

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

present – the *Gegenwart* that occupies the preface of the work. With this act, the collective memory of the *Phenomenology* finally becomes the historical consciousness of Hegel's epoch. Such historical consciousness is the "we" who philosophizes.

The last chapter begins by mobilizing the internal memory of the work. The initial recapitulation of *Religion* – religious consciousness facing its object which, as content of its representation is absolute spirit<sup>62</sup> – leads first to a repetition of the movement of consciousness: immediate Consciousness, perception, and understanding are now seen as "corresponding" to Religion.<sup>63</sup> But the result from which the final movement departs is a higher spiritual totality. What has been presented so far is "in part figure of consciousness in general, in part a number of such figures that we bring together and in which the totality of the moments of the object and of consciousness's relation to it can be indicated only as resolved into its moments." On this basis, to approach the final, conclusive totality, what "we" must do is simply to recall or "remember the preceding figures of consciousness."<sup>64</sup> History and the figures of its manifold historical worlds are set next to the "figure of consciousness in general," and the recollection begins.

This time, Hegel starts back from "observing reason." Once spirit has been recollected in all its forms, at issue is the "conciliation" of consciousness and self-consciousness. Such conciliation takes place (or, properly, has already taken place) both in consciousness and in religious spirit. What we have seen, however, are two distinct conciliations that still remain separate: respectively, in consciousness and in religious spirit. This is because the *Phenomenology* following different geometries of development and different speeds of movement – the line and the net, the ahistorical diachrony and the historical synchrony – has secured this result twice through an unequal development. In the "order in which the figures of consciousness came before us, consciousness reached the individual moments of those figures and their conciliation long before religion gave its object the figure of self-consciousness."<sup>65</sup> In the diachronic series, consciousness is reconciled with self-consciousness even before Religion for, with the latter, only the synchronic re-organization of the whole is achieved. The task of the last chapter is to bring together the diachronic and the synchronic series, to show that the conciliation in consciousness and the conciliation in religion are one and the same, thereby re-connecting the different parts of the work in a final, comprehensive act of memory (and of unity). This is the conciliation achieved by "absolute knowing" in which the "series of the figures of spirit" comes to an end.<sup>66</sup>

However, at this point, Hegel reveals that the conciliation that absolute knowing is said to be, and that we expect will take place in the last pages of the book, "has already happened." Absolute knowing is nothing but the final recollection of what has already happened – the recollection of something that "in itself" has already taken place and needs only to be brought forth in its true and most "proper form" (*eigenliche[n] Form*).<sup>67</sup> Such form is the "simple unity of the concept"<sup>68</sup> to which all figurative phenomenological determination must conclusively yield. And yet, being true to memory, Hegel recognizes that also the "concept" has already been encountered in the preceding movement. There, however, the concept was "still a particular figure of consciousness," just like all other moments. More precisely, the concept has appeared in the different figures that action and its realization have taken throughout the development of spirit. The "beautiful soul" as the figure of spirit certain of itself is the empty concept that is further realized and concretized both in action (in opposition to the emptiness of duty) and in religion as the life of "absolute spirit"<sup>69</sup> itself. Thus, given that all the possible (phenomenological) content has already been produced before arriving at "absolute knowing," the true concern of this chapter must be a more radical gesture. At stake in the last movement of the *Phenomenology* is the elimination of all figurative forms of the concept and thereby of figurative history as such. Thereby the last act of memory will lay bare the concept in its pure form. "*Absolutes Wissen*" is knowing that, being the knowing of a doing or acting, has finally reached the unity of substance and subject.<sup>70</sup> Its memory is now "our" own collective memory, and this is "science." Such memory consists of two operations: on the one hand, we must "gather together the separate moments, each of which in principle exhibits the life of the entire spirit"; on the other hand, we must "hold fast to the concept in the form of the concept," in spite of the fact that its content has already been given and produced in the form of the figure of consciousness. "*Absolutes Wissen*" is, Hegel maintains, "*begreifende[s] Wissen*."<sup>71</sup> As the "concept" (*Begriff*) replaces the "figure" (*Gestalt*), a new type of history begins, which is "*begriffene Geschichte*."<sup>72</sup> Thanks to the work of the last *Erinnerung*, history is no longer figurative history, memory is no longer phenomenological memory.<sup>73</sup> With it, however, the *Phenomenology*, meeting the dimension of the *Gegenwart*, reaches its conclusion.

Once the pure concept – and hence the concept of science – has been attained and the issue of its "existence" posited,<sup>74</sup> the problem of time emerges yet again. After all, the task of the *Phenomenology* was to bring consciousness to the beginning (or to the standpoint) of science. This

beginning has now clearly become a *historical* problem.<sup>75</sup> Given that the content of absolute knowing, or of the concept, has already been obtained and was figuratively present all along, and given that absolute knowing is the most extended as well as the deepest act of memory encompassing all that precedes, *when* "in time" can we say that science first appears (or, alternatively, has appeared)?<sup>76</sup> What is, more generally, the relation between time and the concept? In answering these questions, Hegel sets the conditions for the dialectical act of memory that concludes the *Phenomenology* and leads the way into the Logic.

Historically, "science does not appear in time and actuality" before spirit has attained the consciousness of itself. Such consciousness results (in its philosophical "abbreviation")<sup>77</sup> from the entire phenomenological process.<sup>78</sup> At this point, the foregoing movement is framed in terms of the unitary process according to which the figuration (*Gestaltung*) of substance is its conversion into subject as the appropriation and enactment by the subject. *Erinnerung* is the action that brings spirit into existence – into an existence in time and space. "In actuality the substance that knows exists earlier than its conceptual figure." However, the type of existence that substance displays is the nonexistence of pure interiority – an *Innerlichkeit* that in its "immediacy" and "undeveloped simplicity" is mere "concealment": in substance, the "self of spirit is a self that does not yet exist (*noch nicht da ist*)."<sup>79</sup> The existence of substance as mere interiority is no real existence unless and until it is recollected; thereby it is known by the act of *Er-Innerung* which, giving sensible, real, and indeed historical figure to that interiority, completely converts it into exteriority. The *Begriffsgestalt* is the conclusion of the figurative process through which the metaphysical substance becomes "substance that knows." Substantial *Innerlichkeit* yields to the act of *Er-Innerung* that characterizes the subject – this time the collective subject that is the protagonist of history. This is *Geist*.

Hegel distinguishes two perspectives: the initial position of consciousness for which the whole comes before its articulation in moments, but is an uncomprehended totality; and the final position of the achieved concept or science for which the whole is the result of the preceding process of figuration. The former indicates the phenomenological development up to absolute knowing; the latter is the standpoint of absolute knowing itself, that is, the collective historical consciousness of the philosophizing "we." "In the concept that knows itself as concept the moments... appear earlier than the fulfilled whole, whose coming-to-be is the movement of those moments. In consciousness, on the contrary, the whole, though uncomprehended, is prior to the

moments"<sup>80</sup>: consciousness starts from the substantial totality and articulates it into moments.

The distinction of these two orders on the basis of what comes first (at least logically and phenomenologically) poses the additional problem of time. "Time," Hegel announces in a famous formulation, "is the concept itself that exists and presents itself to consciousness as empty intuition." Time and the concept are identical – time is the concept in the element of existence, is its *Dasein*. But time is also the concept that exists, for consciousness, as empty intuition. "For this reason," Hegel claims, "spirit appears necessarily in time, and appears in time so long as it has not grasped its pure concept, that is, so long as it has not annulled time."<sup>81</sup> That time and the concept are identical and yet distinct is both the reason for spirit's appearance in time – for its phenomenological and historical existence – and the basis of spirit's necessary overcoming of time – of its logical existence. Absolute spirit is set at the juncture of these two modes of existence. Appropriating and reinterpreting Kant's idea of time as a pure form of intuition (or as transcendently ideal but as empirically real), Hegel maintains that time is indeed the concept, yet it is different from the concept. Time is the concept, not in conceptual, pure or self-conscious form, but is the concept in external and existing, opaque, merely intuitive form or figure. In other words, time is not the mode of the conceptual comprehension of the concept, which will be provided by the Logic (which consequently and not in time and not of time) but only the mode of its intuitive appropriation, which has been offered by the phenomenological process and is displayed in its reality by history. Absolute knowing is the point in which "the only intuited concept" (*der nur angeschaute Begriff*) yields to the "conceiving and conceived intuiting" (*begriffenes und begrifendes Anschauen*).<sup>82</sup>

The relation of identity and opposition between time and the concept parallels and integrates the relation between the exteriorization of the merely virtual, substantial interiority and the recollection of the manifold external existence in the self-conscious act of spirit. This relation is the basis of the movement of development in general (*Entwicklung*), and of the development of substance to subject in particular.<sup>83</sup> The necessity of this movement is spirit's historical destiny or the necessity of its historical existence as "*wirkliche Geschichte*."<sup>84</sup> Since such movement leads, at the same time, to spirit's collective *Erinnerung*, history joins memory when *Geist* completes itself as *Weltgeist*.<sup>85</sup> Recollection, however, being the self-comprehension of spirit in its concept, eliminates time, eliminates the exteriority of intuition, and eliminates all meaning of (and all need for) figurative history.<sup>86</sup> Memory stops time,

immortalizes death, freezes the flow of history's manifold figures in a still, collective snapshot. It follows that at this point, as memory intervenes, history (at least figurative or phenomenological history) reaches its end. And this is the true conclusion of the *Phenomenology*. History and memory part ways once and for all – and part ways on *conceptual* grounds.

To conclude, as the *Phenomenology* achieves the historical consciousness of Hegel's own present; the separation of history and memory is finally sanctioned. While at crucial junctures throughout the process the work of *Erinnerung* has served Hegel to transform the development of consciousness's experience into the collective movement of history, once "absolute knowing" is attained history and memory eliminate each other. Memory becomes one with forgetfulness; its living flux is preserved in a gallery of still (dead and past) images whose flow is cancelled in the instantaneous present; history is *aufgehoben* – translated and overcome – in the atemporal and aspatial dimension of the pure "concept."<sup>87</sup> The final separation of history and memory is due to two developments: first, to the reflexive turning of history upon itself, expressed by the notion of "conceptual history" (*begriffene Geschichte*); second, to the end of the tradition of memory developed by the collective consciousness of the *Phenomenology* and sanctioned by the postrevolutionary historical present. Significantly, these are also the two conditions that allow the Logic to begin. As the collective construction of the memorializing phenomenological "we," figurative history disappears to make room for the purely ahistorical and atemporal development of the concept. The phenomenological figures – figures of consciousness, of historical worlds, of atemporal phenomenological moments – yield to the logical determinations or moments of the concept. We will have to wait for the emergence of "objective spirit" in order to reconstitute the ethical context of collective memory. History, however, will not appear in that context but rather beyond it. For, at this point, the systematic conditions of Hegel's discourse on memory and history have changed. After the *Phenomenology*, in the epoch whose outlines this work helps to bring to light, the separation of history and memory (itself the result of their phenomenological interaction) has become the cipher of modernity. In the preface, Hegel outlines the "rupture of equilibrium" that characterizes periods of historical discontinuity such as the one following the French Revolution. This is the *Gegenwart* to which absolute knowing goes back with its last *Erinnerung*. Herein Hegel offers an example of what Pierre Nora has called "the acceleration of history": "an increasingly rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that

is gone for good, a general perception that anything and everything may disappear."<sup>88</sup> It is on this basis that philosophy, for Hegel, must be developed as science. Both memory and history are transformed by such epochal separation: memory becomes a purely logical movement; it becomes logical or dialectical memory but also gains a psychological, subjective depth from which its collective, ethical, and social significance must be eventually recuperated.<sup>89</sup> History concludes the development of objective spirit sinking the triumph of the nation state in the strictures of negativity and contingency; it appears *beyond* memory, since memory is enclosed within the ethical bounds of the nation state, unable to transcend them. Now, history is no longer a matter of ethical memory, but a matter of justice.

But the first step of this further and complex story leads us to the Logic, that is, to the systematic sphere in which history disappears and memory is transformed, reduced to its purely methodological activity.