

Lived Time and Absolute Knowing: Habit and Addiction from *Infinite Jest* to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*

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Abstract:

A study of habit and other unconscious backgrounds of action shows how shapes of spiritual life in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* each imply correlative senses of lived time. The very form of time thus gives spirit a sensuous encounter with its own concept. The point that conceptual content is manifest in the sensuous form of time is key to an interpretation of Hegel's infamous and puzzling remarks about time and the concept in "Absolute Knowing." The article also shows how Hegel's *Phenomenology* connects with current discussions of lived time, habit, and, *via* discussion of Wallace's *Infinite Jest*, addiction.

We are mortal, our days are numbered. But our days are not to be numbered as we would number a growing pile of objects, as if each day is a discrete addendum to an already determined record. We experience our lives as more or less happy, more or less meaningful, as made up of more or less successful actions, and this "more or less" is just one indication that we experience our lives as involving an overall weave of time.¹ Days do not pile up, rather our lifetime as a whole unfolds new meanings in the succession of weeks and days. Time as we experience it is lived time, a term I use to capture the sense of time elucidated by existential phenomenologists in this century, most prominently Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, a time in which—to roughly note features relevant to what follows—past, present, and future are not directions along an ordered continuum of discrete time-points, but interwoven aspects of an ecstatic structuring of experience, which structuring is integral with one's situated existence.² A sense of lived time belongs to the sense of one's life as a life well or badly lived. This is why questions about time continually

arise as a matter of course in life and philosophy.³

Even before we raise explicit questions about time, the attempt to live life well throws us into encounters with it. This is especially true in the experience of problems with habit. One tries to live one's life well, one tries to head toward one's own future, yet one's life unfolds from habits that seemingly 'run' one from one's past—past life implies itself in the fabric of the present and thus extrudes a shell around one's future. In the case of an unshakeable habit, an addiction, habit is no mere shell, it is a prison. The matter of this shell or prison, which flares into prominence in the attempt to live well, is time.

But habit is not merely a shell, prison or problem, for the shell embeds actions that we no longer have to explicitly engage, thus granting a new situational background and correlative identity that supports ever more complex activity. One of the crucial insights of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is that general backgrounds of this sort are vital to self-conscious action. Hegel argues that self-conscious life issues into the project of reason, but reason must configure itself as a practical activity, as a life of reason, rather than a merely theoretical endeavour, and the life of reason presupposes a living situation that cannot be constituted by any purely rational process.⁴ Each shape of rational and thence spiritual activity presumes a background that is already there, a background that is not constituted by rationality or spirit at the present moment, but nonetheless possesses its own rationality or spirituality.

In what follows I study the backgrounds of different shapes of spirit as

forms of habit. This illuminates senses of lived time proper to each shape of spirit, as well as illuminating habit and its temporality in general, thus leading to important results about time in Hegel's *Phenomenology*. As Joseph Flay shows, time is in fact crucial throughout the *Phenomenology*, since the first chapter, "Sense Certainty," embeds all knowing and doing in a temporal matrix. But as Flay also points out, Hegel does not say very much directly about time between the chapters on consciousness and the last chapter of the book, so Flay sets out to reconstruct what would be said about time in the intervening chapters, beginning from epistemological considerations.⁵ By attending to habit and action, I give a reconstruction that instead focuses on the relation between living spiritual experience and time. This has the advantage of drawing Hegel into the discussion of lived time. More important, it shows how spiritual life sediments itself into time, or, to put it another way, how issues vital to various shapes of spiritual life can be intuitively encountered in the form of time. The very form of time can give us an intuitive encounter with the concept of spirit, and understanding this is key to interpreting Hegel's notoriously puzzling claims about time and its "annulment" in the chapter on absolute knowing.

Given that habit is crucial to my approach, I begin in section one with a discussion of habit and its role in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, taking up John Russon's and John McCumber's analyses of habit in Hegel, and Joseph Flay's discussion of time. In section two, I draw on an account of addiction in David Foster Wallace's novel *Infinite Jest* in order to illustrate Hegel's point that pure reason fails as a guide of human life. When it comes time to change actions against the weight of habit, something more than reason, a life of ritual that plunges us into an encounter with time,

is needed. In section three, the point from *Infinite Jest* helps me elucidate the different senses of time that develop through the three main shapes of spirit that Hegel analyzes in chapter VI, namely the ethical order, culture and morality. I return to *Infinite Jest* at the end of section two to elucidate the sense of time belonging to religion. In section four my study of the relation between spiritual life and senses of time lets me show what Hegel means when he calls time the intuited concept and "the concept itself that is there." This leads to an interpretation of his claim that in absolute knowing the time-form is annulled. I argue that lived time does not vanish in absolute knowing, rather the sense of lived time is shown to emerge from spirit's self-conceptual life, from its comprehension of its conceptual situation and history, rather than from a formal ordering of time.

I: From Hegel's Dialectic of Self-Consciousness, to Habit as the Unself-Conscious Background of Action

The dialectic of the *Phenomenology* can be described as operating in the tension between self-conscious claims about experience and experience itself. The dialectic develops through an analytical focus on the self-conscious side of this tension, but the focus on the self-conscious side precisely leads to a claim about experience, namely about what is already requisite to experience itself if self-consciousness is ever to make its claims. This has two crucial implications. First, we should not be surprised if time seems to disappear from the foreground of discussion in the *Phenomenology*, since the book will focus on time only as it matters to the self-conscious claims being analyzed. Second, in being absent from the foreground, time has been absorbed into the background, and can be encountered in other ways, for

example, in the form of habit and its temporality. These two points need a bit more explanation, which will also show how a study of shapes of habit in the *Phenomenology* can help reconstruct senses of time that are not explicitly discussed by it.

In the tension between self-consciousness and experience itself (to continue with the above description of the *Phenomenology*'s dialectic, which description is geared to the concern of this paper, rather than being comprehensive or definitive), experience initially appears as opposed to self-consciousness: the flux of sense-certainty is just given, self-consciousness has no hand in it, self-consciousness just makes claims about it, the given is not conscious. Hegel's dialectical analysis of conscious experience, however, shows that the given already appears as having the sort of universal structures proper to consciousness, that consciousness has a hand in synthesizing perceptual activity, that experience is driven by a force mirroring that of the understanding, that in fact the sense of the given is inseparable from our living interests, from our self-conscious desire.⁶ Rather than saying the given has nothing to do with consciousness, it would be better to say that the given is 'unself-conscious,' since it in fact emerges relative to our self-conscious activity.

Hegel's dialectic focuses on the forward movement that arises from pressures inherent in making self-conscious claims about experience. The philosopher makes a claim about what experience is, but what is given belies the claim, so the claim must be revised. To the philosopher self-consciously claiming that truth is what is sensuously given, time appears as an unself-consciously given series of nows, but Hegel shows that this flow of nows is in fact reflective of self-consciousness. What is

given as an unself-conscious element of experience is in fact reflective of self-consciousness. So what plays the role of the unself-conscious is relative to our reflections. Hegel's *Phenomenology* primarily focuses on the reflective claims of self-conscious spiritual life, and relative to this, time often appears as an unmentioned, unself-conscious background; but Hegel's dialect also shows that this unself-conscious background has already absorbed self-conscious elements. Time, when it recedes as a focus of self-conscious reflection, does not disappear, it is incorporated into the unself-conscious background against which self-consciousness figures its claims, so we can learn something about time by studying this background.⁷

In his article "Time in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," Joseph Flay argues that Hegel's analysis of sense-certainty, perception and understanding show that:

Time is something we constitute in the sense that the knowledge relation is in part a function of the way in which we approach what-is, of the way in which we insert ourselves into the world with one or another intention in the form of desire. Time is something which arises in what are truly *transactions* between a knower and something known or knowable.

(264)

From the point of view I have been developing, this is the claim that time belongs to the unself-conscious background of experience in virtue of the way that self-conscious desire configures itself. Time is not a given, rather it, or more properly its sense, how we experience time, is an unself-conscious counterpart of the way we insert ourselves in the world.

Habit, if conceived in an expansive way, is a proper designation for the unself-conscious background of self-conscious experience. This concept and approach to

habit is supported by John Russon's and John McCumber's studies of habit and its role in Hegel's philosophy.

In *The Self and its Body in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, John Russon presents a study of the *Phenomenology* that articulates its dialectical argument in terms of an interrelation of *phusis*, *hexis* and *logos*. In the context of his book, Russon's study of *hexis* (which he translates as "habit") suggests the following. To experience *phusis* is to experience a sphere that has its own drive prior to our participation in it, a sphere in-itself opposed to consciousness. A *hexis* is experienced as something that verges toward appearing just as fixed, alien and opposed to consciousness as *phusis*. But it is intrinsic to *hexis* that we sometimes experience ourselves as *participant* in it. When we are subject to our own habit, it almost seems like a force of nature, but in realizing that we participate in changing and acquiring our habit, habit appears as a force of our *own* nature. A *hexis*, in other words, is an unconscious background of experience, but, as Russon puts it, a *hexis makes itself* unconscious and inconspicuous; a *hexis* is not in-itself unconscious (as is *phusis*), but has made itself be so.⁸ When we experience that we have contributed to the making of *hexis* and can change it through self-conscious behaviour, we encounter a *hexis* as partly participant in a self-conscious *logos*, the habit appears as an expression of self-conscious meaning (*logos*). In reflecting on one's habitual actions, one becomes ever more self-conscious of those actions as not merely stemming from a habit fixed like a force of nature, but as expressions of choices that one has made. A self-conscious meaning is exposed within one's habit, a meaning that was latent, but not apparent, in the process of habituation. Acquiring latent meaning in this way is quite important. We are taught to do the right thing before we are self-conscious of

its rightness or capable of self-consciously arriving at our own conclusions about the right thing to do.

Habit is thus conceived as a mediating term with a specific functional role in Hegel's dialectic. Habit designates whatever functions as a requisite background that mediates between unconscious nature and self-conscious spiritual life. It is what I have been calling unself-conscious. And here it is important to remember that "unself-conscious" is a relative term. Russon emphasises that habit is a relative term, that habit becomes an ever more complex term of experience, and that the absorption of ever more complexity into habit is what enables ever more complex self-conscious activity.⁹ Habit in this sense, and given its temporal character, would be the place to look for missing senses of time in the *Phenomenology*, granted that time is 'missing' because it has been absorbed into the unself-conscious background of experience, rather than having vanished altogether. And habit in this sense is not to be confused with a particular faculty, but with a whole range of phenomena, since habit's essential determination is its functional role as a midway point between something purely natural and something purely conceptual, a role that enables the whole tension between self-consciousness and its other in the first place. Habit so conceived is broad in scope, and quite important to the development traced by the *Phenomenology*. For example, the representations and rituals of religion, the unself-conscious practices of everyday life, and so on, would count as forms of habit, and as crucial in enabling the development traced by the phenomenology.¹⁰

John McCumber's analysis likewise emphasizes that habit should be conceived as a midway point between the natural and the spiritual, given Hegel's direct remarks on habit in the *Philosophy of Mind*, and that

this conception gives something akin to habit an expansive role in important transitions in Hegel's philosophy. Indeed, in the *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel writes that "The form of habit applies to all kinds and grades of mental action" and that "Habit on an ampler scale, and carried out in the strictly intellectual range, is recollection and memory."¹¹ McCumber's analysis shows how habit, in the first and more ordinary instance (for example, habituation to cold weather), is crucial for Hegel since it enables a sense of a "me" that persists precisely in having habits that institute generalized behaviours over and above immediate feelings. In being habituated, I am no longer wholly absorbed by the sensation of cold, I am a cold-dweller, I am no longer possessed by cold as a natural phenomenon, I have my *own* nature over against this natural phenomenon.¹² This is the sense in which habit operates as a shell, rooted in the past, that gives a sense of identity.

The sort of self-persisting, self-identifying "I" whose 'own nature' is enabled by habit in this narrower sense is, I would argue, precisely what we find refined in the other grades of habit that Hegel mentions. For example, a self that recollects is a self whose 'own nature' is such that it has the sophistication to interpret a historical "me" over against the storm of present psychological activity, its habitual interpretative activity distinguishes a present self from its past, rather than being sunk in an eternal present. This sort of self would already have to have a basis for recollection, and that basis could not itself be recollected, it must have already been unself-conscious. In other words, recollection depends on habit, broadly conceived. And it is this sort of self-conscious recollecting life (self-conscious because set over against its own self, its history, its claims, its reflections) that is the precise concern of the

Phenomenology. Therefore habit as what enables such a life is also a concern of the *Phenomenology*, a point that McCumber secures in more detail in his article (and by a different route than the one I take here).

If habit is the unself-conscious background vitally integral to self-conscious life, to spirit, then it precisely falls into the background of Hegel's phenomenology of spirit, given its emphasis on the self-conscious steps forward. What follows will attend to habit formations as the background for actions belonging to shapes of spirit, and thence to senses of time belonging to those shapes.

II: The Temporality of Habit and the Time of Reason

To experience oneself as acting out of habit is to find oneself doing something without experiencing oneself as having explicitly chosen *how* to do it, or even having chosen *to* do it at all. I did not choose to move in such and such a way, to react in this way in this situation, I did so out of habit. Sometimes even my actions in the moral sphere appear to be rooted in habit: I find myself set in a course of action without having deliberated about it. Habit as an integral unself-conscious background of action turns the experience of action into a problem: I did not do the habitual act (since it stems from the unself-conscious background that is habit), yet in another sense I did (since I am participant in habit, it is my seemingly self-conscious activity that has led to habit, and I could have had another habit).

This problematic aspect is especially apparent in cases of bad habit, habits that lead us into action inappropriate to the present. But it is also the case in good habit: it is precisely because one does not have to 'do' what is accomplished by habit that good habits do their good, that they allow

one to compress otherwise complex judgements into simple habitual behaviour, and that they grant one the ability to behave rightly in a situation that one cannot negotiate through explicit reflection (as when one learns good habits from others without yet comprehending what is behind them). There is a complexity of good and bad when it comes to habit: aren't all habits bad so far as they are merely habitual rather than responsible to their context, yet don't we mortals nonetheless need habit? I shall have to leave this complexity implicit in what follows, and merely note that I tend to focus on examples of bad habit, simply for the reason that bad habit confronts us with what is at stake, temporally and otherwise, in habit, whereas good habit precisely becomes a transparent background of self-conscious life.¹³

One's experience of this problem about habit—that I did and did not do the habitual act—has a temporal sense to it. The act done from habit appears as already done before I made it happen; I experience it as not truly acting in the present, as being inappropriate to the present, since it is rooted in a past presumption. The habitual action is therefore not void as act, rather its act-character recedes into the past. Habits confront one with past actions, they confront us with who one *has* been. But they also throw one toward the future, since the experience of the inappropriateness of the act, say in a spontaneous feeling of shame around a habit, confronts one with who one desires *to* be. In cases where one experiences a habitual action as changeable, this linkage between past, present and future is much more thematic: one not only encounters a past that has erupted in habit, but encounters that past as reworkable in the future. Habit's problematization of the sense of act turns into an experience of the sense of time in which one could overcome this problem by changing one's habit and

action. When I feel shame at my action, the shame implicates me not just in this present action but in a lifetime that has not yet overcome shameful habits, and in which such habits could be overcome.

When one experiences one's action as depending on habit as an unself-conscious background of action, one can experience one's action as arising in the sort of lived time that makes sense of the relation between action and habit. And a habitual background seems to be intrinsic to action in general. This point is apparent in claims as diverse as Aristotle's about the inevitable role of habit in action, Merleau-Ponty's about the situatedness and structure of activity, Heidegger's about the world-hood of the world being a totality of reference, and the developmental psychologist's and everyday realizations that our current actions depend on a background of skills, dispositions and habits that develop through one's life. So concrete action arises in a habit-action couple that can throw one into an encounter with lived time in which one's present belongs to a past and future that are interwoven through one's present.

One's action, then, if one attends to it, does not appear as strictly local to one's present self, but as dispersed into one's history of action in the world. A temporality essential to life thus appears within experiences of action, and this temporality seems to be enclosed within one's own lifetime. For example, to experience shame at a habit is, after all, to have an encounter with the temporality of one's *own* life in a way that seems impossible for anyone else. But at the same time an alienating otherness looms within such experiences: one's own life seems alien to oneself when habit comes up from one's past and directs one away from a desired future, when one's *own* habit presents an obstacle to one's own life. In action, one is in a tension with one's own

habit, and the demand of action would seem to be that one act on that habit, to change it.

This line of analysis can be tied to the *Phenomenology* in the following way. Hegel's analysis of desire and life shows that time is an issue intrinsic to life.¹⁴ But the analysis of self-conscious desire as entailing recognition shows that the time in question is not merely natural. What self-consciousness wants recognized—what is staked in the struggle to the death—is something precisely not present in a moment of natural life, but in an overall lifetime freely and self-consciously lived.¹⁵ One's lifetime is in this sense an inherent issue in the unself-conscious background of self-consciousness. But the inherence of this time in the unself-conscious background of self-consciousness, which is manifest in the struggle to the death, precisely arises from the contradiction that self-consciousness is a freedom, a negative power, that is above and beyond merely natural life, yet is nonetheless manifest nowhere else than in life. This contradiction is realised in the experience of stoicism and scepticism, and is pushed to its limit by the unhappy consciousness which, in its living world, cannot find an adequate relation to an other that would reflect its interior freedom.¹⁶ When unhappy consciousness tries to locate its "unchangeable" other within the sensuous world it necessarily follows that "in time it [the unchangeable] has vanished, and that in space it had a remote existence."¹⁷ The unhappiness of consciousness unfolds in the time in which consciousness loses that which would confirm it. The resolution of this unhappiness begins with reason, which reconciles the freedom of self-consciousness with life in the claim that it is certain of all reality¹⁸, that the account of everything, including time, is to be found in the process of self-conscious life itself, in the life of reason, not in an unchangeable other.¹⁹

Reason is thus obliged to give a rational specification of what belongs to a lifetime freely and self-consciously lived, the sort of life exemplified in the life of reason. So the life of reason is a life whose task it is to reconcile the unself-conscious background of action (whether it be manifest in the unhappiness of consciousness, or in the more immediate experience of the problem of habit discussed above) with self-consciousness. The unself-conscious background must become self-conscious if our actions are truly to give rational sense to our lives.²⁰

Intrinsic to action is a coupling with habit, but the demand intrinsic to this coupling is that one be able to act on habit itself, that one be able to change habits. From the point of view of Hegel's claims about reason, the ability to change habit *qua* the background of action would be crucial to a life of reason which takes as its sigil its certainty that it is all reality. But there is a problem with changing habits, with bringing the background of action into the foreground, and this problem will show that reason is insufficient to its task, and that changing habit requires a sense of time different than that native to reason—and that one cannot deal with the problem of habit entirely on one's own.

Let me illustrate this with an example of a pathological, hard to change habit, namely an addiction. The example is from David Foster Wallace's novel *Infinite Jest*, which (among other things) describes a multiplicity of habitual dependencies that inform North American life. Hegel's *Phenomenology* often articulates its dialectic through discussion of central works of literature, for example, *Antigone*, *Hamlet*, *Rameau's Nephew*, *Faust*, and if Hegel's *Phenomenology* demands that we constantly rework it for ourselves, then *Infinite Jest* seems a fitting work of literature through which to do so. Hamlet is here refigured as

the young tennis star Hal Incandenza, whose problem is not so much being a prince in face of his father's murder and a rotten state, but figuring himself out without succumbing to the narcotics hawked by his Rosencrantz and Guildenstern like chums, or to other dependencies. To use or not to use is the question, and that is the question posed to just about every character in the book: how to make sense of secular life in face of the habitual dependencies integral to that very project. Below, I focus on Don Gately, a small time thief and addict, whose path crosses Hal's in various ways, and who ends up being more or less crucified by the end of the book. In the world of *Infinite Jest*, entertainment and addiction are a pervasive and inherent background of secular life, and the way out seems to be through what amounts to religious community, as is shown below. The novel, then, has the advantage of tracing habit and dependency as an inherent background of the secular, individualized life-world of North America, while showing how religion and community in the sense identified by Hegel are in fact still crucial to secular life, despite the claims of the secular world. This also helps bring Hegel into a broader discussion of lived time.

Don Gately is successfully shaking his habit by participating in A.A. (Alcoholics Anonymous) meetings:

About four months into his Ennet House residency, the agonizing desire to ingest synthetic narcotics had been mysteriously magically removed from Don Gately.... They said to get creakily down on his mammoth knees in the A.M. every day and ask God As He Understood Him to remove the agonizing desire, and to hit the old knees again at night before sack and thank this God-ish figure for the Substanceless day just ended, if he got through it. He didn't have any God- or J.C.-background, and the knee-stuff

seemed like the limpest kind of dickless pap, and he felt like a true hypocrite just going through the knee-motions that he went through faithfully every A.M. and P.M., without fail, motivated by a desire to get loaded so horrible that he often found himself humbly praying for his head to just finally explode already and get it over with. Pat had said it didn't matter at this point what he thought or believed or even said. All that mattered was what he *did*. If he did the right things, and kept doing them for long enough, what Gately thought and believed would magically change. Even what he said.²¹

Gately cannot figure out how A.A. works. He gives himself over to the slogans, vocabulary and rituals of A.A. ("One day at a time," etc.), and prays to a God who never appears and that he does not believe in: "when he tries to achieve a Big-Picture spiritual understanding of a God as he can understand Him, he feels Nothing—not nothing but *Nothing*, an edgeless blankness that somehow feels worse than the sort of unconsidered atheism he Came In with."²² He cannot *understand* how these rituals, which at every repetition remind him of the full weight of his habit, have 'added up' to relief from his addiction. He cannot understand how repeatedly doing things that have no *rationaly* discernible direct purpose in fighting off his addiction can magically change him. How can ritual foreground action transform a habit that otherwise seems like an unmoveable, unshakeable background of his life?

Gately is living an extreme version of a problem intrinsic to habit formation and change, one which Aristotle points out in the *Nicomachean Ethics*.²³ *No one action establishes a habit.* Although habits run us from our past, we cannot directly act in the present to change our future habits. To change a habit, we have to repeatedly act *as*

if from habit, and wait until the habit-to-be actually becomes a fixed part of our behaviour. Wanting to change a habit, then, is inherently paradoxical: the act of change can never be directly initiated in the present, and there is a sense in which it is not an act, since we do not directly affect the change. If one does not comprehend this paradoxical structure, then the attempt to change a habit fails to appear to be an act, since it does not exhibit a straightforward rational structure of action, in which some decision on our part is comprehensible as leading to some decisive change in our world. To experience an attempted change of habit, then, without comprehension of its structure, is to experience one's choosing as dissipating into a future not yet comprehended by one's present, it is to throw oneself into an endless repetition of a ritual that seemingly can never yield change and is thus to immerse oneself in an almost messianic future that is integral to oneself yet remote. It is to throw one's choice toward a promise that appears impossible to fulfil, and is thus to be put in contact with a beyond that is to fulfil this promise. Gately does not believe in this beyond. So he cannot figure out why just doing the right thing for long enough can change his life: "He couldn't for the goddamn *life* of him understand how this thing worked, this thing that was working. It drove him bats."²⁴

Gately's problem is that he is trying to make sense of his conversion away from narcotics through the attitude of reason, which, *qua* being certain that it is all reality, claims that action is rationally comprehensible down to its last detail without reference to something beyond reason. Gately is aware of this tension between reason and his conversion. In his opinion, Geoffrey Day's problem stems from his intellectual pretensions: "It's the newcomers with some education that are the worst, according to Gene M. They identify

their whole selves with their head, and the Disease makes its command headquarters in the head." (272)²⁵ Gately, however, doesn't identify himself with the head or reject A.A.'s prescriptions as irrational, as does Day (a bit too secular, Day); Gately takes up A.A.'s rituals and thus moves beyond reason's claim that it can secure all action to the last detail.²⁶

The attitude of reason would be adequate to grasping what happens when these rituals work only if action and ritual could be grasped as a sequence of events in the time frame of a rationally orderable cosmos, that is, within a temporality antithetical to lived time. But as Hegel shows in his study of reason, reason cannot be a mere observing bystander that locates its action within frameworks that it constitutes. Science claims to observe life and explain it from a rational perspective; anything that cannot be explained by reason is beyond reason. But the perspective of rational observation in fact builds itself in a time that is beyond that of reason. For example, rational observation ultimately leads scientists to explain nature as an autonomous realm that unfolds in a cosmological time; but to be a scientist is not merely to observe an autonomous nature from a scientific perspective, it is to communicate one's results to a community of scientists and is therefore to participate in the lifetime in which scientists build communities of reason. This means that scientists cannot reduce their actions to sequences in cosmological time, the activity of science is beyond the purely rational framework established by science. Rationality wants to constitute a rational sense for action, but in fact the sense that rationality foregrounds depends on a background whose constitution is extra-rational (not irrational!), a background that arises in a time beyond that of rational analysis.²⁷

From Gately's experience, then, we learn something about senses of time active in habit-action. On the one hand, the rational attitude tries to make sense of action by articulating it in a time of succession that would be graspable by a rational consciousness, on the other hand, Gately experiences his change of habit and action as unfolding in a time that is beyond his grasp as a singular rational consciousness. *When* will his actions result in a change of habit? He doesn't know. *How* do actions lead to change in the series of A.M.s and P.M.s, how do these moments relate to one another temporally? He doesn't know. He wants an ordering across activities in time that makes rational sense, but instead he experiences his change as unfolding in a time that is somewhat opaque, in a time where things *will* eventually happen if he faithfully adheres to the way that others *have* done things. This is the experience that changing our own action is the work of a lifetime, that change of action is not local to the here and now. Changing a habit—and thence ultimately acting in a way that is of our own choosing—requires a sense of time other than the one supplied by a purely rational world view. If rationality is a type of self-conscious activity, and if this activity requires a background of self-conscious communal life that is irreducible to pure reason—which is Hegel's point in his analysis of reason—then the sense of time claimed by pure reason is insufficient to making sense of rational activity. (At this point it would be easy to object that this is not a problem about a failure of reason, it is a problem about Gately's failure to be rational. If only he would act like a rational agent instead of messing up his life with narcotics and theft, then he wouldn't be in this mess, and the above points about time and action would be moot. But this misses the point that if we are interested in human experience, then it is in fact the case that we

get into the sorts of problems that Gately experiences, that a purely rational stance towards one's life fails to respond to the problems intrinsic to human life. We are not beings who fail to live up to a standard of pure reason, we are beings whose life is something beyond the ambit of pure reason, and in my understanding Hegel's chapter on "Reason" is an argument for this point, as is his analysis of self-consciousness in terms of desire.²⁸) Hegel's analysis of reason implies that a sense of time beyond a rationally ordered time series is requisite to life.²⁹

But there is something more here. Gately realizes that changing his habit is not the work of his individual lifetime, but a work that requires participation in A.A. His involvement with A.A. is fundamental to the "magic" that makes this thing work, "this thing that was working."³⁰ The sense of time requisite to life is a sense of a time that arises through participation in a community.

We can arrive at a better sense of the role of community in the attempt to change habit (and thereby secure a rational sense of action) by moving beyond a discussion of Hegel's criticism of reason to tracking a series of senses of time that emerge *via* Hegel's discussion of spirit. The following section broadly steps through Hegel's discussion of the main shapes of spirit studied in chapter six of the *Phenomenology*, namely ethical substance, culture and morality. It shows how the unself-conscious background integral to each of these shapes (as it would be manifest if we think about how one changes and makes sense of one's action within each shape) implies a particular sense of time. And it shows how tensions in this complex of changing action and senses of time demand further shapes of spiritual life. The strategy is to develop a temporal inflection within the dialectic that Hegel presents in the *Phenomenology*; direct justification for

claims made about the *Phenomenology* is given in the notes.

III: The Time of Spirit

My central point about ethical substance is that making sense of one's action in ethical substance implies a sense of a time that goes back into one's *ethos*.

Reason would claim that rational action can be made sense of in a time reducible to rational analysis. But Hegel's analysis of rational action shows that such action in fact depends on what Hegel calls a substance, a community of people who are already bound together by something that they themselves have not formulated, by a bond that precedes the time in which the community sets out to find ways of acting together rationally; such a bond is a condition of seeking ways of acting together rationally. To do science you need a rational, scientific community, but to have a rational community arise you already need a bond far more fundamental than anything specified by rationality itself.

The form of spiritual life in which this bond is most prominent is ethical substance, that is, the life of a people who define themselves in terms of a bond fixed long ago in a founding act of ancestors or gods, in a tradition that percolates down to the present in the form of a fixed body of practices and laws, an *ethos*.³¹ For Hegel, the Greeks are exemplary of such a people.

The shift from rationality to ethical substance entails a claim about senses of time. When I act as an ethical agent, defining my action in terms of a tradition that has been founded long before me, I cannot fully constitute the sense of my act on my own, the intention that my act manifests and my success in manifesting that intention depend on the *ethos* from which I set out to act. (This, for example, is why, according to Collingwood, we write

history, or tell myths.³²) So my action does not make sense as issuing from my own here and now, but as issuing from a past belonging to my *ethos* and as moving toward a future that will again be shared by my *ethos*. My action takes place in a time where it has already been determined how one thing leads to another, a time in which my action works to its fullest if action like it has already worked. As Hegel puts it, through the words of Sophocles' *Antigone*, the laws of ethical action "are not of yesterday or today, they are everlasting."³³

That one's sense of time must go back into the time of one's *ethos*, while one acts in one's present, points to a problem about the relation between individual and *ethos*, which is cognate to a central problem worked out by Hegel in the chapter on spirit. Against reason's claim that it can constitute the sense of time requisite to action, action, in virtue of its unself-conscious background, depends on a time whose sense one does not constitute on one's own. Gately cannot make sense of how he is truly participant in the time of his change, even though that change is central to his lifetime. With ethical substance, we have moved from a cosmological sense of time, the rational sense of which would be constituted in abstraction from life, to a time whose sense arises within life—but within the life of an *ethos* that is in tension with the individual.

Consider the case of *Antigone*, as analyzed by Hegel.³⁴ *Antigone* experiences the demand of action as going back into a past that claims to be the past of all Greeks, but then experiences that this past fails in its claim to be the past that rules *this* present. The laws of the Gods fail to hold sway here and now. In terms of time, the lesson of *Antigone's* attempt to act within the ethical order is that the past that one claims as the common, unself-conscious background of one's action cannot actually have been given as a simple past over and done with, for

example, in a past granted by the Gods. If the past from which one acts is to be adequate to the present of which it is the past, and to one's future, then the past cannot be over and done with, it must be a self-conscious labour of one's here and now. Unlike a rational agent, an ethical agent experiences her past as something vital to her present, but on the other hand, for an ethical agent this past is beyond rational comprehension, a time way back when, a time when Titans roamed the earth and heroes could pick up huge boulders, etc. It is a time severed from the present by fundamental differences between then and now. If the past is severed from the present, then the sense that the past gives to action cannot be reconciled with the present. Antigone backgrounds her action against the removed past, Creon backgrounds his action against the civil strife of the present. Their conflict is in some respects a conflict about the senses of time in which one should act: does one act with the sense that one's actions are to be measured against the standards of the eternal past, or does one act in a timely way to save the city?³⁵ (The play intriguingly draws attention to a linking conflict between these times, by setting the drama in a time of lineage and descent that tangles human action with fate and the Gods.)

The point about time that we can glean from Hegel's study of ethical substance is that ethical substance foregrounds action against a time that is already done, a time of the *ethos*, but this time is incommensurate with the time of the self-conscious action of the one who acts. The Greeks are self-conscious of this conflict, it is the stuff of tragedy for them, and also of philosophy and politics. Through rational deliberation on how a people should live together, the Greek tradition dissolves itself, for example, into cities that self-consciously constitute their own tradition by writing constitutions. So

for Hegel the Greeks are not only exemplary of ethical substance, but are its culmination, since they dissolve ethical substance. This dissolution leads us to culture.

Culture works to resolve the conflict between the time of the individual and the time of the *ethos* by constituting the shared time of a cultural epoch, an *ethos* that we have built within time. The problem of self-conscious individual action in ethical substance shows that what is required is a time that senses the past and future as self-consciously related to the present. This time is to be found in the self-conscious connection between past, present and future that is central to cultural labour, as analyzed by Hegel.³⁶ For example, both faith and enlightenment, and culture in general, construct a whole world-view in the present, and such a world-view intrinsically includes a view of the past as an integral genesis point of the present, and of the world-view's future as the purpose of that genesis. Cultural work takes the form of cultural movements that 'spontaneously' initiate new forms of life that establish past precedent for making sense of what we do today, and establish a 'glorious' future, as if a cultural movement through its self-definition pops out into the world fully formed.³⁷ Enlightenment comes on the scene as a movement that calls on everyone to become enlightened; it has discovered that our past is such that we have always possessed the capacity for being enlightened, even if we did not know it. As Hegel puts it, the call of enlightenment is "be for yourselves what you are in yourselves—reasonable."³⁸ That call retrojects a past that becomes the basis for enlightenment's building toward an enlightened future.

The time of cultural action is thus the time of a cultural epoch, a time whose past is interpreted and determined through the ongoing insights and achievements of the present. This stance of culture is perfectly

exemplified and taken to its extreme in the French revolution, with its renovation of the calendar, and in the rewriting of history intrinsic to all cultural revolution.

This extreme points to an intrinsic problem: cultural time is in fact not a spontaneous production, it arises from a past prior to a cultural movement, which is to say that it arises from a confluence of multiple times of action; a culture does not pop out into the world, it grows out of something beyond it. To give an example, enlightenment as a cultural movement does not forge itself from nothing. It forges itself by contrast with a specific background. Its claim that we are all in ourselves reasonable is not straightforwardly true, for if this were so, then there would be no need for enlightenment as a movement, and no background against which enlightenment could stand out as a new movement. And if enlightenment is to explain how there was a time when people were unenlightened, or explain why it needs to call on people to be what they already are, then it must conceive enlightenment as a transformation that occurs in individual lifetimes, and first occurs in those who become the founders of the movement. The revolutionary claim of enlightenment, that everything is now different for us as a whole, already implicates it in a struggle against the momentum of multiple life times that are not yet enlightened, against a non-enlightened cultural past, and against present anti-enlightenment movements. The past is not simply a past constituted by this present culture, and the past is not univocally directed toward the future claimed by this culture. The past and future have a momentum that stems from the multiple life times that compose and precede cultural movements. So another sense of time is required.

As against ethical substance, whose time recedes into a past of founding

ancestors and gods, the time of cultural movement is the time of a cultural epoch that breaks itself away from the past and forges a new connection between past, present and future. But the time of the cultural epoch is alien to the individual. Yet we have seen that a cultural epoch does not get to define its own time, that culture builds itself from the lifetime of individuals. What is required is a sense of time that interweaves past, present and future within the life of an individual (but not, as Hegel's analysis of reason shows, in a way that constitutes the sense of time as abstractly individual).

Morality, as Hegel analyzes it, demands such a sense of time, one that merges the individual and the universal.³⁹ Morality realizes that action is not something that happens spontaneously, it requires its linkage to a past and future and general background that make sense of action as moral. But ultimately if this past and future are to make sense of one's own action, they must in some sense be one's own past and future. And yet the lesson of reason is that in a life well-lived, a life that directs itself toward the right thing to do, the background of one's action has its sense in a time shared with others. There are multiple conflicts apparent in moral action. One must act, but action is a process that takes time, it cannot yet yield its intended result when one initiates it, so one must act without full comprehension of the future of one's action, and in doing so one necessarily draws on one's past ways of acting, and that past cannot be made a background that transparently fits one's present situation, precisely since that background is past. But on the other hand, it is precisely one's past that gives sense to one's act, and one's act has its sense in its future. As a necessary background to one's present action, past and future seem to be unself-conscious moments that one cannot grasp in the present, yet they

need to be made self-conscious for one to fully make sense of one's action and act appropriately. The intention to act morally thus plunges one into a profound encounter with time—with one's lifetime—but it also confronts one with the fact that one's lifetime escapes oneself, that one's lifetime precisely involves a whole lifetime and could never be a possession that could be grasped all at once with full self-consciousness.⁴⁰ The past is done, the future is not yet, but on the other hand, both past and future are vital here and now as the unself-conscious background of action. These contradictions seem to be insoluble, and they would be if action were something purely individual—if action were something that *one* did on one's own. (The beautiful soul withers away from the time of action since it cannot successfully negotiate these demands of action as an individual.)⁴¹ But recall that it is because action inherently brings one into an encounter with something beyond oneself that one cannot give a purely rational sense to the time of action. To be self-conscious is to live by one's act, and to make sense of one's act as one's life is to make one's act be responsible to its inherent self-consciousness—but *the self-consciousness that would make sense of one's act is not a purely individual self-consciousness, it is not numerically one.*⁴² Action is not something individual, and our lifetime is a time amidst the lifetimes of others.

Conscience is the position that lives this contradiction. Conscience realizes that moral action is properly initiated from one's own lifetime rather than the time of culture or the Gods. One's conscience is what is most singular about oneself as a singular moral agent, it is the inner truth of self-consciousness. Yet conscience realizes that each one has its own conscience, and this conscience is expressed in moral action in the communal sphere. To live by

conscience is to recognize the demand of another's conscience in the action of that other. Conscience as the most internal is for that very reason bound to all other consciences and the external world of conscientious action; and this bind of the internal and the external is precisely where one's inner conscience and one's outer action can fall apart in time. The conscientious lifetime does not necessarily appear as such when it acts its life in public time. The position of conscience realizes that no one self-consciousness can succeed in initiating conscientious action from within the confines of its own lifetime, even if conscientious action must be initiated on the basis of the conscientious lifetime.⁴³ Thus on Hegel's analysis action from conscience can only succeed if it develops into the labour of forgiveness, which is the self-conscious labour of 'filling in' the self-consciousness background that no *one* can succeed in constituting as an individual.

Forgiveness precisely requires a different sense of time.⁴⁴ It comprehends that each action stems from an unself-conscious background that must be made self-conscious. Each action thus carries a burden of a lifetime, and what gives sense to conscience is a lifetime that is an integral weave of past, present and future. Yet no one action in a lifetime ever resolves this burden, is ever adequate to fully resolving the tension between unself-conscious and self-conscious moments inherent in any action. Forgiveness tries to fill in the comprehension that goes missing in this tension, it lends the sense of action that goes missing in a lifetime that can never yet have resolved its own tensions. Approached with questions of time in mind, forgiveness finds the missing sense in action by sensing it in a time in which proper action *can* eventually take place, and in which action is to be understood against the past and future that a whole lifetime is aiming at. In short,

forgiveness comprehends action as taking place in lived time—this is the time in which conscience acquires its sense.⁴⁵ But this sense can only be acquired in the mutually entwined lived time where forgiveness can occur. One's own lived time is inadequate to making sense of conscientious action, what is required is a sense of the shared time in which action can work itself out. And in this shared time the non-linear weave apparent in the experience of individual action is, so to speak, amplified—the time in which we can forgive is not merely a past, present and future sensed as interwoven in the experience of action, it is a time in which we must *work at being self-conscious* of this interweaving as the ground of all possible action. Here the sense of time implied as an unself-conscious background of all action becomes a *self-conscious sense of time* that enables action, and the requisite sense of self-consciousness about time is precisely a self-consciousness about action as necessarily having its background in a community and in our histories.⁴⁶

At this point we are in a position to review what can be gleaned about time from Hegel's study of reason and shapes of spiritual life. Reason claimed that it could make full sense of the time in which it acts, but the very condition of action is an engagement with otherness that ultimately implies a different sense of time, a time in which one's actions take one into a temporal flow beyond pure reason. In ethical substance, this time beyond reason goes back into the time of the *ethos*, but this opens a conflict between the time of individual rational action and the time of the *ethos*. Culture opens a sense of time in which past and future are self-consciously related to the present, *via* the labour of building a cultural epoch. But culture does not yet give a sense of time that makes sense of individual action, since it brings cultural *epochs* and their temporal dimension into

being by speech and cultural *fiat* that alienate the individual. Morality takes individual action and its conditions as its central concern, but this plunges morality into the difficulty of providing a unity to action within the life of an individual, given that action is dispersed in time; for morality, however, the unity of the time of action is at least to be related to the life of an individual moral agent. Hegel's analysis implies that this unity is never to be achievable in any immediate form, since action is never over and done with, but rather requires the labour of forgiveness which so to speak supplements the temporal dispersion into which one's action is plunged. The sense of time that ultimately matters in spiritual life is a sense of lived time, of a past, present and future woven together in light of one's attempt to act as individual. But this lived time does not belong to one alone, it is made sense of in a community. We can get a better sense of this relation between lived time and community by briefly turning to the role of religion in the *Phenomenology*.

Religion begins with an unself-conscious experience of this claim about the implication of our lifetime in the lifetime of others. In religion, the time that makes sense of action belongs to a beyond in which we are in some way participant. If one follows the ordering of weeks and days integrally and eternally specified by the divine order of things, then, religion claims, one will be participant in something good. Therein lies the way to proper action. In religion, the time of shared devotion brings us into a participation in a time whose sense is experienced as something outside us—for example, there is a God who creates the world and the visible order of time, and we make sense of our place in that order and move beyond the secular time order by following the cycle of holy days and prayers; to observe a holy day is to participate in an ordering whose holiness is

in a time beyond us. In contrast, in the labours of spirit discussed above, there is a sense of a time beyond one, but it is experienced as stemming from subjectivity and the problems of action. Therein lies the contrast between religious time and, for example, Antigone's experience of time: Antigone finds that her action recedes into a past defined by the Gods, a past that opens conflicts in the sense of her own action, whereas devotional worship is a way of partaking in an eternal sense that is already there and that goes beyond one's own life.

The point of Hegel's chapter on religion is to show that in fact the external aspect of religion, this aspect of an eternal beyond in which one partakes, must become subjective and move into time. What is encountered as an unself-conscious background of ritual life in fact is already a self-conscious element of life, and becomes ever more self-conscious. In terms of time, this means that the time beyond us in which we make sense of life cannot merely be a given outside, we must be participant in it. For Hegel, this is apparent in revealed religion's claim that God has become man, which would also be the claim that the time of a beyond in which we are participant is in fact the lifetime of a community. But this would also be apparent in any religion in which the community comes to focus on forgiveness, on mediating the conflicts between different orders of time, the time of the individual vs. the time of the community vs. the time of the eternal. (I am thinking, for example, of Yom Kippur in Judaism, which might be translated as "The Day of Atonement," but at the root of the word "kippur" are words for washing things away.⁴⁷ Indeed, one of the rituals of the day is "tashlich," casting bits of bread into a river, symbolically ridding oneself of sins and bad habits. Rabbis and teachers constantly emphasise that the prayers do not just ask God to disregard sins committed against

God, but ask others to disregard the sins, slights, and wrong-doings that we have committed against them—and the singing of these prayers together as a community is a central part of the ritual. So on this holiest day of the year, the people's history with God, the yearly cycle of the community, and the path of one's lifetime intersect and support one another in the subjectivity of a communal ritual that tries to make a fresh start with actions on all these levels of time.)

I would like to take up these general points about time and religion by returning to Gately. Gately acknowledges that something beyond his rational capacity is integral to his reform to the extent that he realizes that his own time of action is not what enables his reform. We can see, though, that the beyond that supports Gately's attempt to change is not a remote, mysterious beyond, in fact it is the ritual communal life of A.A. This community unconditionally supports and forgives him in his attempt to change, even if Gately does not comprehend how what he is doing works, that is, even if Gately does not comprehend how attempting to change an addictive habit can be an *act*. Here we have to acknowledge that the ritual life of A.A., its slogans and meetings, expresses an unself-conscious comprehension of how attempts to change addictive habits can be acts. A.A. gives Gately the time to change and the time in which he can change because its activities get Gately to dwell in patterns that are alien to his rational attempts at change, and thus bring Gately into a ritual. This ritual time fills in the gaps that make it impossible for Gately to change on his own. What A.A. does not do is give a self-conscious account of how it works, and this is what drives Gately bats, and why he has to go on faith when it comes to A.A.

The A.A. life expresses an unself-conscious comprehension of how attempts to change habits can actually act, and

precisely in being unself-conscious this comprehension pictures⁴⁸ the possibility of acting as coming from a beyond that is common to all members of A.A. Believe in some higher power, whatever it is, perform one's rituals, come to every meeting without fail, and one will change, how, A.A. will not say. But if it is in fact the ritual communal life that is the mutual beyond that supports the action of its members, A.A.'s picture of what it is doing does not in fact comprehend what it is doing. The fact that A.A. works is not a brute fact about the workings of life or the workings of time, it is neither magic nor miracle, it is something in which the activity of A.A. is participant. The time of change that A.A. enables for its members is a time whose sense is maintained by the work of A.A. members. The beyond is in fact emergent out of a self-conscious communal locale in which members share a sense of activity and a sense of a possible time of change. In a way, A.A. knows this, for it realizes that it is nothing other than its own work of meeting and following ritual; but it is not self-conscious about this connection, since within A.A., the experience of change as ultimately being granted by a beyond is in fact requisite to success in changing, given that what is being changed has the dire weight of an addiction. If one really needed A.A. to drop an addiction, then even if the workings of A.A. were explained, even if one understood it, one would still have to go through the ritual, live each day one day at a time within the ritual time of A.A., in order to change. Or at least this is what the novel suggests, and it seems convincing, and supportable by a phenomenological analysis of the dependency intrinsic to any action (with the complication that a discussion of degrees would be inherent in such an analysis) as well as by analyses of alcoholism such as Gregory Bateson's.⁴⁹ We are the *akratic* animal, and since being self-conscious of one's *akrasia* is precisely

the condition for *akrasia*, and not its solution, since *akrasia* thus always confronts us in our effort to live our mortal lives well, we *akratic* animals are also inherently the ritual spiritual, religious and political animal.

For us mortals the sense of individual action demands a self-conscious background that is more than individual, and in which we are in fact participant. But sometimes that self-conscious background must appear as an unself-conscious background of action that is given by the grace of something that does not demand our full participation—this is what religion presents. What Wallace's novel suggests is that the forms of dependency that are endemic to secular life in fact demand something cognate to religion as Hegel describes it.⁵⁰ Religion is not a practice reducible to forms of worship, definite historical forms, and given codes (although it is inseparable from them); it is a way (among other things) of unself-consciously participating in a beyond and sense of time that enables us to make sense of our lives and action, given that our mortal lives dissipate in time. But we are in fact implicitly, self-consciously participant in this beyond, and this beyond is reciprocally participant in the here and now, in the form of the communal life of mortal individuals who are constituted such that their action is always a reciprocal bind between the unself-conscious and the self-conscious, between more habitual and more active poles of action. Religion presents rituals and practices that address life in this bind, while the life of spirit is the self-conscious working out of this bind. Both aspects show that the sense integral to action requires a sense of action as occurring in a lived time that is something more than individual, a time that is in fact the life of the community.

IV: The Time of Absolute Knowing

The above specifies senses of time implied in the shapes of experience that Hegel studies. Having surveyed these senses of time, we are in a position to suggest an interpretation of Hegel's claims about time in the chapter "Absolute Knowing," especially his remarks about time as the intuition of the concept.

Hegel writes that "Time is the concept itself that is there and which presents itself to consciousness as empty intuition," and that time "is the outer, intuited pure self which is not grasped by the self, the merely intuited concept."⁵¹ By "concept" Hegel means the ongoing result of the sort of spiritual activity discussed above, as a living, self-conscious process that works to comprehend the network of relations, meanings and situations through which such spiritual activity elaborates and comprehends itself. From the point of view of the above analysis of time, the claim that time is the merely intuited concept and that time is the concept that is there and which presents itself to consciousness as empty intuition is the claim that time is the *formal aspect* in which the demand for conceptual labour is *intuited*, yet not comprehended.

We have seen how particular situations that call for self-conscious action throw one into an encounter with different senses of time, whether it be that of one's life, that of one's culture, or that of one's *ethos*. One is thrown into such an encounter because action is inherently something dispersed in time, it cannot take place all at once here and now, it moves toward a presumed future and presumes a starting point that cannot be secured now, because now is already too late. Yet past, present and future must be integrally implicated in one another if one's action is to be successfully self-conscious. As Hegel writes, "spirit necessarily appears in time." What one encounters in action,

then, is a need for an unself-conscious background that would provide an integral weave of past, present and future that would enable self-conscious action. Pure reason does not succeed in providing this weave, because it cannot get beyond itself into a time of action that must already be there for reason to be at all; but the various shapes of spirit do provide different textures and configurations of this weave. Each such weave of time, intuitively encountered (especially in the case of action that fails to meet the demands of self-consciousness), implicitly indicates the concept belonging to the corresponding shape of spirit. In encountering a particular weave of time in relation to one's action, one is implicitly encountering the concept behind that weave. For example, one encounters the concept of the *ethos* in experiencing one's action as bearing the weight of the past of the Gods. But to the extent that one is encountering the concept *via* the time-form belonging to it, one is not really comprehending the concept at all, one is engaged in an *intuitive* encounter with the concept. When Don Gately realizes that he cannot comprehend how he is changing, but that he is nonetheless changing, he encounters a time-form that is paradoxical, that presents a certain resistance or opacity in relation to his self-conscious efforts at action. This intuitive opacity of the time form precisely indicates a conceptual underpinning that eludes his comprehension, but is nonetheless actual—he knows some concept is at work but does not know the concept. He is *encountering* the concept that would enable him to make sense of his change (in fact he is living that concept *via* his participation in A.A. and his world). But so far as this encounter remains at the intuitive level of something that drives him bats, he is not comprehending that concept, the concept is "there" as "merely intuited." This is because the intuition in question is "empty"

of anything other than its form. Don Gately is experiencing a peculiar sense of time, and just that; this sense of time is correlate with his changing self, but he cannot make sense of the time in which he senses that change; the peculiarity of the change in its *merely intuitive form* is empty of clues as to what is at work behind it. Comprehended from another point of view, however, this time-form, grasped in relation to self-conscious action, specifies precisely the concept that enables Gately's change, namely the concept embodied in the communal activity of A.A.

The study of senses of time in the previous section lets us see how the concept that comprehends itself through the activity of spiritual life sediments itself in various senses of time implied by each shape of spiritual life. This gives us an important ingredient in making sense of the intuited time-form as the concept "that is there and which presents itself to consciousness as empty intuition," and of time as "the outer, intuited pure self which is not grasped by the self, the merely intuited concept."⁵² It also helps make sense of Hegel's claim that given that time is "the concept itself that is there and which presents itself to consciousness as empty intuition" *for this reason (deswegen)* "spirit necessarily appears in time": if the concept that is there presents itself in the form of time, and this means that the concept of self-conscious life actualizes itself through the sorts of time-forms discussed above, then there is no way for spirit to conceive itself other than in time.

But Hegel's claims that "spirit necessarily appears in time" is qualified with the statement that it does so "just so long as it has not grasped its pure concept, i.e. has not annulled time," and he also writes that when the concept grasps itself "it sublates its time-form, comprehends this intuiting [of time], and is a comprehended and comprehending intuiting." This appears to

many to be the troubling claim that the move to philosophical comprehension is a move that dispenses with time, that somehow Hegel thinks that philosophical comprehension brings an 'end' to issues of time. But there is an obvious and deep irony in the claim that spirit necessarily appears in time "so long as [*solange*]" it has not annulled time, and as Flay is careful to point out, what is sublated in this annulling is only the time-form, not time itself.⁵³ Time is not abolished, it *acquires a different sense*, a sense that is no longer bound to the *formal aspect* of our intuition of time, but to the *concept* of which time is the intuitive form. We can refer to Gately and A.A. again: the sense that Gately makes of his life is a sense bound to a time-form (the succession of A.M.s and P.M.s, of A.A. meetings and activities) that is simply there as the magical framework in which he can change, and A.A.'s picture for making sense of life is likewise bound to a time-form. But if we comprehend how A.A. is in fact a community whose labour responds to the conceptual demand intrinsic to human action and life, which labour in fact generates the time-form that enables change (the lifetime of the community), then we comprehend that the time-form in fact has its integrity in a conceptual labour, that the time-form is a necessary appearance, but that the necessity of the appearance is in the *concept* that gives it integrity. It is not time itself, formally determined as a flow of events, or a particular texture of happenings, etc., that enables change, but time as the form in which the concept is manifest and is there, in which the community works out its concept and thereby lives a time in which change is possible.

Alternatively, consider the saying "time heals." There is something true about this. Without one's being self-consciously involved, without one being able to be self-consciously involved, grief, heartbreak and

trauma may heal. To the extent that one just utters this as a saying, one has not moved beyond the formal aspect of time, even if one is saying something that one takes to be true for all time; for in just saying it one takes oneself to be imparting some wisdom about a peculiar property or power of the time-form. But if one comprehends *why* time heals, and that it is *necessary* to healing, and that healing is not just a matter of waiting out clock ticks but being involved in life, if one understands something about the very concept of spiritual life that necessitates that an experience of a particular sense of time be crucial to that life, then one's claim grasps the concept of spiritual life and is no longer *determined* by the time-form, even if the claim is still *about* the time-form. And Hegel's *Phenomenology* does seem to imply an argument that time can heal,⁵⁴ so in this sense if we have grasped its argument about the absolute starting point of philosophy in comprehension of the concept, then we have put aside the time-form in grasping once and for all that the spiritual role of the time-form is in the conceptual labour that it enables and manifests. With respect to spiritual life, time is to be comprehended in terms of *the integrity of self-conscious living action*, not as a form of succession. To put it in terms of later phenomenology, time as it is lived does not get its sense from the succession of moments, but from an inner integrity that arises from within, in an ecstatic structuring that is integral with life and its sense.

But this integrity of self-conscious living action ultimately achieves its sense in the conceptual situation of a community. The concept is never individual, it is never *a* concept, it is *the* concept that works across self-conscious individuals and communities through their interrelations. The concept *places itself* in the situation and history from which it arises. To say that spirit necessarily appears in time "so long as" it has not

grasped its concept is to say that spirit's grasp of its concept is something that arises in time; and above I have argued that when it grasps its concept spirit does not discard time, but comprehends the time-form as manifesting the concept that is *still* at work in the life of community. Such comprehension of time precisely requires the conceptual labour of analysing the community through its history and situation—and this is not a matter of gathering empirical data, rather it is a matter of comprehending *how the community comprehends* itself through its history and situation. In this sense the time-form is annulled, since comprehension arises in the time of self-interpretation, with its hermeneutic circles, etc.; and yet comprehension is precisely situated within the community, within the interpretative dimensions through which the community makes sense of itself and its place.

When Hegel writes that spirit sublates its time-form when it comprehends its concept, this is far from the claim that spirit makes an exit from time into some beyond. On the contrary, spirit enters into comprehension of its place in the world. The time-form is sublated because first of all something far more robust, something like place—not time on its own, but time and space as integrally woven and embedded in each other within a rooted history—is requisite to making sense of spiritual life. This is powerfully suggested by Flay's remarks about place in his article. But place and the sense of time that arises in place must be grasped in terms of their conceptual articulation. On the one hand, this is the argument that lived time is inherently emplaced in the community, in the situation and living framework of interpretation that lets us make sense of lived time; on the other hand, this is the argument that place is not an immediate phenomenon, but nurtured by a conceptual labour that gives place a

sense. In this way Hegel's study of shapes of experience, and the implications of this study regarding senses of time, and the relation between these senses and the sense of place and concept, open into the discussion of lived time and place that are currently underway.⁵⁵

We are mortal, our days are numbered. But our days are to be numbered as those of a life well-lived, as a life whose sense can be comprehended before its number has turned up. To do this we need a sense of time as not merely a succession of works and days, but as a comprehensive framework for making sense of one's life. This comprehensive framework is not granted by any moment to moment formal progression of time-events, by the ticking of the clock, it is granted by conceptual activity that makes sense of that framework within its place. The numbering of our days, then, cannot begin or stop with the days of one's own life, it needs to be imbricated in a place and its history, and the demand of this imbrication is ever more comprehensive; to comprehend one's lifetime, one must conceive it in the universally comprehensive setting that enables it, and to do that a "one" is insufficient, rather a "we" conceived of such "ones" must bring the universal back into the place from which it is conceived. The attempt to justly number the days of one's mortal life, which attempt is demanded in every moment of a life which as mortal would escape one in time and in *akratic* action that runs away from one, is the absolute responsibility of comprehending this relation wherein we in our place and history interweave with the universal.⁵⁶ To comprehend this relation is perhaps to write a poem such as William Carlos Williams's *Paterson*⁵⁷, which turns from life as "Rolling up, rolling up heavy with/ numbers", "so that never in this/ world will a man live well in his body/ save dying—and not know himself/ dying", to

"shells and animalcules/ generally and so to man,/ to Paterson," that is, to human life and identity as one with the place of a city and its history:

For the beginning is assuredly
the end—since we know nothing, pure
and simple, beyond
our own complexities.

Yet there is
no return: rolling up out of chaos,
a nine months' wonder, the city
the man, an identity—it can't be
otherwise—an
interpenetration, both ways. Rolling
up! obverse, reverse;
the drunk the sober; the illustrious
the gross; one. In ignorance
a certain knowledge and knowledge,
undispersed, its own undoing.

¹ Cf. Aristotle's discussion of Solon's paradox in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, I-10.

² See especially Heidegger's *Being and Time* (trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson [New York: Harper and Row, 1962]) and Merleau-Ponty's *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris, France: Galimard, 1945); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New Jersey: The Humanities Press, 1962). This is not to belie the differences between the two.

³ This point is nicely articulated by Francis Sparshott's emphasis, in *Taking Life Seriously: A Study of the Argument of the Nicomachean Ethics* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1994), on the way that possession of a sense of time is integral to being an ethical being.

⁴ That reason involves practical life is the point of Hegel's transition from observing reason to reason that actualizes itself in the

chapter “Reason” in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, hrsg. v. Hans-Friedrich Wessels und Heinrich Clairmont (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1988; hereafter *PdG*, with references by page number in the Wessels/Clairmont edition), *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977; hereafter M, with references by paragraph number; translation modified in places, esp. substituting “concept” for “notion” in the translation of “*Begriff*”). The point that such a life presupposes a living situation that cannot be constituted by any purely rational process is nicely expressed in the claim that “It is not, therefore, because I find something is not self-contradictory that it is right; on the contrary, it is right because it is what is right” (*PdG* 287, M437), where this rightness will depend on ethical substance, on the life of a community that is already underway. Joseph C. Flay’s discussion of these transitions in *Hegel’s Quest for Certainty* (Albany: SUNY P, 1984) is very helpful, as is Jean Hyppolite’s in *Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 1974) and John Russon’s in “Hegel’s Phenomenology of Reason and Dualism,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 31 (1993): 71-96. I return to these issues below.

⁵ Flay writes that “Hegel will only actually mention time once more before reaching the last pages of the *Phenomenology* where it will again be explicitly thematized.” (Joseph C. Flay, “Time in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*,” *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 31 [1991]: 259-273, p 263.) Given the context of this sentence, this “once more” would seem to refer to the discussion of time in chapter 3, “Force and the Understanding” and the first mention of time is in chapter 1, “Sense

Certainty.” It is surely right that time only becomes the subject of an extended thematic treatment in these three spots (“Sense Certainty,” “Force and the Understanding” and in the final pages), but Hegel does in fact mention time in some places in between: in the discussion of life in chapter 4, “The Truth of Self-Certainty,” *PdG* 122, M169 (discussed in note 14 below); in the discussion of the unchangeable in 4.b, “Freedom of Self Consciousness,” *PdG* 147, M212 (discussed on page 7 below); the point in M212 is echoed by the point in VI.B “Culture,” that the beyond receives the character of “remoteness in space and time” (*PdG* 353, M534); and there is a discussion of the relation between spirit and time from the point of view of religion at the beginning of chapter 7, “Religion,” *PdG* 446, M679. Flay’s discussion and survey of the literature on time in *Hegel’s Quest for Certainty*, pp 244-247 and note 38, is also helpful on the issue of time in the *Phenomenology*, as is John Burbidge, “Concept and Time in Hegel,” *Dialogue* 13 (1973): 403-422.

⁶ The claim of sense-certainty is that “Our approach to the object must...be immediate or receptive; we must alter nothing in the object as it presents itself. In apprehending it, we must refrain from trying to comprehend it.” (*PdG* 69, M90) However, it turns out that such receptivity in fact requires that universal structures already be in place and “instead of knowing something immediate I take the truth of it, or perceive it” (*PdG* 78, M110), that is, I am involved in perceptual syntheses. It is possible to give an account of the structure of perceptual synthesis as giving determinate content only if there is a complicity between perception and the matter it synthesizes. Perception tacitly posits “the unity of ‘being-for-self’ and ‘being-for-another’” (*PdG* 94, M134), and this is to be understood as a movement that Hegel calls force (*PdG* 95, M136). In

the attempt to understand force as an organizing principle of the perceived world, the understanding is confronted with the fact that it itself is the principle organizing the forces through which the world is understood. “The Understanding’s ‘explanation’ is primarily only the description of what self-consciousness is.” (*PdG* 116, M163) Therefore, there is a fundamental bond between consciousness and its object, and this entails that consciousness is aware of itself only through its object. Consciousness is “essentially the return from otherness,” it is self-consciousness; and the structure of the relation between consciousness and its object means that “self-consciousness is Desire in general.” (*PdG* 121, M167)

⁷ See page 7 and note 9 below.

⁸ See John Russon, *The Self and its Body in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1997), esp. p 69.

⁹ See John Russon, *The Self and its Body in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, p 68-69 and “Embodiment and Responsibility: Merleau-Ponty and the Ontology of Nature,” *Man and World* 27 (1994): 291-308.

¹⁰ As Russon points out in another study of habit, “Embodiment and Responsibility: Merleau-Ponty and the Ontology of Nature,” Merleau-Ponty suggests something like this continuum between the vital, the habitual, the ritual and the personal in the “The Spatiality of One’s Own Body and Motility” in the *Phenomenology of Perception*.

¹¹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace and A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971), 142-143, §410.

¹² John McCumber, “Hegel on Habit,” *The Owl of Minerva* 21 (1990): 155-165, pp 158-159.

¹³ For more on this complexity, see John Russon, “Embodiment and Responsibility: Merleau-Ponty and the Ontology of Nature.”

¹⁴ This is apparent in one of the few things that Hegel does say about time after his chapter on the understanding. In the discussion of desire and life (which precedes the discussion of the lord and the bondsman), he says that one of the moments of the circle of life is “the simple essence of time, which in this equality with itself, has the stable shape of space.” (*PdG* 122, M169) This passage and the discussion of life in chapter IV are very difficult to interpret. But the point of this seemingly obscure passage can, I think, be put in simple terms. As desiring, living beings mutually define themselves and their environment through their living activity. Time as living process has the stable shape of space in the form of an environment that reflects living process. This is significant to all that follows since it shows that time is not an abstract dimension, but a lived dimension integral with a place of activity. Further defence of this interpretation is out of place here. Helpful commentaries on Hegel’s discussion of life are to be found in Russon’s *The Self and its Body in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, esp. 54-61; H.S. Harris’s *Hegel’s Ladder I: The Pilgrimage of Reason* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 322-32; and points about the relation between the flux of time and life are nicely articulated by Flay in “Time in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*,” 265, and also in *Hegel’s Quest for Certainty*, 81-86.

¹⁵ This point is eminently clear in Hegel’s much analyzed struggle to the death. “The presentation of itself, however, as the pure abstraction of self-consciousness consists in showing itself as the pure negation of its objective mode, or in showing that it is not attached to any specific existence, not to the individuality common to existence as such,

that it is not attached to life.” (PdG 130, M187) So to speak, the only gesture through which self-consciousness can show that what really matters to it is pure inward freedom, is to give up life itself rather than submit to the other; but giving up one’s life, as Hegel quickly points out, contradicts the aim of securing the self-conscious life that is aimed at. Instead, what ensues is a process of recognition. The point here is that if what is risked in the dialectic of recognition is one’s life as a whole over time, then in each moment of recognition what is recognized is that life is a self-conscious whole over time.

¹⁶ See Hegel’s introduction of the unhappy consciousness in relation to scepticism, stoicism, and the freedom of consciousness, PdG 143-144, M206. Also cf. Hyppolite’s point that “self-consciousness is the reflection of consciousness on itself; this reflection implies a split from life, a separation so radical that consciousness of it is consciousness of the unhappiness of all reflection.” (*Genesis and Structure of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, 190)

¹⁷ PdG 147, M212. In terms of my discussion, the point of Hegel’s analysis is that the dialectic of the changeable and the unchangeable through which the unhappy consciousness articulates itself is one that neglects the very time of life which has propelled self-consciousness to the point of unhappiness. The restlessness of unhappy consciousness is impacted in this dialectic whereby consciousness tries to escape the very possibility of moving.

¹⁸ PdG 158-159, M233.

¹⁹ That time is a topic integral to reason is quite apparent in Hegel’s analysis of observing reason. He argues that observing reason is compelled toward observation of organic phenomena, and reason’s claim that it can observe a reality that is rationally ordered is more adequately supported by

such phenomena, in virtue of their temporally self-ordering process, which exhibits the sorts of structure belonging to reason itself. For example, he writes: “in existence in its structured shape, observation can encounter reason only as life in general.” (PdG 199, M295) The further point of this paragraph, however, is that the rationally adequate form of the sort of existence that reason observes in “life in general” is in fact to be found in world history. Time figures as an issue graspable by reason, but ultimately it will figure as the time in which reason itself unfolds, which means that reason will not be able to claim an immediate grasp of time, time will have to happen in concert with the world in which reason is situated.

²⁰ That reason must concern itself not only with observing the world but with its own practice and thence with rational action in general is the point of Hegel’s transition from V.A “Observing Reason” to V.B “The Actualization of Rational Self-Consciousness through Itself,” and is summarized in the claim that the category, the unity of being and self claimed by reason’s certainty that it is all reality, which, “in the course of observation has run through the form of being,” is now “posited in the form of being-for-self: consciousness no longer aims to find itself immediately, but to produce itself by its own activity.” (PdG 231, M344). Also see note 4 above. That this self-actualization requires attention to an unself-conscious background that is not absorbable into pure reason will be taken up in what follows, and is also the point of Hegel’s argument that ethical substance and spirit are vital to the project of reason.

²¹ David Foster Wallace, *Infinite Jest* (Boston: Back Bay Books/Little, Brown and Company, 1996), 466.

²² *Infinite Jest*, p 443.

²³ See book II, chapter 4, esp. 1105a15-1105b5.

²⁴ *Infinite Jest*, p 468.

²⁵ Also see the note to this sentence (note 90, pp 1000-1003—yes, this is a novel that has endnotes) which records a conversation between Gately and Day. In terms of the discussion that follows, the point here would be that for its members, AA operates on the level of *Vorstellungen*, not on the level of *Begriff*.

²⁶ On the problem with this sort of rational claim, and why reason depends on a community and history beyond reason, see page 7 and notes 4 and 19 above. Particularly helpful on this issue are Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*; John Russon, "Hegel's Phenomenology of Reason and Dualism"; Joseph Flay's *Hegel's Quest for Certainty*. In this context, Gregory Bateson's analysis of A.A. ("The Cybernetics of "Self": A Theory of Alcoholism," in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* [New York: Ballantine Books, 1972, 309-337], 322) is also relevant. Bateson's point is that conceiving alcoholism along Cartesian, rationalist lines. Alcoholics who operate in this way continually relapse; they have to drink in order to demonstrate that they are in rational control and do not need to drink. The virtue of A.A., according to Bateson, is that it realizes that a ritual or religious framework is required to exit this Cartesian, rationalist bind.

²⁷ See note 20. This point about time being a residuum beyond reason would seem to be suggested by Kant's antinomies.

²⁸ Cf. Hyppolite's point, via Nicolai Hartmann, that one of the signal features of Hegel's discussion of reason is to show that idealism is not a philosophical thesis, but a phenomenon of spirit. (*Genesis and*

Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, 226) On the point that our life is something beyond the ambit of reason, also see the point from Bateson about alcoholism in note 26 above.

²⁹ Cf. the point summarized, e.g., in *PdG* 233-235 M348-350, that individual reason must become universal reason, that the concept of universal reason is found in ethical life, and that ethical life is actual in the sphere of custom—that the life of reason is found in the life of a people. In the broader context of the *Phenomenology* this would be the point that reason cannot comprehend itself through some pure intuition of time, it comprehends itself through the time of custom. Such a time is a condition of rationality: if the reason aimed at by idealism appears as a phenomenon of spirit (see note 28), so too does its time.

³⁰ On this sense of "magic" also see Collingwood's *Principles of Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), chapter IV.

³¹ The argument that rational action depends on substance and that this is first of all to be found in ethical substance is given in the final portions of chapter V of *PdG*, and the point is also made in the introductory portion of V.B; this is also why the analysis of spirit begins with the discussion of *Sittlichkeit*, of *ethos* as a substance. For a discussion of the relation between *Sitte* and habit, see McCumber's "Hegel on Habit"; and see Russon's *The Self and its Body in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*.

³² See R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), esp. the introduction.

³³ See Hegel's point at the end of the chapter on reason (in which he is securing the transition to ethical substance) that the relationship of self-consciousness and its essence is now one in which: "They [the

essences] *are* and nothing more; this is what constitutes the awareness of its relationship to them. Thus, Sophocles' *Antigone* acknowledges them as the unwritten and infallible law of the gods. "They are not of yesterday or today, but everlasting,/ Though where they came from, none of us can tell." (PdG 286, M437). What is essential to rational, ethical life is referred to the past. This is reflected in Hegel's later division of the ethical world into this world and a beyond, governed respectively by human law and divine law, where the divine law is "everlasting." (Cf. PdG 291, M443) It is notable that Hegel's discussion of the division between divine and human law is implicated in a discussion of relations between generations across familial time, where the family is the unconscious (*bewußtlose*) concept (PdG 294, M450). (Cf. V.A.a, esp. PdG 298-300, M456-457) If the human law in the form of the government "has from time to time to shake them [the families] to their core by war" (PdG 298, M455), this is precisely because the family and the divine law with which it is affiliated goes back into a very different time, a time beyond the "from time to time" of the government.

³⁴ PdG VI.A.b.

³⁵ Cf. the point that "For the commands of government have a universal, public meaning open to the light of day; the will of the other law, however, is locked up in the darkness of the nether regions" (PdG 306, M466), which description is taken up at PdG 312-313, M474, in the discussion of what Antigone's action unleashes as a conflict between self-conscious spirit and what is unconscious. It is this time going back into the *ethos*, a time before time, that indicates an unself-conscious background that is merely over against the self-conscious time of human law. Neither sorts of time are adequate to the actual time of human action,

a time in which we have to educate ourselves individually and culturally into a sense of how to act.

³⁶ PdG VI.B.

³⁷ See, for example, Hegel's emphasis on language throughout the chapter on culture, e.g., "In the world of ethical order, in law and command, and in the actual world, in counsel only, language has the essence for its content and is the form of that content; but here it has for content the form itself, the form which language itself is, and is authoritative as language. It is the power of speech, as that which performs what has to be performed." (PdG 335, M508) Whereas the activity of the ethical order goes back into its precedent, speech as the activity that is performative of culture *is its own precedent*. This is the sense in which culture comprehensively creates the entire context for its own build-up, an entire approach to spiritual life. When pure insight "calls to every consciousness: be for yourselves what you all are in yourselves—reasonable" (PdG 355, M537), it is not trying to directly act upon others, but to provide a language which calls upon each consciousness to convert itself, and this means converting itself to the whole world view which would make sense of that conversion. Pure insight, however, splits into an internal battle between faith and enlightenment and it is here where culture becomes a movement against itself and an effort to define that world-view in which our mutual language makes sense of ourselves as reasonable.

³⁸ PdG 355, M537.

³⁹ PdG VI.C.

⁴⁰ Cf. the quotation given in note 43.

⁴¹ These points become apparent in Hegel's articulation of the moral world view as in conflict with nature and as needing to

harmonize nature with moral consciousness, which leads to a division between pure duty and thought, and thence to dissemblance and duplicity and to the problems of conscience. (*PdG* 395-415, M599-631) In all these cases a fundamental problem is how actions determined from within consciousness can take place in natural actuality as the sort of actions that they *need* to be, and one of the factors contributing to this problem is the temporal extendedness of an action and its rootedness in the past.

⁴² Cf. the way that morality brings in “another consciousness” a “thought” “postulated beyond reality” (*PdG* 401-402, M606-609) to achieve the harmony of moral consciousness and nature, and how this harmony is later brought about by conscience that supersedes the division of moral consciousness and nature (*PdG* 417, M634)—but conscience requires another conscience that would recognize it and forgive failures in action.

⁴³ Cf., e.g., the claim that conscience knows that the reality of action “is a plurality of circumstances which breaks up and spreads out endlessly in all directions, backwards into their conditions, sideways into their connections, forwards in their consequences. The conscientious mind is aware of this nature of the thing and of its relation to it, and knows that, in the case in which it acts, it does not possess that full acquaintance with all the attendant circumstances which is required, and that its pretence of conscientiously weighing all circumstances is vain. However, this acquaintance with, and weighing of, all the circumstances are not something altogether lacking; but they exist only as a moment, a something which is only for others; and this incomplete knowledge is held by the conscientious mind to be sufficient and complete, because it is its own knowledge.” (*PdG* 422, M642) Given the weave that goes into action—and

this weave goes across time—it is in vain to presume that we are ever in a position to act in a way absolutely conformable to conscience. To do so, we could say, would require going over one’s whole life time, past and future to come, in each moment, a multiply impossible duplication of one’s life. But the fact that we know this, and know this in our relation to others, gives us a way of negotiating this problem, namely in forgiveness.

⁴⁴ My claims here about the sense of time proper to forgiveness are very much influenced by H.S. Harris’s analysis of the “syllogism” of morality and forgiveness, in *Hegel’s Ladder II: The Odyssey of Spirit* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), 457-508; and this influences the understanding of Hegel on morality that is behind my claim about the sense of time belonging to morality.

⁴⁵ If culture enters a new sense of time by taking up language as a performative dimension of culture (see note 37) conscience is spirit that, in virtue of its community, exists through the word in which it can immediately perform its own conscientiousness in language. “Here again, then, we see language as the existence of Spirit. Language is self-consciousness existing for others.” But here as opposed to the ethical and the moral, “The content of the language of conscience is the self that know itself as essential being. This alone is what it declares, and this declaration is the true actuality of the act, and the validating of the action.” (*PdG* 428-29, M652-653) Cultural speech performs a cultural epoch, whereas conscientious speech performs conscience, and also thereby specifies the lifetime that one aims to live, whether one achieves it or not. So conscientious speech always makes sense of action as belonging to the conscientious lifetime which at every moment is developing in one’s life, and

encompassing one's lifetime as a whole. The connection between language and time in the *Phenomenology* may in fact be profound.

⁴⁶ This would be the time achieved in the "reconciling Yea, in which the two 'I's let go their antithetical existence" (*PdG* 442, M671).

⁴⁷ This is apparent in the use and connotations of the word around the day; also see the entries in *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon*, by Francis Brown (Lafayette, Indiana: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1980), p 497.

⁴⁸ I am here trying to capture the sense of Hegel's identification of the use of *Vorstellung* ("picturing" or "picture-thinking" in the Miller translation) as the insufficiency of religion.

⁴⁹ Bateson's point in "The Cybernetics of 'Self': A Theory of Alcoholism" is that a Cartesian split between self and world is fundamental to the alcoholic's conception of the task of escaping alcoholism, but that this conception is false. A.A. is significant in realizing this in its first and second steps which acknowledge that the self is powerless over its relation to alcohol and that belief in a higher power is requisite. In other words, A.A. substitutes a theological world view for the Cartesian world view, thus enabling 'reform,' and acts as the religious community that supports the theological world view.

⁵⁰ Cf. Bateson's point that A.A. is to be understood in terms of religion and that this religious element is fundamental to A.A.'s success (note 49 above). On these points about addiction, ritual and community, also see Bruce Wilshire, *Wild Hunger: The Primal Roots of Modern Addiction*

(Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998), esp. chapter six and seven.

⁵¹ This translation and all of the following quotes from Hegel are adapted from Miller's translation in *PS* paragraph 801; *PdG* 524-525.

⁵² It seems to me that this interpretation of time, which works toward the concept from the problem of self-conscious spiritual action would also have to be taken up at the level of religion, in which case the time-form in question might be something like religion's picture of spiritual time as a whole, which Hegel discusses at *PdG* 446, M679.

⁵³ Flay, "Time in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," 268.

⁵⁴ Cf. *PdG* 440, M669.

⁵⁵ See especially Edward S. Casey's *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana UP, 1993) and *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1997). Casey's claims about place in Hegel are in a noticeable tension. This paper's claims about place in Hegel are inspired by the questions that this tension raises.

⁵⁶ For discussions of this relation, and on the interrelation of the "I", the "we," the universal, the local and responsibility, see John Russon, "Selfhood, Conscience and Dialectic in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 29 (1991), 533-550; Russon's *The Self and its Body in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*; and H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder I & II*.

⁵⁷ (New York: New Directions, 1968). All quotes are from the "Preface."