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## History and Memory in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*

The first chapter of this study is dedicated to the connection between memory and history in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, that is, in the early work at the time of which the later structure of the philosophical system is not yet in place. In developing this topic, I propose a reading of Hegel's 1807 work as itself a "work of (philosophical) memory." I shall proceed by analyzing the turning points of the *Phenomenology* in which the problem of history is channeled into the phenomenological development in a way that forces Hegel to re-think the entire structure of the process. I discuss, in turn, the preface to the entire work, the chapter (BB) *Der Geist*, the chapter (CC) *Die Religion*, and the conclusion of (DD) *Das absolute Wissen*. In all these turning points Hegel re-organizes the phenomenological process according to radically new criteria so that the entire course and plan of the book take on a different shape. I argue that these radical changes are produced by the intervention of (phenomenological) *Erinnerung* and by the interaction between memory and the issues posed by the concept of history. The crucial question here regards the transformation of the phenomenological movement – the logical, diachronic succession of consciousness's experiences – into a historical sequence. What is required, on the philosophical, conceptual, and systematic level, in order to stage a movement as specifically *historical*? What is history and who/what is its subject?

I propose to recognize the issue of memory as present in the *Phenomenology* at two distinct, yet interacting levels. On the one hand, Hegel tackles the problem of memory as a specific content or figure in the phenomenological development. But on the other hand, and this is my original and central point, I claim that the *Phenomenology* works on the basis of its textual "internal memory," namely, on the basis of a web of internal recollections and cross references that are responsible for the

advancement of the process. The *Phenomenology* is, in this perspective, itself the work of memory. According to a long-standing historical tradition memory is the itinerary of self-transformation that is connected with the creation of "memorable" texts. Here, I attempt a reading of Hegel's 1807 book as a paradigmatic example of this tradition. It will become clear in the successive chapters how memory, dialectically understood, is the force at work successively in the Logic and in the philosophy of spirit; it is the immanent method that structures from within the very activity of philosophizing.

### 1 Figures of memory: substance becoming subject – preface

Placing the book in Hegel's historical present, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* opens with an appeal to *Erinnerung* and closes, in the chapter on Absolute Knowing, by instituting the connection between memory and history in its different declinations (phenomenical, or factual history, and "conceptual history"). The circularity of the work – and the simple fact that the preface was written immediately after the conclusion of its last chapter – only reinforces the importance of this finding. In between the two (acts of) *Erinnerung(en)* lies the unfolding of the phenomenological development through which consciousness is led to the highest level of absolute knowing. "Spirit" (*Geist*), in the proper sense that introduces this structure in the homonymous chapter, appears as a fundamental station in this movement. With spirit, history emerges thematically before the conclusion of the process, midway through it, and radically changes the nature of the development. The appearance of history is a problematic break both in the phenomenological narrative and in consciousness's experience. The issue of whether, and up to what point, Hegel's 1807 work follows a unitary plan has often been raised, much debated, but not definitely solved.<sup>1</sup> Although it is not my direct concern here, that issue is related to the two questions that I want raise. First, how is history thematically channeled into the phenomenological process? Hegel's claim that spirit is a fundamentally historical reality is not the assumption on which the *Phenomenology* is based, but rather its demonstrative outcome. In other words, Hegel can claim that spirit is constitutively historical only to the extent that the phenomenological process succeeds in integrating history in the movement of self-consciousness (or, alternatively, only to the extent that the phenomenology succeeds in becoming a true philosophy of history). The second question is related to the first. Assuming Hegel's famous

claim of the preface – the crucial point is “to comprehend and express the true not as substance but also as subject”<sup>2</sup> – as an adequate description of the general program of the *Phenomenology*, and granting that the concept of *Geist* is Hegel’s solution to the transformation of substance into subject, what is the role that memory plays in this process?

I want to suggest that key to both questions is the concept of “figure” (*Gestalt*) and the process of “figuration” (*Gestaltung*) and the use that the *Phenomenology* makes of them. The idea of “figure” is both the means that Hegel employs in order to channel history into the development of consciousness and the mediating structure that allows substance to become subject. Now, *Gestalt* is the product of the workings of memory and its concrete expression – it is the concrete manifestation of the “internal memory” of the work. *Gestalt* is the mediating link between substance and subject insofar as memory becomes, in turn, what I shall call “ethical memory.” In order to lead on to history and spirit, memory must lose its individual, merely psychological or consciousness-based character, become itself collective memory, and thereby anchor individuality within the ethical substance. Ethical memory transforms the “figures of consciousness” into “figures of a world,” transforming consciousness into the “historical consciousness” that operates within the structures of the ethical world. At this juncture, the phenomenology of consciousness becomes a (phenomenological) philosophy of history.

In the preface, taking on the standpoint of the present postrevolutionary age, Hegel outlines the task to be accomplished with regard to the foundation of “science” in terms of the “beginning of the new spirit.”<sup>3</sup> The task mirrors, or indeed voices, the “need” of the time as a time of fundamental transition to a new era, and is framed by a definite conception of what spirit is. Opposing both the romantic notion of a substantial “depth” that is only promised but cannot be discursively proved nor investigated (and is consequently “empty” or merely “superficial”) and the modern and Kantian view of an “extension”<sup>4</sup> that is sheer manifold, finite, and ineffectual existence (and consequently must be synthetically gathered by an intervening, external “I think” in order to be meaningful), Hegel maintains that “the power of spirit is only as great as its expression and externalization (*Äußerung*), its depth only as deep as it dares to spread out and lose itself in its exposition (*Auslegung*).”<sup>5</sup> In this way, Hegel already outlines the double movement of memory: *Er-Innerung* – the exploration of spirit’s depth – depends on *Ent-Äußerung* – the spreading out in space and time – and vice versa. What spirit effectually is, at the same time its reality and power, can be

measured only by its actual manifestation (or by its *having been* manifested) in the manifold contingency of history. It is only the discursive act or rather the ongoing process of “exposition” (*Auslegung*) – staged from now on by the *Phenomenology* – that can put to the test what spirit really is and has the power to be and to do. It is only spirit’s actual spreading out (and no empty or dogmatic promise of a content) that can be finally recollected to constitute its own “depth.” The past is thereby the sign and proof of the force of the present. At this point, however, Hegel reveals that this program is somehow time-sensitive, as it is formulated in, and indeed made possible by, a very specific occurrence in history. “It is not difficult to see” – announces Hegel, clearly addressing his contemporaries – “that our time is a time of birth and transition to a new era. Spirit has broken with the world it has hitherto inhabited and represented and it is ready to submerge it into the past.”<sup>6</sup> The French Revolution has plunged an old organization (or figure) of the life of spirit into the past, rejecting all connection to it so that the problem is now to envision the contours or the “figure” that the new epoch will henceforth take. But to find oneself at the onset of a new epoch – just as to find oneself at the beginning of science – means that one can count only on memory to proceed forward, since all habitual orientation points have vanished.<sup>7</sup> And yet, significantly, as spirit’s reality has become a moment of the past, memory is not called upon to institute that past again, but rather to move on to a new “figure,” to a new *Auslegung*, and to new meanings. Pace Aristotle, memory seems to be, for Hegel, more of the future or of the present than of the past. Memory is activated in order to proceed toward the future once the past is declared concluded and, indeed, forever consumed, hence, if anything, something to be forgotten.<sup>8</sup>

Despite its abrupt emergence, “the beginning of the new spirit” – explains Hegel – “is the product of a widespread upheaval in various forms of culture.” The beginning “is the whole, which having traversed its content in time and space has returned to itself, and is the resultant simple concept of the whole. But the *actuality* of this simple whole consists in this, *that those various figures which have become its moments will now develop and take figure again, this time in their new element, in their newly acquired meaning.*”<sup>9</sup> This is how history develops when viewed from the standpoint of the present immediately after the revolutionary upheaval. But, in addition, the passage gives us Hegel’s transformation of an epochal starting point into the philosophical starting point of the reconstruction efforts of the *Phenomenology*. This is the beginning of the phenomenological recollection – a recollection that

will take place at the end of the work; but it is also, more properly, the beginning of a process that has already taken place. What we have at the beginning – at the beginning of science and at the beginning of the new era – is the “whole,” that same whole that for Hegel constitutes the “truth”; the same truth that ought to be expressed and exposed “not as substance but at the same time as subject.”<sup>10</sup> The whole, however, belongs to the past; in the beginning, it is truly always a result: it *has become a totality* by traversing the succession of time and by occupying the extension of space, and it has then sunk into itself, thereby closing an epoch of its development. Thus, what we have now, at the beginning, is not the *reality* of this whole – a reality made of time and space and contingent existence – but (only) its “simple concept” – a somehow virtual existence, its having been (in time and space). In fact, Hegel underlines how the whole is now “present in *Erinnerung*.”<sup>11</sup> In memory it has a merely virtual, abstract reality. The “actual reality” of this whole is a matter of the present. To call the *new* (not the old) into existence is the task of phenomenological recollection. For, actual reality, explains Hegel, is the process in which the independent “figures” that have been reduced to “moments” of the conclusive whole gain, yet again, the status of “figures,” this time becoming new figures of a new reality, thereby displaying a new meaning and constituting a new whole. Thus, memory is responsible for reviving the past or the conceptual “moment” as the “figure” of a new organization of reality, (dis)placing it in(to) a different space and in(to) a different time. Thereby memory shapes the present generating the beginning of a new story. The “figure” is the structural unity or the subject of the phenomenological development. The “moments,” that is, the constitutive elements of a whole that are real only within their whole, are integrated into this development insofar as “they give themselves again [...] a figure.” This connection is announced as the motor of the phenomenological development, which is presented as the process of consciousness’s successive “figuration” (*Gestaltung*).

It is precisely the way in which the structural difference between *Gestalt* and *Moment* plays itself out at the intersection of memory and history that interests me here. But first, briefly, a few considerations on the term *Gestalt*, whose use is abundant in the *Phenomenology* as in no other Hegelian work.<sup>12</sup> The notion of *Gestalt* and the process of *Gestaltung* bring together the two semantic fields that the end of the work announces as the forms of alienation of the concept, namely, nature and history, space and time. Goethe is responsible for promoting the concept of *Gestalt* (already used by Kant and then by Schiller in the

aesthetic sense displayed by the “human figure” and its ideal character) to the central notion of his philosophy of nature, in particular of his “morphology.” For Goethe the term expresses the *dynamic* character of a natural structure; it is closely connected to the process of *Bildung* or formation, and it indicates the internal transformation of an individual understood as an organic part of the totality to which it belongs. Figure is the “function” of an individual existence that indicates its formative activity within a whole; *Gestaltung* is the individualization and internal articulation of an organic totality. But as rendering of the Latin *figura*, *Gestalt* bears a meaning connected to the eschatological interpretation of history. As Erich Auerbach shows in his fundamental work on Dante (significantly mentioning Hegel in his discussion), a “figural interpretation” of history directly refers every earthly event or phenomenon as earthly “figure” to the divine plan that finally fulfills (or “realizes”) this figure in the overall providential order. Although the earthly “figure” has its meaning only in its heavenly “fulfillment,” it is nonetheless historically real: its reality is not lost in the abstraction of allegory or symbolism. The reality of *figura* is underscored by Luther (an important reference for Hegel), who renders Tertullian’s Latin with “*gestallt*.” With this term Luther opposes Zwingli’s symbolic and allegoric interpretations of the notion that “Christ’s body is in *gestallt* of bread.”<sup>13</sup> For Luther the figure of bread indicates the real, sensible presence of Christ’s body. Both references – Goethe’s morphology and the figural interpretation of history – should be kept in mind when dealing with the role that the notion of *Gestalt* and its connection with memory plays in the development of the *Phenomenology*. At stake is the dynamism of a process in which individuality is constituted as the function of an organic totality, and in which, conversely, the totality becomes self-conscious through its articulation in individuals. This is the structure of Hegel’s ethical whole, the structure of *Sittlichkeit*. Herein, memory becomes ethical and substance becomes subject.

## 2 Geometries of memory: “ethical memory” and history – (BB) *Der Geist*

While in the first five chapters of the *Phenomenology* history is an implicit presence in the development that follows consciousness to self-consciousness to reason – a phenomenological “cycle” that by and large has an epistemological significance – with the appearance of “spirit” (*Geist*) history comes thematically to the fore, introducing what a great interpreter of the *Phenomenology* has called the “historiographical cycle”

of the book. As this interpreter provocatively puts it, in the chapter *Geist* "we no longer have a phenomenology and not even a philosophy of spirit but a true philosophy of history in which events primarily of social and political nature are translated into concepts."<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, this philosophy of history phenomenologically structured is a practical philosophy. As history emerges as the protagonist of spirit's vicissitudes, Hegel is forced to re-think the entire organization of the work in order to move on in his narrative. In the first pages of the chapter, we pause to consider what has been achieved so far and the extent to which these results are bound to modify the successive development. The "internal memory" of the book is here at work. My claim is that the turning point of the new historical constellation of phenomenological figures disclosed by spirit is the constitution of memory as "collective" or "ethical memory." Unlike the development followed so far, the figures of spirit are instituted by a memory that is collective or by a recollection enacted by the intersubjective, ethical "we." Such figures, announces Hegel, are no longer just "*Gestalten des Bewußtseins*"; they are now "*Gestalten einer Welt*" – the shift goes from the figures of consciousness to the figures of manifold historical worlds. It is the historical and collective context of such "worlds" in which individual consciousness is from now on necessarily rooted. The psychological and phenomenological self is meaningful only within a social recollection process that, on the basis of the way in which it is carried on, is fundamentally historical.

Considered from the side of substance, the "spiritual essence" that results from the development of "reason" is "ethical substance" (*sittliche Substanz*). *Geist*, however, is "the ethical actuality" (*die sittliche Wirklichkeit*),<sup>15</sup> that is, not just substance but substance that has become effectual. A movement from "being" to "essence" and from essence to "actuality" has taken place – a double transition that, as the Logic will teach us, is primarily a movement of *Erinnerung*. Since spirit is essence animated through the activity of the self – not "dead essence," Hegel remarks, but "essence that is actual and alive" – it is "being that has been dissolved into the self."<sup>16</sup> Thereby, spirit is presented as the absolutely independent and real essence, the essence or substance that sustains and "carries itself," that is, essence or substance becoming subject. At this point, the philosopher "we" pauses for a brief recollection of the preceding movement,<sup>17</sup> which appears now in its truth but also as displaying a quite different form than the one it has heretofore presented. To recollect the past process means to change its structure radically. Looking back, it is now clear that spirit is the basis or the

anchor that has been supporting the development of the preceding figures all along. If they are indeed something (for us and in themselves), or better if they have been at all, it is only due to the underlying reality of spirit from which they were abstracted. "All previous figures of consciousness are abstractions [of spirit]. This is what they are: spirit that analyzes itself, distinguishes its *moments*, and dwells for a while with each of them."<sup>18</sup> Since spirit is, as we shall see, a collective, ethical reality, the movement goes from collective to individual consciousness, which means that it is the opposite of the process that in the immanent phenomenological development seems to have led from consciousness to spirit itself. The movement is an *Erinnerung* of spirit. What until now appeared as the progression of consciousness's figures, is in truth the act of spirit's recollection of itself into itself. An act of collective memory retrospectively analyzing the whole, abstracting from specific contexts, and dwelling on its single stations, reveals that the "figures of consciousness" are "moments" of spirit's own reality. In the figural history staged by the *Phenomenology*, spirit is the fulfillment of consciousness's figures – not a transcendent fulfillment but their true historical realization. Figures have reality and indeed "existence" only to the extent that they belong to spirit as its moments. And, yet, since the figures of consciousness are moments of spirit, their reality (*before* the emergence of spirit) is only "*Schein*," an unreal and seemingly ahistorical abstraction. They are but "*verschwindende Größen*,"<sup>19</sup> the vanishing quantities of infinitesimal calculus (which is what "moment" technically means). Only spirit's memory, or *Erinnerung*, can contain, and give permanence to, that vanishing. Significantly, what gives permanence and substantiality to the vanishing past is not an ontological substrate but the re-collective movement that indicates the historical origin of the past figures-moments by retracing the process of their genesis. Curiously, however, this act of memory has two quite different meanings. On the one hand, it does lend existence and reality to the figures-moments of consciousness as it establishes them retrospectively in their essence or "ground"; but on the other hand, if viewed from the present standpoint of spirit, the act of memory reveals the partiality and one-sidedness of each isolated moment and therefore justifies the need to forget and move on to new forms of life and to new figures. As "*Auflösung*" of the moments, memory sets them free and allows spirit to start its process of *Gestaltung* all over again. The memorializing resolution of the past in its moments is its existential dissolution and its historical absolution. This is precisely the condition that allows history to join the phenomenological development and to begin a new process.

Thus, when taken up in spirit's recollection, the preceding succession of figures of consciousness (Consciousness, Self-consciousness, Reason) gives rise to the following picture: "[S]pirit is consciousness in general, which embraces sense certainty, perception, and the understanding, insofar as in its self-analysis spirit holds fast to the moment of being an objectively existent actuality to itself, and ignores the fact that this actuality is its own being-for-self. If, on the contrary, it holds fast to the other moment of the analysis, namely, that its object is its own being-for-self, then it is self-consciousness."<sup>20</sup> The succession of figures that we have followed in the first five chapters of the *Phenomenology* is by no means a history, and properly not even a succession. Not, at least, until spirit remembers it. But when spirit remembers it, the sequence is fundamentally changed and a new process begins. In its (self-) recollection, spirit reveals that all the preceding figures were only abstract, partial, and one-sided aspects of its own reality – consciousness is spirit ignoring the actuality of its own self; self-consciousness is spirit ignoring its own objectivity. History emerges when the figural meaning of consciousness is fulfilled by the reflective act of spirit, that is, by the act of re-collecting all its partial moments into the unity that is spirit itself. Such fulfillment, however, is in turn the beginning of a new figurative process the protagonist of which, this time, is spirit in its accomplished reality. The idea of historical realization or actualization is now called into the picture. Freed from its relation to the preceding moments (memory is liberation), spirit gains a new forward-looking definition: in its "immediate truth" spirit is "the ethical life of a people." This definition frames from now on the articulation of spirit as the subject of history. It is individuality that must progress to the consciousness of its unity with ethical life, thereby breaking the harmony of its immediate bond with it and gaining consciousness of itself. From this starting point, the itinerary develops throughout a "series of figures." However, Hegel marks a fundamental difference between the *Gestaltung* process of consciousness and that of spirit. The latter's figures "are distinguished from the previous ones by the fact that they are real spirits, actualities in the strict sense, and instead of being figures merely of consciousness are figures of a world."<sup>21</sup> Spirit gives itself figure as a collective, historical reality. First, spirit's figures are *real in themselves*; they are real spirits with a proper, actual reality (as opposed to the figures of consciousness that are real only insofar as they are recollected by spirit and grounded in the unity of such recollection as moments – at which point, however, they only have the *Schein* of reality, not true reality). Unlike consciousness's figures,

spirit's figures are real because they are historical; their reality is their "historicity." Second, they are a *collective* reality that instantiates and expresses collective life and collective memory. They are not simply figures of consciousness but figures of a world – of the historical and ethical community in which consciousness is always already inscribed. We have reached the "Halbwachsian" moment of the *Phenomenology* – the place where Hegel comes closest to Maurice Halbwachs's concept of "collective memory."

But how does the collective or ethical memory of spirit function in constructing the succession of the historical figures of its world? The constitution of *Sittlichkeit* is the process of its *Gestaltung*, in which individuality and universality are mediated with each other – the former gaining its necessity within the whole; the latter acquiring lived concreteness when enacted by the individual. Significantly, the process of *Gestaltung* is close to that of *Bildung* – logically as well as historically: figuration is formation and culture. The figuration process of the sphere of ethical life offers the paradigmatic example of the workings of collective memory. To become ethical, that is, to gain true reality as figure of spirit's historical development, memory must abandon its merely psychological, individual, and accidental character and reach its "higher determination" in the "common essence" (*Gemeinwesen*).<sup>22</sup> The ethical substance provides the contents and the goals of the individual's activity, thereby liberating it from the contingencies of natural life and universalizing it. *Erinnerung* – as recollection and as the movement of *Insichgehen* – is the synthetic apprehension of a manifold content that is unified into a concluded whole to which meaning can be attributed retrospectively. This is the process of figuration and the movement through which the structure of the figure is attained. Memory does not take up its contents as a found given (Hegel will clarify this point at length in the *Psychology of subjective spirit*);<sup>23</sup> rather, memory first institutes those contents in the moment in which it recollects it. In other words, dialectically, the recollected contents follow the act of recollection as its result, and do not precede them as presupposition. Memory unifies a scattered manifold giving to it the shape of a discrete event, the figure of something concluded and meaningful, lending to it the form of the past – *ge-wesen*.<sup>24</sup> Memory is memory of the dead; it is the force that preserves and gives subsistence and meaning to what would otherwise be condemned to destruction – to the destruction of nature and to the destruction of time and forgetfulness. And, yet, it is memory that first declares the dead as dead and sanctions the past as past in order to make it live on in the community and as the spirit of

the community. It is memory that cuts out the shape of the meaningful event from the indifferent flux of existence declaring it dead and past, yet worthy of collective remembrance, that is, of life in a new context. Memory is a power of transformation: it transforms natural death into ethical death; it turns an event which merely happens within the chain of causes and effects into something brought forth by consciousness, hence into a historical event. Memory is "ethical" insofar as the dead is no longer a natural and contingent existence but the individualized figure in which the community becomes conscious of its own historical conflicts. Ethical is the memory that gives historical reality and significance – and hence historical fulfillment – to the contingency of individual existence by re-inscribing it into the broader collective context in which such existence becomes ethical life. Thus, in the figure created by memory the "unrest" (*Unruhe*) of contingent life is brought to the quiet "rest" (*Ruhe*) of a simple universality – the universality of death and the universality of the ethical or religious community.<sup>25</sup> The memorialized figure produced by collective memory is the snapshot in which spirit gives itself historical reality: it is the permanent quiet image portraying the fleeting unrest of life as something that has been in the past, and yet it allows the community to exist meaningfully in the present. Paradoxically, historical consciousness is gained by the ahistorical act of fixing the flux of change within the contours of an immutable "figure." However, as Goethe rightly perceives, it is precisely in the structure of *Gestalt* that the dynamism of life and transformation is inscribed and rendered, as it were, internal to the (social) organism itself – figuration is *Er-Innerung* in the most proper sense of interiorization. At the end of the *Phenomenology* a final act of *Erinnerung* will re-organize the complete series of these memorialized figures – the series of the real spirits – in a "gallery of images" to be finally contemplated synoptically together.<sup>26</sup>

It is significant that the figure of individual death and its relationship to (and significance for) the community marks for Hegel the crucial moments of the phenomenological and historical development of spirit. From Antigone's conflict with Creon over her dead brother's body in Greek ethical life, through the unmediated "meaningless death" inflicted upon the anonymous individual in the revolutionary Terror,<sup>27</sup> to the "death of the divine man"<sup>28</sup> and its transmutation as an expression of the universal life of spirit in the religious community of the Christian world.<sup>29</sup> Common to all these cases is the work of *Erinnerung*, the inward figurative movement of spirit that recuperates its own depths from the alienating experience of destruction and death,

thereby cementing the inner life of the community or, alternatively, bringing to light its deepest conflicts and crises.<sup>30</sup>

To sum up this first turning point in the *Phenomenology's* "internal memory," we can say that in shaping the connection between individuality and ethical substance into its figures, ethical memory discloses for the first time the historical reality of spirit. Thereby it accomplishes the mediation of substance into subject. First, memory interrupts the mechanical or accidental course of natural events leading to them social and historical significance; second, it gives them the imprint of consciousness's free activity; and, finally, it saves the event from the destruction and dissolution of time and death by giving it memorialized form. At this point, we meet the interesting dialectical twist of Hegel's argument. In sinking an event (or an individual existence) into the past and in sanctioning the conclusiveness of death,<sup>31</sup> memory makes it present and alive for the community; by giving it the figure of the past and of death to be commemorated, memory saves the individual from the dissolving power of time. And, yet, since being dead and indeed destroyed and past is essential to the recollected event or individual, memory must take onto itself the destructive force of time. In order to transform the event into a *historical* event, memory must destroy it, at least in part do so; in order to universalize the dead individuality in remembrance, collective memory must kill or sacrifice individuality as individuality. Although real, each figure of spirit is not the entire reality of spirit; it is indeed the expression of a concluded story (of the story that memory brings, as it were, to conclusion), yet it is not itself the complete realization. No figure has its fulfillment – or "truth" – in itself. Hence, as chief source of spirit's *Gestaltung*, ethical memory is always and necessarily partial and selective; it is necessarily "external" to the immediacy of the remembered event – always elusive, always hinting at something beyond its actual content. Memory is a process of mediation. From this it follows that in constituting the memorialized figure that gives historical reality to the ethical community, collective memory is neither truthful to the individual, to the community, nor to the story that it is supposed to tell. History is based precisely on memory's betrayal of truth. Memory shapes its contents into figures by making them *other* than what they immediately are. It transforms nature into values, contingent events into consciously performed acts, dead individuality into living, communal universality. While the memorialized figure is always universal, self-conscious, and social, as a figure of the whole it is nonetheless partial, un-true, and necessarily selective.