliation. As usual, the scandal can be inflected in at least two opposed directions: as pacifying idealization or as aporetic self-deconstruction.

Wounds of Spirit

> What's done cannot be undone.
>
> LADY MACBETH

"The wounds of Spirit heal and leave no scars behind" (*PhG* §652). Readers get embarrassed or bored by the sudden Wagnerian extravaganza: what kind of healing and why no scars? In our trauma-besotted, memory-obsessed "wound culture," Hegel's formula seems magical, shamanistic, apologetic—cosmetic surgery applied to the structurally unhealing or contingently unhealed wounds of historical existence. The objections are various, and can be more or less crudely formulated, but can be collected into a single bundle: conceptual laxity, existential vacuity, moral apathy, historical inaccuracy. Hegel is being either stupid or ideological or both: the real wounds don't heal, or have yet to do so, and in any case scars don't and shouldn't just disappear—witness our insatiable contemporary hunger for memorials. It's either too late or too early (usually both) to play Parzifal to the bleeding Amfortas, or Asclepius to the stinking Philoctetes.

Either the opportunity has been missed ("philosophy lives on because it has missed the moment of its own realization," Adorno famously writes) or the conditions have not yet been satisfied (the Messiah has not yet come). And in any case the very fantasy of healing is wrong-headed: Hegel is either ignorant of the constitutive trauma of castration (however you care to define this: primal repression, class struggle, political antagonism, existential finitude, ethical alterity, sexual difference, ontological difference . . .) or coldly indifferent to the throbbing wounds of historical oppression. Either precritical or apologetic, and in any case, it is often noted, strangely undialectical: was not Hegel himself the first to insist that he liked his stockings mended but his consciousness torn?[11]

Slavoj Žižek argues that such protests sentimentalize and "completely miss the point" (as he is fond of saying) of speculative negation: as Hegel reminds us, "consciousness suffers violence at its *own* hands" (*PhG* §80). Subjectivity is itself the trauma, the injury is self-inflicted. Rather than wishing away the injury or demonizing its malignancy, the point is to confront the infinity of the infirmity. The only way to close the wound, or rather to undo its coercive power, is to reopen it: to become what we are. Absolute knowing is just the subject's identification with the woundedness that it is. Antidote is in this sense indistinguishable from injury, health from illness, and poison from cure; Hegel is here rehearsing all the paradoxes of the *pharmakon*. "Salvation is an act of purely formal conversion," writes Žižek, "a shift of perspective" whereby we suddenly perceive our desire to be always already satisfied and the Messiah to have always already arrived.[12] (This is not that there is anything to be satisfied about, but rather because our only satisfaction lies in dissatisfaction. What we desire more than anything is to keep on desiring: at least it makes us feel as if we were still alive.) If we don't get too sidetracked by the potential heroism and even Stoicism of this way of thinking (a whiff of "loser wins"), Žižek's reading is suggestive. It engages the repetitive, restless energy of the dialectic, its obsessive, circular doing and undoing: every inscription supplies its own erasure, every erasure its own reinscription, and this intransitive, tautological transition from negation to negation is relentless. It exposes desire to the compulsive, machinelike energy of the drive. The "silent, ceaseless weaving of Spirit" is Penelopean: the work is infinite and the shroud forever unfinished. As Karl Kraus once said of psychoanalysis (although he meant it as a criticism), absolute knowing is the illness for

which it presents the cure; the *Phenomenology* is the perfect case study of interminable analysis.

Politics of Forgiveness?

Whatever its peculiarities, forgiveness cannot exist in theory or in a social vacuum. As Arendt will emphasize, forgiveness is offered by or to others and only in the presence of others; it is achieved only in being publicly enacted: the speech act performatively generates the sociability to which it attests. The subject secretes or "pours out" (*entäußert*) its exclusive selfhood through an utterance that speaks of nothing other than that there is "utterance" (*Entäußerung*)—a sheer opening to the other, a moment of "pure language" in the Benjaminian sense: intransitive, uncommunicative, inexpressive. The speech act describes nothing, asserts nothing, and points to nothing beyond its own enunciation: it offers a kind of ontological proof of the inaugural extension of the speaking subject: "The reconciling *yes*, in which the two I's let go their antithetical existence, is the existence of the 'I' which has expanded into a duality" (*PhG* §671).

This reflexivity accounts for the otherwise disappointing emptiness—I dare say "flatness"—of Spirit's last monosyllable. The "reconciling *yes*" functions as an empty performative: it is a communication without a message, without any content to communicate other than the fact that there is, or could be, communication, that the machine is once more working; a "phatic" utterance in the sense explored by Malinowski and Jakobson, the most minimal gesture of recognition, a purely ceremonial formula whose only function is to prolong or reestablish contact, to check the channel or to test the microphone, the audible breath drawn by the speaker as he opens his mouth to say something—ritualized, automatic, like a greeting, or a password, or like vapid chit-chat about the weather, "inauthentic" perhaps, "empty" certainly, anxious, too, in its uncertainty (we only check the connection once it has broken, or once we have become painfully aware of its fragility; the very need for a test is already sufficient proof of the test's own failure, which is what accounts for the anxious obsessionality of the ritual (are you still listening?); like every counterphobic measure, the test needs to be endlessly repeated; the more it succeeds the more it opens itself to failure; it keeps on generating the very indeterminacy it wants to settle), fretful, stammering, but almost Joycean in its inaugurative potential.

Nothing precedes the "yes." Because the judge's silence has voided all preexisting content, it is strictly speaking unspecified what exactly is being acknowledged, conceded, or forgiven, and this uncertainty will also in turn need to be forgiven. This is another way of saying that forgiveness retroactively rewrites the terms of the original confession—a perfect example of "positing the presupposition." It is forgiveness that transforms the "confession of sins" (*confessio peccatum*) into a "confession of praise" (*confessio laudis*) and ultimately into a "confession of faith" (*confessio fidei*), to follow Augustine's trajectory: from an act of self-serving self-accusation to an act of testimony and collective affirmation (*con-fiteri*) that has the radical contingency of a new beginning.[13] The guilty interval between confession and response opens a chasm in which time starts again and the world is suddenly reinvented. To say "yes," as Derrida has noted, is to prolong the conversation by forcing an incessant repetition of the beginning; my response prompts you to rephrase the question to which I will answer yes (and yes again). In its emptiness is staged the inaugural force of every action—inaugural, yes, but only because too late, and by that token in need of repetition.[14]

Put otherwise: "the '*yes*'"—strange locution—is neither descriptive nor normative. It neither refers nor commands. There is neither an antecedent content to which it assents nor a determinate goal that it prescribes. There are political implications, although they may seem meager; at the very minimum Hegel is ruling out every temptation to ethical naturalism. All accumulated values have been suspended and there is no symbolic capital on which to draw. Forgiveness evacuates the substantial plenitude of every community, both past and future. The opening to the universal is thus neither reconstructive (forgiveness does not presuppose the stable identity of the social context) nor constructive (it does not stipulate a social norm). It is even unclear by this point either what is being affirmed or who is talking or listening: both speaker and auditor are produced by the speech act, and have no existence beyond this. (This is precisely what Lacan means by "headless subjectification.")[15] "The '*yes*'" comes from nowhere, points to nothing, and can be attributed to no one in particular. It is also peculiarly nonidiomatic. Strangely nominalized and floating in italics, the word is reduced to a zero degree of meaning and expressivity: spectral, citational, referentially opaque. Speech is hovering on the verge of empty reverberation.

Although it would be outlandish to try to translate this into an institutional program, forgiveness demands an immersion in social matters.

The dialectic of conscience has just established the impossibility of disentangling moral agency from the thickly woven strands of our social context; it imposes a burden of political commitment. The isolated subject of moral conscience must yield to the substance of the community, which in turn, however, must "resubjectify" itself by shedding every vestige of positivity. The realist fantasy, also an aesthetic one, that the social world is ready-made, that our community awaits us, had been already shattered with the collapse of beautiful *Sittlichkeit*, together with the illusion of the pristine tranquility of this community. The commitment to transience implies something like a Nietzschean "downgoing." To relinquish the isolated autonomy of the self is to abandon the spectatorial position of the immaculate perceiver. This might seem like thin gruel as a contribution to political philosophy—a commitment to dirty hands and social connectedness: we don't need Hegel to teach us *that*—and one might be forgiven for wondering whether Hegel has traded in a Kantian moral formalism for a kind of political formalism. But there are reasons for this minimalism.

As an active undoing of the past, forgiveness repeats the inaugural logic of the Revolution. Time begins again: "the deed is not imperishable" (*die Tat ist nicht das Unvergängliche*) (*PhG* §669). The double negative actually conceals a triple negative: the deed (or fact) is not in-trans-ient. The negation of the negation is not a return to substantial positivity, but rather an exposure to irrecuperable transience. Time remains irreversible: forgiveness diminishes neither the magnitude of the injury nor the agent's responsibility, whether by forgetting or by "willing backwards" to enfold the past within the warm embrace of *amor fati*. The obduracy of the deed remains, but it no longer confronts me as a stony obstacle, a Nietzschean "it was," before which I must forever gnash my teeth while conjuring up vengeful fantasies of retribution.[16] The event is historicized: instead of determining the future, the past is freed to receive a new meaning from the future.

This is another way of saying that the event is pluralized. I am released from the frozen eternity of my deed only by relinquishing the illusion of independent autonomy. I no longer stand in isolation as an "angry spectator" forever tethered to an inertly uninterpretable past. I am freed from the past, freed to act differently, only by exposing myself to the moral claim of others. This had already followed from Hegel's demonstration, in the "Reason" chapter, of the irreducible sociability of agency. If I am no longer the prisoner of my act, this is because I am not its proprietor either. Not only are

the consequences of my action beyond my control and knowledge, but it is only retrospectively and in the company of others that my intentions even become legible as such; what I "meant" turns out to be the retroactive result of what comes later. Every action, remarks Hegel, is in itself "something perishable"—soggy with contingent interpretations and unforeseeable consequences (*PhG* §405); there is nothing I do which is not the concern of everyone; "my thing" becomes a breeding ground for divergent interests and opinions; it spills over in uncontrollable directions and draws in others "like flies to freshly poured milk" (*PhG* §417).[17] The opening to the future is the opening to the collective. Time *is*, as Levinas says, the Other. And this implies, adds Hegel, *all* the others. Only thus is the mythic fatality of history interrupted.

So it's not the vulgarity of Hegel's solution that needs to be challenged. His analysis retains its restless, reflexive edge: every judgment on history must incorporate itself within its own judgment, ruining every fantasy of immaculate innocence. There is no need to upstage or "dialectize" Hegel by flushing out the unprocessed flotsam of a reified tradition. While conventional in its presentation ("Judge not, lest ye . . ."), and while he will never relinquish the Christian idiom, Hegel's theology of forgiveness translates effortlessly into the terms of contemporary debate. Forgiveness of (and by) the unforgivable is the eruption of witness from the grounds of its own impossibility. In the end the judge testifies to his own failure to testify and language speaks from and of a core of silence.

Despite its traditional appearance, and despite or because of the abruptness of its elaboration, Hegel's notion of forgiveness is, when scratched (and insofar as comparisons add up to an argument), as hyperbolic as anything in Derrida, as asymmetrical as anything in Levinas, as disastrous as anything in Blanchot, as paradoxical as anything in Kierkegaard. It opens to a future as natal, as interruptive in its unpredictability, as anything in Arendt, and to a past as persistent as anything in Kristeva. Hegel's account withstands Nietzsche's critique of forgiveness as a prolongation of revenge, a debit-credit transaction yielding spiritual payback—he puts the "gift" back into forgiveness. He in this way also anticipates a recent wave of "post-secular" readings of Saint Paul (from Agamben and Badiou to Žižek) that try to extract from the aneconomic kernel of Pauline grace, its excessiveness and gratuity,

a source of resistance to the market regime and even implicitly to capitalism. Hegel thus decisively shifts the terms of the usual debates, which either restrict forgiveness to a symmetrical transaction between living equals—a pact between reconciled survivors and repentant perpetrators (Vladimir Jankélévitch)—or reduce it to a sublimated version of penal-economic exchange. Absolute knowing lies outside the sphere of punishment and compensation to which Arendt, for one, problematically ties the possibility of forgiveness: Arendt insists that one cannot forgive what one cannot punish, that for which no price is high enough, and thus genocidal acts such as the Holocaust lie forever beyond the pale. Hegel's insistence on the asymmetrical and untimely nexus of forgiveness and confession also goes some way to extricating the idea of confession itself from deconstructive readings that are quick to discern a self-serving tendency in confession, an ingratiating propensity to self-exculpation and even self-aggrandizement, or from readings, such as Foucault's, that stress the normalizing function of confessional discourse within the modern disciplinary regime.[18]

Hegel's argument for the same reason challenges every attempt to literalize, institutionalize, or normalize forgiveness as clemency, as amnesty, or as a social reconciliation enabled by a testimony whose confessional value would be either sufficient or self-evident. This is not a politics of truth and reconciliation. Hegel's argument is cruder than Derrida's somewhat more Kantian argument for the purity of unconditional forgiveness, but it is compatible.[19] To confuse forgiveness with amnesty is either to infect forgiveness with the taint of instrumental rationality or to invite theocracy or both. Either we reduce forgiveness to a useful mechanism for social integration—a suspension of legality for the sake of social harmony, in order to facilitate regime change, or for some other strategic end (each a fine purpose, but still a purpose)—or, and these are not mutually exclusive, we court fanaticism by granting the sovereign ruler the prerogative of divinity.[20] Either way we introduce coercion. Either we bind forgiveness to the immediate requirements of the existent (the unconditional becomes conditional) or we ground it with the iron fist of authority. Suspended between a politics of pardon and a theology of grace, forgiveness exposes the present to its most exorbitant demand.

This puts pressure on every "politics of memory," just as it challenges every politics of recognition (especially those formulated in Hegel's name) constructed on a model of dialogical transparency, together with the

identity politics that frequently sustains these. Just as confession does not generate forgiveness, so too forgiveness does not of itself produce reconciliation. The finitude of every speech act (its "evil") implies its radical deficiency as a social action. The "reconciling '*yes*'" (*das versöhnende* Ja) retains its participial, unfinished aspect. It speaks not of reconciliation but of an unfinished and ongoing movement of reconciling—a pressure to reconcile, even a desire to reconcile—that in its incompletion comes perilously close to the Kantian "ought" or *Sollen*. Forgiveness becomes a delusory surrogate for justice, even an impediment, if taken as an final accomplishment or orchestrated in a material vacuum. The dialectic of the beautiful soul has just demonstrated the disastrous consequences of cheating the universal by favoring speech over action: this would be a regression to the immediacy of conviction—the easy belief that saying so makes it so, Recognition cannot be "proved through words, assurances, threats, or promises."[21] It does not release society from the demands of justice. The desire for testimony in no way addresses the demand for reparation.

Although Hegel deliberately desists from naming any institutional counterpart to forgiveness, his formulation speaks to an intractable dilemma of transitional justice. How to elude the reactive circle of offense and punishment within a juridical framework consecrated to the principle of universality, commensurability, equality—that is, justice itself? How to redress the past without prolonging violence; how to detach from the past without normalizing atrocity? The example of Thermidor shows very clearly how amnesty can prolong the retributive cycle by unleashing a desire for vengeance no longer contained by legal channels. This issue was revealed clearly in October 1795, when the Convention tried to end the vengeful cycle of the Thermidorian reaction by announcing a general amnesty for all those whose "excessive zeal and blind rage for liberty" had contributed to the atrocities of the Year II. The measure not only failed to quench the thirst for legal retribution but inevitably precipitated new waves of popular violence and vigilante justice.[22]

World Soul on Horseback

During the war years—a charged moment—Kojève will come to read in the forgiveness scene a final reconciliation between theory and practice, between philosophy and politics, between Germany and France,

and specifically between Hegel and Napoleon: what is being forgiven is the impurity of the revolutionary act, but what also needs forgiveness is philosophy's own chronic failure of engagement. "The 'evil' in question is the supposed political 'crime' of Napoleon, and the 'pardon' is the justification of Napoleon's achievement by Hegel's philosophy. . . . The 'acting consciousness' is Napoleon as the 'result' of universal history and the 'judging' consciousness is Hegel, the 'judge' of Napoleon and of history, as the 'result' of German philosophy, and therefore, of the whole history of philosophy." Kojève goes on to relate the 'evil' to the trauma of the Prussian defeat at Jena. "The 'wound' is the defeat inflicted by Napoleon on Germany, which must integrate itself willingly into the universal Empire that Napoleon is in the process of realizing; the valets—they are the essentially 'hypocritical' critics of Napoleon."[23]

There's something crazy about this reading, but its literalism is gripping. Kojève is talking about much more than a banal compromise between idealism and pragmatism, or about the need to temper moral fanaticism with the gritty sobrieties of realpolitik. He is here explicitly binding the possibility of reconciliation to the demands of revolutionary inheritance. German philosophy is not simply a speculative analogue of the French Revolution; it is the practical construction of a legacy. Forgiveness is the embrace of the Revolution's material extension onto German soil—flawed, corrupt, uneven, and traumatically unprepared. If the wound is Napoleon, the trauma is not the fact of occupation per se, however burdensome (increased taxation, forced conscription, economic exploitation, and so on). The invasion has inflicted a temporal as well as a spatial lesion. Crumbling overnight, its internal borders changed beyond recognition, its population displaced, its armies decimated, Germany also suddenly finds its political structures reconstructed, its laws rewritten, its confessional jurisdictions rearranged, its educational systems redrafted, its industries overhauled, its serfs emancipated. In redrawing the map and dissolving the arcane apparatus of the Holy Roman Empire, the tattered political patchwork of princely principalities, imperial cities, ecclesiastical enclaves, together with its social web of corporate affiliations, feudal privileges, and fissured allegiances, Napoleon has imposed a dramatic reorganization of the legal, fiscal, political, military, agricultural, educational, and administrative fabric of German life. By forcing an accelerated modernization upon a state long regarded as moribund and beyond resurrection, he

has induced a temporal short-circuit that leaves Germany breathlessly suspended between two epochs. He confronts Germany with the specter of its own noncontemporaneity.

By Hegel's own legendary account, the last pages of the *Phenomenology* were written the night before Napoleon's army occupied Jena. The streets are pounding. If Hegel is made anxious, the one thing he can't stop fretting about in his letters is whether, given the disruption, the manuscript will make it safely to the publisher by the deadline, whether acts of war might count as extenuating circumstances, and what the financial implications might be if the manuscript goes missing.[24] In 1806, Hegel salutes Napoleon as the "world soul on horseback"—Christ reincarnate—even as he releases the work in which he pronounces the French Revolution's abortion, the exhaustion of political possibility, and the need to translate the language of revolutionary freedom into a completely different idiom. Even as he insists on freedom's forcible migration from the domain of politics into the "unreal land" of philosophical reflection, he celebrates the Revolution's tangible extension onto German soil.

Despite the aching absence of explicit political discussion following his analysis of the breakdown of revolutionary freedom, Hegel's account of conscience in the *Phenomenology* is formally compatible with his account in the *Philosophy of Right*, although it parses differently. In the later text, conscience will explicitly fulfill and surpass itself by committing to the existing community. To overcome the terrifying autochthony of moral beauty is to engage with the claims of my embodied social situation. I can only vindicate my moral agency by identifying as expressions of my own freedom the binding power of the institutions that had previously appeared as fetters—by 1820, this would mean the various institutions of family, civil society, state: marriage, taxes, newspapers, law courts, jails, police, army, university, and so on. This is not a return to the beautiful tranquility of *Sittlichkeit*, and there is no room here for spectators. I can only recognize as mine a world for which I set the standard, and the only standard I can apply is one for which I must continue to supply the measure; I can only engage with objectivity by continuing to refashion it. This is what Hegel means when he writes that "the state is not a work of art" (*PhR* §258A).

The *Philosophy of Right* outlines in sometimes numbing detail just what Hegel took to be the actual conditions of freedom, the logical neces-

sity of which the *Phenomenology* acknowledges at a formal level but leaves critically undetermined. The "birth-time" in which Hegel writes the *Phenomenology* is as open as the twilight of the *Philosophy of Right* is closed; the difference between Jena and Berlin is that between a newborn child and a "shape of life grown old"[25]—the difference, if there still is one, between morning and mourning sickness. The distinction between the two works could be explained in terms of the historical divide between the age of Napoleon and the age of Metternich. In 1806, Germany remains a blank slate, an "unreal world" not yet populated by the institutional structures whose actuality Hegel will seem to be affirming in 1820. The various disparities between the social rationality described in the *Philosophy of Right* and the empirical reality of Restoration Prussia have been well documented and need not detain us now, although the details are endlessly absorbing. Within the lecture hall, Hegel advises his students to avert their gaze from any particular existing state if they wish to discern the rational concept of the state as such (*PhR* §258A). As readers from Marx on have frequently noted, hardly any of the institutions celebrated by Hegel (bicameral parliament, jury system, the right to conscientious objection, freedom of speech and press, voluntary taxation, modern marriage law, constitutional monarchy itself, among other not so minor details) were to be found in the Prussian state of Hegel's Berlin period, although they do reflect some of the more progressive, French-inspired measures, the "revolution from above" reluctantly initiated by Friedrich Wilhelm III in the immediate aftermath of the Napoleonic victory and soon rescinded.[26] Most of these reforms would not see the light of day in Prussia for decades. After Waterloo, as time slips backward and hopes of progress fade into a spectral twilight, Hegel, pausing to note the absence of the fully transparent legal code that might have been Napoleon's legacy, comments that "it is the bad habit of the Germans never to be able to finish anything" (*VPR* 172).

"The Self-Moving Life of the Dead"

Impossible to ignore is a darkly discordant strain running through Hegel's political writings from the early Jena *Realphilosophie* to the *Philosophy of Right*, a dissonance that will challenge not only the legitimacy of the actually existing state but its innermost rationality. The discord is not just contingent or circumstantial. It arises from a structural impasse

at the heart of modern political life. From Jena on Hegel presents a unflinching and prescient picture of the misery inflicted in a world driven by the ruthlessness of the market: the pressure to maximize productivity reduces every worker to an interchangeable cog within a constantly accelerating machine, while the drive to profit generates inevitable crises of overproduction, resulting in unemployment, pauperization and ultimately the creation of a new "rabble" class, *das Pöbel*, whose material destitution is accompanied by a cultural deprivation and spiritual degradation that bring it to the point of revolt (*Empörung*).

The persistence of abject poverty within a system premised on the expansion of private wealth presents "one of the most tormenting problems agitating modern society," Hegel writes (*PhR* §244)—a contradiction that will inevitably precipitate into open rebellion (which, however, does not in any case seem to Hegel to present much of a solution). In at least one place in his lectures, Hegel appears to defend the rabble's right to rebellion.[27] However one chooses to interpret this passage (readers disagree), Hegel is explicit that this would not be simply a "momentary right of distress" (*Notrecht*)—a provisional suspension of law under exceptional circumstances, for example, in self-defense or in the face of natural calamity (the starving man's right to steal a loaf of bread, the drowning man's right to the plank, etc.)—but expresses a permanent state of exception at the heart of the modern liberal regime. Poverty is an "infinite injury to existence" that challenges the founding principle of the bourgeois order: it presents a permanent emergency in the light of which even the bourgeois right to property becomes only a relative right, and the freedom to acquire only a "limited existence of freedom."[28]

This antinomy is intractable within the terms of either modern civil society or the state that sustains it. Society depends for its functioning on those excluded from any corporate affiliation or coherent class membership, and is thus premised on the existence of those whose right to existence it cannot acknowledge. The freedom to accumulate can be sustained only by generating a sub-class for which "freedom has no existence" (*VPR* 194). "Wealth and poverty increase simultaneously" (*VPR* 193): class polarization presents a contradiction insoluble within the terms of capitalism. None of the possible measures Hegel explores can solve the problems generated by a system of right premised on the eradication of right, and instituted on the basis of those who have no status within that system. He

states flatly that the problem of poverty will be overcome neither by a system of welfare administered from within civil society (which would only intensify the rabble's "ethical degeneration"), by state-sponsored employment opportunities (which would only exacerbate the problem of overproduction), by the mediating work of corporations (which is in any case unworkable given that the rabble is by definition excluded); nor, finally, by the export of surplus goods and workers through colonial expansion. "Despite an excess of wealth, civil society is not wealthy enough . . . to prevent an excess of poverty and the formation of a rabble" (*PhR* §245). Not only is rebellion an inevitable response to poverty, but any attempt to justify poverty as merely collateral damage should, says Hegel, be "revolting [*empörende*] to every man."[29]

Hegel is not Marx. The rabble is not the proletariat, communism is not on the horizon, and revolution is not a solution.[30] (Marx's own discovery of the proletariat came a few months after he had broken off his reading of Hegel's political philosophy, and from other sources.) Hegel is not prepared to see in the contradiction of civil society the death knell of class society, to identify capitalism itself as its own gravedigger, or to see in the disenfranchised masses anything more than a surge of blind, formless reaction, "elemental, irrational, barbarous, and terrifying" (*PhR* §303A), a swarm whose integration remains unrealized and unrealizable—an "ought." Nor does Hegel identify in the fractures of the modern state either the debris left by the ancient feudal apparatus, that medieval monster that Hegel himself invariably refers to as a "tottering edifice," or the advance symptom of the state's own eventual dismantling, self-deconstruction, or (à la Marx) withering.[31] But the aporia, untypical for Hegel, points to something unfinished or already crumbling within the edifice whose construction Hegel declares to be completed, a failure of both actuality and rationality that undermines the solidity of the state he elsewhere celebrates, in Hobbesian language, as an earthly divinity (*PhR* §272A), or as the infamous "Gang des Gottes" (*PhR* §258A).

Shlomo Avineri credits Hegel with an unusual intellectual honesty in conceding a limit to the transparency of his own system; others see resignation.[32] The opacity points to the historical challenge posed by the Revolution and evokes the specter of its unfinished legacy. In an extraordinary, almost Gothic passage in the Jena *Realphilosophie* (1803/04) Hegel had described modern civil society (not yet named as such) as a self-moving

machine, a savage and irrepressible beast, a returning phantom—"a life of the dead that moves within itself, oscillating in a blind and elemental fashion, like a wild animal, requiring constant taming and strict domination."[33] The ghosts of the Revolution continue to make their claim.

Gray on Gray (Hegel, Beckett, Richter)

Toward the end of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel describes reconciliation as a sudden inspiration or "inbreathing" (*Begeistung*; §785)—a fresh breath drawn by the consumptive. The image echoes his famous description, in the preface, of the present as a "birth time." Note the breathless punctuation, barely grammatical in the original: "Just as the first breath drawn by a child after its long, quiet nourishment breaks the gradualness of merely quantitative growth—a qualitative leap—and the child is born, so likewise the Spirit in its formation matures slowly and quietly into its new shape, dissolving bit by bit the structure of the previous world, whose tottering state is only hinted at by the isolated symptoms. . . . The gradual crumbling that left unaltered the face of the whole is cut short by a sunburst which, in one flash, illuminates the features of the new world" (*PhG* §11, slightly revised). In the *Phenomenology*, forgiveness hints of revolutionary regeneration—a leap toward a future as yet unknown. Such a *salto mortale* will be officially prohibited in the preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, where Hegel slyly ("with a slight alteration") rewrites the activist challenge in Aesop's fable of the braggart—"Here is Rhodes, leap here" (Hic Rhodus, hic saltus)—as an invitation to a dance: "Here is the rose, dance here" (Hic Rhodos, hic salta). Instead of overleaping its time with fantasies of regeneration, philosophy shuffles in place as it dabs its funereal gray on gray: it paints, overpaints, and silently defaces as it mourns its lost futures and its future losses, commemorating in advance a "shape of life that is old and cannot be rejuvenated."

Whether painting or dancing (curious aesthetic markers), philosophy functions as a memento mori, a reminder of transience both past and future, and as an *ars moriendi*, a preparation for transcendence. The dance is a *Totentanz*: it rehearses the passage from life to death, from mortal body to the eternity of spirit. It could thus be interpreted conservatively as a Christian drama of resurrection; *grisaille* would seem the perfect style in which to depict this allegorical transfiguration. Gray is what you get when

you mix black and white. It announces the triumph of the ideal: the convergence of the dusk of sensation with the dawn of inner illumination, physical blindness with spiritual insight—the sublime passage from sense to sense, from matter to meaning, from nature to spirit and back again. This is the standard "right wing" interpretation of Hegel at Berlin: resignation, accommodation, sublimation.

But a less affirmative reading is possible. Hegel had insisted that Mephistopheles was wrong to mock the senility of the intellect ("gray is all theory, my friends . . .") in his effort to tempt Faust with the alliterative golden-green fruit of immediacy (" . . . and green is the golden tree of life") (*PhG* §361). Mephisto is brandishing the "circus colors" of forced reconciliation—the shimmer of a life numb to its own suffering and cold to the failure on which it feeds.[34] Far from signaling a simple entropy or atrophy of possibilities, it is crepuscular gray, not glowing green or gold, that marks the chromatic opening to a new beginning; it is from the ashes of lost opportunity that Spirit quickens. The doubling of gray on gray marks the almost indiscernible interval between dusk and dawn, between one twilight and another, the point of indifference between one indifference point and another. Absolute knowing "reorients" the occidental movement of *translatio imperiii*. Turning evening into morning, it disturbs the westward course of empire—the "great day's work of Spirit"—by challenging the logic of inheritance that has until now underwritten the history of the victors. It arrests the solar trajectory of a history that has been naturalized in terms of an inexorable planetary rotation, politicized as the geographical migration of sovereign power, legitimized as the transmission of a cultural heritage. Philosophy positions itself in the lingering twilight that marks the aftermath of the ancien régime. It repeats the Revolution precisely in its refusal to inherit. To paint gray on gray is to mark the exhaustion of the present—a faded landscape in which there is nothing to take over and nothing to pass on: *translatio stultitiae*. This is what it means to mark modernity as an "unfinished project."

But what is the force of the repetition: what is the difference between ground and figure, and what is Hegel touching up with his brushstrokes? Why, by 1820, barely five years into the Restoration, and before the promised reforms have been introduced into the Prussian state apparatus, why

does Hegel find the edifice to be in need of a paint job, already crumbling before it has begun to stand? How did the scaffold of a state not yet under construction become in advance a ruin? The prefaces to the *Phenomenology* and to the *Philosophy of Right* present two sides of one dilemma. The gray on gray is the palimpsest of a present that must be read as an anachronism—both a stony tablet on which to write the epitaph for a state not yet in existence and a blank canvas on which to trace the vestige of an opportunity already past. The indiscernible gap between gray and gray marks the minimal interval in which the spectator can find a foothold for intervention. Repetition marks the formal difference separating the present from itself; it identifies the site where the subject's agency is both reflected and repelled. Hegel is starting to rehearse the antinomies of the modernist avant-garde. If the monochrome hints of the absoluteness of the tabula rasa—a utopian movement of transcendence, à la Malevich, at once an erasure of the past and the preparation of a new beginning—it is haunted also, Richter-like, by the deadly specter of tautology: the entropy, boredom, and flatness of serial, industrial reproduction, the repetition that announces the paralyzing anachronism of the present day.[35] In 1820, Hegel is beginning to explore the spectral logic that Marx will soon enough make unforgettable: shadows without bodies, phrases without content, history without events: "if any episode in history has been colored grey on grey, this is the one. Men and events appear as *Schlemihls* in reverse, as shadows that have lost their bodies."[36] In the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, the dappling of gray on gray announces an impossible mourning for a revolution that did not occur as such; the repetition speaks of the slide from original to copy, from uncle to nephew, from tragedy to farce. The "monochromatic formalism" pilloried by Hegel in the preface to the *Phenomenology* will haunt his later project like the night in which all cows (or cats, as the saying originally went) are gray (cf. *PhG* §16). The gray suggests the utopian blankness of forgiveness, but hints also of something darker; it points to an obliteration of missed opportunities and an effacement of unappeasable demands. The *Philosophy of Right* is in this respect as so many others an endless negotiation with the censors.

Setting aside the quaint details of what exactly Hegel claims to find in the newborn state, whose decrepitude he is so emphatically underscoring, we can pause to consider the strange temporality at work. The task of philosophy is to mark the anachronism of the present day. "Actualization"

(*Verwirklichung*) in this sense can mean nothing other than the *deactivation* of the existent and the reactivation and reenactment (in every sense) of the thwarted futures of the past. Actuality thus expresses precisely the pressure of the virtual: it opens history to the "no longer" of a blocked possibility and the persistence of an unachieved "not yet." An ungenerous reading might see in this virtualization a collapse into abstraction: a retreat to the safety zone of unrealizable potentials and securely buried ideals; Marx will famously accuse Hegel of the worst sort of *Entwirklichung*. A more generous reading might try to discern in this modal and temporal convolution something resembling the messianic structure of "hope in the past." By 1820, Hegel is on the verge of thinking the paradox that Marx himself will make famous, even if surely enough at Hegel's own expense: Germany is the only country to suffer a restoration without having endured its own proper revolution; it tastes freedom only vicariously and only once, on the day of its own funeral.[37] The Messiah comes the day after his own arrival; Germany is old before it has been born.[38] The *Philosophy of Right* reveals the Kafkaesque depth of Marx's witticism. This might almost be a subversive insight on Hegel's part.

"As if it had learned nothing . . ."

Despite Hegel's disconcerting silence about postrevolutionary political conditions, the *Phenomenology* does not exactly disavow the necessity of historical intervention. Hegel's silence can be heard as the breath drawn by the newborn epoch, mute, infant—both suffocated and inspired by the aborted possibilities of the most recent past. Hegel resumes the inaugural logic of romanticism: forgiveness is the imperative of a new beginning within the ruinous facticity of time. The circle of history closes. The task of *Sittlichkeit* had been to turn every "happening" (*Geschehen*) into an achievement: to interrupt the immediacy of natural becoming with the supplement of consciousness, thereby converting a contingent event (death, for example) into a result or product—something done, accomplished, or enacted (*Getanes*)—and confirming history (*Geschichte*) itself as a human artifact, a work of *Bildung* (*PhG* §452). The ethical domain was therefore coextensive with the domain of beauty: it conformed to the definition of the artwork. The task of the polis was to stage, to make publicly and permanently visible, the transition from nature to history, from event

to accomplishment, and thus to reveal the emergence of historical humanity from the contingency of natural becoming. The task of forgiveness is the opposite: it transforms the work into a happening, and the happening into a nonhappening—an event that need not have occurred. It undoes what was done (*Tat*). And it does or re-does what was not-done (*Un-tat*). By activating missed opportunities, it not only recalls what failed to happen, but also releases to a new future what had petrified into a static fact. It revisits the crime (*Untat*).

In its negativity, Spirit proves itself to be the "absolute master" (is Hegel talking about anything but the destructive energy of the death drive?): "[it] is lord and master over every deed and actuality and can cast them off and make them into something that never happened [alle Tat und Wirklichkeit abwerfen und ungeschehen machen]" (*PhG* §667). History (*Geschichte*) reverts into nonhistory and nonhappening (*Ungeschichte*, *Ungeschehen*), and the beautiful into the decidedly unbeautiful. Hegel is rapidly approaching Benjamin's idea of a "Messianic cessation of happening," the revolutionary caesura in which the locomotive course of history is arrested.

Although Hegel explicitly identifies in this caesura a reconciliation between humanity and divinity, he is not talking about a sacralization of the community. If the event has the radical novelty of a *creatio ex nihilo*, what he is revealing in this inaugural moment is rather something like a "de-creation"—an undoing or dismantling of actuality so as to release possibilities unconceivable in any present. The broken subject can no longer position itself as the creative origin of either itself or world. Spirit thus suspends the labor that had defined human history as the artisanal history of production and self-reproduction. The world ceases to present a mirror in which I can recognize the objectified imprint of my own activity. In breaking with this imaginary scenario, I submit to a "complete externalization" without return (*PhG* §671). It is not a question of recreating the past through the consoling prism of living form, a beautiful shape in which the spectator might take pleasure, like God before his own creation. The wounded subject encounters history as a rubble heap, in which he intervenes only through his own destructive disfiguration. In the end, the subject is no more a defined shape within the "series of *Gestalten*" than it retroactively shapes this experience (but this is not to say that it is simply shapeless). And the *Phenomenology* is not a Bildungsroman. This is

one way of understanding Hegel's infamous pronouncement of the "end of art." Philosophy does not transcend art by transcribing beautiful form into the shapely labor of the concept. It is rather the work's unworkability that philosophy commemorates; the task of thinking is to mark the fragile moment where the unforeseeable meets the immemorial—the point where sketch meets ruin. Absolute knowing is romanticism brought to its extreme. Forgiveness takes on the inaesthetic fate of romantic genius without seeking to embellish it.

There remains a vestige of the aesthetic in this non-aesthetic—a minimal, negative aesthetic that expresses itself as the barest fiction of the tabula rasa. In the final paragraph of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel stages a scene of radical disinheritance and self-divestiture. Spirit asserts its "supreme freedom and assurance," as it detaches from its own past in order to clear the slate for a "new existence": thus the controlled regression to a zero degree of knowledge, a moment of feigned amnesia regulated by the seemingly Kantian-style, analogical subjunctive of the "as if." "In the immediacy of this new existence, Spirit has to start afresh to bring itself to maturity as if, for it, all that preceded it were lost and it had learned nothing from the experience of the earlier Spirit [als ob alles Vorhergehende für ihn verloren wäre und er aus der Erfahrung der frühern Geister nichts gelernt hätte]" (*PhG* §808). The passage continues with the classic formula of fetishistic disavowal: "But recollection, the *Er-innerung* of that experience has preserved it and is the inner being and the higher form of the substance." All is not lost, or rather, loss itself is being refashioned as a spiritual acquisition, since what is being reactivated or "re-begun" is just the trauma of Spirit's own unmarked and strictly unremarkable beginning, the unrepeatable transition from natural to historical existence—the traumatic birth of freedom.

Forgetting is not opposed to the work of remembrance but proves here to be its most radical achievement: oblivion brings memory itself to a point beyond its own beginning. To forget, to undo the past, to make it all "un-happen," is precisely to remember a moment *before* it all happened, to undo the inexorability of fate by restaging the beginning, even if only in imagination and in proxy: to act *as if* we could take it over again, as if we could cast aside the legacy of dead generations, as if we could refuse the mourning work of cultural succession, as if we could cast off our patrimony, rewrite our origins, as if every moment, even those long vanished,

could become a radically new beginning—unprecedented, unrehearsed, unremembered.[39] This is why Freud will connect repetition with the death drive: the compulsion to repeat expresses a desire for inanimate existence and ultimately for nonexistence: it is the desire to return to a time before the beginning—to go back not for the sake of regressing but in order to take it over again, to do it otherwise. The desire for repetition is essentially the desire for difference. This is why Lacan will underline the link between the death drive and sublimation. It is only the encounter with death that clears the slate for a new beginning: every creation is an ex nihilo creation. We cut into the temporal order by dissolving the world as we find it. There is no beginning that is not already a repetition, no repetition that is not the retrieval of a beginning, no action that is not also the theatrical reenactment of an erasure. In this fiction lies the revolutionary promise of absolute knowing—at once its artifice, its hypocrisy, and its infinite undoing.

Absolute knowing ruins history at both its edges. History collapses into the transience of natural becoming even as it leaps toward the flash point of the event. History pushes simultaneously toward both extremes: at once the natural history of decay and the standstill at which the clock stops and the world unexpectedly begins again. The paradox is Pompeiian: forgiveness is at once the freezing of mythic transience and the melting of what is congealed. Transience (*Vergänglichkeit*), is usually stigmatized by Hegel as the index of irrecuperable ruination—the voracious regime of father Chronos, the relentless crumbling of empires, the vanishing of deeds without a trace. In the *Philosophy of History*, taking a cue from Volney, Hegel conjures up the spectacle of historical dilapidation: the panorama of the great ruins of empire provokes "the profoundest and most hopeless sadness," which seems to yield no consolatory result.[40] Hegel here mocks the romantic infatuation with ruins (another version of the romantic fragment) as an unphilosophical response to the tedium of natural becoming: it is the nostalgia that reduces history to a sterile cycle of generation, inducing a comfortable acedia before the empty continuum of time. History proper, says Hegel, begins with Zeus's defeat of father Chronos: it puts a brake on the destructive cycle of nature by imposing a freeze on transient desire. This is why Hegel determines history as political history: it is a history of production or *Bildung* dedicated to the manufacture of the ultimate "moral work"—the state.[41] History is defined by Olympian inhibition and

self-objectification—time crystallized in the monuments of the polis, the statue, the statute, and the stable institutions of the state. Tradition is therefore the product of slave delay: it is the transmission of the inedible fruit of experience to future generations. Philosophy lives on to tell the tale. Like the slave Scheherazade, it keeps forestalling death through nightly rituals of reminiscence; memory serves the project of infinite postponement.

The brake is off in what Derrida refers to (we now see how aptly) as Hegel's "rush towards reconciliation." Like the crumbling ruins of Carthage, the deed vanishes without a trace, the wounds heal without a scar. Erasure, not commemoration, is the last word of the *Phenomenology*—both its iconoclastic promise and its repressive blank. The blankness is ambiguous: it testifies both to the radical openness of the future and to the effacement of the missed opportunities of the past. "The history of the world," writes Hegel in an infamous passage in the *Philosophy of History*, "is not the theatre of happiness. Periods of happiness are blank pages; for they are periods of harmony, when the contradiction is missing"—or hiding, or not yet obvious, or ideologically occluded [*Perioden des fehlenden Gegensatzes*]."[42] Forgiveness activates these intervals of blankness: it allows us to read what never was written and threatens to conceal what is indelibly inscribed. And here the final ambiguity of Hegel's gamble comes to light.

"We, the masters . . ."

Hegel has relentlessly dismantled every attempt to displace or dissolve the traumatic rupture of the French Revolution within a spiritual, philosophical, or aesthetic upheaval. Political revolution can no longer be absorbed into the Copernican revolutions of Kant or Fichte, or into the various cultural revolutions projected from Schiller on. By 1806, not even the Reformation has the power to upstage or domesticate the trauma of the Revolution: Hegel's chapter on "morality," in the *Phenomenology*, presents a dreary catalogue of every possible variation of contemporary Protestant inwardness. Hegel is as unforgiving here as Marx: every retreat from politics to the freedom of moral self-consciousness rehearses the Stoic impasse, provokes the skeptical rejoinder, and culminates in a self-serving misery in which can be discerned a secret collusion with the existent. The beautiful soul is the caricature of every such posture. But the lesson goes both ways. Hegel not only exposes the stakes of every moral-

izing retreat into the aesthetic. (This is the easy part: the attempt to carve out an immaculate space of inwardness either masks a prior contamination or prepares a virgin zone for occupation.) But Hegel also forces a more challenging consideration: every attempt to purge politics of the aesthetic all too quickly becomes aesthetic when it appeals to the puritanism of dirty hands or to the purity of a praxis unperturbed by cultural mediation. There is no experience that is not already its own interpretation, no action that is not already its own representation, no revolution that is not already theater, spectacle, imitation.

Hegel in this way sets the stage for the endless debates rehearsed throughout the twentieth century between aesthetic autonomy and political engagement—Merleau-Ponty versus Sartre, Adorno versus practically everyone . . . (After May 1968, under the influence of Lacan, the figure of the *belle âme* would be imported into France, where it would find its place in fretful discussions of yet another abortive revolution.)[43] How to preserve a space of critical negativity without relinquishing the claim to practical engagement; how to engage without simply reproducing the conditions of the day; how to distinguish aesthetic dissonance, detachment, or disenchantment from disenfranchisement, abdication, and self-deception; how to distinguish commitment from an unthinking submission to the existent; how to steer a path between the bankruptcy of "forced reconciliation" and the false comforts of the "Grand Hotel Abyss"? The last formulation suggests that the choice might be an empty one: just as the activist embrace of immediacy can be a manic defense against the traumatic pressure of the missed opportunity, so too misery provides its own pacifications.

By the end of Hegel's life, this melancholy keeps threatening to overwhelm the historical understanding, and Hegel never ceases to denounce it—the easy slippage from lamentation (*Klage*) to accusation (*Anklage*) to delirious resignation (with a whiff of schadenfreude) before the gorgeous ruination of the past. Hegel describes the rancor of the historical spectator as a depression, a hypochondria, and ultimately as a hypocrisy (*PhR* §149). In the *Philosophy of History*, he will reactivate the theological vocabulary of the *Phenomenology*: historicist melancholia is the "rebellion [*Empörung*] of the good Spirit"[44]—the stiff-necked judgment that only confirms history's most tenacious grip. The moral valet resurfaces in the misshapen figure of Thersites (the beautiful soul reveals its ugly face

at last) railing against the stupidities of the leaders. Melancholia is here clearly identified as the deadly narcissism of the lived moment. Is there no escape from the unhappy consciousness?

Has Hegel overcome the German ideology only to reinstate it ? Spectatorship is reserved no longer for the disinterested neighbor but for the penitent survivor. Forgiveness is offered from the position of a damaged life—the broken heart—and eventually returns to it. But the trauma is ultimately inflicted by and on the historical observer. Despite Hegel's official tearing down of the fourth wall (the Kantian "curtain of appearances") at almost the very outset of the *Phenomenology*, the dramaturgical distinction between actor and spectator appears in the end to be as intractable as ever. The ultimate evil proves to be the beautiful morality that condemns evil. Moralism is not just one of the many catastrophes of history: it is the finest and most interesting disaster, the greatest danger from which grows the most exquisite saving. The privilege of judgment is reinstated in the gesture that abjures all judgment. Redemption remains an issue for the survivors. The hard-hearted judge displays both the victim's wounds and the stained hands of the perpetrator. In his unlived life—stiff-necked, tubercular, psychotic—coalesce the roles of victim, judge, and holy sinner.

Forgiveness makes no claim to speak on behalf of the victims of history: such ventriloquism would only reinstate the consolations of an unprocessed faith. But this does not preempt a more subtle form of identification in which the forgiving subject assumes as its own the accumulated transgressions of the Spirit. The ultimate offense becomes the refusal to communicate, and the final martyrdom the abandonment of and by the community. The French Revolution finally slips into place as one more item in a long list of abortive rebellions: the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit eclipses the Revolution, relativizes its casualties, and redeems its troubles. Having failed to be upstaged by Luther, by Kant, by Fichte, by Schiller, by Schlegel, by Novalis, by Hölderlin, and by so many unnamed others, the Terror is eventually absorbed into the spiritual dialectic of evil and forgiveness: from the slaughter bench of broken bodies to the Golgotha of unfinished works. With this last move Hegel also attempts to absorb the shock waves of the recent spectacle of inquisition and forced confession—faith's terrifying legacy to the Enlightenment, still operative

in the Terror and in the Thermidorian witch-hunt that continued to denounce it. In the exquisite formalism of this gesture the essential logic of the Terror is both interrupted and prolonged.

Hegel does not, then, or does not only reproduce the standard German response to the French Revolution: the well-traveled route from political revolution to moral regeneration and finally to aesthetic upheaval—the "revolution in poetic language" that marks the seemingly one-way street from modernity to aesthetic modernism. Not simply an observer, but not quite a fellow traveler, Hegel maps the itinerary from the uneasy distance of a survivor. This is less in order to simply repudiate the trajectory than to denaturalize it or make it strange—a kind of thought experiment that, pushed to its extreme, will destroy itself, together with every fantasy of immaculate perception. The moral view of the world will be the final phantasm Spirit must suffer and eventually relinquish.

If morality presents itself as the narrative successor to the Revolution, it is not because it either logically fulfils or historically supersedes it. Kant's critical venture *phenomenologically* succeeds the Revolution (which it *chronologically*, of course, anticipates) insofar as his text becomes legible only retroactively as a result of the event which it supposedly inspires. Benjamin's well-known remark on the belated legibility of texts is relevant. Catastrophe inflicts a posthumous shock upon the past in the light of which every artifact can be inflected as a document of horror: the past suddenly reveals itself to be a bursting archive of missed opportunities, aborted initiatives, and unrealized potentials. In this case it is critique itself, Kantian-style criticism, that undergoes its belated crisis. The Revolution inflicts on Kant's text a retroactive trauma.

Such a shock exposes the anachronism of the present—Hegel's immediate intellectual context, on which the chapter on "morality" provides a running commentary and critique. The literary allusions come fast and furious throughout the final section, and are frequently elusive, producing a collage of not always coherent or even identifiable citations; Hegel is aiming at a moving target. The quotations are unlike the obvious quotations from Sophocles in the *Sittlichkeit* section (the author was in no need of naming: the reference was as transparent as the ethical tautology it illustrated), just as they differ from the garbled lines from Diderot that Hegel

pastes into the section on self-alienated Spirit (the citation intruded with the abrasive foreignness of the wit it was illustrating). The citations at the chapter's end are, in contrast, obscure, episodic, and incoherently assembled; Hegel is collecting the *disjecta membra* of a present that is already distant from itself, but still too close for comfort. As in any modernist assemblage, the glue can be more visible than the scraps of paper. It is probably obvious but still needs stressing: Hegel is at his most "romantic" where he pillories Romanticism. The dismemberment he inflicts on the texts prolongs the violence he seeks to quarantine; his pastiche is an "anthology" worthy of the *Athenaeum*. Hegel mimes even as he mocks the agonistic sociability of the literary absolute—its combative energy, its utopian edge.

The history of Spirit has moved from the beautiful death of the hero to the heroic death of beauty; tragic catharsis has yielded to political purges, to obsessional rituals of purity, to perpetual re-beginnings, and to self-effacing erasures. We learn from suffering, even if at a distance and from a suffering that is not our own to suffer, and even if something like a learned ignorance is, in the end, at stake. It would be a great exaggeration to say that Hegel's overcoming of Kant and company makes good on the promise of the Revolution, or that he finally escapes the asceticism he so severely challenges. But with this last gesture, he reins back, if only for a moment, the chronic temptation to slide from a phenomenology of embodied freedom to a noumenology of the pure will. In this way Hegel returns thought to the order of experience, even if it is a question of a missed experience, a lapsed experience, or even, in the end, another's experience—an experience that came knocking, only to find that "we, the masters, were not home."[45]

REFERENCE MATTER

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Karl Marx, "Introduction to the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's* Philosophy of Right," in id., *Early Writings*, trans. T. B. Bottomore (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 45.

2. Ibid., p. 49.

3. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998), p. 65.

4. Heinrich Heine, "The Romantic School," in *The Romantic School and Other Writings*, ed. Jost Hermand and Robert Holub (New York: Continuum, 1985), p. 21. For an excellent exploration of the debates, see Warren Breckman, "Diagnosing the 'German Misery': Radicalism and the Problem of National Character, 1830 to 1848," in *Between Reform and Revolution: German Socialism and Communism from 1840 to 1990*, ed. David E. Barclay and Eric D. Weitz (New York: Berghahn Books, 1998), pp. 33–62.

5. Marx, "Introduction to the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's* Philosophy of Right," p. 45.

6. Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, trans. Neville and Stephen Plaice (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); cf. Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

7. Hegel, *VGP* 529; *PhH* 447.

8. See Jürgen Habermas, "Hegel's Critique of the French Revolution," in id., *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), p. 121.

CHAPTER 1: MISSED REVOLUTIONS: TRANSLATION, TRANSMISSION, TRAUMA

1. Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Über die Reinigung und Bereicherung der deutschen Sprache: dritter Versuch, welcher den von dem Königl. Preuß. Gelehrtenverein zu Berlin ausgesetzten Preis erhalten hat* (Braunschweig: Schulbuchhandlung, 1794).

2. Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Wörterbuch zur Erklärung und Verdeutschung der*

unserer Sprache aufgedrungenen fremden Ausdrücke. Ein Ergänzungsband zu Adelungs Wörterbücher (Grätz: F. X. Miller 1808–9). In the entry under "Revolution" (p. 218), Campe makes the same remark about velocities.

3. Martin Luther, *Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen* (1530), in id., *Werke*, 60 vols. (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883–1980), 30, pt. 2: 632–46.

4. G. W. F. Hegel, "The German Constitution" (1802), in id., *Political Writings*, ed. Laurence Dickey and H. B. Nisbet (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 6–7.

5. Samuel Pufendorf, *The Present State of Germany*, trans. Edmund Bohun (1696), ed. Michael Seidler (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2007).

6. Friedrich Karl von Moser, 1792 preface to *Von dem deutschen Nationalgeist* (1765), quoted by James Sheehan, *German History, 1770–1866* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 237.

7. Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (Braunschweig: Schulbuchhandlung, 1807), quoted by Hinrich Seeba, "*Trostgründe*: Cultural Nationalism and Historical Legitimation in Nineteenth-Century German Literary Histories," *Modern Language Quarterly* 64 (2003): 181–97. For Campe's letters from Paris, see Joachim Heinrich Campe, *Briefe aus Paris zur Zeit der Revolution geschrieben*, ed. Hans-Wolf Jäger (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1977).

8. The gendered opposition between mother tongue and fatherland is pervasive in Campe; for a similar problematic in Fichte, see David Martyn, "Borrowed Fatherland: Nationalism and Language Purism in Fichte's *Addresses to the German Nation*," *Germanic Review* 72 (1997): 303–15.

9. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Die Staatslehre* (1813), in id. *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte, 11 vols. (1845–46; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1965), 4: 436.

10. Fichte, *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1808), in id., *Sämmtliche Werke*, 7: 257–502

11. Fichte, "Beitrag zur Berichtigung der Urtheile des Publikums über die französische Revolution" (1793) in id., *Sämmtliche Werke*, 6: 257–502.

12. St. Jerome, "On the Art of Translation" (Letter 57 to Pammachius), in id., *The Satirical Letters of St. Jerome*, trans. Paul Carroll (Chicago: Gateway, 1957), p. 140; cf. Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, Bk. 2, §83, on "translation as a form of conquest."

13. For an account of the festivities surrounding Napoleon's transportation into Paris of plundered art trophies from his various campaigns, see Patricia Mainardi, "Assuring the Empire of the Future: The 1798 Fête de la Liberté," *Art Journal* 47 (1989): 155–63; Éduard Pommier, *L'art de la liberté: Doctrines et débats de la révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), pp. 397–466; Dominique Poulot, *Musée, nation, patrimoine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), pp. 215–27; Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 114–23; Dorothy Mackay Quinn, "The Art Confiscations of the Napoleonic Wars," *American His-*

torical Review 50 (1945): 443–45. In relation to the Roman *trionfi*, see Bruno Klein, "Napoleons Triumphbogen in Paris und der Wandel der offiziellen Kunstanschauung im Premier Empire," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 59 (1996): 244–69

14. Speech at exhibition of Belgian war booty in 1794, quoted by McLellan, *Inventing the Louvre*, p. 116.

15. For descriptions of the 1798 Fête de la Liberté, see Mainardi, "Assuring the Empire," and McLellan, *Inventing the Louvre*, pp. 121–23.

16. Werner Goez, *Translatio Imperii. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Geschichtsdenkens und der politischen Theorie im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1958); Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957); Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Late Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 24–30; Jacques LeGoff, *Medieval Civilization, 400–1500* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp. 165–74. See Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, pp. 409–31, for a description of the brightly colored clothes worn at the royal funeral pageants of the Middle Ages, as well as the feasts and visual effigies, designed to mediate the interregnum and to neutralize the event of mourning; see also Ralph Giesey, *The Royal Funeral Ceremony in Renaissance France* (Geneva: Droz, 1960) and Sergio Bertelli, *The King's Body: Sacred Rituals of Power in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, trans. R. Burr Litchfield (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), pp. 11–61. For some of the theological and metaphysical complexities of this perpetuity, see Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, pp. 273–450.

17. Cf. Samuel Klinger, "The German *Translatio* and the Gothic Revival," *Modern Philology* 45 (1947): 73–103.

18. Bishop Otto of Freising, one of the first to formalize the concept of *translatio imperii*, refers the scheme to the prophesy of the four empires in the book of Daniel. See Otto I, bishop of Freising, *The Two Cities: A Chronicle of Universal History to the Year 1146 A.D.*, trans. Charles Christopher Mierow, ed. Austin P. Evans and Charles Knapp (1928; New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

19. "When the pope could not subdue to his arbitrary will the Greeks and the emperor at Constantinople, who was the hereditary Roman emperor, he invented a little device to rob this emperor of his empire and his title, and to turn it over to the Germans, who at that time were warlike and of good repute. In so doing, the Romanists brought the power of the Roman Empire under their control so they could parcel it out themselves. . . . They have always abused our simplicity to serve their own arrogant and tyrannical designs. They call us crazy Germans for letting them make fools and monkeys of us as they please. . . . We carry the title of empire, but it is the pope who has our wealth, honor, body, life, soul, and all we possess. This is how they deceive the Germans and cheat us with tricks [*Szo sol man die Deutschen teuschen, und mit teuschen teuschen*]." Martin Luther, "An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation von des christlichen Standes Besserung" (1520), in id., *Werke*, 6: 462–63; trans. Charles Jacob as "To

the Christian Nobility of the German Nation Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate," in *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, 55 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1958–86), 44: 208–9.

20. Martin Luther, "An die Ratherren aller Städte deutsches Lands, daß sie christliche Schulen aufrichten und halten sollen" (1524), in id., *Werke*, 15: 32; trans. Albert Steinhaeuser as "To the Councilmen of all Cities in Germany that they establish and maintain Christian schools," in *Luther's Works*, 45: 352. On the complexities of Luther's relationship to the doctrine of *translatio imperii*, see Samuel Klinger, "The Gothic Revival and the German *Translatio*"; John Headley, *Luther's View of Church History* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 240–45; id., *Church, Empire and World The Quest for Universal Order, 1520–1640* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1997); Arno Seifert, *Der Rückzug der biblischen Prophetie von der neueren Geschichte. Studien zur Geschichte der Reichstheologie des frühneuzeitlichen deutschen Protestantismus* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1990).

21. Heinrich von Kleist, letter of October 24, 1806, quoted by Wolf Kittler in *A New History of German Literature*, ed. David Wellbery (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 506.

22. On the French Revolution as a natural disaster, see Friedrich Schlegel, "Athenæum Fragments" (1798), §424, in *KA* 2: 247; *EPW* 122 (flood, earthquake); Campe, *Briefe aus Paris zur Zeit der Revolution geschrieben* (flood); Georg Forster, "Pariser Umrisse," in id., *Werke* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1990), vol. 10, *Revolutionsschriften (1792–93)*, ed. Klaus-Georg Popp (hurricane, thunderbolt, flood); Ernst Moritz Arndt, *Geist der Zeit*, in id., *Werke* (Leipzig: K.F. Pfau, 1892-1909), vols. 8–11, 8: 290 and passim (earthquake, volcano, thunderstorm); Johann Gottfried Herder, *Briefe, die Fortschritte der Humanität betreffend* (1792 draft), in id., *Werke,* 10 vols., ed. Martin Bollacher et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1991), vol. 7 (Letters 13, 16, and 17) (shipwreck); Novalis, "Faith and Love" (1798), §21 (comet, meteor, flood, climate change), §11 (crashing mountain), in *Schriften* 2: 489–90; *EPW* 37, 40; Goethe, *Unterhaltungen Deutscher Ausgewanderten*, in id., *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Dieter Borchmeyer et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985), vol. 9, *Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung, Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, Unterhaltungen deutscher Ausgewanderten*, pp. 993–1114, passim (flood); id., letter to Schiller, March 9, 1802, in *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe*, ed. Emil Staiger (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1977), pp. 942–43 (waterfall, flood, raging torrent).

On the gendering of the Revolution (Medusal, Amazonic, castrating, hysterical, etc.) in different national contexts, see Neil Hertz, "Medusa's Head: Male Hysteria Under Political Pressure," in id., *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Jane Kromm, "Representations of Revolutionary Women in Political Caricature," in *The French Revolution Debate in English Literature and Culture*, ed. Lisa Crafton (London: Greenwood Press, 1997). For an analysis of German "male fantasies"

about revolutionary violence around 1800—feminine, cannibalistic, and barbaric (the invasion of Germany more or less coincided with the uprising of the slaves in Saint-Domingue, and provoked similar anxieties and depictions)—see Suzanne Zantop, "The French Revolution in the German Imagination," in *Representing the French Revolution: Literature, Historiography and Art*, ed. James A. W. Heffernan (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992), pp. 213–33. Compare Schiller's depiction of the bloodthirsty female marauders in "Das Lied von der Glocke." Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), has recently drawn attention to the elision of the Haitian revolution in German philosophical responses to the Revolution, particularly notable in Hegel. On French representations of revolutionary cannibalism, see Bronisław Baczko, *Comment sortir de la Terreur? Thermidor et la Révolution* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), pp. 264–77, Alain Corbin, *Le village des cannibals* (Paris: Aubier, 1990) (and see pp. 52–53 above).

On the Revolution as illness, see Novalis, *Political Aphorisms* (1798), §46, in *EPW* 53; Johann Wolfgang Goethe, "Reise der Söhne Megaprazons," in id., *Sämtliche Werke*, pt. 1, vol. 8, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers, Die Wahlverwandtschaften, Kleine Prosa Epen*, pp. 578–94 (and see p. 53 above). The association between revolution and cholera would become emphatic during the upheavals of 1830, 1848, and 1870; see Richard Evans, "Epidemics and Revolutions: Cholera in Nineteenth-Century Europe," *Past and Present* 120 (1988): 123–46 and Catherine Kudlick, *Cholera in Post-Revolutionary Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

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23. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), pp. 47–51.

24. Ibid.; cf. Reinhart Koselleck, "Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution," in id., *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1985), pp. 38–54; Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 204–223; H. Günther, "Revolution," in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. Joachim Ritter and Karlfried Gründer (Basel: Schwabe, 1971–), 8: 958–73.

25. Novalis, "Christianity or Europe" (1799), in *Schriften* 3: 510; *EPW* 64.

26. Ibid., in *Schriften* 3: 510; *EPW* 72.

27. Heine, *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, trans. Howard Pollack-Milgate, ed. Terry Pinkard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 78–79 and passim.

28. Fichte, letter to Jens Baggesen, 1789, in id., *Briefwechsel*, vol. 1: *Briefe 1775–1793*, ed. Reinhard Lauth and Hans Jacob, with Hans Gliwitzky and Manfred Zahn (1968; Stuttgart, 1970), p. 449.

29. Friedrich Schlegel, "Über die Unverständlichkeit" (1800), in *KA* 2: 366 ("eine vortreffliche Allegorie auf das System des transzendentalen Idealismus") and id., "Lessings Gedanken und Meinungen" (1804), in *KA* 3: 96.

30. Schlegel, "Athenæum Fragments," §451, in *KA* 2: 255.

31. Schlegel, "Philosophical Fragments" (1798), §1471, in *KA* 18: 315; *EPW* 165.

32. Ibid., §391, in *KA* 18: 227; *EPW* 163.

33. Ibid., §68, in *KA* 18: 330; *EPW* 166.

34. Schlegel, "Athenæum Fragments," §424, in *KA* 18: 247; *EPW* 122.

35. Novalis, "Christianity or Europe," in *Schriften* 3: 518; *EPW* 72.

36. Herder, *Letters on the Progress of Humanity* (1792), in id., *Philosophical Writings*, trans. Michael Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 366.

37. Novalis, "Pollen" (1797), §64, in *Schriften* 2: 437; *EPW* 20.

38. Cited by Sheehan, *German History,* p. 30. For the text of the Peace of Westphalia treaty, see http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/westphal.asp (accessed January 4, 2010), and see Scott Veitch, "The Legal Politics of Amnesty," in *Lethe's Law: Justice, Law and Ethics in Reconciliation,* ed. Emilios A. Christodoulidis and Scott Veitch (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2001), pp. 33–46.

39. *VPG* 491; *PhH* 411.

40. Cf. Lacan's discussion of Zeno's paradox in *Seminar XX: On Feminine Sexuality* (New York: Norton, 1998), p. 8; cf. Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

41. Schlegel, "Athenæum Fragments," §216, in *KA* 2: 198; *EPW* 118 (slightly modified).

42. Cf. Patricia Parker, "Preposterous Events," in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 186–213 .

43. Schlegel, "Lyceum Fragments," §75, in *KA* 2: 156; *Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments*, trans. and ed. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 152.

44. Schlegel, "Athenæum Fragments," §116, in *KA* 2: 182; *EPW* 116.

45. Freud uses the metaphor of philology in his letter to Fliess of December 6, 1896 (Freud, *SE,* 1: 233–39). See also Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, "Fantasme originaire, fantasmes des origines, origine du fantasme," *Les Temps modernes* 215 (1964): 1833–68; Laplanche, "Traumatisme, traduction, transfert et autres trans(es)," in id., *La révolution copernicienne inachevée: Travaux 1967–1992* (Paris: Aubier, 1992), pp. 255–72; and Samuel Weber, *The Legend of Freud* (1982; expanded ed., Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. 80–85.

CHAPTER 2: THE KANTIAN THEATER

1. Ak 7: 86; *CF* 303.

2. Ak 6: 320–21; *MM* 464–65.

3. Cf. Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1992), pp. 115–27. For an exceptionally interesting exploration of concepts of epigenesis and preformation in this period, see Helmut Müller-Sievers, *Self-Generation: Biology, Philosophy, and Literature Around 1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

4. Ak 7: 88, 85; *CF*, 304, 302.

5. Cf. the distinction in Kant between the "mechanical" and the "judicious" use of memory; the latter is explicitly integrative—a way of subsuming parts under wholes, as in Linnaean classification; see Ak 7: 182–85; *AP* 75–78.

6. Ak 5: 351–54; *CJ* §59, §§225–28.

7. Ak 7: 79, 89, 84; *CF* 297, 304, 301.

8. Kant repeatedly describes radical evil as indelible—see, e.g., Ak 6: 31; *RR*, p. 79: "ineradicable" (*nicht ausgerottet*); Ak 6: 37, 51; *RR* 83, 94: "inextirpable" (*nicht zu vertilgen, unvertilgbar*); Ak 6: 72; *RR* 112: "impossible to wipe out" (*nie auszulöschen*). The image of the *faule Fleck*, or foul stain (Ak 6: 38; *RR* 85), captures what is most enigmatic about radical evil—its formlessless or lack of "character" "[Radical evil] is really without character (since . . . it permits no lasting principle in itself" (Ak 7: 329; *AP* 234). This amorphousness is precisely what distinguishes radical from diabolical evil, where evil is elevated to a formal principle. See above, pp. 47–48.

9. Ak 6: 71–72; *RR* 112–13.

10. Ak 6: 41, 77; *RR* 87, 116.

11. Ak 6: 135; *RR* 162; cf. Ak 8: 379; *PP* 357.

12. Ak 5: 31; *CPrR* 164, and Ak 5: 468; *CJ* §91. The revolutionary event is similarly described as a *Factum* in an earlier draft of *CF* (Ak 19: 604); see Peter Fenves, *A Peculiar Fate: Metaphysics and World-History in Kant* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 218–220, on the complexities of the "fact" in practical reason.

13. Ak 7: 91; *CF* 306. For examples of moral indelibility, see Ak 5:274; *CJ* 156 ("the unmistakable and inextinguishable [*unauslöschliche*] idea of morality"; Ak 6: 45; *RR* 90 ("a germ that cannot be extirpated [*vertilgt*] nor corrupted [*verderbt*]"); Ak 6: 28; *RR* 76 ("the moral disposition cannot be extirpated ([*vertilgen*]"); Ak 6: 35; *RR* 82 ("[not] as if reason could extirpate [*vertilgen*] within itself the dignity of the law itself"); Ak 6: 144; *RR* 169 ("indelible respect [*unauslöschliche Achtung*] for this law which lies within him"); Ak 8: 380; *PP* 346 ("the moral principle never dies out [*erlöscht nie*]").

14. The instantaneity of moral decision—the agent is "certain on the spot what he has to do" (Ak 8: 287; *TP* 288)—is grounded in the timeless punctuality of the categorical imperative: "Act so the maxim of your will could hold *every time at the same time* [jederzeit zugleich] as a principle of universal legislation" (Ak 5: 30; *CPrR* 164).

15. See Martin Heidegger, "Die Zeit des Weltbildes," in id., *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2003), pp. 75–114. On Hegel's critique of the moral world view, see *PhG* §§599–615 and chapter 4 above.

16. Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757; London: Penguin Books, 1998). E. J. Clery connects this self-affirmation to a crisis of confidence in the British military in the mid-eighteenth century and the subsequent promotion of the citizen's militia as symbolic moral supplement—national potency put in reserve and on parade; see "The Pleasure of Terror: Paradox in Edmund Burke's Theory of the Sublime," in *Pleasure in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts (New York: New York University Press, 1996). There is a parallel in Kant's remark on the sublime profit furnished by the spectacle of the warrior. On some of the gender issues involved in Burke's aesthetics of the sublime in relation to his later discussion of the French Revolution, see Linda Zerilli, "Text/Woman as Spectacle: Edmund Burke's 'French Revolution,'" in *The Eighteenth Century* 33 (1992): 47–72.

17. Hence the thuggish reaction of the Savoyard peasant, who lacks the cultural wherewithal to draw moral profit from the scenery: "In fact, without the development of moral ideas, that which we, prepared by culture, call sublime will appear merely repellent to the unrefined person. He will see in the proofs of the dominion of nature given by its destructiveness and in the enormous measure of its power, against which his own vanishes away to nothing, only the distress, danger, and need that would surround the person who was banished thereto. Thus the good and otherwise sensible Savoyard peasant (as Herr de Saussure relates) had no hesitation in calling all devotees of the icy mountains fools" (Ak 5: 265; *CJ* §29). The judgment of beauty involves similar constraints. "Everyone says that hunger is the best cook, and people with a healthy appetite relish everything that is edible at all. . . . Only when the need is satisfied can we tell who among the multitude has taste or does not" (Ak 5: 210; *CJ* §5, slightly modified). Implicit is a historicization of aesthetic experience and a social critique of institutions, which the *Critique of Judgment* does not, however, proceed to deliver.

18. Ak 5: 273; *CJ* §29, p. 155; and cf. Ak 6: 182–84; *RR* 200–202.

19. "Wir haben die Ursache unter unsern Füßen." Kant, "Fortgesetzte Betrachtung der seit einiger Zeit wahrgenommenen Erderschütterungen," in Ak 1: 463–72, at p. 469. This is the last of three newspapers articles Kant wrote in 1756 on the Lisbon earthquake. (See also id., "Von den Ursachen der Erderschütterungen bei Gelegenheit des Unglücks, welches die westliche Länder von Europa gegen das Ende des vorigen Jahres betroffen hat," in Ak 1: 417–28, and "Geschichte und Naturbeschreibung der merkwürdigsten Vorfälle des Erdbebens, welches an dem Ende des 1755sten Jahres einen großen Theil der Erde erschüttert hat," in Ak 1: 429–62.)

20. Ak 8: 304; *TP* 302. Kant had defended freedom of expression in his 1784 essay on Enlightenment; see "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?" in

Ak 8: 33–42; "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" in id., *Practical Philosophy*, pp. 17–22. In 1786, he spoke of freedom of the press as "the last treasure remaining to us amid all civil burdens" ("Was heißt: sich im Denken orientieren?" in Ak 8: 144; "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?" in id., *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and ed. Allen Wood and George di Giovanni [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996]). This freedom was put to the test upon the publication of *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* in 1793, for which Kant received royal censure; for the details, and Kant's response, see Allen Wood's introduction to *Religion and Rational Theology*, pp. xx–xiv and 42–50.

21. Ak 7: 85; *CF* 302. For Fichte, the print medium facilitates the anonymous rapport essential to an egalitarian *Publikum*—"the most intimate means of connecting spirit with spirit." See Anthony La Vopa, *Fichte: The Self and the Calling of Philosophy, 1762–1799* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). This is the point behind Hegel's comparison, in an often-quoted fragment, between reading the morning newspaper and saying the morning prayer. (Hegel, "Aphorismen aus Hegels Wastebook" [1803–06], in id., *Werke* 2: 547.) This collective isolation is what defines the secular congregation: the ritual is performed in privacy, but by everyone and always at the same time.

22. Daniel Purdy makes this argument in *The Tyranny of Elegance: Consumer Cosmopolitanism in the Era of Goethe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

23. Eckhart Hellmuth and Wolfgang Piereth, "Germany, 1760–1816," in *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760–1820*, ed. Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Eduardo Tortarola, "Censorship and the Conception of the Public in Eighteenth Century Germany," in *Shifting the Boundaries: Transformation of the Languages of Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Dario Castiglione and Lesley Sharpe (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1995), pp. 131–50. This relative lack of surveillance created opportunities for "extraterritorial" publications of French radical literature that could then be imported back into France, as Elizabeth Eisenstein has shown in *Grub Street Abroad: Aspects of the French Cosmopolitan Press from the Age of Louis XIV to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). Allen Wood has shown that Kant deliberately did not exploit this situation, rejecting J. E. Biester's suggestion that he circumvent the Berlin censorship by publishing the *Religion* outside Prussia; see Wood, introduction to Kant, *Religion and Rational Theology*, p. 45.

24. The literature on the "reading revolution" in eighteenth-century Germany is voluminous, largely in the wake of Jürgen Habermas's *Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (1962), trans. Thomas Bürger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989). The term "reading revolution" was coined by Rolf Engelsing, *Der Bürger als Leser: Lesergeschichte in Deutschland, 1500–1800* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1974), who

also distinguished between "extensive" and "intensive" practices (see pp. 182–215); see also Reinhard Wittmann, "Was There a Reading Revolution at the End of the Eighteenth Century?" in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), pp. 284–312; T. C. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe, 1660–1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Friedrich A. Kittler, *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990); and Martha Woodmansee, *The Author, Art and the Market: Reading the History of Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994). On the furniture revolution in eighteenth-century Germany and changing images of the reader's body, see Erich Schön, "Mentalitätsgeschichte des Leseglücks," in *Leseglück: Eine vergessene Erfahrung?* ed. Alfred Bellebaum and Ludwig Muth (Darmstadt: Westdeutsche Verlag, 1996), pp. 151–76.

25. Ak 7: 85; *CF* 302.

26. The French Revolution is the singular event that achieves universality in the exegetical reaction of the observer. This corresponds to the way Kant characterizes reflective judgment in the third *Critique*. The ability to respond to disenchanted nature as if it were significant text, to find in beauty, for example, the "cipher [*Chiffreschrift*] by means of which nature . . . speaks to us," is the "mark [*Kennzeichen*] of a good soul" and the "sign [*Zeichen*] of a good moral character [*Charakter*]" (Ak 5: 301; *CJ* §42). By reading the natural world we render ourselves legible, marking and remarking on our own powers of discernment. This opens up a potential infinite regress of signifiers: what is the sign of a "character" if not the sign of a sign? I shall return to the question of moral character. On the motif of reading in the third *Critique*, see Rudolf Makreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

27. See Samuel Weber's rich exploration of "communic*ability*" [*Mitteil* barkeit] in *Benjamin's "-abilities"* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

28. Kant uses the term *Eräugnen* in an early draft of the essay; see Fenves, *Peculiar Fate*, pp. 245–54.

29. There is a second agenda in Kant's argument: the need to extract the *spirit* of republicanism from the *letter* of democracy with which, in France, it has been conflated. Due to the geographical dispersal of the Germans, Kant claims, a monarchic constitution is their best defense against powerful neighbors—the shortest way to the enduring peace that is the ultimate aim of republican existence(Ak 7: 86n; *CF* 302n). This is not merely a pragmatic argument. Kant's republican defense of monarchy is theoretically grounded in a categorical distinction between *formae imperii* (forms of sovereignty: autocracy, aristocracy, democracy) and *formae regiminis* (forms of governance: republicanism, despotism)—a distinction tied to the opposition between letter and spirit (Ak 6: 340; *MM* 480). The distinction allows Kant to defend the principle of monarchical rule while unequivocally embracing republicanism as a regulative ideal. A state can be repub-

lican—"at least according to its Idea," "potentially," "in spirit," or "by analogy"—while being governed autocratically. "To *rule* [herrschen] autocratically and yet at the same time to *govern* [*regieren*] in a republican manner, that is, in the spirit of republicanism and by analogy with it—that is what makes a nation satisfied with its constitution" (Ak 7: 87; *CF* 303; cf. Ak 7: 86; *CF* 302 and Ak 8: 353; *PP* 325). The distinction between sovereignty and governance is drawn most sharply in "Perpetual Peace," where Kant assigns to republicanism its minimal definition as a constitutional separation of executive and legislative powers, an asymptotic ideal to which all states must gradually progress. Kant takes democracy, which he identifies with direct democracy, to be the form of sovereignty least compatible with republicanism, inherently despotic in that it collapses the minimal space of representation in which republican distinctions can be secured: "Everyone wants to be ruler." Kant goes on describe this form of sovereignty, *forma imperii*, as a nonform, "strictly speaking formless" (*eigentlich eine Unform*) (Ak 8: 352; *PP* 324).

30. Ak 6: 342; *MM* 481. In his unpublished *Reflexionen* on the *Rechtslehre*, Kant supplies a metaphysical argument for this claim. According to the logic of political sovereignty in France, as Kant presents it here, the king is not a member or "part" of the social totality he represents (unlike the English "king in Parliament," *primus inter pares*): as its deputy or placeholder (*Stellvertreter*), he can have no place in the presence of this totality. "He becomes nothing once he lets the whole represent itself, since he is only its representative or placeholder, and forms no part of it" (Ak 19: 595). King and people cannot logically coexist in a common space and time. The king's convocation of the États généraux in 1789 (the first time they had been summoned since 1614) would by this reasoning already be tantamount to abdication.

31. Ak 6: 340; *MM* 480.

32. Ak 6: 321n; *MM* 464–65.

33. Kant's main discussions of the right to rebel are in "Theory and Practice" at Ak 8: 297–304; *TP* 296–302, "Perpetual Peace" at Ak 8: 382–82; *PP* 347–48, and *Metaphysics of Morals* at Ak 6: 318–23; *MM* 461–46.

34. Ak 6: 323; *MM* 465. See Domenico Losurdo, *L'autocensure et compromis dans la pensée politique de Kant*, trans. Jean-Michel Buée (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1993), p. 116.

35. "The human being (even the worst) does not repudiate the law, whatever his maxims, in rebellious attitude (by revoking obedience to it). The law rather imposes itself on him irresistibly because of his moral disposition" (Ak 6: 35; *RR* 82)

36. In the *Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant explicitly draws the connection to the primal scene of childbirth: "The same goes for political creations as for the creation of the world; no human was present there, nor could he have been present at such an event, since he must have been his own creator otherwise" (Ak 7: 92n; *CF* 307n). This is one reason why the "parricide" always threatens to turn into a "suicide" (Ak 6: 320, 322n; *MM* 463, 464n). See Susan Shell's stimulating discussion

of the motif of self-birthing in Kant (and Herder's critique) in *The Embodiment of Reason: Kant on Spirit, Generation, and Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

37. Alain Renaut and Jacob Rogozinski argue that Kant uses this argument to accommodate the king's trial, the latter seeing in this accommodation a basic lack of intellectual fortitude. See Renaut, "The King's Trial," in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, ed. Keith Michael Baker, 3 vols. (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1990); Rogozinski, "Un crime inexpiable (Kant et le régicide)," *Rue Descartes* 4 (April 1992): 99–120, and id., "It Makes Us Wrong: Kant and Radical Evil," in *Radical Evil*, ed. Joan Copjec (New York: Verso, 1996), pp. 29–45.

38. Ak 6: 341; *MM* 481–82.

39. Cf. Alenka Zupančič, "Kant with Don Juan and Sade," in *Radical Evil*, ed., Joan Copjec, pp. 122–23.

40. Maximilien Robespierre, speech of December 3, 1792, in Michael Walzer, *Régicide et révolution: Le procès de Louis XVI suivi par discours au procès de Louis XVI* (Paris: Payot, 1989), p. 222. The legal status of the trial was at the heart of the dispute between Condorcet, who insisted on due process, and Robespierre and Saint-Just, who did not shrink from renouncing legality on both theoretical and practical grounds. See the debate between Michael Walzer, introduction to *Regicide et révolution*, and Ferenc Fehér, "Revolutionary Justice," in Fehér, *The Frozen Revolution: An Essay on Jacobinism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 97–112; see also Walzer, "The King's Trial and the Political Culture of the French Revolution," in *The Political Culture of the French Revolution*, ed. Colin Lucas, vol. 2 (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1988). See also Marie-Hélène Huet's very perceptive remarks on the conceptual quandaries raised by the king's trial in id., *Rehearsing the Revolution: The Staging of Marat's Death, 1793-1797* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982)

41. Robespierre, speech of December 3, 1792, in Walzer, *Régicide et Révolution*, p. 219.

42. Robespierre, speech of November 5, 1792, in id., *Pour le bonheur et pour la liberté. Discours*, ed. Yannick Bosc, Florence Gauthier and Sophie Wahnich (Paris: Fabrique-éditions, 2000), p. 164.

43. Louis Antoine de Saint-Just, speech of November 13, 1792, in Walzer, *Régicide et revolution*, p. 207.

44. Robespierre, "Sur les principes de morale politique qui doivent guider la Convention nationale dans l'administration de la République," speech of 18 Pluviose, Year II (February 5, 1794), in id., *Pour le bonheur et pour la liberté*, p. 296.

45. Mona Ozouf, "Régénération," in *Dictionnaire critique de la Revolution française*, ed. François Furet and Mona Ozouf (Paris: Flammarion, 1988).

46. Ak 6: 35–37; *RR* 82–84.

47. Gilles Deleuze, *Coldness and Cruelty,* trans. Jean McNeil (New York: Zone Books, 1991), p. 82.

48. See Walter Benjamin's 1934 correspondence with Gershom Scholem on Kafka, in Benjamin and Scholem, *Briefwechsel 1933–1940* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980); Giorgio Agamben develops Scholem's phrase "Geltung ohne Bedeutung" (letter of Sept 20, 1934) in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 49–62.

49. This is the reproach of Rogozinski, "Un crime inexpiable," Zupančič, "Kant with Don Juan and Sade," and Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do* (New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 206–9.

50. Ak 7: 229, 295; *AP* 124, 194; cf. Ak 6: 47–48; *RR* 92.

51. "Wanting to become a better person in a fragmentary way is a futile endeavor, since one impression dies out while one works on another; the grounding of character, however, is absolute unity of the inner principle of conduct as such" (Ak 7: 292; *AP* 194).

52. Ak 7: 294; *AP* 194.

53. Kant, "Collegentwürfe aus den 80er Jahren," in Ak 15: 867–68.

54. Ak 7: 294; *AP* 194.

55. Cf. Ak 7: 85, 53; *CF* 302, 276.

56. See Ian Balfour, "The Sublime of the Nation," in id., *The Language of the Sublime* (forthcoming).

57. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977).

58. On popular entertainments and decorative art during the Terror, see Daniel Arasse, *La guillotine et l'imaginaire de la terreur* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987), and Daniel Guerould, *Guillotine: Its Legend and Lore* (New York: Blast Books, 1992), pp. 27ff. On decapitation as a fashion theme, see Ronald Schechter, "Gothic Thermidor: The Bals des victimes, the Fantastic, and the Production of Historical Knowledge in Post-Terror France," in *Representations* 61 (1998): 78-94," and as a formal contribution to painting, Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, *Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David After the Terror* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1999). For new media technologies representing the "marvels" of the guillotine, see Laurent Mannoni, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archaeology of the Cinema* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2000), pp. 98–103.

59. Arasse, *La guillotine*, p. 141; Restif de la Bretonne, quoted by Guerould, *Guillotine*, p. 65.

60. See Jean Paul Marat, *L'Ami du Peuple* 314 (December 18, 1790), in id., *Oeuvres*, ed. A. Vermorel (Paris: Décembre-Alonier, 1869), p. 155; Camille Desmoulins quoted by Arasse, *La guillotine*, p. 138. The ambivalence about spectatorship, palpable throughout the revolutionary years, is evident in the constant changes of locations for the guillotine and its gradual withdrawal from the public gaze. Between 1791 and 1794, the guillotine was moved eight times, and during the Restoration, "for humanitarian reasons," it was installed near a prison at the outskirts of the city. The uneasiness would continue through the next two centuries; in 1939, after a notorious photograph of an execution was published, the Ministry of

Justice banned all spectators from executions. Cf. Albert Camus, "Reflections on the Guillotine," in id., *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death* (New York: Knopf, 1969): "Today, there is no spectacle . . ." (p. 137).

61. Jules Michelet, *Histoire de la révolution française*, 2 vols. (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1979), 2: 177. For Michelet, it was the mercilessness of the king's trial that planted the seeds of the Restoration by unleashing a torrent of popular sympathy that would acquire the aura of sacral forgiveness: denied clemency, Louis would be "resuscitated by the force of pity and the virtue of blood" (ibid., 262). Susan Dunn analyzes this dialectic in *The Deaths of Louis XVI: Regicide and the French Political Imagination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

62. Victor Hugo, "Le Verso de la page" (1857); cf. also Hugo's poem "La pitié suprême."

63. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1990).

64. Konrad Engelbert Oelsner, "Historische Briefe über die Begebenheiten in Paris," *Minerva*, August 14, 1792, pp. 518–22. Both conservative and liberal journals featured graphic accounts of cannibalism. For the importance of *Minerva* in shaping German liberal attitudes to the French Revolution, see Thomas P. Saine, *Black Bread—White Bread: German Intellectuals and the French Revolution* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1988), and for its importance to Hegel, Jacques d'Hondt, *Hegel secret: Recherches sur les sources cachés de la pensée de Hegel* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1968). Hegel's characterization of the boredom or "flatness" of the Terror (we shall come to this) is even more arresting in light of the pervasive sensationalism of the media: is "flatness" a defense against fascination, or does pornography serve to distract from *horror vacui*?

65. See p. 161 n. 22 above. Reports of cannibalism are ubiquitous in French counterrevolutionary and Thermidorian reportage. See, e.g., Louis-Marie Prudhomme, *Histoire générale et impartiale des erreurs, des fautes et des crimes commis pendant la Révolution française* . . . cited at length in Joseph Zizek's illuminating article "'Plume de Fer': Louis-Marie Prudhomme writes the Revolution," *French Historical Studies* 26 (2003): 619–660. Many have observed the symmetry between the counterrevolutionary figure of the terrorist *mangeurs du roi* and the revolutionary image of the royalist *buveurs de sang*. See Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 107–10, and Bronisław Baczko, *Comment sortir de la Terreur? Thermidor et la Révolution* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989).

66. Fichte, "Zurückforderung der Denkfreiheit von den Fürsten Europas, die sie bisher unterdrückten," in id., *Sämmtliche Werke*, 6: 3–35.

67. Friedrich Klopstock, "Schreiben Klopstocks an den französischen Minister Roland," *Minerva* 5 (1793): 13.

68. See Jacques Derrida, *Voyous* (Paris: Galilée, 2003), and "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicide," in *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen*

Habermas and Jacques Derrida, ed. Giovanna Borradori (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), pp. 85–136.

69. Goethe, "Die Reise der Söhne Megaprazons." Andreas Gailus has an interesting discussion of this story in his *Passions of the Sign: Revolution and Language in Kant, Goethe, and Kleist* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), pp. 86–88.

70. Friedrich Gentz, introduction to his translation of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), *Betrachtungen über die französische Revolution*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Friedrich Vieweg dem Älteren, 1793), 1: 3–4.

71. Ibid. See Steven Lestition, "Kant and the End of Enlightenment in Prussia," *Journal of Modern History* 65 (1993): 57–112, at pp. 93–94. For a conservative attack on Kantian *Publizität* as a contagious incitement to social unrest, see Johann Georg Heinzmann, *Appell an meine Nation: Über die Pest der deutsche Literatur* (Bern, 1795), p. 53: "The truly enlightened public among whom true virtue, true morals, and probity rules, is certainly not the so-called reading public"; quoted in John Christian Lauritsen, "The Subversive Kant: The Vocabulary of 'Public' and 'Publicity,'" *Political Theory* 14 (1986): 584–603, at p. 596; see also La Vopa, *Fichte* (see p. 165 n. 21 above), pp. 274–83.

CHAPTER 3: THE CORPSE OF FAITH

1. *PhH* 453; *VPG* 535; cf. *Enz* 3: 360; *PhM*, §552, p. 287.

2. For a useful account, see Thomas Saine, "A Peculiar German View of the French Revolution: The Revolution as German Reformation," in *Aufnahme-Weitergabe: Literarische Impulse um Lessing und Goethe*, ed. John A. McCarthy and Albert A. Kipa (Hamburg: Helmut Buske, 1982).

3. For a survey of royalist interpretations during the Restoration of the Revolution's Protestant predilections, see Helena Rosenblatt, *Liberal Values: Benjamin Constant and the Politics of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). There is a similar line of argument in the German anti-revolutionary tradition (e.g., in Novalis and Görres). But political allegiance does not uniformly line with confessional preference; a powerful tradition of radical socialist French Catholic historians, from Philippe Buchez to Louis Blanc, for example, links the Revolution's most profound achievement to the Catholic-style communitarian spirit of the Jacobin dictatorship (the "fraternity" period), and its failure to the seeds of bourgeois—if not indeed "aristocratic federalist" (Buchez)—individualism planted by its early Protestant-style beginnings (the "liberty" period). Hugues de Lamennais, for his part, was able to adapt his version of Catholicism to accommodate a range of diverse political orientations, from royalist to liberal-democratic. On some of the political ambiguities of the post-Revolutionary French Catholic tradition, see Bernard Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition: Aspects of Catholic Thought in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), and

also Pierre Rosanvallon, *The Demands of Liberty: Civil Society in France Since the Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 145–46.

4. Germaine de Staël-Holstein, *Des circonstances actuelles qui peuvent terminer la Révolution et des principes qui doivent fonder la République en France* (1798), ed. Lucia Omacini (Geneva: Droz, 1979), p. 33. Cf. id., *Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française* (1818; Paris: Tallandier, 1983).

5. Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, 2: 615–16.

6. See Dale van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560–1791* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), Catherine Maire, *De la cause de Dieu à la cause de la nation: Le jansénisme au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998), and William Doyle, *Jansenism: Catholic Resistance to Authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

7. Edgar Quinet, *La Révolution* (Paris: Lacroix & Verboekhoeven, 1865), 1: 248.

8. Ibid., 2: 593–94.

9. Ibid., 2: 147. See Paul Viallaneix, "Réformation et révolution," in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, vol. 3: *The Transformation of Political Culture, 1789–1848*, ed. François Furet and Mona Ozouf (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989); Claude Lefort, "Quinet and the Revolution That Failed," in id., *Democracy and Political Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989). For a general account of the Protestant impulse in Orléanist French liberalism, see George Armstrong Kelly, *The Humane Comedy: Constant, Tocqueville, and French Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and Rosenblatt, *Liberal Values.* There is a similar impulse in nineteenth-century British liberal historiography of the French Revolution; see, e.g., William Hazlitt, whose formulation almost directly echoes Hegel's, in *The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte* (1828; Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1875), 1: 68: "Perhaps a reformation in religion ought always to precede a revolution in the government. Catholics make good subjects, but bad rebels. They are so used to the trammels of authority that they do not immediately know how to do without them; or, like manumitted slaves, only feel assured of their liberty in committing some Saturnalian license. A revolution, to give it stability and soundness, should first be conducted down to a Protestant ground." See Seamus Deane's excellent discussion in *The French Revolution and Enlightenment in England, 1789–1832* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

10. "The literature on German philhellenism is vast; for a good general account of Hegel's own relationship to this in the context of his immediate intellectual milieu, see Georg Lukács, *The Young Hegel: Studies in the Relations Between Dialectics and Economics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1975); Jacques Taminiaux, *La nostalgie de la Grèce à l'aube de l'idéalisme allemand: Kant et les Grecs dans l'itinéraire de Schiller, de Hölderlin et de Hegel* (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967); Bernard Yack, *The Longing for Total Revolution: Philosophical Sources of Social Discontent from Rousseau to Kant and Nietzsche* (Berkeley: Uni-

versity of California Press, 1972); Dennis Schmidt, *On Germans and other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

11. *VPG* 384; *PhH* 317.

12. On the overdetermined sense of "Person" in this passage, see Robert Bernasconi, "Persons and Masks: The *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Its Laws," *Cardozo Law Review* 10 (1989): 325–46.

13. Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989).

14. Cf. Dominique Poulot, *Musée, nation, patrimoine, 1789–1815* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997).

15. Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, 2: 803. See also Ozouf, *Fête révolutionnaire*; Marie-Hélène Huet, *Mourning Glory: The Will of the French Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); and François-Alphonse Aulard, *Le culte de la raison et de l'être supreme* (1892; Paris: Alcan, 1909).

16. See Erika Naginski, "The Object of Contempt," *Yale French Studies* 101 (2002): 32–53. See also Louis Réau, *Histoire du vandalisme: Les monuments détruits de l'art français* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1994); Dario Gamboni, *The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism Since the French Revolution* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997); and Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class.*

17. Jonathan P. Ribner, *Broken Tablets: The Cult of the Law in French Art from David to Delacroix* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). A copy of the decree as well as images of the mutilated objects can be viewed on the web site of the Archives nationales, www.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr (accessed May 21, 2010).

18. The association of Enlightenment with disease, frequent in the eighteenth century, was used ironically by Enlightenment thinkers (and against them) in relation to the panic epidemic of superstition. See D'Holbach, *System of Nature*, p. 332; Voltaire, *Dictionnaire philosophique,* s.v. "Religion." Cf. Pierre Saint-Amand, *The Laws of Hostility: Politics, Violence and the Enlightenment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

19. Hegel cites Schiller's poem "Die Freundschaft" from memory, with subtle modification: while the poet reduces religion to an image, the philosopher raises the image to thought. I discuss this passage in "Hegel's Last Words: Mourning and Melancholia at the End of the *Phenomenology*" (forthcoming).

20. *PhG* §551, §555, §556, §565, §580. Hegel describes faith's own relation to the object in similar terms as a *Verleugnung.*

21. *PhG* §551, §563 (*Verkehrung*).

22. *PhG* §565, §579.

23. *PhG* §567, §571.

24. *PhG* §564, §568, §575.

25. Faith is described as a *dumpfes Weben* (*PhG* §573, §574)—an activity also attributed both to matter (§577, §578) and to insight (§546).

26. Alain Badiou, *Abrégé de métapolique* (Paris: Seuil, 1998).

27. On these tensions in the Declaration in relation to unresolved religious tensions within French political culture, see J. K. Wright, "National Sovereignty and the General Will," and Keith Michael Baker, "The Idea of a Declaration of Rights," in *The French Idea of Freedom: The Old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789*, ed. Dale van Kley (Stanford:, Stanford University Press, 1994).

28. For the last six examples (and several more), see Carla Hesse, "The Law of the Terror," *Modern Language Notes* 114 (1999): 702–18. The other examples are drawn from the Law of Suspects (September 17, 1793) and the decree of October 10, 1793; the texts of both are included in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, vol. 4: *The Terror,* ed. Keith Michael Baker (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1994).

29. Robespierre, speech of October 1792, quoted by Geoffrey Cubitt, "Robespierre and Conspiracy Theories," in *Robespierre*, ed. Colin Haydon and William Doyle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 78.

30. Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class,* p. 42. For some of these continuities, see Geoffrey Cubitt, *The Jesuit Myth: Conspiracy Theory and Politics in Nineteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), and Arno Mayer, *The Furies: Violence and Terror in the French and Russian Revolutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

31. Brissot, speech to the Jacobin Club, December 12, 1791, quoted by Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, p. 66.

32. Timothy Tackett, "Conspiracy Obsession in a Time of Revolution: French Elites and the Origins of the Terror, 1789-1792," *American Historical Review* 105 (2000): 691–713.

33. Michel Foucault explores this reversal of Clausewitz's formula in *"Il faut défendre la société": Cours au Collège de France, 1975–1976* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997). The militarization of politics during the Terror is discussed by Patrice Gueniffey, *La politique de la Terreur: Essai sur la violence révolutionnaire, 1789–1794* (Paris: Fayard, 2000), and Carol Blum, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986).

34. Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, 2: 616.

35. The examples are gathered from Arasse, *La guillotine*; Guerould, *Guillotine*; Regina Janes, "Beheadings," *Representations* 35 (1991): 21–51; and Jürgen Martschukat, *Inszeniertes Töten: Eine Geschichte der Todesstrafe vom 17. Zum 19. Jahrhundert* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000); Antoine de Baecque, *Glory and Terror: Seven Deaths Under the French Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2003). See also p. 169 n. 58 above.

36. Staël-Holstein, *Considérations*, p. 313.

37. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1983), pp. 368–73.

38. The association goes back at least to Jacob Talmon, *The Origins of Totali-*

tarian Democracy (London: Secker & Warburg, 1952); Simon Schama makes an extravagant linkage in *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1989). François Furet links the Jacobins' lethal "passion for equality" to twentieth-century totalitarianisms (all in turn conflated) in *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000). For a trenchant critique of Furet, see Marie-Hélène Huet, *Mourning Glory*, pp. 171ff. On the occasional convergence of sensationalist representations of the Terror with Holocaust revisionism in France, see Carolyn Dean, "Recent French Discourses on Stalinism, Nazism and 'Exorbitant' Jewish Memory," *History & Memory* 18 (2006): 43–85.

39. The various anecdotes are taken from Arasse, *La guillotine*; Janes, "Beheadings"; and Martschukat, *Inszeniertes Töten*. For literary examples, see *Le Roman noir de la Révolution,* ed. Raymond Trousson (Paris: Nathan, 1997); Patrick Wald Lasowski, *Les échafauds du romanesque* (Lille: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1991); Susan Hiner, "Hand Writing: Dismembering and Re-Membering in Nodier, Nerval and Maupassant," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 30 (2002). In relation to visual art, Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, "Géricault's Severed Heads and Limbs: The Politics and Aesthetics of the Scaffold," *Art Bulletin* 74, no. 4 (December 1992): 599–618; Ewa Lajer-Burchharth, *Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David After the Terror* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1999); and Linda Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces* (London: Thames & Hudson: 1994). See also p. 169 n. 58 above.

The French medical debates were largely stimulated by the anatomical experiments of Thomas von Soemmering in Frankfurt, whose theories were relayed to France in 1795 by Oelsner, the editor of the *Minerva*, who had been one of the first to bring news of the Revolution to Germany. See Roland Borgards, "Kopf ab': Die Zeichen und die Zeit des Schmerzes in einer medizinischen Debatte um 1800," in *Romantische Wissenspoetik: Die Kunste and die Wissenschaften um 1800*, ed. Gabriele Brandstetter and Gerhard Neumann (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004); L. J. Jordanova, "Medical Mediations: Mind, Body and the Guillotine," *History Workshop* 28 (1989): 39–52; Sean Quinlan, "On Apparent Death In Eighteenth-Century France and England," *French History* 9 (1995): 94–416; Dorothy Outram, *The Body and the French Revolution* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 106–23; Philip Smith, "Narrating the Guillotine: Punishment Technology as Myth and Symbol," *Theory, Culture and Society* 20 (2003): 27–51.

40. Billaud-Varenne's speech of 28 Brumaire, Year II, quoted by Antoine de Baecque, *The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France, 1770–1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 310, 313.

41. Cf. Baczko, *Comment sortir de la Terreur?* pp. 305–53.

42. *VPG* 529; *PhH* 447; *PhR* §258.

43. Joachim Ritter, *Hegel and the French Revolution*: *Essays on the Philosophy of Right*, trans. Richard Dien Winfield (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).

44. "Der Begriff des Rechts machte sich mit *einem Male* geltend" (*VPG* 529; *PhH* 447).

45. Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Anchor Books, 1955), p. 8.

46. Quinet, *Révolution*, 2: 183.

47. Saint-Just, speech of November 13, 1792, cited in Walzer, *Régicide et révolution*, p. 209.

48. Claude Lefort, "Permanence of the Theological-Political?" in id., *Democracy and Political Theory*, pp. 213–55.

49. Walter Benjamin, letter to Gershom Scholem, June 12, 1938, in *Briefwechsel, 1933–1940* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980).

CHAPTER 4: REVOLUTION AT A DISTANCE, OR, MORAL TERROR

1. Joseph-Ignace Guillotin, speech to the Assemblée constituante, quoted by Daniel Arasse, *La guillotine et l'imaginaire de la terreur* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987), p. 26. (The device was an explicitly humanitarian innovation.)

2. James Schmidt, "Cabbage Heads and Drinks of Water: Hegel and the Terror," *Political Theory* 26 (1998): 4–32. On Jean-Baptiste Carrier's activities as the "butcher of Nantes," see Bronisław Baczko, *Comment sortir de la Terreur? Thermidor et la Révolution* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), pp. 191–254. The events seem to have made an impact in Germany, as registered, for example in Klopstock's poem "Retaliation" (1795). On Christmas Eve, 1795, Hegel writes to Schelling stressing the significance of Carrier's trial, and commenting that it "has exposed the complete vileness (*Schändlichkeit*) of the Robespierrists . . ." See id., *Briefe von und an Hegel,* 4 vols., ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1952), I:12.

3. Mona Ozouf, "Thermidor, ou le travail de l'oubli," in id., *L'école de la France: Essais sur la Révolution, l'utopie, et l'enseignement* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), pp. 91–108.

4. Rereading the *Phenomenology* in 1814, Hegel will claim that his analysis of absolute freedom had already logically anticipated the fall of Napoleon. See his letter to Niethammer of April 29, 1814, in *Briefe von und an Hegel*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister, 4 vols. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1981), 2:28.

5. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 3 vols., in *Werke* 18:12; trans. T. M. Knox and A. V. Miller, *Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 2.

6. *VPG* 104; *PhH* 78.

7. Beyond the Platonic cave, the image of the silhouette evokes Pliny the Elder's story of the Corinthian maiden who traced the outline of the shadow cast by her departing lover, marking the primal scene of painting as a scene of mourning. Silhouette's device (popularized in Germany by Lavater) quickly became a form of entertainment and a parlor game. (Hegel ridicules both physiognomy and phrenology in his analysis of contemporary pseudoscience in the "Reason" chapter

of the *Phenomenology*.) The thanatographic aspects of the technique, precursor to photography, were often noted. See Victor Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), and Wendy Bellion, "Heads of State: Profiles and Politics in Jeffersonian America," in *New Media, 1740–1915*, ed. Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey Pingere (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), p. 42. On the relationship between the guillotine and the art of portraiture, see Arasse, *La guillotine*; Patrick Wald Lasowski, *Les échafauds du romanesque* (Lille: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1991); Ewa Lajer-Burchhardt, *Necklines: The Art of Jacques-Louis David After the Terror* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1999).

8. Cited by Lajer-Burchardt, *Necklines*, p. 16. See also Baczko, *Comment sortir de la Terreur?*, pp. 78–83.

9. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, trans. James H. Nichols Jr., ed. Allan Bloom (1969; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 53.

10. Hegel describes both Stoic and moral freedom as an indifference to a natural order that it "lets go free" (*entlassen*, *freilassen*) (*PhG* §200, §599). This is what absolute freedom could not countenance: "it lets nothing break loose [*entläßt*] in the shape of a free-standing object standing over against it" (§588).

11. François Azouvi and Dominique Bourel have assembled a remarkable dossier of documents in *De Königsberg à Paris: La réception de Kant en France (1788–1804)* (Paris: Vrin, 1991). See pp. 70–71 for the correspondence between Louis-Ferdinand Huber and Schiller in 1795 on the value of introducing the French to Kant, whose lucidity might help temper, suggested Schiller (uncharacteristically), both the "brutality and fanaticism" of the Jacobin years and the "sybaritism and opportunism" of the Thermidorian reaction. On the impact of the French translation of Kant's "Perpetual Peace," see pp. 65–83. On Abbé Grégoire's use of Kant, see Ferenc Fehér, "Practical Reason in the Revolution: Kant's Dialogue with the French Revolution," in *The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity*, ed. id. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 202; and see also Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 112–25. See also *La réception de la philosophie allemande en France aux XIXe et XXe siècles*, ed. Jean Quillien (Villeneuve-d'Ascq: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1994).

12. On Humboldt's well-attended colloquium in Paris in 1798 on the first *Critique*, see *De Königsberg à Paris*, ed. Azouvi and Bourel, pp. 105–12; participants included Destutt, Cabanis, and Sieyès. For a fascinating account of the appropriation of German philosophy in the post-Thermidorian refashioning of subjectivity, see Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750–1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); her focus is the institutional and intellectual milieu of the Restoration, and in particular Victor Cousin, but see pp. 126–29 on Sieyès. On a similar uptake of Kant by Mercier, see Michael Sonenscher, "'The Moment of Social Science': The *Décade philosophique* and Late Eighteenth Century French Thought," *Modern Intellectual History* 6 (2009): 121–46.

13. For an account of the episode, see Maximilien Vallois, *La formation de l'influence Kantienne en France* (1924; Paris: F. Alcan, 1932), pp. 280–81; cf. Fehér, "Practical Reason in the Revolution," p. 203.

14. Germaine de Staël-Holstein, *De l'Allemagne*, 2 vols. (1810; Paris: Flammarion, 1968), vol. 2.

15. Benjamin Constant, "Des réactions politiques" (1797), in id., *De la force du gouvernement actuel de la France et de la nécessité de s'y rallier* (Paris: Flammarion, 1988). In his rejoinder, Kant claims not to remember having made the case in these exact terms, but gamely goes on to defend it anyway. See "Über ein vermeintes Recht aus Menschenliebe zu lügen," in Ak 8: 425–30; "On a Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy," in *Practical Philosophy*, pp. 611–15. Constant's example is taken up verbatim in Staël's ambivalent (and very inaccurate) treatment of Kant in *De l'Allemagne*, and it is likely that she supplied the anecdotal material; on her efforts to smuggle refugees during the Terror, see John Isbell, *The Birth of European Romanticism: Truth and Propaganda in Staël's "De l'Allemagne"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 136. Constant's critique of Kant contains an implicit attack on the Revolution's rigid adhesion to principles, familiar enough from Burke and others, but there is a deeper, historical argument also at work: the rigor of the moral law evokes a Spartan severity, which Constant elsewhere associates with the essential anachronism of the Revolution; cf. "De la liberté des anciens comparée à celle des modernes," in Constant, *Écrits politiques* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997); Marx will rework Constant's argument in the *Holy Family*.

16. Hegel, *Werke* 2: 280 *ETW* 183–88.

17. Hegel, *Werke* 2: 284–86; *ETW* 192–94.

18. Hegel, *Werke* 2: 280, 316; *ETW* 188, 204.

19. Hegel, *Werke* 2: 316; *ETW* 204. At *Werke* 2: 317–25, *ETW* 205–13, Hegel explicitly compares the Mosaic Law to Kantian morality.

20. There are vestiges of this early polemic in the inverted world episode in the *Phenomenology*, where Hegel assimilates Kantian to Jewish abstraction, mocking the noumenal world as a "holy of holies," which must be invaded by the subject (who is responsible for generating it in the first place). "[I]n order that there may yet be something in the void . . . in order that in this *complete void*, which is even called the *holy of holies*, there may yet be something, we must fill it up with reveries, *appearances*, produced by consciousness itself. It would have to be content with being treated so badly for it would not deserve anything better, since even reveries are better than its own emptiness" (§146; emphasis Hegel's).

21. Schiller, "Über Anmut und Würde" (1793), in id., *Werke in drei Bänden*, ed. Gerhard Fricke and Herbert Göpfert (Munich: Hanser), 2: 406.

22. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments,* trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 63–93.

23. Andreas Wildt, *Autonomie und Anerkennung: Hegels Moralitätskritik im*

Lichte seiner Fichte-Rezeption (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982); Onora O'Neill, *Acting on Principle* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975).

24. Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (London: NLB, 1974), p. 49.

25. For exemplary readings in this direction, see Allen Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Robert Pippin, *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and id., *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

26. Ak 6: 58; *RR* 101.

27. Ak 6: 121; *RR* 151.

28. Cf. Octave Mannoni, "Je sais bien . . . mais quand même," in id., *Clefs pour l'imaginaire ou l'Autre scène* (Paris: Seuil, 1969).

29. Shakespeare, *Richard II* 4.1.206–10.

30. Ak 6: 47; *RR* 91 and Ak 5: 122ff.; *CPrR* 238ff.

31. The formula is recurrent in Kant: "supernatural cooperation [*Mitwirkung*]" (Ak 6: 44; *RR* 89, cf. Ak 6: 191; *RR* 207), "cooperation from above [*höhere Mitwirkung*]"(Ak 6: 52; *RR* 95); "divine cooperation from without [*äußere göttliche Mitwirkung*]" (Ak 7: 44; *CF* 268).

32. Kant: "supernatural supplement [*Ergänzung*]" (Ak 7: 44; *CF* 268; cf. Ak 6: 52; *RR* 96, Ak 6: 143; *RR* 168, Ak 6: 174; *RR* 193, Ak 6: 178; *RR* 196; 6:196; *RR* 211n); "inscrutable higher assistance [*unerforschlichen höheren Beistandes*]" (6:45; *RR* 90, cf. Ak 6: 178; *RR* 196, Ak 6: 190; *RR* 207).

33. Ak 7: 43f; *CF* 268.

34. Ak 6: 439–40; *MM* 560–61 (and see n. 37 below).

35. Ak 6: 409; *MM* 537.

36. Kant explores the logic of the moral postulates in the "Antinomy" section of the *Critique of Practical Reason*; see esp. Ak 5: 122–34; *CPrR* 238–47. The supplementary status of grace in Kant's moral philosophy relates to the supplementary status of religion generally; for the pleromatic distinction between religion as a surrogate (*Ersetzung*) and as a fulfillment (*Vollendung*) of morality, see Ak 6: 201; *RR* 215 (and cf. Ak 6: 185; *RR* 202). Kant is explicit that the ideas of happiness and grace itself are just that—edifying representations, analogies, or *parerga* of morality (cf. Ak 6:162; *RR* 183)—before abruptly putting an end to the discussion: "To believe that grace may have its effects, and that perhaps there must be such effects to supplement the imperfection of our striving for virtue, is all we can say on the subject" (Ak 6: 174; *RR* 193). On the supplementary status of the *summum bonum*, see esp. Richard Velkley, *Freedom and the End of Reason: On the Moral Foundation of Kant's Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), and Allen Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1970).

37. Although Hegel does not specifically pick up this passage, his portrayal evokes Kant's description in the *Metaphysics of Morals* of the abrasive extimacy of the "internal court" of conscience, where the subject discovers itself as internally

split and doubled, pursued by the shadowy presence of "something other than myself"—"a holy being distinct from us yet present in our inmost being" (Ak 6: 439–40; *MM* 560–61). See Elizabeth Rottenberg, *Inheriting the Future: Legacies of Kant, Freud, and Flaubert* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 45–49.

38. Ak 6: 23n; *RR* 72n.

39. Gordon Michalson sees in Kant's apparent hesitation between a morality of freedom and a theology of grace an expression of his own divided loyalties between the secular modernity of the *Aufklärung* and an unprocessed pietist orthodoxy (expressed symptomatically, for example, in the surds of unprocessed scriptural quotations running through the *Religion*). See Michalson, *Fallen Freedom: Kant on Radical Evil and Moral Regeneration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). For attempts to bring Kant closer to Hegel, see Wood, cited in nn. 25 and 58 above, and for a reading pushing in a Derridean direction, Rottenberg, *Inheriting the Future*. For another consideration of this tension, see John Hare, *The Moral Gap: Kantian Ethics, Human Limits, and God's Assistance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

40. Freud, "Fetishism," in id., *SE* 21: 149–57.

41. Cf. Freud, "The Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence," in id., *SE* 23: 275–78. I explore this recursive logic of splitting in "The Sickness of Tradition: Walter Benjamin Between Melancholia and Fetishism," in *Walter Benjamin on History*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (New York: Continuum, 2005), pp. 88–101.

42. Cf. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* and Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

43. Fichte, *System der Sittenlehre nach den Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre*, in id., *SW* 4: 156; trans. Günter Zöller and Daniel Breazeale, *The System of Ethics: According to the Principles of the "Wissenschaftslehre"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 148.

44. Heidegger, "Die Frage nach der Technik" and "Die Gestell," in id., *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1967); cf. Samuel Weber, "Upsetting the Setup: Remarks on Heidegger's 'Questing after Technics,'" in id., *Mass Mediauras: Form, Technics, Media*, ed. Alan Cholodenko (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

45. "It is now the law that exists for the sake of the self, not the self that exists for the sake of the law" (§639). H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder,* 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 2: 464, points out the reference to Jacobi's open letter to Fichte (see Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, "An Fichte," in id., *Werke*, 6 vols. [1812–25; rpt. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968], 3: 37–38; trans. Diana Behler in *Philosophy of German Idealism,* ed., Ernst Behler [New York: Continuum, 1987], p. 134). Hegel had already cited the passage at length in *Faith and Knowledge*; trans. Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), pp. 143–44. There is a significant, politically charged detail that Hegel does not fail to notice. Jacobi explicitly connects the "sacred certitude" of the moral virtuoso—

"the seal of his dignity"—to his "authentic right of majesty"—that is, the sovereign right to pardon (*privilegium aggratiandi*), a right both Kant and Hegel stake out as the most problematic prerogative of the monarch. (I discuss the theological-political nexus of pardon and forgiveness in the next chapter.)

46. Hegel's polemic against the Romantic cult of feeling began as early as *Faith and Knowledge* and continued at Berlin, with Hegel's attack on Schleiermacher's "canine" theology of feeling. "A dog also has feelings of deliverance when its hunger is satisfied by a bone" (Schleiermacher never spoke to Hegel again). "Foreword to Hinrichs' *Religion* in Its Inner Relation to Science," trans. A. V. Miller, in *Miscellaneous Writings of G. W. F. Hegel*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), pp. 347–48. Kant, as often, anticipates Hegel in his polemic against the Moravians: he regards the appeal to the continuity of feeling as a fetishistic attempt to efface the traumatic caesura of moral decision. The "feeling of supernatural communion" sustains the subject in "continuous prayer"—a kind of mechanical life-support designed to reassure the moral hypochondriac about his own continuing existence (Ak 7: 33, 55–56; *CF* 259, 278).

47. Schlegel, "Athenæum Fragments," §451 and §222.

48. Hölderlin, letter of 1799, in id., *Sämmtliche Werke. Grosser Stuttgart Ausgabe*, ed. Friedrich Beissner et al., 15 vols. (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1943–85), 6, pt. 1: 327.

49. Thus Amelia's question: "Is everything then poetry?" Schlegel, *Gespräch über Poesie,* in id., *KA* 2: 285–86. On the expanded sense of *Poesie* in Schlegel, see Frederick Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 16ff.

50. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1: 68.

51. See Peter Szondi, "Das Naive ist das Sentimentalische," in id., *Schriften*, ed. Wolfgang Fietkau, Jean Bollack et al., 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), 2: 59–105.

52. As many commentators have brought out, Hegel's portrait of the "beautiful soul" condenses a plethora of contemporary collective fantasies. His treatment of Romanticism is even harsher than of Kant, and has provoked strong reactions from Hegel's more literature-affiliated readers. The syncretism can be disconcerting: the product is a strange amalgam of libertinism, pietism, aestheticism, voluntarism, and more. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, vol. 2, offers an exhaustive unpicking of the myriad literary allusions throughout this section, as well as a comprehensive bibliography of the Hegel literature on this subject (and any other subject in the *Phenomenology*) up to 1997. The position dramatized is a composite figure with bits borrowed from everywhere: it takes its conviction from Fichte and Schleiermacher, its introversion from Goethe, its psychosis from Hölderlin, its inability to finish things from Schlegel, its breathlessness from Novalis, its (eventual) ability to forgive from Jacobi, its preoccupation with moral beauty from all of the above and a few more thrown in for good measure (Schiller, Rousseau, Wieland).

Attempts to identify a single source miss the performative point of Hegel's citational strategy, which is to establish a relationship with a fissured, form-shattering, collective literary phenomenon. Allen Speight proposes the Romantic polylogue as both the model and the object of Hegel's critique; see id., *Hegel, Literature, and the Problem of Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 94–121. For an informative history of the concept of the beautiful soul from Shaftesbury on, see Robert E. Norton, *The Beautiful Soul: Aesthetic Morality in the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

53. See Hegel's analysis of Protestant iconophobia in *Faith and Knowledge*. For Schleiermacher's aesthetic depiction of religion, see id., *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (New York: Ungar, 1955), pp. 119–45.

54. Hegel does not explicitly make this claim about Romantic libertinism, but it is implicit in his emphasis on the beautiful soul's timidity. Schlegel deconstructs Goethe's version of the beautiful soul in his novel *Lucinde*, but Hegel's analysis invites us to see how Julius and Lucinde reproduce her behavior. For Nietzsche's description of the phobic stance of "immaculate perception" and the fear of creativity that also drives creativity, see *Zarathustra*, "On Immaculate Perception": "But now your emasculated leering wants to be called 'contemplation!' And whatever allows itself to be touched by cowardly eyes is to be christened 'beautiful'! Oh you besmirchers of noble names" (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian Del Caro [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006], p. 96). In the *Antichrist*, Nietzsche comes close to naming the beautiful soul—a "pale, sickly, idiotic-fanatic" huddling inside a cadaverous body; id., *Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1962), p. 168.

55. For a discussion of the pietistic background of the idea of the beautiful soul, see Norton, *Beautiful Soul*, chap. 2. For Hegel's own relationship to pietism, see Laurence Dickey, *Hegel: Religion, Economics, and the Politics of Spirit, 1770–1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), and for illuminating discussion of the political tendencies of German pietism in Hegel's time, see Warren Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory: Dethroning the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); John E. Toews, *Hegelianism: The Path Toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805–1841* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 243ff.; F. Ernest Stoeffler, *German Pietism During the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1973); Hartmut Lehman, "Pietism and Nationalism: The Relationship Between Protestant Revivalism and National Renewal in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *Church History* 51 (1982): 39–53.

56. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, p. 61, argues that the furtive eudaimonism sustaining many brands of Protestantism leads invariably to an accommodation of empirical conditions. His description of the fetishized interiority of Romantic *Sehnsucht* chimes with his description of the unhappy consciousness in the *Phenomenology*. The Catholic obsession with the "things" of devotional practice (with its historical roots in the Crusades) and the Protestant inflation of the spiri-

tual privilege of private consciousness are two sides of the same coin. The reified objects (the host, the incense, the relics) of medieval practice are here the inversion of the hypertrophic subjectivity of a still unprocessed Protestantism. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, I: 410–17, argues that this is why Hegel uses the term *Sehnsucht*, normally reserved for a nostalgic strain within contemporary Protestantism, to characterize the devotional abjection of the unhappy consciousness. Hegel's supposed conclusion to the Jena *Philosophie der Sittlichkeit* (paraphrased by Rosenkranz) is interesting in this regard, where he sketches an opposition between a "beautiful" religion of Catholicism (a "poetry of consecration") and a disenchanted religion of exile: the "*patria* of religion" has been severed from immediate sensory existence and banished "far from the people's own fatherland." Rosenkranz suggests that as early as 1803, Hegel charged philosophy with the task of mediating between Protestantism and Catholicism within a "third form" of Christianity. The lecture manuscript reads: "Since that beauty and holiness [of Catholic Christendom] has gone under, it can neither *come back again* nor can we *mourn* for it. We can only recognize the *necessity of its passing* and surmise the higher thing for which it had to prepare the way and which must take its place." (Both the quotations from Hegel and Rosenkranz's own comments are taken from Karl Rosenkranz's *Life of Hegel*, and included in the appendix to Hegel, *System of Ethical Life and First Philosophy of Spirit* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979], pp. 184–85; for the uncertain status and provenance of the text, see the editorial remark on p. 178n1). In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel alludes to the temptation presented by Catholicism to fill the void created by certain strands of Protestantism (*PhR* §141 *Z*). The Berlin *Aufklärung* repeatedly attacked pietist heterodoxy as a form of "crypto-Catholicism"; see George di Giovanni, "Hegel, Jacobi, and 'Crypto-Catholicism,'" in *Hegel on the Modern World*, ed. Ardis B. Collins (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

57. Although he pointedly describes conscience as a fissuring extimacy (see p. 179 n. 37 above), Kant makes exactly the same objection as Hegel to the private use of feeling in the *Conflict of the Faculties* (see, e.g., Ak 7: 33; *CF* 259–60). Again, Kant anticipates Hegel's critique of pietism (which Kant himself knew at firsthand); his texts abound with rebukes to the fanaticism of a devotion that ends up "smashing" the heart through masochistic rituals of repentance, pulverizing the community into sectarian splinter groups, and inducing narcissistic raptures in which the believer "has the impertinence of trusting in a supposed hidden familiarity with God" (Ak 6: 201; *RR* 215). (For Kant's explicit attack on pietism, see Ak 7: 55; *CF* 277). On Kant's early exposure to pietism, see Manfred Kuehn, *Kant: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). On Kant's reactions to pietism, see Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion*, pp. 197–98; Hare, *Moral Gap,* argues for a greater receptivity on Kant's part.

58. The incarcerated divinity is a variant of the divine principle that had been "locked up" (*verschlossen*, *verborgen*) in the depths of the unconscious in *Sittlichkeit*

(see *PhG* §466 and cf. §469). See Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, "Introjection or Incorporation," in Abraham and Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis,* trans. and ed. Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

59. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, Preface §7, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 26. Jochen Schulte-Sasse, "The Concept of Literary Criticism in German Romanticism, 1795–1810," in *A History of German Literary Criticism, 1730–1980*, ed. Peter Uwe Hohendahl (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), argues that such a regression to myth is implicit in the Jena period. Novalis had written his monarchist fantasy *Faith and Love* by 1798 and *Christianity and Europe* by 1799; Wilhelm Wackenroder's *Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* was published in 1797. Frederick Beiser carefully dismantles the opposition between manifest Catholicism and latent Lutheranism in German Romantic culture (and points to the resolution of this antithesis in some kind of ecumenical Spinozism) in his excellent introduction to *Early Political Writings of the German Romantics*, pp. xxi–xxii. For an attempt to salvage the political explosiveness of Novalis from the politics of "late" Romanticism (and from the alleged editorial manipulation and mythography of Ludwig Tieck and Friedrich Schlegel), see William Arctander O'Brien, *Novalis: Signs of Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995).

60. E.g., experimental literary or erotic ménages such as those occasionally found in Jena and fictionalized by Schlegel in *Lucinde*. "That I am one with myself, that I am what I had the native endowment to become, that I see truth, that I feel harmonious beauty, that is your work, yours alone; and it is my work, mine alone, that you too are what you were meant to be, that you too see truth, and experience beauty and harmony," Wilhelm von Humboldt wrote to his wife (quoted by W. H. Bruford, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: Bildung from Humboldt to Thomas Mann* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975], p. 10). Hegel mocks the elitism of the pietist conventicles—"little congregations" that "float apart and gather together by chance . . . like the patterns in a sea of sand given over to the play of the winds" (*Faith and Knowledge*, p. 151).

61. In the *Religion*, Kant warns against the ever-present risks of misanthropy lurking in his own moral rigorism (Ak 6: 34; *RR* 81); and cf. his remarks in *Metaphysics of Morals* (Ak 6: 466; *MM* 582) on *allotrio-episcopia* ("a mania for spying on the morals of others") and on moral arrogance [*Hochmut*] as the flip side of a sycophancy that "waives any claim to respect from others" (6: 466; *MM* 582).

62. "No man is a hero to his valet; not, however, because the man is not a hero, but because the valet—is a valet, whose dealings are with the man, not as a hero, but as one who eats, drinks, and wears clothes" (*PhG* §665). The moral valet is an abrasive variant of the "everlasting irony of the community" that had expressed the crisis of political authority and the collapse of ethical certainty at the end of *Sittlichkeit*: irony "changes the universal end of the government into

a private end, transforms its universal activity into a work of some private individual, and perverts the universal property of the state into a possession and ornament for the family" (*PhG* §475). (The gendering of irony, in this earlier passage, as well as everything concealed in this, cannot be pursued here.) The function of irony, at this earlier stage, had been to deflate the heroism of every universal claim, and to expose the vanity of politics, which it reduced to a vestigial "ornament." Romantic irony works similarly, in that it expresses the collapse of moral certainty: it deflates every universal claim by exposing the surd of *amour de soi*—vanity, ambition, lust for power—in every moral act. Irony is thus the residue of a failed mourning. The corpse takes its revenge on Creon (faith on insight) by turning disenchantment against itself: irony demystifies secular heroism by recalling the stench of the particular in every moral act. The valet knows—he has to pick up the laundry.

Hegel's formulation here, as often, reads like an adage and was destined to become a quotation. Hegel's dictum is in fact adapted from Rousseau, who had himself adapted it from Montaigne and others (see Allen Wood's notes to *PhR* §124 for a detailed textual history). Goethe adapts the passage in *Elective Affinities* (in Ottilie's diary). Hegel quotes himself in the *Philosophy of Right* (*PhR* §124), and in the *Philosophy of History* he draws attention to Goethe's citation of him. "'No man is a hero to his *valet-de-chambre*,' is a well-known proverb; I have added—and Goethe repeated it ten years later—'but not because the former is no hero, etc.'" (*VPG* 49; *PhH* 32). At the point of confronting the Romantic fetish of creativity, Hegel simultaneously underlines and effaces the authorship of his own text; or rather, he emphasizes his own originality vis-à-vis Goethe, while relegating the aperçu to proverbial wisdom.

63. Nietzsche, Preface to *Twilight of the Idols.* Hegel frequently uses the image of the hollow vessel in his discussions of Romanticism; see, e.g., *Faith and Knowledge,* p. 61: "hubbub of vanity without a firm core."

64. Hegel distinguishes in the *Encyclopedia* between the abstract or destructive negativity of pure *sound* (a sheer vanishing in time without retention) and the concrete or determinate negativity of the verbal *sign,* in which meaning is retained within the inwardness of thought (*Enz* 3: 116; *PhM* §401 *Z*, p. 87).

65. Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," §5, in *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 83.

66. Cf. Theodor Adorno on *Rausch,* in "In Memory of Eichendorff," in id., *Notes to Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

67. On the resurgence of Catholic devotional tropes within Hegel's thoroughgoing analysis of contemporary Protestant subjectivity, see n. 56 above. The chapter on the unhappy consciousness had traced a reverse trajectory; we can observe surprising eruptions of "Protestant" tropes—Luther's constipation, pietistic *Sehnsucht*—in Hegel's account of Catholic subjectivity in the "unhappy consciousness" section.

The confusion of confessional distinctions points also to the unprocessed legacy of the Thirty Years' War, and reveals the truth of Eichendorff's witticism: German Romanticism is Protestant nostalgia for the Catholic Church.

68. Self-critique can be a way of preempting further critique. On the reversibility of "criticizability" and "uncriticizability" in Romanticism, see Schlegel's famous comment on *Wilhelm Meister*: "Perhaps, then, we should judge it, and at the same time refrain from judging it; which does not seem to be at all an easy task. Fortunately it turns out to be one of those books which carries its own judgment within it, and spares the critic his labor" ("On Goethe's *Meister*," in *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*, ed. J. M. Bernstein [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003], p. 275).

69. Ross Chambers, *The Writing of Melancholy: Modes of Opposition in Early French Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 24–59.

70. Baudelaire's letter of March 1852 to Narcisse Ancelle explaining his abstention from the plebiscite after the coup d'état of Louis-Napoléon: "Le 2 décembre m'a physiquement dépolitiqué" (*Correspondence*, ed. Claude Pichois [Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1973], p. 188). There are, of course, many ways to analyze this depoliticization, among which see Virginia Swain, *Grotesque Figures: Baudelaire, Rousseau, and the Aesthetics of Modernity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

71. Hölderlin, *Hyperion, or The Hermit in Greece* (1797/1799), trans. Willard R. Trask, in *Hyperion and Selected Poems*, ed. Eric Santner (New York: Continuum, 1990), p. 130. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, 2: 494–501, argues for the connection, even though Hyperion's "hard-heartedness" does not perfectly exemplify that of the beautiful soul: Hyperion does not retreat from the political arena, even if he ends up disillusioned. Nor can Hölderlin's own madness (whatever its relevance) be read as the fate of the isolated aesthete, or without reference to the contemporary political situation (including the strain of the pending treason charge in 1805, which was eventually dropped on account of his mental condition). See Pierre Bertaux, *Hölderlin und die französische Revolution* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969). But here too the accuracy of Hegel's allusion is less important than its heuristic function. As has been often noted, Hegel maintained to the end a deafening silence on the subject of his once close friend. See Dieter Henrich, "Hegel und Hölderlin," in *Hegel im Kontext* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), and Daniel Berthold-Bond, *Hegel's Theory of Madness* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

72. See J. M. Bernstein, "Love and Law: Hegel's Critique of Morality," *Social Research* 79 (2003): 393–432.

73. *Enz* 3: 138–82; *PhM* §406 *Z* and §408, pp. 105–39. In Hegel's mature account, mental illness is an exaggerated mode of preconscious life, assigned to the anthropological, feeling-based or natural substratum of cognition, where the subject "sinks" into its isolated self-enclosure (this does not rule out the tendency to

harbor fixed *ideas* about the outside world, but these ideas are just that: random, isolated, untheorized). Essential to madness, and intrinsic to its status as preconscious or "anthropological," is a lack of systematicity or "fluidity" (*Flußigkeit*): it isolates the "single phase or fixed idea which is not reduced to its proper place and rank" (*Enz* 3: 161; *PhM* §408, p. 123; cf. *Enz* 3: 139; *PhM* §406 *Z*, p. 106). Like all anthropological determinations, madness cannot be discussed without reference to the cognitive activity that it foreshadows (hence Hegel's Enlightenment optimism regarding psychiatric treatment, and his unambiguous endorsement of Pinel's "moral cure"); Hegel stresses that madness not only anticipates accompanies rational experience, but can flourish where intellectual capacities are at their peak (*Enz* 3: 16–17; *PhM* §380, p. 7). Madness thus occupies a number of positions: it can be regarded as a primitive developmental phase; as an illness contracted at the intersection of nature and spirit; as a convalescence into rationality; and finally as a crucial moment within reason itself. "Insanity is not an abstract loss of reason . . . , but only derangement, only a contradiction in a still subsisting reason" (*Enz* 3: 163; *PhM* §408, p. 124). The despair inherent in madness arises, like all despair, from the subject's recognition of its own pathology; madness is already the struggle to "overcome the discord" (*Enz* 3: 172; *PhM* §408 *Z*, p. 131). Like consciousness, madness *wants* to cure itself.

Hegel makes an elliptical reference to the historically induced forms of madness introduced by the French Revolution in *Enz* 3: 182; *PhM* §408 *Z*, p. 139—a remark that is immediately followed by a reference to the religious anxieties induced by extreme varieties of Protestantism. Hegel's most vivid example of insanity, borrowed from Pinel, is to a man suffering under the delusion that he had been guillotined (*Enz* 3: 182; *PhM* §408 *Z*, p. 139). In Griesheim's 1824–25 transcription of Hegel's lectures on the *Philosophy of Right*, the beautiful soul demonstrates a link between the trauma of the Terror and the trauma of the Reformation: its pathology is also manifest in "political *Schwärmerei* and fanaticism, as happened at the time of the Reformation and the French Revolution." Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie, 1818–1831*, ed. Karl-Heinz Ilting, 4 vols. (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1973), 4: 402. The published *Philosophy of Right* makes a more general connection between religious fanaticism and the Terror (*PhR* §5).

For an extended treatment of Hegel's treatment of madness, see Berthold-Bond, *Hegel's Theory of Madness,* and, in relation to the theological issue of sin, Allan M. Olson, *Hegel and the Spirit: Philosophy as Pneumatology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), chap. 6. See also Jon Mills, *The Unconscious Abyss: Hegel's Anticipation of Psychoanalysis* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

74. Hegel does not give an extended account of consumption in either the Berlin *Philosophy of Nature* or the Jena *Realphilosophie*, but his passing comments are intriguing: consumption is his example (along with cirrhosis of the liver) of

the kind of incurable illness that sets in when disease targets an isolated body part, leaving the system no chance to marshal; this is what transforms fever from a sign of healing into a symptom of endless lingering—a kind of physiological bad infinite. See *Enz* 2: 525; *PhNa* 3: 198, § 371 *Z*. On the fever that does not fight but only prolongs infection, see *Enz* 2: 527–28; *PhNa*, 3: 201, § 372 *Z*; and cf. David Farrell Krell, *Contagion: Sexuality, Disease, and Death in German Idealism and Romanticism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988). The atomism of madness resembles that of chronic physical illness, but Hegel does not seriously entertain the possibility of untreatable mental illness, or consider its repercussions for his philosophy of mind. Hegel's general account of psychiatry is indebted to developments in postrevolutionary France and owes much to Mesmer and in particular Pinel. See Berthold-Bond, *Hegel's Theory of Madness*.

75. Hegel's account of consumption as corporeal atomization enables him to link it with the hypertrophic individualism that he identifies with Romanticism. Consumption began to be valorized as a disease at the end of the eighteenth century as a civilized, bourgeois disease, both attractive (beautiful pallor) and individuated (the victim dies a unique, private death, rather than the anonymous mass death of the plague). See Claudine Herzlich and Janine Pierret, *Illness and Self in Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 3–37. Roy Porter explores the representation of the disease in relation to the social issues arising from a nascent consumer culture, as the disease began to be linked to anxieties about excessive "consumption"; see Roy S. Porter, "Consumption: Disease of the Consumer Society?" in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. id. and John Brewer (New York: Routledge), pp. 58–81.

CHAPTER 5: TERRORS OF THE TABULA RASA

1. The link is signaled by the semantic proximity between the vertigo (*Schwindel*) of skepticism (§205) and the dizziness of consumption (*Schwindsucht*) (§668). Moral shiftiness (*Verstellung*) is also described as a "dizzying movement" (*schwindelnde Bewegung*) (§617), whose hypocrisy is suggestive also of a certain "swindling" (*Schwindel*); cf. Krell, *Contagion*, pp. 118–19.

2. Cf. Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia." The affinity between melancholia and anxiety is brought out by Jacques Hassoun in *The Cruelty of Depression: On Melancholy* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1997).

3. There is a connection to Heideggerian *Angst*: anxiety (before death) is not "before" anything in particular, I am not anxious "about" anything determinate. Kojève draws out the revolutionary potential of this suspension, although he does not address its reactionary counterpart.

4. These issues are brought out lucidly by J. M. Bernstein, "Confession and Forgiveness: Hegel's Poetics of Action," in *Beyond Representation: Philosophy and Poetic Imagination*, ed. Richard Eldridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University

Press, 1996), pp. 34–65, and Robert Bernasconi, "Hegel and Levinas: The Possibility of Forgiveness and Reconciliation," *Archivio di filosofia* 54 (1986): 325–46.

5. See *PhG* §§228–229 ("it truly and completely denies itself") and §594 ("it has nothing positive and therefore can give nothing in return for the sacrifice").

6. Luther had identified two contradictory impulses in the institution of auricular confession: an overweening confidence in the power of human agency (if I do this I shall be forgiven, my fate is in my own hands) coupled with a fearful accommodation to worldly power (there is always one more sin to be admitted, the debt will never be acquitted). Luther, "De captivitate Babylonica ecclesia praeludium" (1520), in id., *Werke*, 6: 543–49; trans. A. W. Steinhäuser, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," in *Luther's Works*, 36: 81–91, and "Ein Sermon von dem Sakrament der Bußе (1519), in *Werke* 2: 709–23; "The Sacrament of Penance," trans E. Theodore Bachmann, in *Luther's Works*, 35: 9–22. See Thomas Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), and James Aho, *Confession and Bookkeeping* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005). The sacrament of confession at times involved the literal extraction of a fee, the so-called *Beichtpfennig*. See Philip Gorski, *The Disciplinary Revolution: Calvinism and the Rise of the State in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 108.

7. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 239.

8. Hegel develops an explicitly Christian account of forgiveness in "Spirit of Christianity"; see J. M. Bernstein's suggestive reading in "Love and Law: Hegel's Critique of Morality," *Social Research* 79 (2003): 393–432.

9. Franz Kafka, "Das Kommen des Messias," in id., *Parables and Paradoxes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), pp. 80–81.

10. Derrida's reading of Hegel is uncharacteristically and intriguingly vulgar: "As soon as the word 'pardon!' . . . is uttered, is there not the beginning of a reappropriation, a mourning process, a process of redemption, of a transfiguring calculation which, through language, the sharing of language (see Hegel on the subject) rushes toward the economy of a reconciliation that causes the wrong itself to be simply forgotten or annihilated?" Jacques Derrida, "To Forgive: The Unforgivable and the Imprescriptible," in *Questioning God*, ed. John Caputo, Mark Dooley, and Michael Scanlon (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 46.

11. Hegel, *Aphorismen aus Wastebook*, in *Werke* 2: 558: "Ein geflickter Strumpf besser als ein zerrissener; nicht so das Selbstbewußtsein" ("A mended stocking is better than a torn stocking; not so self-consciousness"). Heidegger, who misquotes the phrase in his seminar at Le Thor, identifies this as the first lesson in "phenomenological kindergarten"; see id., *Four Seminars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), pp. 12–13.

12. Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 165–99.

13. Augustine explores this movement in the first book of the *Confessions*.

14. Cf. Derrida, "Ulysses Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce," in id., *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 253–309.

15. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 1981), p. 184.

16. Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, "On Redemption."

17. See Robert Pippin, "Recognition and Reconciliation: Actualized Agency in Hegel's Jena *Phenomenology*," in *Recognition and Power: Axel Honneth and the Tradition of Critical Social Theory*, ed. Bert van den Brink (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

18. Paul de Man, "Excuses (*Confessions*)," in id., *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1979), and Jacques Derrida, "Typewriter Ribbon," in id., *Without Alibi*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002). On the disciplinary use of confession, see Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Part One* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978) and id., *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977). See also Chloë Taylor, *The Culture of Confession from Augustine to Foucault: A Genealogy of the "confessing animal"* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

19. Derrida, "To Forgive," p. 44, invokes a distinctly Kantian framework when he underscores the difference between the "quasi-secret solitude of forgiveness" and the ritual theatricality of amnesty.

20. I am reconstructing the first part of this argument. Hegel supplies the second part. This is why the thirteenth article of the 1791 French penal code abolished the sovereign's right to pardon in jury trials as a remnant of absolutism. Kant puts his finger on the theological-political kernel: "[T]he right to grant clemency [*ius aggratiandi*] is the slipperiest one for [the monarch] to exercise, for it must be exercised in such a way as to show the splendor of his majesty, although he is thereby doing injustice in the highest degree" (Ak 6: 336; *MM* 477). Hegel touches on the dilemma in the *Philosophy of Right* in his discussion of the constitutional monarch whose logical necessity is deduced but precisely for his vacuity—a mere "dot on an i." Hegel assigns the monarch a purely ceremonial function, later much derided by Marx: he signs forms. The function of the king's signature is to make symbolically manifest the presence of individual subjectivity latent in the political order. The monarch also, however, has the sovereign privilege of clemency: "only the sovereign is entitled to actualize the power of the spirit to undo what has been done and to nullify crime by forgiving and forgetting [*im Vergeben und Vergessen das Verbrechen zu vernichten*]" (*PhR* §282). In the following remarks, Hegel emphasizes the difference between pardon and forgiveness, which relates to the gap between objective and absolute spirit, already established in §270 *Z*. "Pardon is the remission of punishment, but it is not a cancellation of right. . . . This cancellation . . . may be effected by religion, for what has been done can be undone in spirit by spirit

alone." Cf. Hegel, *Werke*, 15: 337; *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, trans. R. E. Brown et al., vol. 3: *The Consummate Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 337. For a probing discussion of the distinction between forgiveness and amnesty, see Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), epilogue; Peter Krapp, "Amnesty: Between an Ethics of Forgiveness and the Politics of Forgetting," *German Law Journal* 6 (2005): 185–95; and on the biopolitical issues, Adam Sitze, "No Mercy," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107 (2008): 597–608.

21. Hegel, *System of Ethical Life and First Philosophy of Spirit*, p. 237.

22. See Howard Brown, *Ending the French Revolution: Violence, Justice, Repression* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006); Bronisław Baczko, *Comment sortir de la Terreur? Thermidor et la Révolution* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989); and Richard Cobb, *Reactions to the French Revolution* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 19–43.

23. The citation is from Alexandre Kojève, "Hegel, Death, and Christianity" (1946), in *Hegel: Critical Reassessments*, ed. Robert Stern (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 381n; the argument runs throughout Kojève's *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*.

24. Hegel, letters to Immanuel Niethammer on October 13 and 18, 1806, in *Briefe von und an Hegel*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister, 4 vols. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1981), 1: 119–24.

25. Hegel, *Werke* 7: 28; *PhR* 22.

26. The discrepancy between the Hegelian and the contemporary Prussian state was underscored by disciples such as Eduard Gans and Karl Rosenkranz, in defending Hegel against Rudolf Haym's charge of sycophancy. See *Materialien zu Hegels Rechtsphilosophie*, ed. Manfred Riedel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), vol. 1. For the various points of divergence, see Adriaan Peperzak, *Philosophy and Politics: A Commentary on the Preface to Hegel's "Philosophy of Right"* (Dordrecht: Nijhoff, 1987), and Domenico Losurdo, *Hegel and the Freedom of the Moderns* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

27. *VPR*, pp. 195–96. Dieter Henrich reads in this passage from the 1819 lectures (the most explicit of all the lecture cycles) Hegel's unqualified anti-Kantian endorsement of the "right to rebellion" (p. 20); see also John McCumber, "Contradiction and Resolution in the State," *Clio* 15 (1986). For opposing views, see Mark Tunick, *Hegel's Political Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 117–19, and Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

28. *VPR 1819*, p. 196. See also Losurdo, *Hegel and the Freedom of the Moderns*, pp. 153–79; Stathis Kouvelakis, *Philosophy and Revolution: From Kant to Marx* (New York: Verso, 2003); and Allen Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 253–54.

29. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie, 1818–1831*, 6 vols., ed. Karl-Heinz Ilting (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1973–74), 4: 342.

30. Marx, who does not engage with Hegel's discussion of poverty, is also dismissive of rebellion (*Empörung*) as a sentimental or subjective response to objective social conditions: "revolt" (in the twofold sense of indignation and upheaval) had to be transformed into revolution. See his attack on Stirner in the *German Ideology*, as well as in the *Holy Family*, chap. 4.

31. Hegel is even harder on reactionary populism: the "people" do not know their own will or even what it means to will, a lack of agency that makes them at least as susceptible to aristocratic manipulation as to revolutionary agitation (*PhR* §301A; and see Kouvelakis, *Philosophy and Revolution*, p. 31). "In the state no one of its moments should [*soll*] remain as an unorganized mass" (*PhR* §303A); Eric Weil notes the Kantian formulation in *Hegel and the State*, trans. Mark A. Cohen (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 100–101. For "tottering edifice," see *Hegel's Political Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 244.

32. Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 154.

33. Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe I: Das System der spekulativen Philosophie. Fragmente aus Vorlesungsmanuskripten zur Philosophie der Natur und des Geistes*, ed. Klaus Düsing and Heinz Kimmerle (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1986).

34. The phrase "circus colors" is from Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 81, on the philosophical significance of gray in Samuel Beckett's plays.

35. Cf. Benjamin Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's *Eight Gray*: Between *Vorschein* and *Glanz*," in *Gerhard Richter: Eight Gray* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 2002), pp. 13–28.

36. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) (New York: International Publishers, 1963), p. 44; cf. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

37. Marx, "Introduction to the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's* Philosophy of Right," in id., *Early Writings*, p. 45.

38. Kafka, "Das Kommen des Messias," pp. 80–81.

39. The anamnestic function of forgetting has been explored brilliantly by Marc Augé, *Oblivion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

40. *VPG* 34–35; *PhH* 21–22.

41. *VPG* 101; *PhH* 74.

42. *VPG* 42; *PhH* 26–27.

43. See Peter Starr, *Logics of Failed Revolt: French Theory After May '68* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

44. *VPG* 34; *PhH* 21.

45. Walter Benjamin, "On the Image of Proust," in id., *Selected Writings*, ed. Marcus Bullock et al., 4 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996–2003), 2: 48.

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