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Hegel, Reason, and Idealism

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In this article I want to focus on the central role that scientific reason plays, for Hegel, in leading us toward idealism, yet its complete failure to adequately establish idealism, and, oddly enough, the way in which this failure turns into a most interesting success by anchoring idealism and thus preserving us from solipsism. To bring all of this into relief, I must attend to Hegel's differences with Kant.

I.

A major concern of Hegel's philosophy is to decide the place, importance, and scope of reason (*Vernunft*). Grand claims have traditionally been made on its behalf--that it is the highest form of knowledge and that it is capable of knowing everything that can be known. In the early modern period, this sort of commitment even launched natural science's quest to demonstrate that reason is, as Hegel puts it, all of reality.¹ Even Kant would admit that reason, as long as it does not go beyond experience (in which case it produces transcendental illusion), as long as it confines its operation to the realm of observation and experience, can lead us toward solid empirical knowledge of everything

¹ Notes

Phenomenology of Spirit (hereafter *PhS*), trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 140 and, for the German, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Rheinisch-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968 ff.), IX, 133.

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that can be known.² There is nothing unusual here--this is the traditional sort of claim made by theoretical reason.

But all of this overlooks a real problem--and Hegel zeroes right in on it. Theoretical reason, certainly as understood by Kant, *cannot* make good on its grand claims. Hegel thinks that we cannot hold both that: (1) self-consciousness constructs all of reality within the transcendental unity of self-consciousness, and (2) that theoretical reason can give us knowledge of all things in the world. Scientific knowledge, empirical observational knowledge--theoretical reason as traditionally understood and as understood by Kant--will not even allow us to take the most basic step. It will not allow us to understand the transcendental self that constructs our world and does the knowing. Kant himself would admit this openly, though he would not seem to find it the embarrassment that Hegel suggests it is. But further than this, Hegel will argue, scientific reason will not even give us an adequate empirical understanding of the self--the sort of understanding promised by empirical psychology--as Kant certainly thinks it can.

Thus, it is Hegel's view that theoretical reason will fail miserably in its claim to know all of reality. Reason, as Lauer puts it, has been engaged in a "rational conquest of the world....", it has "eliminated all other contenders--myth, faith, authority, tradition ..."³ As Hegel puts it, reason "plants the symbol of its sovereignty on every height and in every depth [it] digs into the very entrails of things and opens every vein in them so that it may gush forth to meet itself ..."⁴ But reason's conquest will not succeed. Nevertheless, I will try to argue, its failure serves a very important function. Its failure will shore up idealism. The fact that reason is unable to know everything, unable to pull every last bit of reality into the transcendental unity of apperception, this failure permanently prevents a collapse into solipsism. Theoretical reason confronts a solid and irreducible other in its world that it cannot totally absorb.

² I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (hereafter *CPR*), A297-B356, B380-A324, A326-A327, B436, A644-B673, A653-B682; I have used the N. Kemp Smith translation (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965) and, for the German, *Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1910 ff.), but simply cite the standard A and B edition pagination so that any edition may be used. Both Kant and Hegel distinguish between reason (*Vernunft*) and understanding (*Verstand*); see *The Logic of Hegel* (hereafter *L*), trans. W. Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 92-3 and, for the German, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. H. Glockner (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1927 ff.), VIII, 134. While Kant makes it sound as if reason and understanding are actually two distinct faculties, it would seem merely that when we apply categories or concepts to intuition, we have understanding; whereas if we apply the same categories or concepts either beyond experience or to the activities of the understanding itself, then we have reason; see *CPR* B356-B357, B359, B362-B363. Rather than two distinct faculties, then, it would seem that we merely have a difference in scope and in the sorts of objects to which we apply our thinking. As we shall see, this will certainly be Hegel's tendency.

³ Q. Lauer, S.J., *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1976), 132-3.

⁴ *PhS*, 146 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 138.

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Hyppolite says that Hegel "rejects a purely mathematical conception of nature like Newton's ... But he also rejects Schelling's and Goethe's view of nature as a manifestation of genuine reason. Reason, which observes and which seeks itself, in part discovers itself in nature, *but only in part*."⁵ In other words, nature is not radically other than consciousness--we have no unknown thing-in-itself for Hegel. Yet nature is not simply and wholly within consciousness, say, as for Berkeley. For Hegel, we have an objective idealism. Nature is within consciousness, but it is not wholly comprehended by consciousness. It is not completely dissolved into consciousness. Within consciousness, it always remains an object over against consciousness. Reason finds itself in nature, but nature is not nothing but reason; and reason cannot be fully at home in nature. In the *Logic*, Hegel says, "The aim of knowledge is to divest the objective world that stands opposed to us of its strangeness, and, as the phrase is, to find ourselves at home in it: which means no more than to trace the objective world back to the notion,--to our innermost self."⁶ The natural world has to be worked on. It must be transformed. It must be understood. We find this drive to alter, this drive to strip things of their foreignness, Hegel says in the *Aesthetics*, in something as simple as a child skipping stones in a river as well as all the way up to art, religion, and philosophy.⁷ Natural science is part of this same drive to remove the foreignness of things, an attempt to allow us to see ourselves in the world and be at home in it, but it is not spirit and will not succeed to the extent that art, religion, and philosophy can.

Hegel's idealism is a robust, subtle, and very interesting idealism. It is quite different from other forms of idealism. All of reality, for Hegel, is within consciousness, but the object is not just an object of perception, and thus we need not deny that it is actually out there, as for Berkeley. Objects really are out there for Hegel.⁸ Hegel's view, we might say, is that their *esse es intelligi*. The essence of the thing, what it most truly is, is what reason *knows* about it. This in no way requires the rejection of actual objects or things. Take, for example, the *concept of matter*. Hegel is fully able to accept the existence of matter. It is just that in discussing what we know about matter, what matter really is, Hegel is going to end up putting the emphasis on the *concept* of matter, where the materialist will put all the emphasis simply on the *matter*.⁹ Hegel does not need to deny that there is something *out there*. It is just that as soon as we try to get clear about what we know or understand about the thing out there we cannot avoid the idealist turn. We

⁵ J. Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. S. Cherniak and J. Heckman (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 244 (my italics).

⁶ *L*, 335 and *Sämtliche Werke*, VIII, 404-5). See also *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 12 and, for the German, *Sämtliche Werke*, VII, 35.

⁷ *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), I, 31 and *Sämtliche Werke*, XII, 58.

⁸ *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind* (hereafter *PM*), trans. W. Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 198 and *Sämtliche Werke*, X, 323.

⁹ *PhS*, 154 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 144.

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begin to conceptualize--that is, to idealize. And only thus do we really know the thing. All that we know about the thing, what it really is, its essence, is ideal.

The difference between Hegel and Kant, then, is really a very subtle matter of emphasis. For Kant there is a thing-in-itself out there that we cannot know. Hegel does not reject this thing-in-itself. He just thinks that Kant has not thought it through very well. Hegel accepts the thing-in-itself as much as Kant does. Hegel is just perplexed at how anyone could accept the concept of a thing-in-itself, accept it exactly as Kant does, and then claim *not to know it*. The only thing Kant could possibly mean, Hegel thinks, is that we cannot know the content, the specifics, the filling of this concept of the thing-in-itself. Because we certainly know the *concept of the thing in itself*-- we talk about it, employ it, argue about it page after page. And that is exactly what the thing-in-itself is, merely a concept, merely a concept of an empty, contentless, thing--and nothing else. There simply is no content there to be known. But what *is* there, the bare concept, is obviously and easily known.¹⁰

Hegel's rejection of the notion that the thing-in-itself is unknown leads to a fundamental difference between his idealism and Kant's. For Hegel, reason grasps the essence of things, their very reality, "self-consciousness and being are the same essence, the same, not through comparison, but in and for themselves."¹¹ Hegel thinks it a spurious idealism that lets this unity split into consciousness on one side and the in-itself on the other. Hegel wants to move beyond Kant and to recapture the direct grasp of reality characteristic of traditional metaphysics.¹²

Reason, we must see, is not merely a subjective phenomena--a characteristic activity or process of minds. Reason, for Hegel, is also objective. Reason expects to find itself in nature. The object embodies reason. Our subjective reason wants to meet reason in the object so as to be at one with it. This is a view that one can find in Medieval and Renaissance thought and which Hegel wants to revive in a modern form. For Aquinas, reason was embedded in the objective world by God in the form of natural law.¹³ If we were to imagine this traditional conception of God replaced by an absolute transcendental unity of consciousness, then nature would not lie outside this absolute consciousness, but would be constituted within it. The difference, then, between our individual consciousness and nature (both of which are within this absolute consciousness) would not be a radical difference between consciousness, on the one hand, and nature or matter, on the other. There are not two worlds here. Rather we would have a difference within consciousness--within absolute consciousness. Thus, to say that nature is rational, that it obeys rational laws, would not be to say that nature is neutral material out there and that only our mind subjectively perceives it as rational--that the rationality is only in our

¹⁰ L, 91-2 and *Sämtliche Werke*, VIII, 133. *PhS*, 89, 103 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 90, 102.

¹¹ *PhS*, 142 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 134.

¹² L, 60-1 and *Sämtliche Werke*, VIII, 99-100. *PhS*, 142, 146-7 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 134, 138.

¹³ For example, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1st Part of 2nd Part, Question 91, Article 2, pp. 22-3; I have used the New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964 edition but cite the part, question, and article so that any edition, English or Latin, may be used.

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minds. Rationality would permeate nature itself. Nature would be a part of an absolute rational consciousness. It would be inseparable from rationality. So our subjective rationality can and must grasp objective rationality in the natural object.

In Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, there is a section entitled, "Refutation of Idealism."¹⁴ It will be instructive to compare this section to Hegel's very firm affirmation of idealism. Kant distinguishes between the problematic idealism of Descartes, which holds that the existence of objects in space outside us is merely doubtful and indemonstrable, and the dogmatic idealism of Berkeley, which holds that space itself is false and impossible.¹⁵ Kant wants to deny that he is an idealist of either sort. He wants to refute idealism. And so he argues against both Descartes and Berkeley that inner experience is only possible on the assumption of outer experience. Kant argues that he is conscious of his own existence as determined in time. But all determination of time (the flux of inner experience), Kant argues, presupposes something permanent. We are only able to perceive determination of time through change, and we can only perceive change against the background of something unchanging or permanent. Without a permanent, then, we would not be able to perceive change in any ordered way--as we obviously do perceive it. So, for example, prisoners kept in the dark for long periods of time have no permanent against which to order temporal change and thus lose all sense of time. Such experience can be extremely disorienting. Where, then, can we find this necessary permanent? Certainly not in inner sense--which is nothing but a continual Humean flux. A permanent is possible, then, Kant concludes, "only through a *thing* outside me and not through the mere *representation* of a thing outside me ..."¹⁶ Thus Kant is not an idealist of the Cartesian or Berkeleyan sort. He is an empirical realist. The empirical world really exists out there in outer sense.

All of this, however, will not clear Kant of the charge of idealism, certainly not as soon as we realize that for him the empirical world of outer sense is our construction, an appearance--a *representation*. And so we still need something out there more than just this representation. There must, it would seem, be an unknown thing-in-itself out there beneath the representation. Besides being an empirical realist, Kant is a transcendental idealist.¹⁷

In Hegel's view, Kant has certainly not refuted idealism. Kant *is* an idealist. And the fact that Kant claims to be a transcendental idealist while remaining an empirical realist, in Hegel's opinion, just lands Kant in a spurious form of idealism.¹⁸ In this form of idealism, Hegel says, reason first claims that all reality is its own--that all is within the transcendental unity of apperception. But all this gives us is an empty 'mine'--a sheer empty unity of self-consciousness. And thus for this empty 'mine' to get any filling, for it to get a world, it will at the same time have to be an absolute empiricism. Where Kant

¹⁴ *CPR*, B274-B279.

¹⁵ Hegel, in the *Philosophy of Mind*, holds that "things are in truth themselves spatial and temporal ..."; *PM*, 198 and *Sämtliche Werke*, X, 323.

¹⁶ *CPR*, B274-B276 (Kant's italics), A106-A107.

¹⁷ *CPR*, A368-A370, A375, A385.

¹⁸ *PhS*, 142 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 134.

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argues that transcendental realism leads to empirical idealism,¹⁹ Hegel argues that transcendental idealism leads to absolute empiricism. To get any filling--to get hold of difference, multiplicity, a world--will require an extraneous impulse. It must come from an outside source--an unknown thing-in-itself. Where else could the filling come from? It cannot be generated by the transcendental unity of apperception itself. And so all reality is not really 'mine.' Moreover, Hegel argues, in such empiricism, reason will only be able to achieve the kind of knowing that we find in sensation, perception, and understanding, that is, the apprehending of an extraneous other through observation or experience. Such knowing, however, is not a true knowing--by the very standards of this idealism itself. True knowing is only possible within the unity of apperception--the 'mine.'²⁰

This spurious idealism, then, ends up with a duality of opposed factors--the unity of apperception and an extraneous impulse or unknown thing-in-itself. And reason is fundamentally unable to bring these two sides together. The transcendental unity of apperception cannot give itself any filling; it cannot provide a world--the multiplicity and difference of sensation. And the kind of knowing that perceives and understands the empirical world, we shall see, is incapable of knowing the transcendental self. To find itself in the world, to succeed as natural science, then, reason must lose its true self, the unity of apperception, because it reduces itself to the knowing of observation, perception, understanding, a form of knowing incapable of grasping the transcendental self, and, moreover, a form of knowing which if directed toward the self will be radically reductive--ultimately, we shall see, it will reduce mind to a mere skull bone. Such knowing, then, fails to know *all* of reality--it fails to make all its own. It fails even to know itself. This is deeply ironic because it was, we could fairly say, the commitment to the unity of self-consciousness, the 'mine,' the notion that all reality was its own and thus was knowable, that drove reason to the scientific project in the first place, to the attempt to systematically know all of reality. Yet such scientific knowing fails to grasp, reduces, destroys the very unity of self-consciousness that set it going in the first place.

Kant himself admits that understanding, the sort of knowing that employs the categories, cannot grasp the unity of apperception, "Apperception is itself the ground of the possibility of the categories ... it does *not* know *itself through the categories*, but knows the categories, and through them all objects, in the absolute unity of apperception, and so *through itself*. Now it is, indeed, very evident that I cannot know as an object that which I must presuppose in order to know any object ..."²¹ Hegel thinks that the inability of this self (which makes all knowing possible) to know itself is an embarrassment. Indeed he thinks that such knowing--scientific knowing, observation, experience--does not know what knowing really is.

The thrust of Kant's thought, then, is to flee idealism, to be embarrassed by it, to find an other, a permanent, a thing-in-itself, an anchor--as if he were afraid of being trapped and imprisoned in the transcendental unity of apperception. Hegel moves in precisely the opposite direction. He affirms idealism. He even thinks that reason, ordinary reason,

¹⁹ *CPR*, A369.

²⁰ *PhS*, 144-5 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 136-7.

²¹ *CPR*, A401-A402 (Kant's italics).

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reason as understood by the scientific tradition, as well as by Kant, if we watch it carefully, despite what it takes itself to be doing, really moves us in Hegel's own direction. Scientific reason, "approaches things in the belief that it truly apprehends them as sensuous things opposite to the 'I'; but what it actually does, contradicts this belief, for it apprehends them *intellectually*, it transforms their sensuous being into [concepts], i.e. into just that kind of being which is at the same time 'I', hence transforms thought into the form of being, or being into the form of thought; it maintains, in fact, that it is only as [concepts] that things have truth."²²

Reason seeks laws--scientific laws, laws of nature--and that means, for Hegel, that it seeks conceptions, abstractions, which replace the independent, indifferent, subsistence of sensuous reality. As Hegel puts it in the *Logic*, "the positive reality of the world must be as it were crushed and pounded, in other words, idealized."²³ In the *Philosophy of Mind*, he says, "Every activity of mind is nothing but a distinct mode of reducing what is external to the inwardness which mind itself is, and it is only by this reduction, by this idealization or assimilation, of what is external that it becomes and is mind.... This material, in being seized by the 'I', is at the same time poisoned and transfigured by the latter's universality; it loses its isolated, independent existence and receives a spiritual one."²⁴

For example, by testing a law thru experiment, one might think that the independent, external, and sensible would be established against the abstract and conceptual--that the conceptual law would be overwhelmed, lost, in the gritty particularity and multiplicity of the sensible. One might think that we would come to the empirical and particular rather than to the conceptual. But really, Hegel argues, exactly the opposite occurs. Sense existents are lost in the conceptual. The conceptual law is brought out in its abstract shape. Specific existence, specific cases, are established as cases of the conceptual law. The same abstract law is seen to have many specific instances and these instances are conceived as instances-of-the-abstract-law.²⁵ Moreover, natural science even unifies particular laws under higher level and more general laws--for example, the law of planetary motion and the law of terrestrial motion under the law of gravity. The independent subsistence of the sensuous particular tends to vanish; it tends to become an instance of higher and higher level conceptual laws.

Kant, then, wanted to refute idealism by showing us that inner sense required something really out there, a permanent, and not just the representation of a permanent, but, it would seem, a thing-in-itself. Thus Kant is an empirical realist. The empirical world really is out there. But he is also a transcendental idealist because we cannot know things as they are in-themselves. Hegel rejects this refutation of idealism. He rejects the Kantian notion that knowledge is ever going to hand us a permanent really out there--if 'out there' means anything like independent of our knowing. Knowledge is not even

²² *PhS*, 147 (Hegel's italics; and translation altered) and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 138.

²³ *L*, 88 and *Sämtliche Werke*, VIII, 129. Also *PhS*, 146-7 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 138.

²⁴ *PM*, 11 and *Sämtliche Werke*, X, 24-5.

²⁵ *PhS*, 152-3 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 143-4.

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going to steer us in that direction. Knowing does not direct us beyond itself. It does the very opposite--it appropriates, conquers, transfigures, crushes and pounds, in short, it idealizes. Even scientific knowledge, which at first sight seems to be a paradigm case of knowing that confirms ordinary consciousness's belief in the objective, sensuous, external, material world, Hegel shows us, really moves in the opposite direction. It idealizes. It confirms idealism--it does not refute it.

II.

At this point, we have to wonder whether Hegel's idealism can avoid solipsism. Hegel eliminates all external anchors. He refuses to appeal to an outside, to an unknown thing-in-itself, as Kant did, or even to a transcendent God, as for Berkeley. For Hegel, as we have seen, the thing-in-itself is known and, as we can see elsewhere, God is our construction.²⁶ Even matter gets idealized. There is nothing, then, but consciousness and its objects. There is no outside--everything is inside. How, then, do we avoid an implosion into solipsism? If reality is to be shored up, it is clear that it can only be shored up immanently. But how? What is left to make this inside solid and real? Appeal to authority? Can we argue that all is real because science can study it, understand it, control it, find it useful? Is there nothing more than the official imprimatur of science to shore up reality from inside.

There is a bit more to it than this. It is true that scientific reason has an idealizing tendency, but not only will it never lead us into solipsism, it will permanently block such a consequence. Scientific reason idealizes, but it is incapable of fully and adequately idealizing what confronts it, and this is so because reason also objectifies. This is especially obvious when reason turns to itself, to mind. At this level, as we shall see, reason is a total failure. And because of this failure, we might say, scientific reason finally turns out to be the hero of ordinary consciousness. It gives us, guarantees us, a stable world of objects out there over against us. It prevents solipsism--as long as we stick with scientific reason and do not go on to a more fully developed reason.

Scientific reason seeks itself in the world through observation, experience, experiment. Two concepts that permeate this whole quest, and that reason cannot do without, are the concepts of inner and outer.²⁷ In seeking itself in the world, reason cannot find itself directly--it cannot confront itself, as it were, face to face. Rather, it takes reason in the world to be a hidden inner that in some way expresses itself in the outer. It is only the outer that we can observe. We can study the outer consequences, the deeds, the effects of the inner and then seek to grasp the various relations as laws. These concepts, in Hegel's opinion, are seriously flawed. In employing them, reason will fail to find itself in the world in adequate fashion.

²⁶ *PhS*, 138 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 131. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. P.C. Hodgson, trans. R.F. Brown, P.C. Hodgson, J.M. Stewart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984-87), I, 295 and, for the German, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, ed. W. Jaeschke (Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 1983), I, 199. Also see note 62 below.

²⁷ We also find these concepts in Kant, even in his "Refutation of Idealism;" *CPR*, B339=A283, B274-B278.

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In Chapter V of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel examines reason's attempt to study and to find itself in inorganic nature and then in organic nature. In neither case does reason find itself adequately. Reason then turns directly to itself, and Hegel explores the science of empirical psychology.

As we have seen, for Kant, the self knows whatever it knows through the categories, but cannot know itself through the categories.²⁸ In other words, the inner self cannot be known through outer experience. As Kant puts it, "I cannot have any representation whatsoever of a thinking being, through any outer experience, but only through self-consciousness." However, we can for Kant develop an empirical psychology; we can make "use of observations concerning the play of our thoughts and the natural laws of the thinking self to be derived from these thoughts" and "there would arise an empirical psychology ... capable perhaps of explaining the appearances of inner sense ... "²⁹

Hegel objects to all of this. In the first place, as we shall see, we cannot successfully separate inner from outer. In the second place, it is the very reliance upon a form of knowing that only observes outer objects and actions, namely, scientific reason, that will guarantee not only that we are unable to grasp directly a supposed inner self, as Kant admits, but will also keep us from inferring across this false gap from outer to inner, and thus will not even give us the empirical psychology Kant thinks we can have.

Hegel argues that empirical psychology assumes, on the one hand, an already given world of circumstances, customs, habits, and so forth, and, on the other hand, a mind simply given as separate and as containing all sorts of faculties, inclinations, passions, "a contingent medley of heterogeneous beings ... together in the mind like things in a bag ... "³⁰ Empirical psychology, then, would attempt to establish the laws that determine the effect exerted on the individual mind by specific circumstances, customs, habits, and so forth.

This simply will not work, Hegel argues, because individuals both conform to circumstances as well as set themselves in opposition to (and, indeed, even transform) circumstances. Therefore, exactly what circumstances are to affect the individual and what kind of effect they are to have depends very much upon the individual. Of course, if these circumstances, customs, the general "state of the world, had not been, then of course the individual would not have become what he is", but the fact that this particular individual was particularized in this specific way implies that this individual must have had something to do with particularizing itself on its own account.³¹

If individuals were directly and simply formed by the world, then we would only have to study the world to understand the individual. "We should have a double gallery of pictures, one of which would be the reflection of the other: the one, the gallery of external circumstances [would] completely determine and circumscribe the individual, the other" would be "the same gallery translated into" the inner individual.³² This is obviously unacceptable. The same world does not form all individuals in the same way.

²⁸ *CPR*, A401-A402, B422.

²⁹ *CPR*, A347.

³⁰ *PhS*, 182 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 169.

³¹ *PhS*, 183-4 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 170-1.

³² *PhS*, 184 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 170.

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Clearly, the world does have an affect on the individual, but the world that has this effect could either be the world understood as it is in and for itself or the world understood as already transformed by the individual, and the influence upon the individual expected from the former could be absolutely the opposite of that actually brought about by the latter. "The result of this ... is that 'psychological necessity' becomes an empty phrase, so empty that there exists the absolute possibility that what is supposed to have had this influence could just as well not have had it."³³

In Hegel's view, we are influenced by our world. But the world cannot be understood as something existing simply in and for itself outside and apart from the individual. We must see that the world is transformed by the individual. Nor can we understand the individual as separate from the world. The individual is formed by a world it transforms. We do not have a situation that falls apart into a world as given and an individual existing on its own account. If we insist on separating world and individual, as scientific reason does, then we will find no necessity and no law that connects them.³⁴ What Hegel wants to work towards is a rejection of the distinction between inner and outer, between individual and world. We must get beyond the sort of knowing that sets objects out there, over against an inner self. From this point forward in Chapter V of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel launches an attack on all separations which cluster around, or are versions of, the distinction between inner and outer.

He ends up examining the pseudoscience of phrenology. Phrenology as propounded by Gall contended that the individual's character, through the causal effect of mental processes and brain functions, produced various bumps on the individual's skull which could be interpreted by the phrenologist. Hegel writes,

it must be regarded as a complete denial of Reason to pass off a bone as the *actual existence* of consciousness; and it is passed off as such when it is regarded as the outer being of Spirit ... It is no use saying that the inner is only being inferred from the outer, and is *something different*, nor that the outer is not the inner itself, but only its *expression*.... When ... a man is told 'You (your inner being) are this kind of person because your skull-bone is constituted in such and such a way,' this means nothing else than, 'I regard a bone as *your reality*'. To reply to such a judgement with a box on the ear ... the retort here would, strictly speaking, have to go the length of beating in the skull of anyone making such a judgement, in order to demonstrate in a manner just as palpable as his wisdom, that for a man, a bone is nothing *in itself*, much less *his* true reality.³⁵

Scientific reason is a failure. It is reductive and positivistic. It cannot grasp itself in the world. It is inadequate to grasp mind, spirit, consciousness. If it tries, Hegel's point seems to be, it becomes a pseudoscience--it reduces mind to a bone. And so theoretical reason must "abandon itself and do a right-about turn."³⁶ Consciousness must cease to try

³³ *PhS*, 184-5 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 171.

³⁴ *PhS*, 185 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 171.

³⁵ *PhS*, 205 (Hegel's italics) and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 188.

³⁶ *PhS*, 206 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 188.

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to find itself as immediately given in the world. Instead it turns to practical reason and tries to "produce itself by its own activity."³⁷

III.

It is difficult to know why Hegel takes up phrenology as the example he uses to demonstrate the failure of scientific reason. But to better understand his conception of this failure it will be instructive to compare Hegel's treatment of scientific reason in the *Phenomenology* to his treatment in the *Encyclopaedia*. The two texts are very different. In the latter text, it is not at all the case that scientific reason fails to win through to an adequate grasp of spirit, mind, consciousness. At the end of the *Logic*, the Idea goes outside itself in the form of nature.³⁸ *The Philosophy of Nature* then, as did the *Phenomenology*, goes through a discussion of inorganic and then organic nature--though a much more detailed and lengthy discussion. After the *Philosophy of Nature*, there is no reversal of the sort we have just seen in Chapter V of the *Phenomenology*. Instead, we pass directly on in the *Philosophy of Mind* to spirit, mind, consciousness. We begin with an anthropology of the soul, proceed through phenomenology and psychology, and then move on to law, morality, the family, civil society, and the state. In other words--and Hegel says it explicitly--nature passes over to spirit.³⁹

In the *Philosophy of Nature*, God is taken to have created nature and thus can be revealed both in nature as well as in spirit. In this text, reason's quest to find itself in nature does not fail--it does not end up with a mere bone. In the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel says, "Spirit finds in Nature its own essence ... " In fact, the study of nature allows spirit to be liberated, for it to emerge on its own, and to be studied in the *Philosophy of Mind*. Nature implicitly is reason, but it is through spirit, through our study of nature, that reason first emerges from nature into existence.⁴⁰ This is rather obscure, but we can at least see that in Hegel's view nature has proceeded from spirit and spirit will re-emerge from nature.⁴¹ Thus, spirit's quest to know itself in nature, to find itself in nature, in the *Encyclopaedia*, succeeds, whereas in the *Phenomenology* it failed.

How are we to interpret this difference? Did Hegel change his mind in the *Encyclopaedia*? In the *Phenomenology*, the goal of scientific reason seemed to be to deduce mind from brain. Phrenologists observe natural objects, skulls, from which they infer that certain bumps were produced by certain brain processes. From those brain processes they then make the leap to mind and infer specific traits of character. So also psychologists move from outer circumstances to the inner individual--from the observed to the inferred, the natural to the spiritual. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel rejects this whole procedure, a procedure that appears especially absurd in phrenology, but which he finds objectionable in general. Has Hegel changed his mind in the *Encyclopaedia*? Has he come to think we *can* leap from brain to mind, from nature to spirit?

³⁷ *PhS*, 209 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 191.

³⁸ *L*, 379 and *Sämtliche Werke*, VIII, 452.

³⁹ *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature* (hereafter *PN*), trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 443 and *Sämtliche Werke*, IX, 719.

⁴⁰ *PN*, 13 and *Sämtliche Werke*, IX, 48.

⁴¹ *PN*, 444-45 and *Sämtliche Werke*, IX, 721.

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Or perhaps there is no ultimate disagreement between the *Phenomenology* and the *Encyclopaedia*. Perhaps, in the *Phenomenology* Hegel is just out to attack the positivistic and reductive science of his age, a science that is shown to be objectionable by its inability to win through to mind. But if--taking a hint from Goethe and Schelling--science were reconceived, perhaps then it *could* win its way through to spirit, as it does in the *Encyclopaedia*. And so, it might be argued, there is no fundamental opposition between the *Phenomenology* and the *Encyclopaedia*; it is just that in the former text Hegel attacks the science he objects to in preparation for the latter text where he will consider a reconceived science and set out his own positive views.

At the stage of the *Phenomenology* at which we examine scientific reason, we have not yet arrived at the absolute. We who are philosophizing with Hegel know that we construct nature, though scientific reason will not accept this.⁴² For scientific reason, nature is something real, independent, there, outside us. Once we arrive at the absolute--as we certainly have by the time of the *Encyclopaedia*-- we will see nature as completely inside, perfectly ideal, completely constructed. Is the *Encyclopaedia* more radically constructionist and idealist than the *Phenomenology*? Or is it just that the *Phenomenology* takes up reason at a much earlier stage, a stage which refuses to accept that it constructs and idealizes nature, whereas the *Encyclopaedia* takes up reason at a much later and higher level of its development where it is able to fully accept its constructionist and idealist character?

And when we finally arrive at the absolute, does Hegel want us to decide that the attitude of scientific reason, as presented in the *Phenomenology*, was the wrong attitude, an attitude to be abandoned entirely, so that we come to see that nature really is constructed all the way down, that it is completely idealized? Or is there anything correct about the *Phenomenology's* treatment of scientific reason, anything that we want to keep permanently? Scientific reason always confronts an object--an it. It has a limit. It cannot absorb all of nature into itself. It fails to idealize everything--and thus stands as an obstacle to solipsism.

Is this really something we want to dispense with, brush aside, consider a mistake? One might consider it a rather brilliant response to Kant. Hegel does not need to appeal to a permanent that is out there in the form of an unknown thing-in-itself. Hegel rejects any appeal to such an outside. We must shore up our idealism immanently. The view of nature that Hegel develops in the *Phenomenology* is certainly of a nature that it is constructed and ideal, but at the very same time, scientific reason is unable to accept this fact and will not accept it. Scientific reason cannot succeed in pulling all of nature inside. Scientific reason--because of its *own* limitations--cannot explain all of nature, cannot idealize it completely. And this failure permanently blocks any implosion into solipsism. We need not violate our idealism by trying to anchor ourselves in an outside thing-in-itself--as for Kant. We can be as idealistic as we wish. Even matter is essentially a concept. We have constructed all of nature. Does this head toward solipsism? No. Because reason--scientific, positivistic, ordinary, common reason--simply is incapable of getting that far. Try it. Try to use reason to understand the

⁴² Hegel says that consciousness has forgotten it; *PhS*, 141 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 133.

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world. You will reach a limit that you cannot get around, that cannot be dissolved into the ideal. And when you turn to consciousness, scientific reason will objectify and reify it. You will end up with a bone.

The sort of reason that Hegel focuses on in Chapter V of the *Phenomenology* is an as yet undeveloped, unconsummated, lower form of reason.⁴³ In the Introduction to the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel distinguishes between two forms of reason,

the Greek Anaxagoras was the first to declare that the world is governed by a 'nous', i.e. by reason or understanding in general. This does not signify an intelligence in the sense of a self-conscious reason or a spirit as such, and the two must not be confused. The movement of the solar system is governed by unalterable laws; these laws are its inherent reason. But neither the sun nor the planets which revolve around it in accordance with these laws are conscious of them.⁴⁴

Indeed, when Socrates read Anaxagoras, Hegel points out, Socrates was disappointed to discover that Anaxagoras dealt only with external causes such as air, ether, water, and so forth, not with any deeper sort of reason. Hegel goes on to suggest that to get at the deeper sort of reason that rules the world we might start by examining our ordinary concept of providence.⁴⁵

In Chapter V of the *Phenomenology*, the sort of reason that is presented and examined is *nous*, but a higher sort of reason--or spirit--is there lurking behind the surface, and we can even get a hint of it from the way *nous* behaves--a behavior that contradicts itself. *Nous* claims to study independent, external objects that remain there before it in the world, but without realizing what it is doing or what it means, *nous* idealizes--it transforms sensuous objects into concepts.⁴⁶

The characteristics of *nous* are that it takes objects to be things that present themselves to observation as found, given--they merely are.⁴⁷ They exist in the form of immediate being.⁴⁸ They are outside, external, and they suffer passively whatever action the mind performs on them.⁴⁹ Reason as *nous* fits things into fixed categories and denies them all opposite or opposed categories. Then it merely strings such predicates together⁵⁰--it connects them as external relations. It even sees the mind as made up of faculties,

⁴³ *PhS*, 146 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 138.

⁴⁴ *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction* (hereafter *PWHI*), trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 34 and, for the German, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (hereafter *PW*, I), ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1955), I, 37.

⁴⁵ *PWHI*, 34-5 and *PW*, I, 37-8.

⁴⁶ *PhS*, 147 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 138.

⁴⁷ *PhS*, 181 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 167.

⁴⁸ *PhS*, 146 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 138.

⁴⁹ *PM*, 13 and *Sämtliche Werke*, X, 27-8.

⁵⁰ *L*, 62-3, 37 and *Sämtliche Werke*, VIII, 101-2, 73-4.

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inclinations, passions, heterogeneous beings, as if they were inert things in a bag.⁵¹ And, as Hegel puts it, "When being as such, or thingness, is predicated of the mind, the true and genuine expression for this is, therefore, that mind is such an entity as a bone is....we do not *mean* it ... but that is what we *say* ..." ⁵²

Nous, scientific reason, Kantian theoretical reason, which claims to rule the world, and which sets out to find itself in the world, is doomed to failure. It limits itself to observation, experience, the phenomenal, and thus it will not even be able to understand itself--it will turn mind into a bone. If, on the other hand, this sort of reason tries to go beyond experience, it will be denounced as transcendental illusion. Hegel would suggest that the illusion lies instead in scientific reason's belief that it can rule the world when it cannot even see that it does not understand itself.

If nature is the realm of *nous*, of scientific reason, then history and culture are the realm of spirit--the realm of art, religion, and philosophy. *Nous* cannot finally overcome the otherness of the object, cannot completely idealize it, always meets a limit, and when it turns to mind, even reduces it to a bone. Spirit is different. Art, religion, and philosophy are able to overcome otherness and objectification. Reason in culture is able to see that it has constructed reality, to see itself in that reality, and to be fully at home with itself. In culture, all is the doing, the action, the construction of self-consciousness. What, for example, is a government? It is certainly not a set of buildings or even persons. It is not a thing--like a bone. It is a set of beliefs, commitments, actions, practices, procedures, ideas, laws, and so forth. It is our construction--all the way down.

It is true that nature, for Hegel, is constructed by us just as much as culture is. Nevertheless, in nature there is always something there that remains an other, over against us, an it, that we cannot dissolve. *Nous* fails in its attempt to find itself adequately in nature. Spirit does not have this problem in culture. Culture is the realm in which reason can find itself and be at home with itself in the world. If anything, spirit has the opposite problem. If we too quickly see that culture is our construction, it can lose its reality for us. If we too quickly see that we have constructed God, religion can collapse. If we too quickly see that government is nothing but the practices and beliefs of individual citizens--perhaps especially of certain classes of those citizens--government can collapse. In short, where we could not get around nature's objectivity and otherness, cultural institutions can be in need of a certain degree of objectivity and otherness. They will have to generate this objectivity--through the trappings of monarchy, clerical ritual, or something of the sort. If we saw all at once that we had constructed God, nature, and our world, we would collapse into a chaotic solipsism. Our constructions must have the form

⁵¹ *PhS*, 182 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 169.

⁵² I prefer Baillie's translation of this passage: see *Phenomenology of Mind* (hereafter *PhM*), trans. J.B. Baillie (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 369 (Hegel's italics) and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 190; for Miller's translation, see *PhS*, 208. Hegel also says, "Nature is only the corpse of the Understanding ... Schelling therefore called her a petrified intelligence ..." (*PN*, 14-15 and *Sämtliche Werke*, IX, 50-1.) Once we reach the perspective of spirit, it is true, the corpse can be revived; but not if we remain at the perspective of the corpse.

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of objectifications. They must take on the look of otherness. They must be a bit alien if we are to have a solid world.⁵³

To better understand spirit, as opposed to *nous*, let us look at the *Philosophy of Mind*, where Hegel speaks of:

the mind or spirit that makes world-history. In this case, there no longer stands, on the one side, an activity external to the object, and on the other side, a merely passive object: but the spiritual activity is directed to an object which is active in itself, an object which has spontaneously worked itself up into the result to be brought about by that activity ... Thus, for example, the people and the time which were molded by the activity of Alexander and Caesar as *their* object, on their own part, qualified themselves for the deeds to be performed by these individuals; it is no less true that the time created these men as that it was created by them; they were as much the instrument of the mind or spirit of their time and their people, as conversely, their people⁵⁴ served these heroes as an instrument for the accomplishment of their deeds.

It will be instructive to compare this passage with our discussion a few pages back of empirical psychology. Empirical psychology, in Hegel's view, attempts to give us laws that would determine the relationship of circumstances to mind. But it completely fails because individuals both conform to, as well as set themselves in opposition to (and even transform), circumstances. What happens, then, depends as much upon the individuals as the circumstances. There is a complex interplay between the two that cannot be determined as a law. The people, the circumstances of their time, and leaders like Caesar or Alexander shape and influence each other in mutually determining ways that scientific reason cannot fix. *Nous* is at a loss in this realm. If it tries to move ahead anyway, it will move into pseudoscience. On the other hand, the historian, the artist, the theologian, the political theorist, the philosopher are quite at home with such cultural phenomena and can handle them without special problems. Indeed, their doing so even contributes to the further development and articulation of spirit. It is a significant part of the process by which spirit constructs itself, grasps itself, and comes to be at home with itself. Through such activity spirit constructs its world, fills it out, and roots us in it.

What scientific reason in Chapter V of the *Phenomenology* focuses on is *nous*; whereas the *Encyclopaedia* also considers spirit. Scientific reason in Chapter V of the *Phenomenology* supposes that nature is *prius* and that mind is posited by nature.⁵⁵ What the *Encyclopaedia* sees is that spirit is *prius* and that nature is posited by spirit.⁵⁵ Many of the differences between these two texts stem from the fact that the *Phenomenology* is out to establish the absolute, whereas the *Encyclopaedia* assumes that that has been successfully accomplished and operates entirely within the absolute. Thus, the *Encyclopaedia* sorts through each of the absolute's parts, putting them in place, and becomes increasingly aware of the totality of the whole as well as the internal relations

⁵³ *PhS*, 206 (Hegel's italics) and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 189.

⁵⁴ *PM*, 13 (Hegel's italics) and *Sämtliche Werke*, X, 28.

⁵⁵ *PM*, 14 and *Sämtliche Werke*, X, 29.

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among the parts. In the *Phenomenology*, on the other hand, we are going through the same parts, but not yet having reached the absolute, which we are working to prove, we find that each stage resists us. Each stage tries to put itself forth as fully adequate--as a sufficient alternative to the absolute. Each presents itself in isolation--as externally related and resisting totality. Each stage claims we need go no further--that it is capable of explaining all of our experience. So the parts which are seen as making up an internally related totality in the *Encyclopaedia* each step forth on their own in the *Phenomenology*, each solitary stage fails to explain all of our experience, and that is what drives us further along toward the absolute and thus the possibility of the *Encyclopaedia*. In Chapter V of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel tries to present and to push as far as it will go: empiricism, observation, isolation, in order to show that *nous* will not work and to force us to reverse ourselves. In the *Encyclopaedia*, on the other hand, he is trying to elaborate connection and totality. Where the *Phenomenology* is a pathway of doubt, a way of despair,⁵⁶ with each stage failing to hold up, the *Encyclopaedia* continually presents positive claims and establishes philosophical positions.

The *Encyclopaedia*, especially the *Philosophy of Nature*, examines empirical science, and it asks where it fits and what it means within the totality of the absolute. Chapter V of the *Phenomenology* takes up empirical science and asks whether it can stand on its own and either replace or make unnecessary the absolute; Hegel does this in order to convince us that we need the absolute and that it cannot be replaced or eliminated by natural science. In this sense, then, the *Phenomenology* is false and the *Encyclopaedia* is true. The *Encyclopaedia* correctly sees the relationship of parts to the whole, and the *Phenomenology*, as it presents those parts in isolation, presents them falsely. On the other hand, the way the *Phenomenology* presents these parts, each claiming to stand alone and be self-sufficient, corresponds to ordinary consciousness as well as to the traditional claims of various philosophical systems and of natural science. This involves illusion, in Hegel's view, but it is a necessary illusion--as transcendental illusion is necessary for Kant. It gives us a solid world and anchors our idealism without violating that idealism by appeal to some permanent outside.

But things are even more complicated than this. The *Phenomenology* establishes the absolute, from which the *Encyclopaedia* as well as other texts like the *Philosophy of History*, the *Philosophy of Right*, and the *Aesthetics* take off. But it is not as if the *Phenomenology* just deduces a principle with which the other texts start. The *Phenomenology* in establishing the absolute, gives us the totality of all reality within which we exist, have consciousness, and know all that we know. The *Encyclopaedia* as well as all of the other texts take place within this absolute that the *Phenomenology* establishes. If, then, the *Phenomenology* is correct in its proof of the absolute, nothing exists outside the absolute--not even the *Phenomenology* itself. So the difference between the *Phenomenology* and the *Encyclopaedia* is not as sharp as it might seem. The stages of the *Phenomenology* abstract from the absolute, present themselves as if they can stand alone, in order to show us that they cannot do so, and thus drive us on

⁵⁶ *PhS*, 49-50 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 56. For a more extended discussion of the approach of the *Phenomenology*, see my "Structure and Method of Hegel's *Phenomenology*," forthcoming in *CLIO*.

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toward the absolute. Both texts operate fully within the absolute. It is just that the *Encyclopaedia* is fully aware of this, straightforwardly acknowledges it, and proceeds accordingly, whereas the stages of the *Phenomenology*, while they try to act as if they are independent of the absolute or that there is no absolute, are set out that way only in order to prove to us the absolute that surrounds us.

In an interesting passage in Chapter V of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel says that if consciousness "knew that *Reason* is equally the essence of things and of consciousness itself, and that it is only in consciousness that Reason can be present in its own proper shape, it would go down into the depths of its own being, and seek Reason there rather than in things. If it did find it there, it would be directed to the actual world outside again, in order to behold therein Reason's sensuous expression, but at the same time take it essentially as [concept]."⁵⁷ In Hyppolite's view this passage describes precisely what Hegel does in the *Logic*, but not in the *Phenomenology*. Hyppolite thinks that such a consciousness transcends the *Phenomenology*. It is no longer a phenomenological consciousness but an ontological consciousness.⁵⁸

What then are we to conclude about the relation of the *Phenomenology* to the *Encyclopaedia*? Is it the case that once we reach spirit we will see that all is constructed, including nature? And will it be the case that all is within the unity of absolute consciousness such that we will be able to freely deduce mind from brain and spirit from nature? And if this is so, then must we say that there is a fundamental difference, a shift, in Hegel's thought between the *Phenomenology* and the *Encyclopaedia*? Because in the *Phenomenology* it would seem that Hegel is not as radical a constructionist or idealist as he is in the *Encyclopaedia*. In the *Phenomenology*, nature does not seem to be constructed all the way down. There remains a bare it, an other, that cannot be absorbed, pulled into reason, so that we can adequately grasp spirit. And so consciousness remains phenomenological; it does not fully grasp and completely construct reality--it does not become ontological.

But this suggests that the *Encyclopaedia* casts aside the view of the *Phenomenology* and succeeds where it failed. This is simply not correct. In the first place, we certainly cannot say that the *Encyclopaedia* succeeds in 'deducing mind from brain.' That very way of phrasing the issue is based upon a positivistic, reductionist, and scientific outlook--the outlook of *nous*. The *Encyclopaedia* will move back and forth between spirit and nature, mind and brain, have interesting things to say about them, find insightful connections, and so forth, but it will not even try to '*deduce* mind from brain.' It will instead do the sorts of things humanistic disciplines like philosophy do. In other words, it is much as we saw was the case in comparing empirical psychology with cultural history. The fact that psychology failed to give us the laws that determine the way circumstances influence mental life is not intended to suggest that spirit will succeed in the same positivistic endeavor. Rather history, philosophy, art, and other humanistic disciplines will operate in their own mode in handling the way in which circumstances, people, and leaders like Caesar or Alexander mutually influence each other. Spirit does

⁵⁷ *PhS*, 146 (Hegel's italics; and translation altered) and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 138.

⁵⁸ Hyppolite, 235.

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not try to be a superscience (which would inevitably end up being a pseudoscience). It has its own different way of dealing with the world.

What, then, is the attitude Hegel finally wants us to adopt toward nature? Does he want us to move beyond scientific reason and to finally see that nature is fully a part of spirit and that it is constructed all the way down? Does he want us finally to reject the view of the *Phenomenology* which suggests that nature always involves an it, an object that resists and cannot be totally idealized, that cannot be completely dissolved into consciousness? Should we dismiss this view?

I do not think so. In the *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel says, "every determinateness is a determinateness only counter to another determinateness; to that of mind in general is opposed, in the first instance, that of Nature ... Nature, not merely offers resistance to us, exists apart from our mind, but holds itself asunder against its own self, divides itself into concrete points, into material atoms, of which it is composed."⁵⁹ Nature is a necessary anchor to mind. If mind were able to find itself instantly in everything before it, if it could find itself perfectly and completely in the world, if all was a perfect mirror, or if it never even had to look outside but only inside, mind, I suspect, would collapse into a disordered solipsistic madness. Kant argued that we need a permanent against which to measure change. For Hegel we need to meet *resistance*. And if we are to be consistent idealists, this resistance cannot come from outside. There is no transcendent God or unknown thing-in-itself that we can call to our aid. Everything is immanent. Thus, it is only theoretical reason itself that can generate this resistance. Scientific reason, which limits itself to empirical observation, itself gives us solid objects and things. They are part of spirit--within the absolute. They are not unknown things-in-themselves or Fichtean impacts. But we cannot dissolve them into consciousness. They remain as an object--a bone. Of course, we can move beyond scientific reason to spirit where we *will* see that everything is constructed by spirit all the way down, but it is questionable whether we could live in that realm *alone*, whether we could keep our footing. We need scientific reason, ordinary reason, which, illusory as it is from a higher perspective, gives us the solid anchored world of objects we need to live in.

Reason's very failure to find itself in the object, to idealize the object completely, to win through to spirit, is its success for ordinary consciousness. The failure of reason to absorb all into consciousness cuts off and makes impossible an implosion into solipsism. Solipsism is impossible if the tendency of theoretical reason is to objectify--to take mind to be a bone. Thus, for Hegel, we end up with a subtle, nuanced, and robust idealism. Hegel does not and need not deny the external world or insist that only ideas exist, as for Berkeley. Reason faces a world of matter and material processes that it studies scientifically. Such study transforms, idealizes, the world. The essence of the world is grasped in thought. *Esse es intelligi*. But theoretical reason cannot go all the way. Spirit will be able to do so, but for *nous* there always remains an it that we cannot dissolve. Reason cannot grasp itself in the world as if there were nothing but reason, spirit, mind, and no other, no object. Nevertheless, this it, this object, is not a Kantian unknown thing-in-itself. Though theoretical reason is unwilling to accept it, we know that we have constructed this world. We have constructed the object and the object is known. But

⁵⁹ *PM*, 8-9 (Hegel's italics) and *Sämtliche Werke*, X, 20-1.

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because of the form of knowing involved--theoretical reason, *nous* --we are unable to fully comprehend, fully idealize, the object. Scientific reason, much like the labor of Hegel's slave, works on the object and idealizes it, makes it an object-for-consciousness. But, at the same time, the more we work on the world, the more we objectify it, the more we will meet resistance that must be wrestled with, transformed, struggled with. In short, the more we work on the world, the more we try to idealize it, the more nature will be stimulated to resist us and demonstrate its independence.⁶⁰

Idealism has been given a bad name by its enemies. And, at least, we must fight against silly stereotypes of it. Johnson thought he could refute idealism by kicking a stone and uttering, "I refute Berkeley thus." Hegel would seem to turn this very ploy against him. It is the slave and the scientist who stub their toes against nature and wrestle with the resistance of the world. But far from refuting idealism, their work is the very thing that idealizes the world while giving us the experience of solid objects in it. In experiencing the resistance of Johnson's stone, the slave and the scientist might have said, "We refute *Johnson* thus."

Reason anchors idealism not only by giving us resistant objects, but also in a second way that we must begin to recognize. Hegel suggests in Chapter V of the *Phenomenology* that reason is larger than the ego. Reason is "dimly aware of itself as a profounder essence than the pure 'I' is ..."⁶¹ In seeking reason in the world, we have seen, subjective reason seeks to find objective reason embedded in nature, and in this quest the ego will become aware that it is a part of a larger rational unity, a unity that includes all egos and all objects in the world. This begins to make clear to us how reality can be constructed by consciousness yet be something that consciousness finds to be objective. The world is objective in the sense that it is an object, a thing, a natural resistance, but also in the sense that the world is rational, organized, lawlike. This is to say that as subjective reason finds itself, finds objective reason, in the world, it finds an authority, something it must answer to, something that makes legitimate demands upon it. Reason is both an activity of consciousness and its sovereign. Consciousness has constructed the world and reason is the action of consciousness, but it is not as if consciousness, certainly not individual consciousness, is arbitrarily in control here. To become aware of reason in the world is to become aware of reason as a regularity, a norm, an authority that is not other than me but which is much larger than me.

To anchor idealism immanently--so that we need not appeal to an outside and thus undermine our idealism--we need resistant objects, which, as we have seen, theoretical reason gives us. Secondly, we need totality--the absolute. There can be nothing outside of consciousness--no outside to consciousness. Individual consciousness cannot give us such totality--an absolute consciousness will be required. Nature is a construction, but it is not the construction of individual consciousness. It is more objective than that. It is the construction of an absolute consciousness. The hint in Chapter V that reason is larger than individual consciousness and an authority for it pushes us in this direction. Thirdly, what we need to anchor our idealism is to be solidly grounded so that we can be at home in our world--we need the recognition of our world, recognition by accepted authority. In

⁶⁰ *PhS*, 118 and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 115.

⁶¹ *PhS*, 146 (Hegel's italics) and *Gesammelte Werke*, IX, 138.

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Chapter V, we get a world that is recognized by science. Where does science's authority come from? The same as any government, from its accomplishments, its objectifications, the excellence of its laws, its ability to understand the world, and to control it.

To claim that nature is constructed, it might seem, would be to displace the centrality of science. Since nature would have to be constructed by an absolute consciousness, it might seem that theology would become central. However, Hegel takes both science and religion to be cultural products. This does not mean that science and religion are false. The fact that God is constructed, in no way establishes that God does not exist.⁶² So also the fact that science is a cultural product, and that science constructs nature, in no way suggests that what science discovers about nature is untrue. Science can certainly go awry and lapse into pseudoscience. Science also has an imperialistic tendency to claim all truth for itself and to exclude the sciences of spirit (history, art, religion, philosophy, and so forth), a view which is certainly rejected by Hegel, but none of this means that science cannot allow us to really understand laws of nature--which also thereby shores up our world.

We must see what this amounts to. Natural science is not sovereign, and the spiritual sciences marginally important underlaborers. If the fundamental task of idealism is to construct the world, understand it, and be at home in it, science certainly has an important role to play in this process. Indeed, it is the hero of ordinary consciousness. But its role is a smaller one that should not blind us to the larger and more fundamental role of the human and cultural sciences. If we want to understand how we construct the world, we must look finally to art, religion, philosophy, and history.

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⁶² The claim that God is constructed, which seems obvious to non-believers (of which I count myself one), is quite objectionable to most believers, and both believers as well as non-believers usually think that constructionism implies atheism. That is a serious mistake that will make it impossible for us to understand Hegel. The claim that God is constructed is absolutely neutral with respect to belief or disbelief--indeed, is totally irrelevant to the question of God's existence. Even the believer must admit that for God to make any sense to human beings, God must be constructed. Each culture must find the language, concepts, practices, and institutions that make their God understandable to them. This is true even if the believer thinks that God contributed to all of this, dictated every syllable, comma, and period. Hegel is certainly a believer and he does not intend his constructionism to be at odds with his belief. On the other hand, the non-believer will find constructionism to be perfectly compatible with disbelief. Yet, to be sensible, the non-believer must admit that any culture, in a very significant way, is a product of its God--whether or not God exists. Even if there is no God, the religious language, concepts, values, practices, and institutions that a culture has developed over time will react back upon it, deeply influence it, mold it, and at least in certain ways may well benefit this culture, improve it, do it good. Moreover, this could continue to occur long after the last believer.