The Spirituality of Phenomena:
A Mystical-Philosophical Interpretation of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*

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ABSTRACT

The Spirituality of Phenomena:
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The thesis offers an interpretive analysis of G. W. F. Hegel's best known philosophical work, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The primary aim of the analysis is to clarify the essential role that religion - and in particular a mystically oriented religion - plays in Hegel's arguments, and to challenge the idea that the book can be meaningfully approached from a purely secular perspective.

To this end, four key sections of the text are examined in considerable detail, and the interconnectedness of the themes discussed, as well as their place in the overall message and structure of the text, is emphasized. In the process, particular attention is also given to Hegel's theory of action, his conception of Christianity, and the development and superseding of an ethical worldview.

The general conclusion to be defended is not only that the spiritual elements of Hegel's thought are of key importance and can only be meaningfully interpreted in an explicitly theological light, but also that the fundamental symbiosis between religion and philosophy forms the very heart of Hegel's philosophy.

Contents

1. Introduction

Writing an interpretive work on a philosophical text as seminal, influential and controversial as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* perhaps requires little by way of justification. The danger in probing a book that has come as close as any to meaning all things to all people (and, it may be added, nothing to quite a few), lies, however, in the fact that while such an endeavour may well come to be lauded as impressive or insightful, it is particularly unlikely to be accepted as genuinely edifying or in any sense conclusive. While Hegel's work is often looked at as a prime example of a philosophy that takes the purview of truth as a whole to be its object and aims to consolidate all of its elements into a single system, the extremely wide range of ideas and intellectual movements which his work has inspired, as well as the very broad lack of consensus about the overall message of the *Phenomenology,* can make attempting to explain his thought seem like a particularly idle endeavour.

Although at a certain level it is of course an admirable thing when a text gives rise to lively and multifarious philosophical debates and acts as an enduring source of intellectual inspiration, at the same time there might well be good reason to lament the lack of consensus regarding Hegel's work. It may not require a particularly heavy dose of additional pessimism or arrogance to move from initial admiration of the breadth of intellectual response, to a subtle sense of confirmation of the old adage that wisdom cannot be taught. In any case, Hegel certainly intended his *Phenomenology of Spirit* to be more than merely intellectually stimulating, and he was very much not the sort of philosopher that was in the habit of simply 'throwing out ideas'. Those who approach the text simply as a source of ideas (as opposed, to put it in Hegelian terms, as a

presentation of 'the Idea'), certainly fail to live up to Hegel's deepest aspirations for his work.

Upon recognizing that one is unlikely ever to effect a consensus regarding aspects of the 'truth', it has proven to be very tempting for philosophers to reconstrue the value of their profession as deriving instead from the fact that what they are doing is at least 'interesting'. In fact, that a given expression of ideas is 'interesting' seems to be quickly becoming the primary positive term of assessment in the field. As with a modern artwork that forsakes its attachment to an ideal of beauty to settle for a ditzy championing of 'creative expression', however, this sort of a movement in philosophy is likely to do it considerable harm. Working on Hegel appears to be an area where the danger of such a reception is particularly strong, and yet such a shift is at the same time particularly contrary to the spirit of Hegel's philosophy. In this regard, the topic is a dangerous one.

Unfortunately, although I take a discussion of this sort to be a necessary preliminary to an essay on Hegel, there is of course no magic solution that could definitively lift what follows from the status of being 'just another (perhaps interesting) interpretation' of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. What can be done, however, is to identify a number of points which I take to be essential to guiding a 'responsible' reading of Hegel's text.

I therefore wish to characterize what follows by claiming it to be motivated by the desire to avoid what I see as three closely related ways in which Hegel's thought tends to be commonly misconstrued. The first is to fail to keep fully in mind that Hegel is doing universal philosophy. Guarding oneself from this sort of misperception involves both generally attributing to specific passages of the text a more general and universal

meaning versus a more limited, particular one, as well as always attempting to keep in mind the overall interconnectedness of his thought as a whole, and the place of particular arguments within this broader scheme. The second broad way in which Hegel's arguments tend to be maltreated, on my view, is by reading too much explicit historical context into his shapes of consciousness. It is of course true that Hegel is a philosopher for whom the relationship between philosophy and history is a particularly close and lively one. At the same time, however, the specific historical connotations of his arguments tend often to be strongly exaggerated by his commentators, and there is, I believe, a very real danger of losing sight of the more universal level of his message thereby.

The third and most important misreading of Hegel's text that I wish to combat is, of course, the tendency to overlook or dismiss the religious and more generally 'spiritual' implications of his arguments. It seems to be a fairly predominant tendency to think that that which is most interesting in Hegel's thought can be approached from a purely secular perspective, and that the theological aspects of his work are at best of circumstantial interest, and at worst a frustrating historical embarrassment. Religion has of course been amply proven throughout history to be capable of exerting a very polarizing influence, but this does not justify simply trying to ignore the issue, least of all by philosophers. Religion is either true or not (i.e. there either is a God or there is not), and this is of course a contentious issue. What should not be contentious, however, is that if religion *is* true, religious considerations must of necessity occupy a key place in any comprehensive philosophical system. It seems surprising that philosophers are generally so less willing to be identified as falling into two broad camps on so fundamental an issue, opting instead to sweep the whole thing under an intellectual rug,

while they are often all too willing to identify themselves as falling into rival camps on much more trivial questions. Hegel, in any case, falls squarely and firmly into a religious camp, and any attempt to interpret him in any other way could easily seem humorously silly, if it were not the case that such views have been so unsettlingly influential.

Even if the myriad theological and spiritual references that are only ever so slightly subtle are dismissed, there are still so many entirely explicit statements of Hegel's views on the relation between religion and philosophy that any doubts about the centrality of theological considerations to his thought should be quickly swept away. I will here quote only a single such instance from his *Encyclopaedia*, which very much encapsulates the general conclusion that I will seek to defend:

> The objects of philosophy, it is true, are upon the whole the same as those of religion. In both the object is Truth, in that supreme sense in which God and God only is the Truth.[1]

All this being said,[2] it is of course at the same time important to also avoid adopting a *strictly* theological approach to Hegel's work that fails to appreciate the complex philosophical nature of his thought. The aim throughout this paper will therefore be to show how the religious dimensions of Hegel's thought intertwine with the more explicitly philosophical ones.

I should perhaps be explicit in stating that I interpret the word Spirit as at least in some general sense reflective for Hegel of something akin to 'divine essence'. I therefore reject readings that reduce it to some sort of social supra-conscious, or to a

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[1] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* in *The Logic of Hegel*, tran. William Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 3.

[2] A final point that may be added is that part of the reason that the religious connotations of Hegel's thought are often dismissed may derive from the view that whereas philosophical thought has a right to stray where it will, theological thought does not enjoy this sort of liberty. In coming to see that Hegel differs in many significant ways from traditional Christian doctrine, then, it becomes increasingly easy not to take the religious implications of his thought too seriously.

concept whose meaning is so broad as to make it all but empty. (That Spirit as divine essence is not an empty concept in this sense is something that is to be implicitly defended in what follows.)

The way in which I will proceed in my explication of Hegel's arguments is to offer a fairly detailed analysis of what I take to be four key sections of the text, namely those shapes of consciousness which occur at the end of the chapters on Self-Consciousness, Reason, Spirit and Religion. A rough explanation of why I selected these particular sections, and how I take them to fit into the structure of the text as a whole, is offered in a brief preliminary chapter. It should perhaps also be stressed from the outset that this is *not* a critical work; the aim throughout has been to explain Hegel's thought, not to criticize or comprehensively evaluate it. On a related note, relatively little effort has likewise been put into directly relating the way I interpret Hegel's work to the conclusions of other commentators, or to directly defending myself against them in those areas where my reading of the text may differ substantially. Although some of the secondary literature has been quite helpful in bringing me to come to grips with elements of Hegel's arguments, the emphasis throughout will be very much on engaging with Hegel's thought directly in a personal way.

It is perhaps also necessary to briefly comment on the use of the term 'mystical', which I have both placed in the title and frequently employed throughout the chapters that follow. The idea in using this term is to stress that Hegel's religion is very much presented as an essentially personal and transcendental one. What sets the mystic apart from the ordinarily religious man is that he approaches God as something which must be stripped of any sense of otherness. I believe that such a mystical reading of the text can be consistent with avoiding the adoption of any sort of anti-rationalist interpretation

of Hegel's philosophy, a claim which I hope will be adequately justified through what follows.

I offer as the general thesis of this paper the claim that the Phenomenology of Spirit is at the same time an account of the Spirituality of Phenomena. I believe that this inversion of the title of Hegel's text back upon itself captures something of the transcendent role of spirituality in the dialectical progression of Hegel's arguments. The claim that phenomena are inherently spiritual becomes much the same as the claim that one's phenomenological experience of Spirit is what motivates one's progress to higher shapes of consciousness, when it is recognized that it is the divine essence which inheres in oneself that is at the basis of one's experience of Self and Reality. That being said, the defence of this claim must also be left to the exposition that follows.

All references to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* have been taken from A. V. Miller's translation,[3] and are identified by paragraph number. I have generally retained Hegel's original italicization when citing passages from the text.

[3] Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

2. Architectonic of a Bacchanalian Revelry:[4] General Interpretation

My discussion in this chapter is not intended to be anything more than a brief explanation of my impression of the broad structure of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as whole, and an explication of the reasoning behind focusing on the particular sections of the text that I have selected. As such, it stands not as a primary thesis to be defended by what follows, but only to ensconce my analyses within a broader interpretive context.

The overall message of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* emerges through four progressive, parallel series. The first series comprises the opening chapters on Consciousness and Self-Consciousness, while the following three chapters (Reason, Spirit and Religion) each form a further series. I therefore agree with the broad conclusion Jon Stewart defends in his article "The Architectonic of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit," where he contends that "'Reason', 'Spirit' and 'Religion' return to the same starting point that we saw in 'Consciousness' and work through the same material again under different aspects in accordance with the sphere that each governs."[5] Although each of the latter three series in a sense picks up where the former left off, at the same time they do so by returning to the initial starting point at a fundamentally different level. Therefore, although the character and explicit subject matter of Hegel's arguments varies immensely throughout the book, and certainly the overall strain of the work is broadly progressive, the very strong parallels between the various stages nevertheless suggests that the overall structure of the book is as much one encompassing four diverse aspects or manners of approach, than four purely

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[4] "The True is thus the Bacchanalian revel in which no member is not drunk." (*PhG*, §47)

[5] Jon Stewart, "The Architectonic of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," in Jon Stewart, ed. *The Phenomenology of Spirit Reader* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 450.

successive elements. The relation between consciousness and self-consciousness, which is explicit in the chapter titles of the opening series, is paralleled in the latter three: the passivity or self-removed stance of mere consciousness (in contrast to the active independence and assertiveness of self-consciousness) is reflected in a reason that merely *observes* (in contrast to one that 'actualizes through its activity' and 'takes itself to be real in and for itself'), a social entity which sees the world as a mere ethical *order* (in contrast to one that comes to see it as a complex moral composite in which it achieves certainty of itself), and a religious perspective which relates to God as an abstract natural beyond (in contrast to an integral revelation of its own divinity).

Given this fourfold structure of the *Phenomenology,* it follows that it is at the end of each of these series that Hegel's discussion reaches a sort of culmination. The four sections of the text that occur at the end of the chapters on Self-Consciousness, Reason, Spirit and Religion, are therefore not only particularly interesting and worthy of joint consideration because of their profundity and complementary subject matter, but also because, I suggest, they in fact (together with the chapter on Absolute Knowing and parts of the preface) most directly concern themselves with the core themes that are at the heart of Hegel's overall aims in the *Phenomenology.*

Hegel characterizes the transition into the Reason chapter by writing that reason is "the certainty that, in its particular individuality, it [the Self] has being absolutely in itself, or is all reality," (*PhG,* §230) Regarding the transition from Reason to Spirit, he writes, "reason is spirit when its certainty of being all reality has been raised to truth, and it is conscious of itself as its own world, and of the world as itself." (*PhG,* §438) Based in part on statements such as these, the four series can, I believe, be characterized roughly as follows. The theme of the first series is the emergence of a

sense of self that is aware of its own *existence*, and this is arrived at through the dialectical movements of a consciousness that is forced to come to terms with its relation to its *experience*. In the second series, through a dialectical movement of a consciousness assimilating its relation to the external world as *nature*, the theme that is developed is one of a sense of self that recognizes itself as the basis for all *reality*. In the third series the theme progresses from an abstract sense of the self as reality to the more involved sense of the self as essentially constituting *its own world*, and this is achieved by shifting the dialectic to the examination of the self's relation to *society*. Finally, in the fourth series, the theme of the self's progressive assertion has risen to the level of *absolute being*, and the dialectic reaches the point where it is driven by the nature of the individual in relation to the highest embodiment of comprehensive being, namely *God*. It is this fourfold division between the external moments of experience, nature, society and God, coupled with the internal moments of existence, self-reality, a self-constitutive worldliness, and absolute being, that underlies Hegel's progressive journey through the various shapes of consciousness.[6]

The arguments of these culminating sections of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* present the reader with the resolution of a series of fundamental dichotomies which need to be resolved in order for one to overcome all sense of otherness. These take the form of dichotomies between: (a) one's individuality and absolute essence; (b) one's practical freedom and absolute laws; (c) one's personal virtue and the absolute good; and, (d) the Self's pure Being and absolute Being or divinity. The process of coming to

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[6] Just as raw experience, a law-governed nature, a complex and inter-related society, and an all-encompassing divinity, represent four increasingly complex ways of viewing the purview Spirit from the outside-in, likewise the self that simply is, the self that is constitutive of reality, the self that manifests as an individual world, and the self that is absolute Being, represent four increasingly complex ways of viewing the purview of Spirit from the inside-out.

recognize that the Self is Spirit and that the Spirit is Self, is stymied by the apparently unfathomable chasms which one encounters between the seemingly limited world of the Self and the infinite world of the Beyond. Although the Self is propelled forward in its identification with Spirit through the progressive movement of its phenomenological self-realization, there are key times when its inability to let go of its sense of 'own-ness' seems to fundamentally bar a further assimilation with absolute essence. This takes the form of its identification with its particularity, its free will, its unique expression of virtue, and finally its deeply personal expression of Being, and it is only through the progressive revelation that each of these moments of individual expression is reconcilable with the universal expression of absolute Spirit, that the Self can break the fetters of its limited sense of self-identity and exchange this for a limitless sense of identity in Spirit. The culminating chapters of the book (Unhappy Consciousness, Individuality which takes itself to be real in and for itself, Conscience, and Revealed Religion) therefore present an attempted solution to the core hurdles to be overcome in progressing to a higher level of self-awareness.

The burden of this paper will therefore be to demonstrate through textual analysis of the four key sections of the text how Hegel effects the four reconciliations which I have identified. The key aspects of the interpretive context which I have here set out can be summarized by means of the following chart:

Series	1	2	3	4
Chapter(s)	Consciousness + Self-Consciousness	Reason	Spirit	Religion
Theme	The Self *Is*	The Self *is all reality*	The Self *is its own world*	The Self *is absolute being*
Method	Examination of Self in relation to *experience*	Examination of Self in relation to *nature*	Examination of Self in relation to *society*	Examination of Self in relation to *God*
Culmination	Reconciliation of *individuality* and absolute *essence*	Reconciliation of individual expression through practical *freedom* and limitation through absolute *laws*	Reconciliation of *personal virtue* and absolute *good*	Reconciliation of *personal Being* and absolute *divintiy*

3. Individuality and Essence: The Unhappy Consciousness

The section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that deals with the shape of consciousness which Hegel terms the Unhappy Consciousness (roughly the final two thirds of the 'Freedom of Self-Consciousness' chapter) is a key section of the text for a number of reasons. It is both the place where we find the conclusion of the dialectical progression of the entire chapter on Self-Consciousness, and it is the passage in which Hegel effects the fundamental transition to the level of Reason. It is also within the discussion of the Unhappy Consciousness that the important notion of Spirit, which has been somewhat in the background through much of the preceding text, enters more explicitly into Hegel's exposition. Furthermore, the significance of the chapter is attested to by the frequency of Hegel's references to it in later chapters of the *Phenomenology.* Although there is a general consensus among commentators that this section of the *Phenomenology* is to be understood as explicitly religious to at least a certain extent, the degree to which the 'spiritual' implications of Hegel's discussion are central to what he aims to accomplish in the section is contentious. In this chapter I will present an analysis of the text that not only takes the spiritual undertone's of Hegel's argument seriously, but which will furthermore attempt to make fully explicit the mystical Christian character of his complex dialectical arguments.

What Hegel offers in this chapter is perhaps best characterized as a measure of consolation against the anguish that arises from a nascent spirituality that falls short of its own full consummation. This consolation, in classic Hegelian fashion, takes the form of a dialectical presentation of the necessary progression through which the self-transcendence that will allow the Unhappy Consciousness to overcome its antithetical condition is to be achieved. The net result of this progression is coming to embrace in

an *essential* way that to which its previously *inessential* relationship was the source of its unhappiness. What this means is that the individual's merely peripheral movement towards identifying with its spiritual essentiality must overcome its 'othering' and become a more deeply and intrinsically established one.

Although it is important to keep in mind that the Unhappy Consciousness occupies a particular position in Hegel's overall phenomenological progression, and that his philosophical thought accords an uncommon significance to the course of history, as with all other parts of the text I eschew reading too much direct historical context into his arguments. I therefore agree with Stephen Crites' assessment that,

> It soon becomes apparent that the unhappy consciousness is not the affliction of some person in particular, or of an identifiable community, or generation, or historical epoch. It is a universal crisis of self-conscious life, that occurs everywhere and always whenever spirit is being born. This unhappiness is the travail of conscious life giving birth to spirit.[7]

This giving of birth to Spirit is of course representative for Hegel of many things, just as 'Spirit' itself is in the *Phenomenology* a complex term with a multifarious meaning. However, this does not preclude an interpretation of 'Spirit' in which it signifies something in some way akin to 'divine essence'.[8] The moral of the chapter then becomes the very general religious one that those in the condition of the Unhappy Consciousness,

> must strive to bring their own view of the world in line with the 'true view' by elevating themselves in thought to the divine point of view. They must alienate their own subjective points of view in order to

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[7] Stephen Crites, *Dialectic and Gospel in the Development of Hegel's Thinking* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1998), 289. As Hegel's mysticism is after all a Christian one, it may however be meaningful to suggest that the *prototype* of such an Unhappy Consciousness can be found in the history of the early Christian Church.

[8] Just as 'The Unchangeable' signifies, at least as fully as is possible at this early stage of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the Supreme Deity. The further along in the *Phenomenology* one gets, the more the notion of Spirit is developed from an initially very vague and general one to a much more explicitly and substantially theological one.

attain to the mystical objective point of view.[9]

Before plunging into the murky depths of Hegel's exposition, however, it may be helpful to briefly expound the overall structure of the text. The general outline of Hegel's argument, at least the way I understand it, is roughly as follows. The discussion of §§206-209 sets the stage by describing the general condition of the Unhappy Consciousness and the dichotomy that it gives rise to. In §210 Hegel very briefly 'resolves' this conflict from the level of the philosopher who has the ability to look at the situation from a detached higher perspective. As he makes clear in §§211-213, however, at the level of the individual who is actually passing through the experience of the Unhappy Consciousness, the resolution must take a rather different and more complex route. The primary difference involves the introduction of what Hegel terms the Unchangeable in its 'incarnate form', and this will be a key motif throughout the arguments that follow. In §214 Hegel lays out the three-stage structure that his 'real' resolution of the Unhappy Consciousness will take, and the rest of the chapter carries through this argument, the three stages being developed, roughly, in §§215-217, §§218-222 and §§223-230, respectively. The primary emphasis throughout rests on the nature of individuality and the way this manifests in the self's evolving relation to its own spiritual essentiality.

The condition of the Unhappy Consciousness is essentially founded on a dichotomy between what might be called the universality and particularity of Self. This conflict is one that arises upon the simultaneous recognition of and identification with the dual bases of self in the essential universal and in the particular individual. Whereas the Unhappy Consciousness on the one hand yearns to come to associate itself as

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[9] Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology - The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), 72.

reflective of the essentiality which it recognizes to be absolutely inherent in the Unchangeable Deity, at the same time it finds itself unable to let go of its finitely particular identification of itself as a distinct personality. The particularity and finiteness of the latter appears to be both a crucial aspect of one's identity as a Being-for-Self, and that element which stymies fuller identification with that in which the Self finds its essentiality to fundamentally inhere. Hegel writes,

> The Unhappy Consciousness itself *is* the gazing of one self-consciousness into another, and itself *is* both, and the unity of both is also its essential nature. But it is not as yet explicitly aware that this is its essential nature, or that it is the unity of both. (*PhG*, §207)

The Unhappy Consciousness is unhappy because at its level of awareness it is unable to recognize the fundamental unity of its universal essentiality and its particular individuality, and must rather, in the absence of the sense of such unity, continuously find itself drawn apart by its two-sided nature. Although it is drawn to the universal as the necessary means to confer depth to its sense of Self, it lacks the intrinsic resources to recognize that it is the interplay of the universal and particular within its own being that gave rise to its individual sense of Self in the first place. The Unhappy Consciousness is therefore that consciousness which approaches the absolute out of necessity, but finds itself able to relate to it only as an 'other'.

Although it yearns to more fully self-identify with the Deity, the Unhappy Consciousness sees in the action of drawing nearer thereto not an innocuous unification that will complement itself, but rather a losing of a part of itself in the immensity of what it cannot help but come to see as "an alien Being." (*PhG,* §208) The conflict between Spirit yearning to be Spirit and Self yearning to be Self at this level, seems to preclude the development of a sense of Self as Spirit or of Spirit as Self. The Unhappy Consciousness represents the position of the *birth* of Spirit, and this is fundamentally an

unstable and disconsolate position - Spirit is in its very nature not the sort of thing that can be identified with only in part. (That it *is* possible for one to come to identify with Spirit in full may be said to be one of the overarching messages of the *Phenomenology* as a whole, but at this point we have not yet reached that level.) It can thus be said that it is the Unhappy Consciousness' spirituality that first leads it to become unhappy, and it is the limitations of its spirituality that prevents it from overcoming its unhappiness.

Before moving on to Hegel's resolution of this conflict, it is perhaps useful to briefly comment on the relation of the Unhappy Consciousness to the shapes of consciousness that precede it. The entire chapter on Self-Consciousness, broadly, could be said to represent the 'awakening' of Spirit, and it is the progressive (and, on Hegel's view, necessary) struggles of the individual against this identification with Spirit that motivates the entire chapter. By the time the Self reaches the level of the Unhappy Consciousness, it has found that it is unable to approach its relation to Spirit as in some sense *external* (Lordship and Bondage), *incidental* (Stoicism), or *problematic* (Scepticism), and finds that it has reached the point where it cannot but posit its relation thereto as *essential*; however, at the same time it has not yet come to that point where it has surmounted the supposed need to hold on to that which motivated all its previous attempts to defer its full integration with this essential Spirit in the first place. In the phenomenological drama of assuming the 'reasonable' position whose requisite is the assimilation of the sense of oneself as a self-consciousness-in-Spirit, one cannot help but approach the necessary transformation dialectically, in the sense of achieving the final integration only through a progressively more desperate struggle to hold on to that which in its intrinsic limitedness opposes this transition.

Hegel's resolution of the conflict of the Unhappy Consciousness from the detached philosophic standpoint is very brief, and my examination of it here will aim to echo this brevity. The main point is that from the level of the 'philosopher's eye view' it is seen that the struggle of the individual aiming to reconcile itself with the absolute Deity is at the same time just as much a struggle in the opposite direction - namely, of the Unchangeable aiming to reconcile itself with the particular individual. As such, 'individuality' comes to be seen not as that element in the Self which actuates the sense of separation, but rather as the constituent factor which, because it is fundamental to both sides, is in fact the key to overcoming the conflict and effecting the sought after unity.[10] As Hegel writes, "consciousness becomes aware of individuality in general in the Unchangeable, and at the same time of its *own* individuality in the latter." (*PhG,* §210) As this 'philosopher's eye view' is not, however, directly available at the level of the Unhappy Consciousness, the working out of this solution has to follow a more complex and mediated route.[11]

Hegel describes the key difference that is required for there to be a 'real' resolution of the conflict when he writes in paragraph 213 that,

> If at first the mere Notion of the divided consciousness was characterized by the effort to set aside its particular individuality and to become the unchangeable consciousness, its efforts from now on are directed rather to setting aside its relation with the pure *formless* Unchangeable, and to coming into relation only with the Unchangeable in its embodied or incarnate form. (*PhG,* §213)

The "Unchangeable in its embodied or incarnate form" is a reference to Christ.[12] What

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[10] In other words, one's particular individuality is not only seen not to be what stands in the way to the sought after union with the absolute, but is that which in fact makes such a movement possible.

[11] The ideas expressed here in fact tie in very closely to Hegel's discussion in the Revealed Religion chapter, as discussed in chapter six of my thesis. This is of course directly in line with the view that the various conflicts examined are at their root really the same issue addressed at progressively higher levels.

[12] See for example J. N. Findlay, "Analysis," in G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tran. A.V. Miller

seemed to fundamentally inhibit the Self's identification with the Deity (and hence with its own essential nature as Spirit) was the seemingly unfathomable divide between an infinite, formless, unchangeable Beyond on the one hand, and a finite, determined and changeable Self on the other. This chasm is bridgeable (even at the practical level), however, Hegel suggests, because of the existence of the connecting notion of the Christ, which incorporates the essence of the Deity in the form of a particular individual - as Pinkard explains, it assumes "the 'God's eye' point of view from within the human (subjective) point of view itself."[13] By setting aside its own failed attempts at a direct relation to the Deity, and rather taking what may appear as the 'indirect' route through identification with this 'middle term', the Unhappy Consciousness is ultimately able, Hegel will seek to show, to overcome its unhappy condition.

It is important to point out that Hegel's understanding of the notion of Christ here, although certainly in some sense related to the person of Jesus, goes beyond this to a more general and abstract level. Hegel writes that, "the initially external relation to the incarnate Unchangeable as an alien reality [i.e. as a historical individual] has to be transformed into a relation in which it [the Self at the level of the Unhappy Consciousness] becomes absolutely one with it." (*PhG,* §213) To this should also be compared the following passage from his *Encyclopaedia*:

> The Christian religion, in its immediacy, falls apart in an empirical-historical Jesus and an equally empirical or 'positive' church, which beholds Jesus from the outside as if he were on display. But the religious truth present in the mythical Christ cancels this empirical immediacy: It is sacrificed, overcome, and is known as nothing and evil in itself, if proclaimed as final and authoritative.

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 525, and Terry Pinkard, *op. cit.*, 71.

[13] Terry Pinkard, *op. cit.*, 71.

> If a personal life in and for the eternal truth is taken to be a model for Christian believers, then the believer too will alienate himself from his alienation, i.e. from his natural immediacy, and he too will unite himself with the divine life in the sorrow of negativity, the "cross we have to bear."[14]

With 'Christ' Hegel intends less to denote a particular individual than a sort of 'Christ-principle' - something which every individual consciousness is meant to come to personally associate with in a manner presumably reflective of that in which Jesus did. However, in stressing this point it is also important not to lose sight of the other essential quality which this 'Christ-principle' is meant to embody, namely that of being an *incarnation* of the Unchangeable; although the Notion of the Christ needs to be suitably abstract and general to suit Hegel's purposes, at the same time it cannot become so abstract as to lose its ability to act in a mediating role through its reaching down to the practical level. The key to how this necessary balance is attained, and how this Christ principle is able to play the mediating role that it does, lies, as the passage from the *Encyclopaedia* suggests, in the essentially sacrificial nature of Christ, which ties in closely to Hegel's discussion in the final few paragraphs of the chapter.

In §214 Hegel lays out the three stages or moments of the dialectical progression that will bring about the resolution of the Unhappy Consciousness. The first stage, in which the individual approaches the incarnate Unchangeable "as pure consciousness," has to do with a movement from a passive to an active level of relation to the absolute. In the second stage, one comes to associate with Spirit "as a particular individual who approaches the actual world in the forms of desire and work;" this is a crucial intermediary step in which the Self's conception is transformed through a

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[14] G. W. F. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, tran. Gustav Emil Mueller (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1959), §470 (283).

newfound insight into the nature of its freedom. The third and finally transcending stage involves a process of surrender which, through a supreme letting go, in fact allows the individual to grasp onto a fuller awareness of "its own being-for-self," and thus lifts it out of its unhappy condition. The remainder of this chapter of my thesis will be occupied with examining these three moments in turn.[15]

A key passage in the dense and difficult argument of the first stage is the following:

> Just as, on the one hand, when striving to find itself in the essence it [the Unhappy Consciousness] takes hold only of its own separate existence, so on the other hand it cannot lay hold of the 'other' [the incarnate Unchangeable - Christ] as an *individual* or as an *actual* Being. (*PhG,* §217)

What Hegel is saying here is that just as previously the Unhappy Consciousness could not resolve its dichotomous nature by taking only its changeable self as that which was essential, so now it cannot *purely* seek its essentiality in the Christ-principle, without contributing something substantial from the level of Self with which it identifies as a Being-for-Self. Hegel continues,

> Where that 'other' is sought, it cannot be found, for it is supposed to be just a *beyond*, something that can *not* be found. When sought as a particular individual, it is not a *universal* individuality in the form of thought, not a *Notion*, but an individual in the form of an object, or an *actual* individual; an object of immediate sense-certainty, and for that very reason only something that has already vanished. (*PhG,* §217)

The main point here is that in seeking to relate to the incarnate Unchangeable, the individual must do so in an active manner. What is desired is a *drawing together* of the Self and the Christ-principle, not a *losing* of the former in the latter. Furthermore, Hegel is pointing out that just as the individual consciousness would lose itself if it was forced to abandon its particular identity, so the Christ-principle would be 'something that has

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[15] All quotations in this paragraph are from *PhG,* §214.

already vanished' if conceived of apart from its universality. Rather, then, the Self must approach the incarnate Unchangeable *as* an individual in order to find in the *universal* individuality of the latter a complement to its own *particular* individuality.

Hegel describes the incarnate Unchangeable not merely as a universal individuality, but one 'in the form of thought', and the notion of thinking plays a major role in his overall argument in this section. An important (and rather mystifying) passage is the following:

> It [the unhappy consciousness] has advanced beyond both of these [stoicism and scepticism]; it brings and holds together pure thinking and particular individuality, but has not yet risen to that thinking where consciousness as a particular individual is reconciled with pure thought itself. It occupies rather this intermediate position where abstract thinking is in contact with the individuality of consciousness *qua* individuality. The Unhappy Consciousness *is* this contact; it is the unity of pure thinking and individuality; also it *knows* itself to be this thinking individuality or pure thinking, and knows the Unchangeable itself essentially as an individuality. (*PhG,* §216)

Before attempting to explain what Hegel is suggesting in this paragraph, it may be helpful to introduce the following biblical passage, which it seems Hegel might have had in mind in writing this section:

> Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.[16]

Hegel's discussion on the Unhappy Consciousness obviously has both religious and epistemic implications, and it is within this stage of his discussion that these two elements seem to most closely intertwine. The chapter on the Unhappy Consciousness is designed to describe both the birth of Spirit and the transition to reason, and the interplay of these dual aspects of the argument is largely what accounts for the

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[16] *Philippians,* 2:5-7.

obscurity of these passages.

The dichotomy which gives rise to the condition of the Unhappy Consciousness in the first place is the division between the universality and particular-individuality of the Self. The latter manifests phenomenologically in consciousness as an intrinsic sense of Being-for-Self, the former, Hegel here suggests, through the awareness of oneself as a being capable of abstract (or pure) thought. The fundamental nature of such abstract thought is that, *qua* abstract, it relates directly to the beyond (its purview extends beyond the realm of that which is determined by the Self), yet *qua* thought it nevertheless connects with the consciousness of individual experience. Thinking is phenomenological (it is a mental feeling whose actuality is attendant on a conscious awareness of its occurrence); yet, in its purely abstract form, such thinking, though rooted in the experientiality of consciousness, breaks the bounds imposed on it by this its basis and reaches to a realm in which it finds its determinacy not in anything arising from the Self-Consciousness of the particular individual, but rather in the actuality that inheres in a Beyond.

The 'mind that was in Christ Jesus' (and it is that mind by virtue of which he was *Christ* Jesus) represents a state of consciousness that projects the essence captured in the working of pure thought upon one's direct awareness of Self. In other words, what differentiates an individual who embodies this 'Christ-mind' is that in contacting elements of absolute reality (which all are capable of doing through pure abstract thought), he is also able at the same time to assimilate it at a personal level - 'consciousness as a particular individual is reconciled with pure thought itself.'[17] Insofar

[17] If this comes across as an altogether bizarre way to characterize Christ, it is perhaps useful to relate it to the healings which we are told were such a major element of the historical Christ's activity. Supposedly it

as the Unhappy Consciousness is able to achieve this same state it will likewise come to see the Unchangeable as 'its own self', and hence 'think it not robbery to be equal with God'. Of course, the Unhappy Consciousness does not here fully reach this level,[18] but it does begin to manifest at least "a movement *towards* [pure] thinking," (*PhG*, §217) and this is a necessary preliminary step in the resolution of its Unhappiness.[19]

We turn now to the second moment of Hegel's argument, which involves the notion of "a particular individual who approaches the actual world in the forms of desire and work." (*PhG*, §214) What is going on in this section of the text is a transformation in the Self's understanding of its individuality through its coming to see the full spiritual basis of its freedom. By exchanging the limited conception of its freedom that was at the root of its unhappiness for a spiritually substantive sense of its own creative autonomy, the individual consciousness is able to overcome an element of that identification with a limiting sense of Being-for-Self that stood in the way of resolving its unhappy condition. The key to how this shift is accomplished lies in coming to see the external world as itself infused with spiritual essence, and thereupon through one's own ability to act upon such a world to reassess the nature of one's personal capacities.

A meaningful and substantial employment of freedom requires not only free will but also the internal and external means to exercise this will in actuality.[20] Originally the

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was generally the case that it was the ill person's own 'faith which made them whole,' and yet the healings obviously would not occur without some sort of intercession on Jesus' part. Faith (a form of pure thought directed at God), accompanied by the mediatorship that effects the connection of this thought's object to one's individual self-reality, is that which is capable of causing degenerate conditions to be replaced by the divine ideal of wholeness.

[18] Something like this level will be achieved much later in the Revealed Religion chapter.

[19] We see in this analysis the close relation between the religious and philosophical dimensions of Hegel's thought. On the one hand, the moral of the story is that the first step of the resolution of the Unhappy consciousness is to 'become more Christlike'; on the other hand, it is to dissolve the impediments to the intrinsic assimilation of pure thought.

[20] A free action of throwing a ball, for example, requires: (a) the capacity to formulate the decision to throw

external means to free action (i.e. the world) is seen by the individual as being void of intrinsic essentiality. What takes place at this stage of Hegel's argument, however, is that "the world of actuality to which desire and work are directed [comes to be seen] no longer for this consciousness [as] something *intrinsically null*... [it] is also a sanctified *world*." (*PhG,* §219) Consciousness therefore comes to see an aspect of the essence of the Unchangeable deity to be inherent in the external world, and because it also finds itself to be able to act upon this world (i.e. to effect change in it), it sees this placing of God's essence in the world as the surrendering to consciousness of an aspect of the divine. As a result, it comes to see its own exertion of causality on the world through its actions as an act of co-creation with the deity. Furthermore, consciousness not only finds itself able to act on this 'sanctified world', but also sees that it does so through being *in* the world. It therefore comes to see its "faculties and powers [to be] a gift from an alien source, which the Unchangeable makes over to consciousness to make use of." (*PhG,* §221)

Through in this manner coming to see the internal and external means of its exercise of freedom as endowments from the Unchangeable deity, Hegel argues, consciousness cannot but also come to see in the free will through which it embraces these means an element of the validation of actuality which it identifies with the deity. Prior to this shift in consciousness, "the Unhappy Consciousness merely [found] itself desiring and working; it [was] not aware that to find itself active in this way implies that

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it (free will); (b) a physical body with limbs and the ability to exert force (internal means); and, (c) a ball and a physical space over which to throw it (external means).

it is in fact certain of itself." (*PhG,* §218) By coming to the new sense of its autonomy as described above, on the other hand, conscious *does* become able to draw from its creative potential a confirmation of its self-certainty.

Even at this point, however, the dialectical progression of the Unhappy Consciousness chapter is not yet complete. As Hegel explains, when "consciousness... has truly proved itself to be independent, by its will and deed," that is in fact when "the enemy is met with in his most characteristic form." (*PhG,* §223) This leads us into the third and final moment of Hegel's argument.

The problem arises because when consciousness comes to see its activity as a genuinely autonomous acting on a 'sanctified world', this is also when its awareness of itself as sinful and base hits it with increased force. Hegel tells us, for instance, that consciousness comes to look at its 'animal functions' as activities which "are no longer performed naturally and without embarrassment." (*PhG,* §225) It seems painfully inappropriate and self-defacing for one who acts as a co-creator with the deity through activity on a 'sanctified world', to at times exercise this capacity in a base, mundane and even evil manner. It is thus through a stronger sense of the essentiality of its activity that the individual comes to adopt a greater shame for its imperfections and banality, and in this way the movement towards union with the absolute is again turned around upon itself.[21]

The solution to this latest setback takes the form of the superseding of an 'immediate' religion with a 'mediated' religion; that is, it comes to be only through a "middle term" that "the Unchangeable, is brought into relation with the unessential

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[21] The realization that one's capacity to act is of a higher order than previously thought is only a positive recognition insofar as one takes one's activity to generally have been positive and constructive in character. Insofar as the reverse is true, it only deepens one's dissatisfaction with oneself.

consciousness, which is equally brought into relation with the Unchangeable only through this middle term." (*PhG,* §227) This middle term is Christ (or, the 'Christ-principle) in its role as mediator.[22] This adoption of a mediated religion, as opposed to a 'direct' religion requires a deep surrender on the part of the individual, but it is the key to allowing it to overcome its sense of being "a personality confined to its own self and its own petty actions," (*PhG,* §225) and thereby to resolve its unhappy condition. At the same time, it becomes evident that while the problem of the Unhappy Consciousness may have been solved by this latest move, we are still far from the absolute Revealed Religion with which Hegel's phenomenological drama will conclude. Before we can reach this latter perspective, the potential wrongness of one's actions has to be more directly confronted by first developing and then transcending a moral view of the world and of oneself. It is this which will be the subject of the following two chapters of my thesis.

[22] My interpretation here differs somewhat from most traditional readings of the text, which identify the middle term more simply with a 'priest'.

4. Freedom and Limitation: Individuality which takes itself to be real in and for itself

The last of the three broad divisions of the chapter on Reason is entitled 'Individuality which takes itself to be real in and for itself'. In this important section of the *Phenomenology,* Hegel deals with a number of central issues stemming from the way in which the Self relates to its actions, and these concerns directly launch us into the foundations of his system of ethics. The notion of purposive individual action, which Hegel also sometimes refers to as 'work', has played a crucial role in the *resolution* of the conflict of the Unhappy Consciousness, but here it in turn becomes the root of a new conflict. As we will see, it is in fact the inability of the individual to adequately come to terms with the contingent nature of the externalization of his identity through work that gives rise to the dichotomy that is to be resolved, and the solution to the problem comes through the adoption of an 'ethical world view'.

Hegel claims that at the level of Reason, self-consciousness can no longer identify itself merely as an individual essence in isolated abstraction, but rather comes to look at itself as a being that "in its particular individuality... is all reality." (*PhG,* §230) As a result of this shift, the individual's sense of self can no longer be constructed merely internally, but must also be formulated through its external manifestation. In other words, it can no longer be content with the simple fact that it *can* act and that its actions stem from its own *will,* but also begins to develop an attachment to its work as an end in itself. Hegel expresses this point as follows:

> [The individual] no longer seeks only to realize itself as End in an antithesis to the reality which immediately confronts it... Action is in its own self its [i.e. the individual's] truth and reality, and individuality in its setting forth or expression is, in relation to action, the End in and for itself. (*PhG,* §394)

A being that seeks to essentially identify with the fullness of a reality of which it is in its implicit being only a part, must do so by attaching fundamental significance to its going forth as a causal agent against that broader reality. "The work produced," as Hegel states, "is the reality which consciousness gives itself." (*PhG,* §405)

We soon find, however, that this newfound significance attached to action becomes the basis for a new crisis when this action is found to be fundamentally undermined. Hegel writes,

> The work *is*; i.e. it exists for other individualities, and is for them an alien reality, which they must replace by their own in order to obtain through *their* action the consciousness of *their* unity with reality; in other words, *their* interest in the work which stems from *their* original nature, is something different from this work's *own* peculiar interest, which is thereby converted into something different. Thus the work, is, in general, something perishable, which is obliterated by the counter-action of other forces and interests, and really exhibits the reality of the individual as vanishing rather than as achieved.
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> Consciousness, then, in doing its work, is aware of the antithesis of doing and being, which in the earlier shapes of consciousness [most explicitly the Unhappy Consciousness] was at the same time the *beginning* of action, while here it is only a *result.* (*PhG,* §§405-6)

On the one hand consciousness wants to invest its activity with fundamental significance, while on the other hand it aims to hold on to it as purely its own; this, however, is impossible. Because the work in and of itself *is,* it becomes something which other individuals can relate to on their own terms. As such, the work takes on meaning for various different individuals, who, due to the fact that this action is not native to their own interests, may often contradict it through their own activity. For this reason, the very essential reality of its work now becomes a source of division for the individual - "in this fundamental contradiction inherent in work... all the aspects of the individuality thus appear again as contradictory." (*PhG,* §407) We are thus once again forced to confront much the same problem as that which faced the Unhappy Consciousness, only

at a higher level.

The dichotomy between freedom and limitation thus arises because consciousness finds it *can* work and *must* work, but that its work is not a universal, and hence seems to betray the investment of identity which is placed in it. The challenge for Hegel thus becomes one of recasting the Self's relation to its action in such a way as to conserve the essentiality which action as a moment embodies for the individual, in the face of the contingency of individual actions in the world.

As already mentioned, Hegel's accomplishing of this task at the same time establishes the basis of his ethics. His argument falls into two major parts, which I will examine in turn. The first part occupies the second half of the section bearing the bizarre title 'The spiritual animal kingdom and deceit, or the 'matter in hand' itself',[23] and spills over slightly into the following section (i.e it occupies roughly §§408-21); the second takes up the remainder of the chapter.

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An important feature to appreciate in the discussion that occupies the first section is that Hegel there argues for two things at once: against consequentialist attitudes *in general,* and in support of the need and incentive for an ethics *per se.* In other words, he is answering the two questions of 'why should I be moral?' and 'why is it intentions that matter rather than results?' *at the same time.* As already mentioned, it is also important to keep in mind that the answers to these questions arise only through a more general discussion relating to a theory of agency. In what follows, I will focus in large part on the relevance his arguments hold vis-à-vis ethical concerns, since this is what carries over most importantly to the following chapters, but at the same time it

[23] The first half of this section is occupied with laying out the basis of the conflict as just described.

must be shown how this ties in to the more general points he makes regarding the internal and external sides of action. It is very important, in other words, to attempt to understand how the basis of Hegel's ethics arises directly from his broader philosophical concerns - to see how he does not so much 'formulate' a theory of morality as 'find' one.[24]

So how *does* Hegel accomplish all that I suggest that he does? A good place to begin is with the following passage:

> If, now, consciousness is thus made aware in its work of the *antithesis* of willing and achieving, between end and means, and, again, between this inner nature in its entirety and reality itself, an antithesis which in general includes within it the contingency of its action, yet the unity and necessity of the action are no less present, too. The latter aspect overlaps the former, and the experience of the contingency of the action is itself only a contingent experience. (*PhG,* §408)

The key to overcoming the antithesis that arises from the fact that one's actions do not always have the desired results (i.e. that they are contingent) lies in recognizing that this does not compromise the completeness of the action insofar as it is something stemming from oneself. Whether or not a given action will succeed in its goal has no

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[24] In fact, the fact that a moral theory such as Hegel's or Kant's arises out of a more general philosophical system (that deals with a full range of fundamental questions: metaphysical, epistemic *and* ethical) may well be a crucial element of its potential success. When philosophers attempt to answer fundamental moral questions purely on their own basis they tend to have little success. When faced by the genuine moral sceptic, there is generally little philosophers can do besides shrug their shoulders; when faced by an individual who is genuinely undecided between two rival ethical theories, philosophers seem capable ultimately only of demonstrating the richness and 'success' of their own approach, not to offer any conclusive arguments one way or the other. By presenting a complete philosophical system within which ethical conclusions arise from more general principles, philosophers may well be able to get around these limitations and provide a moral system on a firmer basis; in such cases questions such as 'why should I be moral?' are shown to be integrally connected with more general questions such as 'what is individuality?' or 'what is the nature of action / knowledge / objects, etc.?' Both the history of philosophy and the character of consequentialist theories seem to suggest (to me at least) that consequentialist theories are likely incapable of ever being integrated into any such an overall system.

Insofar as these sorts of observations are correct, pursuing such questions seems a much more likely road to achieving any sort of ethical consensus than debates that attempt to address the 'efficacy' and 'plausibility' of particular ethical theories directly, or to pit two theories against each other on their own terms.

bearing on its character as something you do at the particular moment that you do it. From the point of the Self at the crucial moment of engaging in a given activity, all actions are the same; it is only after the fact that they become distinguished on the basis of their relative success or failure. In this regard, the 'unity and necessity of the action are no less present' for failed actions as for effective ones. Furthermore, an action in and of itself is simply a projection of one's will upon the field of reality, and the causal history of this reality is not essential to it. Therefore, it is also true that at the time that one takes a given action, the results of any former actions, whether successful or unsuccessful, have already become a part of the state of reality upon which one now wishes to exert one's will, and are hence no longer essential in themselves. Because the contingency of a particular action can thus not be essential either to itself or to any subsequent action, this contingency becomes 'itself only a contingent experience'.[25]

What it comes down to is that in being distraught by the contingency of its actions, the individual has in fact failed to take its nature at the level of Reason fully seriously.[26] Hegel writes:

> Objective reality, however, is a moment which itself no longer possesses any truth on its own account in this consciousness; that truth consists solely in the unity of this consciousness with the action, and the true work is only that unity of *doing* and *being*, of willing and achieving. Consciousness, then, because of the fundamental certainty of its actions, holds the reality opposed to that certainty to be for it alone. (*PhG*, §409)

If consciousness holds reality to 'be for it alone', it cannot also seek to draw on the conditions of this reality (i.e. whether or not it faithfully expresses the projections of its

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[25] What the contingency of one's actions *can* affect is, of course, determining what sort of future actions it becomes possible for one to take (for example, if my action of buying a car is thwarted by somebody stealing it from me immediately afterwards, I cannot subsequently decide to drive my car). This, however, is not a problem that relates to the particular conflict that Hegel is here trying to resolve.

[26] Recall that at the level of Reason consciousness is certain that "in its particular individuality, it has being absolutely *in itself*, or is all reality." (*PhG*, §230)

will) to 'confirm' its sense of Self. Insofar as it would do so it would make the reality a moment that 'possesses truth on its own account.' To put this somewhat differently, it would be hypocritical[27] to take action as essential in the first place because it is the means by which one can project one's will over reality, but then to undermine the importance of action by relating to the reality directly on the basis of its characteristics. I believe Terry Pinkard expresses a similar point when he explains that:

> The general defining *purpose* that the individual pursues [through his work] is to express his individuality. The world can either be opposed to this purpose (by thwarting the expression or deforming it), or it can be in harmony with this purpose, but it cannot define that purpose.[28]

It is only because the individual unjustifiably came to see the thwarting of his purpose as a threat to the identity of its purpose that the contingency of its action could ever have come across as a fundamental problem to it.

The gist of the argument against attaching essential importance to the consequences of one's actions may be expressed by saying that the Self learns to *distance itself* from consequentialist considerations because it comes to recognize that such considerations are in fact *distant from it.* In the opening section of the Reason chapter Hegel explains:

> Now that self-consciousness is Reason, its hitherto negative relation to otherness turns round into a positive relation. Up to now it had been concerned only with its independence and freedom, concerned to save and maintain itself at the expense of the *world*... But as Reason, assured of itself, it is at peace with [the world], and can endure [it]; for it is certain that it is itself reality, or that everything actual is none other than itself. (*PhG,* §232)

Because the way things are is already essential to the Self simply because 'everything

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[27] I use this term generically, without meaning to suggest any Hegelian undertones (i.e. without alluding to anything he says about hypocrisy later in the *Phenomenology*).

[28] Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology - The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 116.

actual is none other than itself,' it does not make sense to *also* relate to elements of reality on the *further* basis of how they reflect what the individual has tried to bring about through its activity. Consequences, therefore, lose their interest *qua* consequences, and rather take their more proper position as being of interest insofar as they are elements of the way things simply are - "the negativity manifested in work... affect[s] the reality as such." (*PhG,* §409)

To demonstrate the contradictions inherent in not rejecting consequences *qua* consequences in this regard, one need only consider a case in which somebody performs an action that brings about a result other than that intended. Upon becoming acquainted with this unexpected state of affairs, he may well desire to undertake another action that is only possible given this new way the world is. This state of affairs therefore becomes essential to the expression of his self-identity through this new wilful activity, which he might desire to bring about every bit as much as he did the previous one. If he were at the same time also to hold this same state of affairs as injurious to his self-identity on account of its thwarting the purpose of his original action, he would be in the contradictory position of viewing the same set of circumstances as both supportive of and hostile to his individual self-expression.

In the relinquishing of attachment to the consequences of one's actions, something else has simultaneously occurred. In lieu of attending to the *results* of its work, consciousness comes to attach complete importance to its actions considered purely as cause, or what Hegel terms the 'matter in hand'. We soon learn, however, that this 'matter in hand' is in fact "the *ethical substance*, and consciousness of it is the *ethical* consciousness." (*PhG,* §420) In other words, Hegel is telling us that in coming to view the significance of our activity as lying simply in the potentiality we exercise

through it, rather than in the state of affairs it may or may not bring about, we in fact adopt a moral attitude towards the world. We must now consider how and why this important shift is brought about.

The notion of developing an 'ethical consciousness' may be thought of as coming to feel a sense of essential responsibility for one's activity. In the pre-moral mindset one simply does what one wants to do because one wants to do it, but at a moral level one begins to feel responsible for how one's actions measure up to some sort of ideal. At first sight it might seem ironic for Hegel to suggest that it is just when one stops caring about the results of one's actions that one develops a sense of responsibility for those actions. When properly understood, however, this is not actually such a counterintuitive move. The reason is that in relinquishing its attachment to the *particular* consequences of its actions as essential to its *own* identity, the individual can come to recognize that the *general* ability of its activity to have results can mean that they hold significance to the world at large. Hegel explains that, "the originally *determinate* nature of the individual has lost its positive meaning of being *in itself* the element and purpose of its activity." (*PhG,* §419) By loosing itself from the misguided notion of the results of its action as being essential *for it,* the individual at the same time comes to recognize that its activity can hold essential significance beyond its merely being an expression of its individual desires. As a result, the individual comes to see the power of potential which it wields in engaging in activity as carrying with it significant responsibility.

Hegel tells us that "a movement corresponding to that from [sense-] certainty to perception [runs] its course here." (*PhG,* §410) Just as in the early pages of the *Phenomenology* we find that "the way we take in perception is no longer as something that just happens to us like sense-certainty; on the contrary it is logically necessitated,"

(*PhG,* §111) so here the way we relate to action is no longer as something we simply do, but rather it is (or ought to be) morally determined. The shift from approaching action as something we *simply* do to seeing it as something more complex is in fact a fairly useful way to characterize the move to the level of morality. The reason the moral individual need not care about the results of his actions is that he can find in the 'dynamics' of deciding on a given course of action a confirmation of his identity and worth: insofar as he does the morally best thing when he could have done otherwise, his activity endorses his essential identity as an ethical Being-in-Spirit. As Hegel writes, the true work expresses "the *spiritual* essentiality... in which the certainty consciousness has of itself is... an objective fact for it." (*PhG,* §410) The pre-moral individual, on the other hand, engages in no such dynamic, but acts purely and simply, doing whatever he happens to desire at the moment. As such, he has no grounds for drawing confirmation of his identity or worth from the action in and of itself, and looks instead to its consequences, which as we have already seen is an ultimately futile strategy. In this way it becomes clear how moral restrictions on actions, although they may at first appear as a fundamental limitation on one's expressive freedom, can in fact be liberating in an essential way.

I began this chapter by characterizing what Hegel was up to at this stage of the *Phenomenology* by saying that he was arguing against consequentialist considerations in general and for morality per se, at the same time (with the end result including the development of a deontological ethical theory). It is now possible to explicitly develop this idea somewhat further by looking at the role of the present shape of consciousness in the overall progression of the *Phenomenology* to this point. This unfortunately requires talking at a very abstract level, but, I believe, may nevertheless be of

significant value in coming to better understand what is going on. (That being said, the following three paragraphs are perhaps best viewed as a bit of an aside from the main argument I have been presenting).

An individual is an element of the totality of existence (the purview of Spirit, if you will) that has a sense of awareness of itself as a distinct moment. What this means at the most fundamental level is that, insofar as something is a 'somebody' rather than a mere 'object', it is something which perceives a distinction between 'itself' and the 'world'. In order for such a perception to be sustained, however, there must be some sort of interchange between these two moments. Such an interchange in the direction from the world to the individual is what is called 'experience' (in the broadest sense of the term), and in the direction from the individual to the world it is captured in the term 'action'.

Sustaining a sense of oneself as a distinct moment in this manner can be accomplished either by relating to the world as a 'mere other', or as 'an other that is at the same time essential to oneself'. Experience of the first sort is sense-certainty ("a knowledge of the immediate or of what simply *is*" (*PhG,* §90)); experience of the latter sort is explicitly dealt with in the shapes of consciousness which follow sense-certainty ("the way we take in perception is no longer as something that just happens to us," (*PhG,* §111) and "the first, immediate presentation of the object is superseded in experience (*PhG,* §166)). Action of the former sort first makes its appearance in the early shapes of self-consciousness, in which one treats its activity purely and simply as a means to exert one's desire over a world that means nothing to it in and of itself ("self-consciousness is *Desire* in general," (*PhG,* §167) which is "certain [only] of its own self" (*PhG,* §186)); action of the latter sort is encountered in the chapter on Reason (in which

"the particular individual [sees that]... it is all reality" (*PhG,* §230)). Just as sense-certainty has been shown to be an unstable moment and a superseded shape of consciousness, so now action of the immediate self-centred sort has been demonstrated to be so as well.

In order for action to be capable both of serving as something through which one can sustain and develop a sense of self *and* avoid the pitfalls of treating the world as a mere other, then, it needs to reflect the notion of the world as an other but nevertheless in some sense as essential to oneself. We therefore see that it becomes necessary for action to be determined on the basis of its relation not *merely* to the individual (unrestrained action), or *merely* to the world (consequentially restrained action), but to the spiritual essentiality of the individual as a world or the world as individual (genuinely morally restrained action). It is also in this way that the development of an ethical worldview functions as the gateway into the chapter on Spirit, in which the Self's "certainty of being all reality has been raised to truth, and it is conscious of itself as its own world, and of the world as itself." (*PhG,* §438)

This discussion on the role of Hegel's arguments in the broader scope of the text also leads us to the final major point that needs to be addressed here. This has to do with the way in which the ethical consciousness views the existence of other individuals like itself. Hegel tells us that the nature of the matter in hand is,

> such that its *being* is the *action* of the *single* individual and of all individuals and whose action is immediately *for others,* or is a 'matter in hand' and is such only as the action of *each* and *everyone*: the essence which is the essence of all beings, viz. *spiritual essence.* Consciousness learns that no one of these moments is *subject,* but rather gets dissolved in the *universal 'matter in hand'*; the moments of the individuality which this unthinking consciousness regarded as subject, one after the other, coalesce into simple individuality, which, as this particular individuality, is no less immediately universal. (*PhG,* §418)

What is interesting to note is how Hegel ties the value of moral action *for the individual* together with the moral value *of individuals*. In rejecting consequentialist considerations from morality, Hegel has argued that states of affairs in the world are not of direct importance for the moral consciousness. Considerations about the way the world is, however, include considerations relating to the condition of other people, and it would certainly seem inappropriate if those sorts of circumstances were not in some sense of direct concern to the moral individual (i.e., intuitively at least, it seems that to be moral, one must 'care' about other people). Like Kant, then, Hegel needs to unite a deontological moral theory with a corresponding essential respect for persons, and, again like Kant, he aims to do so through the notion of universalizability. However, whereas in Kant the claim that the second 'formulation' of his categorical imperative really expresses the same content as the first seems contentious, or at least highly complex, in Hegel the connection is very direct. Because self-consciousness is "spiritual essence, in its simple being," (*PhG,* §419) insofar as one acts in such a way as to confirm one's identity as a self-consciousness-in-Spirit (i.e. acts morally), all other instances of such self-consciousness (i.e. other people) cannot but come to be seen as essential elements in one's purposes.

Through this recognition of the intrinsic moral worth of individuals, Hegel explains, the morally determined action "looses the characteristic of lifeless abstract universality," and rather becomes "substance permeated by individuality" and is "the universal which has being only as this action of all and each." (*PhG,* §418) Morality, then, becomes the resolution of the crisis of freedom and limitation because in the moral limitations imposed on its actions consciousness comes to see, not an external rejection of the fullness of its self-expression through its action, but rather a rubric

which directs its work in such a way as to ensure that it enhances its realization of itself as an essential individuality in Spirit.

It should perhaps be stressed that the interpretation of the 'Spiritual animal kingdom' section of the text that has been presented here differs quite considerably from the way in which most commentators have read this chapter. In general, this section of the *Phenomenology* tends either to be given very little attention at all, or else to be read in the form of a 'parable' on bourgeoisie industriousness or the academic cult of productivity, from which more universal lessons can be drawn only indirectly.[29] Despite the dangerous uniqueness of such a view, however, I think seeing this chapter as a fundamental step in the formulation of Hegel's ethical theory is both explicitly suggested by some of the statements Hegel makes, and is important in relation to understanding the wider aims of the text as a whole.

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I think the main thrust and significance of Hegel's arguments as presented above can be further elucidated by briefly relating what he says to a more general discussion on the nature of freedom and necessity. In the *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel writes:

> Necessity indeed *qua* necessity is far from being freedom: yet freedom presupposes necessity, and contains it as an unsubstantiated element in itself. A good man is aware that the tenor of his conduct is essentially obligatory and necessary. But this consciousness is so far from making any abatement from his freedom, that without it real and reasonable freedom could not be distinguished from arbitrary choice - a freedom which has no reality and is merely potential. ... In short, man is most independent when he knows himself to be determined by the absolute idea throughout.[30]

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[29] See, for example, Gary Shapiro, "Notes on the Animal Kingdom of the Spirit," in *The Phenomenology of Spirit Reader*, ed. Jon Stewart (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), and Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology - The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 113-122.

[30] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, tran. William Wallace (Oxford: OUP, 1873), §157 (283).

Freedom that is absolute, in the sense of being free of all restrictions, is in fact no freedom at all because it reverts to mere chance. It is therefore the case that we require boundaries and parameters to give direction to our action just as much as we need autonomy to initiate it.

Explaining the nature of freedom has long been perceived as one of philosophy's most difficult tasks: the need to demonstrate that room can be blasted between the seemingly more concrete notions of necessity (or determinateness) and arbitrariness for something altogether different that is somehow to fit in between. The key to overcoming the difficulty, as both Kant and Hegel realized, is to challenge the assumptions that give rise to it in the first place. At the most fundamental level, there are three broad answers to a question of why a particular event occurs. Namely, it can come about: (1) by necessity, that is, as determined by laws of cause and effect; (2) by chance, that is, for no explicable reason at all; or, (3) by freedom, that is, as the result of the wilful interference of a conscious agent.[31] The general attitude of philosophers and scientists has habitually been to see the first approach as somehow more explanatorily rigorous than the second and third - that the operation of laws of necessity is somehow less 'mysterious' than the operation of freedom (or chance).[32] That the notion of necessity is prima facie on a stronger theoretical footing to begin with than is freedom, however, is ultimately not based on any innate affinity or reasoned conviction, but merely on a conceptual presupposition. This presupposition is, essentially, to

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[31] Billiard ball mechanics (why does this ball have such and such a velocity at such and such a time? - because this other ball hit it with such and such a velocity and the laws of momentum came into play), individual instances of nuclear decay (why did this atom decay at this particular moment? - it just did), and bodily movements (why did his arm move in such and such a manner at such and such a time? - because he willed it to do so), may be taken as paradigmatic examples of these three explanatory approaches.

[32] For the purposes of what follows I will focus only on the distinction between freedom and necessity, ignoring the further grounds of chance.

approach the questions of philosophy from a perspective that takes 'the Self' to be in a fundamental sense secondary to 'reality'.

By suggesting that the framework for the fundamental parameters of reality (space and time) is not innate to it but rather contributed by the individual, and that even the generation of such basic principles as cause and effect is ultimately derivative upon one's cognitive composition, Kant first suggested that the presupposition of the primacy of reality over the Self could be challenged. Furthermore, in arguing for a complex and fundamental dynamic between morality and autonomy in his practical philosophy, and in claiming that the latter is in fact primary to his theoretical philosophy,[33] Kant also paved the way for a fuller development of the idea of the primacy of the Self over reality. Nevertheless, there is something not entirely convincing about Kant's system in this regard.[34] I suggest that at least a part of the reason for this lies in his attempting to reformulate his conception too exclusively on the basis of the Self, as opposed to a framework that permits the Self *and* the world to come under some fundamental rubric that subsumes both under a common conceptual aegis. Because of this, there is a constantly recurring tension that has something to do with uncertainty about the relationship between experience and activity. On a related note it is perhaps a telling fact that despite his 'Copernican revolution' in re-directing philosophy's outlook, Kant's moral philosophy is yet presented under the title of a *Metaphysics of Morals*. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit,* I suggest, further challenges philosophical presuppositions on the relation between Self and reality, and aims to

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[33] "Now, the concept of freedom, insofar as its reality is proved by an apodictic law of practical reason, constitutes the *keystone* of the whole structure of our system of pure reason, even of speculative reason." *Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:3-4. Also see 5:119-21.

[34] This is obviously not the place to delve into a detailed critique of Kant's philosophy, but it might be pointed out that the potential difficulties with his moral tie in to the problematic role and character or the noumena in his speculative philosophy.

provide an 'ethics of ontology' at the same time as a 'metaphysics of morals'. Hegel's unique genius was to construct a philosophy that took neither the Self nor reality as an exclusive fundamental basis, but rather to subsume both under a conceptual framework that transcends either one considered in and for itself.[35]

A central difference between Kant and Hegel's systems, and a key to understanding Hegel's arguments, lies in the respective roles of reason in their work. Whereas for Kant reason is the central motivating notion in his philosophy, both the theoretical and the practical, for Hegel reason is only a moment in the self-realization of consciousness in Spirit. Both Kant and Hegel overcome the prevailing tendency to approach philosophy from the outside-in, but whereas in Kant's system the lynchpin upon which one's conception of the world is reconstructed (reason) is entirely internal to the individual, Hegel claims to find it in something (Spirit) which is intrinsic to the individual but at the same time transcends it. By so doing, Hegel provides himself with the basis of a much more persuasive solution to the problem of freedom vis-à-vis necessity and the attempt to unite morality with autonomy. Because its essentiality rests upon something which is intrinsic to it and yet transcends it, "the individual has lost its positive meaning of being *in itself* the element and the purpose of its activity," but nevertheless its expression of pure will in purposive action "gets its filling from the active, self-differentiating individuality." (*PhG,* §419)

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[35] Despite this being such a fundamental point of the *Phenomenology* (which of course ties in closely to his claim that "everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*." (*PhG,* §17)), interpretations and applications of Hegel's philosophy remarkably frequently fall back into seeing the Self as *the* fundamental basis under which otherness is to be subsumed. It is through this type of misconception that his work has fuelled myriad philosophical developments of an existentialist or 'societal-ist' nature.

We now turn to the second part of Hegel's discussion in the chapter. Rather than explaining Hegel's specific arguments against Reason as lawgiver and Reason as testing laws, however, I will here focus primarily on the final part of the chapter (§§432-37), in which he discusses the general reasons for transcending either of these moments, and offers his own solution to the question of the status of the moral laws.

Hegel tells us that "both the above moments [reason as lawgiver and as testing laws].. fill[ed] the former emptiness of spiritual being." (*PhG,* §432) This former emptiness of spiritual being refers to a state of consciousness that has accepted the need for a morality but has no awareness of the 'determinate laws of the ethical substance'; that is, it is the emptiness that comes from desiring to do right but not knowing how. In its eagerness to fill this emptiness, consciousness has attempted to find such moral laws immediately within its own reason (Reason as lawgiver), or through grasping anything that appears as if it might be such a law and determining through its reason whether or not it in fact is (Reason as testing laws). What it has failed to realize is that in approaching morality in this way, it has in fact acted directly contrary to its aspirations to be moral. As Hegel explains, "to legislate immediately in [the way of Reason as lawgiver] is... the tyrannical insolence which makes caprice into a law and ethical behaviour into obedience to such caprice." The 'testing' of laws, similarly, "means the insolence of a knowledge which argues itself into a freedom from absolute laws, treating them as an alien caprice." (*PhG,* §434) Both approaches fail to respect the true nature of ethical laws because each embodies "a negative relation to substance or real spiritual being." (*PhG,* §435)

In order to approach the ethical laws in such a way as to respect their nature *as* ethical laws, one cannot presume to put anything of oneself into them, or to put oneself

over them as one who can judge them. For something to be a genuinely moral law, it must embody a level of absoluteness and aloofness - they must not "*merely* [be] laws... but at the same time *commandments*." (*PhG,* §434) Hegel's solution is, famously, to simply proclaim that "they *are*, and nothing more." (*PhG,* §437) Although Hegel does not write in a way that is explicitly religious anywhere in this chapter, it is here that the theological basis of his thought becomes obvious. Even if one does not read any direct religious significance into his repeated references to 'spiritual being' in the lead up to this statement, or the fact that he interjects his crucial statement on the nature of the laws by telling us that Sophocles "acknowledges them as the unwritten law of the Gods," (*PhG,* §437) the most basic point is that in the absence of some sort of theological content, Hegel's stark exclamation that the laws 'simply are' is as empty and inane as it at first sounds.

It is important to stress in this regard that Hegel is here not advocating intuitionism or any sort of view that the ethical laws are simply immediately knowable on a personal level. He writes, for instance, that "if they are supposed to be validated by *my* insight, then I have already denied their unshakeable, intrinsic being." (*PhG,* §437) When he says that they 'just are', he is therefore saying that they 'just are' regardless of anything on the part of the individual. To say that moral laws can simply be plucked out of the air, however, is clearly absurd. It is precisely because the laws of ethics cannot be so plucked from the air that philosophers and people in general have been debating moral issues since antiquity. More fundamentally, it is the fact that they are not in this manner immediately available that explains why ethics has always been seen as in a fundamental sense something complex: it is not sufficient vis-à-vis morality to simply want to do what is right, one must come to know how to do so as well. Another way to

put this is to say that it is the non-immediacy of the availability of moral laws in this regard that makes it conceivable that when someone claims to have done something because they thought it was right, when you personally take the given action to be wrong, you do not necessarily disbelieve them immediately.

It is in fact the supreme usefulness of theology that it provides one with a peg on which to hang morality. The finding of such a peg appears to be one of the primary aims of deontological moral theories. Having demonstrated (to himself at least) that Kant's attempt to find this peg in reason itself is inconsistent with the nature of the ethical substance, Hegel is led back to God to solve the problem.

We can in fact bring the usefulness of theology in this regard to a more general level. When the origin of the world is attributed to a divine being, this gives one a basis upon which to claim that the ethical laws that determine the moral fabric of the world could have sprung into existence together with the world as a physical entity. In other words, when one sees the world as having been created by God, this allows one to posit that the physical and normative dimensions of the world could have come into existence together, and hence that the normative dimension to existence can in some sense be said to be fundamental. When one rejects the idea of God and attributes the existence of the world to merely physical causes, or to no causes at all, there is really no basis on which to argue that there is such a thing as an essential normative dimension to the world at all. Any attempt to formulate a morality from such a standpoint must therefore do so from the basis of a purely human perspective. The only really consistent way in which this can be done is to focus on some quality that is taken to be essential to humanity as an end in and for itself (say, happiness), and to advocate that morality consists in maximizing this quality. As already argued at length, Hegel rejects any moral

theory of this type. For Hegel, then, the "True ethical law is the unwritten, inerrant, unalterable divine law spoken of in the *Antigone*."[36]

A final related point that ought to be very briefly brought up is that Hegel claims that it is the ethical law***s*** that are; there is not a single supreme moral law form which all the others can be derived, but rather all of the various ethical laws are absolutely fundamental in themselves. The reason for this is that for Hegel the issues of ethical incentive and of the determinations of the ethical substance are not two separate ones. As such, the *supreme* 'principle' or 'law' of morality must simply be to 'act right' or 'be good'. It is, then, this fundamental principle which captures all of morality within itself, and yet in itself says nothing determinate, which "divides itself into masses or spheres which are the *determinate laws* of the absolute essence." (*PhG,* §434) Looked at in this way, God can be seen to be that being which, because he is the source of all the individual moral laws, is also the pure moment of rightness or goodness in its absolute form. This is important because it places the recognition of the essential interrelatedness of religion and morality which Hegel wishes to defend on a sounder basis.

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[36] J. N. Findlay, *Analysis* in *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit,* tran. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 550.

5. Virtue and the Good: Conscience

We now shift focus from the foundations of Hegel's ethics as presented at the end of the Reason chapter, to the culmination of his moral theory as discussed at the end of the long chapter on Spirit. We must therefore turn our attention to the intriguing and complex section of the *Phenomenology* that bears the title 'Conscience'. In contrast to the section on 'Individuality which takes itself to be real in and for itself' examined above, what is under investigation here is not the theoretical basis of the ethical worldview, but rather, as Robert Solomon describes it, "the broader moral picture in which that formal moral theory is embedded."[37] The full title of the chapter in Hegel's text is 'Conscience. The 'beautiful soul', evil and its forgiveness'. Within this chapter, the discussion on conscience itself can be roughly consigned to §§632-656, and it is on these paragraphs that my analysis will primarily focus. Hegel's' discussions of the beautiful soul and evil and its forgiveness which follow it, although interesting and complementary to the central discussion of conscience, will not be explicitly examined here. That being said, many of the major themes of course carry over, and the notions of evil and of the beautiful soul will be alluded to in what follows at least indirectly.

The basic dichotomy that motivates the conscience chapter can be characterized as that between personal virtue and the absolute moral good. Having come to terms with its nature as a moral being, and having accepted its subjection to the moral law, the individual yet finds a gulf between the absolute moral law and its own moral actions, because the latter require a level of particularity and contingency that seems to fly in the face of the austerity of the former. Although the individual has accepted the need to

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[37] Robert Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel* (Oxford: OUP, 1983), 564.

be moral and is fully committed to pursuing a duty-based life, he finds that he gets stuck when it comes to the question of how to bring his moral character forth through an individual application of the moral substance.[38] In his eagerness not to transgress the dictates of the moral law, the individual compromises his own creativity and decisiveness in forging a personal course of action.

The truth of the matter is of course that although all people are bound by the same basic moral laws, they yet all live very different lives, and do so legitimately. In fact, morality not only *permits* diverging courses of action, it positively *requires* them; although the moral law in and of itself is perfectly absolute, it is nevertheless essentially multifarious in its individual manifestation - as indeed it must be if it is not to fully displace freedom. However, this simple fact can be something that it is very difficult for the individual to fully come to terms with, and the problem that needs to be overcome is the tendency on the part of the individual to see the moral law as essentially restrictive in nature. To put it in Hegel's words, what needs to be done is to bring self-consciousness to the point where it sees that "it is now the law that exists for the sake of the self, not the self that exists for the sake of the law." (*PhG*, §639)

It should perhaps be stressed that the issue is a fairly deep one. As in the previous two cases (the Unhappy Consciousness and 'Individuality which takes itself to be real in and for itself'), the problem that presents itself here gives rise to a fairly deep-seated crisis of individual identity (in fact, it is very much again the same general issue at a higher level). The Self, in accepting the ethical worldview, has come to identify itself in an essential way with the moral law; as discussed in the previous chapter, it

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[38] In this regard we might also draw on Hegel's preface to the Spirit chapter, where he tells us that the Self's "spiritual *essence* has already been designated as ethical *substance*; but Spirit is the *actuality* of that substance." (*PhG*, §439)

comes to identify acting in accordance with the dictates of the moral law as a fundamental aspect of its identity as a Being-in-Spirit. When it now comes to face with the demand to forge an individual path that is to be in harmony with the moral law but nevertheless to transcend it in a fundamental way, it cannot help but come to see its nascent sense of identity as a moral being threatened as it scrounges for the intrinsic resources with which to supersede a restrictive sense of duty. It is interesting to note how, in characteristically Hegelian fashion, the current crisis is essentially the inverse of the former;[39] there the conflict was one of the Self's individual expression through freedom seemingly being threatened by what appeared to be an external restraint in the form of morality; here it is in fact the extent of its freedom (or, the laxity of moral determinateness) that appears to threaten its newfound individual expression as an ethical being-in-Spirit. The key notion in Hegel's resolution of the issue is that of conscience itself, and at the same time as we examine Hegel's general discussion and arguments, we will also need to come to terms with exactly what he means with this word.

Hegel begins by explaining the key to the overcoming of the problem as follows:

> It is as conscience that [self-consciousness] first has, in its *self-certainty,* a *content* for the previously empty duty, as also for the right and the universal will that were empty of content. And because this self-assurance is at the same time an *immediacy,* conscience *exists.*
>
> Moral self-consciousness having attained its truth, it therefore abandons, or rather supersedes, the internal division which gave rise to the dissemblance, the division between the in-itself and the self, between pure duty *qua* pure purpose, and reality *qua* a Nature and sense opposed to pure purpose. (*PhG*, §§633-4)

Conscience, we therefore learn, fulfills a sort of connecting position between pure duty and reality, and in so doing it enables the pure duty to become endowed with reality

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[39] I.e. the one discussed in the previous chapter of my thesis.

and reality to become qualified by moral duty. Through the performance of action under the direction of conscience, Hegel tells us, "pure duty, as also the Nature opposed to it, [become] superseded moments." (*PhG*, §634)

It is important to stress that the notion of conscience in Hegel's philosophy is something fairly different from what the term generally denotes in common use. 'Conscience' generally signifies one or both of two things, namely, either a source of insight as to what the moral law demands (an internal source of moral knowledge), or a prompting or urging to make the right choice at a given time (an internal strengthening of one's moral resolve). For Hegel, however, both of these functions (moral knowledge and incentive) have already been established as part of the foundations of his ethics examined in the previous chapter of my thesis; the further notion of conscience, which he only now introduces, therefore encapsulates something somewhat different. What is at issue is neither knowledge nor incentive, but rather, as he explains in the passage quoted above, an expression of self-assurance. It is interesting to note, therefore, that the solution to the personal crisis arising from the complications inherent in acting morally, for Hegel, does not lie in procuring greater ethical 'expertise' or a sterner moral resolve, but rather in the embracing of a self-confidence that supersedes 'the division between the in-itself and the self'.

There may seem to be something counter-intuitive in equating conscience and self-confidence in the way that Hegel does. It must however be kept in mind (as discussed above) that at this stage of the Phenomenology the incentive to be moral is something that the individual has already fully assimilated. *Given,* that one has an overarching desire to do what is right, and that one identifies oneself essentially as a moral individual, to say that one acts conscientiously insofar as one acts with full inner

confidence is in fact a fairly natural move. If one is at one's core a moral individual and one expresses oneself outwardly through actions, then it makes sense to say that insofar as one is capable of pursuing those actions with genuine self-assurance and conviction one is most in tune with one's genuine ethical essence. The idea of equating conscience with confidence or self-assurance is in fact a fairly powerful one because it provides a ground to account for what might be called the moral panache of the fluently conscientious individual that does not require falling back upon any basis external to the individual himself.[40]

In order to see *how* the introduction of this notion of conscience can solve the crisis that motivates this chapter of the text, and to properly appreciate the role that the conscience chapter plays in the *Phenomenology* as whole, it is essential to understand the crucial way in which religion enters into the picture. The most explicitly theological passages in Hegel's exposition in this chapter occur at the culmination of his discussion on conscience at §§655-6, but before looking at these key paragraphs directly, we will begin with a more general characterization of the nature of his arguments. The best way to do this, I believe, is to begin by delineating the types of reasons one can give for doing the morally correct thing in a particular situation.

In answer to a question about the grounds for one's abstaining from an immoral action (or performing a morally required action) - for example, a question such as 'why did you refrain from stealing in such and such a situation?' - I suggest that one can respond in one of four basic ways: (1) because I could and I so desired; (2) because it

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[40] It ought however also to be noted that conscience is nevertheless a feeling (as opposed to something purely rational); the self-assurance of the conscientious individual manifests not merely as some sort of cognitive sense, but as a feeling or inner conviction of rightness. In fact, it is because of the emotive nature of conscience that it is able to complement (as opposed to replace) ethical knowledge.

was right and I wanted to do what was right; (3) because so doing would, *insofar as it would have been wrong*, run counter to something else which I value or desire; or, (4) because I could not (or could not consider) doing any differently. The distinction between levels one and two is presumably very straightforward: it is the difference between a moral individual and an immoral one; between somebody that just happens to do the right thing in a particular instance for some contingent reason and somebody that does what is right because it is right. The difference between the second and third levels, however, is a somewhat more complicated and less conventional one, and it represents the move from morality *qua* morality to morality as a 'superseded moment'. A key idea in understanding Hegel's arguments in this section of the *Phenomenology*, I suggest, is not only to understand that what he is doing is to move to this third level, but further that that which supersedes morality can only be understood in an explicitly religious context. As we will see when we turn to §655 below, this superseding moment is captured in what Hegel there terms 'worship'; in effect, the difference between the second and third levels is the difference between the individual who follows the call of duty simply because it is the right thing to do, and the one who does so because he 'loves God too much' to act contrary to his statutes.[41]

That the transition from the second to the third level is liable to come across as unusual or problematic is probably due in part to a general and fairly deep-seated predisposition on the part of philosophy and contemporary culture to see ethics as an essential end in itself - the belief that the parameters of right and wrong are of themselves a fundamental element of the normative fabric of the world. Hegel's suggestion that morality must become a 'superseded moment' is thus often poorly

[41] Or something to that effect; precisely how to characterize the latter condition is tricky.

understood, and the additional fact that the spiritual nature of that which supersedes it runs counter to the much more secular inclinations of contemporary society, makes Hegel's claims on this matter all the easier to dismiss or misrepresent. Nevertheless, I believe it is absolutely essential in coming to understand Hegel's philosophy to recognize that it does not fall into this sort of a secularized tradition, and any attempt to construe Hegel's ethics in anything resembling a 'contemporary' perspective in this regard is bound to seriously obfuscate his arguments. For Hegel, morality is not in any sense the last word, and one's attachment to the 'moments' of right and wrong must give way to a transcendent spiritual assimilation.[42] Furthermore, the relation between morality and religion for Hegel does not fall into the mould of a 'chicken or egg' type of question.[43] It is not so much that right and wrong are derivative upon a religious foundation, as that the latter is simply a higher vantage point. As the crisis that motivates the conscience chapter makes clear, being committed to morality as a mere end in itself is an unstable moment, and the individual superseding of this moment into a more comprehensive spiritual perspective thus becomes unavoidable.

On a related note, it may be useful to compare Hegel's ideas on this issue to Kant's moral theory. Kant famously insists that an action is genuinely good only if it is performed purely from duty, and not on the basis of any other inclinations or desires.[44] This clearly differs strongly from Hegel's claims in the conscience section of the *Phenomenology* that morality and duty in and of themselves must be superseded by a conscience that through self-assurance subsumes the fulfillment of one's moral duty

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[42] It is in this light that Hegel will tell us later in the text that good and evil are at a certain level the same.
[43] I.e., the classic theological question of whether it is the case that what is good is good because God favours it, or that God favours it because it is good. See the discussion on §655 below.
[44] See for example the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 4:397-8.

under a higher spiritual incentive. The difference between Kant and Hegel's moral systems is therefore very clearly the difference between a philosophical outlook that takes morality as an essential end in and of itself and one that does not. The reason why Kant takes moral duty to be absolute in and of itself rests on the fact that he sees the distinction between the grounds of action as a purely two-way one: one either acts out of duty, or one acts on the basis of some other desire. Kant did not compass, as would Hegel, that there could be a third ground at which what motivates one's actions is not duty, but at the same time is also not something that stands in contrast to duty or to which duty is irrelevant, but rather which involves an assimilating of duty as the essential means to a superseding essential end. Kant recognized as an alternative to morality pursued for its own sake only the contingent doing of the moral thing as a means to some other end, and not alternatively morality in and of itself as the means to a higher end. The latter (doing what duty requires not for pure duty's sake but for the sake of something for which the dutifulness of the action is nevertheless essential), Hegel here argues, is neither immoral nor amoral, but rather supramoral (that is, it transcends morality without rendering it in any sense irrelevant).

Even having come this far, however, we are still short of a comprehensive characterization of what Hegel is up to. In his arguments he does not seek merely to incorporate a religious perspective, but also to do so in a fundamentally 'mystical' manner. It is for this reason that what he accomplishes in the conscience chapter cannot be understood simply as the move from the second to the third level of the matrix suggested above, but must at the same time also be seen as effecting a shift to the fourth. The distinction between the third and fourth levels is one between a consciousness that has firmly aligned itself with good as opposed to evil in a spiritual

manner that supersedes morality as an end in itself, and one which has gone one step further to transcend the sense of the dichotomy between good and evil altogether. Whereas the former had transcended morality in and for itself in favour of a superseding religious perspective, the latter goes further and also transcends the sense of evil, overcoming the basis of the very dichotomy between good and evil, at least insofar as it manifests at a personal level; in this sense, it can be said that doing anything but what is right cannot even appear as an option to it. This latter condition is a characterization of consciousness in its pure and fully innocent state prior to its 'partaking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'[45] - that is, prior to its consciousness adopting an outlook of relativity, through which alone doing the wrong thing could ever have come across to it as an open option.

Another way to put this point may be to say that Hegel aims to equate the *innocence* of an individual that faithfully follows the promptings of the divine voice of conscience with the developing *purity* of a Self which cannot be touched either by sin *or* the consciousness of sin.[46] To pull the biblical analogy entertained above somewhat further, it is only when the effects of the partaking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil are overcome, that access to the 'tree of life' (represented in Hegel by the final assimilation of the Revealed Religion and Absolute Knowing chapters of the *Phenomenology*) is permitted.[47] Overcoming the effects of the knowledge of good and evil cannot come about simply by consistently favouring the

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[45] See *Genesis*, chapters 2-3.

[46] The idea that genuine innocence requires essential purity is of course characteristic of a mystically-oriented spiritual perspective.

[47] Again, see *Genesis*, chapters 2-3. The idea that in its state of purity consciousness cannot identify with evil at a personal level, but only consider it from a detached impersonal perspective, is the key to understanding the strange things Hegel has to say about good and evil further on (i.e. that they are the same, but not really, etc.).

former over the latter[48] (even if done on the basis of transcendental spiritual yearnings), but must involve a surrendering of the sense of identity and potential which such knowledge bestows. The individual must therefore let go of his sense of identity as a being for whom morality is an essential end - rather than seeing the choice between right and wrong and zealously opting for the former, drawing from this choice a confirmation of his own worth, he must become oblivious to the dynamics of the distinction[49] altogether and permit himself to be carried *automatically* to do the right thing. "In the strength of its own self-assurance," Hegel tells us, conscience "possesses the majesty of absolute autarky, to bind and to lose." (*PhG,* §646)

Just as morality is to become a superseded moment, then, so must the sense of oneself as a moral individual. In the arduous trek to the concluding shapes of consciousness of the *Phenomenology,* the Self must not only transcend its attachment to morality in favour of a more rigorous spiritual point of view, it must also assimilate the latter to a sufficient extent to purge its consciousness of the sense of duality that delayed its reaching this stage.

The great benefit of surrendering to conscience in the manner described is that in renouncing one's freedom to actively chose between right and wrong, one gains the capacity to meaningfully exercise one's freedom in how to do right. This capacity is of course precisely what was lacking for the individual who found himself immobilized in his eagerness not to transgress the moral law (as described above). One therefore finds that it was in fact one's *attachment* to the good that stymied one's full *expression* of the good, and in typical Hegelian fashion it is only by surrendering a portion of one's

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[48] I.e., good over evil.
[49] I.e., that between good and evil.

apparent freedom that one acquires freedom in full measure.

We turn now to the actual paragraphs of the text in which the religious elements of Hegel's discussion are made explicit. In §655 Hegel writes:

> [Conscience] is the moral genius which knows the inner voice of what it immediately knows to be a divine voice; and since, in knowing this, it has an equally immediate knowledge of existence, it is the divine creative power which in its Notion possesses the spontaneity of life. Equally, it is in its own self divine worship, for its action is the contemplation of its own divinity. (*PhG,* §655)

The idea of conscience as the recognition of an inner voice that is a divine voice clearly establishes the point that the way in which the superseding action of conscience is effected is through a religious movement that nevertheless maintains the essentiality of the individual. The final clause in the first sentence is also very interesting: because conscience embodies this divine connection it is 'the divine creative power which in its Notion possesses the spontaneity of life.' In order to understand this it is useful to turn, once again, to a passage from Genesis. During the act of creation we are repeatedly told that "God saw that it was good," and at the end of the sixth day we are told that "God saw what he had made and behold it was very good."[50] These statements are in fact quite interesting because they impart more than the simple truism that God's creation was good. God, it suggests, did not *first* determine whether or not something was good and then create it, nor does it suggest that the goodness of the creation simply derives logically from the fact *that* God created it. Rather, God creates the world purely and simply as an act of will, and subsequently *recognizes* it as good; he can create what he wills and be assured of a good outcome, because 'good' and 'will' are not two separate moments for him.

The fully conscientious individual, Hegel tells us, can do likewise. Although he of

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[50] See *Genesis*, chapter 1.

course lacks the omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence of the deity, he need not differ from him in the essential nature of his creative activities.[51] This divine creative power 'possesses the spontaneity of life' because in it the division between internalization and externalization that stifled this spontaneity is dissolved. The pre-conscientious individual had to first internalize the elements of his will vis-à-vis his conception of his duty, before being able to externalize it through action. This stifles the spontaneity of life, as exemplified in the most extreme form in the beautiful soul, which in desperation rejects the moment of externalization altogether. Insofar as one is successful in surrendering fully to the 'divine inner voice of conscience' one is able to overcome this division because will and right cease to be separate moments - "in the will of the self that is certain of itself... lies the essence of what is right." (*PhG,* §654) Another way in which Hegel expresses this general point is that "it is only in the completed form of conscience that the distinction between its abstract consciousness and its self-consciousness is eliminated." (*PhG,* §656)[52]

Unfortunately this has by no means been a comprehensive examination of the very complex section of the *Phenomenology* that purports to deal with conscience. What has hopefully been established, however, is some sense of the main outlines by which Hegel, at least when judged upon his own terms, manages to make the difficult and controversial move from a state of consciousness that takes morality as an end in and of itself to one that takes a mystically-oriented religion as the essential end.

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[51] This may well tie in to the opening sentence of the Spirit chapter, in which we learn that what characterizes the shapes of Spirit is that the Self "is conscious of itself as its own world, and of the world as itself." (*PhG,* §438). This point also ties back to the notion of a sanctified world in the Unhappy Consciousness (see chapter three above).

[52] The ideas of this chapter may also be relatable to the fairly peculiar new testament statement that "all things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient," which seems to suggest that the saintly individual (in this case St. Paul) is in some sense 'above' the moral law, and yet follows it for reasons of 'expediency', however the latter term is to be understood. (*I Corinthians*, chapter six)

6. Being and the Absolute: The Revealed Religion

We turn now to the penultimate chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* and the one in which the basic dichotomy examined in this paper appears in its fourth and highest form, taking the shape of that between personal Being and absolute divinity. It is also in this chapter that the theological dimension of Hegel's exposition at last fully breaks out into the open and takes centre stage; in fact, Hegel's discussion in this section of the text may come across as more of a religious one than a philosophical one. J. N. Findlay, in his assessment of the chapter in his introduction to Miller's translation of the text, is even prompted to assert that "if Hegel was nothing better, he was at least a great Christian theologian."[53] Although neither the theological merits of his analysis, nor the extent to which it can be said to be genuinely 'Christian' in character, will be the explicit focus of my discussion here, I will aim to show that Hegel's arguments are interesting and sophisticated, genuinely spiritual in character, and tie in closely to other elements of the *Phenomenology.* The chapter on Revealed Religion is a fairly long one in which there is a lot going on. As such, I will here focus primarily on the first half of the text, where the most fundamental elements of Hegel's argument are to be found.

I believe the best way to begin is to step back and frame the issue of this chapter in terms of the reconciliation of two contrasting theological outlooks, which I will refer to as 'mystical essentialism' and 'substantial foundationalism'. In order to explain what I mean with this distinction, I will begin by presenting the following somewhat lengthy passage from a recent sociological study of religious history:

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[53] J.N. Findlay, "Foreword," in G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tran. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), xxvii.

> [T]he definition of religion leaves room for "Godless" religions, such as the elite forms of Confucianism and Taoism wherein the supernatural is conceived of as a *supernatural essence* - an underlying mystical force or principle governing life, but one that is *impersonal, remote, lacking consciousness, and definitely not a being.* ... [It] inspires meditation and mysticism, but not worship. ...
>
> Supernatural essences may be ideal objects for meditation and mystical contemplation by intellectuals, but Godless religions fail to appeal to the general public, and therefore popular forms of Confucianism and Taoism include a substantial pantheon of Gods. This split has existed for millennia. ...
>
> Why do most people prefer a Godly religion? Because Gods are the only plausible sources of many things people desire intensely. It must be recognized that these desires are not limited to tangibles. Very often it is rewards of the spirit that people seek from the Gods: meaning, dignity, hope, and inspiration. Even so, the most basic aspect of religious activity consists of exchange relations between humans and Gods: people ask of the Gods and make offerings to them. Indeed, it is believed that Gods, unlike unconscious essences, set the terms for such exchanges and communicate them to humans.[54]

Although this passage approaches the issue in a somewhat different way than I intend to do, it fairly clearly explains the contrast and intrinsic conflict between 'mystical' and 'foundational' approaches to religion. On the one hand, there is the religious perspective that is based on an active, substantial deity that provides the foundation of our world of experience, not only through an act of creation, but also by acting as a point of reference for our moral systems, eschatological beliefs and expectations of reward and punishment. The existence of such a being, however, through its very individuality and inherent completeness, belies a genuinely personal dimension to religious experience. On the other hand, there is the religious perspective that rests in an accessible but ethereal spiritual essence. This is the sort of religious substance in which one can 'lose oneself' and subsequently 'find oneself', and which thus easily facilitates a mystical dimension to spiritual experience. This latter perspective, however, by failing to provide

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[54] Rodney Stark, *For the Glory of God - How monotheism led to reformations, science, witch-hunts, and the end of slavery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 4-5. Original Italics retained.

anything definite to grasp on to, is unable to provide a basis for the foundational role of the deity in human life. To put the entire matter somewhat differently, the moral of the story seems to be that one cannot find in religion *both* the peg on which to hang one's identity *and* the cloak of identity one wishes to put on.

What Hegel aims to do at this stage of the *Phenomenology*, however, is precisely to find in religion both a peg and a cloak. Although his spirituality is essentially very mystical in character, in the sense that religion is an avenue by which the individual is to attain to a fuller sense of self and transcend limitations, at the same time it is crucial to Hegel's entire system that the substantiality of the deity remains fully intact. God must be capable of being seen both as the creative and sustaining locus of the world, and as the culminating objective of one's personal transcendent aspirations. The task of overcoming the dichotomy between personal Being and absolute divinity - the inability of the Self to fully reconcile its own experience of essential Being with the existence of an entity that subsumes all Being under itself - therefore becomes at the same time the task of bridging the seeming chasm between mystical essentialism and substantial foundationalism in religion.

In coming to understand Hegel's solution, it is perhaps useful to begin by reminding ourselves once again of his crucial statement in the Preface that the entire message of the *Phenomenology* "turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*." (*PhG*, §17) This merging of substance and subject plays a key role in his arguments in the Revealed Religion chapter, and is accomplished through the "incarnation of the divine Being."[55] This 'incarnation' is a "retaining [of] its

[55] It is important to recognize that this is not simply a reference to Christ, at least not in a narrow sense. In this regard see the discussion of the role of Jesus in Hegel's thought in chapter 3 above.

self-identity in its otherness," (*PhG*, §759) and implies that "the fact that [God] essentially and directly has the shape of self-consciousness, is the simple content of absolute religion." (*PhG*, §759) "Consequently," Hegel tells us,

> in this religion the divine Being is *revealed*. Its being revealed obviously consists in this, that what it is, is known. But it is known precisely in its being known as Spirit, as a Being that is essentially a *self-conscious Being*. For there is something hidden from *consciousness* in its object if the object is for consciousness an *'other'* or something *alien*, and if it does not know it as *its own self*. Spirit is known as self-consciousness and to this self-consciousness it is immediately revealed, for Spirit is this self-consciousness itself. (*PhG*, §759)

As Findlay interprets this passage, "God must know God in religion."[56] The religious man therefore comes to know God "as Self, as the Self that is at the same time *this* individual, and also the *universal*, Self." (*PhG*, §761) Because it is in this revelation of Self that all sense of otherness is superseded, it cannot form the basis for any separation between what is immediate and what is derivative, and hence through this recognition the individual "behold[s] what absolute Being is, and in it [finds] itself." (*PhG*, §761) The solution to the seeming dichotomy between personal Being and absolute divinity therefore comes about through the recognition that Being is nothing but Self-consciousness stripped of its attachment to a sense of otherness.[57]

I think the most useful way to more clearly understand what is going on at this stage of the argument lies in seeing that Hegel interprets the biblical idea that "God created man in his own image"[58] at a very fundamental level. Rather than merely interpreting this statement as saying that God endowed man with numerous God-like

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[56] J.N. Findlay, "Analysis," in G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tran. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 586.

[57] This paragraph, incorporating seven separate quotations, is obviously a mess. It aims to tie together the main strands of the key argument that roughly spans §§758-61, and which the next few pages will attempt to explain.

[58] See *Genesis*, chapter one.

qualities, he reads into it the view that it is because of the simple fact that man is a *self-conscious* being that he embodies the image of God. The experience of self-consciousness is the distinguishing mark of one's participation in absolute Being. Since the moment of absolute Being supersedes any sense of otherness, then, one cannot but come to see one's expression of individuality as a direct reflecting of the totality of this Being through one's own self-identity. In other words, insofar as one is endowed with self-consciousness (or, insofar as one is an individual), one is a focus of the absolute Being which in its totality is God.

It is in this light that Hegel can tell us that "this individual man, then... is the *immediately* present God." (*PhG,* §763) Although God manifests the moment of self-consciousness purely and simply in and of himself, it is only through the reflection of this essence through individuals that the deity can turn its mere *general* presence into an *immediate* presence. What this means is that the solution to the seeming conflict between mystical essentialism and substantial foundationalism is in fact the existence of the individual himself. Although it is true that the deity is in some sense only a vague ethereal essence, the fact that it pulls itself down into immediacy through individual self-consciousnesses establishes it as substantial and definite. Correspondingly,[59] although it is true that the deity is in some sense an unapproachably definite entity, this is offset by the fact that it exercises its capacity by creating beings who through their individuality diffuse its essence. When man thus finds himself to be a link *within* God, he ceases to look for a link *between* himself and God, and the consummation of his spiritual yearnings is effected.

This is very much the key point, which I fear my rather jumbled exegesis has left

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[59] I.e. seen from the other direction.

fairly obscure. To expand on it somwhat we can examine a further statement Hegel makes, when he writes:

> That the supreme Being is seen, heard, etc. as an immediately present self-consciousness, this therefore is the consummation of its Notion; and through this consummation that Being is immediately *present qua* supreme Being. (*PhG,* §760)

It is therefore *through* the existence of people that God's *own* self-expression is fully effected. The act of creation thus comes to be seen as not having been merely gratuitous; God's creating individuals was in an essential sense something he did for himself. Hegel's key idea is therefore that both the deity and the individual self-consciousness achieve the fullest fulfillment of their sense of self (the 'consummation of their Notion') through the recognition of their interrelationship.

The deity may thus be seen as that which embodies the *totality* of Being in itself, and the *particularity* of Being through its relation to individuals. The individual, on the other hand, embodies the *particularity* of Being in itself, and the *totality* of Being through its relation to God. As "Spirit is the knowledge of oneself in the externalization of oneself... the movement of retaining [one's] self-identity in otherness," (*PhG,* §759) it is this symbiosis of God and man that is the very foundation of reality.

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The general thrust of what Hegel is arguing in this chapter can perhaps be more adequately explained by bringing it down to a more general level. The way in which this can be done is to reformulate the issue into one having to do with the incentive to living religiously.[60] In confronting the central issue of why people should make sacrifices

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[60] The discussion in this section would be greatly complicated if I took into regard the complexities and vagueries that appear regarding the relationship between religion and ethics. For the purposes of this discussion I will try to ignore this issue and assume that the question of religious incentive makes at least some sense as distinct from any moral concerns. Although this is perhaps a dangerous assumption, and one

regarding things they desire in the name of religion, there have traditionally existed two general ways in which to respond: (1) to argue that following the demands of religion is really in one's own best interests, because all will be rewarded or punished in the end in accordance with how their lives measure up to a religious ideal; or, alternatively, (2) to argue that one should not base one's life on concerns about oneself at all, but rather ought to supersede self-centredness and to do things purely and simply because God so wants one to.[61] Although it is plausible to assume that the average religious person in fact bases their decisions in some sense and to some extent on each of these approaches, considered from an intellectual perspective it is difficult to see on what sort of basis the two can be reconciled. How is it possible for a single action or instance of sacrifice to be based on both enlightened self-interest and on something which supersedes self-interest altogether? Alternatively, what can plausibly replace or supplement these two approaches to explain the grounds for religiously motivated decisions?

On Hegel's view, neither of these approaches is adequate or appropriate, because neither can be the basis for genuine religion. In fact, considered in themselves and seen for what they really are, each leads to something that in fact stands in stark opposition to a truly religious attitude. The former approach is fairly obviously nothing

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which I have more or less been trying in the previous chapters to show Hegel would dissagree with, I think that for the purposes of explaining the arguments of the Revealed Religion chapter this approach is nevertheless of some value. That being said, the present section should be considered only as an aside to the more contextually faithfull analysis offered above.

[61] Arguments of the form of Pascal's wager are famous (albeit indirect) examples of the former approach, as is a remarkably large part of the 'revealed' teachings such as what is found in the Bible and the Qu'ran. The breadth and repetitiveness of religious exhortations of this form suggest that such considerations do not simply occur as a one time internalization of faith in an afterlife, but rather play an ongoing role in particular religiously charged decisions. Arguments of the second form are particular common in the more personal and reflective sides of religious teachings, as well as in those traditions that come to religion from a more broadly conceived 'spiritual' perspective.

more than selfish prudence, while the latter, perhaps less obviously, is in fact a form of idolatry. The problem of course lies in the fact that while each approach recognizes both the individual and the deity as essential beings, each takes one or the other of them as the sole end in and for itself, relegating the other member of the pair to the status of a mere other. Religion, however, at least for Hegel, is precisely that in which the otherness between the self and God is to be overcome.

Hegel's solution, in characteristic fashion, is essentially to turn the question of religious incentive inside out. The gist of his answer, then, is that one should be religious because one *is* religious; or, to put it somewhat differently, one should behave religiously because one is essentially spiritual in nature, and this spiritual nature finds its fullest expression in a religious life.

It is also on this note that it seems appropriate to end this essay, not only because I believe it captures the heart of Hegel's overall message fairly well, but also because everything that he has to say in the opening paragraph of the *Phenomenology* against the customary way in which philosophical works are prefaced seems to me to be all the more applicable to the customary way in which philosophical works are concluded, and I suspect any attempt on my part to provide an 'uncustomary' conclusion would only detract from what has already been said.

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