
Hegel's Account of Alienation in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*

While Hegel enjoyed great success in the last decade of his life as a professor in Berlin, things were not always so easy for him. He spent some trying journeyman years where he struggled even to begin an academic career. Hegel was born in Stuttgart in the Duchy of Württemberg in 1770.¹ He attended the University of Tübingen from 1788 to 1793, where he studied theology at a famous Lutheran theological seminary. Among his fellow students were the philosopher Schelling and the poet Hölderlin. After completing his degree, Hegel was reluctant to enter the clergy, as was expected of him, and instead chose to work as a house tutor for noble families, first in Bern in Switzerland (from 1793 to 1797) and then in Frankfurt am Main (from 1797 to 1800). These were difficult and lonely years for Hegel, who desired to begin a university career but lacked the means to do so. At the time, the entry level positions were unsalaried, so they required one to be independently wealthy, which Hegel was not. He finally received his chance when his father died in 1799. Hegel received an inheritance from his father, which allowed him at last to embark on an academic career.

He began his academic career at the University of Jena in 1801, where he arrived after the departure of Fichte. This university belonged to the court of Weimar, and its benefactor was the Duke of Weimar, Karl August (1757–1828). This was the leading institution of higher learning in the German-speaking world, due largely to the influence of the famous writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who was a diplomat and close advisor to the duke.

¹ For Hegel's biography, see Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Horst Althaus, *Hegel: An Intellectual Biography*, trans. by Michael Tarsh (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); Jacques D'Hondt, *Hegel in His Time*, trans. by John Burbidge (New York: Broadview Press, 1988); Kuno Fischer, *Hegels Leben, Werke und Lehre* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1901); Karl Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's Leben* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1844); Franz Widmann, *Hegel: An Illustrated Biography*, trans. by Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Pegasus, 1968). A useful source of primary materials can be found in Günter Nicolin (ed.), *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1970). For a useful introduction to Hegel's thought, see Allen Speight, *The Philosophy of Hegel* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2008).

Goethe worked to bring to Jena some of the leading scholars of the day, such as Fichte, Schelling, and Schiller.

Hegel's period in Jena was largely one of struggle. A few years before his arrival, his old friend Schelling had been appointed a professor at the university at a very early age. While Hegel was happy to be reunited with his friend, he struggled to establish his own academic identity, while Schelling received all of the attention. Ultimately Schelling left Jena in 1803, providing Hegel with the opportunity to come out of his shadow. Hegel was aware that he needed to produce an important book if he were ever to entertain seriously the idea of receiving a salaried professorship. During these years he wrote a number of drafts of a philosophical system that he did not publish. As time passed, Hegel's financial situation became increasingly precarious. The money he received from his inheritance was running out, and he urgently needed to receive a paying position. He appealed to his friend Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer (1766--1848), whom he met at the seminary in Tübingen and who was his colleague in Jena until 1804. After Niethammer's departure, Hegel wrote several letters to him asking him for financial assistance and for help in finding fixed academic employment. With his future very unclear, Hegel lapsed into bouts of depression.

It was under these difficult circumstances that Hegel wrote *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.² He urgently needed to finish the work but struggled to do so. As he worked, his original conception changed, and soon he seems to have lost control over the manuscript. Hegel initially reached an agreement with a publisher in Bamberg named Joseph Anton Goebhardt to publish the work with an advance when Hegel delivered the first half of the manuscript.³ When Hegel delayed in sending the manuscript, Goebhardt changed the agreement and said that Hegel would only receive his money when the entire text was received. By now Hegel was on the verge of desperation. He was obliged to meet a strict deadline, or else his friend Niethammer would be obliged to pay the publisher. He was sending off parts of his manuscript piecemeal as French troops under Napoleon were descending on Jena. From his letters it is clear that he was vexed at the thought of some of these possibly being lost in the mail in the midst of the chaos of war. Napoleon led his army against Prussia, and they met at the Battle of Jena on October 14, 1806. The day before the battle, Napoleon occupied the city, and Hegel saw him in person and was clearly moved by the experience. Some years later he recounts that he finished the final pages of the *Phenomenology* "the night before the Battle of Jena."⁴ In a letter to Niethammer, Hegel explains the tense

² G. W. F. Hegel, *System der Wissenschaft. Erster Theil, die Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Bamberg and Würzburg: Joseph Anton Goebhardt, 1807). (English translation: *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A. V. Miller [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977].)

³ See Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography*, p. 227.

⁴ Letter 233, "Hegel an Niethammer," in Johannes Hoffmeister (ed.), *Briefe von und an Hegel*, 3rd ed., 4 vols. (vols. 4.1 and 4.2 ed. by Friedhelm Nicolin) (Hamburg: Felix Meiner,

situation of the occupation and the uncertainty about how the population would be treated by the French.⁵ Hegel took refuge with friends, but when he returned to his apartment, he found it occupied by boisterous French troops who had ransacked it. He claims to have carried around with him the last pages of his manuscript in his pockets. Napoleon's victory meant that the University of Jena now had far fewer students, and the instructors were also leaving in droves. With the help of Niethammer, Hegel, now destitute, received a position as a newspaper editor in Bamberg. These are the dramatic circumstances that led to the publication of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

1.1 Introduction to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*

The Phenomenology of Spirit appeared in 1807, and, although it did not immediately meet with a great reception, it eventually established itself as a classic in Western philosophy.⁶ The tortured story of the work's composition is evident. The last few chapters of the work have an almost perfunctory look about them, and there can be little doubt that Hegel would have liked to have had the opportunity to develop them in more detail.⁷

The book is intended to be a kind of introduction to a philosophical system or what Hegel calls "science" in general. He does not mean by this what we understand by the term today. The idea is that we all begin with our notions

1961–1981), vol. 2, p. 28 (*Hegel: The Letters*, trans. by Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984], p. 307).

⁵ Letter 74, "Hegel an Niethammer," in Hoffmeister (ed.), *Briefe von und an Hegel*, vol. 1, pp. 119–121 (*Hegel: The Letters*, pp. 114f).

⁶ For works on *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, see Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974); Robert C. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel: A Study of G. W. F. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Jon Stewart, *The Unity of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Systematic Interpretation* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2000); H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, vol. 1, *The Pilgrimage of Reason* and vol. 2, *The Odyssey of Spirit* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997); Howard P. Kainz, *Hegel's Phenomenology, Part 1: Analysis and Commentary* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1976; Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1988); Part 2: *The Evolution of Ethical and Religious Consciousness to the Absolute Standpoint* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1983); Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Donald P. Verene, *Hegel's Recollection: A Study of Images in the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985); Merold Westphal, *History and Truth in Hegel's Phenomenology* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1979); Allen Speight, *Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

⁷ See Jon Stewart, "Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a Systematic Fragment," in Frederick C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 74–93.

of common sense, which tell us that the world consists of a variety of different things that exist outside us and separately from us. I know that I am different from the objects around me in fundamental ways, just as I know that who I am is fundamentally different from other people in the world. Common sense thus tends to see things as distinct and separate since this is the way that they are presented to our perception. I am different from and independent of this pen or that person. Common sense likes to set up dualistic structures that juxtapose different kinds of things. According to Hegel's view, the idea of a true "science" is the exact opposite of this. Science understands the complex interconnections in the world. It shows how things that we might conceive as individual or atomic are in fact closely, and indeed necessarily, related to one another. The slogan that Hegel uses in the long and famous preface to the *Phenomenology* is "The true is the whole."⁸ In some ways this is not so hard to understand since today we are used to different fields of science making connections and showing the complex relations of things, often uncovering hidden relations that were not known previously. Given this, we are used to seeing things not as isolated phenomena but rather as complex systems with many interconnected elements. Hegel's goal in the *Phenomenology* is to start from the ground up with our most basic intuitions about the world and to show that in fact they are all wrong. Instead of things being separate and individual, they are connected.

He organizes the work in an ascending fashion, starting with our most basic intuitions about things in the world and moving to our relations with other people and then to more complex phenomena such as history and religion. The work is divided into six chapters: "Consciousness," "Self-Consciousness," "Reason," "Spirit," "Religion," and "Absolute Knowing." These chapters are of very different lengths, with some being very short and others very long. Moreover, their internal organization becomes more and more complex as the book progresses. It seems that Hegel initially conceived of the work as containing only the first three chapters – that is, "Consciousness," "Self-Consciousness," and "Reason" – and then he realized that a fuller account had to be given, so he added the chapters on "Spirit" and "Religion."

In the "Consciousness" chapter Hegel tries to refute our common-sense models of what things are. Indeed, consciousness is by definition an awareness of things. While our common sense says that objects in the external world are radically separate from us, Hegel demonstrates that whatever model we have of a thing, it in fact always contains some element of human thought. In other words, the object does not reach us directly, but instead we play some role in determining what it is. Hegel is, of course, known as an advocate of *idealism*, a believer that what is most real is ideas and that the faculties of the human mind fundamentally shape the objects that we perceive around us. This view

⁸ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. xxiii; *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 11. (Note that all quotations are from the first edition from 1807 referenced earlier.)

stands in contrast to the doctrine of *realism*, which claims that what is most true and real are physical things outside us in the world. While our common sense immediately assumes that realism must be true, Hegel's analysis demonstrates that there is always an element of thought or ideas in how we think of or describe things in the world. Thus things do not reach us directly but are ultimately determined by our ways of thinking.

This leads Hegel to the "Self-Consciousness" chapter.⁹ Self-consciousness is, of course, our awareness of ourselves in contrast to our awareness of objects. We like to think of ourselves as independent individuals. We know who we are, regardless of what the circumstances are or what others might think of us. But Hegel goes through a series of arguments to refute this view of common sense. He demonstrates that our awareness of ourselves is in fact dependent on other people. To be aware of ourselves we must be able to see ourselves from the perspective of another self-conscious agent. When we look at another person, we immediately imagine that person looking back at us, and we are concerned with what they are seeing. This interaction with the other fundamentally shapes our behavior and self-conception. We could not be fully human in isolation. Hegel thus demonstrates that our common-sense view is mistaken and in fact human beings stand in necessary relation to one another. We could not be who we are as individuals without other people.

Hegel continues in this fashion through the rest of the work. In the "Reason" chapter he explores how our ways of thinking are shaped by different social relations. Here he treats topics as diverse as the natural sciences and ethics, which represent complex conceptions that are developed and shared by groups of people. The "Spirit" chapter is dedicated to history. Here he gives an overview of world history in an attempt to show how different institutions and ways of thinking have developed through the course of time. This chapter demonstrates how history is a key element of how we think and perceive the world. In the "Religion" chapter Hegel does much the same thing by giving an overview not of the different periods of world history but of the different religions of the world.¹⁰ He tries to show how the various conceptions of the divine develop through time. This development thus determines how we conceive of God. Finally, in the chapter "Absolute Knowing," Hegel concludes

⁹ For this chapter, see Gwendoline Jarczyk and Pierre-Jean Labarrière, *Les premiers combats de la reconnaissance. Maîtrise et servitude dans la Phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel* (Paris: Aubier, 1987); Werner Marx, *Das Selbstbewußtsein in Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt am Main: Klosterman, 1986); Otto Pöggeler, "Hegels Phänomenologie des Selbstbewußtseins," in his *Hegels Idee einer Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Freiburg and Munich: Karl Alber, 1973), pp. 231–298; Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hegel's Dialectic of Self-Consciousness," in his *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Essays*, trans. by P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 54–74.

¹⁰ See Jon Stewart, *Hegel's Interpretation of the Religions of the World: The Logic of the Gods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

that the sphere of philosophy or what he calls “science” has finally been reached and the different forms of common-sense dualism have been refuted and dispensed with. Now the connection of everything with everything else in all the different spheres has been demonstrated. With this refutation of common sense, the real work of science can begin with the construction of the actual philosophical system itself.

1.2 The Struggle for Recognition

Hegel’s analysis of the lord and the bondsman from the “Self-Consciousness” chapter of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is one of the most celebrated texts in the entire history of philosophy.¹¹ This discussion was in many ways the point

¹¹ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, pp. 114–128; *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 111–119. Note that Hegel gives a very similar analysis in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. See G.W.F.Hegel, *Encyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, 3rd ed. (1830) (Heidelberg: August Oßwald’s Universitätsbuchhandlung), pp. 445–448, §§ 430–437. (*Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind: Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, trans. by William Wallace and A. V. Miller [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971], pp. 170–178.) For analyses of the lordship and bondage dialectic, see Howard Adelman, “Of Human Bondage: Labor, Bondage and Freedom in the *Phenomenology*,” in Donald Phillip Verene (ed.), *Hegel’s Social and Political Thought* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1980), pp. 119–135; J. M. Bernstein, “From Self-Consciousness to Community: Act and Recognition in the Master-Slave Relationship,” in Z. A. Pelczynski (ed.), *The State and Civil Society: Studies in Hegel’s Political Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 14–39; Daniel Duquette, “The Political Significance of Hegel’s Concept of Recognition in the *Phenomenology*,” *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, 29 (1994), 38–54; Karen Gloy, “Bemerkungen zum Kapitel ‘Herrschaft und Knechtschaft’ in Hegels *Phänomenologie des Geistes*,” *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung*, 39 (1985), 187–213; Eliot Jurist, “Hegel’s Concept of Recognition,” *The Owl of Minerva*, 19 (1987), 5–22; Eliot Jurist, “Recognition and Self-Knowledge,” *Hegel-Studien*, 21 (1986), 143–150; George A. Kelly, “Notes on Hegel’s Lordship and Bondage,” *Review of Metaphysics*, 19 (1965), 780–802; Henning Ottmann, “Herr und Knecht bei Hegel: Bemerkungen zu einer missverstandenen Dialektik,” *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung*, 35 (1981), 365–384; Steven B. Smith, “Hegel on Slavery and Domination,” *Review of Metaphysics*, 46 (1992), 197–124; Costas Douzinas, “Identity, Recognition, Rights or What Can Hegel Teach Us about Human Rights?,” *Journal of Law and Society*, 29(3) (2002), 379–405; Robert R. Williams, *Hegel’s Ethics of Recognition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Axel Honneth, *The Pathologies of Individual Freedom: Hegel’s Social Theory*, trans. by L. Löb (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001); Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel on Self-Consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011); Frederick Neuhouser, *Foundations of Hegel’s Social Theory: Actualizing Freedom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). See also Italo Testa and Luigi Ruggiu (eds.), “*I That Is We, We That Is I.*” *Perspectives on Contemporary Hegel Social Ontology, Recognition, Naturalism, and the Critique of Kantian Constructivism* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016); Heikki Ikäheimo and

of departure for thinkers such as Feuerbach and Marx, whom we will examine in due course. Moreover, the Russian-born philosopher Alexandre Kojève (1902–1968) gave a series of lectures in Paris in the 1930s that focused explicitly on this part of the *Phenomenology*.¹² Hegel's analysis proved to be instrumental in the development of French existentialism,¹³ where it appears perhaps most prominently in the work of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. It has also been important in post-structuralism, not to mention Jacques Lacan's psychology. More recently, this analysis has also been significant in fields such as gender studies and post-colonial studies, in the work of authors such as Nancy Fraser, Seyla Benhabib, and Judith Butler. If ever there was an influential text in the history of philosophy, this short eight-page snippet is it.

The "Self-Consciousness" chapter begins by exploring our basic relation to other things around us in the world. Hegel claims that this relation is fundamentally one of desire.¹⁴ We have natural needs for food, drink, and shelter, and we freely make use of the objects of nature to fulfill these needs. Early hunter-gatherers took from nature what they could find to sustain themselves. By doing so, they asserted their superiority over nature and demonstrated their freedom. By killing and eating plants and animals, they confirmed their own sense of themselves as free and independent. They were generally stronger than most of the objects of nature, which were in large part at their mercy. But despite this superiority, the freedom that is demonstrated by the appropriation of nature is undermined by the fact that our natural needs are never satiated for long and soon return again. It is thus a never-ending struggle, as humans must continually go out again to gather food and obtain the basics needed for their survival.

The next step in the analysis concerns the relation of an individual not to an object of nature but rather to another person or, in Hegel's language, another

Arto Laitinen (eds.), *Recognition and Social Ontology* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011) (*Social and Critical Theory*, vol. 11).

¹² See Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel. Leçons sur la Phénoménologie de l'esprit professées de 1933 à 1939 à l'École des Hautes Études*, ed. by Raymond Queneau (Paris: Gallimard, 1947). (English translation: *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by Allan Bloom [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980].)

¹³ See Jean Hyppolite, "La Phénoménologie de Hegel et la pensée française contemporaine," in his *Figures de la pensée philosophique. Écrits (1931–1968)*, vol. 1 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), pp. 231–241; Marcel Régner, "Hegel in France," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, 8 (1983), 10–20; Judith P. Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

¹⁴ See Leo Rauch, "Desire, An Elemental Passion in Hegel's *Phenomenology*," *Analecta Husserliana*, 28 (1990), 193–207; Frederick Neuhouser, "Deducing Desire and Recognition in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 24 (1986), 243–262.

self-consciousness. He begins with a kind of thought experiment and imagines two people in a kind of state of nature seeing one another for the first time. There is no further contextualization or determination. What is the most basic kind of human interaction? How does one person relate to another, a stranger? Hegel's thesis here is that although our common sense tells us that we are separate, distinct, independent individuals, in fact, to be self-conscious at all implies that we are in interaction with other self-conscious agents. Specifically, to be self-conscious means that we are *recognized* by another person. Hegel seizes on *recognition* as the key term for his analysis. Once again, what we thought was individual and separate is in fact necessarily related to something else.

With his use of the concept of recognition, Hegel draws on the work of Fichte,¹⁵ who explored this in connection with social-political philosophy, specifically in his book *The Foundations of Natural Right*. The question for Fichte is how to establish our basic relation to others in society as one concerning justice, based on rights and duties. As free individuals, we pursue different activities, mutually determining and conditioning one another. My individuality results from its contrast with my fellow members of society. By the same token others define themselves in contrast to me. I regard other people as free in their spheres of activity. Their freedom implies that they can potentially interfere with my sphere of activity and limit my freedom, but for our society to function properly, we must exercise control and respect others. This is a kind of self-limitation.¹⁶ I limit myself so that others can act freely in

¹⁵ James Alexander Clarke, "Fichte and Hegel on Recognition," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 17(2) (2009), 365–385; Robert R. Williams, *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); Allen W. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 77–93; Ludwig Siep, *Anerkennung als Prinzip der praktischen Philosophie. Untersuchungen zu Hegels Jenaer Philosophie des Geistes* (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 1979); Wolfgang Janke, "Anerkennung. Fichtes Grundlegung des Rechtsgrundes," *Kant-Studien*, 82(2) (1991), 197–218; Gabriel Gottlieb, "A Family Quarrel: Fichte's Deduction of Right and Recognition," in *Kant and His German Contemporaries*, vol. 2, *Aesthetics, History, Politics, and Religion*, ed. by Daniel Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 170–192; Dean Moyer, "Fichte's Organic Unification: Recognition and the Self-Overcoming of Social Contract Theory," in Gabriel Gottlieb (ed.), *Fichte's Foundations of Natural Right: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 218–238; Douglas Moggach, "Fichte's Theories of Intersubjectivity," *The European Legacy*, 1(6) (1996), 1934–1948; Thomas P. Hohler, *Imagination and Reflection: Intersubjectivity. Fichte's Grundlage of 1794* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982). See also the useful articles on Fichte's relation to Hegel in Daniel Breazeale and Tom Rockmore (eds.), *Fichte, German Idealism, and Early Romanticism* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2010) (*Fichte-Studien-Supplementa*, vol. 24).

¹⁶ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Principen der Wissenschaftslehre* (Jena and Leipzig: Christian Ernst Gabler, 1796), p. 37. (Note that Fichte published

their spheres of activity, just as they limit themselves so that I can pursue my own projects.

Our rationality enables us to see the freedom of others and limit ourselves so as not to interfere with it. The key element is our mutual recognition of each other as free rational beings: "Thus the relation of free beings to one another is a relation of reciprocal interaction through intelligence and freedom. One cannot recognize the other if both do not mutually recognize each other; and one cannot treat the other as a free being, if both do not mutually treat each other as free."¹⁷ This reciprocity is necessary for the development of both individuals and the society they comprise. Fichte emphasizes that his "entire theory of right rests upon it."¹⁸ For another person, with their own rationality, to recognize me as rational is for them to agree with my own self-conception. This agreement is possible because we are both rational agents who can recognize each other as such based on our actions. I must treat other people in a way that is consistent with my view of them as rational by respecting their freedom and rationality and, by doing so, encourage them to reciprocate. This analysis by Fichte is the point of departure for Hegel in the *Phenomenology*.

In the scenario Hegel sketches, one person meets another and looks at them. The person can immediately see that what is standing opposite them is a person and not a thing or object of nature as before. When one looks at a thing, there is nothing that looks back, so the thing is not regarded as a threat. However, when I look at another person, I see their eyes looking at me. I thus become self-conscious and aware of myself. I see myself from the outside, from the perspective of the other. Hegel describes this as a kind of coming out of oneself (when one sees the other) and then returning to oneself (when one sees oneself through the eyes of the other). The eyes of the other function as a kind of mirror that one's glance bounces off before returning to the viewer.

But there is something uncomfortable about being looked at by the other person. I have my own conception of who I am, but when I look at another person looking at me, even without exchanging a word, I clearly sense that the other person's picture of me is different from my picture of myself. I can feel the other person judging me, condemning me, laughing at me, and denigrating me. In a parallel fashion, I, in turn, can give a hostile and disapproving look to the other person as well, making them feel uncertain. So the natural result of this situation is aggression and hostility. I wish to eliminate the other person's negative picture of me and thus confirm my own self-image.

the second part of this work the following year: *Grundlage des Naturrechts nach Principen der Wissenschaftslehre. Zweiter Theil oder Angewandtes Naturrecht* [Jena and Leipzig: Christian Ernst Gabler, 1797].) (English translation: *Foundations of Natural Right*, trans. by Michael Baur, ed. by Frederick Neuhouser [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000], p. 41.)

¹⁷ Fichte, *Grundlage des Naturrechts* (1796), p. 38. *Foundations of Natural Right*, p. 42.

¹⁸ Fichte, *Grundlage des Naturrechts* (1796), p. 38. *Foundations of Natural Right*, p. 42.

We can understand Hegel's idea here at a common-sense level. We all have views about ourselves and the world that we take to be true. But other people also have their views, and some of these stand in contradiction to ours. This makes us uncertain. We want to believe that our views are correct, but they seem to be called into question if we are alone in holding them to be true. But if our views are also held to be true by others – for example, our friends or family – then this seems to serve as a kind of confirmation of their truth. A given opinion is thus not just my personal view but is really true since everyone else thinks the same thing. This makes us feel more certain and confident about both ourselves and the world. We thus spend much time and energy negotiating truth claims, large and small, with other people. We usually do this with arguments and persuasion. In the scenario that Hegel wants to describe, the people involved do not yet have at their disposal the tools to mediate their truth claims by means of logical argument. Instead, their only resort is to try to intimidate or physically force the other person into agreement.

I need to prove to the other that I am better than they think I am. In their eyes I can see that they regard me as nothing other than an object of nature, like an animal. In other words, they see that I have natural drives and desires and that these are what rule my life; the other person does not recognize me for who I really am – as someone who is higher than just this creature of nature. The lives of animals are dictated by their natural drives, which they immediately try to satisfy. They seem generally incapable of doing anything else. Humans, by contrast, can defer the satisfaction of their natural drives and prioritize them as lower than other things. In this way we are able to master the element of nature in ourselves and demonstrate that we are free, that is, that we have a higher faculty than the natural drives. One of the most basic instincts or drives is that of self-preservation. So, in the scenario that Hegel presents, in order to show the other the truth of who I am, I must risk everything, even my own life. I must show the other that I am completely independent and not attached to anything by overcoming my drive to preserve my own life. Only in this way can I prove that I am in fact free from the limitations of nature, and only in this way can I show that I am what Hegel calls “spirit,” that is, a self-conscious person.

This development happens on both sides since just as I feel threatened by the other, so also the other person feels threatened by my disapproving look. The result of this is a violent struggle during which each person attempts to assert their own independence from nature and demonstrate to the other that they are not weighed down by the natural aspect of their being. Each side must thus risk death as a way of proving their true self.

One outcome of this violent struggle is that one of the contenders is defeated and dies. The defeated party demonstrated their independence from nature and risked their life, but if they die, they have gained nothing from this. The

victorious party is in much the same position. The victor's goal was to compel the other person to recognize them for who they are, but with the other person dead, no such recognition is forthcoming. The immediate threat to one's own conception of oneself is eliminated, but no confirmation of one's own view has been achieved.

The other possible outcome is that one of the two combatants eventually surrenders for fear of losing their life. At this moment, that person shows that in fact they are still dependent on nature; by capitulating, they still hold their natural self to be of value and do not want to lose it. This inferior relation to nature is exactly what the other person wanted to see. Thus the victorious party is confirmed in their negative and disapproving view of the defeated person. This outcome means that the two people now emerge into two different roles: one is dominant, the master, and the other submissive, the bondsman or servant.

A key point in Hegel's account is that the very nature of self-consciousness depends on our interaction with others. To know who we are, we must have the other as the vehicle by means of which we see ourselves. An important implication of this is that self-consciousness is not something fixed and static; instead, it is a process. Just as our relations to others are always changing, so also is our self-conscious understanding of ourselves. We develop a sense of self-consciousness as small children, and this basic self-awareness is always present to us throughout our lives. But the details of our self-conception are always being negotiated in our various interactions with other people. As individuals, we do not appear as finished and forever fixed. Rather we are fluid, constantly changing and developing.

1.3 Hegel's Analysis of the Lord and the Bondsman

In this new situation the master receives from the bondsman the recognition for being the master. The bondsman, by contrast, receives only the negative recognition of being the servant and the one who lost the struggle. He is accordingly disdained and treated with contempt by the master. The master's negative view of him is reflected back to the bondsman, who is compelled to accept it as his own self-image. He regards himself as weak, unimportant, and inessential. As a consequence of his condition, the bondsman is compelled to work for the master in order to produce what is needed to meet the master's needs. The bondsman must labor in terror every day, while the lord simply enjoys the fruits of the bondsman's labor without having to work for them.

So it looks as if the master has created a good situation that he can exploit for a long time. But then in the course of things his situation proves to be not as favorable as one might think. The lord gains his recognition and the confirmation of his self-image from the slave. He knows that he is the master because the bondsman recognizes him as such. But when he sees the fear in the eyes of

the bondsman, he realizes that the bondsman's recognition is not freely given but rather coerced. The master is in effect forcing the bondsman to recognize him with the constant threat of renewed violence. The bondsman will say or do almost anything to avoid this, so he is willing to pretend to recognize the master, but deep down he despises him and resents his own position of servitude. So the recognition that the master receives from the bondsman is not real or meaningful.

This is the same kind of recognition that dictators and tyrants receive from their terrified subjects. Afraid of losing their property, their jobs, their freedom, or even their lives, people in a tyrannical regime will go to great lengths to assure the dictator of their goodwill and loyal support. But in the privacy of their minds, everyone resents the dictator. Since no one can do anything about the situation, everyone fears speaking openly about it, and this only causes the resentment toward the dictator to grow. In this kind of social condition, it is clear that the recognition ostensibly given is in fact false since it is coerced. One cannot force love or respect. These are things that must be freely given in order to be meaningful. Coerced recognition from a terrified subject or a slave means nothing. Recognition only makes sense if it comes freely and spontaneously from an equal. This undermines the lord's sense of recognition and makes him forever uncertain about what the bondsman really thinks.

Further, the master does not have to work but can simply enjoy the fruits of the slave's labor. In the course of time this means that the master begins to lose his independence from nature and becomes dependent on the slave. This is paradoxical since the initial struggle was all about both parties demonstrating their independence from nature and each other. Thus another inversion of roles takes place. The initial situation is now strangely reversed, with the master being dependent on the slave and recognizing him.

The situation of the bondsman is also transformed in the course of time. Initially the bondsman was the one who capitulated since he was unable to overcome his fear and risk everything. Now in his position as a slave, he lives in daily fear and is subject to hard work. In time this allows him to develop discipline and to overcome his anxiety. He is exposed to many hardships, which he gradually gets used to, and this makes it easier for him to endure the difficulties of doing without things that are necessary for him to meet his natural needs. He thus becomes stronger and more self-sufficient as he develops and works. Moreover, although he is deprived of the enjoyment of the product of his labor, which he must immediately surrender to the master, nonetheless he gains recognition from the master for it. By making use of the servant's product, the master, without even saying a word, is conceding that the servant has done something well and has produced something valuable. The master thus recognizes his work and ability. The servant, therefore, oddly receives the more meaningful form of recognition of the two. Now he finds

a sense of gratification from his work. He feels fulfilled by being able to work and create something valuable.

At the conclusion of this analysis, Hegel talks about the relationship of the lord and the bondsman as one of alienation.¹⁹ Each person regards the other as something fundamentally different and separate – a foreign threat. Initially, the two individuals feel alienated from one another since each sees in the eyes of the other a negative view of themselves. They have a self-image that is contradicted by the picture of themselves that the other person has. They cannot identify with the negative image that the other person is projecting of them, and this is the cause of the conflict. Then, when the roles of lord and bondsman are established, the bondsman continues to feel alienated from the lord since the lord has a negative and demeaning conception of the bondsman that the bondsman cannot identify with. But through labor, the bondsman creates a product, which is recognized by the lord as important and valuable. The bondsman can thus identify with the product; it is an object in the external world that is a reflection of his own personality. As an object, the product acts as a sign representing him in the world even when he is not around. It is recognized and appreciated by the lord, and in this way the positive estimation of its value is not just postulated by the personal opinion of the bondsman but is validated by the other. Thus through his labor the bondsman's initial alienation is overcome. By seeing his product in the world as something valued by others, the bondsman is reconciled with the condition of the world and sees a part of himself in it.

Hegel also talks about alienation in terms of overcoming fear. At first, the individual is confronted by another, whom he fears. This fear is what makes him a bondsman. In a sense this is the relation that children have to their parents or teachers. When we are young, we wish to act immediately on our desires and inclinations, and we are prevented from doing so by, for example, our parents. They set the rules and tell us what we can and cannot do. Children *fear* the anger and punishment of their parents, so they try to adhere to the rules. But in the course of time, as children grow and develop, this kind of parental control is gradually phased out. As the child grows into adulthood, they no longer need this kind of check since they have learned how to manage their own desires and inclinations in an appropriate manner. One can say that the child has internalized the voice of the parent or the teacher in their own conscience, good judgment, or, if one will, *superego*. What was at first outside or external is now internal. So at first the child was confronted by what Hegel calls an "alien being,"²⁰ that is, another person, but then this alien entity is overcome and becomes a part of oneself. In this way the individual becomes

¹⁹ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, pp. 126f.; *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 118f.

²⁰ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 126; *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 118.

independent since they no longer depend on others or external forces to determine their behavior. Instead, they can regulate it themselves.

The lordship and bondage analysis represents an interesting reversal of roles in the relation of recognition. The master, who initially demonstrated his independence from nature, in fact proves to be dependent on the slave. Although the master, as the dominant figure, initially enjoyed the recognition of the slave, ultimately he receives no meaningful recognition at all. Likewise, the slave, who initially was overly dependent on nature, through work and discipline is able to overcome and master it and in the end show his independence over it.²¹ The slave, who at the outset was regarded as nothing, in fact, through his labor, comes to receive recognition from the master. This is a complex analysis that is insightful for issues of interpersonal relations. It can be read as an account of class conflict between groups of people. Hegel's analysis was decisively influential for the theory of alienated labor that Marx and Engels later developed.²²

An important point that Hegel wants to make, again in an extension of Fichte's analysis, is that as individuals we are fundamentally determined by our interactions with others. Our common sense tells us that we are who we are on our own and separate from other people. We do not need them in any way for the creation of our own self-image or self-conception. We are all familiar with the idea of the self-made man, who came from impoverished circumstances to achieve a position of great wealth and power. The idea behind this is that the self-made man's success was accomplished solely due to his own industry, diligence, and ability and that he received no assistance from his family, community, state, or anything else. As sociologists like to point out, this idea is a myth. Hegel's analysis of the lordship-bondage dialectic shows that who we are is dependent on the kind of recognition that we receive from others. Our self-conception is never something that is created and developed in isolation. Rather, it is in constant interaction with other people, from whom we are always receiving feedback that we take into consideration. In this constant negotiation of our views with those of others, we come to constitute our ideas of ourselves. So one of the goals of Hegel's analysis is to refute the view that we all exist as isolated, atomic individuals who have nothing to do with one another. Instead, he argues, our very self-conception and our very freedom are dependent on other people.

Hegel's analysis of the lord and the bondsman is also relevant for social-political philosophy. His account has been compared to a kind of state-of-nature situation that the contract theorists, such as Hobbes and Locke, posit as

²¹ See Rudolf Gumpfenberg, "Bewußtsein und Arbeit. Zu G. W. F. Hegels *Phänomenologie des Geistes*," *Zeitschrift für Philosophische Forschung*, 26 (1972), 372–388.

²² See Werner Becker, *Idealistische und materialistische Dialektik. Das Verhältnis von Herrschaft und Knechtschaft bei Hegel und Marx* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1970).

existing prior to the creation of the state.²³ According to contract theory, the state comes into being when individuals jointly come to an agreement to enter into a cooperative community ruled by a designated leader for the sake of mutual protection. This view presents individuals as fully free and developed in the state of nature. The political state is then conceived as something artificial in contrast to the original human condition in the state of nature. The state is in a sense conceived as a necessary evil since individuals are required to limit their freedom in order to live in a community. For Hegel, this view is fundamentally wrong. Our relation to other human beings is not simply something accidental or arbitrary. It is not just that we simply happen to prefer to live together with other human beings. Rather, there is something necessary about this relation and order of things. To be who we are, we necessarily need the other. Our very self-consciousness and identity are created in interaction with others. Therefore, the state and social life in general are necessary expressions of the individual. Similarly, the freedom that the contract theorists claim humanity enjoyed in the state of nature is meaningless. True freedom is not simply the ability to do whatever one wants whenever one wants, free from any external constraint. Rather, it means rationally choosing to limit oneself in different ways. Thus we enjoy true freedom when we live with others in a community and when we freely choose to submit to laws that permit us to develop ourselves as individuals. A child is not free who is allowed to do anything they want. Instead, they can only be said to be genuinely free when, through education and upbringing, they learn right and wrong and act according to their own rational choice. Hegel's account here can be regarded as a refutation of the myth that we are all ultimately atomic and isolated individuals who could just as well live without civic or social life. On the contrary, our personality, self-identity, and indeed our very freedom are all necessarily bound up with this social sphere. To be who we are, we must live with others in social relations.

1.4 Hegel's Analysis of the Unhappy Consciousness

Hegel's discussion of the so-called unhappy consciousness follows the account of the lord and the bondsman in the "Self-Consciousness" chapter of *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.²⁴ Specifically, it appears as the third part of a section called "Stoicism, Skepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness." While not as influential as the lordship and bondage section, the unhappy consciousness has nonetheless played an important role in the reception of Hegel's philosophy in

²³ See Ludwig Siep, "Der Kampf um Anerkennung zu Hegels Auseinandersetzung mit Hobbes in den Jenaer Schriften," *Hegel-Studien*, 9 (1974), 155–207.

²⁴ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, pp. 141–161; *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 126–138.

the thought of figures such as the French philosopher Jean Wahl (1888–1974).²⁵ Perhaps one of the reasons why this analysis has not caught on in the same way as the lordship and bondage discussion is that there is less agreement about its content and meaning.

The unhappy consciousness can be understood as an analysis of a form of religious thinking. Hegel explores different ways in which the pious religious believer understands themselves and their relation to the divine. It might strike one as strange that this kind of analysis would follow the account of the lordship and bondage discussion that we just explored. But these discussions are in fact related in an important way. While the lordship and bondage analysis featured two individuals and the different forms of alienation that took place between them, the unhappy consciousness moves this relation to the inwardness of a single individual. In other words, the split between two separate individuals can be seen as occurring in the mind of a single person.²⁶ Thus the form of alienation is not one between two separate people but rather is a kind of self-alienation. Hegel refers to this as the “unhappy” consciousness for precisely this reason: the individual is split or divided within themselves. The different aspects of this relation that Hegel traces can be understood as different attempts by the individual to overcome this split or division and to reach a form of reconciliation.

The basic terms of the dual consciousness are simply the pious believer and God. On the one hand, the believer is aware of themselves, and on the other, they have an idea of God. But insofar as the idea of God is just that, *an idea* in the mind of the believer, both elements – that is, their awareness of themselves and their awareness of God – are in their own mind. It lies in the nature of self-consciousness that we can imagine other people without them being physically present. From this ability we can always imagine the eye of God upon us, even when there is no perceptible evidence of this. But the believer does not realize this, and when they think of God, they imagine an externally existing being.

Hegel uses his own jargon to refer to this relationship. God is conceived of as “the Unchangeable,” that is, as an eternal, substantial, transcendent entity. God creates the universe, which is always changing, but God himself, who is beyond

²⁵ See Jean Wahl, *La conscience malheureuse* (Paris: Denoël et Steele, 1936). See also Bruce Baugh, “Hegel in Modern French Philosophy: The Unhappy Consciousness,” *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 49(3) (1993), 423–438; Murray Greene, “Hegel’s ‘Unhappy Consciousness’ and Nietzsche’s ‘Slave Morality,’” in Darrel E. Christensen (ed.), *Hegel and the Philosophy of Religion* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), pp. 125–141; Gwendoline Jarczyk and Pierre-Jean Labarrière, *Le malheur de la conscience ou l’accès à la raison. Liberté de l’autoconscience: stoïcisme, scepticisme et la conscience malheureuse. Texte et commentaire* (Paris: Aubier, 1989); Jon Stewart, “Die Rolle des unglücklichen Bewußtseins in Hegels *Phänomenologie des Geistes*,” *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 39 (1991), 12–21.

²⁶ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 141; *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 126.

nature, never changes. By contrast, the individual conceives of the world and everything in it, including themselves, as "the Changeable." The world consists of finite, empirically perceivable things, which are forever coming into being, decaying, and passing away. In theological language, this is the distinction between the Creator and Creation.

The basic feature of the world of nature is change. The believer is aware of this, and the basic changes that characterize their own being separate them radically from God as an eternal being. The believer thus has a negative conception of themselves as finite, transitory, and sinful, in absolute contrast to the conception of God as infinite, eternal, and perfect. The individual thus conceives of the divine as, in Hegel's words, an "alien being"²⁷ or an "alien reality."²⁸ The individual and the divine are radically separated and thus "alien to one another."²⁹

Hegel outlines three ways in which the believer tries to overcome this radical difference and become one with God. The first attempt concerns the Incarnation of God in Christ. Initially, God as the creator of the universe is thought of as transcendent and beyond the world that is known to the believer. In this relation, the believer can try to think of or imagine God, but it is impossible for them to get any closer than their own imagination. According to Hegel, the religious believer relates to this conception of God not in terms of concepts but rather feelings. He calls this "devotion," "the pure heart," or "musical thinking" and refers to different aspects of the church service, such as the use of bells, incense, and the singing of hymns.³⁰ This feeling serves only to underscore the painful separation from the transcendent God. This is the form of religious belief of unreflective or uneducated believers.

With the Incarnation, God is incarnated in human form and enters into the world of actuality. One important aspect of the doctrine of the Incarnation is that of reconciliation. With the figure of Christ, humans are reconciled with God and the burden of original sin is overcome. The figure of Christ plays an important role in the relation of recognition since the believer can now see themselves through the eyes of the divine by seeing Christ. A concrete relation of self-conscious recognition arises when one sees that the divine is in fact a human being and then realizes that, as a human being, one has something of the divine in oneself. (Humans are made in the image of God.) This realization helps the individual to overcome what seemed to be a radical split or opposition between the divine and the human.

²⁷ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 142 (*ein Fremdes*); *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 127. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 143 (*das fremde . . . Wesen*); *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 128.

²⁸ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 146; *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 130.

²⁹ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 141; *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 127.

³⁰ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 148; *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 131.

But Hegel points out that this form of reconciliation or recognition has limitations. Christ is a human being in the world of actuality, and, like everything else in the world of actuality, he too must change and ultimately perish. This means that after his death he is no longer physically present to offer the kind of immediate recognition that the religious believer yearns for. Christians born after the death of Christ attempt to recover some vestige of the physical remains of the divine and to hold on to them firmly. The result of this is the desire to collect holy relics, such as splinters from the cross or the funeral shroud of Jesus. Hegel also mentions the desire to locate and preserve the grave of Jesus. (These can be taken as references to different practices of medieval Christianity and to the discovery of the purported site of the crucifixion and the tomb of Christ by St. Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great.)³¹

According to Hegel, these attempts all end in failure. Whenever one tries to get hold of Christ as an object of sense perception, he disappears, and all that is left is the physical remains. This demonstrates that the divine has again become a transcendent entity that is “beyond” the world and again radically separated from the religious believer. Moreover, it is a misunderstanding to think of the importance of God or Christ as something physical. What is physical changes, decays, and perishes; by contrast, a thought or a concept – the Christian message – is eternal. Thus the approach to religious faith that is focused primarily on emotion, feeling, or the senses is misguided since it leads to a constant struggle in the face of the transitory and ever-changing nature of the subject of faith when it is regarded as the object of sense perception.

The second attempt at reconciliation concerns what Hegel refers to with the terms *desire* and *work*.³² Hegel seems to have in mind the kind of work that religious penitents do in order to atone for sins, deprecate themselves, and thereby get closer to God. The believer puts aside their own private interests and focuses on work, dedicating their labor and its fruits to God. They denigrate themselves, regarding themselves as nothing and selflessly working for the divine. Hegel points out a contradiction in this attempt to renounce oneself entirely and to unite with the divine through work. In their self-deprecation, the individual must claim that their own efforts with all of their labor are meaningless. But this then undermines the idea that their work is for God, for whom the work is supposed to be meaningful in some way. The work that the believer does, they ascribe not to themselves but to God, who gave them the ability to perform it. Moreover, the believer renounces all personal interests and enjoyment in the products of their labor, which are all dedicated to God. But this is not entirely true either since in fact the individual also lives from the products of this work, consuming the bread and the wine that they

³¹ See John W. Burbidge, “‘Unhappy Consciousness’ in Hegel: An Analysis of Medieval Catholicism?,” *Mosaic*, 11 (1978), 67–80.

³² Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 150; *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 132.

and others like them have made. Further, the individual cannot deny the fact that they indeed did perform the work and derive satisfaction from this. (Here we see an echo of the bondsman's relation to the master in the previous analysis.) This undermines the idea that the work represents an entirely selfless devotion to God since it contains a clear element of self-interest.

The third attempt at reconciliation comes through the idea of a mediator, that is, a priest who stands between God and the believer. Here Hegel seems to have in mind a model such as that of a monastery or a nunnery. When a monk enters a monastery, he is obliged to give up his possessions and property. He thus abandons life in the world, where one works in order to accumulate private wealth. Instead, his new goal is to do the work of God, which means putting his own will and personal interests aside. The monk is thus obliged to work and perform a number of tasks that are necessary to keep the monastery running. The religious believer or monk again works for God, but now he can transfer the product of his labor to the Church. He can thus renounce his own agency and refer everything to the Church. The abbot or prior is responsible for the actions of the monks and makes all decisions for them. So the work of the monk is no longer his own but rather belongs to the abbot or the Church, as do the products of his labor. But here ultimate reconciliation still eludes the believer. While one renounces one's own will and transfers it to the Church, the believer does not see their will reflected in the Church again, and thus their alienation from God is merely replaced by an alienation from the Church. The promise of salvation in the Church is not something that the believer can redeem in this life. It is a promise for the future, and thus the believer remains separated from it. The believer finds themselves confronted by yet another transcendent entity, and the division of consciousness remains.

The point of the unhappy consciousness is that the efforts of the individual are closely connected with the efforts of others, and indeed with human institutions such as the Church. When people work in the context of these institutions, their actions take on an importance that is greater than merely the subjective, arbitrary actions of individuals. Instead, their actions become a part of a broader project. This opens up the possibility of greater fulfillment and recognition for one's work. This then leads Hegel, later in the *Phenomenology*, to explore in more detail the different kinds of human institutions and ways of thinking that involve groups of people instead of more or less isolated individuals. While we started with two people in the lordship and bondage scenario, we have now reached a considerably more complex situation with groups of people and social institutions.

The unhappy consciousness illustrates different forms of alienation. Most obviously, the unhappy consciousness conceives of God as a separate and radically different entity from itself. The unhappy consciousness is alienated from God in the sense that it cannot overcome the split between itself and God. Despite many attempts to resolve the dualism, God always remains separate

and other. This idea also leads to a sense of alienation from one's own self-conception. The unhappy consciousness conceives of itself both as a believer strenuously trying to get closer to God and as a hopeless sinner. In this way the unhappy consciousness is also unhappy because it has a contradictory view of itself that it cannot overcome. The unhappy consciousness believes it has a human nature that was created by God, but, due to sin, it cannot live up to this, and this causes it to be alienated from itself.

1.5 *The Phenomenology of Spirit* as a Book about Alienation

One of the main issues in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* is the overcoming of alienation. This lies in the nature of the work as a whole.³³ Hegel's goal is, as noted, to refute and thus overcome different forms of common-sense dualism, that is, different conceptions of the split between subject and object, and subjects and other subjects. It was also noted that the idea of alienation always concerns some conception of separation or difference. In this sense, all of Hegel's analyses here can be seen as treating different forms of alienation since they all examine forms of dualism, which are characteristic of this concept. With alienation there is always, so to speak, *an other*.

In the "Consciousness" chapter, an attempt is made to overcome the alienation with objects that appear as independent, self-subsisting others. Hegel shows that in fact they are necessarily bound up with the conscious subject. We cannot even begin to describe an object without having recourse to forms of human thought. As we saw in the "Self-Consciousness" chapter, an attempt is made to overcome the alienation with *the other* as a self-conscious subject, which appears as independent and foreign. Who we are as individuals is necessarily determined by the recognition that we receive from others. In the "Reason" chapter, *the other* is different groups of people and their ways of thinking. In other words, I have my own way of viewing the world, and this may be at variance from the ways in which other people view it. So, in a sense, the relation of one person vis-à-vis another that we saw in the lordship and bondage dialectic is replaced here by a relation of one person vis-à-vis a group of people and their collective ways of thinking. The goal is to overcome the

³³ See Timothy L. Brownlee, "Alienation and Recognition in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," *Philosophical Forum*, 46(4) (2015), 377–396; Gavin Rae, "Hegel, Alienation, and the Phenomenological Development of Consciousness," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 20(1) (2012), 23–42; Gavin Rae, "Alienation and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*," chapter 6 in his *Realizing Freedom: Hegel, Sartre, and the Alienation of Human Being* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), pp. 143–164; Helmut Nicolaus, "Entfremdung nach der *Phänomenologie*," chapter 5 of his *Hegels Theorie der Entfremdung* (Heidelberg: Manutius, 1995), pp. 247–329; Conrad Boey, *L'aliénation dans la Phénoménologie de l'esprit de G. W. F. Hegel* (Paris and Bruges: Desclée, De Brouwer, 1970).

alienation of the individual from the group and to bring into alignment the view of the particular person with that of the whole.

In the "Spirit" chapter, *the other* is represented by different kinds of customs and institutions that the individual finds in the world, seen from a historical perspective. In fact, it is here, where Hegel uses the term "alienation" most frequently, specifically, in the section entitled "Self-Alienated Spirit: Culture"³⁴ and its first part, "The World of Self-Alienated Spirit."³⁵ In Hegel's grand scheme, this section corresponds to the "Self-Consciousness" chapter but at a higher level of development.³⁶ Here he treats different concrete historical institutions, ways of thinking and interacting that appeared in medieval European culture. Individuals are confronted by seemingly arbitrary practices and customs that they did not create. They thus feel alienated from them as something that is external and imposed on them from the outside. Yet people are obliged to go along with them if they are to participate in social life at all. In this context Hegel explores the relations between a king or sovereign and their vassals. This analysis is an echo of the lordship and bondage dialectic. The nobles or vassals disdain the king, and only by compulsion do they *recognize* the royal power. They must overcome this by their noble actions in the service of the court and the accumulation of private wealth. The different roles in society are established by a complex network of recognition, with some people standing above one's given station and others standing below it. The individual's self-understanding is bound up with their placement in this social hierarchy, which is determined by the recognition and acceptance of it by others.

In the next chapter, "Religion," *the other* is represented by different conceptions of the divine. The gods appear as independent and foreign entities. According to Hegel, human beings are what he calls "spirit," but this is not something that is simply given but rather takes some time to develop. As humans evolve from nature, they are initially not aware of this element of their character. It remains as unfulfilled potential. Instead, they see themselves as continuous with nature. This is reflected in their religious beliefs and specifically their conceptions of the divine. Early human beings have ideas of the gods as entities closely associated with natural objects: the sun, the moon, a river, water, or other natural elements. In Zoroastrianism, fire is worshiped as sacred, and in Hinduism and the Egyptian religion, there are sacred bulls and cows. For Hegel, this is not surprising since these peoples, he claims, had not yet developed to the point where they could understand the divine as

³⁴ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, pp. 429–547; *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 294–363.

³⁵ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, pp. 434–485; *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 296–328.

³⁶ See Jon Stewart, "The Architectonic of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 55(4) (1995), 747–776.

something higher – as spirit. Only in later religions, such as Greek and Roman polytheism, do the gods take on an anthropomorphic character. According to the story that Hegel wants to tell, human beings feel a sense of alienation from their gods until they reach the point where they can conceive of God as spirit. This has to do with the concept of recognition. When we see a god as a terrifying force of nature, an animal, or a creature such as the Egyptian god Anubis, who has the head of a jackal, we feel alienated. We cannot recognize ourselves in these forms of the divine. Only when we see the divine as human can we recognize ourselves in it.

At each level in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, there is some kind of *other* that confronts the human mind. The goal is to work through these different conceptions and to overcome them by showing the deeper, hidden unity. Thus the goal of overcoming alienation is present throughout. Indeed, it can be said that alienation is the motor that drives Hegel's dialectical analysis forward. Since there is a separation or division at each stage, there is a need to overcome it with a new conception. Given the centrality of this motif and even Hegel's explicit use of the term, it is odd that it was only in the twentieth century that the concept of alienation was fully recognized as an important topic in his philosophy.³⁷ But in many ways it can be said that this work and this motif played a significant role in setting the philosophical agenda for the nineteenth century.

³⁷ See Walter Kaufmann, "The Inevitability of Alienation," introductory essay in Richard Schacht, *Alienation* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971), pp. xvff.