

CHAPTER V
HEGEL, HEIDEGGER, AND THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF HISTORY

The culmination of metaphysics, according to Heidegger, begins with Hegel's metaphysics of absolute knowledge as the spirit of the will.¹ With this dictum we enter a new stage in the philosophic rehabilitation of tradition. To be sure, some of the terms of Heidegger's sentence are familiar. Absolute knowledge and spirit recall what we saw in Hegel. There the reconciliation of science and experience achieved in dialectic would dissolve the opposition between oneself and one's tradition. But the other terms in Heidegger's sentence need to be explored. What is the particular accent which Heidegger gives to the word "metaphysics"? In what sense is Hegel's absolute knowledge the beginning of the culmination of metaphysics? Does that mean that, with Hegel, the end of metaphysics has begun? Why are absolute knowledge and the spirit of the will placed virtually in apposition? What is the link between Hegel's absolute knowledge and Nietzsche's will to power? Clearly, Heidegger's treatment of Hegel has a critical edge. This poses a problem. If Heidegger is critical of Hegel, how can the philosophies of the two be viewed as complementary, as part of the philosophic rehabilitation of tradition?

In what follows, we shall begin by exploring the relation between Hegel and Heidegger, paying particular attention to each man's vision of history and historical consciousness. Both thinkers, we can say by way of anticipation, realized that consciousness is in some way historical. This realization is of consequence for the philosophic rehabilitation of tradition. The question that remains is whether Heidegger's critique of metaphysics, the metaphysics with which Hegel's concept of time has been stamped, renders each man's concept of tradition incompatible with that of the other. Gadamer has remarked that it was Heidegger's criticism of the Roman Catholic theology of his time which propelled him to the question of how Christianity can defend itself from the alienation resulting from its link with Greek philosophy.² With that Greek philosophy Heidegger carried on a life-long dispute, drawing from it the inspiration for his research into the meaning of being, but seeing in it the beginnings of the forgetfulness of being. Hegel, in Heidegger's eyes, grasped the heritage of Greek antiquity in the most

¹ "Die Vollendung der Metaphysik beginnt mit Hegels Metaphysik des absoluten Wissens als des Geistes des Willens." Martin Heidegger, "Überwindung der Metaphysik," in Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1954), p. 76. Translation: "Overcoming Metaphysics," in *The End of Philosophy*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1973), p. 89.

² Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Heidegger und die Geschichte der Philosophie," *The Monist* 64 (1981):423-433, esp. pp. 425-426; translation: "Heidegger and the History of Philosophy," trans. Karen Campbell, *ibid.*, pp. 434-444, esp. p. 435. See also Gadamer's "Sein Geist Gott," in his *Kleine Schriften*, 4.75; translation: "Being, Spirit, God," trans. Steven W. Davis, in *Heidegger Memorial Lectures*, ed. Werner Marx (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1982), pp. 56-57.

radical way. This means that Hegel shares in the ambiguity with which Heidegger regards the Greeks. The philosopher of absolute knowledge has contributed to the forgetfulness of being. But has he not also opened up, with the rediscovery of the traditions of Hellenistic philosophy, the historical dimension of being?

This chapter examines Heidegger's explicit critique of Hegel and the inexplicit reconciliation between the two achieved in the name of history. Heidegger stated and restated his criticisms of Hegel throughout his career. Hegel had reduced consciousness, in his opinion, to a mere formula. And for Heidegger, the Greek concept of time taken over by Hegel fails to acknowledge the hidden effectivity of the temporal realm. One can see in Heidegger's criticisms of Hegel the directions which Heidegger's own work took. But what is at issue is less the division than the reconciliation between the two. Such a reconciliation is far less easy to see, because Heidegger treated Hegel just as he treated all the major figures of the philosophical tradition: more as sparring partners than as honored predecessors. This treatment conceals the positive appropriation of the tradition, an appropriation which will be our theme in chapter III. For the present, we must inquire, not into Heidegger's relation to the tradition in general, but to Hegel in particular. Can we discern in their philosophies, despite an overt antagonism on the part of Heidegger, the threads which draw them into a common vision? Is it possible to regard their efforts as contributing to the rehabilitation of tradition, without simultaneously conflating what must remain two distinctly different philosophies?

V.1. History as the Inexorable

The decisive point of accord between Hegel and Heidegger is that each had, in his own way, a comprehensive theory of history. We saw in our treatment of Hegel, for example, that he viewed the history of art as a constant development. Doubtless, the work of certain eras, such as the art of Greek antiquity, remains an unsurpassed norm.³ But there is a simultaneous development, culminating in the freedom of the spirit which Hegel saw in the romanticism of his own age. The same notion of development can be seen in Hegel's philosophy of history.⁴ There he argued that the principle of spiritual freedom, first realized in ancient Greece, becomes fully expressed in the German world with the advent of the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment. Hegel attributed a consequentiality to history. What, we may now ask, is the Heideggerian philosophy of history, and how does it correspond to that of Hegel?

Heidegger concisely sketched his philosophy of history in the essay composed during the period 1936-1946, "Overcoming Metaphysics." Briefly put, it is a history of the growing forgetfulness of being, a forgetfulness whose culmination began with Hegel. The forgetfulness of being is Heidegger's term for the general tendency of what he calls

³ See chapter IV, esp. the section entitled "The Permanent Validity of Every Epoch."

⁴ Hegel, Werke, vol. 11, Vorlesung über die Philosophie der Geschichte. Translation: The Philosophy of History, with prefaces by Charles Hegel and the translator, J. Sibree, with a new Introduction by C. J. Friedrich (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956).

metaphysics. Being is forgotten, he suggests, when it is viewed as something metaphysical, that is, beyond the physical. This is misleading or forgetful because, while beyond the physical, being is still considered a thing. The difference between being and beings is forgotten.⁵ This occurs when the insight of the Greeks into being, namely, that being is not susceptible to categorization in the same way that beings are, ceases to be a matter for thought.⁶ Instead, being is treated as one among other beings, and not that which every question about beings necessarily presupposes.⁷ When this takes place, it can be said that physics has determined metaphysics. The latter is reduced to the study of the being of beings, that is, the study of nature. Nature comes to stand in contrast with freedom and obligation. The greatest forgetfulness of being reveals itself in the opposition of being and value, of the is and the ought. Being tends to be regarded as something wholly distinct from what humanity wants or should do. Ultimately, from the viewpoint of a fashionable nihilism, all statements about what is tend to be seen as mere expressions of prejudice, of human willfulness.⁸

The clearest example of this is the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. In the selection from his notebooks of 1883-1888, entitled The Will to Power, Nietzsche spoke of the attainment of nihilism. It will be attained, he said, when humanity recognizes that all becoming in the sensible world has no goal and that the “true” suprasensible world is fabricated from psychological needs.⁹ If this is the case, then metaphysics should no

⁵ Heidegger, Vorträge und Aufsätze, pp. 77-78; trans., The End of Philosophy, p. 90.

⁶ See Chap. VI below, especially “The Categories in Aristotle.”

⁷ Martin Heidegger, Einführung in die Metaphysik (lectures of 1935, first published in 1953), 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1957), p. 15. Translation: An Introduction to Metaphysics, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 19.

⁸ Heidegger, Vorträge und Aufsätze, p. 90; trans., The End of Philosophy, p. 77. Heidegger's exposition here is very elliptical, describing the very thing to which he is opposed – the metaphysics based on truth as the certainty of correct representation – in sentences which do not always convey his antipathy. And where he does tip his hand, the translation is inadequate. Heidegger's statement that being becomes a mere value when the will contradicts its nature (“Schliesslich wird auch das Sein selbst, sobald der Wille in sein äusserstes Unwesen kommt, zu einem blossen 'Wert'”) is hardly well-translated as “Finally Being itself, too, becomes a mere 'value' when the will enters its most extreme deformation of essence.”

⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, Gesammelte Werke, Musarionausgabe, 23 vols. (Munich: Musarion Verlag, 1920-1929); vols. 18-19: Der Wille zur Macht. Versuch einer Umwerthung aller Werthe (arranged under the commission of Nietzsche's sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche; ed. Richard Oehler, Max Oehler, and Friedrich Chr. Würzbach), 18.14-16. Translation: The Will to Power, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale; ed., with commentary, by Walter Kaufmann (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), note 12 (ca. Nov. 1887-March 1888), pp. 12-13.

longer command belief. Nietzsche's genuine insight is that the Kantian distinction between the thing-in-itself and mere appearance arose as a consequence of subjectivism.¹⁰ No such distinction would be possible were it not believed that the source of truth lay in the perceiving subject.¹¹ But Nietzsche meant more than a critique of the subjectivism which found expression in the Cartesian ego. He argued that that ego, whose judgments are guaranteed after a fashion by the truth of God, needs to be freed from the metaphysical crutch of what he ironically called divine truth.¹² Nietzsche believed himself to have overcome metaphysics. This is disputed, however, by Heidegger. According to the latter's interpretation, Nietzsche's will to power was thoroughly caught within metaphysics. The phrase "will to power" encapsulated for Nietzsche the drive of those who had freed themselves from moralistic thinking in order to create their own truth and their own art. But this longing to be free of moralistic compulsions, according to Heidegger, is itself a compulsion. It is the compulsion to dominate all being, and thus to escape – as if that were possible – the destiny of being.¹³

Heidegger characterizes this destiny in a paradoxical way. It is the fate of being, he says, to reveal itself in its difference from beings. Yet this difference cannot come to light unless it is first obscured, that is, unless beings take precedence over being. Being is then considered as one among other beings. When this comes to pass, when being is most obscured, something surprising happens. For when most forgotten, says Heidegger, being is exerting its dominance over beings as the will to will.¹⁴ Being wills, it might be said by way of paraphrase, that human beings will. We would be mistaken, Heidegger adds, to conceive of this will to will as the conscious will to power. It is far more the destiny of humanity to will without experiencing what this willing is.¹⁵ In short, at the moment when human beings feel that their wills are most unfettered, they are most firmly in the grip of the destiny of being.

Nietzsche did not realize this. The freedom which he believed he had obtained, a freedom for truth and for art, is, in Heidegger's view, nothing more than an expression of the metaphysics which Nietzsche criticized. Nietzsche's concept of truth, as Heidegger sees it, lies in the will which seeks to calculate and dominate everything for itself. Truth

¹⁰ Ibid., 18.19-20; trans., note 17 (spring-fall 1887; revised 1888), pp. 15-16.

¹¹ See Gadamer, Wahrheit und Methode, p. 244; trans., p. 228.

¹² Nietzsche, Der Wille zur Macht, in Gesammelte Werke, 18.311- 312; trans., note 436 (1885-1886), p. 240.

¹³ Heidegger, Vorträge und Aufsätze, p. 80; trans., The End of Philosophy, p. 92.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 78; trans., p. 91

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 89; trans., p. 101

has become a mere technology for guaranteeing the stability of what is to be manipulated. And Nietzsche's art, again in Heidegger's interpretation, glorifies the creative unconscious at the expense of thought. Life itself, which cannot be reduced in Nietzsche's view to a philosophic schema, becomes an excuse to despise thinking.¹⁶ For this reason, Heidegger charges that philosophy culminates with Nietzsche's metaphysics. It culminates in the sense that all the consequences of the forgetfulness of being, that forgetfulness which is philosophy's fate, have been realized. The veiling of the difference between being and beings is so far advanced that all talk of something other than beings, of something other than the categorizable, is regarded as the psychological projection of wishes. Being is, in this era of forgetfulness, nothing other than that which humanity wills.

With that in mind it is now possible to interpret Heidegger's statement that the culmination of metaphysics begins with Hegel's metaphysics of absolute knowledge as the spirit of will.¹⁷ Metaphysics has become for Heidegger a catchword signifying the study of the being of beings. It is a study in which being itself has been reduced to a self-evident assumption. In metaphysics, the difference between being and beings tends to be forgotten. When this occurs--and it has been generally occurring, Heidegger argues, since the Greeks first formulated the problem, occurring as the very fate of Western thought--being comes to be seen either in terms of nature or of will. If in terms of nature, being is opposed to obligation. Humanity alone can give itself its own laws. If in terms of will, being is that which humanity can freely and consciously achieve. Only what humanity wills or allows can truly be said to be. In both cases, the Greek concept of being as that which cannot be reduced to substance, genus or species (but within which all of them participate) is forgotten. This culmination of metaphysics, says Heidegger, begins with Hegel's metaphysics of absolute knowledge. By this Heidegger means that absolute knowledge, which Hegel characterizes as the overcoming of the opposition between oneself and what one knows, is linked to the will. Heidegger suggests that the aim of overcoming the opposition between oneself and what one knows manifests human willfulness as well as the impersonal force of the will to will.

Nevertheless, Heidegger's criticism of Hegel takes place within a theory of history no less comprehensive than Hegel's own. For just as Hegel saw in history the expression of a reason so cunning that it enlists all human effort to further its own ends, so in Heidegger we find a forgetfulness of being which operates as the very fate of humanity. Hegel could discover no one, neither hero, statesman, nor conqueror, who could step outside of historical forces, so to speak, and impose upon them an alien will. All people, he argued, are agents of the spirit of history and of the cunning of reason. And Heidegger's survey of the history of ontology includes no one who escaped the fate of Western thought. No one, in other words, can treat being as if it were wholly other than beings and hence incapable of predication. At most Heidegger can find an Aristotle,

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 81-82, 87-88; trans., pp. 93-95, 99-100.

¹⁷ See footnote 1 above.

who recognized the difference between being and beings, and a Kant, who realized that the ego is not one among other categories but rather the condition for their possibility.¹⁸ These thinkers perceived the ontological problem, but they did not escape fate. In sum, both Hegel and Heidegger acknowledge the inexorability of history. They recognize that history has a consequentiality which is, to a degree, impossible to resist.

In that recognition lies an important key to the philosophical rehabilitation of tradition. For if history is in some way consequential, if the sequence of events embodies within it a rationality (to use Hegel's word) or a destiny (to use Heidegger's), then one cannot hope to speak persuasively about truth without accounting for it. To speak of truth as if it were an item of knowledge unmediated by history is, after Hegel and Heidegger, to fail to come to grips with the issue. Moreover, even when one has, after a fashion, accounted for history, that is, introduced it in discussion as an element for which an account has to be given, one has by no means tamed its force. History is inexorable not only in the sense that it provides the immovable context within which we have our very being, and so must be thematized. It is also that which resists thematization. History resists it because we cannot prevail upon history or persuade it to take the form we want it to take. Hegel perceived this and spoke of the dialectic by which one theme necessarily gives rise to another. This is the dialectic in which one participates, but which one cannot dominate without hindering the unfolding of the matter itself. Heidegger saw the same problem, and spoke of the being which unveils itself in discourse about beings. Even when we designate being by a name, and predicate it, our thematization is by no means a manipulation. Being is not, strictly speaking, a substance of which one can predicate accidents. Hegel and Heidegger agree in that each has a vision of the consequentiality and inexorability of history. Tradition thus becomes important as that by which we speak of historical continuity. In tradition, the rationality and destiny of history are transmitted.

V.1.A. The *Phenomenology's* Formula for Consciousness

What are we then to make of Heidegger's criticism of Hegel? If the two thinkers are as one in their emphasis upon history as that which mediates and, ultimately, can be identified with human being, how is the Heideggerian critique to be understood? Why does Heidegger state that metaphysics begins its culmination with Hegel's absolute knowledge? This becomes clear in the essay which grew out of Heidegger's lectures from the period 1942-1943, "Hegel's Concept of Experience." There Heidegger comments on the Introduction to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In his Introduction, Hegel examines the distinction, arising from Kantian epistemology, between absolute truth and knowledge. Hegel criticizes the distinction. He argues that, if absolute truth and mere knowledge are distinct, then knowledge is outside of truth. This he rejects, for knowledge cannot be outside of truth and still deserve the name of knowledge. In its place, Hegel proposes what he calls the science of the experience of consciousness. This science presumes that consciousness embraces all mental experience, even the experience

¹⁸ Aristotle and Kant will be treated at some length in chapter six, starting at the section entitled "Inappropriate Use of Categories."

that there is an absolute truth, and so abolishes the distinction between mental experience and absolute truth.¹⁹ Science in general wills to know the absolute, says Hegel, and the science of the experience of consciousness suggests how this goal is to be achieved.²⁰

At this point Heidegger insinuates a criticism. He paraphrases Hegel in this manner: “Science, in its way, wills only what the Absolute wills; and the will of the Absolute, in and for itself, is to be with us.”²¹ The ostensible meaning of this sentence is that science desires to know the absolute, and that knowledge of this absolute is indeed possible. The absolute wills to be known and science wills to know it. But Heidegger’s statement that the will of the absolute is to be with us raises the question of the relation between Hegel and Nietzsche. To be sure, the connection between the two is not detailed in this essay. And Heidegger does seem to use the term “will” in the Hegelian context without opprobrium. The will of the absolute is not the will to power.²² Nevertheless, a definite criticism of Hegel is being made, and the criticism draws Hegel into a relation with Nietzsche. Hegel writes, in the Introduction to the Phenomenology, that when one recognizes that the object of knowledge and the concept of that object are both present in consciousness, certain epistemological problems are solved. In particular, the problem of comparing object and concept no longer arises in the way it arose for Kant. Hegel dissolves the distinction between the two because both are present-at-hand to consciousness, and consciousness tests itself.²³ Heidegger paraphrases Hegel by stating that consciousness is the comparison of what is represented ontically (Hegel’s object and concept) and what is represented ontologically (Hegel’s notion of consciousness).²⁴ When Hegel asserts that consciousness tests itself, he means that it compares what it

¹⁹ Hegel, Phänomenologie des Geistes, in Werke, 2.80; trans., pp. 144-145.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.69; trans., p. 133

²¹ “Die Wissenschaft will in ihrer Weise nur das, was das Absolute will. Der Wille des Absoluten ist es, an und für sich schon bei uns zu sein.” Martin Heidegger, “Hegels Begriff der Erfahrung,” in Heidegger, Holzwege, 3rd unchanged ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1957), p. 125. Translation: Hegel's Concept of Experience, with a section from Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit in the Kenley Royce Dove translation; the English translation of Heidegger's text prepared by the publishers (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1970), p. 40.

²² See, for example, Heidegger's remark that “Experience is the prevalence of the will of the Absolute to be with us” (*ibid.*, p. 175; trans., p. 129) – in which, however, the verb “to be” is a translation of “anwesen,” the noun form of which is Heidegger's “presence” – and the remark that “The will wills itself in the parousia of the Absolute by us” (*ibid.*, p. 187; trans., p. 148).

²³ Hegel, Phänomenologie, in Werke, 2.77; trans., p. 141.

²⁴ Heidegger, Holzwege, p. 163; trans., Hegel's Concept of Experience, pp. 108-109.

represents to itself with the consciousness which performs the comparison. Heidegger criticizes this for failing to consider adequately the difference between the two. That which performs the comparison, consciousness, is not simply an item to be compared, as the object and the concept are. It is rather the comparison itself. As such, it receives inadequate consideration from Hegel. That is why Heidegger states that neither the object nor its concept stand up to the test which consciousness is.²⁵ Consciousness makes, without a doubt, the comparison of the two. But it is more than a maker of comparisons – it is the very condition for the possibility of any comparison whatsoever.

Hegel's inability to see this is, in Heidegger's view, linked to his failure to see the difference between beings and being, between what is present and presence itself. It is a failure to see what underlies, because what underlies beings (as well as what underlies what is present, namely, the object and our concept of it) is apparently self-evident to Hegel. It seems to be present, present to consciousness, present at hand. But when we name it, what we name is not what underlies, but rather our present concept of it. The presence which underlies escapes us.²⁶ When we treat it as something present, our science or knowledge of it is only science in a secondary sense. It is, in Heidegger's opinion, a kind of technology, an inquiry which never inquires about its origins, but which unconsciously takes its direction from something more original and basic.²⁷

This gives us a first clue to the question with which we concluded chapter I, the question of whether the link between the Hegelian concept and Christian doctrine transforms that doctrine into a benumbed absolute knowledge. A concept or doctrine falls prey to that fate when it ceases, in Heidegger's terms, to inquire about its origins. This would mean, for our purposes, that a definition of tradition as doctrine must be taken up into dialectic conceived along Hegel's lines. Such a definition expresses the truth, we would want to say, but the force of the truth always outstrips its own expression.

When this dialectic is seemingly forgotten in Hegel's own analyses, the philosopher of absolute knowledge draws close to Nietzsche, with whose metaphysics philosophy was, according to Heidegger, brought to its culmination.²⁸ In Nietzsche's metaphysics, Heidegger argues, being had become that which the creative artist willed. Instead of taking over a concept of being from philosophy or theology, the willful and creative could make their own. But their efforts reduced being, in Heidegger's view, to

²⁵ Ibid., p. 165; trans., p. 112

²⁶ The question of how this presence can arise, when the very predication of it reduces it to something present at hand, is treated below in chapter 6, esp. the section entitled "The Categories in Aristotle."

²⁷ Ibid., p. 179; trans., p. 135

²⁸ Heidegger, *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, p. 83; trans., *The End of Philosophy*, p. 95.

an item of manufacture, to a technology.²⁹ Being, it must be admitted, was never such a technology for Hegel. But in Hegel's willingness to leave unprobed the difference between the consciousness which examines and the consciousness which is examined, Heidegger detects a tendency in this direction. It is a tendency toward reducing the fullness of a given matter to something manageable. In Nietzsche, the tendency manifested itself in the praise of a creativity which never reflects on that with which it creates. In Hegel, the tendency can be seen in the effort to describe the all-embracing activities of consciousness – a description which reduces those activities to a set of formal relations.

Heidegger's example of such a formalizing tendency is the Hegelian analysis of the relation within consciousness between the object and its concept. Hegel had written, in the Introduction to the Phenomenology, that the relation of consciousness to its conceptualizations differs from every other relation in nature. In nature, he said, a life which is limited to its immediate existence cannot transcend itself. It can only change when, by violence, it is forced to change.³⁰ Hegel does not illustrate this point, but we can give as an example the relation between plants competing for sunlight. Their lives are limited to a vegetative existence. This existence perpetuates itself and will not change until, when one plant deprives the other of sunlight, the other is forced out of its self-satisfied way of life. It undergoes a change, and that change is its death. The life of consciousness, however, is entirely different. Unlike the vegetative existence of natural life, it does not rely on something outside of itself – for example, a foreign concept, someone else's idea – to transform itself. Consciousness is rather, as Hegel puts it, its own concept. The concept which forces consciousness to transcend itself is not something alien, but belongs to consciousness itself.³¹ What Hegel suggests is that, when we consider what it means to know, we begin by distinguishing between what seems to be true and the truth itself. The truth is viewed as something external. It is like the competing plant which jars the first plant out of its vegetative existence. Just as the first plant is unable to continue existing when deprived of sunlight by the second plant, so what seems to be true, the so-called natural consciousness, cannot continue its existence when confronted by the truth itself. But then a new insight arises. It is the insight that consciousness embraces both what had seemed to be true, that is, the concept of truth, and the truth itself. Consciousness need not rely on something external to force it from

²⁹ Ibid., p. 82; trans., pp. 94-95.

³⁰ “Was auf ein natürliches Leben beschränkt ist, vermag durch sich selbst nicht über sein unmittelbares Daseyn hinauszugehen; aber es wird durch ein Anderes darüber hinausgetrieben, und diess Hinausgerissenwerden ist sein Tod.” Hegel, Phänomenologie, in Werke, 2.73-74; trans., p. 138.

³¹ “Das Bewusstseyn aber ist für sich selbst sein *Begriff*, dadurch unmittelbar das Hinausgehen über das Beschränkte, und, da ihm diess Beschränkte angehört, über sich selbst.” Ibid., 2.74; trans., p. 138.

self-satisfied darkness into the light of truth. Hegel says that the force which it suffers, which propels it toward the truth, stems from itself.

Heidegger criticizes this Hegelian image. It reduces the activities of consciousness, in Heidegger's view, to a set of formal relations whose origins are unexamined. There is, first of all, the relation between object and concept. Genuine knowledge begins, according to Hegel, when the knower recognizes that a given conceptualization of a matter may not be adequate to the matter itself. The equation between object and concept is denied. This can be called the first negation. Secondly, there is a relation between consciousness, on the one hand, and the object and concept, on the other. In this second relation, Hegel tells us, the problem of the first relation is overcome. It is overcome by means of the realization that consciousness itself performs the comparison between object and concept, and so embraces both. This is the negation of the first negation.

Heidegger does not contest Hegel's analysis. But he objects to the implication in Hegel that the matter has been made, with the analysis, fully transparent. What Hegel has not broached, in the analysis of the term consciousness or "Bewusstsein," is the meaning of being or "Sein." Instead, the activities of consciousness have been expounded as if they were fully present, laid out on a table, so to speak, for our examination. Hegel's formalizing procedure, Heidegger argues, is due to the nature of metaphysics. Metaphysics treats everything as one among many beings, in Heidegger's view, and never inquires as to the meaning of being itself. Even the activities of consciousness, says Heidegger, are reduced in Hegel's analysis to a formula: the negation of the negation. In this formula the profound differences between the beings or relations treated by Hegel and the being which underlies them is obscured.³²

Heidegger's critique of the Hegelian exposition of consciousness, we can now see, is linked to his own posing of the question of being. Consciousness, as it is presented in the Introduction to Hegel's *Phenomenology*, does not explore the relation between consciousness and being. Heidegger criticizes that treatment for suggesting that all reality can be made fully transparent to thought. Hegel's discovery that the distinction between truth and knowledge of the truth is only a preliminary stage of consciousness is, no doubt, a liberating one. It liberates philosophy from the Kantian epistemology according to which the results of thinking were always subject to a reservation. According to this reservation, what one thinks is never absolutely true, for it has to be distinguished from the thing in itself. Hegel made abundantly clear that the thing in itself and the concept of that thing are both encompassed by consciousness. But Hegel's exposition of this matter is, according to the critique of Heidegger, a misleading one. It misleads by suggesting that all being can be grasped in formal terms, just as consciousness grasps the distinction between the object and its concept. Thus we can say that, while Hegel and Heidegger have in common a comprehensive view of history and of its consequentiality, Heidegger subordinates Hegel to the growing forgetfulness of being.

³² Heidegger, *Holzwege*, p. 161; trans., *Hegel's Concept of Experience*, p. 105.

Both thinkers made explicit in their work the insight that humanity remains within a history which has its own inexorable momentum and goal. But for Heidegger, Hegel did not stand at the summit of that history, as Hegel himself believed. Hegel had not ushered in the era of spirit realizing its freedom, but rather had marked the beginning of the culmination of metaphysics. He had, from Heidegger's perspective, reduced the complex relation of being and knowledge to a formula: the negation of the negation.

V.1.B. The *Encyclopedia's* Exposition of Time

It is worth noting that Hegel's phrase, "the negation of the negation," does not occur in the Introduction to the Phenomenology. Heidegger quotes the phrase, without proper citation, in his analysis of Hegel's Introduction, but the phrase originates elsewhere, in Hegel's Encyclopedia. There, however, the phrase "the negation of the negation" does not refer to consciousness and its grasp of the object and its concept. Instead it refers to the connection between space and time. Hegel defines space dialectically. He states that it is quantity, i.e., a number of points. But, at the same time, he adds that a point is, by definition, that which takes up no space. Hegel's definition of space, then, is a definition in terms of the negation of space.³³ It contradicts itself by positing space as a quantity of points, then canceling the concept in the realization that a point is space less. This, we can say, is the first of Hegel's two negations. It is, in its turn, negated by a second negation, time. Time is the perpetual self-cancellation or self-transcendence of the points whose quantity is space. The constant contradiction of space and point is constant in time. Only in time, says Hegel, does the point have actuality. The truth of the constant self-cancellation of the point lies precisely in its constancy, namely, in time.

Having seen this we are in a position to examine Hegel's phrase about the negation of the negation. The phrase occurs as Hegel summarizes the relation between space and time. "This pure quantity [of spaceless points]," Hegel says, "as difference existing for itself, is that which is implicitly negative, i.e. time; it is the negation of the negation, or self-relating negation."³⁴ Space is the difference, according to Hegel, between the points of whose quantity it consists. The word "difference" refers to a

³³ Hegel, System der Philosophie (the title of the Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften as it is given in the Jubiläumsausgabe: this is the "Grosse Enzyklopädie" edited after Hegel's death with numerous additions from Hegel's manuscripts), in Werke, vol. 9: Zweiter Teil. Die Naturphilosophie, with a Foreword by Karl Ludwig Michelet, paragraph 257 and its "Zusatz," pp. 78-79. Translation: Hegel's Philosophy of Nature, edited and trans. with a Introduction and explanatory notes by M. J. Petry, 3 vols. (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd, and New York: Humanities Press, Inc., 1970), 1.229.

³⁴ "Diese reine Quantität, als für sich daseyender Unterschied, ist das an sich selbst Negative, die Zeit; sie ist die Negation der Negation, die sich auf sich beziehende Negation." Ibid. The translation renders "an sich" as "implicitly," thereby obscuring the point that time is of its very nature negative, and that its negativity is not simply incidental or implicit.

certain incompatibility. It is the incompatibility of “spaceless point” and “space-as-quantity-of-points.” This incompatibility, as we saw above, remains constant. The constant incompatibility of point and space is, in Hegel’s conception, time. Hegel calls this time a negation because it negates the relation between point and space, transcending them as a third term. Time is self-relating because it is not simply opposed to something else, as point is opposed to space. It arises from that opposition and is, in a sense, the opposition itself.

The aim of Hegel’s analysis is a critical one. It criticizes a superficial understanding of time as a thing within which other things take place. The superficial understanding arises when time is regarded as mere succession, the succession of one thing after another. That which occurs in time is distinguished from time, and so appears external to it. There are the things which take place, on the one hand, and the time in which they take place, on the other. Time appears less real than that which occurs in it. To this Hegel is wholly opposed. “Everything does not appear and pass in time,” he writes; “time itself is this *becoming*, arising, and passing away, it is the *abstraction* which has *being*, the *Cronos* which engenders all and destroys that to which it gives birth.”³⁵ Hegel concedes here that time is an abstraction. But it is an abstraction which has real being. By it, the things which occur “in time” are put in their proper place. Hegel turns the tables on those who would grant to time a secondary reality. On the contrary, he seems to be saying that time is primary. It is the parent who bears and slays its offspring. These offspring, we can see, negate themselves, for in their very mortality they possess the seeds of their destruction. But time, Hegel also seems to be arguing, negates this negation. The offspring of Cronos do not simply live and die in time, for time is their actual living and dying. In time, the negation of life and death negates itself. The connection between time and the events which occur “in time” is not an arbitrary one, Hegel argues, for time is in truth the very synthesis of those events.

V.1.B.1. Infinity as the True Present

If this is the case, if Hegel’s aim is to reinvigorate a concept of time which had been taken for granted in philosophic discourse, then why does Heidegger criticize his treatment of time? Heidegger is savage in his discussion, at the end of the uncompleted Being and Time, of the Hegelian view. Hegel’s concept of time, Heidegger writes, presents the most radical expression of the vulgar understanding of time.³⁶ His

³⁵ 35”Aber nicht in der Zeit entsteht und vergeht Alles, sondern die Zeit selbst ist diess *Werden*, Entstehen und Vergehen, das *seyende Abstrahiren*, der Alles gebahrende und seine Geburten zerstörende *Chronos*.” Ibid., paragraph 258, p. 80; trans., 1.230.

³⁶ Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit (1927), 15th ed., proofread in conjunction with the complete edition of Heidegger's works, with the author's marginal notes printed as an appendix (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1979), p. 428. Translation: Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1962). Because the translation includes the pagination of the German edition in the margins, only the pagination of the German shall be cited.

characterization of time, Heidegger adds, conceals and levels off its full structure.³⁷ The Hegelian term “negation of the negation” simply formalizes time as a succession of present moments.³⁸ Having understood the Hegelian term, we must inquire into the meaning of Heidegger’s critique. If he and Hegel share a concern for the meaningfulness of history, a concern which prompts them both to bring time forward as a theme for philosophic discourse, why then does Heidegger fault Hegel’s treatment?

The key to Heidegger’s animosity lies in the Hegelian exposition of time as the true present which is infinity. This is laid out in Hegel’s Encyclopedia. There Hegel begins by characterizing the present. “The present,” he writes, “is only because the past is not: the being of the now has the determination of not-being, and the not-being of its being is the future; the present is this negative unity.”³⁹ Hegel’s meaning seems to be that, without the past, one could not speak of a present. The “now” is present only because, by definition, it is not past. In short, the past determines the present. Furthermore, the present is determined by what lies ahead of it: the future. The future belongs to the present, and so is part of its being. But that future has not yet come to pass. The negative unity of which Hegel speaks is the unity, in the present, of the being which it is and the future which it is not, i.e., the not-being which it is yet to be. From this he concludes that the present enjoys an immense right:

Only the present is, before and after is not, but the concrete present is the result of the past, and is pregnant with the future. The true present is therefore eternity.⁴⁰

Past and future have no being, according to Hegel, except in the present. They are not and yet they are. Only the present is truly eternal, then, because it alone has not disappeared into the past and does not lie ahead as the future. Past and future are not terminal points, but instead are encompassed by the present.

The thrust of Hegel’s analysis is that, while only the eternal is true, nevertheless that eternal does not lie outside of time. Implicit here is a critique of Plato, for whom the

³⁷ Ibid., p. 431.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 432.

³⁹ “Die Gegenwart ist nur dadurch, dass die Vergangenheit nicht ist: umgekehrt hat das Seyn des Jetzt die Bestimmung nicht zu seyn, und das Nichtseyn seines Seyns ist die Zukunft; die Gegenwart ist diese negative Einheit.” Hegel, System der Philosophie (Enzyklopädie), in Werke, par. 259 Zusatz, 9.86; trans., Hegel's Philosophy of Nature, 1.235.

⁴⁰ “Nur die Gegenwart ist, das Vor und Nach ist nicht; aber die concrete Gegenwart ist das Resultat der Vergangenheit, und sie ist trüchtig von der Zukunft. Die wahrhafte Gegenwart ist somit die Ewigkeit.” Ibid.

eternal God creates the essential ideas of which human productions are mere copies.⁴¹ According to this theory, the objects of true knowledge are eternal in the sense that they are outside of time. Hegel disputes this. It bears too close a resemblance to the Kantian distinction, constantly opposed by Hegel, between phenomena and the things in themselves. Hegel willingly concedes that the true is eternal. But he also insists that eternity is present. “The Notion of eternity,” he writes, “should not however be grasped negatively as the abstraction of time, and as if it existed outside time; nor should it be grasped in the sense of its coming *after* time, for by placing eternity in the future, one turns it into a moment of time.”⁴² If eternity is understood as an abstraction of time, one fails to do it justice. Eternity is neither outside time, like the eternal ideas, nor in the future, like an unrealized eschaton. If outside time, eternity is unreal for temporal beings. If in the future, then it is no longer eternal, for it has a beginning. Hegel emphasizes that eternity is present in order to prevent it, and the truth, from seeming wholly alien to us.

V.1.B.2. The Datability and Significance of Time

The trouble with this approach, as Heidegger quickly points out, is that it fails to acknowledge the hidden effectivity of time. For while it may be right to say with Hegel that the true present is eternity, it hardly follows that eternity is truly present, at least not in the sense of something present at hand. The hidden effectivity of time consists in the fact that it cannot be made present, for no one period is simultaneous with another period. The Hegelian interpretation of time assumes this hidden effectivity, but never acknowledges it explicitly. Heidegger puts it this way: “Hegel’s characterization of time as the ‘now’ presupposes that the full structure of this ‘now’ remains obscured and levelled off, even though capable of being intuited as present at hand only ideally.”⁴³ To understand this very compressed judgment of Hegel, it must be seen that the obscureness and levelled-off quality of the “now” is not something Hegel consciously presupposes. When Heidegger states that Hegel’s characterization presupposes this levelled-off quality, he means that Hegel has not realized it. It is an unexamined presupposition. While Hegel would admit that time as the “now” is only capable of being intuited ideally – and not sensibly or materially – he fails to see that even this intuition is possible only

⁴¹ See, for example, Plato Republic 597b.

⁴² “Der Begriff der Ewigkeit muss aber nicht negativ so gefasst werden, als die Abstraction von der Zeit, dass sie ausserhalb derselben gleichsam existire: ohnehin nicht in dem Sinn, als ob die Ewigkeit nach der Zeit komme; so würde die Ewigkeit zur Zukunft, einem Momente der Zeit, gemacht.” Ibid., par. 258, 9.80; trans., 1.231. The translation obscures the sense in which eternity is not just “placed” in the future, but actually becomes the future.

⁴³ “*Hegels* Charakteristik der Zeit aus dem Jetzt setzt voraus, dass dieses in seiner vollen Struktur verdeckt und nivelliert bleibt, um als ein wenngleich 'ideel' Vorhandenes angeschaut werden zu können.” Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 431. The translation is my own, for the published translation tends to suggest that Hegel is making a conscious presupposition, instead of the unexamined one Heidegger makes.

when what is intuited is treated superficially and when it, for the most part, remains in darkness. Heidegger does not dispute that Hegel's intuition of time is correct. What bothers him is that the intuition, while seeming so comprehensive, has been erected upon unexplored foundations.

Had Hegel looked more deeply into the matter, Heidegger implies, he would have brought the obscurity and levelling-off tendency of the "now" into the light. He would have seen that the conception of time as a sequence of present moments, a conception which Heidegger calls the natural or traditional one, conceals something important.⁴⁴ It conceals, first of all, the way the human being relates what happens not just to a calendar. To date something by means of a calendar can tend to suggest that a thing is sufficiently grasped when it is treated as a mere item in history. But human beings "date" what concerns them not simply by treating their concerns historiographically. What concerns them grasps them, and the extent of that grasp cannot ever be reduced to a historiographic formula. Heidegger refers to this relation by the term "datability" or "Datierbarkeit."⁴⁵ Datability is overlooked in the tradition concept of time, Heidegger argues, a concept which Hegel presupposed.

The traditional concept of time as a succession of present moments also tends to include the assumption that time is simply the context within which human beings understand. It neglects the more profound sense in which time is the very condition for the possibility of humanity's self-understanding.⁴⁶ An interruption in time, that is, in the continuity of cultural identity which is tradition, would not be simply a blow within history to academic historiography. It would rather be the end of that history as we know it, and would profoundly alter our understanding of ourselves. Time, far from being a mere context for understanding, is identical with the purposefulness by which humanity understands itself. Heidegger calls this aspect of time "significance" or "Bedeutsamkeit."⁴⁷ Hegel's ordinary concept of time, he implies, pays no attention to this significance. The concept leaves it rather in obscurity. To regard time as a succession of present moments, as Hegel does, levels those moments off, suggesting that they are all of equal worth, concealing the fact that some of them, but not others, have grasped humanity and transformed its self-understanding.

Heidegger's critique enables us to understand why he and Hegel, despite their common emphasis on history, do not see eye to eye. Hegel regarded history with

⁴⁴ For a brief sketch of this natural or traditional notion of time, see chap. 6, esp. the section entitled "The Categories in Kant."

⁴⁵ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, section 79, esp. p. 407.

⁴⁶ See the reference to Jakob Burckhardt in *Hans-Georg Gadamer and the Decline of Tradition*, footnote 133.

⁴⁷ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, section 18, esp. p. 87.

boundless optimism as the concrete expression of reason. In history, according to Hegel, one encounters rationality itself, and the span of history offers a panorama of logical necessity. Thought grasps in history what seems alien and incomprehensible, and makes it intelligibly its own. For Heidegger, however, history is less the manifestation of reason than that which has obscured reason's foundations. The very *sine qua non* of reason, which Heidegger calls being, repeatedly fails to arise in history as a theme for investigation. Apart from the few thinkers, pre-eminently Aristotle, who noted the distinction between being and beings, the history of philosophy was apparently destined, in Heidegger's view, to conceal the distinction. This provides us with another clue to the question, posed at the end of chapter I, about the parallel between Hegel's "strenuous toil of conceptual reflection" and the definition of Christian tradition as doctrine. The Hegelian motif, a description of the effort of thought to grasp historical being, is premised upon the nature of being as rational. Without such a premise the rehabilitation of tradition is impossible. It is our very destiny to posit the unity of being and thinking. But such a premise, as Heidegger suggests, tends to reduce being to something within nature, rather than that which every nature manifests. Christian doctrine is not immune from the same tendency to regard its own historical being as self-evident – indeed, we could say that it is destined to regard itself that way.

The key word here, to which we must return, is destiny.⁴⁸ By destiny, Heidegger means that being has its own will, above and beyond that of the wills of human beings. Hegel suggests something similar when he speaks of the rationality of history. But Hegel's emphasis is on the human ability to grasp historical reason. Eternity is for him the true present because humanity can grasp, in the present, whatever has occurred, dissolving the difference between history and humanity's concept of history. But Heidegger's emphasis is quite different. He stresses the great gulf between being, whose will is active in history, and the human conception of being. That conception always betrays the difference between being and beings, of which it is one. A concept of time which fails to heed what underlies time and what enables the conception of time – such a concept is, for Heidegger, altogether ordinary.

V.1.C. Convergence in Historical Consciousness

A summary of the differences between the Hegelian and Heideggerian understandings of history can illuminate the different ways in which each thinker contributed to the rehabilitation of tradition. Hegel, we saw, celebrated the riches of history. In every age one can follow the spoor of reason, he said, because in every age, even the most primitive, the human spirit strives to overcome the difference between what it thinks and what it longs to think. This effort, we can say by way of a generalization, is tradition for Hegel. His rehabilitation of it is basically a conservative gesture: no part of the transmission from the past can be discarded, for it is all the chronicle of spirit. Heidegger's rehabilitation of tradition avoids the conservative note. To be sure, he also acknowledges the riches of history, especially the history of ontology. But toward those riches he displays a certain ambivalence. For while it is true for

⁴⁸ See the concluding section of chapter six, entitled "Destiny and Tradition."

Heidegger that, in the writings of certain philosophers, one glimpses the difference between being and beings, nevertheless those philosophers are a minority. Most treatments of ontology within the history of philosophy have obscured the difference. The history of ontology, in Heidegger's opinion, has concealed more than it has revealed.⁴⁹ Unlike Hegel, who perceived in history a gradual surmounting of the alienation between humanity and the world, Heidegger regards history as the growing forgetfulness of being.

Despite their differences, however, Hegel and Heidegger share what can be called an historical consciousness.⁵⁰ Their writings reflect a consciousness of the very history in whose grip they found themselves. Hegel, for example, never doubted that the cunning of reason, which subordinates all history to itself, was stronger than he. He was conscious of playing a role in the drama of history, a drama of which he was not the author. And Heidegger, in whose inelegant prose we detect a struggle to avoid reducing being to one among other beings, came to regard that reductive tendency as the very fate of Western thought. He saw that it is one thing to recognize the difference between being and beings, and quite another to express the difference. For how can one speak of being without making it the subject of a sentence, yoking it to a predicate? To speak that way is our very fate. Heidegger and Hegel were both conscious that history was playing itself out in them.

The remarkable thing about such historical consciousness is that it is quick to foster an illusion. This is the illusion that, once one acknowledges the power of history, whether as the manifestation of reason or as the fate of Western thought, one can be freed from its spell. Hegel flirted with this illusion when he spoke of the absolute knowledge in which the opposition is overcome between the thinker and what is thought. His flirtation was encouraged, we can surmise, by the enthusiasm and millenarian expectations of the French Revolution. It seemed to him that a new age was dawning in which spiritual freedom would be truly realized. Heidegger too, it appears, was tempted by hopes for an absolute breakthrough in thought. This is apparent in his early project of a fundamental ontology, an ontology which would lay a transcendental basis for the understanding of being by means of an analysis of the human being or "Dasein."⁵¹

⁴⁹ A distinction must be made between Heidegger's opinion and the effect of his work, which has provoked a re-examination of the very history he criticized. See chapter VII below.

⁵⁰ This is the point of Gadamer, "Hegel und Heidegger," in *Hegels Dialektik*, p. 91; trans., p. 110.

⁵¹ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 13. The search for a fundamental ontology, we can now see, was part of Heidegger's legacy from Edmund Husserl. Husserl sought a transcendental phenomenology in the Kantian sense, that is, sought a kind of knowledge not so concerned with the objects of experience as with the way in which being is given in experience. Edmund Husserl, *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phanomenologie. Eine Einleitung in die phanomenologische Philosophie*,

Heidegger would later see that even a fundamental ontology was no escape from metaphysical thought.⁵² But he continued to hope that, despite the apparent indomitability of the forgetfulness of being, being itself might turn and manifest its truth.⁵³ Neither Hegel nor Heidegger, it could be said, were immune to the temptations of historical consciousness. The lure of a consciousness which could somehow triumph over history as its very summation was almost irresistible for both thinkers.

V.1.C.1. The Critique of Historicism

Yet both Hegel and Heidegger insisted that one could not escape history. This is the particular stamp which both placed upon historical consciousness. It distinguishes their historical consciousness from historicism and enables historical consciousness to serve the philosophical rehabilitation of tradition. Historicism, the effort to interpret history solely in terms of itself, and so to avoid imposing upon history an extra-historical interpretation, was an object of opprobrium for both Hegel and Heidegger. To be sure, the word historicism was not current in Hegel's day. But Hegel's critique, in the section on revealed religion in the Phenomenology, of the external action by which scholarship preserves the works of the past--not to live in them but merely to represent them--is nothing other than a critique of what would later be called historicism. To that, Heidegger was no less opposed than Hegel. His aim, in Being and Time, was not primarily the refutation of historicism. But he saw clearly that an historicism which seeks to treat history as a datum or factum, a history which itself provides everything necessary for its own interpretation, as if it were an object of experimental science, was

ed. Walter Biemel, vol. 6 of Husserliana. Edmund Husserl. Gesammelte Werke, based on the literary remains published in cooperation with the Husserl-Archiv at the University of Cologne from the Husserl-Archiv (Louvain) under the leadership of H. L. Van Breda, 23 vols. (1950-1980) to date (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954), 6.271-272. Translation: The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy, trans., with an Introduction, by David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), p. 337.

It must be said that, even at the time of Sein und Zeit, Heidegger was no longer looking for what Husserl called an "Ur-Ich" or primal ego (Husserliana, 6.182, 187-188; trans., The Crisis, pp. 178, 184-185). This final and radical foundation of philosophy was not Heidegger's goal. Instead of seeking a new standpoint over against the naivety of unreflective life, Heidegger proposed to grasp understanding as the fulfillment of the being of the person who is always in the world (Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, esp. sections 31-32). See Gadamer, Wahrheit und Methode, pp. 243-245; trans., pp. 227-230.

⁵² Martin Heidegger, "Einleitung" (1949) to the lecture of 1929, Was ist Metaphysik?, 8th ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1960), p. 21.

⁵³ Martin Heidegger, "Die Kehre," in Heidegger, Die Technik und die Kehre (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1962), passim. Translation: "The Turning," in "The Question Concerning Technology" and Other Essays, trans., with an Introduction, by William Lovitt (New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London: Harper and Row, Publishers (Harper Colophon Books), 1977).

caught in an impasse. For while historicism might presume that all historical variables are in its grasp, Heidegger saw that it would miss entirely the sense in which the historian is caught in historicity.⁵⁴ The historian, who is not just a student of but also an actor in history, cannot treat historicity as an experimental variable.⁵⁵ Heidegger readily conceded that, regardless of one's historical consciousness, one's own historicity could not be managed as if it were something fully thematized or present at hand.

The critique of historicism by Hegel and Heidegger serves the philosophical rehabilitation of tradition by clarifying the dimensions of the problem of tradition. Hegel saw the dimension in which tradition presents the contemporary interpreter with an image of a way of life or type of thought which no longer is. The interpreter longs to grasp the life of antiquity. But historical consciousness underscores the great distance between then and now. How is it possible to bridge the distance without abandoning a critical scientific method? For Hegel, it is possible because the mind can encompass the distinction between the past as the ancient reality and the past as the modern conception of that reality. Both, he said, are determinations of consciousness, and consciousness can overcome the tensions between its own internal determinations. How it does so raises the issue of dialectic, upon which we have already touched. For the present, it suffices to show the new dimension of the problem which Hegel opened up. That is the dimension of consciousness. With Hegel, the problem of tradition became the problem of the consciousness and its grasp of tradition.

Heidegger saw a different dimension of the problem of tradition. It was not the gulf between the past and the present, but rather the method by which many theorists sought to bridge the gulf. The method to which Heidegger objected strives to build a bridge and conceal, at the same time, the bridge's ad hoc character. Such a method would suggest that the bridge between past and present is itself outside of history. But this cannot be the case, for history embraces every solution to an historical problem. The solution to a given problem, far from being extra-historical, is itself a manifestation of history. It manifests the history of the interpreter's own world, and there is a connection between that history and the historical problem under consideration. This connection, grasped in historical consciousness, is the new dimension of the problem of tradition brought forward by Heidegger.

Some would say that the connection between the interpreter and history threatens the objectivity of the analysis. If the interpreter's own history shapes the interpretation of an historical problem, then the interpreter is in the grip of prejudice. But Heidegger saw that this objection is not final. Wilhelm Dilthey's analysis of the historical "Typus" suggested why it is not. Dilthey had written, in an essay of the period 1895-1896, that all representation, whether in art, in history, or in science, is not merely imitation. It is also the giving of form to what is represented, and a synthesis of its typical features. The concept of the "Typus" describes what is genuinely common to (but not identical with

⁵⁴ See chapter six, esp. "Historicity and the Superficial Method."

⁵⁵ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, section 76, esp. p. 396.

anyone of) the class of things represented.⁵⁶ Dilthey realized – and this is why his analysis interested Heidegger – that in the formation or representation of what is typical, the one who is making the representation is influenced by historical forces. “Insofar as the forces of history are effective in us,” Dilthey wrote, “can we understand history.”⁵⁷ This is more than a statement of fact. It is also a prescription. Dilthey was saying that the value of the past depends on the degree to which the past affects the historian. Dilthey’s realization suggested to Heidegger that the fear of prejudice on the part of historians, the fear that their representations of the past might betray the prejudices of their own epoch, may be a self-defeating fear. It may lead historians to the vain effort of attempting to sever themselves from their own time, whether through a merely aesthetic interpretation of history or through a pedantic empiricism.⁵⁸ The problem of tradition is not simply that of finally freeing oneself from prejudice. After Heidegger, it was a problem of letting tradition be genuinely effective in one’s life.

V.1.C.2. Consciousness and the Link with Hegel

Dilthey’s insights into the problem of grasping what is typical for the representation of the past were not the last word for Heidegger. Heidegger’s understanding of Dilthey was mediated by the writings of Count Paul Yorck von Wartenburg (1835-1897), with whom Dilthey corresponded from 1877-1897. In his letter of October 21, 1895, Yorck praised Dilthey’s concept of the “Typus.” It offers, he wrote, an historical category which is as meaningful for the knowledge of his toricity as logical categories are for the knowledge of the ontical realm. But Yorck’s praise was somewhat tempered. The concept of the Typus offers a sharper critique of the pretensions of natural science, he continued, than Dilthey’s own treatment of those pretensions in the earlier sections of the same essay in which the concept of the Typus appears.⁵⁹ Those earlier sections of Dilthey’s essay, in Yorck’s opinion, “emphasize too

⁵⁶ Wilhelm Dilthey, “[Über vergleichende Psychologie]. Beiträge zum Studium der Individualität,” in Dilthey, Gesammelte Schriften, 18 vols; vol. 5: Die geistige Welt. Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens, first half: Abhandlung zur Grundlegung der Geisteswissenschaften, ed. Georg Misch, pp. 241-316, esp. pp. 279-282.

⁵⁷ “(In dem Grade) als die geschichtlichen Lebensmächte in uns wirken, können wir die Historie verstehen.” Ibid., pp. 281-282 footnote.

⁵⁸ Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, section 76.

⁵⁹ “Er [der Begriff der Typus] konstituiert ein Lebensmass, eine geschichtliche Kategorie, von gleicher Bedeutung für die Kenntniss der Historizität, wie irgend eine der logischen Kategorien für das Ontische. In diesem neuen Prinzipie und seiner glänzenden Anwendung ist mehr enthalten: eine schärfere Absage der naturwissenschaftlichen Präntensionen, als 1-3 der Abhandlung in Anspruch nehmen – die mir, worauf ich zurückkomme, zu we ig die generische Differenz zwischen Ontischem und Historischem betonen.” Wilhelm Dilthey und Paul Yorck von Wartenburg, Briefwechsel zwischen Wilhelm Dilthey und dem Grafen Paul Yorck v. Wartenbur , 1877-1897, ed. Sigrid von

little the generic difference between the ontic and the historic.” Heidegger quotes this judgment, putting it in italics.⁶⁰ It is one of the points at which he and Yorck part from Dilthey. Dilthey tended to overlook the difference between history and the ontical realm of things which occur within history. Without a doubt, this tendency was less pronounced for him than it was among history the members of the German historical school who sought to interpret history aesthetically.⁶¹ But Dilthey never saw as clearly as did Yorck that the interpreter belongs to history. Yorck could even say that the historian “is” history, at least in the sense that history is not something which one does but rather that in and through which one lives.⁶² What he meant is that the consciousness, which seems to grasp history as a possible object of its attention, is itself grasped by history. Yorck expressed this better than Dilthey, and that is why Heidegger states that he has nurtured the spirit of Yorck in order to better serve Dilthey’s work, in which the problem of history manifests itself.⁶³

Heidegger’s appropriation of Yorck was also his reconciliation, after a fashion, with Hegel. This has become clearer since the publication, in 1956, of Yorck’s Bewusstseinsstellung und Geschichte.⁶⁴ This unfinished work, whose composition dates from 1890 to Yorck’s death in 1897, argues that self-consciousness and history have a reflexive relation. Self-consciousness, which suggests to the knower that history can be treated almost as an experimental science, stands nevertheless as its own presupposition, reminding the knower that his or her spontaneity is matched only by his or her dependence. Here Yorck’s debt to Hegel is patent.⁶⁵ The spontaneity by which consciousness undertakes the study of history is bound up with the dependence of consciousness upon history.⁶⁶ Yorck’s thesis, clearly apparent in the work published in 1956, can be detected in his correspondence with Dilthey, published in 1923. In those

der Schulenburg, vol. 1 of the series Philosophie und Geisteswissenschaften, ed. Erich Rothacker (Halle an der Saale: Verlag Max Niemeyer, 1923), p. 191.

⁶⁰ Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, p. 399.

⁶¹ See Hans-Georg Gadamer and the Decline of Tradition, esp. the section entitled “Individual Expressivity, Not Content.”

⁶² Dilthey-Yorck Briefwechsel, January 4, 1888, p. 71.

⁶³ Heidegger, Sein und Zeit, pp. 403-404.

⁶⁴ Graf Paul Yorck von Wartenburg, Bewusstseinsstellung und Geschichte. Ein Fragment aus dem philosophischen Nachlass, ed., with an Introduction, by Iring Fetscher (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1956).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 104,112.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

letters Heidegger found a link – although he never described it as such – between Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit and the transcendental subjectivity of his teacher, Husserl: both emphasized the structural correspondence between life and self-consciousness.⁶⁷

It is in this sense that the thought of Hegel and Heidegger converges. Their historical consciousness enabled them both to see that, while history lay before them, an object to be investigated by means of modern critical methods, nevertheless it also dominated them, exercising its lordship as the very presupposition for their critical analyses. This insight impelled Hegel to see the dialectical nature of tradition. It impelled Heidegger to see that tradition is active in thought as its very fate. Heidegger may have justly faulted Hegel’s concept of absolute knowledge for numbing thought into a standstill, dulling the will to inquire about its own origins. And such an anesthetic may paralyze a theology which regards Christian tradition as doctrine, as we suggested at the end of chapter IV. But the acknowledgment of the historicity of thinking by both Hegel and Heidegger provides the needed antidote. It draws tradition back into the dialectic by which tradition is known through its expression, an expression whose underlying force is never exhausted.

Having grasped this point of essential contact between Hegel and Heidegger, we must acknowledge its tendentiousness. Heidegger himself would probably dispute it. Throughout his writings, he was engaged in a constant critique of Hegel. While it is true that, in Heidegger’s treatment of Hegel’s concept of experience, the critique of Hegel is subordinate to a painstaking exposition of Hegel’s thought, nevertheless, in the majority of Heidegger’s writings, an antagonism toward Hegel is overwhelmingly evident.⁶⁸ Heidegger has been rightly criticized for tending to reduce Hegel’s thought to a mere background for his own.⁶⁹ Because the Hegelian concept of being does not bring forward the difference between being and beings which Heidegger sought to express, the

⁶⁷ Gadamer, Wahrheit und Methode, pp. 237-240; trans., pp. 222-225. One can see the link between life and self-consciousness in Husserl’s essay of 1910-1911, “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” in which he argues that natural science, and psychology as well, are naive. Their naivety consists in their acceptance of the “given” of nature, and their lack of reflection on what it means for something to be given – given precisely to consciousness. Edmund Husserl, “Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft,” Logos 1 (1910-1911): 289-341, p. 298 cited here. Translation: “Philosophy as Rigorous Science,” in Husserl, Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy: “Philosophy as Rigorous Science” and “Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man,” trans., with notes and Introduction, by Quentin Lauer (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper and Row, Publishers (Harper Torchbooks), 1965), p. 85.

⁶⁸ See the section above entitled “The Phenomenology’s Formula for Consciousness.”

⁶⁹ Gadamer, “Das Erbe Hegels,” in Gadamer and Habermas, Das Erbe Hegels, p. 81; trans., Gadamer, Reason in the Age of Science, p. 61.

Hegelian concept scarcely receives justice at Heidegger's hands.⁷⁰ Indeed, one could argue that Heidegger's critique of Hegel is typical of his treatment of the entire philosophical tradition. His criticism tends to mask his appreciation. Heidegger engages the great thinkers of the past in order to break with the presuppositions which dominate their writings, above all the presupposition that being can be treated as one among many beings. This may suggest that Heidegger's critique of tradition lays the basis for a general break with tradition. Yet we have already seen that both Hegel and Heidegger were in agreement that one could not escape history. And insofar as tradition and history correspond, could it not be said that one cannot escape tradition?

In this chapter, the inexorability and reflexive nature of history have been expounded as the basis for a reconciliation between Hegel and Heidegger. It must be said, however, that this reconciliation cannot obscure the fundamental difference between the two thinkers' evaluation of tradition. For Hegel, the tradition which stands to the individual as the "other," as positivity, need not remain alien. In dialectic, the thinker comes to recognize that the alien tradition forms the counter-concept to, and therefore helps define, the thinker's own self. By a dialectical reversal, the tradition becomes an opportunity for the self to recognize more fully who it is. But in Heidegger, the tradition is quite different. While one can justly say that tradition, regarded in Heideggerian terms as the fate of Western thought, is to a degree inescapable, nevertheless the entirety of Heidegger's career can be interpreted as a struggle against it. Fate (or tradition) presents the individual, according to Heidegger, with possibilities to be seized in a resolute way. The possibility to which Heidegger devoted his life was that of detaching the meaning of being from the web of the philosophical tradition within which it had been entangled. This can be formulated in a paradoxical way: tradition bequeathed to Heidegger the possibility of breaking with the tradition. What is the tradition which willed to Heidegger such a possibility? What is the tradition with which he broke? What is the ambiguity of tradition for Heidegger?

⁷⁰ Jan van der Meulen, Heidegger und Hegel oder Widerstreit und Widerspruch, 3rd unchanged ed., vol. 13 of the series Monographien zur philosophischen Forschung, founded by Georgi Schischkoff (Meisenheim am Glan: Verlag Anton Hain KG, 1959), pp. 42-43.