

### 3 Geometries of memory: the net of religious and historical memory – (CC) *Die Religion*

While the sixth chapter of the *Phenomenology* (BB) *Der Geist*, thematically introducing the dimension of history through the workings of ethical memory, forces Hegel first to re-frame the preceding “figures of consciousness” as “moments” of spirit’s reality, and second to develop the new process of spirit’s own *Gestaltung* as the historical sequence of the “figures of a world,” in the seventh chapter (CC) *Die Religion* we encounter yet another radical break in the course of the work. Again, at stake is the relation between moments and figures of spirit, and the issue regards their respective historicity. The question is whether they are in time and display historical reality or are rather somehow eternal structures of spirit or even mere philosophical abstractions meaningful only in relation to a given historical context. At this juncture we are presented with another epochal *Erinnerung* of spirit from which, retrospectively, a new organization of the entire phenomenological process arises.<sup>32</sup> Here we have the second *locus memoriae* of the *Phenomenology*. We are confronted with the problem of the “geometrical” structure of world history in the transition from the manifold historical worlds to the totality of spirit. The question is now: What role does religion play in this constitution process?

Just as history pervades the development of the first five chapters of the *Phenomenology* but is introduced thematically only with *Geist*, so in presenting *Religion* Hegel remarks that religion, as “consciousness of the absolute essence,” has indeed appeared already in the previous figures – namely, in “consciousness, self-consciousness, reason, and spirit” – yet heretofore it had reality only “from the standpoint of consciousness” not as “self-consciousness of spirit”<sup>33</sup> in the different figures assumed by the absolute essence itself. Heretofore religion was considered only as occurring in individual consciousness. Its autonomous reality was not yet sanctioned by spirit’s collective memory. With the emergence of *Geist* the issue regards the historical reality of the figures of spirit as collective figures of a world or epoch. As we have seen, ethical memory articulates the historical reality of each one of these figures and their succession. With *Religion* the issue is the disposition or organization of all those successive figures as constituting the totality of spirit, the final recollection of spirit’s reality in the unitary development of world history. How does Hegel move from the (distributive) claim that each one of spirit’s worlds is historical to the (collective) claim that the overall succession of all those figures taken together is world history? In other

words, Hegel must show not only that the figures of spirit are *individually* historical but also that *collectively* the complete succession of all the figures makes up the development of world history. It is only on the basis of this combined operation that substance can be said subject as *Geist*.

Moreover, at the level of *Religion* another problematic aspect of spirit’s figures is at issue, namely, the type of “reality” that they can be said to display. For while, on the one hand, religion is an eternal moment of spirit’s self-consciousness and hence does not seem to have a history or be subject to history, religious representation, on the other hand, does appear in different determinate figures whose content has historical reality and is subject to historical change. Throughout the development of spirit, its being recollected in different figures is the mark of the discrete progress of its realization. *Gestalt* expresses a mode of spirit’s historical reality, is the mediation between individuality and substance crystallized in an objective organization of the world. The figure, however, has a limited, one-sided reality with a fundamental opacity of its own: *figura* finds its fulfillment or truth in something else, in something always beyond itself. This discrepancy is the engine of history and is also what moves the phenomenological development. To determine the reality of spirit in its figures (and hence in its history) memory has to transform and give unitary shape to a scattered natural reality, animating it with consciousness and with time. In religion, instead, the “universal spirit” seems to have dispelled the existential objectivity and opacity of the figure; aiming directly at the eternal, it seems to have overcome the quandaries of time. “*Gestalt*,” contends Hegel, is for it something “utterly transparent” and self-conscious; its “actuality” is “enclosed” and indeed “*aufgehoben*”<sup>34</sup> in the universal spirit, apparently with no need for external, historical manifestation. Religious consciousness looks at the dimension of eternity. In their claim of transcendence, religious representations remain separated from earthly existence. The figure is no longer the objective expression of a collective, historical world. It is the *Gestalt* taken on by the religious, self-conscious representation of the absolute essence. Thus, religion initially appears as the interiorization – or *Erinnerung* – of figural representation itself. Its movement – its “completion” or fulfillment (*Vollendung*), as it were – is the progression of a *Gestaltung* process whose protagonist is spirit’s figural representation of itself. Figure, this time, is first and foremost form, not content. Given this starting point, the aim of the last phase of the *Phenomenology* is to reclaim to the religious figure the objective, collective, and historical reality of its content. The figural representation of religion must be endorsed and enacted by ethical memory, and

must ultimately reveal the worldly dimension that it seemed to shun. As religion enters history, spirit's historical worlds are connected into the development of world history. This is the achievement of the *Religion* chapter.<sup>35</sup>

Representation is the element of religion in which spirit represents itself to itself. Herein is the moment of spirit's consciousness. The "actuality enclosed" in religious representation is, Hegel contends, "the figure and the clothing of its representation."<sup>36</sup> Such reality is not directly the objective reality of universal spirit; it is only the reality of its representing. The relation between reality and representation is here inverted. Representation is no representation *of* reality; it is representation itself that displays an accessory reality. Thereby representation finds its fundamental limitation. Although it seems to be both form and content, it is unable to bring the two sides to correspond to each other. As form, representation is conscious and self-referential, and properly "religious"; as content, it has reality, the reality of the figure that clothes representation and lends it a communicable shape and meaning. Religious representation aims at capturing the eternal; its figure, instead, is inexorably anchored in time. But to claim that the reality of religion is the figure and "*Kleid*" of its representing activity means to lessen (even to corrupt) the force of such representing, while to claim that the reality of religion is only "clothing" means to make such reality auxiliary to religious representation, leaving out the aspect of its independent and "free existence." Ultimately, the truth is that no "determinate figure" can capture what it is supposed to represent, namely, "spirit that is conscious of itself."<sup>37</sup> Once again, no determinate figure is in itself fulfilled (*Vollendung*) or truly self-referential; yet this is precisely what religious representation tries to achieve.<sup>38</sup> As Hegel shows in the last chapter of the *Phenomenology*, only the structure of *Begriff* – which is no longer properly a figure and is no longer properly phenomenological – is adequate to a *Wissen* that is truly "absolute."

Thus, it is precisely the limitation of religious representation taken as a "figure" of universal spirit or, more generally, the discrepancy between "representation" and "figure" itself, that fuels the movement of the chapter. At this point, even before the new movement can properly begin, Hegel pauses to offer a re-organization of the entire phenomenological development so far positioning the problem of religion in this new context. He frames the task by introducing the new dimension of time and by raising the question of what is the proper subject of history. As in the opening pages of the chapter *Geist* – the first *locus memoriae* of the *Phenomenology* – Hegel now re-thinks (or re-collects) the

preceding development in light of the distinction between the totality of spirit, its figures, and its moments. The question is: Which of these structures is shaped by history and can be said to exist in time? And how does the answer to this question affect the further course of the *Phenomenology* – both retrospectively and proleptically? What we have is yet again an act of *Erinnerung* practiced both by the totality of spirit resulting from the previous development and by the philosopher "we." As the totality of spirit re-collects (itself), "we" must recollect what we have seen and exposed so far. It is a distinctive act of memory that places certain structures of spirit in time while taking other structures out of time – reserving them, alternatively, for eternity or for the present or for the atemporality of pure logical thinking. The result of this methodological act of memory is a completely new asset or a transfiguration of the phenomenological sequence that must now portray world history.

As religion and spirit in its worldly existence are initially separated, what we have at the beginning of this movement is the distinction between religion on the one hand, and on the other the entire preceding development of the book, which is now collectively subsumed under the concept of "spirit." The latter in its actuality appears as the "totality of spirit." Yet spirit is totality only insofar as it is articulated in distinct "moments," individually following each other, each one as a discrete unity unto itself. This is how we have proceeded through the *Phenomenology* so far. The "moments" of spirit's totality, Hegel repeats after the opening of the *Geist* chapter, are "consciousness, self-consciousness, reason, and spirit." Spirit has joined the series as its last moment but only insofar as it is taken as "immediate spirit," that is, as spirit that has gained reality in the historical world but still lacks self-consciousness.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, *Geist* is also the whole (of which "immediate spirit" is, in turn, the last moment). As such it is "*zusammengefasste Totalität*" – a composite totality retrospectively re-collected into a unity to encompass the entire preceding movement. Herein, consciousness, self-consciousness, and reason are all moments of spirit's manifold historical totality. Thus, what we have at this point are two distinct and possibly conflicting progressions. Although they seem to merge into each other (and to comprise the same terms), as they are both linear progressions, they must be kept apart if religion ought to be separated from spirit's worldly existence and have an independent development of its own. On the one hand, Hegel presents the linear *systematic* succession heretofore displayed by the phenomenological narrative – the simple sequence of consciousness, self-consciousness, reason, "immediate spirit" – on the other hand, the *Geist* chapter has

shown that spirit's reality is the reality of *historical* worlds; but as world history enters the phenomenological development with spirit gathering in its totality, the linear succession is interrupted by an act of recollection (*Zusammenfassung*). Hegel's problem is to explain how the two series – the *systematic* and the *historical* progression – can be distinct and yet convergent, thereby bringing the entire phenomenological development to its conclusion. *Erinnerung*, and specifically, religious memory, will provide the required mediation. Hegel's argument from now on proceeds (a) by first introducing the new parameter of time, on the basis of which the distinction between the systematic and the historical series is drawn; (b) then by raising the issue of the subject of history; (c) and finally by posing the question of the relation between time and history, at which point a different organization of world history emerges, an organization no longer linear but in the shape of a net with multiple dimensions. But let us now follow closely Hegel's argument.

First, Hegel needs to justify the separation between spirit's historical existence ("immediate spirit") and its self-consciousness (religion), between what is historical in and of spirit and what may be eternal. To analyze the complex (*zusammengefasste*) totality of spirit, he introduces the element of time and draws on this basis the distinction between "figure" and "moment." What he just called, generically, the "moments" of spirit's "worldly existence" are, more properly, its "figures," which have been articulated, he informs us, according to those moments or "general determinations." Within the reality of spirit, figures have been developed according to the general systematic moments of consciousness, self-consciousness, reason (thus, for example, "sense certainty" and "perception" have been presented as "figures" of the "moment" consciousness; "stoicism" and "skepticism" as figures of the moment self-consciousness, etc.). The figure instantiates moments and carries spirit's concrete reality. Although it expresses a limited reality, as we have often observed, it is nonetheless a well-rounded, complex actuality that contains in itself many different aspects and determinations. The moment is, instead, when held up to the reality of spirit, utterly abstract and one-sided; it is the logical marker or the determination of a systematic position within the phenomenological development. In fact, Hegel warns that the succession of spirit's moments, when contemplated from the heights of *Religion*, "should not be represented as occurring in time." For, "only the entire spirit is in time" because only spirit as a whole has "*eigentliche Wirklichkeit*." Since time is the cipher of true actual existence, only what is actual is in time. And only spirit in its totality has actuality and is in time. Since the moments express neither the reality nor the

totality of spirit, they do not occur in time; their linear progression is only a systematic and logical progression. The figures instead, despite their partiality, directly shape the reality of spirit. They somehow represent spirit *pars pro toto* (the rhetoric *figura* of synecdoche). Unlike the moments, spirit's figures are in time because they are "figures of the entire spirit as such."<sup>40</sup> Since figures are *real* and are representative of the *reality* of spirit they participate in its history; their linear succession (in the chapter *Geist*) is a historical sequence.

Thus, moments being abstract and lacking reality do constitute a sequence but are not in time (consciousness, self-consciousness, reason, spirit – is a systematic sequence); figures, instead, as partial expressions of spirit's concrete reality and totality are in time (sense certainty and perception in consciousness, ethical life, alienated spirit, the enlightenment, etc., in spirit form a historical sequence). While the *moments* give the phenomenological *logic* and the *systematic* hierarchy of spirit, the *figures* tell spirit's concrete *history*. Once the totality of spirit is instituted at the beginning of the *Religion* chapter by a distinctive act of *Erinnerung*, the problem of the relation between spirit's systematic and historical progression emerges. Hegel's suggestion is that spirit's figures form a diachronic series while the moments may coexist synchronically within the same figure. This suggestion, as we shall see, fundamentally changes the structure under which world history is represented. The problem, however, lies in the fact that the claim that the figures constituting the totality of spirit are presented in time does not imply the claim that the whole as such follows the progression of world history.<sup>41</sup> A further argument is needed to ground the temporal development of world history.

It is relevant that only at this point of the phenomenological development are we able to differentiate in this way the fundamental structures of the process – figures, moments, and the whole. For only now can spirit re-collect itself or display a memory that institutes the complex, overarching totality embracing all its historical figures. However, this is also the sign that memory and history have parted ways. And yet religion proceeds as if it could ignore their split. To be sure, with the emergence of religion, spirit itself is split: its complex historical totality – the "*zusammengefasste* Totalität" – is distinguished from and opposed to its "*einfache* Totalität," the simple totality that is religion. Systematically, or in the non-diachronic succession of the moments, religion presupposes the entire development of spirit and is presented as its "absolute self."<sup>42</sup> Viewed from the standpoint of religion, history seems to develop unconsciously or to have meaning, not in itself, but

in a transcendent eschatological beyond. Only in religion does spirit gain a conscious "self"; only in religious recollection does world history become meaningful. Or, in yet another rendering of the same opening thesis of the chapter, world history is "*figura*" of a transcendent divine plan. These are the initial claims of religious consciousness. As memory appears in the form of memory of the divine and eternal, it seemingly absorbs the course of history entirely and somehow even eliminates (or transcends) it. There are, indeed, people with no history but with a religious memory (Asian, African); and people whose history is identical with their religious memory (Jews). In these cases, what is collectively remembered is not a historical but a religious content (memory is ritual and liturgical re-actualization). Against this initial position, the task of the final movement of the *Phenomenology* is first to show that religion must itself enter history in order to fulfill its course (to be *vollendet*); and, second, to overcome or mend the split between history and religion (or historical and religious memory), figure and truth, substance and subject. This is the concluding function of "absolute knowing" and of the final *Erinnerung* performed by it. For Hegel, the "recollection of the eternal" (*Erinnerung der Ewigkeit*)<sup>43</sup> is not a matter of religious representation but of conceptual thinking. In the end, figural history yields to "*begriffene Geschichte*," or conceptual history, itself the synthesis of factual history and phenomenological science.<sup>44</sup>

To sum up the results reached so far: viewed from the standpoint of religion the "moments" of spirit – consciousness, self-consciousness, reason, and spirit – are neither in time nor history, nor do they display a distinct, objective form of existence or a proper independent reality.<sup>45</sup> They are abstractions, logical, psychological moments or, alternatively, eternal forms of spirit's totality present synchronically in its totality. Within the moments, however, figures arise that do have distinct and individual reality and whose succession does take place in time: within the same moment of consciousness the figural distinction between sense certainty and perception "does occur in time."<sup>46</sup> The figures give historical, individual reality to the universal moments, thereby generating diachronic sequences within the systematic atemporal progression of moments. The sum total of these figurative sequences is the complex totality of spirit. And this is the subject of history. But what is the form or the inner organization of world history? The claim of religious representation is apparently of no help here. For this performs an *Erinnerung* of the whole that, reducing it to "simple totality," eliminates time in the dimension of eternity. Herein the historical totality of spirit is separated from its self-consciousness, effectual history from

its transcendent meaning. This is the claim of all eschatological interpretations of history for which the complex totality of partial figures becomes meaningful only on the basis of a divine plan, that is, once assumed in and as the "simple totality" of religious recollection. The phenomenological movement, however, has a different conclusion in store. Religious recollection does bring spirit to its "*Vollendung*."<sup>47</sup> And, yet, in an important reversal, this occurs not through the elimination of history in the representation of the eternal, but through the historicization of religion and of religious memory. Thereby the *Aufhebung* of representation, and with it the *Aufhebung* of the figural interpretation of history, is achieved, and the *Phenomenology* is brought to the threshold of its conclusion. Only "absolute knowing" and the "concept" will eventually "eliminate" time.<sup>48</sup>

Religion achieves spirit's "completion" insofar as in it the movement of *Er-Innerung* brings the moments of spirit to their "*Grund*." In religious memory, Hegel claims, these moments "return and have returned to their ground."<sup>49</sup> Religious memory is re-actualization or re-enactment of the atemporal moments of spirit in the element of representation.<sup>50</sup> The aim of the development of religion – of its successive inner figuration – is to claim for spirit in its totality the unity of the "essence" and the "figure," whereby its self-intuition is finally achieved.<sup>51</sup> The movement of religion is the movement of its *determination* in different actual figures. Now, religion takes the specific *determination* of its figure from the determinate stage of spirit's own historical reality to which it is said to "correspond" so that the figure which religion acquires in a certain stage penetrates, in turn, all manifestations of spirit's existence and "stamps them with this common character."<sup>52</sup> Phenomenologically, religion is a movement of *Erinnerung* of spirit since it re-collects the entire preceding development under a new determination, namely, representation. The entire sequence is now repeated or doubled in a new element. Thereby the figures of religion are referred to in real spiritual forms (and historical epochs) to which they are said to "correspond." We discover that history is not eliminated but rather repeated in religious representation. Thus, the "becoming" of religion is ultimately the story of its entering world history – of the figuration or incarnation of the absolute essence in revealed religion.<sup>53</sup>

The memorialized repetition of the totality of spirit in religion, which truly implies a thoroughly new organization of the entire phenomenological development up to this point, is presented by Hegel in a complex structure that invests both "memory" and "history" with new meanings. Memory changes the structure of history: the progressing lines – both

the systematic sequence of moments and the diachronic sequence of figures – become a net of correspondences, which constitutes the totality of spirit (finally, in the last chapter of the *Phenomenology*, the net becomes a circle). History is no longer a line proceeding in a temporal succession, but an interwoven net of multiple memories. On the other hand, history brings to light the duplicity of dialectic memory: memory is retroactive and prospective, is the movement into the depths of spirit (*Er-Innerung*) and is radical exteriorization or alienation (*Entäußerung*); memory is the intertwining of time and the concept, repetition and erasure of time in the concept, realization, and alienation of the concept in time.

Hegel contrasts two distinct organizations of spirit. Both are significantly presented as the work of *Erinnerung*. The first model is linear and shapes the phenomenological development up to the *Religion* chapter, bringing the two sequential lines – the systematic and the historical – into convergence. In the succession developed so far, each moment gained its subsistence and permanence as memory created the points of crystallization that mark spirit's sinking down into its own depths, reconnecting with itself and re-collecting itself. Memory gave subsistence to otherwise vanishing moments, shaping them into the real figures of historical worlds. The moments have "substance" only when held together by the recollecting process of memory; yet they also subsist as isolated wholes, each ruled by a different "principle." In them spirit strives for "knowledge" (*Erkennen*) of its own depths.<sup>54</sup> While at the beginning of *Geist* at stake was the constitution of spirit's historical reality, in the opening of *Religion* we realize that memory's exploration of the depths of spirit has not provided us with history yet, or has provided us only with a simplified history. Spirit is not yet fully historical, or is not yet accomplished spirit (and substance is not fully subject). Spirit is historical in its individual, partial figures but when it is re-collected in its composite totality we discover that this concluded totality itself, hence spirit as a true *whole*, is not yet historical. But how does the whole hold together in all its different figures and moments? How can it be claimed that the whole holds together *historically* (or alternatively that the meaningful order of world history is that which holds together the whole in its different successive figures)? World history is much more than a progressing unidirectional line, and is not mere horizontal temporal succession. Spirit is substance that is becoming subject.<sup>55</sup> And to this aim substance must come out and reveal or manifest itself. Recall Hegel's contention in the preface: "the power of spirit is only as great as its exteriorization [*Äußerung*], its depth only as deep as it dares to spread out and lose itself in its exposition

[*Auslegung*]"<sup>56</sup> – a claim that Hegel varies in the last chapter of the work, maintaining that spirit should not act "as if it were afraid of alienation" (*Entäußerung*).<sup>57</sup> *Ent-Äußerung* must join and complete *Er-Innerung*. This happens precisely at the beginning of the *Religion* chapter. Herein the linear succession (both the systematic sequence of moments and the diachronic sequence of figures) yields to the organization of figures in a net of interconnected memories.

While the previous *single* series in its advance marked the retrogressive steps in it by knots, but from them it continued itself again in *one single* stretch, it is now, as it were, broken at these knots, at these universal moments, and falls apart into many lines which, gathered together up into *one single* bundle, at the same time unifies symmetrically so that the similar differences in which each particular moment took figure within itself meet together.<sup>58</sup>

With this picture, fascinating in its complex geometry, Hegel introduces the second model that shapes anew the foregoing phenomenological process. Now substance has come out of its depths – it is "*herausgetreten*." And memory has become fully real. Memory is a power that does not allow the single moments (which have acquired separate subsistence in the past) to claim individual, isolated meaning in themselves as was still the case in the preceding linear progression, still centered on successive historical worlds. The moments have no meaning in themselves; but they also have no real meaning when simply arrayed in a sequence or linear succession; to become meaningful, they must be reconnected and re-enacted as figural parts of a collective, universal context – this is spirit in its accomplished totality. Embracing retrospectively the entire progression of past figures, memory considers them now synchronically, holding them synoptically together, and disposing them according to their "correspondences" and "differences" across different systematic moments, thereby indicating how all the past figures respectively articulate the interconnected structure of the same spiritual whole – the totality of a historical epoch. Diachrony yields to synchrony. Memory forcefully interrupts the progression of the line and, cutting it into pieces in its relevant "knots," reshapes the broken line into the synchronic overview of a net that connects and gathers together figures belonging to different moments. For example, Stoicism, Skepticism, and Unhappy Consciousness as figures of the moment Self-consciousness (B), are now considered synchronically as corresponding to the *Rechtszustand* (legal state) within Spirit (A, c) – the latter being the result of the dissolution



of Greek *Sittlichkeit* to which, in turn, corresponds *Kunstreligion* in Religion.<sup>59</sup> It is only through this complex operation of rearrangement that the discrete unity of the Roman Empire, for example, is constituted in its internal articulation as an epoch of world history. On this view, the philosophies of the Roman period are reconfigured, more precisely, as the ideologies of the Roman Empire – thinking is seen as dependent on and intertwined with the social and political institutions of the world.<sup>60</sup> Only through this re-interpretation of the foregoing movement is world history conclusively introduced into the phenomenological development. Only on this basis can Hegel claim that spirit is truly historical. According to this model, each phenomenological “figure” is characterized by three topological coordinates: (a) first by its position within a systematic atemporal moment (Skepticism in Self-consciousness); (b) second, by its position in the diachronic succession of moments (Skepticism lies between Stoicism and Unhappy Consciousness); and (c) third, by its position within a historical epoch (Skepticism as peculiar ideology of the Roman Empire). At stake in this model is no longer a linear, horizontal progression, but the vertical articulation of a section of spirit’s, for example, life – the inner composition of a historical epoch. Dialectically, the vertical exploration of depths (*Er-Innerung*) generates the progression of a line of isolated moments; whereas the coming out of substance (*Ent-Äußerung*), its gaining extension and its spreading out, generates the complex, heterogeneous synchrony of the figures coexisting within the same historical epoch and truly constituting its manifold actuality. History, in its “true reality,” is properly the result of both operations, which are the constitutive operations of memory. History is not a simple line that progresses (or rather goes back to its ground). It is rather the re-organization or the conclusive re-collection of the line that is bent and broken in its epochal knots and then re-constituted in the synchronic, complex unity of an age. Herein the structure of history seems identical with the movement of memory. The historical epoch is the mediation between the “totality of spirit” (the *zusammengefasste Totalität*) on the one hand, and the individual partiality of the “figure” on the other. As a “particular whole” (*besondere[s] Ganze*)<sup>61</sup> the historical epoch is the generative cell of history. It is the multifaceted dimension of the historical present (*Gegenwart*) brought forth by the complex workings of memory.

With this synchronic rearrangement of the phenomenological development, Hegel tries to mend the one-sidedness of collective memory and to generate a plausible model of historical narrative capable of accounting for the complex reality of spirit. World history as the reality

of spirit in its concluded totality is not a line that describes mere succession, but is an encompassing net of correspondences and differences. And, yet, what Hegel confronts in thinking through such totality is not the monolithic, substantial wholeness of history but rather the fragility and contingency and violence of the link that ties together history and memory. History is the recollected unity of broken memories gathered together to constitute the synchronic whole of an epoch. The whole, however, is shattered even before it becomes a whole. The illusory unity and alleged necessity of a “single series” advancing in a “single stretch” is replaced by the unity of a “single bundle” holding together a manifold reality made of manifold parallel recollections. Owing to its genesis, the unity of history remains a quite fragile achievement. Despite the synthesizing efforts of memory, the historical narrative is necessarily plural and discontinuous; its lines are many and are also broken – somehow interrupted. But they are many and they are broken for no other reason than because they result from memory. The unity that memory holds on to and calls history is born shattered, is fragile, and constantly risks falling apart. This is because unity presupposes the act that breaks the line in its epochal knots and starts all over again, repeating the whole in a different figure. This is indeed the contradictory predicament of the connection between memory and history. As we shall see, after the *Phenomenology*, Hegel abandons this model entirely and thinks history according to a very different idea: *Weltgeschichte ist Weltgericht*. Judgment – the original splitting of the whole as *Ur-Teilung* – becomes the leading thread of Hegel’s later reflection.

#### 4 The circle of the last *Erinnerung* and the present – (DD) *Das absolute Wissen*

The last chapter of the *Phenomenology* presents us with the last *Erinnerung*. This final, conclusive act of memory, which follows the ethical recollection at the beginning of *Geist* and the religious recollection at the beginning of *Religion* discloses, in turn, a new form of history. While in the religious *Erinnerung* the geometry of the line is broken and re-constituted into a net to compose the historical epoch as the fundamental unit of the temporal development of world history, “absolute knowing” introduces a circular model of history that attempts to link memory with the dimension of *Gegenwart* – the presence of the eternal as well as the historical present. Thereby the end of the work is brought back to its beginning. The task of the last phenomenological memory is to circularly reconnect absolute knowing to the dimension of Hegel’s historical