

HEGEL AND HEIDEGGER AS CRITICS

Martin Heidegger devoted considerable effort to diagnosing the state of the modern world. He spoke, as have many, of its ugliness and brutality. He distinguishes himself, however, not by his pictures of ruin but by his attempt to think the impact of our technological world when it functions comfortably and well. Beyond this he tries to think the way men and nature today are called to be, a point from which we can glimpse a limit to our world and hope for a new dwelling.

I would like to compare Heidegger and Hegel as critics of modernity and of each other's critique. I choose them because I think what they have to say may be of use to us in trying to pick our way through our world. I am not so much interested in defending either thinker as in bringing them into confrontation to locate issues which we must think whether or not we think in German.

We tend to forget that Hegel too was a critic of his times. We are used to his image as the glorifier of actuality and the Prussian state. Even granting that his thought gave rise to later critical movements,¹ it may seem perverse to call him a critic. It is true Hegel was not an *alienated* critic, and we tend to think the great critics must be alienated. He approved what he saw as the general direction of his culture and society. Yet that direction had only recently made itself apparent; many still lived and thought in an earlier way. From the viewpoint of the nascent reconciliation Hegel criticized large segments of contemporary institutions and thought.

In this essay I will first present Hegel's criticism of modernity, then Heidegger's, then show how closely Heidegger's critique resembles Hegel's in its structure. Then I will show how each thinker would find the other unable to overcome modernity, and close with some issues for our thought. Between the two thinkers looms all the intellectual and social history that undermines Hegel's optimism. Nor can "modernity" and "subjectivity" simply mean the same after Nietzsche. But I believe there are exciting parallels to be discussed. The result of this abrupt confrontation may be to question Hegel's most characteristic claims and to force Heidegger towards his more Nietzschean side.

Hegel takes aim at modern subjectivity: freedom without content. The modern discovery of the free individual wars with the ancient solidity of roles

and thought. We need to unite the Romantics and the Greeks into a world honoring freedom yet building community on a nonarbitrary basis. Though this reconciliation has been in principle accomplished by new institutions and concepts, much remains to be done. In fact it is only now, at the end of history, that we can criticize accurately. Previous reformers were caught by the cunning of reason: what they intended and what their actions worked for were not the same. Now man has achieved self-awareness and can judge truly. All the more reason, then, to forward what has begun, the construction of a way of life in which man can be fully at home.²

For Hegel modernity enters with the Reformation, the economic free market, Cartesian philosophy, the French revolution, romantic art. In their various spheres these movements free man from earlier restrictions. They bring to full flower the discovery of individual subjectivity begun at the time of Socrates. No more does a person stand defined by substantial bonds which fit his existence into a larger whole dictating the content of his life. He can face God alone without a priest, make contracts with anyone about anything, be the equal of any citizen without regard for birth and status, base his thought on his individual self-certainty, express his own peculiar genius. He is freed from and over against tradition, things, and other men. As a positive achievement this individualism creates a world where freedom and subjectivity are finally made the basis of human recognition. But this abstracted individual, this subjectivity over against the world, is empty. All content, all institutions and ideas become objects to serve the subject's will or impulses.³ Persons face God in blind feeling without belief-content or community; the economic order reduces human relations to commodities; equality becomes a rage against any structure at all; philosophy becomes empty formalism or glorification of the subjective;⁴ art emphasizes technique over content, or loses itself in ironic reflection upon ironic distances. Thought, feeling, and institutions lose contact with each other.

I must stress that I am assembling negative points from a more serene description. Hegel believes that the remedy appears almost the same time as the disease and the patient is never in principle critically ill. But the symptoms are present, and many live and preach them. The preaching draws Hegel's ire. History has overcome these imbalances in principle, but the bad side of modernity is being reinforced by glorifiers of subjectivity whose distortions are then incorporated into lives and institutions, exacerbating earlier problems.

To sum up the symptoms: the modern liberated individual possesses empty freedom and useless self-reflection. He and his society can only get the bad infinite of More: more feelings, more needs and products, more bits of scientific knowledge and more philosophical schemes, all thrown into the bot-

tomless pit of a subjectivity that maintains its identity by maintaining distance. This subjectivity must always consume or deny or relativize content in order to stay over against.

These symptoms come from a deeper root. They are from a new shape of spirit which provides new possibilities for the mutual recognition of people and their interaction with nature. Any individual now finds himself within these possibilities. They are not his fault, nor can he leap out of them. From the explicit principle of opposition emerges a subjectivity no longer defined by any given content of social roles, beliefs and traditions. This is the achievement of modernity, the appearance of spirit as no longer a thing or substance with given content. When, however, this opposition becomes the last word the free individual loses all solidity. His freedom depends on avoiding given definiteness or on enforcing arbitrary self-definition. Hegel sees the challenge to provide a content for modern freedom. In the modern setting substantial content can only be an outside force to be resisted. Neither can content be arbitrarily created, for in so doing modern subjectivity would again affirm its separation from its product and remain empty. Hegel's problem is to find content which neither comes from outside nor simply comes from us, yet in which we can find ourselves and our freedom.

Hegel's solution is to undo the abstraction of modern man and the total need to be over against. In his jargon: he shows the mediation of the particular content and the (seemingly empty) universal into true individuality. He does so by showing modern subjectivity to be a falsely absolutized aspect of the process by which things are. In the *Phenomenology* Hegel raises us to occupy our true place, and the System is to fill out our comprehension. In finding our place in the movement of reality we discover a content derived from that movement. We discover that the process is not really ours. Rather it is the coming-to-be of the content through us. We are the place where it appears and is fully concrete. We are its final self-grasp. In letting ourselves consciously be this self-grasp of the final content-and-process we come to our true selves.

Every fixed and stable independent thing stands as a moment in the motion of spirit.⁵ Neither the definite content nor the transcending power of subjectivity is simply there. There are no simple fixed contents for subjectivity to be over against; nor is there any fixed subjectivity to be over against things and content. Both result from the motion of mediation. Modern distance, be it in Cartesian philosophy or the French revolution, expresses only one aspect of this process. It cannot be made absolute since it is possible at all only in a wider context. Hegel aims to show we exist in (and as) a motion that expresses its own movement as its content and gathers back the expression into a self-conscious unity.⁶

In all this the modern world and its problems turn out to be a necessary stage. The world of free subjects over against content is to be *aufgehoben*, its advances kept and their false absoluteness removed. In the new larger context we will understand the modern world for the first time in its true reality.

In principle all this has been accomplished. Modern life *has* overcome its one-sided emptiness. The adequate content has become available, so we can criticize the presence of earlier concepts and institutions. Such criticism is fully self-conscious only in philosophy, but men also live the new content and criticize the old by their practice as new citizens, artists, and believers. The philosopher's task is to render all this explicit and self-consciously conceptual. Thinkers need not push reforms; spirit works without prodding. Yet thinkers let spirit come to full self-consciousness in themselves.

The climb to self-awareness is over, or beginning its completion. Happenings will not cease, but now spirit will be fully actualized and human life will happen at one with itself and its world. Hegel ends the *Encyclopedia* with a quote from Aristotle on "thought thinking itself." This signifies not eternity but the full penetration of the world by spirit living among dualities that remain but are seen through. Time is overcome by entering its motion and being at home in the presence of its unity. To finish the transition there is judgment to be said of many concrete institutions, laws and thinkers. The completion is in the details of the content as well as in the overall movement. This judgment is not an external application of philosophy; it is an expression of the Beings of things. Where the medieval reads the scriptures and Heidegger reads Hölderlin, Hegel reads the morning newspaper.⁷

For Heidegger, modern subjectivism comes into its own with the new science and philosophy of the seventeenth century, and achieves its completion with Nietzsche and modern technocracy. This culminates a movement that started with the Greeks.⁸ In its modern phase, man is removed from secure medieval foundations and increasingly organizes his world around his own self-certainty and power. Such power can only affirm itself through remaking objects; it accepts as a goal only its own growth. Man becomes the distanced manipulator encompassing all to achieve his own self-certainty, no longer close to things and world. This aggressive emptiness hides under a variety of humanistic banners which all further nihilism. Man is torn from his roots and has nowhere to turn but towards himself and his aimless power. Yet man himself comes under the sway of that power (which only seems to be his possession); he too becomes an object to be manipulated and ordered.

Heidegger sees the challenge to get us back to our full place with the world and things. We cannot of ourselves provide new context for our activities but at least we can undo the false isolation of the self-sure modern subject. Its very triumph has made the undoing possible. To accomplish this we must investigate how things come to stand in their Being.

Heidegger's first philosophical question sought the unified meaning of 'Being' across its many modes. Natural things have one mode of presence, persons another. There are numbers, tools, historical events, God, and so on, all present but in various ways. What brings it all together? Early in his career Heidegger rejected the unification offered by contemporary Neokantian theories of the formal aspects of experience. He sought for a clue in the temporal structure of all modes of presence, and may well have thought he could give a loose derivation of all modes from the key phenomenon of lived time.⁹

He came to think the attempt for a unified origin of the modes of presence was itself the manifestation of one historical mode. He kept the relation of all modes to time interpreted as the opening of fields of possible presence. He rejected the attempt to show any origin of such fields which could itself be brought to presence as a being within a field. The only 'origin' is the constant interplay between man and the arising of fields of possible presencing within which beings can appear.¹⁰

This interplay is not an interaction of two beings that could be made present. Man is not unified, not a core self or transcendental ego. He is the spread-out tension of action and possibility, presence and absence, run through a complex of temporal structures no one of which grounds the others. The temporality of these structures is not time as surveyed from above like a river, but the coming about of the future *as* future in the opening of possibilities. Similarly, the fields of possible presencing are determinate networks relating presences to absent possibilities, networks which like the horizon continue to open up as one advances and can never be made present as a totality. Man and fields find their place through each other without blending into some massive presence. Neither can be without the other, but there is no moment of identity nor dialectical resolution. The arising of this togetherness of man and fields is neither a datable event nor a treasurehouse behind history. There is no thing behind the arising to be studied or made present as a being within a field. The finitude of this arising is the hardest thought in Heidegger, and a misstep will turn him into Hegel, or into Michel Foucault, or Nelson Goodman.

Both the fields and man change through history. To use one of Heidegger's metaphors, the tuning of that togetherness alters.¹¹ The metaphysical search for grounds and origins is the expression of one such tuning which gives temporal primacy to the surveyable present. From the Greeks, this tradition is a long attempt to ignore the arising of fields or to pervert it into a relation (or product) of things that can themselves be made wholly present (Forms, God, universals, egos, laws of thought, and so on). This also brings on the attempt by the modern subject to overcome its temporal dispersion and achieve self-certainty. Here we find the common root of metaphysics and technocracy.

From this root springs the barrenness which is most insidious when modern life works well in all its flashy variety. There is a nihilistic lack of context, a flattened world where all modes of presence are reduced to that of objects for the ordering will. This is the end of art and real thought.

None of this is our fault. To take the blame is again to vaunt the modern will. Heidegger undoes the separation of the modern subject in two moves. First, in the analysis of *Ge-stell* he argues that the seemingly omnipotent modern subject is in the grip of a mode in which everything including man comes to presence as calculable material for the ordering will.¹² The lordlike subject is really called to be what he is by his appropriation into the field in which he, like every being, comes to presence. In our age that field has the objectivizing quality which threatens to bury other modes of presence and our relation to the arising of fields.

Second, by seeing the modern field of presencing as ruling man we open a return to where that rule occurs, our belonging with the arising of all fields. This undoes modern overagainstness so far as lies in our power. "Modern man must first and above all find his way back into the full breadth of the space proper to his essence."¹³ "It is precisely in this extreme danger that the innermost indestructible belonging of man within [the arising of fields of presencing] may come to light."¹⁴ We can "admit ourselves into that wherein [modernity] itself comes to presence."¹⁵

It does not lie within our power to bring about a new world. Modernity fulfills an old destiny which, like all interplay of fields, cannot be thought in metaphysical terms of causation or responsibility.¹⁶ There is hope that modernity will be overcome by a new mode of presence in which technological civilization will find itself within a richer presence of things. Now at the culmination of the West we cannot will a change but we can become self-conscious of our place and glimpse new possibilities. The thinker's task is to bring all this to language. We can hope that "the coming to presence of technology will be surmounted in a way that restores it to its yet concealed truth."¹⁷ "Will we arrive . . . within the essence of nearness that . . . brings the world near? Will we dwell as those at home in nearness?"¹⁸

I will now express Hegel's critique of modernity in schematic outline, showing parallels in Heidegger at each point. Then I will return over the same steps and collect the differences between the two thinkers. For both thinkers the solution appears with the full development of the problem. For convenience, however, I will speak below as if we had first the problem then the solution.

1. Hegel: There is a modern age with a problem, not just scattered times and problems. Underneath its manifestations lies the incomplete structure of spirit which limits the possibilities for full life and institutions.

(2) we are off

Heidegger: There is a modern age with a unified field of possible presencing that creates and limits our possibilities, cutting us off from a fuller and more original life.

2. Hegel: Our age brings to fulfillment something that started with the Greeks, the principle of individual subjectivity whose introduction divides Greek history into two phases. We lack the substantial community of early Greek life.

Heidegger: Our age brings to fulfillment something that started with the Greeks, the demand for total presence of the Being of beings, whose introduction divides Greek thought into two phases. We lack the openness to absence and negation of the early Greek thinkers.¹⁹

3. Hegel: The modern age is the time of subjects over against objects. This is the dominant self-image and institutional reality, a time of directionless ego seeking more and more content to devour so to affirm itself as separate and free. This denies its own context in other involvements with content and history.

Heidegger: The modern age is the time of the will to power which can only be itself by going beyond any stable content and affirming itself in that overcoming. Institutions and ways of thinking all express this, and the world becomes a reservoir of objects to be used and ordered by the will. This denies our more original context and place.

4. Hegel: The development of modern empty subjectivity is not our doing or our fault. It is a shape of spirit in its development. *is not*

Heidegger: Modern domineering subjectivity is itself called to be as it is by the current field of presencing. It is neither our achievement nor our sin. *is not*

5. Hegel: What is needed is a content for freedom which is neither merely given nor arbitrarily created. Otherwise the empty subject will reaffirm its separateness.

Heidegger: "The freedom of the open (der Freiheit des Freien) consists neither in unfettered arbitrariness nor in the constraint of mere laws."²⁰ We need to find a nearness to things in the opening of presence prior to the sphere of calculation and domination. Otherwise any remedy will be another exercise of the will to power. *object*

6. Hegel: We must break the illusory completeness and self-sufficiency of the abstracted modern individual, and show that it is possible only as a moment of the process in which things have their Being.

Heidegger: We must break the illusory self-sufficiency of the willing subject, and show it is possible only out of a more basic relation of man to the arising of presencing, which is the relation through which things are revealed in their Being. *and* *ewes*

WZM → G

F: moment } scene
C: moment } ↑

7. Hegel: The relation man has to the process by which things become is one of negation, differentiation and unity. Man is needed as the self-grasp which renders the process transparent to itself.

Heidegger: Man's relation to the arising of presencing is one of belonging together in difference. Man is needed to correspond as the place where Being comes to Language.²¹

8. Hegel: When spirit's motion becomes self-transparent, the adequate content for life and thought becomes available and guaranteed. The necessary ~~content of the whole~~ appears, and in it we find ourselves. ^{It is content} This content is not arbitrary (it is the structured motion of spirit) nor is it merely given to us (we are that same structure and motion made self-conscious). Our freedom is maintained but as a moment in the development of that self-conscious content. The empty subject is replaced by a concrete totality from which any formal or subjective assertion can only be a one-sided abstraction. The seemingly infinite power of abstract modern subjectivity to negate and demand indefinitely More turns out to be rooted in this concretely infinite totality. ~~and is like no 3~~

Heidegger: In our age we can become aware of our place in the play of man and presencing, and so achieve a new nearness to things. There is no unique content, only nearness to the arising through a nearness to the things called to presence. ^{may} [This opens up a realm of possibilities beyond calculation and domination, so that the content for life is neither our construction nor some object we have to surmount, but a calling to ratify possibilities opened up along with the Beings of things and of ourselves.]

Our freedom is maintained but as a receptive response to the possibilities granted us to be. We come to presence within the content, not the reverse, yet we transcend the content because it is made possible only by our ^{openness} openness with the arising which is beyond content, no thing. The empty subject is replaced by the finite togetherness of man and the arising of presencing, from which any formal or subjective assertion can only be a derived mode of behavior. The seemingly infinite power of modern subjectivity to demand self-certainty turns out to be rooted in the finite granting of presence.

9. Hegel: In all this the modern age and its problems are a necessary stage which is to be *aufgehoben*: its achievement preserved and its one-sidedness overcome.

Heidegger: The world of the will to power is our destiny. Yet its ^{restric} restrictions give us the opportunity to escape the forgetfulness of our true place which has dominated the West. We can live in this world letting our awareness that we receive it as a destiny transcend the self-definition this

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restric

world gives us. The claims of technology will thus lose their status as the last word; they will be "*aufgehoben* in the Hegelian sense."²² Beyond this, we can not know what kind of dwelling may be granted us later.

10. Hegel: The overcoming is now accomplished in principle. History is over and a new human existence comes to birth where man will be at home in the self-conscious actualization of spirit.

Heidegger: The domination of the metaphysical-technological way of Being now completes itself. A new 'poetic dwelling' with things can be discerned as life lived consciously and resolutely with the arising of fields of presencing.

11. Hegel: The thinker must let the movement of the spirit come to self-conscious presence in concepts, so that its self-grasp may be completed. This will enable him to judge and speak against holdovers from earlier moments of spirit's development. In doing so he will employ no external standard; the conceptual movement itself reveals the earlier moments to be incomplete. Though he brings the movements to its full presence, the thinker does not initiate the movement, since the change first appears in politics and religion and art.

Heidegger: The thinker must let the arising of new fields of presencing come to the finite articulation of language, so that man will live authentically called in close co-responence to that arising and within the new world. In speaking the word from this call he can speak the coming of the new and the fate of the old, whose limits and destiny are now shown. The thinker speaks out of his own calling; his word is primal but not more so than that of the poet and the prophet.

It seems to me that despite their disagreements these two thinkers show a remarkable similarity in the structure of their critique of modernity. It is not without reason that Hegel, though not the strongest influence on Heidegger's thought, remains that earlier thinker from whom Heidegger has the most trouble disentangling himself. I will now go back over the eleven steps, collecting points of opposition between the thinkers.

1. Both agree there is a problem with the modern age, not just a set of diverse difficulties. Both locate it in the allowed possibilities for man and things to be. But in Heidegger's eyes Hegel spells all this out metaphysically by making the modern possibilities themselves one possibility for how spirit can come to presence as a being, instead of stepping back to the conditions that make possible any being's presence in whatever mode.

2. Both agree our age brings to its completion something that at its occurrence split Greek history into two phases. But for Heidegger the introduction

of the individual in Greek life was subsequent to the redefinition of the experience of time and presence which leads to individuals seeking self-certainty. Further, while for Hegel what began with the Greeks finds fulfillment and will be continued (in its proper context), for Heidegger what began with the Greeks is coming to a culmination which will signal its end. Finally, while Hegel wants us to recapture the positive sides of both phases of Greek life, Heidegger seems often to wish we could find ourselves in something most akin to the early phase.

3. Both agree that an empty willing is the keynote of modernity. Both see that will trying to affirm itself by overcoming any stable content. For Hegel, however, modern will is radically individualized, while for Heidegger it has individuals in its grasp. We ourselves become material for an anonymous ordering which aims only at its own increase. ("Modernity" for Heidegger, after Nietzsche, cannot remain the individualistic, romantic, free-market world Hegel criticizes. Nor can "subjectivity" have as much unity. Yet they agree on criticizing the striving for More to achieve self-certainty when substantial content can neither be thought nor lived.)

4. Both trace modern will to something more basic which is not our doing. But for Hegel that more basic something is a shape of spirit that can itself be made transparently present, while for Heidegger what is more basic is the field that renders possible all presence and cannot appear as something present.²³

5. Both seek a content that escapes the negating domination of modern subjectivity. But while Hegel seeks *the* true content in which we find ourselves and so are at home, Heidegger seeks a true relation to *whatever* is granted by the play of presence.

6. Both want to break the illusory self-sufficiency of the modern abstracted individual by finding man's relation to the becoming of the Being of things. But for Hegel that becoming is itself the Being of things. Its structure is open to examination. For Heidegger that becoming is the arising of the fields within which any examination of the Being of things might be carried out. The arising cannot be so studied.

7. Both think the togetherness of man and the becoming of the Being of things as a relation of difference and togetherness. But Heidegger thinks this relation without the moment of identity crucial to Hegel; there is no totality involved in any dimension. Further, for Heidegger this becoming has no sweeping historical motion. Though it gives birth to different historical eras it is neither an historical process like Hegel's spirit nor supra-historical like Hegel's absolute Idea. Finally, we do not become the totalizing self-consciousness of this becoming, but only its responsive shepherds, allowing ourselves and things to come to presence through our resolve and our saying.²⁴

8. Both see the awareness of modern man's full situation leading to a life which undoes the dichotomy of empty subjectivity versus content. In Hegel the dichotomy is ~~replaced~~^{replaced} by a concretely infinite totality reconciling both sides while trimming their absoluteness. In Heidegger the ~~dichotomy~~^{dichotomy} is seen as derived from a particular finite granting of presence. The finitude of that giving undermines all its claims to absoluteness and totality. It also precludes any Hegelian transparency or infinitude; there is no reconciliation in Hegel's sense. There is only a call back to a root situation which cannot maintain the separateness of modern subjectivity. ~~We find ourselves within a field of possible presencing, and our only transcendence of that field is to the no-thing which is its arising.~~²⁵

9. Both find the modern era necessary, with achievements to be preserved. But for Heidegger it is a stage at the end of a larger epoch itself without necessity. The metaphysical age has a unity and culmination, but the whole is just one turn in the directionless play of man and fields of presencing.²⁶

10. Both see the beginning of a new human life in which the becoming of the Being of things is no longer hidden. For Hegel this is the definitive revelation of the structure of spirit, now self-transparent. For Heidegger the arising of fields of presence, Ereignis, hides itself even as we approach it without forgetfulness. It is not a being to be made present; it has nothing to show except beings and their fields. Here is "an unbridgeable difference. Since for Hegel man is the place of the Absolute's coming to itself, that coming to itself leads to the overcoming of man's finitude. For Heidegger, in contrast, it is precisely finitude that comes into view—not only man's finitude, but the finitude of Ereignis itself."²⁷

11. Both see men dwelling within the word. Both see the thinker as bringing to language movements accomplished in man's world as a whole yet completed by the word which lets them appear. They disagree, however, about what is achieved in bringing this to thought and language. For Hegel the word allows pure final self-grasp, for Heidegger a presence that withdraws from presence. In both cases, though, the movement of full or partial presence is the movement in which we find our deepest dwelling. Both allow the thinker to speak out the limits and destiny of present happenings without importing external standards, but for Hegel this judgment rests on the steady availability of the concept while for Heidegger the thinker's judgment shares the clarity and confusion of the poet's word, since what makes it possible is a presence never available but always withdrawing.

These differences fall into a quick summary in Heideggerian jargon: Hegel is metaphysical, seeks self-certainty, and forgets Ereignis. Heidegger tries to uncover deeper roots of the very separation and individuality Hegel complains about. Hegel's "solution" to modernity is only a final perfection of the principle behind modern subjectivity.

I will now discuss Heidegger's criticisms of Hegel. Then I will turn around and show that from Hegel's point of view it is Heidegger who reinforces modernity in the attempt to overcome it.

Since we have seen the points of difference already, we can be brief in our discussion of Heidegger's explicit criticisms of Hegel. We can focus on three attacks.²⁸

First: Hegel is the arch-metaphysician bringing everything into presence. He carries to extremes the dream of finding grounds for everything in the way some highest being exists. This highest being renders itself fully present in the course of history, both present to consciousness and fully in the present moment. Thus Hegel forgets the relation of man to the arising of fields of presence, or, to be more exact, he thinks that relation as itself the highest being making itself present. This is a metaphysical cure for a metaphysical disease.

Whether this is an adequate portrait of Hegel is questionable. It ignores the extent to which Hegel himself goes beyond metaphysical ways of thinking. Spirit is not *a* being nor a metaphysical ground in any usual sense. Identity, presence, and self-certainty are used dialectically and encompass their negations. This said, it remains true that Hegel's emphasis is on presence and transparency, and his goal is to forge a concrete totality.²⁹ For all their flexibility the dialectical concepts do demand encompassing unity, and create a discourse within which the Being of anything can be rendered present. In these senses Hegel does stay within the metaphysical tradition. Whether or not this is a failing, of course, depends on other arguments.

Second, Heidegger argues that Hegel remains in the Cartesian tradition. The Being of things is an objectivity to be represented to a willing subject which in performing that representation achieves self-certainty. The subject is the absolute spirit and the representation occurs in absolute knowledge. This criticism is elaborated in a careful analysis of the Introduction to Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Though it would require more detail than is appropriate in this essay to support my claim, I believe this picture of Hegel as a super-Cartesian is simply mistaken.³⁰ In this case, at least, Hegel has definitively broken with the tradition in which Heidegger wishes to pen him. Just how Hegel relates to the tradition of self-certainty can best be seen from texts in the *Logic* and *Philosophy of Spirit*. Hegel thinks subjectivity through negativity, not the reverse.³¹

Third, Hegel fails to achieve closure. The great circular system rests in a context that it does not comprehend, a taken-for-granted set of possibilities defining time and presence and truth, conditioned not by the development of the system but by a finite granting of fields of presence. The dialectical machinery cannot grasp this wider context which lacks the moments of

totality and identity needed to give purchase to Hegel's concepts. This is a damaging criticism, since it argues the failure of the system on its own terms.³² If the attack is successful—and I think it is—then there is more to be thought than the system can encompass.

This argues that even if we accept Hegel's characterization of modern empty subjectivity there is no overcoming it in a concrete totality such as Hegel proposes. The infinitude of that totality has been compromised. We do not lack for suggestions of finite totalities (language games, forms of life, cultures) to take the place of the Hegelian infinite whole, but these seem to collapse as answers under sustained fire from both Hegel and Heidegger.

Now let us examine an Hegelian critique of Heidegger along the themes we have been following: subjectivity and content. In this view it is Heidegger who fails to overcome modern subjectivism. Hegel's full critical method involves producing a synthesis which delimits and preserves the truth of the position being criticized. But at times Hegel contents himself with pointing out unresolved tensions or lack of thought.³³ I will follow this latter course.

According to Heidegger the arising of fields of presencing brings men and things into presence in varying ways. Man maintains his essential relation to that arising, yet he is granted different fields of presencing in different eras. It is our living in aware nearness to that arising which helps break the hold modern subjectivity has on us.

Hegel might question the sameness and difference involved in this. In his jargon: is there a Universal here? If so, from whence does it get its various specifications? If not, by what right does Heidegger talk of different eras of the history of Being? And how does this sameness and difference relate to the ontic continuities and explanations we discover in history?

Let me try and spell out these questions. Hegel claims that modernity frees us from substantial identification of our subjectivity with a given content, but modern subjectivity remains an empty transcending of particular content, an 'empty universal'. Hegel tries to show that content can be developed from the universal itself and that our seemingly empty transcendence lies within the evolution of the rational content. Hegel might say that Heidegger never resolves modern subjectivity but remains wavering on the border between substantiality and empty universality, thinking he has transcended both when in fact he oscillates rapidly between them.

The content in question will be any particular field in which man and things come to presence together. At times Heidegger tells us just to let ourselves and things come to presence as what they are. Is this substantiality? No, because we have a relation beyond this field (which can't be made a totality) to the arising of such fields. We are precisely *not* identified with any substantial content (we are not things) yet we come to ourselves when we let

things and ourselves be as they are granted presence. It is our finitude to be transcending the given content but *not* to anything itself substantial. Our openness beyond content is to the no-thing of the arising. Yet what this relation beyond the determinate content seems to give us is only the space of that content; we still are in the determinate world with all its givenness.³⁴

Here is the nub of the matter: can Heidegger think that to which we are open beyond determinate content without either becoming Hegel or having us open to an empty formal universal juxtaposed to a content merely given?

That to which we are open has other possibilities than the present content. If it did not there would be no way to overcome the dominance of the technical mode of presence. Part of the liberation of living man's true relation to the arising of presencing is that we live with the finitude of the present content as one among many. In accepting this finitude as not the only possibility but as *our* possibility, we find ourselves in resolve and authenticity.

The different modes of presence occur most dramatically in different eras. Though I will concentrate on the historical side of the question, analogous objections could be raised concerning the various "contemporary" modes of presence discussed in the Thing essay and similar pieces on poetic dwelling.

How can Heidegger speak of the arising of presencing, Ereignis, as the same each time? The easiest way would be to reify it into a Source, but this contradicts Heidegger's whole attempt. Ereignis opens the field within which all beings, sources and Sources included, come to presence. A second way would be to make it a formal structure with different material fillings during history. But this too is metaphysics: Heidegger would be making present the form of man-in-history.

These questions reveal a further issue: by what right does Heidegger collect different eras at all? What is the universal which lets us discuss 'different modes of presencing'? How can the whole discussion get started?

These questions are the *first* problem area: how think the unity of different eras and the sameness of Ereignis without doing metaphysics? There is a *second*: how relate the sameness of Ereignis to its different contents? (I use the word 'content' here contentiously; Heidegger would reject the "Kantian" phrasing. But has he grounds to do so?) Does Ereignis develop different fields of presence out of itself? Then it is an Hegelian universal. Heidegger comes perilously close to this in some of his remarks.³⁵ Heidegger would fare no better if Ereignis, like an Aristotelian universal, were to receive its specification from outside. What could be outside? ontic history? If neither of these ways of accounting for the diversity of eras succeeds, do we then let the unity of Ereignis across different eras collapse? How do we think this unity without relapsing into dialectic or into Kantian formalism.³⁶

There is a *third* problem area: we must relate the sameness and difference of Ereignis to the comings and goings of ontic history. Despite the disarray of the social sciences, there seem to be some continuities and generalizations across eras. Economic and ecological factors are the most obvious, but there are more purely cultural generalizations, for instance those that might apply to primitive Japan and primitive Greece. The whole realm of cultural development so prominent in Hegel seems to be abruptly denied any efficacy in changes of modes of presencing. We need to know how continuities in ontic patterns relate to changes from Ereignis. It seems clear that not any arbitrarily chosen institution or way of thought can follow any other. Even if there is no necessity in the actual course of history, there seem to be at least some constraints. The sensibility of seventh century Japan does not seem a possible next step for fourteenth century Europe. Do such constraints come from Ereignis? If so, we are approaching Hegel. Do they arise from outside? Or do modes of presence have their own dynamism and development? Heidegger's statements on the independence of the history of Being from ordinary historiography do not make this problem any easier.³⁷ There is danger, once again, that the whole discussion of the history of Being will collapse into empty formalism while the real work of giving content is left to ontic history. This would leave us moderns oscillating between empty universality and given content.³⁸

New
beginnings?

This relates to the problem of what Heidegger allots to our activity. Within an era we can retrieve future possibilities from the past and renew ourselves by the hermeneutical power of thought. But when a change of era is in store we can only be self-aware, serve, sit and wait. The disjunction between our ontic activities and the 'activity' of Ereignis seems too wide; how does this relate to the march of ontic events? The morning newspaper should be more important. There is more to be thought if we are to escape modern subjectivity.

If we were to modify Hegel and Heidegger to meet their respective attacks, they would both tend to converge on a position without either Hegelian closure or the protective insulation Heidegger puts between his meditations and ontic concerns. A finite (i.e., un-Hegelian) Hegel resembles a Heidegger pushed more toward his Nietzschean side.³⁹

We can draw a question from this confrontation. Many thinkers today claim thought and life go on in a context which cannot be totalized. There is no encompassing language; we and our discourse are always located in ways beyond our making or full sight. Where, then, is the universal? By what right do we talk of different instances of cultures or forms of life or whatever we see as multiplied? Are they instances of a common form? (If so, where does the content come from?) Are they various states of some concrete totality?

finite or infinite? Is there perhaps some process changing through time (man making sense of nature, hermeneutical existence, the play of signifiers, or what have you) with neither formal identity nor totalization? Then how account for its unity, and for its differences?

If with Hegel we deny the adequacy of finite totalities and formal unities, and if with Heidegger we deny the possibility of any encompassing totality, where are we?

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NOTES

1. Marx and Kierkegaard come to mind most readily, but the conservative Hegelians of the right were also critical of current trends.

2. Hegel discusses his contemporary world frequently in his prefaces, lectures, and notes. In the body of his major writings explicit references are more rare, but the crucial issues are addressed directly. For my presentation of his views I have drawn heavily on the *Philosophy of Right* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1955), preface and sections 182ff (civil society), *Aesthetics* (London: Oxford U.P., 1975), preface, section iv, *Philosophy of Religion* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1968), preface, section ii, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952), preface and sections on Enlightenment, Terror, and Romanticism, *The Science of Logic* (Leipzig: Meiner, 1955), section "On the Concept in General," *Encyclopedia* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1969), sections 40–78.

3. Will or impulse amount to the same thing in this case, as Hegel argues in the *Philosophy of Right*. Cf. the recent Cornell dissertation by Nancy C. Gerth, *Individual Freedom and Duty in Hegel's Philosophy of Right*.

4. "It marks the diseased state of age when we see it adopt the despairing opinion that our knowledge is only subjective and that beyond this subjective we cannot go." *Encyclopedia*, section 22z.

5. "... to which I gave the name 'infinite absolute negativity,' the activity of the Idea in that it negates itself as the infinite and universal, so as to become finiteness and particularity, and just as really cancels this negation in turn, establishing thereby the universal and infinite in the finite and particular." *Philosophy of Fine Art*, preface, section iv. In what follows I adopt the convention of distinguishing 'being' (anything that comes to presence) from 'Being' (its mode of presence).

6. This is of course the most vulnerable aspect of the system. Heidegger attacks it for what it tries to do, while almost everyone attacks it for failing to do what it claims. But, as I will suggest below, Heidegger may himself be vulnerable to a reverse of the same attack.

7. Nor was Hegel always heartened by what he read. His letters reveal a less confident side: "I am about fifty years old, and I have spent thirty of these fifty years in this ever unrestful era of hope and fear. I had hoped that we might for once be done with it. Now I must admit that it is with us as always; indeed, it seems in one's darker hours

that it is getting increasingly worse" (from a letter written in 1819 (*Briefe von und ab Hegel*, II, 219) translated and cited by Clark Butler in his book, *Hegel* (Twayne, 1978), p. 196). At times Hegel seems to retreat to the claim that spirit gives us only a set of normative formal structures whose embodiment is purely contingent; I have, however, emphasized his more robust program. For details of Hegel's criticisms of modern institutions, cf. Shlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge, 1972).

8. Almost every piece Heidegger wrote contains some discussion of modernity. In this presentation I have drawn especially from the essays "The Question Concerning Technology," "Science and Reflection," "The Turning," and parts of the Nietzsche volumes.

9. Thomas Sheehan "Time and Being, 1925–1927," *Proceedings of the Twelfth Annual Heidegger Conference* (Villanova: Villanova University, 1978 (preprint)).

10. "Field of possible presencing," is my halting paraphrase of "world" in Heidegger's special sense. "Field of meaning" or "field of intelligibility" have their merits but sound too like subjective projections on neutral objects. The "arising" of such fields is my translation of Heidegger's "Ereignis." No English rendering captures the overtones of the German which mingle the *event* of a new world, its *own-ing* us, our finding our *own selves* in the space *proper* to the world. I have used a simpler translation and tried to suggest the complexities through context. I have also adopted the neutral term "era" for what is usually translated "epoch" of the history of Being, because "epoch" has special connotations from "epochē" which may only apply to metaphysical eras.

11. The metaphor is used in the essay "What is Philosophy?" *Aufsätze* (Pfullungen: Neske 1967), p. 26–27; *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, (New York: Harper 1977), p. 26–27.

12. Cf. *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullungen: Neske, 1967), pp. 26–27, translated in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper, 1977), pp. 26–27. These two books are referred to below as *Vorträge* and *Question*.

13. "The Turning," *Question*, p. 39.

14. *Vorträge*, p. 32; *Question*, p. 32.

15. *Vorträge*, p. 24; *Question*, p. 24.

16. "Thus modern science as the theory of the actual is not anything self-evident. It is neither a mere human construct nor something extorted from the actual. Quite the contrary, the essence of science is rendered necessary by the presencing of what presences in the moment (Augenblick) when presencing sets itself forth in the mode of objectivity for the actual. This moment remains full of mystery, as any moment of its kind. Not only the greatest thoughts come as on doves feet, but before all else at any time the changes in the presencing of all that comes to presence." ("Science and Reflection," *Vorträge*, p. 49; *Question*, p. 168–9, translation modified.)

17. "The Turning," *Question*, p. 39.

18. "The Turning," *Question*, p. 49.

19. This needs to be qualified. In his essay "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking" Heidegger retracted his claim (made earlier in "Plato's Theory of Truth") that there was a change in the experience of "truth" with Plato. Heidegger never worked out the implications of this new historical interpretation. In one way little alters: the word "truth" is surrendered to its normal philosophic meaning, and Heidegger can continue to talk about what concerns him, the arising of the field within

which anything like "truth" can occur. But without an early transformation in "truth" the forgetfulness of Ereignis ceases to be a distinctively Greek-and-Western affair. While this weakens the parallel with Hegel's treatment of the Greeks, it makes Heidegger more Hegelian overall. By increasing our natural forgetfulness history has brought us to where we can in some measure overcome it.

20. *Vorträge*, p. 25; *Question*, p. 25.

21. I am bypassing the complications of Heidegger's late use of "Language" here. The parallel with Hegel could still be drawn.

22. From Heidegger's posthumously published interview in *Der Spiegel*, issue 23, May 31 1976, p. 193 ff (Hamburg: Spiegel Verlag, 1976). A translation appeared in *Philosophy Today*, Winter 1976, pp 267-284.

23. Many qualifications would be needed on both sides here. Spirit is not a Being. On the other hand Ereignis can be approached and lived with; it is not 'unknowable'.

24. The degree of our activity in historical changes remains a difficulty for both thinkers and separates them from the pragmatic tendencies of Anglo-American thought.

25. The resulting lack of closure is the key to Heidegger's overcoming of modernity. The finitude which encourages us to reach for self-certainty also provides the conditions for our rescue from that destructive task.

26. At times, however, Heidegger does talk as if the eras had a fitting together or appropriateness to one another which, if he means this in general and not just within the overall era of the West, is both more Hegelian and unexplained in his thought. Cf., for instance, *Question*, p. 37 and p. 39. (On the unity of the Western era, cf. Michel Haar, "Structures hégéliennes dans la pensée heideggérienne de l'Histoire," *Revue de Métaphysique et Morale*, 1980, no. 1.)

27. *Time and Being*, (New York: Harper, 1977) p. 41.

28. The three attacks correspond very roughly to the essays "Hegel and the Greeks," "Hegel's Concept of Experience," "The Onto-theo-logical Constitution of Metaphysics." All three attacks are present in each essay.

29. The opening and closing pages of the Encyclopedia furnish many methodological remarks concerning the ultimate transparently Hegel sought.

30. Heidegger seems to confuse spirit and consciousness, though the burden of the Phenomenology is to make that distinction. The two relate to will and representation in quite different ways. Further, in his interpretation of the movement of the book Heidegger mistakes the kinds of standards to be applied to the shapes of consciousness, giving far too little weight to determinate negation. In general his picture of the Phenomenology resembles something Hegel is at pains to combat, Schellingian immediate intuition of the Absolute used as a standard for judging and grounding finite consciousness. Heidegger's recently published 1930 lectures on Hegel (*Hegel's Phanomenologie des Geistes*, Gesamtausgabe, Band 32 (Frankfurt am M.: Klostermann, 1981)) show the same questionable interpretation. Heidegger reads the Phenomenology so that the transition to Self-consciousness is overvalued in a way which allows the claim that spirit is ego. The movement of the shapes of consciousness is said to occur because they are constructed within a pre-given and unquestioned horizon of the meaning of Being as infinite (in Hegel's sense). As in the later essays on Hegel, Heidegger gives virtually no weight to the process of determinate negation on which Hegel set so much emphasis.

31. This is not to say that Hegel's negativity does not in the end fall within what Heidegger terms *Subjektivität* (not, however, *Sujektivität*). That is, though, at a very

long end which would require close examination of the relation of form and process in Hegel.

32. The objection is a sophisticated descendant of Kiekegaard's claim that existence cannot be caught in the closure of the system. Heidegger claims to find conditions for Hegel's discourse which cannot be comprehended within that discourse, thus undermining its claimed completeness.

33. Hegel distinguishes between pointing out a *Mangel* and producing a *Widerlegung* (*The Science of Logic* [Leipzig: Meiner, 1955], II, pp. 216–17; in the Miller translation (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969), pp. 580–81.)

34. If this resembles the problem of the 'Stoic' as Hegel describes him in the *Phenomenology*, it is tempting to see in some of Heidegger's French successors, such as Derrida, some analogue to the active negating done by the Sceptic.

35. Cf. "The Turning," *Question*, pp. 37, 39, 48. Because Heidegger insists on the lack of necessity and culmination, the resemblance is somewhat to Schelling rather than Hegel. But this suspends Ereignis uneasily between the concrete universal and the night in which all cows are black.

36. In my essay "A Place Without a Form?" (*Proceedings of the Fifteenth Heidegger Conference* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1981 (preprint))) I suggest that Heidegger develops a kind of formalism across eras in the history of Being, but a formalism which does not allow totalization or meta-description. This has affinities with Hegel's treatment of formalism, but lacks his closure. As a way of answering some of the questions in the first two problem areas, this leads to considerable difficulties in the third.

37. "But Being does not have a history in the way in which a city or a people have their history. What is history-like in the history of Being is obviously determined by the way in which Being takes place and by this alone," (*Time and Being*, p. 8) "No historiographical representation of history as happening ever brings us into the proper relation to destining (Geschicken) let alone into the essential origin of destining in the disclosing coming-to-pass of the truth of Being that brings everything into its own" (*Question*, p. 48). Cf. the whole essay "The Turning."

38. It will not do to avoid these questions by pointing out that the social sciences themselves are but one mode of presencing. For what are being talked about here are themselves modes of presencing in different eras, which can be talked of ontically as well as in Heidegger's way. If *this* is denied, then we see Heidegger (or his defenders) adopting the detached transcendental standpoint for which they criticize others.

39. This obviously recalls recent French philosophy, but also current analytic work by Richard Rorty, Nelson Goodman and Hilary Putnam.