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Richard Naftkow
Reason and Tradition
The Limits and Tasks of Interpretation in Political Theory

by

Richard A. Nutbrow

A thesis submitted to the Department of Political Science in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Carleton University
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January, 1985

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a critical analysis of the dominant approaches to interpretation in the study of the history of political theory. It suggests that the recent turn to hermeneutics in the human sciences in general, and political science in particular, reflects a crisis in modern understanding which has deeply effected traditional political theory as well. In turning to Hegelian phenomenology for guidance, the dissertation argues that the practice of interpretation is an historical, conceptual and linguistic activity which takes place within an established intellectual tradition.

In opposition to traditional scholarship, Chapter Two argues that Socratic dialectic is a hermeneutic of tradition in which respect for apparent meaning (doxa) is the source and foundation of the possibility of a radical critique of existing society. In effect, it opposes the conventional belief that Platonic metaphysics and its ancillary notion of the ideal polity constitute the originary foundation of critical political theory.

Chapters Three and Four examine the Hegelian dialectic; its relationship as a interpretive mode of understanding to history and logic; and the place of language in interpreta-
tion. In Chapters Five and Six this analysis is applied to three distinct interpretive perspectives employed by contemporary political theorists. These include the Great Tradition, New History and Political Commentary approaches.

The purpose of this research is to demonstrate the importance of interpretive understanding in an age in which neither modern science nor contemporary philosophy seems capable of addressing the complex moral and practical issues of political life. This is because both have consistently denied the historical achievements of speculative reason in support of the analytic understanding and methodological formalism. Under these intellectual conditions we have little choice but to understand the tradition well enough in order to apprehend what would indeed constitute a new beginning in political theory.
Acknowledgements

I am fortunate to have had good teachers who are also friends, especially Jill McCalla-Vickers whose patience, care and attention are greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank Tom Darby and Will Mullins for their help and kindness during a time when the arguments which appear below required intellectual assistance and encouragement. Professor Mullins' careful reading of the dissertation has improved the final version immeasurably.

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Finally, this thesis would never have been written were it not for Janine, Shawn and Brodie. Their optimism, affection and commitment, and their unselfish giving of time, have taught that the dream of a better world is never a hopeless intellectual illusion. The world is already a better place because of them.
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1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last decade the words 'interpretation' and 'hermeneutics' have increasingly come to take the place of terms such as explanation and analysis in the theoretical discourse of the human sciences. There is, however, much confusion about what these terms mean.¹ For some, the words suggest, respectively, a particular mode of intersubjective understanding (Verstehen) and a specific theoretical orientation in which the subjective aims and purposes of social agents are made the primary focus of analysis. From this perspective, interpretation refers to a theory of social action. As Anthony Giddens, a principal exponent of the hermeneutics of social action, notes: "[Social science] ... is not concerned with a pregiven universe of objects, but with one which is constituted by the active doings of subjects."²

¹ For a discussion of the Greek origins of the word 'hermeneutic' and its contemporary usage, see Richard Palmer, Hermeneutics, (Evanston, Ill.:Northwestern University Press, 1969), Part I, pp. 3-74. Its specific meaning in this work is developed in Chapters 1-4 below.

Traditionally, however, the question of interpretation has been more or less restricted to the activities of textual commentary, that is, to the interpretive activities of those who understand the human sciences as primarily historical and textual in nature. In other words, social knowledge is obtained from interpretation of texts, especially written records of the past. Paul Ricoeur, following Dilthey, is perhaps the clearest proponent of this perspective, though his concept of text is broadened to include dreams, symbols and myths. For Ricoeur, textual hermeneutics can be approached from two quite opposed points of view. The first is interpretation as 'demythologization' which understands its task as the activity of bringing forth the hidden meaning in a text. In other words, the 'true' meaning of a text is embodied in the work itself but is latent and thus requires deciphering. This he calls the hermeneutics of respect because it is motivated by a loving care to make manifest this latent meaning. Bultmann's Biblical exegesis is the principle example of this approach. The second is the hermeneutics of 'demystification' which functions to demon-

---

strate the illusory character of the surface symbols of a
text and thereby seeks to destroy these symbols in order to
advance a new understanding. This, for Ricoeur, is the her-
meneutics of suspicion and is most clearly represented in
the work of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.

The following discussion makes no attempt to develop ei-
ther a hermeneutic theory of social action or a new politics
or sociology of interpretive practices. Like Ricoeur, I
take the word hermeneutics to refer to the activity of tex-
tual commentary primarily, though not exclusively, and that
it implies a confrontation or encounter with tradition
through written records of the past. This dissertation is a
critical examination of the interpretive practices in the
history of political theory from the standpoint of an Hegel-
lian theory of the mediation of the past and present. Its
purpose is to assess contemporary modes of political com-
mentary, including their ascribed aims and functions, from the
perspective of an Hegelian hermeneutic of suspicion. Chap-
ters Two through Four discuss in detail this approach. In
short, I take the hermeneutics of suspicion to be a funda-
mentally humanistic perspective which accepts that the con-
flict of interpretations is an inescapable outcome of the
finitude of human knowledge or, in the language of Hegel,
that a reading is always to a certain extent a function of
the process of alienation and self-estrangement. It is not,
therefore, a strictly epistemological or methodological per-
spective, but rather an attempt to grasp the practical character of hermeneutics through a close analysis of language, history and cognitive activity. Bref, textual hermeneutics is about how human beings have come to make intellectual sense of the world and, consequently, it is about the potential perfectability of the species.

1.2 POLITICAL SCIENCE AS INTERPRETIVE SCIENCE

The human sciences are still motivated by a strong desire to dissociate textual interpretation from contemporary research, and in so doing to valorize the empirical present at the expense of the intellectual past. In part this is why political science, for example, is internally divided between interpretive accounts of its origin and development as a specific cognitive tradition, and actual empirical political analysis. Until quite recently it was widely accepted that the latter form of knowledge, viz., empirical research which tended to appropriate the vision and methods of natural science, was somehow more substantive than textual or interpretive analysis, and that it alone lives up to the word "science" in the name political science. A striking example of this view is, among many others, William Riker who argues boldly:

The more general purpose of this book is to add another (putative) example (to the several that already exist) of the fact that it is or may be possible for political science to rise above the level of wisdom literature and indeed to join economics and psychology in the creation of genuine sciences of human behaviour. There is considera-
ble intellectual ferment among political scientists today owing to the fact that the traditional methods of their discipline seem to have wound up in a cul-de-sac. These traditional methods — i.e., history writing, the description of institutions, and legal analysis — have been thoroughly exploited in the last two generations and now it seems to many (including myself) that they can produce only wisdom and neither science nor knowledge. And while wisdom is certainly useful in the affairs of men, such a result is a failure to live up to the promise in the name of political science.

Today, however, there is little need to apologize for taking an active interest in the problems of continuity and discontinuity of intellectual traditions, or for showing concern with interpretive issues. The revitalization of hermeneutic theory in both Marxist and non-Marxist social and political thought in Europe and elsewhere is both too important and pervasive to be left unheeded. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that David Apter, a leading proponent of the modern science of politics, makes hermeneutics a "third way" or alternative approach to political science in distinction to behaviouralism and grand theory.

There is, of course, a third position, one not often proposed in political science textbooks, but one to which this author subscribes. I prefer the hermeneutic, or interpretive, point of view over the strict notions of science. ... 

Basic to the hermeneutic position is the idea that in social science one does not simply review research findings but considers them in an ever-changing moral and intellectual context. This is particularly the case with political science. One reads both theories and data, using paradigms and empirical facts in a world of shifting emphasis

and circumstances. All of us seek to unlock both the secret of the moment and its meaning in the larger perspective of change. One thus goes back as well as forward.

It would be highly misleading to argue that the renewed curiosity in interpretation by political scientists is simply the intellectual by-product of the methodological limitations of either behaviouralism or other forms of empirical political analysis. This is because hermeneutics also reflects a widespread concern to return to the original foundations of the humanities and social sciences as essentially practical-historical activities. That is, a primary interest of the human sciences is with questions about what it means to be a human being, and what, if any, is our place in the world. As a result, a persistent theme of contemporary hermeneutics is that we have lost sight of the practical, experiential and historical dimension of our cognitive endeavors. In so doing the initial meaning and purpose, or original foundation, of these sciences have also been lost.

David Apter, Introduction to Political Analysis, (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop Publishers, 1977), pp. 537-538. The problem with Apter's notion of hermeneutics is that it suggests a rather extreme contextualist relativism, and it is quite unsystematic conceptually. And yet, it is still somewhat startling to see that the language of hermeneutics has penetrated the analytical discourse of the American science of politics. In fairness to Apter, moreover, he respects the essentially humanistic dimension of hermeneutics: "If interpretation requires us to see political science as a whole, as a corpus of thought, it is also a way of breaking up and making manageable its various parts. It is hoped that the result will be a more humane perspective to accompany the scientific one. What will be required is a little intelligence, greater patience, and above all, a touch of humour," ibid., p. 538.
or forgotten. We have, in other words, forgotten the "reasons" for our intellectual activities.

A central purpose of interpretive theory is obviously to re-address the problems of meaning in respect of changing socio-cultural circumstances, though hermeneutics is not alone in this concern. The interests of this discussion are more limited, however. The sphere of hermeneutics developed below pertains to the range of methodological and interpretive questions concerning the understanding of the foundational texts of political science. On this account, the purpose of interpretive theory is to illuminate the nature of the ambiguities and uncertainties which cloud political commentary on the master texts. And yet, the application of the hermeneutical attitude to political commentary represents more than the appropriation of certain exegetical techniques or interpretive strategies from other disciplines. In fact, if hermeneutics were merely a set of exegetical canons or methods, it would be of little or no practical use to political science. Rather, the attractiveness of interpretive theory is precisely its intellectual attitude in that it demands a practical relevance for our intellectual activities. More particularly, it asks that we consider what form reason can take in a society deeply divided between an historical culture whose norms have lost much of their validity and meaning, and a scientific, technical culture which is increasingly impervious to the uniquely human
and linguistic dimensions of social reality. The discussion which follows is not about how to read the master texts, though this question is touched on at different levels, but why we read these texts. In effect, the dissertation asks whether, on the one hand, the tradition of political theory is dead and thus without residual meaning for practical politics; or, on the other, is there still reason to study the history of political theory? This is why the issues of language, history and understanding will play a crucial role in the discussion to follow:

All speech is alienating when it ignores its origins and treats the life-world and the speakers involved in it as "things" rather than as essentially practical activities. Where language is reified, it is treated as a thing divorced from the practical circumstances of its speaking.

It is commonplace to regard the internal divisions within the human sciences, and between these sciences and the natural sciences, as products of alternative, and perhaps incommensurate, notions of theory and methodological practice. This is evident in the debate among political scientists over methods of analysis, as well as over what the activity

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of politics is. One account, which usually goes by the title of traditional or normative political theory, conceives of theory as a reflective, practical activity. Its function is to elucidate the meaning and purpose of political life in light of the textual development of the discipline as both a practical and theoretical science. It incorporates what Aristotle called theoria and phronesis, or theoretical and practical reasoning. In this sense traditional political theory is a textually-oriented, linguistic and historical mode of analysis.

The other approach, i.e. the modern science of politics, is much more difficult to describe accurately because it remains a highly imitative activity. In effect, it reflects a form of mimetic desire to copy the natural sciences, or to dress up as caricatures of the scientist as portrayed by philosophers of science. This is evident in its overly-zealous appeal to the methodology of science, and in its characteristic array of analytic terms, abstract models and constructs which have more to do with the language of the philosophy of science than with the actual content of politics. In several important instances, moreover, its faith

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8 For a wide-ranging compilation of these different views, see John S. Nelson, (ed.), What Should Political Theory Be Now?, (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1983); and David Apter, Introduction to Political Science, op. cit.

9 In fairness, a certain amount of this confusion about methods and techniques is attributable to the positivist dogmatism of many of the philosophers of social science. Richard Rudner, for example, has sought to distinguish be-
in either empiricism or logical positivism seems far greater than both the philosopher's and the scientist's. The modern science of politics normally begins with an already constituted field of empirical objects, e.g. political parties, voting, etc., and a form of rote knowledge, e.g. voters are self-interested. Both of these, however, are often quite indifferent to the practical and experiential dimensions of political thought and social action. Many of the contemporary theories of political development, modernization, systems theory, policy analysis and international relations theory illustrate this imitative activity very well. 10

In both instances, however, each of these theoretical attitudes makes a special claim to grasp the meaning of politics and its proper interpretation in terms of reason and

10 See, e.g., Herbert Blalock, Theory Construction - From Verbal to Mathematical Formulations, (Englewood Cliffs,
rational experience, albeit from substantively different philosophical and methodological standpoints. As such, it is perhaps more profitable to treat these different theoretical perspectives as conjectures about the nature of reason, the experience of thinking, and the role of human understanding in the intellectual constitution of the political world.\(^\text{11}\) In other words, each of these perspectives in its own specific way, and with its own analytical terms, makes a special claim to what is true and good about political life — they aim at the perfectability of human understanding — and thus each attempts to reflect a dimension of human being and what is knowable by finite minds. Most fundamentally, then, their differences are philosophical: Modern political science and traditional political theory express different views of the meaning and purpose of political activities. This is why the extended discussion to follow is essentially philosophical, though it does not seek to resolve epistemological or methodological problems in the social sciences in general or political science in particular. That is to say, it does not seek to comprehend the limits of what is knowa-

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ble by these sciences. Rather, it is a philosophical treatise in the sense that the problems which it addresses are not about the subjective boundary of what an individual can know, or say, but about the objective self-formative process of the human species making itself at home in the world intellectually.

More particularly, it is a philosophical essay about the place of the intellectual who works on books and commentaries; not, however, in either the Marxist sense of the intellectual as bearer of the universal power of history, or from the Mannheimian perspective of the social scientist as the practical conscience of the world. Rather, it is from the more limited perspective of a Socratic cum Hegelian, dialectical hermeneutics. What this means is elaborated in Chapters Two through Four below. In effect, the dissertation argues that the 'ideal' of political commentary is the development of a critical attitude towards prevailing opinion through an encounter with tradition, and which, in a fashion analogous to the work of Michel Foucault, seeks to attack the power of the social interests that the education

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system is meant to preserve and conceal. 13

This is not intended to suggest that political commentary is exclusively "normative" in that it involves only the critical appropriation and application of past practical understanding to the present context. On the contrary, the real work of historical understanding must assiduously decline the invitation to pass judgement on the present because its principal task is to comprehend the past as past. And yet, political commentary on the tradition of political theory is also meant to convey the meaning of certain past experiences which may help to illuminate our understanding of the present. While these different themes are examined critically below, the practical ideal which guides this research ought to be made clear. In the language of Foucault and Hegel, the aim of this work is to undiscipline the desire which motivates political theorists to conceive the point of their commentaries as primarily autotelic, or understanding for the sake of understanding. This is because autotelism, like reconstructive hermeneutics, is itself a desire to promote the present while simultaneously disciplining others in the normalization and protection of the

existing order of things.14

Christian Bay, for example, exemplifies the need for such a critical attitude when he argues that "there has in the history of political ideas been a tendency to select ideas that would tend to preserve and justify existing institutions, in preference to those that would radically question or contest the legitimacy of such institutions."15 To illustrate this point, Bay remarks that Socrates, for example, is regularly represented as a utopian idealist. That is, Socrates is recalled for "his (very practical from a governmental point of view) sense of loyalty to even an unjust legal order. His readiness to give his life for the protection of the system is remembered more often than his insistence on placing his conscience above the law when the two were in conflict."16 While the Socratic moral teaching is examined closely in Chapter Two, it is worth noting here that the de-


15 Christian Bay, "Beyond Liberalism: The Priorities of Political Humanism," in Laurier Lapierre, et. al. (eds.), Essays on the Left, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), p. 271. Bay adds: "[A]s a goal the first premise of political theory, or more precisely, a necessary implication of the first premise ... is ... that politics should serve human life - not only certain lives, but every human life, which is of infinite worth, and in this sense also, of course, of equal worth with every other human life," p. 270.

16 Ibid., pp. 270.
bate between the modern science of politics and traditional political theory is not reducible to an intellectual struggle of ancients and moderns over the "true" meaning and scope of political science. While at present there are schools of political commentary which argue that this is indeed the case, specifically the Straussian and Voegelinian students of political theory, the perspective advanced here is that the debate about interpretive methods in political theory is concerned with the intellectual positions that we as moderns can take towards the contemporary political world. It is in this sense that Socratic dialectic is not exclusively a moral teaching based on a (putatively) higher moral culture. It is also a critical attitude towards the hegemony of ingrained opinion and the political powers it serves.

1.3 SCIENCE, HERMENEUTICS AND POLITICAL THEORY

The theoretical model of natural science, especially as it has been characteristically portrayed by historians and philosophers of science, continues to be a source of intellectual attraction for contemporary students of politics. From Bacon to Locke and Hume, from J.S. Mill through Russell and Whitehead to Popper, science has been represented as a major force in the triumph of human rationality over the perceived irrationality of traditional modes of thinking and forms of life. More particularly, supporters of this
view generally agree that concomitant with the development of modern science was the expansion of human freedom. In other words, scientific rationality, and the freedom from natural necessity it is thought to provide, are the hallmarks of modern society in contradistinction to Antiquity. Modern science is unlike the classical model of contemplative truth which had assumed that the unity of the world and thought, of logos and nous, is discernible — if only by the few philosophers. This is because the modern synthesis of reason and freedom is founded on a practical ideal which regards the disciplined conquest of physical nature, and the pacification of human nature, as humanity's noblest feats. Science, in other words, is a disciplined desire to normalize the world.

From its humble beginnings, natural science regarded ordinary consciousness and everyday forms of life as somehow lacking in reason, or so to speak, never wholly subsumable under the model of disciplined scientific rationality. In fact, historically scientists have consistently emphasized the need for a complete separation between science and politics, that is to say, between scientific research and political life. The view that the life-world is lacking in reason is not particularly modern, but the view that the cognitive and technical products of science represent the

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ideal model of human reason is indeed thoroughly modern. The scientization of knowledge, that is, unlike philosophy or politics or culture, produces knowledge. And its products are the result of a disciplined and methodical desire to master the unity of nature. This view is apparent in the early development of the social sciences as well where Hobbes, for example, spoke of the physics of the life-world. What he meant was that a rational science of politics could be possible only when the arbitrariness of human passions is set in motion against a countervailing, but equally undisciplined political will (*Leviathan*). In effect, Hobbes made routinized desire, conditioned by both the fear of man-made death and the passion to pursue an insatiable appetite for possessions, the dialectical source of its own negation in the power of the State. With Locke, the physics of society gave way to an indeterminate concept of the private ego as infinite will. It was private will with a class identity, however, such that the self-discipline of the propertied classes is justification for the coercive disciplining of unpropertied labour. Both Hobbes and Locke shared the same prejudice about society; reason is absent from the social world and must be brought to bear upon it, that is, the "industrious and rational" must be protected from the "giddy, contentious and quarrelsome."

In the 20th century many philosophers of science, especially Bertrand Russell, came to see the practice of science
as potential source of an ideal model of a rational political society.¹⁸ What impressed Russell was the putative "democratic" spirit of scientific practice. Its espousal of open deliberation, the empirical referencing of testable hypothesis, tolerance to dissenting opinion, and consensual quality of truth, Russell believed, could become the attributes of modern political society as well. More particularly, Russell argued that the scientific attitude is fundamentally opposed to religious, political or valuational forms of thought and expression which restrict knowledge (and freedom) to arbitrary forms of canonical or institutional authority. Russell's humanism, however, seems to have gotten in the way of his assessment of science. Under the combined attacks of Wittgenstein and Winch in England; Kuhn, Feyerabend and others in America; Bachelard, French structuralism and post-structuralism; and phenomenology, existentialism and Critical Theory - this desire for a society based on the practice of science was severely questioned.¹⁹


tions of "paradigm" and "normal science", for example, the scientific manner of proceeding is seen as a rather narrow body of discourse in which mean-spirited professionalism and dogmatic obstinacy to new ideas are more often than not the norm.20 In effect, Kuhnian science reflects the Hobbesian social world much better than it does our conventional understanding of science as a product of human involvement and mutual cooperation. While Kuhn was primarily concerned with the growth of knowledge, including its transient techniques, he also suggested that the context of validation, or the logic of justification, is not as far removed from the context of discovery as it is normally presented. There is no need to review in detail these arguments because at the heart of Kuhn's critique is the view that extra-scientific concerns or interests impose themselves on the practice of science. The scientific community, in other words, is a collection of undisciplined interests which mirrors, and often enhances, the biases of authority and power in the scientific community. In other words, the scientific community is disciplined by things other than scientific rationality. For many this meant that a critical understanding of science required the development of a radical sociology or psychology of the growth of scientific knowledge. Others, however, continued to defend science on the basis of a putative dichotomy between the logic of justification and the motiva-

tional process of discovery. Presumably, the logical status of its manner of validation represents the rational kernel of the scientific ideal, while discovery, or the art of devising new theories, reflects that larger expanse of human life into which the non-rational or irrational is continually intruding. Martin Heidegger, among others, openly challenged this generally acknowledged view of science and its relationship to ordinary consciousness:

... with the sciences ... there is always a direction transition and entrance to them starting out from everyday representations, beliefs, and thinking. If one takes the everyday representation as the sole standard of all things, then philosophy is always something deranged. This shifting of the attitude of thought can be accomplished only after a jolt. Scientific lectures, on the other hand, can immediately begin with the presentation of their subject. The plane of questioning thus chosen will not be abandoned again when the questions become more difficult and complex.

Heidegger's argument is that science investigates only those 'things' that exist conceivably in the world, and upon which science can impose its logic and theoretical attitude. Beyond this, for the scientist qua scientist, there is nothing. But, according to Heidegger, the scientist's initial sense of mystery, or wonder, about the world, and thus that


which conditions the very possibility of cognitive activities, such as science, is always already the 'beyond' of actual scientific practice. Science, however, as a specific set of logical and methodological practices has opposed itself to such philosophical - or 'deranged' - interpretations on the grounds that it alone has the power to invalidate or refute its empirical findings. Science, that is, is always about something, and something which is either true or false. This assertion, in turn, implies a fundamental intellectual weakness and lack of discipline on the part of those who labour for a deeper understanding of human being through a close reading of the Western cultural tradition, including the history of its thinking about the political. In short, proponents of the scientific method have argued that the validity of philosophical and poetical standpoints, and this applies equally to the history of political theory, ultimately rests on personal inclination, historical bias or interest, that is to say, on the irrationality or alogicality of the everyday world of human concerns. This because there can be no rational adjudication of the correctness of such claims. From the standpoint of the scientist qua scientist, normative political theory must appear as something deranged.

In recent years, however, science as a specific cognitive tradition has increasingly gravitated towards an interpretive perspective of its own history and practices, especial-
ly in the field of quantum physics. When, for example, the book of nature is no longer written in the universal language of visualizable mathematics and geometry, i.e. when nature is silent in the face of our contending scientific representations, then actual scientific practice must itself become fundamentally hermeneutical. While free to interpret electrons as either particles or waves, or simultaneously as both, this freedom demands that the modern physicist enter into a complex hermeneutic about the ultimate structure of physical reality: "Nature requires interpretation because its operations are hidden." But the complexity of this development does not rest with the mathematical or experimental problems of subatomic particles. Rather, each of these contrasting standpoints has an impact on the traditional notions of Newtonian time and Cartesian space.


24 J.A. Mazzeo, Varieties of Interpretation, ibid., p. 2. Werner Heisenberg also notes that: "In the experiments about atomic events we have to do with things and facts, with phenomena in daily life. But the atoms or the elementary particles themselves are not as real; they form a world of potentialities or possibilities rather than one of things or facts," Physics and Philosophy, (New York:Harper and Row, 1958), p. 186.

25 Heisenberg explains that the dissolution of the rigid frame of traditional physics "took place in two distinct stages. The first was the discovery, through the theory of relativity, that even such fundamental concepts as space and time could be changed and in fact must be changed on account of new experience. ... The second stage was the discussion of the concept of matter ... and this idea had at least to be modified in connection
and these concepts in turn play a fundamental role in our theoretical understanding of human reality. Obversely, phenomenological, existential and hermeneutic critiques of the natural science project enunciate radically different views of the traditional categories in which human beings experience and locate themselves in the physical and social worlds, or the life-world. And if observed physical nature or human behaviour remains silent to both, how then do we make sense of these categories? This is not meant to imply the universality of hermeneutics as a philosophical project, but rather to note that the confluence of these activities strongly suggest that our old notions about the division of natural and social science, of verstehen and erklären, for example, ought to be reconsidered in light of these historical and theoretical developments. As Giddens argues:

[O]ur understanding of the character of human social activity, and ... of the logical form of natural science, ... are not entirely separate endeavors, but feed from a pool of common problems. For just as it has become apparent that hermeneutic questions are integral to a philosophical understanding of natural science, so the limitations of conceptions of the social sciences that exclude causal analysis have become equally evident. We cannot treat the natural and social sciences as two independently constituted forms of intellectual endeavor, ...

The general development of interpretive theory in the social sciences, especially the hermeneutic movement of the Geisteswissenschaften, is thus not restricted to a critique with the new experience," ibid., p. 199.

of natural science, nor are its interests independent of the development of science. It also embraces a broad range of cultural phenomena as well. In fact, the history of modern literary criticism, philology, religion and other cultural activities, all reflect the inescapable problem of the conflict of interpretations. 27 If, for example, the Bible cannot be read literally as the direct script of divine inspiration, but requires a hermeneutic of 'demythologization' to penetrate its surface rendering, then the interpretation of Scripture is a hermeneutic act of supreme consequence: Its interpreted meanings constitute the very understanding of man's relationship to the Word of God, and thus establish 'His' presence for us in the world. 28 And what if, as proponents of what Ricoeur calls the hermeneutics of "suspicion" claim, value is not written on the foreheads of the industrial proletariat, but is hidden in the complex structure of human labour and its ancillary relations of production in capitalist society; 29 or if rational human activity is not


the product of conscious, calculative ratiocination, but the unconscious result of a myriad of repressed sexual, or other inner and outer psychological conflicts;\textsuperscript{30} - or if authorial intentionality is a minor consequence in the historical reception of the master texts of our culture.\textsuperscript{31} That is to say, if cultural phenomena are not 'facts' but modes of understanding situated in history which require deciphering, then the task for modern thinking is not how to sophisticate our surface logics, but how to penetrate into the voiceless and concealed meanings of a world which increasingly demands interpretation.

While man's empirical knowledge in our century has expanded at an exponential rate, however, his sense of purpose or direction seems to have atrophied; although more knowledgeable about the world than any of his forbears, man today is more ignorant or at a loss as to what he and his accumulated knowledge are all about. Confronted with a rationally functioning but ultimately silent universe he asks the question: What is the point? Viewed in this context contemporary methodological issues reveal their salience and underlying agony; the concern with "understanding" as a type of in-

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quiry results from a crisis of human understanding.\textsuperscript{32}

Though acutely conscious of the importance of methodological issues, hermeneutics is not a special discipline or method of philosophical analysis. On the contrary, it is a broad intellectual movement within the humanities and social sciences which addresses both the textual continuities of tradition as well as novel elements in our thinking. Or, what is the same, it addresses both the rational and creative dimensions of human thought and social action.\textsuperscript{33} In stressing the historical continuity of various intellectual or cognitive traditions, hermeneutics shares with Husserlian phenomenology an interest in what is reproducible, reiterable and transmittable over time and between generations, viz. with the rational element in thought.\textsuperscript{34} This is the sense in which we tend to talk about tradition, that is, content, values, or modes of presentation which continue to convey to us an understanding of the world and which define for us our place in the world. This is why it is quite legitimate to speak of a cultural tradition of political theo-


ry. And yet, hermeneutics is more than a defense of the place of tradition. It is also a recognition of the situatedness of all thinking and therefore seeks to elucidate the practical role of human subjects in the active constitution of the social world. In this it shares a certain fellowship with existentialism, especially with the latter's practical and philosophical concern with questions of responsibility, commitment and care, briefly, with human being qua human and qua being, or Dasein. 35

The crisis of modern understanding does indeed reflect the salience of methodological issues, but it also points to the need to reconsider once again the question of human being and our place in the world. Phenomenology and existentialism are both fundamentally concerned with how to make intellectual sense of human life. This need is even more acute today because the old verities and authorities of tradition are no longer as persuasive or convincing as before. The movement towards interpretive theory also suggests that our concepts of human being and of knowledge are in the process of changing as well. But we have no clear idea about what this new meaning could be, and no real sense of the implications of these changes for our concepts of reason, freedom or truth. Under such circumstances we have little

choice but to understand the tradition well enough to take notice of the signs of change in order to recognize what would indeed constitute a fundamental transformation in traditional modes of thinking and experience.

1.4 Hegel, Interpretation and Political Theory

The demise of behavioralism and the subsequent development of phenomemological, post-structuralist and hermeneutic methodologies has not resulted in the decline of traditional political commentary.36 Unlike much modern literary criticism,37 for example, political theorists have shown rather remarkable good sense by not reducing the study of the master texts to a subfield of hermeneutic theory or philosophy, while nevertheless still incorporating some of their interpretive insights into its methodologies. The problem of interpretation has always been a key issue in the debate concerning the nature of political science and its relationship

36 Anthony Giddens makes a strong argument to the effect that not behavioralism per se, but what he calls the "orthodox consensus" has broken down in the social sciences. With Giddens, the orthodox consensus was built on logical, methodological and substantive commitments, viz., positivist logic, functionalism, and the "industrial society," all of which provided a specific vision of traditional society. See, "Hermeneutics and Social Theory," in Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects, edited by Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica, (Amherst, Mass.:The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), pp. 215-230. See also a reply by Fred Dallmayr, "Comments on Giddens," ibid., pp. 231-238.

to the technical sciences. In fifth-century Athens, for example, the intimate relationship between the structure of ideal regimes as the essence of political science (politike episteme), and the structure of Being as the essence of science proper (metaphysics), was always assumed, though political science was clearly recognized as both a practical and theoretical science. In modernity, however, the language of Being has been displaced by the symbolic languages of logic and mathematics. These modes of intellectual expression are far removed from popular culture and the ordinary discourse of the life-world; and reflect clearly the technological and industrial imperatives of late capitalist society. The issues of language and intersubjective communication are, however, still key issues in the contemporary debate between the modern science of politics and textual commentary. In fact, the form and role of language in inquiry is at the center of the modern debate between science and the human sciences. Historically, this debate may be viewed in terms of the contrasting visions of Galileo and Vico, for example. On the one hand, there is Galileo's claim to a universal language of nature, viz., the mathesis universalis. 38 On the

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38 "Philosophy is written in that great book which ever lies before our eyes - I mean the universe - but we cannot understand it if we do not first learn the language and grasp the symbols, in which it is written. This book is written in the mathematical language, ... without which one wanders in vain through a dark labyrinth." Galileo, from the Dialogues Concerning the Two Great Systems of the World, quoted in E. A. Burtt, The Metaphysical Foundations of Modern Science, (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1954), p. 75.
other, is Vico's view that language is intimately related to
history such that history is characterized by linguistic
differentiation, involving a cyclical evolution of language
types. While Vico's theory of language is described in de-
tail in Chapter Four below, it is worth noting here that the
rationality of pure symbol advocated by Galileo may also be
viewed as an historical event, to wit that what Galileo
sought to describe as an attribute of nature is a stage in
the development of language and expression. Moreover, Gali-
leo's language of mathematics fails miserably when we are
confronted with the expressive beauty of the Homeric epic-
form, or the power of metaphor in medieval political theory,
or the equivocality and polysemy of contemporary political
speech. The desire for a mathesis universalis arises only
with the consciousness that language cannot provide a com-
plete account of any situation of experience; that, in other
words, language is essentially limited in its ability to
penetrate the core of experience. This view, in turn, led
to the suggestion that the structure of language and the
structure of experience are not the same. Generally this
perspective is represented by the view that language re-
quires a speaker - "language plus me" - and the "me" of lan-
guage use is somehow more fundamental than language itself.
This perspective was easily extended to textual commentary

39 On G. Vico, see Northrop Frye, The Great Code - The Bible
and Literature, (Toronto:Academic Press, 1982), Chapter
One. Vico's theory of language developed in Chapter Four
below follows Frye's analysis closely.
such that interpretation involves some formulae of text plus me; that is, it is the "me" of interpretation which is more problematic than the text itself to the extent that the reader brings his or her own meaning as well as extricates meaning from the texts. And yet, there is another perspective which suggests, following Vico, that the "me" is in fact a linguistic event in which meaning is not a psychological addition but a fusion of language acts which takes place within a pre-established structure of meaning, i.e. a tradition of meaning. Chapters Two through Four address this model of understanding and interpretation from an Hege- lian perspective.

For political science, the problems of language, communicative competence and interpretation cannot be settled by unscrupulously appropriating the methods of other intellectual disciplines. Equally, however, it cannot neglect the primary role of the concept of interpretation which forms the cornerstone of the methodologies of the human sciences in general. The approach to be adopted below readily accepts that political theory is a distinct branch of human knowledge with its own specific content and lines of inquiry. It is a particular cognitive activity which aims at understanding warrantable political opinions and improving them in shared public dialogue. This ought not to be taken to mean, however, that political commentary is closed to other currents of thought and methods of interpretation, or
that it is unrelated in specific ways to other cognitive
disciplines or cultural forms of intersubjectivity. The
habit of mind which dictates that each and every branch of
knowledge is unique and particular, and yet ultimately re-
lated to other cognitive activities, is not new. Long ago
Aristotle taught that while everything in the world is ulti-
mately and inextricably connected with everything else, the
essential condition of knowledge is a strict division of la-
bour among the sciences and arts. Each branch of knowledge,
including technical, practical and contemplative modes, has
its own rationale. For Aristotle, each separate science and
art demands its own distinct mode of inquiry because each is
directed at a specific and limited aspect of nature and hu-
man life, and each has its own specific and limited knowl-
dge as its own end.\footnote{Cf., R.S. Crane, \textit{The Language of Criticism and the Struc-
ture of Poetry}, (Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1953). See especially Chapter 2, "Poetic Structure in
the Language of Aristotle."} Each, that is, forms its own appro-
priate tradition.

The fact that each science and art has its own end, modes
of inquiry, and special analytic terms is not, Aristotle
opined, the result of inappropriate principles of reasoning.
On the contrary, their distinctiveness reflects the particu-
larity of things and their requirements for specialized
kinds of knowledge. Such knowledge is thereby always rela-
tive to the particular aspect of things under investigation.
In other words, while Aristotle sought to demonstrate how
different lines of inquiry are related to particular aspects of things, he was mainly concerned with the divisions of the various sciences and arts, or the limits of knowledge, and not with the division of things themselves. As a result, for Aristotle, any object in nature and in human life may be approached from different analytical standpoints as long as the basic aim and meaning of the subject-matter is not thereby destroyed. It is in this sense that Aristotle could argue that epistemology and methodology are never entirely independent of ontology. Because all lines of inquiry are relative to the different aspects of things under examination, different modes of analysis may help to clarify and enrich our understanding. Many roads do indeed lead to Rome, provided that Rome is the final destination.

In the modern period Hegel has taken up this Aristotelian challenge in an attempt to demonstrate the necessary connection between the fluidity of any content of experience, and the adequacy or inadequacy of forms of conceptualization. With Hegel the 'archaeology' of knowledge became the central focus of critical thinking, and in so doing he reposed the problem of knowledge in an essentially hermeneutic fashion. This is because he argued that all philosophical interpretations are equally self-interpretations, and thus they are both richly historical and philosophical. It is with Hegel's consideration of the relationship between rationality and actuality, or reason and history, that this examination
of the history of political theory begins. For if political theory is a rational activity which is directed at a particular end or good, and if rationality seems in flight from the actuality of the modern age, then there is a need to re-consider that view of the interconnectedness of the world and reason from which modern thought seems to have retreated. To begin with Hegel is not to suggest that what is required in the contemporary period is a resuscitation of the Hegelian presumption to absolute knowledge. Rather, as we shall see, to begin the archaeology of modernity with Hegel is to commence with a clear understanding of the impossibility of such an enterprise. More importantly, whether or to what extent the Aristotelian hierarchy of cognitive activities, or the Hegelian synthesis of reason and reality, are adequately-adduced philosophical standpoints is not really in question. These are matters for philosophy proper to decide. Politically, however, it could be argued that under the existing conditions of a constant nuclear threat and the continuous decline of normative political discourse, it makes little difference if either Hegel or Aristotle is an appropriate benchmark from which we consider the conditions of our present condemnation. And yet, as long as there is real concern with the possibility of what Aristotle called "living well" as opposed to merely living, or what Hegel understood as the "march of freedom through time", then questions about rational political dialogue, of right order and moral
purpose, must remain critical themes for modern political theory as well.

Choosing to begin with Hegel is not a denial of the classical world or its model of the ideal-polity. On the contrary, Hegel straddles the abyss which separates modernity from itself and from the classical world of philosophia. On the one hand, he is the greatest modern story-teller of the narrative of man's expressive self-creation in time, and therewith endorses the fluidity of myth, labour, language and social interaction as dialectical bearers of infinite mutability as well as continuity. On the other hand, Hegel reasoned that the complexity of this movement could be examined systematically. As importantly, he never lost sight of the traditional principles of reason and rational experience which had hitherto guided Western thought, and thus represents a clear account of the traditional concept of truth. Without such an account of tradition, modern thinking is incapable of recognizing the signs of a new beginning.

Hegel is a radical intellectual in the modern sense that while he recognized both the ideal unity of classical ontology and the power of positive science, he steadfastly refused to sacrifice the fluidity and particularity of content to abstract universality. How, then, do we interpret the world if positive science and classical ontology represent partial and incomplete standpoints? And, how do we interpret our cultural and historical legacy, that is, the herit-
age of thought and experience which continues to define for us the basic problems, as well as to set the parameters for qualitatively new forms, of thinking and determination? In this way to examine the Hegelian theory of interpretation is really to reconstruct the tendencies in contemporary modes of non-metaphysical and non-positivist analysis. It is to begin with that thinking which places interpretation at the center of human thought and action.

Hegel's theory of interpretation exemplified in his analysis of the history of philosophy, or the phenomenology of consciousness, in no wise guarantees a good or sensitive interpretation of the master texts in the history of political theory. And yet, Hegel's hermeneutic theory is nevertheless an account of the operations of the interpretive understanding which can serve to guide us in our intellectual activities as political commentators. Because Hegelian dialectics is a phenomenological account of the possibility and development of knowledge in general, it directs our attention away from the specific instruments of knowledge, that is, away from the pre-eminence of the knowing-self. Instead, it proposes that we look to the existing as well as to historical interpretive practices in a given field of analysis in order to uncover the internal structures of its operation.

The study of the history of political theory has traditionally been practiced in the absence of an explicit theory of interpretation, and this absence suggests that a special-
ized art or craft of political commentary has been practiced historically. In other words, the skillfulness of an interpretation is not wholly dependent on an explicit theory of its practices. Our task, therefore, is not to deny that the study of these texts is a craft or art which differs significantly from other interpretive modes, but to examine the structure or logic of its operation. It was Hegel who quite clearly demonstrated that there can be no canon which governs the application of all of our interpretive strategies; or, what is the same, that there is no external interpretive standpoint from which to gauge the internal practices of an art or science. The only adequate hermeneutic standpoint is that which is expressed in the history of practices themselves. Hegelian interpretive theory, that is, is a hermeneutic of tradition.

This does not mean that students of politics should resign themselves to the distinctiveness of political theory in opposition to other fields of knowledge. It suggests only that political science is a part of the human sciences, and, as such, shares with its sister disciplines in the work of hermeneutic methods and procedures because they rely on an understanding of texts. This dissertation will argue that the foundation of these disciplines as hermeneutic sciences requires a close examination of textual commentary as essentially a dialectical, historical and linguistic activity which operates within an established tradition of prac-
tices. Chapters Two to Four investigate respectively Hegel’s dialectic, concept of history and theory of language. In Chapters Five and Six this analysis is applied to three distinct interpretive strategies employed by political theorists to analyse the master texts. These include the 'Great Tradition', 'New History', and 'political commentary', approaches to the study of the history of political theory. While the first two classifications follow John Gunnell’s typology, though not his analysis, the third represents a more general and widely practiced strategy of interpretation. It suggests that while philosophical or conceptual issues may be germane at times, the essential focus of political commentary is the development of a specific attitude toward the "political"; and that methodological debates about interpretation tend to downplay or de-emphasize the purely "political" in favor of interpretive or conceptual issues.

The central purpose of this discussion is to assess these interpretive approaches from the standpoint of how each perspective understands the activity - as 'rational' activity - of political commentary. More particularly, it will demonstrate from the standpoint of Hegelian theory why the Great Tradition requires the notion of a "noetic vision" as the


ground for its diagnosis of the plight of modern political science; why the New History employs a classificatory scheme of concepts from which to reconstruct temporal and historical modes of political expression; and why political commentary eschews methodological issues in support of a second order dialogue based on the concept of a specific "political" understanding.

1.5 FROM ANTIQUITY TO TRADITION

The notion of "tradition" implies that there is a sphere of human action and thinking in which the meaning of change is highly problematical. The concept of change, for Hegel at least, is not exhausted by the notion of transformation which serves as the essence of the historian's craft, especially the non-philosophical reports of actual perceptions. Nor is it a kind of reflective history which unifies perceptions in a fragmentary way through unsystematic conceptualizations such as classificatory schemes. For Hegel, only philosophical history reveals the essence of Dasein as historical because it seeks to uncover the operations of reason which relate spatial-temporal perceptions and conceptions to the unity of the historical discourse it seeks to decipher. In this sense we may talk about the philosophy of history, and the history of philosophy, as philosophical history in opposition to a record of events, ideas, etc. Indeed, Husserl makes the same point about mathematics as the paradigm-
matic instance of a tradition of pure reason, as opposed to the history of mathematics which records its relative moments. 43 And yet, the history of mathematics, or political theory, may also be approached philosophically in that we may seek to comprehend the unity of its differentiations over time. As history proper, the tradition of political theory reflects the interests, values, and concerns of different epochs; but as a dimension of reason, it is also a source of recollection or retrieval through which the fundamental political questions about mankind can be reposed in light of present circumstances, events and understandings. The history of political theory, from the point of view of its interest in the meaning and purpose of collective life, is similar to philosophy in that it reflects a dimension of the science of reason, though it does not seek to grasp the whole of reason.

To talk of political theory as a stage in the history of reason runs against the current of contemporary political commentary. This is because in most respects the interpretation of the master texts as both a science and history of political thought has today assumed for itself an autonomy and independence from the claims of philosophical reason.

The purpose of this work is to re-assert the claims of reason in opposition to this now fashionable point of view which understands political theory as somehow too pure and unique to require the insights philosophy might offer. If commentary on the history of political theory seeks to adumbrate what might be called a "rational experience" of the political, and therewith is a participant in the historical mission for political excellence, then it must be approached as an element of the reason which constitutes human history. Gadamer makes this point eloquently when he argues:

All that, ... in which we stay or which we encounter as a tradition in which others are staying [e.g. religion], originates from the one and unique excellence of man, to have reason. Science may dedicate its investigatory efforts to the world of nature, to the social life which carries us on, as well as to the historical worlds which are transmitted to us: - philosophical thought will participate in all the different forms of human rational creativity, not with the despotic superiority of a system of concepts which integrates everything in its framework, but with the thoughtfulness of someone, who never knows totally and definitely what he knows.

Gadamer, among others today, has sought to express the Socratic innocence of our limited understanding, of finite Da-sein, as a fundamental principle of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics, that is, "has its origins in breaches in intersubjectivity. ... - the hermeneutical has to do with bridging the gap between the familiar world in which we stand and the strange meaning that resists assimilation into

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the horizons of our world. In opposition to the model of hermeneutics as the reconstruction of the psychological or historical conditions of a writing, Gadamer follows Hegel in support of a view of understanding as mediation, that is to say, hermeneutics is the mediation of "past meaning into the present situation."

The hermeneutical problem arises when a text, an artwork or some other human creation strikes us as strange and incomprehensible, and therefore evokes the task of understanding. Most commonly, such estrangement occurs through the passage of time, whereby the art and literature are transmitted to us as torn out of their original context and accordingly obscured in their original meaning. How does one go about to overcome this alienation from the tradition. Basically, two models serve to define the extreme procedural possibilities: Hegel's mediating integration of the past with the present and Schleiermacher's restoration and reconstruction of the past.

The possibility of such an Hegelian encounter with tradition is conditioned by more than a special philosophical understanding of the concept of mediation. It also embodies a hermeneutical and historical understanding which, I suggest, finds its initial expression in the attitude Hegel adopted towards classical Greece and its theoretical form of life. In other words, it begins with the initial attempt to "overcome alienation" by trying to grasp the theoretical and

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46 Ibid., p. xvi.
practical importance of Antiquity as the first historical mediation. Greece, for Hegel, represents the awakening of will as desire such that the tragedies of Socrates and Antigone, for example, manifest themselves as a struggle of wills which reveals history as a self-making. In this, tragedy is the dawn of human self-creativity because it expresses the power of will to transform desire into meaningful social action. Self-creative reason mediates objective determination and subjective freedom, and in so doing poses the fundamental problem of the political in terms of freedom. While primarily aesthetic in its frame of mind, Hegel believed the Greek world was the first society socially constituted in opposition to natural necessity - it was created by man and realized through Law and Custom; that is, by the "spirit" or moral culture of the people, and not strictly by the bond of Nature. Socrates was the first to announce this self-creative power of reason, and to reflect on this power through the dialectic of dissolution called 'Socratic Irony'. Chapter Two is an account of the Socratic origins of dialectic as a practical hermeneutic of self-formation.

48 Cf., Paul Ricoeur, "The Political Paradox," in History and Truth, translated with an introduction by Charles A. Kelbley, (Evanston, Ill.:Northwestern University Press, 1965), pp. 247-270. Ricoeur poses the problem in terms of 'political liberalism': "If the term could be saved, it would state rather well what ought to be said: that the central problem of politics is freedom: whether the state founds freedom by means of its rationality, or whether freedom limits the passions of powers through its resistance," p. 270. On Hegel's analysis of Greek life, see especially his Phil. of History, p. 225ff.
through radical questioning of accepted opinion. Chapter Three examines Hegel's concept of history as the basis for a logic and phenomenology which forms the foundation of a 'systematic' hermeneutics; and Chapter Four outlines the linguistic essence of Hegel's hermeneutic of suspicion as a radical, humanistic and dialectical theory of interpretation.

To conclude this introduction, it is worth recalling that we live in a time when increasing numbers of students have turned their backs on philosophy and politics, and therewith away from reflection on the conditions of thought and experience which have brought the world to the precipice of nuclear confrontation. Under these conditions, it may seem pointless to talk of such things as tradition and reason. This despair towards human possibility reflects what Werner Marx has noted as the basic dilemma of the age - "It remains in search of the true even though it has no valid concept of truth." This sentiment has been echoed in Arendt's notion of "dark times"; Wallace Stevens' "the soul which no longer exists"; or Dallmayr's "between dogma and despair." Each of these metaphors suggests that modernity is propelled by


contrasting forces of thought and experience which attach us collectively to the past but whose basic determinations and principles are without validity and meaning. It is undoubtedly true that the world has changed radically and inalterably as a result of both the immense technological power now available, and the subsequent new relationships which obtain between human beings and their world. This raises the real possibility that modern society is no longer capable of providing the kind of polity in which the contrasting ideals of speculative philosophy and positivist science can, if not without mutual suspicion, contend principles of validity and right. In this way to ask about the place of reason in public life is really to wonder aloud about the future of the inter-relationship of normative discourse and the practice of politics, and therewith to ask about the fate of those who would live the ideas of philosophy and those who would too willing outlaw such ideas. The effects of this cloud of unknowing are apparent.  

51 At no time in recent memory have class and military power been employed so ruthlessly by the major and minor nations of the world. In this respect at least, the enemies of reflective politics, that is, those who deny the appropriateness of critical normative theoretical discourse about the best possible regimes, are well represented in the contemporary world of empirical political

power. Under such conditions it is incumbent on those who do not share the blind economic and militarist passions of the age, but who remain uncertain of direction, to recollect the Western heritage of political discourse and to re-assess the principles of reason which hithertofore guided Its fate. As Hegel so aptly noted long ago:

... people grant that it is nature as it is which philosophy has to bring within its ken, that the philosopher's stone lies concealed somewhere, somewhere within nature itself, that nature is inherently rational, and that what knowledge has to investigate and grasp in concepts is this actual reason present in it; not the formations and accidents evident to the superficial observer, but nature's eternal harmony, its harmony, however, in the sense of law and essence immanent within it. The ethical world, on the other hand, the State (i.e. reason as it actualizes itself in the element of self-consciousness), is not allowed to enjoy the good fortune which springs from the fact that it is reason which has achieved power and mastery within that element and which maintains itself and has its home there. The universe of mind is supposed rather to be left to the mercy of chance and caprice, to be God-forsaken, and the result is that ... truth lies outside it. (Phil. of Right, 4).

The discussion which follows attempts to address the place of reason in political thought and to examine political commentary on the history of the master texts as a tradition of rational discussion. The choice of Hegel as the central focus of this discussion, while perhaps deterring many who find his philosophy too remote and excessive, is really about his manner of asking how it is we understand the world the way we do. As such, it is less concerned with "spirit" than with the cunning of reason, or that infinite
process of making and self-making in which finite man continuously attempts to leap beyond his own shadow into the sun. In the final analysis, Heidegger may be right:

Hegel alone apparently succeeded in jumping over this shadow, but only in such a way that he eliminated the shadow, i.e. the finiteness of man, and jumped into the sun itself. Hegel skipped over the shadow, but he did not, because of that, surpass the shadow. Nevertheless, every philosopher must want to do this. This "must" is his vocation. The longer the shadow, the wider the jump. This has nothing to do with a psychology of the creative personality. It concerns only the form of motion belonging to the work itself as it works itself out in him.

This process of working itself out is never wholly personal for Hegel because the real work of thought, its travail, has always already set out on its own road, moving first this way and then another, ever in search of answers to the great mysteries of things. To a certain extent, we have now in our control both the philosopher's stone— for we can change the basic structure of elements—and the secret of life, i.e. knowledge of the structure of the living cell. Hegel, however, was primarily concerned with the last great mystery, viz. the meaning of things beyond the transient world of elements and cells; the meaning, we might say, which would move human knowledge beyond the shadow of its own finiteness— beyond dogma and despair to divine consciousness. In this way Hegel's philosophy of nature, his most contentious effort, represents more than his desire to

52 Martin Heidegger, What is a Thing?, op. cit., pp. 150 - 151.
work out a comprehensive system of knowledge (regardless of how its particular content is arranged) because for Hegel the real work of reason comes on to the scene only when the notion of mystery no longer clouds the process of thinking. This is simply another way of saying that nature has been reconciled with reason. His hermeneutic philosophy is a recognition of this process to the extent that the Owl of Minerva, or that process whereby human knowledge is both revealed and concealed, takes flight only in concealment, i.e. only when meaning seems lost or forgotten. Hegel understood more clearly than most moderns that dissimulation and concealment are the core of the secret of meaning, and that henceforth this secret could be employed critically and humanely to instruct human thought. This is because with Hegel the process of concealment is the vital clue to an understanding of the historicity of the world as a self-making, for we can only forget what we have participated in bringing forth as knowledge. More particularly, as Habermas demonstrates, this forgetfulness of the world as rationally self-constituted is also the medium in which the process of domination, of the power of non-reason, is transmitted and legitimized. 53 Thus to recall the Hegelian teaching is, in effect, to participate in what Heidegger called the "vocation" of philosophy, as well as to join with Habermas in the

53 Habermas, following the early Frankfurt School, is the most formidable exponent of this aspect of Hegelian teaching. See Jurgen Habermas, Philosophical - Political Profiles, op. cit., p. 10ff.
critical assessment of the Western tradition as the "trans-
mission which legitimizes domination." It is in this sense
that Hegelian philosophy, as we shall see below, is both a
hermeneutic of tradition and of suspicion, and thus essen-
tially a humanistic teaching. Emile Fackenheim is perhaps
the clearest in his appreciation of the hermeneutical char-
acter of Hegel's thought:

If the doctrine of historicity is to be main-
tained, human being must be understood, after all,
as the Hegelian struggle between aspects which
seek each other and flee each other; and that
struggle must remain in principle unresolvable.
The aspects must seek each other because human
self-identity must be achieved, if not in integra-
tion, so at least in the search for integration.
And the aspects must flee each other because if
they found each other the result would be either a
self-refuting historicism or else a Hegelian ele-
vation of man above humanity. If human being is a
self-making, then man is not merely accidentally
involved in this unresolvable struggle. This
struggle constitutes what man is.

54 Ibid., p. 10.

55 Alexander Koyre draws the same conclusion but from some-
what different considerations. "Hegel's philosophy, is
its deepest intuitions, seems to have been a philosophy
of time. And, consequently, a humanistic philosophy," in
"Hegel a Iena" quoted in George A. Kelly, Idealism, Poli-
tics and History: Sources of Hegelian Thought, (Cam-
bridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. 313. Alex-
ander Kojève draws the line of argument as follows: Work
- Struggle = Freedom = Time = History = Transcendence =
Nothing = Man, in An Introduction to The Reading of He-
gel, translated by J. Nichols with an Introduction by Al-

56 Emile Fackenheim, Metaphysics and Historicity, (Milwau-
George Armstrong Kelly's remarks about the spirit of Hegel's philosophical efforts also reflect the motivation for this research:

This book is a retreat, with Hegel, from the Wordsworthian youth of the world, from hopes dashed, but with faith sustained and given rigor and reason.

Chapter II

HEGEL: CLASSICAL AND MODERN DIALECTIC

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Hegel reflected the contrasting intellectual currents of his own historical moment. While writing in a intellectual environment strongly influenced by the philosophy of Kant, Hegel was also a contemporary of the great German Romantics, including, for example, Goethe, Hölderlin, Schiller, Herder, Novalis and Schleiermacher. This contrast in styles of thought and expression is well represented in Hegel's philosophy as well as in the writings of his interpreters. On the one hand, he is often characterized as an archetypal representative of the Western philosophical tradition of 'logocentrism', that is to say, a philosopher who conceived the world rationalistically in terms of logical form, albeit dialectically. On the other hand, he is often portrayed as a potential source of a radical departure from this tradition, or a philosopher of individual and unique content who is more akin to modern existentialists and phenomenolo-

58 Thus, for example, Bertrand Russell argues that Hegel's "most important books are his two Logics," in History of Western Philosophy, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), p. 702; while Charles Taylor suggests that Hegel was "deeply moved by the expressivist current of his
in specific texts, such that the Phenomenology of Spirit (Mind), for example, ought to be read as somehow in opposition to his history of philosophy, the philosophy of history or the 'Logics'. For still others, the tension is not between two Hegels - the Hegel of the system of Absolute Knowledge, and the Hegel of its phenomenal instances - but reflects a dualistic tension in modern thought itself which Hegel was the first to address systematically, and which has subsequently been carried into the contemporary debate by his interpreters. Hegel, on this account, is the father of post-modern philosophy.

As a 'master' philosopher of the Western tradition, Hegel can indeed be read in light of the problems and determinations of reason which have informed the practice of philoso-


phy down through the ages, viz., the logical properties or rationality of our claims to truth, reality or morality, for example. Several of his contemporary interpreters, however, have placed special emphasis on the division between his 'onto-theo-logical' claim to Absolute Knowledge with its profoundly religious notion of Spirit; and his radical and humanistic openness to the limitations of an all-encompassing system of thought. 61

Because Hegel reflects a form of philosophical radicalism which continues to instruct modern thinking, contemporary interpreters have suggested that he is more than a writer of obscure passages who had a certain historical impact on subsequent thinkers, especially Marx, and on such modern philosophical movements as phenomenology, existentialism, and


hermeneutics. Surely, for example, the same might be said of Kant or Nietzsche, as well. Rather, the Hegel of his modern commentaries is taken as a central figure in the development of a kind of post-traditional thinking which understands its task as the radical reconsideration of the entire Western philosophical heritage; but from a standpoint which rejects modernity's preoccupation with either transcendental subjectivity or logical formalism. What is emerging is a portrait of Hegel as a great synthesizer who forged the contrasting visions of the Enlightenment and its Romantic revolt syncretically into a Faustian epic of human consciousness as a restless, historical and conceptual struggle for self-awareness or, what is the same, a human struggle for meaning. The Hegelian philosophy, that is, is a roman a clef about human beings making sense of the world.62

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Christian apologist or the theological heretic he has so often been made out to be in traditional German and English interpretations," In the Spirit of Hegel, op. cit., p. 5. For a pro-humanist, anti-system perspective in Hegelian political theory, see Thomas Darby, The Feast: Meditations On Our Hegelian Legacy, (Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1982). The notion of humanism alluded to here relates to Hegel's philosophical anthropology in a manner more closely aligned to C. Taylor's notion of 'expressivism' than to R. Solomon's wholly negative anthropocentrism. The term 'expressivism' is discussed below in Chapter Four. For a discussion of the 'pre-system' period of Hegel's formation, see especially, ibid., H.S. Harris, Hegel's Development.

In grappling with what he called the "necessities" of his own historical moment, Hegel rejected both traditional metaphysics and positive science, and in their place he offered the outline of a radical thinking which situates the critique of knowledge firmly in the social world of human labour, language and social interaction.\(^{63}\) Thus, Marx, Nietzsche and others who followed Hegel's dialectical path are not to be read exclusively as opponents of his conceptual system, but equally as fellow travellers in the development and elaboration of a new humanism which was first announced in the Romantic period.\(^{64}\) Like the early Marxist writings, this view suggests that Hegel ought to be read as a sustained attack against the dehumanizing influences of Enlightenment individualism and its mechanistic theory of meaning. As such,

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Though much despised in the contemporary period by intellectuals and religious fundamentalists alike, 'humanism' was originally a term used to designate an early modern
the Hegelian philosophy is not the pro-Enlightenment, secular, anti-clerical and positivist humanism of a Voltaire, for example, but a kind of thinking which struggles theoretically for a vision of unity while accepting of diversity. Practically, it is a philosophy which seeks to re-establish a collective sense of community as both a feeling of belonging and as rationally constituted. With Hegel, however, philosophy is not to be a speculative retreat to the notion of Absolute as unmediated creativity or intuition advanced by the early German Romantics, though their underlying desire for a new theoretical and practical beginning in philosophy is retained; nor is it an exaltation of the anthropocentrism of enlightened theoretical reason and its mastery of non-human nature. In sum, the Hegelianism which appears

intellectual movement which opposed medieval scholasticism and its institutionalization of philosophy, science and theology, as well as art, literary and cultural criticism. As a Renaissance movement, the Italian humanists, for example, challenged the "Aristotle of the Schoolmen, as petrified in orthodox doctrine, ... in favor of Plato," Robert Mandrou, From Humanism to Science, 1480-1700, translated by Brian Pearce, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 25. Mandrou makes the point that the greatest humanists of this generation were not the new scientists, as is usually asserted, but they were "editors of ancient texts," p. 27. They involved themselves not only with questions of history, philology and hermeneutics, or the sciences of translation and interpretation, but also with the development of a critical intellectual and aesthetic sensibility for the power of human creativity and expressive competence, especially eloquence. The concept of humanism is therewith a kind of passion for Antiquity and a desire to recover its forgotten teachings; it is not the negative anthropocentrism it later became in the work of many Enlightenment thinkers. In fact, in the modern period, humanism is often described poetically in terms of a "will to meaning" or the "will to power." Hegel, it will be argued, stresses the classical teaching and its
below is a hermeneutic perspective based on two very general principles: First, philosophy — and analogously all our interpretive, cognitive activities — must be radical in the sense that it should have no content given to it other than its own historical and conceptual self-development, that is to say, philosophy is the human expression of reason's own self-creative development. This is why Hegel rejected the Fichtean assertion about acts of pure, indeterminate ego positing itself, as well as the Kantian notion of a transcedent reality without knowable or expressible content which functions as the ground of transcendental necessity. Moreover, if the term radical also means philosophical opposition to the natural standpoint, e.g. beliefs, opinions, and attitudes of ordinary consciousness, then, Hegel argues, this opposition must be demonstrated by an immanent conceptual critique; it cannot rest on psychological, sociological, religious or economic

"vision" of logos and, as such, is more closely identifiable with the notion of a "will to meaning" as an existential and conceptual confrontation with the limited horizons of modern philosophy. On this distinction, see, for example, Viktor Frankel, Man's Search For Meaning, (New York: Washinton Square Press, 1963), pp. 151-210. On Hegel's "humanism", contrast Robert Solomon, In the Spirit of Hegel, op. cit., Chapter One, with Charles Taylor, Hegel, op. cit., Chapter One. On Renaissance humanism and eloquence, see Hanna Gray, "Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence," in Journal of the History of Ideas, 24, (1963): 497-514.

apriorities which are external to the actual history of philosophy as an interpretive tradition. Similarly, as we shall see, the tradition of political theory, and political commentary on this history, represent a particular field of interpretive practices which is self-generating and self-authenticating, and must be evaluated from the standpoint of its own internal, historical and conceptual self-development.

The second principle is that acts of thinking and forms of consciousness are always hermeneutical - they are both interpretations and self-interpretations of the world. In this fashion the different ways in which we understand the world are correlative of the different ways in which we understand ourselves and our place in the world. The following three chapters examine these two principles from the standpoint of classical and Hegelian dialectics; the relationship of dialectics as a way of thinking to history and logic; their interconnectedness as the foundation of hermeneutics; and Hegel's contribution to the development of this approach to knowledge. The following Chapter seeks to establish the pattern for this approach in Socratic humanism and the underlying hermeneutics of respect in Socratic dialectic; its ossification in the Platonic metaphysic of Form; and Hegel's critical response to the classical teaching. In effect, Socrates is here treated as the archetypal intellec-

66 Ibid., p. 103.
tual who recognized that in the transmission of tradition, i.e. education, there is always a subversive element, and that it is this element which constitutes the moving principle of thought and its determinations. From this perspective, the modern notion of the intellectual as social critic must be seen as a delimiting vision because, for Socrates at least, the simple art and act of criticism is always dependent on the alternative hegemony of a particular mode of discourse. With Socrates the true art of philosophy is the bringing forth of the contradictions of tradition, i.e. its subversive element, in order to free thought from its own self-imposed restrictions, and, a fortiori, the relations of power which are thereby enhanced. In the language of Hegel, philosophical knowledge, if it is true knowledge, is that knowledge which sets man free - the intellectual is the midwife's apprentice.

2.2 Socratic Radicalism and Platonic Ambivalence

The view that philosophy is an inherently radical activity, that is to say, a reflective activity the function of which is to unmask the unacknowledged presuppositions which serve to confuse and restrict our deliberations, is now new. In the period of Greek Antiquity from Thales to the Eleatic cosmologists and later Presocratics, there was a clear recognition of the limitations of sense awareness, as well as of the need to penetrate beyond a mythically-inspired ren-
dering of the order of things. It was not very long, moreover, before this questioning attitude toward the ultimate structure of the cosmos was directed at ordinary opinions, beliefs and attitudes about social life as well. This 'turn' is normally represented in the figure of Socrates. The philosophical attitude initiated by questioning the reliability of sense perception did not begin with a realization of the epistemic limits of ordinary experience, however, but with what Aristotle called a sense of "wonder" at the majesty and mystery of the world. Put differently, it began with a genuine conviction that the essence or nature of things is beyond the empirical immediacy of sense perception and manifests itself as a notional intuition which grasps the inner force of exterior representation. 67 This

speculative notion of Being, in turn, brought about a radical questioning of the forms of knowledge and the content of accepted meanings. While this poses a number of important interpretive and conceptual questions about classical thought in general, and modern philosophical practice in particular—especially in the contemporary period wherein epistemology has sought to restrict all knowledge to rational intellectual faculties—it is perhaps more fruitful at this point to note that what is intended here by the term radical is really a norm or way in which to conduct a cognitive investigation. In this sense, philosophy as a radical activity is a mode of cognitive behaviour, or an attitude toward thinking and, with Socrates, for example, a passionate form of life. It is not primarily an epistemological or methodological claim to how it is we come to contest our ordinary understanding of things, either as method or content. In effect, Socratic philosophy is about the reasons and justifications for doing and saying what we think and do.

The view that philosophy is essentially a radical attitude towards thinking and action does not in itself prejudice the "ideal" of philosophical analysis as a presuppositionless activity. On the contrary, it is meant only to suggest that while serious thinking necessarily begins in reflection and self-reflection about the form and content of experience, this reflectivity and its modes of expression

must be continuously re-examined in the light of unacknowledged presuppositions. In this way the term radical does not prejudice the content or method of analysis because it serves as a quasi-regulative ideal. Stated simply, it says "look to what is unsaid and unaccounted for in our statements about the world." The aspiration to radical insight is accordingly a self-conscious decision to conduct one's thinking and evaluations in a fashion which, to a certain degree at least, is both tolerant and intolerant. While a word such as intolerance is often highly-charged emotionally, and thus ought to be employed carefully, it nevertheless captures the classical spirit of philosophy as a restless questioning, and, with Socrates, a necessarily uncompromising form of life. Philosophy must be flexible or tolerant towards what is being said as a requisite "good manner"; but it must also be inherently intolerant towards the philosophical attitude which refuses to move beyond an unreflected acquaintance with the content of our knowledge. Philosophy, that is, must have an inherent integrity.

Etymologically, the word intolerance does not mean dogmatic narrow-mindedness or uncivil behaviour but - from the Latin "tolere" or "to lift up" - it suggests that, from the point of view of public life, citizens rise above private interest and particular will as a condition of communal existence; but from the standpoint of Socratic philosophy, as we shall see, its function is to rise up against, or to ref-
use to endure, what the present uncritically and unconditionally accepts as true, proper or good. Quite obviously, then, there is a significant difference between self-conscious philosophical radicalism and political toleration. 68

In several important ways, Socrates was the first to teach that philosophy must embody this attitude and activity of intolerance if it is to live up to its name as the 'love of wisdom', that is, if philosophy is to be an activity which continuously subjects conventional wisdom to unceasing critical scrutiny. For Socrates, however, there was an important distinction to be drawn between an attitude of philosophical opposition to the mastery of subjective will and passion over reason, and political life as participation in the conventions which order collective everyday existence.

68 On the concept of political tolerance in political theory, see Richard Vernon and Samuel V. Laselva, "Justifying Tolerance" in the Canadian Journal of Political Science, XVII:1, (March 1984):3-23. The use of the term here is meant to highlight the critical function of Socratic philosophy as a radical activity. It is not intended to suggest that the term does not have important political connotations and denotations, especially in the rhetoric of liberal democratic theory. Here, the reference is to philosophy, especially Socratic dialectic, as a discipline of Thinking. While tolerance is a virtue which demands a certain disciplining of habits, Socratic dialectic was employed to show people that irrespective of the virtues they claimed, they are fundamentally "ignorant" of the reasons which justify such claims. Thus, the dialectic functions to administer an "intellectual and moral shock" at the groundlessness of our beliefs. See Iris Murdoch, The Fire and The Sun - Why Plato Banished the Artists, Oxford:Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 21. Professor Leo Strauss is perhaps the best known proponent of this view. "Philosophy ... is ... the attempt to dissolve the element in which society breathes [i.e., opinion], and thus it endangers society," What is Political Philosophy and Other Studies, (New York:The Free Press,
In other words, it is not difficult to comprehend Socrates' attitude of intellectual inflexibility towards ungrounded philosophical assertions about the ultimate meaning of this or that phenomena or principle, e.g., justice, piety, etc.; but this is surely not the same as intolerance toward the ordinary beliefs of the everyday citizen which are grounded in the historical and existential character of a community. Socratic dialectic is directed against the former in order to educate the latter. Consequently, Socratic teaching is an inherently subversive teaching because its sole function is to educate a society in order to transform its fundamental beliefs and attitudes. In order to educate Socrates understood that this involved both the transmission of the Athenian cultural heritage, as well as its critical scrutiny. In effect, he made himself a conscious participant in its dissolution by so doing. Thus, his arguments were never directed against the moral authority of the State as a valid moral power, but against the reasons and principles used to justify existing moral habits. In the Republic, for example, Socrates is objecting to certain well-established ideas about justice, but he is not refuting the principle of justice, or the role of the State as a valid legislator of this principle. In this way Socrates does not hold to the modern view that our ordinary ideas reflect a state of false-consciousness - or that the State is a form of domination - but

1959), p. 221.
rather suggests that the true is hidden or veiled in our ordinary ideas and requires that we first be made aware of our ignorance of what is true through the dissolution of apparent meaning. Socratic dialectic is founded on the simple faith that the true will reveal itself through recollection and restoration of meaning which, when disengaged from the power of private will and passion, is accessible to human reason. Socratic philosophy, that is, teaches the need for reminiscence of the true through respect for apparent meanings as the source of the unfolding of all other meaning. It is a hermeneutic of respect, but one which teaches that only through respect for tradition can its inherently subversive character be brought to bear on existing social conditions.

The manner of philosophy practiced by Socrates, and the democratic spirit of tolerance and participation in opinion-forming exemplified in the constitution of the Athenian polis, came necessarily into opposition, however. This because while the former sought to transcend ordinary opinion via a teaching which was inwardly directed to the voice of reason and individuality - "know thyself" - the latter restricted reason and individuality to the externality of citizenship, or membership in the polis. Socrates nevertheless recognized that the ordinary citizen lives in an unreflective world of passion, will and interest, and must of necessity come to an understanding of tolerance towards competing
authorities, i.e. as admitting of the need for authority as a requisite civic virtue. While tolerance to competing, or even dissenting, opinions is undoubtedly a pragmatic virtue much desired in the polity, it is also an acceptance of the authority upon which civil morality is founded. Thus, while Socrates the philosopher could not be tolerant of different philosophical authorities all speaking in the name of different truths, i.e. the politicians, Socrates the citizen was well-aware that society is by habit nurtured in the disposition that law and principle are of necessity always in the process of change. For this indeed is the lesson that experience and history teaches. As a result, the relationship between Socratic philosophy as a hermeneutic of respect and 'citizen - Socrates' as radical philosopher is profoundly paradoxical: The philosopher Socrates incessantly probed the limits of public opinion, including all his community held as sacred and true, while the Socratic philosophy originates in the hermeneutic view that what a society holds as sacred and true is the source of its salvation because it allows us to examine the nature of what it means to be a human being. This, in turn, set the stage for Socrates' moral dilemma: The inner voice of reason directed Socrates to examine and dissolve accepted opinions, while the State had an equal moral right to resist such challenges in order to sustain its authority to prescribe in law what is right and good. And for the historical Socrates this moral struggle
was clear: Philosophia is the activity of seeking out and making clear the source and origin of our deepest convictions, but the knowledge acquired from such activity is never so transparent and complete as to allow us to disobey what the collective wisdom and its history had announced in law as true. The role of the intellectual, for Socrates at least, is not to change the world, but to understand it. The fate of Socrates, as a result, was that he became the first individual to proclaim his conscience as the inner voice of reason, and his will a moral will to act on the imperatives of reason. And the State, in turn, claimed its equally valid, rational, moral authority. The tragedy of Socrates is not that he was a good man in an evil political world, but simply a man who did not know, living in a world equally unsure of what to do.

Plato, however, was much more circumspect. He sought to override the fate of Socratic individuality and moral freedom by attempting to fuse statecraft and philosophy in his Republic. And yet, his thinking retained an unresolved tension between the philosophical claims of reason and the political claims of authority. This is reflected in his early dialogues where Socrates consistently chooses the practical terrain of a philosophical hermeneutic which seeks to perfect human understanding through genuine conversation based on mutual respect. The Plato of the later dialogues, however, opts instead for a philosophical prejudice which de-
nies serious meaning to the conventionality of ordinary existence, while ascribing to itself the pretense of reason, truth and high-minded righteousness. 69

In the Seventh Letter Plato tells of his disillusionment at the treatment of Socrates by the politicians, and why he came to believe that philosophy alone could restore the mastery of reason, including normative direction, to the polis. 70 From the Sophist Cratylus, following Heraclitus, Plato had learned that the empirical world and its sensible representations are continuously in flux and that evanescence is the essence or nature of materiality and sensuousness. From Socrates via Parmenides, however, he developed a central tenet of Western moral philosophy; that materiality is superseded by a transcendent, spiritual realm which alone

69 If, as many affirm, Socrates brought philosophy down from heaven, then this reading would seem to suggest that Plato very quickly returned it to the cosmos, albeit in a substantially different fashion as the Theory of Forms. This reading is not meant to oppose Socrates to Plato, however, only to underline their differences and to highlight the essentially practical character of Socrates' achievement. It should be noted that the historical Socrates wrote nothing and there are few sources about him in Antiquity except in Xenophon, Plato's dialogues and Aristotle. See F.C. Copleston, A History of Philosophy, (Westminster, Md.: The Newman Press, 1946), Vol. 1, pp. 96-115; C. Mason, Socrates, The Man Who Dared, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1953); A.E. Taylor, Socrates, (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1933); H.-G. Gadamer, "On The Natural Inclination Toward Philosophy," in Reason in the Age of Science, op. cit., pp. 142-143; and Leo Strauss Xenophon's Socrates, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972), and Socrates and Aristophanes, (New York: Basic Book, 1966). The point of the distinction drawn here is essentially Hegelian, (Lectures, Vol. I, 384-448): Socratic dialectic is not an Inherently metaphysical doctrine about the ultimate structure of the cosmos as the unity of divine, human and natural orders,
gives meaning and moral relevance to our daily concerns and activities. Plato, however, learned these lessons too well, for rather than accepting the normative and experiential content of the Socratic teaching about virtue, viz. its fundamentally human and practical concern with the world as it is experienced by the many, he "lifted up" these notions to a supreme ontological status. Socratic dialectics was thereby transformed into a privileged noetic vision whose determination no longer rested with human actions and intentions, but was made the sole property of philosophy; it became the dialogue of the few. Among the intellectually trained, that is to say, the convinced and initiated, philosophy could be a genuine conversation about the meaning of things, but in so doing it had to deny the democratic spirit.

but is a method of question and answer which seeks to dissolve ungrounded opinions without imposing an arbitrary structure of ontological or epistemological principles antecedently into the discussion. For Socrates, philosophy was talk about particulars of human action, belief, custom or law, without a transcendental model, though he did hold to a transcendental view of moral principles. Plato, by contrast, elaborated the Theory of Forms as a transcendental model, and thus made the human world an element within a rigid structure of abstract ideas, discernible only by the few philosophers. In the Sophist, for example, he refers disparagingly to the "friends of the Forms" as Sophists. Presumably Socrates would then be part of this group because of his unsystematic and inclusive philosophizing. As F.M. Cornford notes: "Platonism is, what the doctrine of Socrates never was, a system of the world, embracing that whole province of external Nature ..." Before and After Socrates, Op. cit., p. 56. Socrates was concerned with Arete, or moral and practical goodness only, brief, with human affairs.

This reading has also benefitted from Martin Heidegger's interpretation of the Platonic Theory of Forms. Heidegger makes the argument that Plato changed the orig-
of the polis, or the discourse of the many. Thus, the Republic opens with a pretense of Socratic respect — "let us listen to the opinions of the day and let us enter into a dialogue with little more than an awareness that our fellow interlocutors are telling what they believe to be true." But Plato accords only a negative function to this manner of proceeding because his interlocutors are quickly transformed into identifiable bearers of shallow opinion only such that their claims to justice are made to appear ill-considered or myopic. This is why they can be treated as mere "political" ideas, i.e., as opinions which reflect only the conscious or unconscious aspirations of an individual or a group to impose its political will on others. Plato's management of this dialogue also reflects his own argument for an absolute


Karl Jaspers, for example, makes this point when he ar-
original and sombre innocence. For Socrates, that is, simple erotic innocence is the most sublime ignorance because it seeks to possess what it does not yet know, and in this activity there is no wrong, or right, only the unknown. It is thereby profoundly existential, concrete and finite. But the soul is also part of immortal nature which has descended from above down to the mortal natures of man and beast. It is from this mortality that the soul must raise itself again to its original source. The dawn of philosophy for Socrates, therefore, is when this human innocence and simple faith in salvation stands before the mysteries of human life, that is to say, when the intellect stands before its own finiteness and mortality. Unlike Socrates, however, Plato subverted the radicality of this view of Eros as both the self-moving restlessness of erotic instinct and the

74 Jean Hyppolite, Studies on Marx and Hegel, op. cit., p. 157.

75 Cf P.M. Cornford, "The Doctrine of Eros in Plato's Symposium," in The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), esp. p. 79ff. See also Alexander Kojève, An Introduction to The Reading of Hegel, op. cit., p. 250ff. Iris Murdoch notes: "Diotima goes on to tell Socrates of these erotica into which even he may be initiated, although the true mysteries lie beyond. The initiate is not to rest content with beauty in one embodiment, but to be drawn onward from physical to moral beauty, to the beauty of laws and mores and to all science and learning and thus escape 'the mean slavery of the particular case.' Carnal love teaches that what we want is always 'beyond', and it gives us an energy which can be directed into creative virtue. When a man thus directed his thoughts and desires toward beauty of the mind and spirit he will suddenly receive the vision, which comes by grace, ... of the Form of Beauty itself, absolute and untainted and pure." The Fire and The Sun, op. cit., p. 34.
of Socratic dialectic as talk. For Plato, anything short of a full rational model of human, natural and divine order is to be held in contempt as the absence of philosophy, and thus of the conditions of right thinking and right conduct. In this way, justice is no longer a product of the actions and activities of individuals seeking a more fully human context in which to live, as it must be for a practical dialectician such as Socrates. For Plato, philosophy becomes a cosmic chess-game in which the gods and philosophers would henceforth determine who should govern the discourses of chance that rule ordinary lives.

It makes little difference if we, the inheritors of this Platonic teaching via Christianity, proclaim with him that there is an ontological order discernible by the few; or that impersonal history, statistical chance or divine ordi
nance is the ultimate source of meaning and expression. It is not the cosmologies of our discourses of chance, but who governs them, that constitutes the political question. By super-imposing philosophy as the noetic dialogue of the few upon this terrain, Plato could not answer this question other than to say that no one but the philosopher could rule his utopia - his "no-where" beyond chance and change. Like the Mannheimian concept of utopia, Plato's *Republic* is a purely intellectual transcendence of the given situation. This is not to suggest, however, that the historical Socrates, as opposed to Plato, was merely a dishevelled Protago-
ras who argued that "man is the measure of all things." On the contrary, Socrates recognized that as an ideal or norm the notional intuition of an absolute such as justice, for example, functions to draw attention to the incompleteness and contentiousness of what a community believes to be right and true at any moment in time. This attitude to partiality and unexamined belief requires that there must be an ideal model of truthfulness, or faith in the revelatory power of Being, in order for a serious dialogue about what is true to proceed. It is the hermeneutic path of a conversation which begins with the emptiness of a simple belief in truth as an ideal and moves through stages of abstraction and dissolution to higher levels of meaning. This path, as we shall see below, is what Hegel calls the "logical" movement from indeterminate Being to determinate meaning, or the "actual" progression from simple conviction to concrete idea. If, in other words, it were to be accepted that common opinion alone constitutes the limit of what is expressible at any moment in time, then political discourse would be little more than what Thrasymachus claimed political dialogue to be: "The imposition of my will on other wills." As such, political discourse would be fundamentally what many unthinking commentators have suggested was Machiavelli's contribution to political thought, viz., the view that politics is simply the exercise of power, and, political conversation, the expression of the will to power. It would thus
have no contact with the questions of what is true, meaningful or good, and thus, for Hegel, no real history.

There is a substantial difference between the viewpoint that knowledge must be grounded in a metaphysical claim to permanence and stability which inflects both knower and the reality known, and Socrates' hermeneutic understanding that such an ideal is necessary in order for a thoughtful discussion about truth to proceed. In suggesting that Socrates must be understood in light of the latter because, as he insists, he did not know the truth - it was an ideal he sought to intimate and teach others through his dialectical demonstration of the weaknesses in prevailing opinion - this is not to imply that Socrates was a Sophist. Such considerations are textually without possible resolution. Rather, the debate between Plato and the Sophists which is inherited by modern political theorists is essentially metaphysical, that is to say, it is about stability and change, permanence and chance, order and time as cosmological or ontological categories. While these matters are obviously crucial to

72 In Parmenides (147D) Socrates debates the nature of Forms with Parmenides who asks whether every particular has its own proper Form, including, for example, mud, hair and dirt. "When Socrates inclines to say no, Parmenides rightly points out that if he gives up here he is not a philosopher ... [because] Forms are necessary for knowledge and discourse, since 'you must always mean the same thing by the same name'." Iris Murdoch, The Fire and The Sun, op. cit., p. 27. See also Hegel, Lectures, Vol. II, p. 420. In this sense Socrates was not a philosopher, but a great thinker who speculated about Forms and who, because he did not know the truth, chose to continue talking in order to find the true. Plato, in contrast, treated Forms as discernible realities or things.
philosophy proper, perhaps the intellectual manner in which they are posed is not paramount to the concerns of political commentary on the history of political theory. This is because the biography of the historical Socrates suggests a specifically political and hermeneutical importance to his understanding of the relationship between philosophy and the polis which is often forgotten in the classical dictum about the supreme importance of the contemplative life. The political lesson learned from Socrates is that in the search for an absolute standpoint which would more fully humanize collective moral life, philosophy must necessarily destroy the standards that support the partial interests in any polity which forever are trying to be universalized. This is why Socrates, unlike Plato and Aristotle, remained in the marketplace to defend the claims of reason against the politically powerful few. In effect, the struggle at the level of ideas is coeval with the struggle at the level of interests, and each continuously seeks to be universalized. For Socrates, the proper attitude was that all thought and opinion seeks universality, and universality is demonstrated or made manifest in the particularity of doxa, for they are all we have to begin with. This is why rhetoric, for example, or the linguistic art of convincing others of the appropriateness of some thought or form of action, has always been central to political science. Rhetoric transforms the struggle of interests into a struggle of words, and likewise
the struggle of words into a struggle of will. But rhetoric is more than the art of persuasion. From the life of Socrates, and from our inherited notion of the polis as a community of discourse, we have been brought to see that rhetoric is not simply the craft of sophistry and eloquence, but it is also the dialectical art of discovering warrantable opinions in everyday life, and improving these opinions in shared conversation. 73 For Hegel, it will be argued below, the present task is to raise the Socratic art of dialectic to interpretive science.

In the Phaedo and Republic, Plato makes the argument that what is true is prior to sensation and experience. Beauty, Goodness, and Justice, for example, must be known before we experience them, otherwise we could never express their meaning. They are analogous to what Kant calls "noumena" or things-in-themselves which are made known to us speculatively through reason and meditation, not sensation or experience, and are a part of an ontological order which is ultimately discernible by philosophers, but never adequately expressible in the common language of the people. In the Timaeus, Plato extends this argument to speculate that what is apprehended by intelligence and reason is this strata of permanence, the realm of Forms, while sensation records only the process of becoming and perishing, or the principle of Nature. Phenomena have no reality, only a circle of past,

present and future which archs meaninglessly between the innocence of birth and finitude of death, between growth and decay, order and chaos. For Plato, philosophy transcends the immediacy of material Nature, the given, that is, the partiality and one-sidedness of our finite historical condition, and thus it also transcends the manner and mode by which simple consciousness uncritically accepts and defends the present. It escapes the principle of Nature and enters the domain of freedom.

Plato is never entirely comfortable with the political implications of this thinking, however, especially with the inherent radicalism which infuses this manner of Socratic philosophizing. His concept of the soul illustrates this ambivalence well. While it is primarily a philosophical category - he employs it to justify both his epistemology as recollection (anamnesis), and his cosmology as alternatively participation in, or imitation of, celestial harmony and order (methexis) - it also retains the capacity to promote humans to the status of an "in-between" reality. Though presently immersed in a material body, the human soul also at one time sat among the gods. In this distinction between materiality and spirituality, Plato is not simply expressing an epistemological or ontological position; he is also saying something about the differences between and among individuals as well. This is reflected in the Phaedrus where he employs the metaphor of a charioteer and his two steeds, one
good and one bad, which represent the noble and ignoble elements of the soul, or reason and the passions. It is the ignoble which initially wins out, drawing humanity to earth and from which we must struggle to recollect the soul's presence in the divine order. This is not simply an intellectual struggle, however, but it is also an existential and practical struggle for conditions which make the contemplative life socially possible. Social and political life, as a result, must be made subservient to this goal of passive attendance for the truth to reveal itself in a noetic vision: Politics thus becomes the alienation of actuality from idea, of the many who labour from the few who think in the Republic.

The path to divine re-integration is eloquently portrayed in the Symposium where the attractions of base instinct and divine passion come together in a vision of the beautiful as a product of philosophia, or the love of wisdom. But this is Socratic moral teaching, not Platonic metaphysics, because while beauty is an ideal, inexpressible Form, it is also of the world of human creative reason; its essence lies in the interrelatedness which obtains between and among human beings, and flows out of the eroticism which binds individuals in their search for what is beautiful, true and good. Knowledge is therewith a function of simple erotic innocence which grows dialectically to impassioned wonder—a passionate wonder which, if true, is always "the return to
original and sombre innocence. For Socrates, that is, simple erotic innocence is the most sublime ignorance because it seeks to possess what it does not yet know, and in this activity there is no wrong, or right, only the unknown. It is thereby profoundly existential, concrete and finite. But the soul is also part of immortal nature which has descended from above down to the mortal natures of man and beast. It is from this mortality that the soul must raise itself again to its original source. The dawn of philosophy for Socrates, therefore, is when this human innocence and simple faith in salvation stands before the mysteries of human life, that is to say, when the intellect stands before its own finiteness and mortality. Unlike Socrates, however, Plato subverted the radicality of this view of Eros as both the self-moving restlessness of erotic instinct and the

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74 Jean Hyppolite, Studies on Marx and Hegel, op. cit., p. 157.

75 Cf F.M. Cornford, "The Doctrine of Eros in Plato's Symposium," in The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), esp. p. 79ff. See also Alexander Kojève, An Introduction to The Reading of Hegel, op. cit., p. 250ff. Iris Murdoch notes: "Diotima goes on to tell Socrates of these erotica into which even he may be initiated, although the true mysteries lie beyond. The initiate is not to rest content with beauty in one embodiment, but to be drawn onward from physical to moral beauty, to the beauty of laws and mores and to all science and learning and thus escape 'the mean slavery of the particular case.' Carnal love teaches that what we want is always 'beyond', and it gives us an energy which can be directed into creative virtue. When a man thus directed his thoughts and desires toward beauty of the mind and spirit he will suddenly receive the vision, which comes by grace, ... of the Form of Beauty itself, absolute and untainted and pure." The Fire and The Sun, op. cit., p. 34.
passion for salvation. Instead, he "lifted up" Socratic philosophia to a dogmatism of sophia as a kind of metanoetics and metaphysics - devoid of Socratic innocence and faith in redemptive reason. This is reflected in the Republic, for example, when Plato announces that he knows that Goodness is beyond Being and Intellect, to which a thoroughly dumbfounded Glaucon is heard to reply: "What a devil of a hyperbole." (509-b-c).  

Plato's spiritual world of Abstract Intelligibles or Forms - the paradise of lost souls - unlike the mundane world of politics or art, is really the closed philosophical tribunal of the Academy in which the keepers of the dialogue of the few demand that all notions of order and change, right and wrong, be brought before them to testify, and be found wanting. For Socrates, however, the purpose of philosophy is not to judge the suitability of transcendent models of the "natural order", but to grasp and ameliorate our understanding of the present social order, especially its most popular views of right and wrong behaviour. More importantly, in the Phaedo he argues that philosophy is a continuous meditation on the problem of death, that is, it is to "practice dying," (Phaedo, 67E). By this he means that life is a preparation of the individual soul for death.

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76 W.H.D. Rouse, Republic, op. cit., p. 308. This is in contrast with Socrates who, in Phaedo 99E, "could not look at the sun and had to turn to logos (propositions, discourse), which he added were not to be thought of as images. (That is; speech, not objects of perception.)." Iris Murdoch, ibid, p. 30.
and, as such, implies that each individual has both a personal and collective task of improving the imperfect soul for its life without a body. It is in this sense that Socratic philosophy is intolerant of those Sophists who teach that truth is transient temporality only, because their teaching denies the possibility of preparing the soul for its true existence. The basis of his moral teaching is thus a hermeneutic of respect because it affirms that the soul can be restored to perfect health - that true meaning can be restored or recollected. In affirming the redemptive power of intellect Socrates commits philosophy to a respect for the given, the particular, and sets its task in essentially practical terms: Philosophy seeks to understand life as a series of moments which show forth the intrinsic moral and practical character of all human thought and action. This exclusively moral teaching lost much of its existential significance with Plato, however, who tended to conceptualize death as a philosophical category only.

For Socrates, thinking about death is not a noetic ecstasy but an occasion to reflect upon the passion for life that finds its true complement in a serious dialogue about the meaning of life. The death of mortal nature, he argues, silences the private self, but the age-old dialogue which seeks to recollect the true meaning of life through a conversation about the mysteries of existence is, in fact, the self-moving, immortal soul expressing itself, i.e. reason or
logos. Thus the power of logos as Eros is its ability to make itself felt as the attractiveness in what is beautiful in human nature, initially through physical and verbal contact, and progressively moving to higher levels of intellectual appreciation. The soul as reason is thereby first aroused in the aesthetic impulse of base instinct and ascends via the passions for possession to contemplation of what is pure, and therewith what is already possessed by the soul (or reason) itself. This process is what leads to the realization that “all physical beauty is one in the same,” 77 that is to say, it is Beauty itself which is already contained in human consciousness.

For Hegel, Socratic dialectic is an attempt to imitate the self-moving restlessness of reason through a form of question and answer which seeks to uncover the truth in the popular discourses and sentiments of the community, i.e., in ordinary consciousness. As a result, Hegel’s understanding of the Socratic dialectic is wholly practical. Socratic dialectic, he argues, is not simply an element in the philosophical contest between the Academy and the politicians over the State’s authority versus Socrates’ radical moral freedom, nor is it just about human mortality and immortal reason, or virtue and ignorance; for Hegel, it reflects a life and death struggle which is practical and political as well as philosophical. In this way the evolution and de-

77 Ibid., p. 76.
clusion of meaning recorded in the dialogues requires a deep understanding of the moral culture of the people. What strikes Hegel as exemplary about Socrates is that he never rejected the market place of ideas — he remained in the agora while Plato and Aristotle sought contemplative solitude. For Hegel, in any event, the community is where all true philosophy finds its appropriate medium of expression, i.e. in the common language of the people. While Hegel objected to the one-sidedness of Socratic dialogue, he nevertheless accepted from Socrates the view that dialectic is not a purely noetic or eristic instrument or power, but arises out of the structure of the polis, i.e. its language, mores, habits, etc. 78 As such, Socratic dialectic finds its source and power in the polis, and not in the method of Socratic irony. For Hegel, Christianity and the Reformation are what made the polis comprehensible, and the adventure of speculative reason unleashed by Greek life and thought in turn is what gave meaning to this development.

In summary, the Hegelian philosophy discussed below attempts to capture the spirit of Socratic thinking, especially its concern with what could be called the humble and sim-

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ple unity of Socrates' hermeneutic vision of human life as a struggle for meaning. In the dialogues there is a persistent image of Socrates tracing and retracing the arguments of others in order to move from the dissolution of contending opinions to a higher order argument, but which is never enunciated. With Hegel, as we shall see, the Socratic dialectic of dissolution required a more "scientific" presentation of the dialectic as conceptual self-development, i.e. as a science of logic. Moreover, Socrates' hermeneutic of respect was to become a hermeneutic of suspicion with Hegel.

2.3 **SOCRATIC IRONY AND HEGELIAN PHILOSOPHY**

For Hegel, the death of Socrates was a truly tragic event; not because natural death itself is a sad event, for this is the exercise of the power of Nature over individuals; but because it was the rational "misfortune of a will choosing to act morally." Like Antigone, Socrates was placed in the impossible position of deciding between the dictates of a higher law which gives inner moral suasion to its imperatives, and the demands of positive law which express the continuity, tradition and reason which animate all historical societies. And like Antigone, Socrates had no choice but to accept the inward voice of his own conscience

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in opposition to the objective voice of an equally valid moral power: "[I]n what is truly tragic there must be valid moral powers on both sides which come into collision. ... Two opposed rights come into collision, and the one destroys the other." (Lectures, 1, 446).

Thus both suffer loss and yet both are mutually justified; it is not as though the one alone were right and the other wrong. For one power is the divine right, the natural morality whose laws are identical with the will which dwells therein as in its own essence, freely and nobly; we may call it abstractly objective freedom. The other principle, on the contrary, is the right, as really divine, of consciousness or of subjective freedom; this is the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, i.e. of self-creative reason; and it is the universal principle of Philosophy for all successive times. (Lectures, 1, 446-447).

Other than his historical importance as the first to express the meaning of philosophy as self-creative reason, Hegel also believed that Socrates was a "world historical" figure because he grasped in thought the "inner necessity" which compelled him to radically re-evaluate his own society. By necessity, Hegel means "a necessity of meaning which progressively unfolds itself," and which is hidden in events and becomes clear only later. For Hegel, Socrates grasped the spirit of his own time, a period in which Greece began its cultural and moral decline. In this sense, Socrates expressed the cultural magnificence of the Greek polis including the practical wealth of its moral habits, laws and customs - its objective freedom - while still turning this

80 Jean Hyppolite, Marx and Hegel, op. cit., p. 164.
language inward and making it a matter of self-determination and choice - a matter of subjective freedom. Henceforth philosophy would begin its long recession into a world of inward self-acquaintance, restricting its activity to a form of thinking which rejected the moral culture of the people. Plato was the first step in this general direction. Whereas Socrates had posed the problem of moral truth in terms of self-determination of thought and will, subsequent thinkers were left the problem of raising this knowledge to the level of philosophy as a system or, to what means the same, to philosophical science. For Hegel, then, the task became one of trying to reunite inner self-awareness as objective knowledge, and thus the source of the freedom of thought and action, with the moral and practical culture of the people as objective morality. Politically, this meant a re-integration of Moralität and Sittlichkeit, of subjective self-determination and objective freedom, and therewith of the individual and the State as a moral and political community.

For Hegel, the Socratic understanding was incomplete because its method was one-sided. It was not yet philosophical science. On the one hand, Socratic dialectic was practical and experiential, and thus sought to elucidate the universal which is the source of particular opinions and beliefs. On the other hand, however, the Platonic dialogues show clearly that Socrates never attempted to explain systematically, or even to tell us, what such universals as
Beauty, Justice, or Goodness are. Even Plato's eloquent metaphors and allegories do not express the meaning of these terms because the true, for Plato at least, is unsayable. In contrast, Socrates seems to have preferred a practical, ironical stance, to wit that he knew nothing and was prepared to learn from those who claimed knowledge. In other words, it is not that Socrates necessarily believed that the true is unsayable, only that he did not know what is true and therefore could not express it. The true, that is, remains hidden. As Hegel notes: "...Socratic irony..., like all dialectic, gives force to what is taken immediately, but only in order to allow the dissolution inherent in it to come to pass; and we may call this the universal irony of the world." (Lectures, 1, 400).

The dissolution of public opinion occurs as a result of its inherent lack of foundation and this is well-represented in the various dialogues by the ultimate silence of those who advance the different positions. This is the essence of Socratic irony - the most knowledgeable know the least and reduce themselves to public silence - thought turns inward to the voice of reason. As developed in the Theaetetus, Socratic irony is expressed in the metaphor of a "mid-wife" of dialogue whose art of question and answer conversely aids in the dissolution of accepted opinion and in the emergence of a self-awareness of the universal as a coming-to-be conscious of the activity of thought. This kind of delibera-
tive probing, in opposition to simple faith or scepticism, represents the birth of philosophy as the activity of studying thought as its own peculiar problem. Thus what began in wonder as the mystery of mortality becomes more determinate as thought which thinks thought. In his self-ascribed activity as philosophical mid-wife, Socrates understood the function of thinking as analogous to the healing science of medicine; of restoring health to an ailing culture and community through genuine conversation governed by an ideal of ultimate truth and goodness. As such, the Socratic dialectic remained an art of practical concern and care for everyday life, but it was not yet a science of universal truth. This is because philosophy aims to know what is true and cannot be directed by an ideal which is external to the thought and knowledge it seeks to express. This is why Hegel believed that Socratic dialectic was not yet the self-conscious activity that dialectic would later become. This in no wise diminishes the achievements of Socrates or his method of dialectic, even though Hegel argued that this method of question and answer remained arbitrary in a manner analogous to the diagnostic art of medicine. It is a hit and miss activity which, though prompted by some knowledge, is founded on ignorance of the whole. He interprets this method in the following way:

It is the assisting into the world of the thought which is already contained in the consciousness of the individual - the showing from the concrete, unreflected consciousness, the universality of the concrete, or from the universality posited, the
opposite which is already within it. Socrates hence adopts a questioning attitude, and this kind of questioning and answering has thus been called the Socratic method; but in this method there is more than can be given in question and replies ... to say that in actual life people are found to answer as they are here made to do, is quite another thing ... . The spirit of dogmatism, self-assertion, stopping short when we seem to get into difficulties, ... all these attitudes and methods are excluded. (Lectures, 1, 402-403).

In several significant ways, Hegel's philosophy is an attempt to retain the rational kernel of Socratic dialectic, that is to say, the rational process of thought becoming progressively more concrete; but from the standpoint of thought alienating itself from itself, and not from an ideal which is external to this actual movement. The movement of classical dialectic is well illustrated in the Republic. The arguments begin with the distinctive wisdom of the elders, are then dissolved in the thinking of the present, and move on to resolution as transcendent idea. Hegel, however, rejects the purely transcendental resolution, and argues that the idea of justice which emerges - "act according to one's nature" - is never systematically developed. It remains an abstract Form illuminated in allegory and metaphor, but never systematically expressed. Knowledge begins with an awareness of the particular which, as an expression of the universal, leads us to reflect back on the art of thinking. It is an ever-expanding circle of growing self-awareness. This is why Hegel argues that Socratic dialectic always results in the "suprise" that what is never said or
accounted for is "found in consciousness." (Lectures, 1, 404). It is the bringing forth of what is already contained in consciousness, in thought, which constitutes the power of dialectic in both a theoretical and practical sense. This is a major theme of the Meno, for example, where the question of what is common to all virtue, and knowledge of geometrical figures, are brilliantly intertwined and out of which comes the seminally important view later developed in modern hermeneutics that the recollection of one thing is the source of the recollection of all things. This is analogous to the notion of Beauty developed above. Similarly, Hegel conceives the origin of philosophy as an activity akin to the Socratic innocence of the slave-boy standing before the Pythagorean theorem: Philosophy, he says, "begins with a puzzle in order to bring about reflection; everything must be doubted, all presuppositions given up, to reach the truth as created through the Notion [concept]." (Lectures, 1, 406).

Hegel regarded his own method of philosophizing as a theoretical and practical activity, but in a manner mediated by the Cartesian principle of radical doubt. Unlike Descartes, however, Hegel nowhere suggests that there can be a philosophical method, and thus he argues that dialectic is not a method. Moreover, his use of the word dialectic is sometimes confusing because while he retains elements of the

Greek notion, he also employs the term in a fashion analogous to Kant's "transcendental dialectic" wherein reason is chided for its fanciful desire to move beyond the bounds of possible knowledge.

Hegel's use of dialectic is a combination of both of these. He agrees with Kant that the use of reason allows for the creation of antinomies or contradictions, but he also agrees with the ancients that these contradictions are not a dead-end or an absurdity but rather a clue to the truth. That truth is, according to Hegel, that consciousness is capable of opposing points of view and feels the necessity to resolve them. The dialectic of the Phenomenology ... is the process of discovering the limitations of various "forms of consciousness," in part through the recognition of their contradictions - both internal and external - and thereby coming to see more adequate forms of consciousness that resolve contradictions.82

In order to clarify the Hegelian view of dialectic, it is important to recall that the term itself comes from the Greek word "discussion". With the Greeks it retained a positive connotation and was closely allied to logos, a word which is difficult, if not impossible, to capture in all of its variegated meanings. With Heraclitus, for example, it was employed in several different ways; as representative of what is common in variety, as eternal becoming, and as God or Spirit in a fashion analogous to John the Evangelist's "And The Word Was God." In the work of Heraclitus, "Logos is the universal law which governs change and becoming. The Logos is also the mind of the world. This Logos, however, is not a transcendent personal spirit, but an immanent law

... that governs change.\textsuperscript{83} Parmenides the Eleatic, on the other hand, sought to make thought and being the same such that the content of thinking, and therewith the expression of subjective being, is made identical with the content of objective reality. In this way he made the world of Logos, or transcendental thought, identical to reality as the rational experience of the world gained speculatively through notion- al intuition and abstract reason. As such, only the "whole" of the universe is essential, and the particularity of sensuous or material moments of experience acquire their meaning only in relation to the ideal, intuited world of abstract universals. Thus, for Parmenides, scientific truth is valid only when it is eternal and transcendent, while for Heraclitus the actual world, in so far as it is in space and time, is eternal flux.\textsuperscript{84}

With Plato, logos appears as a supreme ontological principle as well; it is the source of the idea of ideas as the ultimate foundation of Being. Dialectics, therefore, is made the supreme science because its task is to determine the pure structural idea of the world from which all of the a priori truths necessary for the other sciences as sciences


\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., p. 22. In the \textit{Lectures}, Hegel, says: "[I]n Heraclitus we see the perfection of knowledge so far as it has gone, a perfecting of the Idea into a totality which is the beginning of philosophy ... the unity of opposites." (Lectures, 1, 283).
are derived. With Plato, that is, philosophy became meditation on pure structure as reality independent of the thinker - philosophy became a kind of structuralism. While Hegel's dialectic retains the Heraclitan principle of immanent change, he also accepts the Platonic-Parmenidean principle of a structural interrelatedness which informs all of our possible notions of politics, ethics, and culture, as well as of logic and science. Unlike either of these perspectives, however, Hegel would not surrender the freedom of thought to a method or a cosmology which imposed an a priori, intuited order on the world. Thus, while dialectic is both a principle of reality and of our knowledge of reality - though this must be demonstrated empirically and conceptually as History and Logic - Hegel steadfastly refused to make dialectic a tool or instrument of philosophical analysis. Thinking, for Hegel, is both too complex and too concrete, i.e. too rich in variety and modes of experience, to be settled or harnessed to a method which restricts the abundance of human experiences to a epistemological or methodological formalism. In his Preface to the Phenomenology, Hegel outlines his own notion of philosophy and the place of dialectic in his thinking. After a brief presentation of its arguments, we shall then proceed to develop Hegel's account of dialectic on the basis of how he understands the activity of philosophy, his opposition to formalistic methods, and his view of dialectics as hermeneutics.


2.4 HEGELIAN PHILOSOPHY AS HERMENUETICAL DIALECTICS

The stature of Hegel's Preface to the Phenomenology has grown steadily over the recent years to a point where many now agree with Findlay's assessment that it is a "literary as well as philosophical masterpiece."\(^{85}\) Equally interesting, however, is Hyppolite's understanding of the problems which face any reader of the Preface: "What can that thought mean which belongs neither to positive science nor to classical ontology? What is the place of this thought and of its language?"\(^{86}\) Obviously, it is not possible here to do justice to either Hyppolite's questions about the implications for modernity of Hegel's thinking, or to the Preface conceived as an encapsulation of the entire breath of Hegelian thought. This is because the task here is less expansive in scope and requires only that Hegel's "science" of interpretation as hermeneutical dialectics is clearly developed. This still does not adequately situate the discussion of Hegel undertaken below. To be brief, then, it should be noted that while there is no intention here of ascribing to Hegel a type of thinking and a series of problems and determinations which were not specifically his own, there still remains the question of assimilation, that is, the problem


of employing Hegel to illuminate matters of interpretation which have arisen in recent years and which Hegel could not have foreseen. The following exposition of Hegel makes no attempt at an imminent critique, nor does it suggest a new account of the Hegelian philosophy. Rather, all that is attempted below is an assimilative account of Hegel, born of a time in which the conflict of interpretations has forced students of political theory to address complex interpretive issues which hithertofore seemed unnecessary, and in which I want to suggest that Hegel is not so much a corrective of contemporary practices but a source of new ideas and insights of supreme relevance to the problems of political commentary, including the decline of political philosophy. In this sense it reflects the example of many earlier political thinkers, e.g. Marx, Lukacs, Kojève, Habermas, etc., who have assimilated Hegel for their own purposes. This notion of an assimilative account is taken from Werner Marx's analysis of Preface in which he makes the point that such an approach "takes up a position toward questions ..., but does so expressly and deliberately in the light of [our] own general philosophical enterprise." 87

The following account of the Preface is not a detailed presentation of the arguments because such accounts already abound in the literature, and, more importantly, because the problems of philosophical method and dialectics are not systematically developed in this short essay. What Hegel attempts in the Preface is a general description of his manner of presentation, noting that the question of method and its "real exposition belongs to the Logic, or rather constitutes the Logic" (Preface, 72). For Hegel, philosophy is constituted by the very act of thinking in its own self-movement and development, and the function of the Logic is to demonstrate the inner necessity which underlies this movement. This can be stated in a hermeneutical fashion: Philosophy brings nothing to the act or practice of thinking and experience except thinking itself, and this thinking is self-thinking or self-consciousness. Much of the Preface, as a result, is taken up with an attack on the view that there can be, or ought to be, a specific philosophical method, or a formalized notion of philosophical intuition, which supercedes or lies outside of the historical and conceptual development of philosophical thought itself. For Hegel,

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89 Cf., Jean Hyppolite, "The Structure of Philosophic Language," op. cit.. Hyppolite interprets the Preface as a general introduction to philosophical language per se.
knowledge claims can never be adjudicated in purely formalistic or intuitionist ways.

Scientific knowledge, however, demands precisely that we surrender to the life of the object or — and this is the same — that we confront and express inner necessity. (Preface, 80).

In commenting on this passage Kaufmann notes that Hegel is here attacking both the widely-accepted view that there can be a unique philosophical method which remains outside of the content of philosophy as well as the corollary view implicit in this thinking to the effect that philosophy is a purely subjective activity. "What matters to Hegel is that the impetus that leads from point to point should not come from the arbitrary disposition of the writer but rather from the subject matter. A thorough analysis of one Concept, for example, should require that the analysis proceed to a second Concept, and in this way we should be led on and on by the "inner necessity" of the content."90 While this implies dialectical activity on the part of both the Concept and its interpreters, it is not eristic argumentation which elucidates this movement, however. As Hegel explains:

... argumentative thinking, is ... the freedom from the content and the variety that looks down on it. This variety is expected to exert itself, to give up this freedom and to immerse it in content, instead of being the arbitrary moving principle of the content. The content should be made to move itself by virtue of its own nature, i.e. through the self as its own self, and then to contemplate this movement. One should not intrude into the immanent rhythm of the Concepts either arbitrarily or with wisdom gained elsewhere: such-

90 W. Kaufmann, Preface, op. cit., p. 81.
restraint is itself an essential moment of attention to the Concept. (Preface, 88).

What Hegel is suggesting is that content, and a fortiori, thinking about content, cannot be properly studied by a model of philosophy which assumes that knowledge is merely the accidental by-product or result of discursive or eristic argumentation. Following this kind of model, and Hegel has Kant's formulation of philosophy firmly in mind, claims to knowledge can proceed only after an a priori determination of what counts for knowledge; only, that is, after philosophy has investigated the faculties of knowing and has pronounced itself a priori upon what constitutes valid knowledge claims in light of the limits of these faculties of knowledge. Hegel's objection to this manner of proceeding is that it is a purely epistemological approach which merely assumes the mantle of rigorous science and demonstration, and in so doing sacrifices the content of knowledge to its possible forms. The modern philosophy is thereby in no position to aid in the investigation of the foundations of the different branches of science, nor can it prescribe the limits and validity of meaningful and intelligent speech. These matters are examined extensively in the following chapter. In the case of the study of the history of political theory, for example, this modern epistemological viewpoint suggests that methodological arguments about the appropriate framework for interpreting the master texts are fundamentally conceptual in character, and ought to be de-
cided by recourse to specific philosophical arguments. But what Hegel is advocating is quite different. His objection to this Kantian programme is straightforward: This approach is ultimately impossible because it makes epistemology, as the science of possible knowledge, prior to knowledge itself. There is not, nor can there be, he argues, an objective standard or criterion of knowledge with which to test all of the competing epistemological or methodological standpoints at work in the different sciences. If there is no rule which governs the application of rules, i.e. if there are only rules, then it is impossible to arrive at a single criterion or set of criteria which governs all possible experience.

... the examination of knowledge can only be carried out by an act of knowledge. ... to seek to know before we know is as absurd as the wise resolution of Scholasticus, not to venture into the water until he learned to swim. (ENC., 10, 14)

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For Hegel, as it was for Aristotle and would later become for Husserl and Wittgenstein, the proper approach to knowledge is found always within the established ways of proceeding, and this is applicable to every science and art, though their arguments in support of this position vary significantly. The activity called philosophy is analogous to what the later Wittgenstein called "following a rule", or more generally it is in keeping with the accepted way of doing things. The operative dictum is "to the things themselves", i.e. to a view of phenomena as what "actually" appears and this is possible only if we understand how the tradition has treated a content conceptually in a specific way. Philosophy is therewith a special conceptual content which is unlike history or mathematics, for example, even though its content does have an empirical history. In this way the rules its follows and its practices are intimately interconnected, not because they share a conceptual and empirical history, but because this history is constituted by

actual experiences and attitudes which, when reflected back upon themselves, makes thought its own object. Unlike Socrates who wished to teach dialectic to the Athenian youth in order to lead them beyond the unexamined presuppositions that restrain thought to the dominant opinions and interests of the moment, Hegel desired to comprehend how and why dialectic is an immanent principle of thought and reality, and is thus reflected in interests, opinions and attitudes of both philosophers and ordinary citizens. For the historical Socrates dialectic was the negative form of philosophy as radical questioning; for Hegel, however, philosophy as dialectic is pure radicality. Its aim and activity is to record the restless criticism of all partial standpoints and moments - and therewith the partial interests they tend to legitimate - up to and including the belief in transcendence, from the point of view of reason as self-movement. This is the "rational kernel" which Marx made the cornerstone of his dialectic of history. In the Preface to the Philosophy of Right, Hegel illustrates this aspect of his thinking:

To comprehend what is, this is the task of philosophy, because what is, is reason. Whatever happens, every individual is a child of his time; so philosophy too is its own time apprehended in thoughts. It is just as absurd to fancy that a philosophy transcends its contemporary world as it is to fancy that an individual can overlap his own age, jump over Rhodes. If his theory really goes beyond the world as it is and builds an ideal one as it ought to be, that world exists indeed, but only in his opinions, an unsubstantial element where anything you please may, in fancy, be built. ... What lies between reason as self-conscious
mind and reason as an actual world before our
eyes, what separates the former from the latter
and prevents it from finding satisfaction in the
latter, is the fetter of some abstraction [and so
transformed] into the concept. (Phil of Right,
12).

Hegel's model of philosophizing in opposition to moderni-
ty's preoccupation with epistemological formalism is an ex-
tension and inversion of classical dialectic:

Study in antiquity differed from that current in
modern times: it was nothing less than the thor-
ough education of the natural consciousness.
Testing itself against every separate part of its
existence, and philosophizing about everything it
encountered, it made itself into a generality that
was active through and through. In modern times,
on the other hand, the individual finds the ab-
stract form ready—made: the exertion of grasping
it and appropriating it is rather more the unmedi-
ated production of the inward and the cut-off gen-
eration of the general than the emergence of the
general out of the concrete and the multiplicity
of existence. ... But it is far more difficult
to make fixed thoughts fluid than sense experi-
ence. (Preface, 52).

The process of making "fixed thoughts fluid," or what he
called "the movement of pure entities," is science; and this
is why he entitled his own work "philosophical science." In
this way what Hegel is seeking to articulate is really an
inversion of the classical dialectic which had provided
ideality and rigidity to the fluidity of sense awareness.
He wishes, that is, to "make thoughts fluid." Students of
Hegel are generally apprised of the fact that the working
title of the Phenomenology was "The Science of the Experi-
ence of Consciousness." 93 What Hegel intended by this title,

or why he subsequently changed it, is a matter for his biographers. What is interesting, however, is that the word "phenomenology" means the study of phenomena or appearances, and it is clear that irrespective of the final title, Hegel had proposed to write a phenomenology of consciousness, or a descriptive study of the forms of consciousness as they appear to consciousness. For Hegel of the Preface it was clear that such a study would have to be a historical and conceptual enucleation of the movement of thought from simple or unreflected consciousness to self-consciousness and reason. As such, the Phenomenology was not to be a simple history conceived in the manner of a history of art or philosophy, but a history of how we have come to make sense of our own experiences of the world. If we interpret the world through concepts, for this is what we normally call "rational" experience, and if concepts arise out of a human desire - as simple innocence - to give meaning to human actions; then to ask about why we think and act as we do is to ask about the "rules and reasons" which govern our experiences.  

If applied to the study of history of political theory, this view suggests that what is required is a descriptive phenomenology of the accepted "rules" which govern our interpretive practices, their various conceptualizations, and an exposition of these activities as specific manifestations of the rationality of political life. This,

\[94 \text{Ibid., p. 11.}\]
as we shall see below, is what characterizes a rational experience of the meaning of political things.

In order to clarify what is meant by a descriptive or "phenomenological" account it is important to recall that Hegel distances his own philosophical endeavors from the more generally accepted notions of philosophical practice. This is because Hegelian phenomenology is not a way of proceeding but rather an attitude toward the subject matter under investigation which, like classical dialectic, is meant to allow the content to speak for itself, to dissolve itself in its own inner contradictions, and to bring forward the universal made manifest in its particularity. As David Lamb explains:

The history of philosophy reflects the constant movement from illumination (the employment of a distinction) to distortion (forcing reality into this distinction) and to transcendence of this distortion in a recognition of the fluidity of mind's categories. This is the course of the dialectic described in the Phenomenology.

In the later chapters following the discussion of Hegel, the different modes of political commentary will speak for themselves in order to enucleate their internal differences, as well as their conceptual affinities. But before embarking on this examination, Hegel's theory of language and historical interpretation must be more fully developed. It is worth recalling once again, moreover, that the approach to be followed below does not seek to impose Hegelian philoso-

phizing on the practice of political commentary; this would not only negate his philosophy, but would render political commentary a sterile and lifeless activity. And yet, this caveat is not meant to suggest the contrary either, to wit that Hegelian philosophy has nothing to do with the problems of interpretation as they relate to political theory. As long as political theory is about the meaning and purpose of political life, philosophy will retain an important place in its deliberations, or as Hegel notes in the Preface: "Let the other sciences try to get somewhere by arguing without philosophy as much as they please: Without it they cannot contain life, spirit or truth." (Preface, 102). The kind of dialectical philosophy Hegel had in mind is not merely radical and critical, it is also historical and conceptual. In order to demonstrate the dialectical character of this kind of thinking, Chapter Three will examine the relationship between history and logic, while Chapter Four discusses the medium in which dialectic is expressed, i.e. language.

In the following chapters the Socratic ideal of humanity struggling to unearth the meaning of its place in the order of things, and of the role of the intellectual in this process, appears throughout. This is because the Greek world represented an attitude toward truth which, in contrast to the point of view of modern empirical description, was for Hegel a much deeper and more profound vision of human possibility. The view of truth which emerges from Antiquity is
the concept of truth as art, (at least for the German idealist tradition) which, unlike scientific description, is meant to comprehend the meaning of our place in the world as a creative vision, or as a work of art. Such meaning, for Hegel, escapes all scientific formulae and alone reflects what is truly valuable in human intellectual labour. Thus the figure of Socrates as intellectual and cultural spokesperson was not meant to reduce the Hellenic philosophical achievements to a salutary vision of the intellectual as autonomous 'keeper of culture' - the "slaughter-house" of history is too tragic and pathetic for such accounts - but was intended to suggest that the classical vision of the intellectual is, in certain respects, far superior to the modern notion. Unlike modern criticism which flows from a appreciation of knowledge as the power to control, the Socratic vision offers a much different perspective. The intellectual stands aside existing relations of domination not because the intellectual is somehow privy to the knowledge which condemns class elements to endure the discipline of productive relations, but because of a lack of knowledge. The lack of knowledge sets for thought the work of identifying the nature and scope of what is possible in order to transform both existing knowledge and its audience. As such, the work of intellection is not the production of emancipatory ideals, to jump over Rhodes so to speak, but to recall the

\[96\] J. Glenn Grey, Hegel's Hellenic Ideal, op. cit., p. vii.
culture and tradition in which particular social and historical experiences acquire meaning in order to release the subversive element which tradition necessarily contains. The subversive element is that part of tradition which stands in opposition to itself, and which, with Hegel, is the force of contradiction that motivates the desire to transcend opposition. This is not, however, the liberal view of intellectual freedom which is possessed by autonomous personalities who stand outside of history, for such is impossible for Hegel, but is in fact the power of reason made manifest in culture and human expression, and is exemplified in art and poetry. In other words, Antigone, Divine Comedy, or Faust are true and valuable in a way which is, for Hegel, much deeper than any scientific formulae or description.

For Hegel, the intellectual's task is to render in language the power of dialectic already at work in thought and reality, and in which the intellectual is always already a participant. With Socrates this activity is represented historically and metaphorically in his education of the youth of Athens, that is, in the bringing-forth of the dissolutionary power of education through what Hegel called a channeling of the inner voice of reason against the application of existing knowledge. Education, that is, serves the existing relations of power but it must also serve the claims of reason, and it is this contradiction which Socrates sought to articulate. Though he never answered his own
questions, and thus never came to favor a particular vision of community as against others. Socrates nevertheless taught that the force of reason could be brought to bear on existing relations of power. In this sense the accusation of impiety was directed at the Socratic form of teaching and only subordinately at its content because, in a time of crisis, the freedom of individual conscience always encroaches upon the collective freedom of society to secure for itself a measure of psychic distance from the harsh contingencies of existence. This is why the trial of Socrates was not about a good conscience arrayed against evil politicians, but, as Merleau-Ponty observed, it was about the power "to judge the law at the risk of being judged by it." For Hegel, however, it was even more than this. As an heroic figure, Socrates reflected the aleatory nature of the contest between good and evil, and in this he articulated what is potentially the most subversive threat to conventional authority, to wit that we can never really know what we are doing. But as an intellectual, Socrates rejected the scepticism of such a view as a principle of knowledge, and instead insisted that the truth which is embodied in collective law and custom can be recovered through critical scrutiny of existing opinion. In this he was the first to uncover the real dialectical power of rhetoric as either a power of dissolution or abso-

olution — rhetoric, that is, is open to all. For Hegel, however, the power of reason always wins out over the power of existing knowledge and its application, i.e., philosophy as the voice of reason defeats rhetoric as the power of existing knowledge, and thus what appears initially as contradiction always already contains the truth of its own resolution and reconciliation. To reconcile means to harmonize the fluidity of experience and its expression, and to resolve is to make clear the unity of disparate parts. Chapter Three assesses these two activities from the standpoint of Hegel’s concepts of logic and history. This analysis will involve a close examination of Hegel’s attitude toward modern philosophy, especially the Kantian critical project. As such, the following chapter investigates what has come to be called the Hegelian system. The purpose of this discussion is not to present the system as system, however, but to demonstrate the practical and political force of dialectic as a purposive intellectual tool which demands rigorous clarification. Hegel’s system, that is, follows from his dialectic and not from an expressed wish or desire to formalize his understanding. As George A. Kelly remarks:

In point of fact, dialectic, like any purposive intellectual tool, always has the propensity to recreate system, because, however witness and impulsive or sacrificial and despairing may be the actions of men, mind cannot endure in the void of radical “openness” and must compel actions to conform to the pursuit of aspects of present reali-

98 Frank Lentricchia, Criticism and Social Change, op. cit., p. 163.
Chapter III
HEGEL: HISTORY AND LOGIC

3.1 INTRODUCTION

I find the distinctive mark of science in the self-movement of the Concept but have to admit that the above-mentioned, as well as several other peripheral, features of the notions of our time about the nature and form of truth are different and indeed quite opposed to my view. (Preface, 108).

Hegel was well aware that his manner of proceeding was at odds with the contemporary philosophical practices of his time. This is why the Preface to the Phenomenology and the Introduction are, to a large extent, a bridge between his sciences of logic and experience. In short, the function of the Preface is to exhibit this link in order to demon-

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100 Hegel employs the concept of experience in a specific way. In the Phenomenology, he remarks that "experience is called this very process by which the element that is immediate, inexperience, i.e. abstract - whether it be in the form of sense or of a bare thought - externalizes itself, and then comes back to itself from this state of estrangement, and by so doing is at length set forth in its concrete nature and real truth, and becomes too a possession of consciousness," (Phen., 96). And, as Findlay notes, Hegel uses the word "in a curious phenomenological sense in reference to the way in which earlier, more naive views of absolute reality are incorporated into later, more developed ones: the objects of later views are said to be the 'experience' of the earlier ones," idem. Hegel:A Re-examination, op. cit., p. 89. See also Hegel, Phen., 143f. The major feature of this concept is that the real meaning of our experiences are, for Hegel, hidden from consciousness, or go on "behind the back of consciousness".
strate that the method and content of philosophy is one and the same. In the Preface Hegel takes exception to the then fashionable view that philosophy is the search for a general cognitive principle or set of principles under which to subsume all of the different instances of the knowledge of phenomena. This desire, he says, would reduce knowledge to a kind of monochromatic formalism—"the night in which all of the cows are black." In other words, with this model of the understanding both the specific content and the actual operations of knowing are sacrificed to possible thought-forms. Hegel argues that this manner of philosophizing is analogous to filling an empty shell with various contents, because it is not the actual content which matters but its predetermined cognitive form. This approach rigidifies the fluidity of thought and experience—its dialectical character—into closed schemata of categories and in so doing makes reiterable forms of thought, and therewith the analytic operations of the understanding, the foundation of philo-

101 In opposition to Solomon's separation of the Logics and the Phenomenology (In the Spirit of Hegel, op. cit., Chapter One), Malcolm Clark argues that "Hegel is [not] giving a purely psychological description of two thought processes that may occur independently, such that we may at one time be engaged in the first, at another time in the second. As the life of absolute spirit is inseparably an externalization of itself into existence and a return to itself from existence, so the process of human thought is an expression of itself in its Vorstellung, which is eo ipso a raising of Vorstellung to thought," Logic and System, p. 25. According to Clark, the term Vorstellung, given its complex relation to traditional philosophy, ought not be translated as "thought" because this "fails to convey the literal sense of the German ('setting before')," p. 27.
sophical reflection. Philosophy, that is, is reduced to epistemology, or a science of the conditions of possible knowledge which is independent of the operations of actual knowing.

This is why Hegel begins the Preface by saying that there can be no "pre-text" to a philosophical exposition, no privileged beginning, or, what is the same, no formulae under which to subsume the actual unfolding of philosophical arguments. The self-development of concepts is what constitutes the only proper form and content of philosophy. His opposition to deductive formalism is two-fold: It negates the content of philosophy; and it separates reality from thought, substance from subject, to such an extent that experience becomes little more than a "pigeon-holing process of the understanding." (Phen., 111). 102

What results from the use of this method of sticking on to everything in heaven and earth, to every kind of shape and form, natural and spiritual, the pair of determinations from the general schema, and filing everything in this manner is no less than an "account as clear as noonday" of the organized whole of the universe. It is, that is to say, a synoptic index, like a skeleton with tickets stuck all over it, or like the rows of boxes kept shut and labelled in a grocer's stall; and is as intelligible as either the one or the other. It has lost hold of the living nature of concrete facts;... (Phen., 110)

Hegel is here criticizing both the Fichtean dialectic as a formalistic triad - "thesis, antithesis, synthesis" - and Kant's deduction of the table of categories. In contrast to the formalistic model of proceeding, Hegel insists that the subject matter be allowed to speak for itself. Otherwise, the work of reason would consist only in the collapsing of meaning into possible thought-forms and thus of making philosophy, as the science of reason, a matter of thought without actual content. Philosophy would thus become synonymous with the conditions of the possibility of knowing but with little or no interest in what is knowable. In this way Hegel, as we shall see below, equated logical formalism with unreality, and both with analyticity.

Hegel did not reject the entire Kantian epistemological programme, however, nor did he suggest that formalistic or logistic thinking has no place in human affairs. On the contrary, analytic understanding occupies an important place in the activity of thinking, especially in the development of natural science. But it does so not as final arbiter of knowledge, or what stands for knowledge. With Hegel, knowledge neither originates in the recognition of the a priori functions of the understanding, nor are its limits set by the formalization of the conditions of possible knowledge in the a priori categories of the analytic understanding. Hegel's opposition to the Kantian epistemology, to be brief, is the criticism that Kant fails to demonstrate how the cat-
categories are to be employed in the determination of actual knowledge.

Hegel's fundamental complaint, then, is that Kant analysed the categories as functions of thought, not when they were functioning in actual knowing, ... Hegel wanted to see the categories at work, as it were, in the determination of what is to be known, whereas on his view, Kant considered them only when they were "idling" in the understanding as conditions for the possibility of experience without exhibiting themselves as operative in actual knowing.

In effect, Hegel was quite opposed to the Kantian hypostatization of the thinking process and of its own-sided critical epistemology, even though Hegel's own manner of proceeding remains heavily indebted to the Kantian philosophy. His objection to the putting-aside of content in favor of the forms of possible knowledge is clearly developed in his critique of Kant. It is a complaint which follows not only from Kant's diminution of reason in support of the understanding, but also from Hegel's view of the roles of history and logic in the operation of actual knowing.

103 John E. Smith, "Hegel's Critique of Kant" in Joseph O'Malley et.al., Hegel and the History of Philosophy, op. cit., p. 114. Smith attempts to rescue Kant from certain of Hegel's criticisms.
3.2 KANT AND THE TRANSCENDENTAL CRITIQUE OF KNOWLEDGE

In his "Introduction" to the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant argues that his task is not to advance the claims of reason, but "to keep it free from errors." In order to accomplish this task, Kant believed that what is required is a transcendental critique of knowledge which would establish the a priori limits of human comprehensibility. As he says:

I entitle transcendental all knowledge which is occupied not so much with objects as with the mode of our knowledge of objects in so far as this mode of knowledge is to be possible a priori: A system of such concepts might be entitled transcendental philosophy.

The need for such a philosophy was clear to Kant for both theoretical and practical reasons. Practically, Kant like all philosophers since Antiquity was well-aware that ordinary opinion could be brought to accept the most outlandish, and often pernicious, points of view. But rather than retreat to a position which esteemed the need for some external authority, e.g. the state, Scripture, etc., to limit or proscribe such pronouncements; or to the equally wrongheaded view that, collectively, the common person is incapable of


105 Ibid., CPR, (A.12, 59). The deduction of such a system of concepts Kant calls the "transcendental deduction," or "the way in which a priori concepts can relate to the objects. Transcendental deduction is concerned not with the matters of empirical fact (quid facti) but with the justification of validity (quid juris)." Karl Jaspers, Kant, translated by Ralph Mannheim, (New York:Harcourt,Brace and World, 1962), p.33.
comprehending anything but the most mundane empirical viewpoints, Kant instead focused his attention on the thinking faculties. He recognized that at the heart of this dilemma is the power of reason to extend itself speculatively beyond the limits of possible knowledge, and thus to terminate always in confusion and contradiction. This is quite obviously a significant theoretical problem as well. Thus the Critique of Pure Reason is not a critique of what is expressible or thinkable per se, but is about the limits beyond which what we can say becomes meaningless. That is to say, it is about the subjective boundaries of possible knowledge.

Kant begins by asserting that all knowledge begins in experience. While this would seem to suggest that he is siding with the empiricists in opposition to the Cartesian rationalist tradition, he quickly modifies his position by noting that this does not mean that "knowledge arises from experience." 106

According to Kant, there are two sources of knowledge: the first is the capacity of receiving representations, the second is the power of knowing.

106 Robert Solomon, In the Spirit of Hegel, op. cit., p. 72. As Kant argues: "We cannot think an object save through categories; we cannot know an object of thought save through intuitions corresponding to these concepts. Now all our intuitions are sensible; and this knowledge in so far as its object is given, is empirical. But empirical knowledge is experience. Consequently, there can be no a priori knowledge, except of objects of possible experience. But although this knowledge is limited to objects of experience, it is not therefore all derived from experience," CPR, (B. 116), pp. 173-174, (Kant's emphasis).
an object through these representations. Through the first (empirical or material) source of knowledge, objects are given to us; through the latter (formal or rational) they are thought. Kant insists that without experience no object can be apprehended. This does not mean, however, that receptivity for impressions is the primary source of intelligibility and objectivity. The essential function of the empirical source of knowledge consists in setting the formal element in operation. In other words, the necessity and objectivity of phenomenal reality result from the operation of the a priori agencies of the mind. Therefore, the subjective element of knowledge, which is independent of experience, makes our judgements possible and objective.107

In other words, Kant wished to demonstrate that certain principles of knowledge must be supplied to experience, i.e. empirical knowledge. "They are conditions that make experience possible; they precede every particular experience and so, in Kant's terms, are a priori -- literally before".108 In this way Kant can proceed to argue that scientific knowledge -- sophisticated empirical knowledge of 'natural' concepts -- is not the product of a passive reception of sensations which are then rendered into abstract ideas or concepts, but rather that the understanding (the a priori faculties of knowing) is an active participant in the acquisition and constitution of objects for knowledge. This is what Kant means when he says that there can be no concepts without precepts, and no precepts with concepts; or no meaning with--


out experience, and no experience without a meaning-structure of concepts. In order to comprehend Kant's argument, it is important to grasp the nature of the problem he is confronting.

With the empiricists, especially Locke, the doctrine of "innate ideas" was rejected and in its place was accepted the principle that all of our ideas originate in some previous experience. Experience is composed of Sensation and Reflection such that an individual becomes what he or she is by virtue of physical contact with the world, and the ideas which are formed as a result of this contact. Sensation is thereby the source of our simple ideas about the external world which, in turn, are made into complex ideas. The latter are a product of the internal operations of the Mind (Reflection). Lockeanism, therefore, is more accurately a radical form of epistemological individualism. If all of our ideas are perceptions and result from chance sense contact with objects, then the ideas or thoughts of other people are, to a certain extent at least, also accidental and personal. Our 'real' knowledge is thus very limited indeed.

109 For a rather spirited critique of Lockean empiricism and his denigration of imagination, see Owen Barfield, Poetic Diction - A Study in Meaning, (Garden City: N.J.:Anchor Books, 1953). See also Gerraint Parry, John Locke, (London:George Allen and Unwin, 1978); and John Yolton, (ed.) John Locke, Problems and Perspectives, (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 1969). Briefly, for Locke experience is the source of all human knowledge; either through sensation in which the senses convey to the mind the effects of particular objects; or as reflection, that is, the mind's cognisance of its own internal operations.
What is required, Locke argues, is really a recognition of the fact that all knowledge is derived from sense and is limited to sense experience. What is required, for Locke, is thus a critical epistemology founded on an empirical psychology. In other words, the limits of what is knowable by finite human minds are to be fixed by establishing the spatio-temporal limits of experience, the latter being the boundary beyond which the understanding cannot go without falling into unresolvable contradictions and error. This is in fact another way of saying that the mind is extremely limited, and a fortiori, that reason is powerless to solve the problems which it sets for itself. Thus, the possibility of a philosophical dialogue which points beyond the subject to resolvable questions about the meaning or essence of things is utterly impossible because the validity of such statements must be limited to the representative evidence of the empirical moment and its accepted significance. It is limited to the dominant and reiterated perceptions and ideas of the day.

Locke is both empirical and critical, however, because while he argues that all knowledge originates in objects of some previous experience, he is, at the same time, highly critical of the traditional ways in which the nature of experience had hitherto been investigated. Paradoxically, he makes all ideas dependent on the empirical moment, and yet, he directs his own thinking against the prevalent opin-
ions of his time. In sum, Lockean epistemology is a passionate tribute to the emerging bourgeois sensibility - there are only individuals, their experiences and their respective mental powers which stand over and against the unknowable essences of an external world and nature. The mind, like a mirror, must place itself before its objects and reflect only what is thereby truly objective because it neither creates nor forms these images. With Locke there is no simple innocence which rises to philosophical wonder, only an unbreachable and unbridgable gap between the knowing faculties and unknowable things. This is why Ernst Cassirer argues that the real question for Locke is not about objects tout court, but about human knowledge and its limits, that is, the limits of possible experience.

We must not grasp at any objects whatsoever and seek to investigate their nature on the basis of our knowledge; our first question must be what kind of objects is commensurate with, and determinable by, our knowledge.

For Locke the answer to this question is genetic or evolutionary. Any investigation into human knowledge must answer to the question of how we come to understand things the way we do. Consequently, we must forever return to experience. This is not strictly a matter of history, however, but of psychology, because any investigation into human knowledge is more accurately an examination into the activi-

ty of the Mind, or the thinking-self. As Locke explains:

Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas: - How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from EXPERIENCE. In that all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation employed either, about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understanding with all the materials of thinking. The two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring.

Locke divides the activity of thinking into two quite different operations: Wit, which combines ideas, and Judgemen, or that activity of Mind which distinguishes our ideas. There is no need here to develop the Lockean epistemology, or his theory of the reality or adequacy of ideas. This is because our intent is to examine how Locke diminishes the trustworthiness of Wit, or the intellectual freedom of verbal association, in order to advance the analytic faculty of Judgement. On the surface it would appear that Wit, or the activity of combining ideas, is a synthesizing and poeticizing faculty which reflects the power of the freedom of thought in language, while Judgement, or the distinguishing of precepts, is a kind of sterile, mechanical analyticity - a monochromatic formalism. With Locke, however, there

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is no distinction drawn between idea and precept, and thus the true synthetic activity of the mind is at the level of Judgement only. It is the formal synthesis of ideas which are always already abstract. It is worth noting that the outcome of this kind of philosophizing is a view that Wit must be harnessed to possible experience such that all of our statements are in principle reducible to some vocabable form of external reflection, or to some empirical or logical principle or rule. We must discipline human creativity to operate solely within the bounds of a dictionary meaning of the world; or within the syntactical or judgemental limits of language as a sign system. For Locke, then, "true" thinking is discursive argumentation only.  

Hegel's critique of Locke is straightforward: "[W]hen experience means that the Notion has objective actuality for consciousness, it is indeed a necessary element in the totality; but as this reflection appears in Locke, signifying as it does that

112 Cf., for example, Owen Barfield, Poetic Diction, op. cit., Appendix IV. Peter Winch makes this point in his discussion of the "underlabourer conception" of philosophy. Of Locke, he says: "The modern conception of what constitutes the "rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge" is very similar to Locke's own: philosophy is concerned with eliminating linguistic confusions. ... a philosopher removes contradictions from realms of discourse," The Idea of a Social Science, op. cit., p. 7. Barfield adds: "Locke ... never discriminated between precept and idea; he did not see that the idea must already contain a conceptual element. Hence his synthetic faculty of Wit is synthetic only in the discursive or logistic sense of divining the general in the particular. It conducts a synthesis of ideas. Now this is precisely what I understand by the word definition. The whole of Locke might indeed be described as a Philosophy of Definition," ibid., pp. 190-191.
we obtain truth by abstraction from experience and sensuous perception, it is utterly false, since, instead of being a moment, it is made the essence of the truth," (Lectures, 3, 295-296). And he adds: "Locke does not get beyond the ordinary point of view of consciousness, viz. that objects outside of us are the real and the true," (Lectures, 3, 296). In other words, Locke investigated our ideas, their origins, etc., but he never bothered to ask whether or why these ideas are rational or true. His entire epistemology was an attempt "to describe the manner in which thought accepts what is given to it," (Lectures, 3, 310). And finally, Hegel makes the following criticism of empiricism in general:

So long as this sensible sphere is and continues to be for Empiricism a mere datum, we have a doctrine of bondage: for we become free when we are confronted by no absolutely alien world, but depend upon a fact which we ourselves are. Consistently with the empirical point of view, besides, reason and unreason can only be subjective: in other words, we must take what is given just as it is, and we have no right to ask whether and to what extent it is rational in its own nature. (ENC., 38, 64).

Kant also objected to Locke's one-sided empiricism and argued that while a crucial distinction must be drawn between the operations of the understanding and the power of reason, the two are nevertheless important cognitive faculties. For Kant, the understanding governs the laws of science and reason has dominion over principles of right conduct. His objection to Lockean empiricism proper was that

it leaves only a secondary and passive role for thinking in
the constitution of objects of knowledge. In its place Kant
proposed an active understanding whose a priori principles
of cognition constitute the very possibility of experience
and its verbal expression.\textsuperscript{114} Whereas Locke had argued that
the two dominant "faculties" are sensation and reflection, Kant allowed that reason itself is a distinctive faculty of
mind. For Kant, the understanding is the "faculty of think-
ing" whose sole function is to discover the rules or princi-
pies which govern objects of experience (phenomena) a
priori. That is, the understanding seeks to indicate inde-
pendently of experience the case to which each rule is ap-
plied to objects of experience. The understanding is thus a
synthetic a priori activity which conditions our interpreta-
tions of all "natural" phenomena. As a result, Kant treated
the understanding variously as the synthetic faculty of
"thinking", "rules" and "judging." Reason, on the other
hand, is also a faculty, but not a very trustworthy one for
science because it is a dialectical activity in which Mind
seeks to comprehend what it knows in terms of an a priori
unity, or as a "system" of concepts. It is the "art" of
building or constructing systems, or the "architectonic"
faculty, which always tends to extend itself speculatively
beyond empirical evidence in support of a claim to knowledge

\textsuperscript{114} Cf., Stephen Kroener, \textit{Kant}, (Harmondsworth:Penguin
Books, 1955); Karl Jaspers, \textit{Kant}, op. cit.; Jonathan
Bennett, \textit{Kant's Dialectic}, (Cambridge:Cambridge Univer-
sity Press, 1974).
of a totality. It tends to reach beyond the phenomenal limits of our interpretive capacities. While Kant allowed that "pure reason" can make certain claims to knowledge about concepts, any of its claims about the 'essential' nature of objects-in-themselves are inadmissible on the grounds that it is beyond our constitutive ability to know such things. We can talk about rules or laws which govern the phenomenal world, e.g. things-for-us, but we cannot talk about things as they exist independently of the constituting ego. In this way Kant is really saying that philosophy can tell us "nothing" about the unity of objects of experience, it can only analyse concepts and nothing more.

Kant argued that we can understand objects as they appear to us, or as they are constituted by the a priori functions of our cognitive faculties, but we can never know things-in-themselves or noumena. As long as reason operates discursively, that is to say, as long as the concept of a noumenal order is understood as a logical category which combines concepts into a system of categories, as pure abstraction, reason operates within its prescribed bounds. The moment reason presumes a reality as expressible "thingness" beyond phenomenal understanding, it has over-reached its limits and is speaking nonsense. Thus the Critique of Pure Reason is an analysis of the limits of our ability to speak meaningfully about natural concepts, or the theoretical limits of scientific interpretation. Ultimately, it is about the im-
possibility of speculative reason producing true knowledge or, what is the same, the impossibility of metaphysics. In passing it should be noted that Kant's *Critique of Judgement* is about the likelihood of combining his critiques of theoretical and practical reason. It is about how the understanding as the legislator of nature is related to reason as the freedom to make its own practical rules.

Like Locke, Kant saw synthesis as a discursive rather than an expressive or dialectical activity. He recognized that a great gulf exists between our freedom to interpret the world architectonically, or the dialectic of speculative reason, and the constitutive limitations of our use of natural concepts, or theoretical reason. If the history of political theory is both a theoretical and practical activity - it employs both theoretical and practical concepts - then we must address ourselves to the same fundamental question. How does reflective judgement mediate the transition from a unifying intellectual freedom to the determinate realm of natural concepts?; - or, how is the transition from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom possible? Unlike Kant, however, Hegel argues that this transition is not a "logic of illusion", or a special talent of the gifted few, but a dialectical, historical and conceptual process of development to different levels of mutual insight and comprehension through dialogue over time.
It is not too difficult to understand why the Enlightenment in general looked down upon traditional philosophy, especially metaphysics, as an impossible enterprise. This is because Enlightenment teaching held to the view that philosophy is not an active participant in the growth or production of human knowledge — only natural science seemed able to fill this role. As a result, philosophy, henceforth was to be an adjudicator, or 'underlabourer', of the operations of the understanding in its work of "dividing and isolating ... the reduction of material to essential components," of overcoming difficulties posed by the analytic method of reasoning. This is why Hegel describes the Enlightenment as the epoch of Raisonnier, or following the French, raisonnement.

Analysis, the instrument of understanding (Verstand), breaks up living organic wholes and attempts to conceive of them apart from their function and development. Synthesis, the instrument of reason (Vernunft), perceives the underlying powers that control the total structure, and proceeds on the assumption that the whole is true. Hegel thus equated analysis with unreality because it is the attempt to understand the essential structure of material apart from its context and divorced from the realm of process. He believed that his logic, as a logic of reason (Vernunft), was able to grasp the synthetic course of development, to read history in terms of related progressive wholes.

115 J. Glenn Gray, Hegel's Hellenic Ideal, op. cit., p. 70.

116 As Hegel remarks: "Raisonnement ... adopts a negative attitude towards the content apprehended; knows how to refute it and reduce it to nothingness. [It is] detachment from all content, and conceited superiority to it." (Phen., 117).
For the Enlightenment, traditional metaphysics was conceived as the paradigmatic case of reason advancing beyond human cognitive limits. It provided innumerable examples of speculative thought propounding its dreams of an absolute system of truth. Thus, metaphysics may well be a form of wisdom or sagacity, but it is not knowledge. It is not science. The understanding operating within the a priori limits of 'natural' concepts (theoretical reason), or reason operating with the limits of the a priori faculty of desire (practical reason), henceforth were to constitute the subject matter of philosophy. In other words, only thinking within the limits of the presence of a constitutive or regulative ego is to be recommended as the valid or correct way of proceeding scientifically or ethically. And if all meaning is a type of production of scientific and practical utilities, then it is the production process itself which has to become paramount. Meaning is therewith reduced to the adequacy of our ideas to reconstruct the world in light of abstract rules or norms. The 'true', that is, is not in the things-themselves, but in our rule-oriented, rationally-constituted production of them. But this is tantamount to saying that there is really no such thing as singularity or individuality. A thing is what it is by virtue of its conformity to abstract forms of thought. A thing is what it is

117 J. Glenn Gray, Hegel's Hellenic Ideal, op. cit., p. 70-71.
because of methodologism. What emerges from all of this is the humanistic image of a new Prometheus, holding in one hand an infinite power to harness necessity, and, in the other, the radical freedom to determine the moral content of the will. And yet, it is also a clear image of the self-estrangement which the Enlightenment had hoped to overcome. Its answer to the problems of error and misunderstanding was a form of philosophizing that sought to restrain and constrain the human intellect in the ways in which the existing order of things is critically examined and justified. Philosophy, as a result, became a reduction rather than an expansion of human horizons. The new Prometheus of **raisonnement** was not a captive of the Greek concept of fate which opposed human freedom, however, but a product of its own self-imposed, self-repressed imprisonment to the immediate. For Hegel, the spiritual power of the Enlightenment was not its scientific optimism, but its timidity in thinking the problem of truth as absolute. It chained thought to an immediacy and presence it desired to criticize, and thus averted the real power of subjectivity it announced. In effect, Hegel's critique of the Enlightenment was that in trying to keep reason free from error, it was forced to restrain reason itself. But, because error is a vital component of the dialectic of knowledge, the Enlightenment

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was ultimately forced to deny human beings a range of knowledge by restricting what we can know to the analytic faculties.

In opposition to the poetic rhythms of speculative reason, modern philosophy prefers the hard cadences of formal logic and discursive settlement of contending points of view. Whereas with Socratic and classical dialectic, philosophy was meant to play an active normative role as an educator in public affairs, modern philosophy retreats to the narrow confines of the analytic method of reasoning. There it proclaims itself master of the great questions of truth and knowledge. Philosophy settles into the Academy of Science. It becomes an epistemology without care for content, and a methodical programme of investigating and evaluating argument and counter-argument in order to clarify the logical properties of what is presented in the name of valid knowledge. In this way modern philosophy represents itself as a neutral arbitor, or the impartial voice of pure intellect, because it is not directly involved in the intersubjectivity of any dialogue and it is not confined to the pronouncements or written testimonies of certain peoples in particular periods and at different times. It stands over and apart from the actual movement of any historical or contemporary conversation and presides over the deepest thinking and utterances about the nature of things; but only to the extent that they are brought before the sovereign authority of its
eristic methods of disputation. Thus, for example, the sciences of wisdom such as normative political theory are held to be somehow inadequate for the needs of the modern age. They are viewed as a series of speculative systems of ideas or, in other words, ideas which do not live up to the modern name of "science" in terms such as political science.

Hegel totally rejected this model of discursive arbitration on the grounds that the notion of understanding which governs this view is wholly one-sided, or what he called "external reflection" only. For Hegel, 'true' philosophy is "determining reflection." It is the demonstration of the "self-moving activity", or the ebb and flow of meaning, which constitutes the speculative interplay of assertion and counter-assertion. Philosophy is its own historical symposium, or a movement which Hegel suggested is analogous to a linked chain progressively moving to higher levels of mutual insight and comprehension over time. In contrast, 'external reflection' is a deeply non-conversational, mechanistic process of bringing this movement to rest under general principles of analytic reason. Like common sense awareness, it proclaims everything to be "either/or" and all dialogue is thereby abruptly terminated. For Hegel, moreover, these either/or identities of 'external reflection' represent more than the terminus of thoughtful conversation. They also assume that assertions and counter-assertions must be evaluated on the basis of a model of understanding which proclaims
itself to be the limits of all possible knowledge, that is to say, the limits of our ability to speak meaningfully about things.

This is why Hegel argued so forcefully in the Preface against the normal practice of writing an introduction which embodies a descriptive overview of the subject-matter, a definite statement of the author's methodological standpoint, and a summary of the results. Such practices, he contended, never amount to more than "abstract" generalities which affirm the ground and possibility of what is being said from the outside. That is, "I" show how the world will be made to conform to certain abstract principles which flow from "my" understanding and then "I" proceed to demonstrate how the world does indeed conform. For Hegel, on the contrary, philosophical thinking is the demonstration of the inner dynamic of reason and experience, of the speculative historical and conceptual syncretism of assertion, contradiction, negation and re-assertion, as a dialectical process in which both philosophers and their objects are altered continuously throughout their development. This, in turn, reflects the inherently hermeneutical character of Hegel's dialectic - thought contains reality as its other. This is why the "text" of the Phenomenology can have no "pre-text."

It is a living, self-moving conversation, or an extended, conceptually-linked and historical dialogue in which every experience encountered passes over into new experience and
expression. This relentless struggle for meaning is, to use an Hegelian metaphor, to face the unknown at the beginning.\textsuperscript{119} There can be no privileged scheme of entry to the apparent antinomies tossed up by reason save the power of reason itself. That is, there is no "beyond" which rescues thought from thinking through its own contradictions. It is in this sense that the Phenomenology shares with Faust the same appeal to the universality of the human spirit; reason is the source of its own self-redemptive power.

Because of the continuous shifting from experience to thought, and from thought to experience, Hegel argued that the normal practice of writing an introduction is a methodological formalism. It has the effect of reducing both actuality and thought to ahistorical moments of abstract generality. This is because there can be no introduction to the conceptual activity which connects the various stages in the progression of knowledge from simple sense awareness to self-conscious reflection, or to the modes of experience traversed therein. Put simply, there can be no single rule or set of rules which grasps at once and for all time the process whereby human beings make intellectual sense of the world. As Hegel argued in the lesser Logic: "To speak of a beginning of philosophy has a meaning only in relation to a person who proposes to commence the study, and not in rela-

tion to the science as science," (ENC., 17, 23). For Hegel, therefore, knowledge of abstract methodological or epistemological principles of interpretation does not guarantee access to the deepest insights of possible knowledge, though we have been led to believe that they do by both the technical successes of the natural sciences, and modern philosophy's willingness to exalt this knowledge as the limits of our cognitive abilities. In opposition to this manner of proceeding, Hegel replies:

... the distinctive difference of anything is rather the boundary, the limit, of the subject; it is found at the point where the subject-matter is not. (Phen., 96) (Preface, 10).

In his Forward to the second edition of Truth and Method, Götamer eloquently restates this point in exceptionally practical terms: "My real concern was and is philosophic; not what we do or what we ought to do, but what happens to us over and above our wanting and doing." The concern with what is "above" or "beyond" the subject is instructive. The use of the phrase 'subject-matter' illustrates Hegel's critique of modern scientific thinking and its formal model of interpretation. The hyphenated word 'subject-matter' is a noun phrase or substantival which underscores the modern recognition of the importance of the subject in knowledge. Today, however, the more common practice is to drop the hyphen, and not always for typographical reasons, such that the phrase becomes adjectival. The adjective 'subject' mod-

ifies the substantive "matter" to denote an extensive qualitative change in their relationship, and, parenthetically, it further emphasizes the role of the constitutive ego in modern thought. But there is more than a syntactical change at work here. If we accept the Kantian view of understanding, then the adjectival phrase conceals an inflectional change as well, that is to say, the adjective "subject" is more truly the transitive verb 'to sub-ject'. As Kant notes:

Reason, holding in one hand its principles, according to which alone concordant appearances can be admitted as equivalent to laws, and in the other hand the experiment which it has devised in conformity with these principles, must approach nature in order to be taught by it. It must not, however, do so in the character of a pupil who listens to everything that the teacher chooses to say, but of an appointed judge who compels the witness to answer questions which he himself has formulated. Even physics, ... must adopt as its guide, that which it has itself put into nature.\[121\]

There is a clear confession here that nature must be subjected to formal rules or principles of analytic understanding, or from the outside, for this is what constitutes science. What is fundamental is not the matter at hand, for any particular content may be brought under the control of the analytic method of reasoning, but the power of the understanding to impose its order on things. Hegel countered Kant's critique of pure reason by arguing that the limits of the understanding are only the limits of the operation of

\[121\] Kant, CPR (B xiii-xiv), p. 20.
external reflection – the limits of the scientific model of truth. It is not the boundary beyond which thought does indeed travel, however. This is because the limits of the phenomenal world are always already transcended in the announcement of a noumenal order. As Adorno explains: "Hegel's criticism of Kant, ... [is] the criticism, namely, that to set limits is already to transcend them; and that if reason is going to confine itself to the finite, it must already be master of the infinite in whose name the limits are imposed." In effect, any model of interpretation, including political commentary, which begins arbitrarily with an externally-developed methodological or exegetical perspective that is meant to impose order and meaning on content from outside its content is doomed to remain always on the periphery of the meaning it wishes to uncover and express.

3.3 KANT, HEGEL AND THE CLAIMS OF REASON

Hegel's critique of Kant is always couched in somewhat ambivalent terms, for while he believed Kant to be the most important, if faulty, modern thinker, he also seems to imply that the Phenomenology is a systematic elaboration of the entire Kantian philosophy, (Phen., 235). This is because he found the Kantian table of categories to be unsystematically developed, or, as he says, "an outrage on scientific thinking," (Phen., 277). Hegel nevertheless agreed with Kant that the history of philosophy does not represent a meaningless flight of conceptual fancy in which reason had conjured up indefensible propositions and assertions about reality, or what is knowable. Rather, the history of philosophy demonstrates how different thinkers at different times had sought to describe how the world must be in order to for us to experience it in the different ways in which it appears to consciousness. Hegel, however, rejected both the Kantian noumenal world of unintelligibles, along with his corollary view of a bifurcated mental world in which the principles of scientific knowledge and the rules of right conduct are constituted by the separate and functionally disparate faculties of theoretical and practical reason. Hegel, moreover, rejected the view that either reason itself or its inherently dialectical character is illusory.

For Kant, speculative reason can never provide us with knowledge of either the sensible or the supersensible world,
even though it continuously strains to contrive such knowledge, and thus always terminates in contradiction and error. In this way Kant's critique of pure reason answered a resounding "no" to the question of the possibility of metaphysics as a knowledge of objects beyond the experiential data made available to the self-reflecting ego. That is, there could be no knowledge of an object-world upon which the finite mind could not apply its categories of comprehensibility. Conceptual questions about God's existence, the freedom of the will, and the immortality of the soul, as a result, could not be answered theoretically according to Kant. This is why he was prepared to reject theoretical knowledge in order to make room for faith in certain postulates which make practical reasoning a possibility, especially the postulate of a free will. Without such faith, Kant argued in the Critique of Pure Reason, human beings could not arrive at principles of right action. 123

With Kant's Copernican Revolution, questions about the ultimate structure of the world became questions about the ultimate structure of our minds. But understanding nature is but one human enterprise among others; and the concepts of the under-

123 Kant CPR, (B, xxx), p. 29. Here Kant argues that he had found it "necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith." Hegel's veiled response is that: "It is true that the forms and rules of the old logic, of definition, classification and syllogism, which include the rules of discursive thinking, have become recognized as inadequate for speculative science; or rather their inadequacy has not been recognized; it has only been felt, and then these rules have been thrown off as if they were mere fetters in order to allow the heart, the imagination, and causal intuition to say what they pleased." (Phil of Right, 2).
standing only provide us with one kind of principle. There are also principles based on the concepts of reason which have their own kind of validity, not as knowledge but in terms of practice. This is the basis of Kant's radical separation of the world of knowledge and science and the practical world of God and morality and human action: The first world, the "sensible world" of scientific knowledge and Newtonian mechanics, is viewed from the standpoint of the understanding, including the categories of substance and universal causality, applied to the data of experience within the forms of space and time. The second world, the "intelligible world" of morality, freedom, good intentions, God and the immortality of the soul, is viewed from the standpoint of man as moral agent, willing his good deeds on the basis of universally rational principles of duty.  

In opposition to Socratic dialectic as a radical mode of moral teaching, the Kantian philosophy is primarily a critical thinking in that Kant made knowledge-critique a priority and necessity. For Kant, the critique of knowledge must be complete before proceeding to knowledge claims, and this involves settling the nature and epistemic limits of human comprehensibility.  

Hegel objected to such a project on the grounds that Kant more accurately separated the activity of criticism from the knowledge to be criticized, or how we know from what we know. Thus, Kant's criticism of the activity of knowing was separated from both the content of the

124 Robert Solomon, In the Spirit of Hegel, op. cit., p. 77-78.

125 This irrespective of the fact that it is entirely possible that Kant was more interested in establishing the claims of human freedom and moral reason than in advancing the claims of science. Karl Jaspers, e.g., quotes Kant approvingly to the effect that: "Philosophy is in reality nothing other than a practical knowledge of men," in Kant, op. cit., p. 8.
known, and from the actual and ideal genesis of concepts wherein knowledge claims are constituted and made objects for criticism. For Hegel, content and the activity of knowing are dynamically interconnected both conceptually and historically. In effect, he argued that Kant had forgotten the innocence of human knowledge — he had forgotten that man and his knowledge have a history and that this history teaches a formidable lesson: Sooner or later all thinking is confronted with a position beyond which it is incapable of proceeding, i.e. an unintelligible. Kant's notion of metaphysics as necessary illusion is the apprehension in pure thought of this historical and conceptual process. With Hegel, however, there is a "resolute refusal to treat the unintelligible as a "beyond", or as a merely "residual unknown."

As he states in the 'lesser logic':

Kant undertook to examine how far the forms of thought were capable of leading to the knowledge of truth. In particular, he demanded a criticism of the faculty of cognition as preliminary to its exercise. That is a fair demand, if it means that even the forms of thought must be made an object of investigation. ... The forms of thought must be studied in their essential nature and complete development: they are at once the object of research and the action of that object. Hence they examine themselves: in their own action they must determine their limits, and point out their defects. This is that action ... of Dialectic, and regarding which we need only at the outset observe that, instead of being brought to bear upon the categories from without, it is immanent in their own action. (ENC, 41, 66).

For Hegel, Kantian criticism operates primarily at the level of the understanding, and while Kant had recognized the function of dialectical or speculative reason as a unifying faculty, he failed to take into account the possibility that the initial tension between these faculties is overcome in the syncretic unity of their operations as Reason. In failing to consider this interconnectedness, Kantian criticism was incapable of advancing to the level of speculative reason, which, for Hegel, "apprehends the unity of terms in their opposition - the affirmative, which is involved in this disintegration and transition" (ENC., 82, 119). In effect, Hegel argued that Kant had settled with the discursive understanding and in so doing had ultimately failed to advance the cause of scientific knowledge beyond a formal subjectivity, and a purely accidental subjectivity at that - "a method rediscovered, to begin with, by instinctive insight." (Phen., 107).

Kant's theory of the moral will attempted to free practical reason from the mechanistic world of Newtonian causality and to provide individuals with a sphere of freedom in which to master our sensuous natures. He believed that it is possible to deduce principles of right conduct in such a way that the will is provided with its own moral form. As a result, reason can determine right conduct, but only formally in so far as the individual is able to act intelligently, that is to say, to follow the imperatives of the will will-
ing to do its moral duty. Again, Hegel rejected this moral formalism on the grounds that it implies that moral action is the product of an ego determining its own will in isolation and abstraction from social and political life. It is something external to the moral culture and life of the people. For Hegel, moral right, like Newtonian science, is an appearance and "therefore a possible object of scientific knowledge."127 This is evident, for example, in Hegel's brilliant account of the master-slave dialectic as both an actual form of consciousness and as a content of our conceptual self-development.

Hegel's advance over Kant is, in sum, his historicization of the process of rational self-determination. Against Kant, Hegel argues that the opposition of freedom and necessity appears to be unresolvable only because it is viewed ahistorically and individualistically. Against Kant's individualism, Hegel makes reason practical through the active spirit of a people in erecting a system of right within a social reality. ...

With the dynamic or developmental concept of reason, Hegel can say that Kant has made a wrong choice in giving priority to empirical reality over the rational idea.128


128 Ibid., p. 140.
3.4 Logic and Phenomenology: History and Truth

It is commonplace to argue that Hegel's philosophy claims a total vision and an absolute standpoint. As a result, it is often suggested that to approach Hegel properly means to take up his system as he intended it, i.e., as the system of absolute knowledge. In spite of the problems of intentional meaning, this viewpoint, if accepted literally or if applied with equal vigour to other philosophers, is obviously limiting because it means that a text bears no relationship to its reception by subsequent generations—a text has no history. But philosophical texts, like other cultural artifacts, have a history and a history of interpretations. For our purposes, the approach to Hegel adopted here stresses Hegel's often-reiterated view that the world is a human affair. As a result, the oppositions between History and Truth, Time and Eternity, Being and Meaning, are neither raised to pure spirit nor reduced to the immanence of a personal self-constitution in time—Absolute Spirit or Universal Me. Rather, our task is remain open to what Hegel called the "Cunning of Reason," (List der Vernunft).129

La difficile maitresse de l'hegelianisme est la relation de la Phenomenologie et de la Logique, nous dirions aujourd'hui de l'anthropologie et de l'ontologie ... Hegel a cru dans la Phenomenologie pouvoir comprendre la reflexion humaine a la lumiere du savoir absolu (le pour-nous de l'ouvrage), et il nous semble que le principe de cette compre-

129 This reading is patterned on Jean Hyppolite's readings of Hegel. See his Genesis and Structure, op. cit. and Logique et Existence, (Paris:Presses Universitaires, 1953); as well as Studies on Marx and Hegel, op. cit.
hension est contenu dans la signification de l'ontologie hegelienne, mais il a cru pouvoir manifest-
ter le devenir-savoir-absolu de la conscience hu-
maine, comme si ce devenir était une histoire. 
L'histoire est bien le lieu de ce passage, mais ce 
passage n'est pas lui-même un fait historique.

The transition from the Phenomenology to the Logic, and 
its reciprocal connection, I take to be directed at eluci-
dating a notion of human being as Dasein, as it has been 
comprehended and made manifest historically in and through 
the mediation of thinking, speaking and interacting individ-
uals in concrete socio-culture and economic communities.  
Philosophy only occurs in self-sufficient communities, and, 
for Hegel, only autarchic communal life is historical be-
cause it embodies both the aufhebung of life lived solely by 
necessity and the freedom of cultural existence to pursue 
the "good" life. It is in this sense that Hegel can talk of 
the "bei sich" of history, or literally making ourselves "at 
home" in the world. As we shall see in Chapter Four below, 
the medium of this comprehension and manifestation, or the 
dialectical medium, is language.  
The discussion to follow 
immediately describes the Hegelian relationship between his 
logics and phenomenology, or, what is the same, the connec-
tion between forms of consciousness as appearances to con-
sciousness (phenomenology), and the inner necessity of their

130 Ibid., Logique et Existence, p. 247.
131 Cf., Jean Hyppolite, Studies on Marx and Hegel, op. cit., esp, Chapters 8 and 9.
conceptual self-development (logic). Hegel employs the metaphor of a circle to express this developmental process:

As concrete, this process is a succession of processes in development which must be represented not as a straight line drawn into vague infinity, but a circle returning within itself, which, as periphery, has many circles whose entire composition consists of a large number of processes in development turning back within themselves. (Lectures, 1, 27).

In the Science of Logic he extends this metaphor to a methodological principle:

By reason of the nature of the method which has been demonstrated the science is seen to be a circle which returns upon itself, for mediation bends back its end into the beginning of simple ground. Further this circle is a circle of circles, for each member, being simply inspired by the method, is intro-reflection which, returning to the beginning, is at the same time the beginning of a new member. The various sciences, of which each has a before and an after, are figments of a chain, or rather, each has only a before, and in conclusion shows its after. (Science, 484).

The obvious importance of this metaphor for Hegel - it also appears in the lesser logic and in the Preface, (ENC., 15, 20) and (Phen., 93) - is that it expresses how the historical development of content proceeds by its own integral rules or logic, and that logic is internal and co-extensive with content. As such, for Hegel the history of any particular content as "thought which thinks itself" in terms of its own contradictions, is always a series of ever-expanding circles which reflect both logical as well as cultural, historical or temporal developments. This is what he means when he remarks that it "is of the nature of truth to pre-
vail when its time has come, and therefore never appears too Early, nor ever finds that the public is not ready for it" (Preface, 108). What, we might wish to ask, is the relationship between history and philosophical truth? For if history expresses only particular, finite and transient temporality, and truth expresses universal, unchanging and timeless necessity, how are they conjoined? It should be recalled that these questions are of fundamental concern to the contemporary debate about how to go about interpreting the history of political theory. This is especially germane to proponents of both the Great Tradition and New History approaches. In effect, Hegel is directly confronting those who conceive truth in the universal and timeless reiteration of the classical 'vision' of politike episteme and its ideal model of authentic political life. Moreover, he is also confronting those who would separate the concept of truth from necessity and claim for knowledge only that which is transitory and finite, and therewith subsumable under general categories of historical understanding. In the Great Tradition, for example, the history of political theory is indeed conceived as an epic circle, a world of its own, in which ideas as timeless iterations are given far greater salience than the actuality in which they appear. Thus it forever retreats back into itself as the ideal expression of all that is holy and true, and equates its own understanding with the esoteric intentionality of authorial meaning. But as Hegel retorts:
[The rationality of history] ... is also opposed by the ... fancy that Ideas and ideals are something far too excellent to have actuality. This divorce between ideas and reality, ... looks upon its own abstractions, dreams though they are, as something true and real, and prides itself on the imperative 'ought', which it takes especial pleasure in prescribing even on the field of politics. As if the world had waited on it to learn how it ought to be, and was not! (ENC., 6, 10).

With the New Historians, however, the perspective is quite different. With them, the history of political theory is limited to history proper, to the disconnected circles of its apparent finitude or empirical form. In so doing, however, they deny all that systematic thinking embraces as the highest form of its own, viz., the freedom of thought, or its a priori character (ENC., 12, 18). In giving over the constitution of meaning to a context which thought seeks to apprehend, thought itself is thereby reduced to an empirical form only. In sum, the existing practices of political commentary contain an inner contradiction which is analagous to Hegel's diagnosis of the plight of philosophy in his time.

[Philosophy aims at understanding what is unchangeable, eternal in and for itself; its end is Truth. But history tells us of that which has at one time existed, at another time has vanished having been expelled by something else. Truth is eternal; it does not fall within the sphere of the transient, and has no history. But if it has a history, and this history is only the representa-

133 Compare Hegel's view that philosophy is never edifying (Phen., 74) with Leo Straus's remark that "while 'Philosophy must beware of wishing to be edifying', it is of necessity edifying," Thoughts on Machiavelli, (Seattle:University of Washington State Press, 1969), p. 299.
Hegel's response to this contradiction is his demonstration that truth must have a history and history a truth - "veritas filia temporis." In a culture in which the word "truth" is oftentimes a source of derision, Hegel's position must appear fanciful, to say the least. This is forcefully expressed by Sabine, for example, in his preface to the most widely-read text on the history of political theory. "Taken as a whole," he says, "a political theory can hardly be said to be true." But rather than a defect, this is precisely the same cultural phenomenon and philosophical attitude which Hegel took to be the plight of philosophy in his own day. That is, a "general scepticism toward philosophy as a viable human enterprise bred precisely by incomprehension of the history of philosophy." Conversely, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Hobbes, and Marx, for example, each claims to express the true form of political life. But who is correct,

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who is telling the truth, and most fundamentally, how can we form a judgement? Quite obviously, in the case of Sabine cited above there can be no judgement, only sterile analysis because his conception of the history of political theory is a kind of historical gossip - "a battlefield covered with the bones of the of the dead," (Lectures, 1, 17). With Epicurean alacrity, Sabine teaches the virtues of the analytic understanding which trisects the world into facts, logic and preferences, none of which has priority or truth. And yet, after rendering lifeless each political theory in this way, are we not still driven to accept one or another as more plausible, or more true, than its competitors, and to hold in full or partial error the remaining others? If we deny the possibility of truth to the study, while holding dear to our own convictions and opinions about the appropriateness of one or another of the master texts, then surely thinking itself is lifeless or dead. With Hegel, as a result, I see nothing inherently wrong with allowing, in a fashion analogous to the history of philosophy, that the whole of the history of political theory has something to do with truth. This must, however, be demonstrated logically as well as historically. In sum, the argument from Hegel is that the serious political teachings which constitute the

137 The force of Hegel's argument is clear in the full citation: "The whole history of philosophy becomes a battlefield covered with the bones of the dead; it is a kingdom not merely formed of dead and lifeless individuals, but of refuted and spiritually dead systems, since each has killed and buried the other." (Lectures, 1, 17).
tradition of political theory represent a series of finite standpoints whose own inward and outward dialectic makes manifest the development of the human species as conscious political beings. Thus, Hegel applies to philosophy the words of Christ: "Let the dead bury their own dead; arise, and follow Me." (Lectures, 1, 17). 

It is a mistake to interpret the study of the classical philosophical or political tradition as a cosmic struggle or competition for a single, all-embracing Truth. This is precisely the attitude that breeds scepticism, for in believing what is true to be a singular entity - some thing grasped in one simultaneously primal and final intuitive or didactic act - but finding nothing but an array of plausible systems, thought early collapses into scepticism. The same attitude leads to the same unthinking conclusion when political theory is characterized as the search for the good, or the ideal, political regime and it is not found. Throughout his many writings, Hegel's central argument is that from the point of view of individual systems of ideas, or the "for

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138 In the Preface Hegel applies the same attitude to his own philosophy: "The feet of them which shall carry thee out are already at the door," (Preface, 110). The reference is to the Apostle Paul to Ananias, "Behold the feet of them that shall carry thee out are at door." "Behold," says Hegel, "the philosophy by which your own will be refuted and displaced will not wait long, just as it has never waited long before." (Lectures, 1, 17). Cf., Matthew 8:22 and Acts 5:9: "The feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out." (Preface, 111).

itself", concepts of truth or good are expressions of human life, forms or shapes of consciousness, which arise out of peculiar circumstances and represent answers for a certain stage of life. Similarly, the master texts of political theory "for itself" are also a series of destructive challenges and displacements of what was written before. Each system of ideas seeks to assert itself in opposition to other systems which it means to subjugate or destroy. For us, however, as "in itself," it appears as a tradition in tension and conflict in which the contrasting standpoints demand that the dialectic of reconciliation operating behind its surface strains be made apparent. What is such a task but an effort to understand the true nature of the concept, and to show how our efforts to elucidate meaning flow into one another, sometimes easily and peacefully, at other times with hostility and mortal struggle. In history itself, we see the same record — mass-slaughter, unhappiness, lack of wisdom and virtue — but, asks Hegel, what is the purpose and final principle of this record.\footnote{140} Is it not to uncover what is true and right?

\footnote{140} As J. Glenn Gray notes: Hegel "compared the vitality in history to the myth of the Phoenix, that prepares its own funeral pyre on which it is consumed, and lo! from the ashes there emerges a new Phoenix with life fresh and renewed. If history is a record of dissolution and death, it is no less a record of rebirth and of new beginnings." \textit{Hegel's Hellenic Ideal}, op. cit., p. 2.
It is not by mere chance or simple convention that the study of the history of political theory is conceived as a tradition, or as a conceptually-interrelated body of thought. In this sense it actually makes little difference if this general view embodies a philosophical vision of wholeness (Great Tradition) or is limited to a series of reconstructed circles (New History) — for otherwise it would consist of isolated particulars only. And, as Hegel argues, what is particular only is accidental or fortuitous, and thus worthless, trivial, and untrue as knowledge. "Nor is it so that one thing has been thought out here, another there, at will; in the activity of thinking mind there is real connection, and what takes place is rational." (Lectures, 1, 19). Consequently, the various notions of tradition accepted by the students of the history of political theory, including the Great Tradition, New History, as well as the simple form of classificatory scheme suggested by Gunnell and others, all point to the study as a continuing dialogue, an open and rational conversation about present possibilities directed in part from the past.

... just like any other conversation what can be said is, to a large extent, governed by what has been said before. Whilst the direction of the conversation may shift, there are definite rules governing what can be said next. Not anything can be said and, like any conversation, a shared framework of conventions is presupposed. Meaningful discourse only takes place against a background of shared meanings.\(^{141}\)

\(^{141}\)David Lamb, *Language and Perception*, op. cit., p. 79.
The concepts of 'shared meaning' and of 'dialogue' suggest that a tradition of discourse - philosophical, political, religious, aesthetic, etc. - is not the outcome of a reconstructed history or the result of the imposition of an external framework of meaning antecedently onto the record. The unity of a discourse must, according to Hegel, arise out of internal standards which allow for the possibility of an examination of the validity and necessity of the flow of the arguments. For Hegel, moreover, this is the power of dialectic as both the logical and historical dynamic of Reason - the cunning of reason itself.

The relationship between philosophical science and history can be divided into logical and temporal components, or the structure of concepts as a conceptual whole and their development in history. What Hegel tries to show is that the history or pattern of development of different systems in time is correlative of the structure of logical relations in their conceptual development. In other words, the logical and temporal strains are parallel. In this way, for example, if the historical sequence of systems of philosophy is correlative of the architectonic or conceptual development (Verunft) of philosophy as a whole, then the task of

142 A. Robert Caponigri, "The Pilgrimage of Truth," op. cit., p. 13. As Hegel concludes: "I would only remark this, that what has been said reveals that the study of history of philosophy is the study of philosophy itself," (Lectures, 30).

143 It should be evident to the reader that Hegel's concept of logic is his Science of Logic which is examined imme-
philosophy would seem to be the phenomenological and logical
description of their correlation. 144 The history of philoso-
phy becomes philosophy itself, and philosophy becomes the
philosophy of history. Likewise, the philosophy of history
becomes history, and history becomes a Phenomenology of con-
sciousness, as well as the Science of Logic. Both logically
and phenomenologically, therefore, the interpretation of
separate systems of ideas is not for the purpose of uncover-
ning or reconstructing the manner of their contextualization,
either as a function of the temporality of social circum-
stances, 145 or ideological context. 146 And it is not, as I
will argue below, a question of grasping an author's origi-
nal intentions either. This is because from the standpoint
of Hegel's logic, thinking is a structural process and a
structured activity which, irrespective of authorial inten-
tions, generates its own history as a conceptual unity with
its own tradition of discourse. Logically, that is, system-
atic thinking is independent of the thinking subject in both
its historical development and internal structure. This is
what Hegel calls Mind, or "thought which thinks itself," or

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144 A. Robert Caponigri, "The Pilgrimage of Truth," op.
cit., p. 13.

145 Cf., Neal Wood, "The Social History of Political Theo-

146 Cf., C.B. Macpherson, The Political Theory of Possessive
what Heidegger would later refer to as 'philosophy philo-
phizing itself.' While this may seem strange at first
stance, the meaning of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* is in-
comprehensible if we fail to take into account that the en-
tire book is an exposition of "thought thinking itself" in
and through the historical movement of its actual spatio-
temporal development. The purpose of the *Logic* is to demon-
strate this movement in its inner necessity as pure 'thought
thinking thought' through its multiple determinations as
forms of consciousness. For Hegel, philosophical thinking
tries to make sense of how we have come to make sense of the
world; and, it could be added, political philosophy is about
how we make political sense of our political understanding
of things. In this way, philosophy is quite opposed to a
science of nature. This is because Nature is "as it is; its
changes are thus only repetitions, and its movement takes
the form of a circle only ... the circle of eternal return"
(*Lectures* 1, 32).

The *Phenomenology* and *Logic*, however, argue that the cir-
cle in which philosophical thinking moves is not repetitive
but dialectical, for in order to know itself thought exter-
nalizes itself, it becomes an object "for itself" and is
thereby alienated from itself. This is a complicated way of
suggesting that in order to understand the world we must
have some understanding of ourselves, and to have self-
knowledge demands some knowledge of the world. The *Phenome-
nology is thus a dialectical and hermeneutical circle in which the knower and known, reason and experience, are bound existentially in history and conceptually in thought, as well as conceptually in history and existentially in thought. Thinking may be said to "take flight" into existence or into time because it is always a "negative" movement from one thought to another in order to return to the original thought with a broader and deeper knowledge. This is what Hegel calls positivity. Thinking is thereby a dialectical process which involves an ever-expanding circle of growing self-awareness, and an ever-narrowing circle of conceptual reconciliation. This is similar to the Socratic notion of beauty outlined in Chapter Two, in which the recognition of beauty in one thing leads progressively to a realization of beauty in all things. With Hegel, history reflects a similar process. It is not endless infinite flux but a movement away from time and toward the unity which compels thought to seek for the meaning of itself in time. History is the movement toward self-knowledge, not as the reminiscence of a lost unity, but as the coming-to-unity of self-creative reason, or the coming to maturity and fruition in the self-conscious thought and action of free individuals. In the Logic, Hegel explains:

Truth is only possible as a universe or totality; and the freedom of the whole, as well as the necessity of the several sub-divisions, which it implies, are only possible when these are discriminated and defined, ... Each of the parts of philosophy is a philosophical whole, a circle rounded and complete in itself. In each of these
parts, however, the philosophical idea is found in a particular specificity or medium. The single circle, because it is a real totality, burst through the limits imposed by its special medium, and gives rise to a wider circle. The whole of philosophy in this way resembles a circle of circles, but, at the same time, the whole idea is constituted by the system of these particular phases, and each is a ... necessary member of the organization. (Science, 24-25).

This view suggests that the task of interpretation is really the tracing or retracing back of the pattern of dispersal of our thinking in time, back to the unity of its conceptual structure in and through the dialectic of the plurality of contending systems of ideas. The purpose of our interpretations is therewith not to preserve the relativism of existing convictions or to generate an endless repetition of tired opinions, but is to bring political knowledge to rest as self-knowledge. For what is at rest is not in time, and knowledge which is not in time is truth.

[The history of Philosophy gives us the same process from a historical and external point of view. The stages in the evolution of the Idea there seem to follow each other by accident, and to present merely a number of different and unconnected principles, which the several systems of philosophy carry out in their own way. But it is not so. For those thousands of years the same Architect has directed the work: and that Architect is the one living Mind whose nature is to think, to bring to self-consciousness what it is, and, with its being thus set as object before it, to be at the same time raised above it, and so to reach a higher stage of its own being. The different systems which the history of philosophy presents are therefore not irreconcilable with unity. (Enc. 13, 18).

Hegel is here pointing to a fundamental distinction between temporality and historicity, that is to say, between thought in its apparent chaotic dispersal in time as the plurality of contending systems and thought as Concept (Begriff). By Begriff, Hegel is making reference to what we in English normally call the process wherein a concept, as an abstract term, is comprehended or grasped, i.e., its meaning in and for the world is comprehended or concretized. Concepts, in other words, are acts of consciousness self-consciously realized. This is a unifying activity and is precisely what Hegel has in mind when he asserts that actuality and rationality, Being and Concept, are correlative. In order to follow Hegel's argument, his view of logic and its relationship to phenomenological analysis must be further developed. This is because the Logic deals with the 'pure' content of thought while the Phenomenology is a descriptive account of the movement of thought from consciousness to self-consciousness and reason. The need for such a reconsideration by students of politics was clear even to Hegel:

The necessity of understanding logic in a deeper sense than as the science of the mere form of thought is enforced by the interests of religion and politics... In earlier days men meant no harm by thinking: they thought away freely and fearlessly. ... But while they so thought, the principle ordinances of life began to be seriously affected by their conclusions. Thought deprived existing institutions of their force. ... Thought, in short, made itself a power in the real world. The matter ended ... [when] the world professed to find that thought arrogated too much and was unable to perform what it had undertaken. ... What it had done was to overthrow religion and the state. It became urgent therefore to justify
thought, ... and this justification in recent times has constituted one of the main problems of philosophy. (ENC., 19, 24-25).

Gadamer notes that at the end of the Phenomenology Hegel leaves us with the "idea of a philosophical science whose moments are no longer determinate forms of consciousness, but rather determinate concepts." For Gadamer, this means that the 'truth' of the Phenomenology must be grounded in a science of logic which, paradoxically it would seem, is itself grounded in the experiences of consciousness delineated in the Phenomenology. Thus, instead of arguing which of the major texts is more authoritative or central to Hegel's intentions, Gadamer suggests that both of these works represent the "sole part of his system which he actually completed," and are thereby of co-equivalent importance for the understanding of Hegel. Hegel's other books, he argues, were intended as textbooks and should be treated as manuals of instruction and not as part of his system. While it is

148 If one is not already persuaded by the argument that Hegel is essentially conservative in his political orientations, this passage would seem to suggest a rather different point of view. That is, Hegel is here hinting that it is not simply the task of a philosophy to be critical of its own thinking, but that the more urgent purpose of philosophy may well be the need to keep alive its inherently radical tendencies by not succumbing to the modern preoccupation with establishing the limits of the power of thought.


150 Ibid., p. 76. Wallace, however, argues that the Encyclopaedia is the "only complete, matured, and authentic statement of Hegel's philosophical system," in translator's "Introduction", Hegel's Logic, op. cit., p. xxxi.
not very clear what this distinction is meant to indicate in respect of reading Hegel's other works, his view of the relationship between the Logic and the Phenomenology is well advised. Too often in the past Hegel's Logic has been treated as peripheral to the Phenomenology, and in so doing his philosophy was made to appear inconsistent. On the one hand, such interpretations offered the spectacle of a thoroughly unrestrained idealism which implies that Hegel's analysis is quite arbitrary; on the other, a logically questionable, from the point of view of identity-logic, and often inchoate parade of categories and determinations with authoritarian implications for politics.\textsuperscript{151} Taken together, however, the Logic and Phenomenology represent a corrective to this point of view. As Stanley Rosen remarks: "The Phenomenology is not genuinely intelligible without a knowledge of the Logic."\textsuperscript{152} At work in both is the mind of a philosophical radical attempting to penetrate the categories and determinations of thought which philosophy had hitherto taken for granted, or had so totally formalized that they were treated as pure idealities without need of philosophi-

\textsuperscript{151} The most severe proponents of these perspectives are, respectively, Bertrand Russell, \textit{History of Western Philosophy}, op. cit., pp. 701-715; and Sir Karl Popper, \textit{The Open Society and Its Enemies: The High Tide of Prophecy}:\textit{Hegel and Marx}, Vol. 2, 2nd ed., (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), Chapters 11-12. In both cases, these authors reduce Hegel to a specific text, or a part of a text, without treating the system as an interrelated work of philosophy.

\textsuperscript{152} Stanley Rosen, \textit{Hegel}, op. cit., p. 129.
cal or conceptual justification.

The portrait of Socrates drawn in Chapter Two, i.e. that his dialectic operated in such a way that opinions were allowed to dissolve into contradiction in order to elucidate the reasons, or lack thereof, for advancing them, is at the heart of Hegel's logic as dialectics. Unlike the Socratic method of question and answer, however, Hegel saw reason at work in the dialectic, and sought to represent this negative movement as an equally positive expression of the conceptual activity of thought. While he agreed with Socrates that the rightness of an opinion could never be established on the basis of the correctness of a single point of view, e.g. justice is honouring the gods, Hegel argued that correctness is ultimately a product of a system of ideas in development which give meaning and expression to each particular manifestation and negation of an idea. It was because of Plato's ultimate insistence on the 'beyondness' of Forms, or the inexpressibility of Intelligibles, that Hegel rejected classical dialectic as immature philosophy, and in its place offered a reconciliatory logic. In other words, all of our thinking is at some point confronted with a contradiction it cannot master - this is the point at which philosophy, for Hegel at least, begins. To understand the dialectic of thought and reality which brings this about is the task of philosophical science.153 And yet, Hegel agreed with Socrates-

tes—Plato on the general standpoint of philosophy: The subjective certainty of a conviction is "distinct from the objective truth to which it aspires."¹⁵⁴ Experience, that is, is not always the best teacher of what is true or good, but, contra Socrates—Plato, Hegel argued that the scepticism or relativism which normally follows from this argument is not overcome by setting indeterminate Being over and against determinate forms of consciousness. Such a solution, he argued, expresses only the fate of the unhappy consciousness as a flight from experience into a supersensible world of fancy or faith.

This flight into illusion is not merely an historical form of consciousness, it is an ever-recurring mentalité. The writer G.K. Chesterton, for example, exemplifies this attitude in the contemporary period when he suggests that "elfland" philosophy is an answer to the self-estrangement of modern scientific culture.¹⁵⁵ That is, in each of us there is a desire to experience the world in its mystery as a place of enchantment rather than as a place of mechanistic, anti-human and dull repetitions. To recapture the pleasures of fairytales and legends—the pleasure of the text—requires a suspension of knowledge and a setting-free of the imagination as a flight into fantasy. Such an attit-

¹⁵⁴ Jean Hyppolte, Studies on Hegel and Marx, op. cit., p. 170.

tude of untrammelled belief, Chesterton suggests, is an existential antidote to positive science and its dehumanization of the human spirit. Thus, against actuality, Chesterton recommends a dogmatic _epoché_ of rational experience in favor of Catholic orthodoxy. Religion, that is, is made a wholly negative attitude to actuality— but elves like the Christian God they are meant to intimate have no actuality. Hegel, on the contrary, refused to dissociate ideas or ideals from actuality on the basis of sentiment—or the desire for deeper meaning which prompts such feelings—holding always to the view that the achievements of reason, and our reflective experience of these accomplishments, constitute alone the ultimate goal of our thinking, speaking, and interacting. Thus the _Logic_, as we will see immediately below, points to the fact that the _Phenomenology_ cannot be made the terminus of our thinking and acting: it is the recognition and expression of the desire to comprehend the achievements of reason through an analysis of the Western heritage of philosophy as "thought thinking thought" in and through its multiple determinations as actual modes of consciousness.

The "end of history" is thereby the recognition of the power of reason to reconcile its confrontations with the "unintelligibles" of specific times and locations. Time and eternity, God and humanity, thought and reality always remain open to the "cunning of reason," however, and therefore
to possible reconciliation. In this way Hegel does not stand at the end of history, nor does his philosophy represent the hubris of contemporary science which sees the present state of knowledge as always superior to the past. The "end of history" for Hegel has meaning only to the extent that henceforth thought must resolutely refuse to accept a "beyond" when confronted with its own contradictions. The 'end of history' arrives, if we must use such terminology, with the Science of Logic, or, what is the same, it arrives when the otherness of reality disclosed in the science of appearances is comprehended as logical thought, and not as the unintelligible, ineffable or noumenal order of things.

The dialectical movement from the relativity of particular perceptions and experiences to the universality of thought and expression is in and through the Logic. With Hegel, however, logic is not the logic of the grammarians with its formal rules of identity and doctrines of propositional structure. Again, as in the Phenomenology, there can be no rule which governs the restlessness of thought. Rather, Hegel describes what he has in mind as the logic of concepts. For those unfamiliar with the structure of the Logic, the following will serve as a brief summary.

The Logic is Hegel's account of the achievements of reason in history. It is divided into three major sections, the doctrines of Being, Essence and Notion (Concept). The first doctrine, i.e. Being, is a discussion of our common
sense appreciation of the world, and is characterized by such immediate and self-contained categories as being, nothing, quality, quantity, measure, etc. In treating these categories as immediate, Hegel is arguing that these are determinations with which we cognize the world rather unre- flectively. As Stace says:

Each of them (categories) is what is quite apart from the other. They do not mediate one another, as positive and negative do. Hence they are called immediate. ... [W]hen the categories of the general sphere of being are critically exam- ined, it turns out they are in fact vitally relat- ed to each other. ... This is the very meaning of the deduction of the categories from one an- other. The deduction breaks down the supposed self-sufficiency of each category and shows that, though it purports to stand alone, it is in reality impossible without the other. But it is the purporting to stand alone which constitutes the immediacy of the categories of this sphere. 156

In other words, Being moves through a series of determinations of thought, e.g. nothing, becoming, and of experience, e.g. limit, infinite, design, ratio, as stages of increas- ing reflection. That is, the binary pairs and intercorrelated categories mediate as well as imply each other. This leads to the doctrine of essence as mediation. It is a stage which Hegel suggests represents the birth of scientific awareness, or the consciousness that the unreflected immediacy of common sense masks the more abstract categories of existence, appearance, actuality, substance, the thing, identity, difference, etc., with which thought

begins to represent the world conceptually as a object for thought. Here arises the awareness of an "outer and inner" layer of Being as that which is essential rather than superficial. Concomitant with this stage is the view that the true is an essence while the untrue is unessential or an appearance only. The task for thought at this stage is to penetrate the "outer" surface of things in order to arrive at the "inner" essence. Whereas Being is immediacy, essence implies what Stace calls "the sphere of universal relativity." What he means is that the doctrine of essence is the stage at which the mind is made aware of the fact that there is no cause without an effect, substance with accident, etc. Briefly, thought has arrived at the level of understanding and its either/or mode of comprehension. This is why Hegel argues that natural science is necessarily always relativistic because it is incapable of moving beyond the universality of its categorization of the world as essence. Thought which thinks itself, and therewith can think the concept of Absolute, is at the stage of the Notion (Concept). Here, Hegel says, logic becomes identical with philosophy as the self-conscious awareness of the work of subjectivity in reality, e.g. judgement, logic, idea, subjective end, life, truth, goodness, etc. In other words, while the doctrine of Being reflects the ordinary view of the objective world as a field

157 Ibid., p. 176.
158 Ibid., p. 177.
of objects which is immediate, the doctrine of Essence is the recognition of the place of the thinking-subject in the apprehension of objects for knowledge. The subject, however, still remains separated from reality. The doctrine of the Concept is the "idea of a being which in passing outwards into its opposite does not become anything different, but remains, even in the opposition, completely identical with itself."\textsuperscript{159} That is, the concept mediates itself; it is self-mediating. For Hegel, the first two stages represent his "objectivist" logic while the Notion is "subjectivist" logic. The mediation of subjective and objective logic is the Absolute Idea, or the identity of identity and difference, or universal and particular. It is what Hegel calls the singular or individual.\textsuperscript{160} The singular is the crux of Hegel's

\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 222.

\textsuperscript{160} It should be clear that Hegel is not talking about "individual" in the sense of a distinct human being. This is because he is attempting to move beyond the binary categories of universals and particulars to their synthesis as singular. In other words, following Russell's distinctions, knowledge is most often presented as consisting of two sorts: Knowledge by description and knowledge by acquaintance, or in terms of universals or particulars. Knowledge by description, as we have seen, denies the particularity of things, while knowledge by acquaintance, like history, never reaches universality. What Hegel is saying that both require each other, or are determined by each other, such that knowledge of universals is dependent on particulars, and knowledge of particulars on universals. Left in this way, however, Russell's distinction is clearly a case of the "universal relativity" of the world categorized solely in terms of the doctrine of essence. Hegel's third moment, i.e. the singular, is the unity of universality and particularity as self-determined – the mediation, reconciliation and unification of the moments of opposition, or the negation of the negation. This moment is hermeneu-
gel's concept of history. The story of the logic in its journey from immediacy to Idea is likewise the universal history of the world as Reason. The dialectic which propels both thought and reality is not a logic of blind chance, but the working through of the implications of the categories in which we cognize objects and our thinking about objects. Thus, the logic leads to the realization that each of its partial and inadequate articulations is made progressively more complete by each negation and new expression of an idea. History, likewise, is governed by the identical process of negation and reconciliation, of dissolution and death and rebirth and regeneration. In effect, this is what Hegel means when he says in the Phenomenology that the Absolute "has to be conceived essentially as a result" (Preface, 82). This same process, moreover, is seen in the history of philosophy when it is approached as a conceptual unity as well as a chronological, temporal order.

3.5 LOGIC AND HISTORY - TOWARDS HERMENEUSIS

There is thus a certain correspondence between the actual genesis of the history of philosophy and the ideal genesis of the categories in Hegel's Logic. But the parallel is not a perfect one. For history is subject to temporal vicissitudes and particular situations. As long as there is meaning which has not found expression - or is alienated - there will be, indeed, perhaps there must be, misunderstanding.

tical, as opposed to science and historical thought, as we shall see. Cf., George O'Brien, Hegel - On Reason and History, op. cit., pp. 84-89.
For Hyppolite the corresponding relationship between Hegel's history of philosophy and his logic is at best imperfect. This, he states, is not the result of Hegel's incomplete mastery of his tools of thought, but arises out of the content which the logic seeks to adumbrate. Misunderstanding is integral to the process of making sense of things—error is an inescapable result of Dasein's search for meaning. This point is oftentimes missed by many of Hegel's interpreters who either suggest that Absolute Knowledge be taken literally; or that the arbitrariness with which Hegel seems to cast his logical spell over all of history and its articulation is essentially the product of reading previous events and philosophies in light of a predetermined model of development. In other words, or so the argument proceeds, Hegel is guilty of deciding antecedently that history is progressive and thus set about imposing a preconceived logical schema on to history and its record. While Hegel may indeed have decided that the history of philosophy is identifiable with its logical development prior to his empirical investigations of the record, this in no wise means that his understanding is arbitrary. As Lauer explains:

If philosophy is to have a history at all, in the sense in which Hegel understands history, it must throughout its development be identifiable as one and the same, and if its own logic demands the

161 Jean Hyppolite, Marx and Hegel, op. cit., p. 177.
162 For a discussion of this criticism and a defense of Hegel, see Quentin Lauer, "Hegel as Historian," op. cit., p. 22ff.
sort of development Hegel has elaborated in his system, it is quite understandable that he should expect to see the "moments" of that development manifested in the historical process. In any event the standpoint from which Hegel surveys the history of philosophy is that of his own Logic. 

History, as Hegel understands it, is not simply a record of successive events or philosophies but also the unity which structures and links these events and expressions. As a result, Hegel "detects a certain logical necessity, whether the events in question be those of world-history or the opinions of philosophers who have contributed to philosophy's growth down through the ages." The task of the historian then is not only to record the past, but to demonstrate the inner necessity that connects the apparently inchoate succession of events and opinions. And if this inner necessity is reflected in the empirical record, it must be approached conceptually, that is, in terms of the inner and outer appearances and categories through which history has acquired its meaning and expression. In effect, it must be approached logically. As such, this is why Hegel can argue that what connects various philosophies and their interpretations is not that they are grouped under the banner of philosophy as a class concept, but because they represent a conceptual unity, the unity of differentiated determinations. Similarly, the history of political theory is not

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163 Ibid., p. 22.
164 Ibid., p. 22.
165 Ibid., p. 24.
just a class concept, but a unity as well, albeit with its own structure and mode of expression.

The point of all this is that only in rational thinking can man come to grips with reality as it is, and this can do only if he makes thought itself the object of investigation. Philosophy is precisely thought occupied with itself. When it is occupied with the inevitable implications of thinking as such, the investigation is logical.

The problem remains, however, of clarifying the nature of the correspondence between history and logic, not only in terms of the problem of particulars and universals, which in any case is a matter for language, but also in respect of experience and thought. While language may well be the medium in which this connection is expressed, it is not the medium in which the dialectic of contingency and necessity moves. This is why the Logic may be seen to operate in two quite different ways, each of which produces substantially different implications. One approach is directed toward detecting the play of reason as history; the other, toward meaning and its manifestation in history. This is not to suggest that reason and meaning are not interrelated - Hegel always had in mind the classical concept of Logos as reason and word - but to note that their relationship is not identical. For Hegel, history records the work of Reason and this labour is exemplified in terms of both the alienation of meaning as well as the search for new meaning which constitutes the historical record. The Logic, however, is con-

166 ibid., p. 24.
cerned with the movement from the absence of meaning to meaningful articulation. This is another way of saying that thinking begins with an idea, this idea in turn finds itself in contradiction with itself, and moves outside itself in order to subsequently return to the initial idea with a clearer and deeper insight. It moves from the empty notion to concrete idea. In this regard Hegel need not be interpreted as the archetypal historicist of World Spirit, i.e. as the spokesperson for a concept of history as immanent objective necessity. Rather, he may be read profitably as a hermeneutic thinker addressing the incontestability of misunderstanding and incomprehension which defines us as finite, historical beings, i.e. Dasein.

The dialectical structure of the Logic, and its movement from the doctrines of Being to Absolute Idea, is a description of the ideal genesis of hermeneutical thinking. Whereas the Phenomenology may be regarded as the actual genesis of interpretive history, i.e. as forms of consciousness continuously mediating the past and present, the Logic presents this dialectical circle from the standpoint of an ideal genesis of categories of interpretation, i.e. from indeterminate abstract categories to determinate concepts. This is why the Logic begins with indeterminate Being as the emptiest and weakest category of Being in order that nothing is philosophically presupposed or made an element of assertion which would separate the knowledge sought from the content
under examination. But Pure Being is thoroughly indeterminate; it cannot characterize reality.\textsuperscript{167} From here Hegel begins his dialectical ascension of categories to the most determinate concept, i.e. Absolute Idea. As Hegel explains:

Pure Being makes the beginning: because it is on one hand pure thought, and on the other immediacy itself, simple and indeterminate; and the first beginning cannot be mediated by anything, or be further determined. ...

[When thinking is to begin, we have nothing but thought in its merest indeterminateness: ... And this we call Being. \textsuperscript{(ENC., 86, 124-125).}

In the same discussion he applies this insight to the interpretation of the history of philosophy:

In the history of philosophy the different stages of the logical Idea assume the shape of successive systems, each based on a particular definition of the Absolute. As the logical Idea is seen to unfold itself in a process from the abstract to the concrete, so in the history of philosophy the earliest systems are the most abstract, and thus at the same time, the poorest. The relation too of the earlier to the latter systems of philosophy is much like the relation of the corresponding stages of the logical Idea: in other words, the earlier are preserved in the later; but subordinated and submerged. ... Thus the history of philosophy, in its true meaning deals not with a past, but with an eternal and veritable present: ... \textsuperscript{(ENC., 86, 125-126).}

In a parallel fashion, the \textit{Phenomenology} begins with what we feel or believe to be the most concrete form of experience, i.e. sense-certainty, in order to demonstrate the vacuousness of this simple belief in immediate presence. This because sense-certainty is without content - it must be said. The \textit{Logie} begins at the dawn of philosophical think-

ing, however, with the pure immediacy of philosophical categories, i.e. with abstract words. It deals with the determination of concepts while the Phenomenology is concerned with determinate forms of consciousness. Each is interrelated to the extent that the transition from one figure of consciousness to another is reflected in the logical development of concepts in the Logic.

Hegel's claim to inner necessity in the empirical record of events and philosophies, and his corollary argument that the history of philosophy and the philosophy of history express this necessity, cannot be evaluated from either a strictly formal or historical standpoint. This is because, from the point of view of logic, concepts acquire concretization and determination in reality, but, from the standpoint of history, the process of concretization operates conceptually and dialectically as logic. Thus, as Clark remarks, for Hegel logical thought contains its other. "[Thought] contains reality as its other, not merely as a confused thought, but as that which reduces the system of pure thought to one part of a greater whole." The greater whole is Reason. The work of Reason is not made manifest through the imposition of principles of external reflection, i.e. traditional logic, but is revealed in history - the history of thought thinking thought as its own content.

The perennial problem of philosophy has been the universalizing of a reason whose activity takes place in individuals but whose validity transcends the limits of individual reasoning. Whether or not Hegel has solved this problem may be a moot question; that he has drawn an impressive historical picture of the process whereby reason (or spirit) has progressively transcended the bounds of finitude, thus revealing its infinity, can scarcely be contended.

Viewed in this manner, the question of the relationship between reason and misunderstanding cannot be posed merely in terms of human error. With Hegel, history is fundamentally human history and, while logic may give a majesty to the notion of Absolute Knowledge, human history remains grounded in the vicissitudes of temporal and cultural experience. This is why the Logic and the Phenomenology are never a perfect fit and though they are a testimony to the power of self-creative reason, they are not the end of history. From this vantage point, speculative reason is an attitude which forever draws thought back from its own abstractions to the reasonableness of the world and ordinary speech. Thus, there is little need to debate whether the Logic constitutes a dialectical proof of the Phenomenology or whether the Logic is self-authenticating. This question can be left to Hegel scholars. The Logic and Phenomenology are paths back to everyday experience and thinking - they are a path back to the innocence which prompted Socrates to

169 Quentin Lauer, "Hegel as Historian", op. cit., p. 46.
170 Charles Taylor, Hegel, op. cit., Chapter 8.
171 Ibid., Chapter 8.
wonder aloud about what is ultimately right and good. In this way Hegel is, strictly speaking, a phenomenologist in the sense that he has attempted to provide a manner of "seeing" beyond the loaded vocabulary and theoretical reasoning of the moment. It is not, however, a phenomenology of essences. What is instructive, therefore, is that the Logic is clearly a very powerful testament to the freedom of thought, and to its restlessnes in accepting the distinctions of essence upon which most modern philosophy is based. In this fashion it is arguable that Hegel is really the originator of what Paul Ricoeur calls the 'hermeneutics of suspicion.' 172 Hegel's 'subjective logic', or the doctrine of the Concept, illustrates this well.

3.6 SUBJECTIVITY, SUSPICION AND HERMENEUTICS

In the third part of the Logic which Hegel entitles "Subjective Logic" the Concept occupies the stage in place of essence and the Logic becomes, properly speaking, a logic of meaning, where meaning is identified with a reality in process, or Being itself, the original Being that had revealed itself as meaning. The Absolute Idea in which the logic culminates is this meaning as Being, the return to immediacy which is the very reality of mediation. The logic of the immediate, or Being, is the counterpart to the description of Sense-Awareness, the first great metaphysics of Being. 173


The Concept reveals itself as subject in the last part of the Logic. For Hegel, the categories of Being and Essence operate at the level of objective logic and the final stage of the Concept (Notion) is where subjectivity "emerges as the true form of objectivity." This section of the Logic is meant to demonstrate that what is real is neither alien to the subject, nor in need of a noumenal or transcendental order of ideas to justify the activity of the subject in knowledge. The world is structured by concepts. This is why Hegel argues that the inner necessity which propels the development of knowledge finds its counterpart in the freedom of the subject to comprehend this development - we bring facts to reason through concepts. As Marcuse notes: "The truth cannot be gleaned from the facts as long as the subject does not yet live in them but rather stands against them." 175

This is obviously a view of concept that is foreign to its usual definition as an abstraction or abstract universal. For Hegel, a concept is an active participant in reality; it is the idea of an idea which contains within itself both the thought and reality of what is apprehended. This is what Hegel means by the "stages" through which the immediate notion travels from objectivity to subjectivity to a reconciliation of subject and substance as Absolute Idea.


This is a progressive reunification of the concept with reality, self-consciously arrived at. The Concept is therefore true reality. There is no need here to trace all of Hegel's terms, their dialectical interplay, or the possible contradictions which they may entail. The major function of this exposition is to illustrate the logical notion of the Concept as a hermeneutical moment. By this I mean that concepts are self-mediating, they determine themselves. That is, they have no content except that which they provide in and for themselves. Applied to the interpretation of the history of political theory, this hermeneutical approach, as we shall see, opposes both the Great Tradition with its unmastered "beyond", and the New History with its linguistic, ideological and contextual "essences" which condition political thinking. Such an Hegelian approach, moreover, does not require the imposition of a strict ontological necessity on history. While Hegel may well have operated on the premiss of such a necessity, as Taylor among others has argued, there is also reason to believe that Hegel's doctrine of the Concept can be read profitably as an historical, hermeneutical theory in which the principle of dialectic as self-movement does not require a philosophy of total immanence. The Logic and the Phenomenology constitute what Hyppolite calls "an adventure in Being" in which the


177 Jean Hyppolite, Marx and Hegel, op. cit., p. 183.
dissolution of previous standpoints conditions the ground and the possibility of new thinking and expression. This comes about in spite of the fact that the requirements for such a new meaning are never clearly defined. Reading Hegel in this fashion is an adventure in self-understanding as well, for our interpretations are equally self-interpretations. These constitute the hermeneutic principles outlined in Chapter Two. What becomes significant is that such a thinking does not require that the concept of truth as a whole be rejected. It merely states that human actions and intentions always find reference beyond private will and individual reason.

In the *Phenomenology* Hegel claimed to provide an access point to this kind of thinking which, he contended, is consistent with the very development of thinking itself. The crux of his argument is that the process of coming to self-consciousness is both a process of illumination and self-deception. In this way the *Phenomenology* is a hermeneutics of suspicion because it treats each form of consciousness, and thus the forms of life to which they correspond, as alienated from the true. Whereas the *Logic* is concerned with meaning as a return to Being, the *Phenomenology* is a cogent description of the alienation and self-estrangement which motors this development. Thus, as Hegel says:

Absolute knowing is the truth of every mode of consciousness because, as the course of the Phenomenology showed, it is only in absolute knowing that the separation of the object from the certainty of self is completely eliminated; truth is now equated with certainty and thus certainty with truth.

The pure science presupposes liberation from the opposition of consciousness. (Science, 49).

For Hegel, no particular figure of consciousness can penetrate to the whole of its content without meeting with contradiction. Thus the Phenomenology serves to demonstrate that the "unity of consciousness can be found only in its diversity." From the standpoint of knowledge, therefore, even the Logic must be only a preliminary statement to the effect that the whole of philosophy is fundamentally an account of why there can be no facts (quid facti) without diverse interpretations even in the first instance of empirical immediacy; and, no facts, only interpretations in the last moment of reason and idea. In this sense we could say that Hegel completes the Kantian project. This is because he makes the science of knowledge a truly dialectical account of the infinite in whose name the limits of the finite are imposed. The infinite, that is, is the revelation that all that can be thought and expressed is already contained in consciousness. The task of a hermeneutic science is to arouse in consciousness this sense of the infinite through a radical questioning of categories in which human understand-

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ing restricts its own possibilities.

While Socratic irony is a testimony to the non-confidence of human finitude, the Hegelian dialectic is not a supra-confidence in Dasein's ability to grasp all truth. To think the infinite is a real, not illusory, possibility. It is to ponder the conditions of human excellence, or, what means the same, to reflect on the perfectability of human being. This is why Solomon, for example, argues that the Phenomenology is "not only a book about Truth; it is also a treatise on the good life and human happiness." Like Socrates, Hegel teaches that the good life and 'living well' are fundamentally human affairs which can never admit of a single resolution without falling into dogmatism. Philosophy, therefore, as well as all branches of science which take seriously the justification of reasons for thinking and acting as we do, must serve the critical function of unmasking such dogmas by preventing any single claim to knowledge or reality from proclaiming itself absolute in reference to the contradictory opinions of the day. Just as we might say that the good life is a contradiction of various opinions about human possibility and excellence, the true also consists of contradictory truths for Hegel. The task for thought, therefore, is to resolve, or try to reconcile, these contradictions practically and theoretically without resorting to a position which antecedently collapses these

180 Ibid., p. 173.
contradictions under a single principle or set of principles. Moreover, it does not follow from this approach that all opinions are equally valid or plausible. Rather, it suggests only that there are different ways of conceiving and experiencing the world, and that these differences must be interpreted on the basis of their own conceptual and historical self-development. For Hegel, the science of discovering these principles and determinations is the dialectic, and the medium of this discovery is language. In summary, from the standpoint of Hegelian logic, thinking is the logical reconstruction or translation of experience into conceptual form and the demonstration of the necessity which obtains between concepts as a structure of meaning. From the standpoint of phenomenology, the task is to describe the movement of sequential historical systems of thought as forms of consciousness — or modes of discourse as we shall see below — working toward and fleeing from each other dialectically in an ever-expanding circle of conceptual thinking about a specific content. This is the sense in which Hegel understands that truth, as an a priori logical necessity, must have a history, i.e. it is a movement toward unity in and through our growing awareness of what it means to be a human being, in time. The medium of this logical and historical movement is language. Chapter Four to follow is an analysis of the place of language in Hegel’s philosophy.

181 Ibid., p. 195.
Chapter IV

HEGEL: LANGUAGE, REASON AND HERMEUTICS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

[The highest and final aim ... [is] to bring about, through the ascertainment of this harmony [of actuality and experience], a reconciliation of the self-conscious reason with the reason which is in the world - in other words with actuality. (ENC., I, 8).

How is such a task to be accomplished? Where do we begin to develop the critical sensitivity and theoretical insightfulness required to even think the possibility of reconciling truth and temporality, Being and Meaning, in our archaeologies of knowledge? More importantly, is it still possible to employ the language of Reason without falling prey to the accusation of rationalism; or, in a culture permeated with the discourses of chance and accident, is the language of Reason only a surrogate for religious talk? And finally, can the language of Reason be employed in such a way that it is not simply reducible to the finite aims or purposes of individual agents; or raised to the "beyond" of a pure, intellectual vision? For Hegel, the answer to these and similar questions is found in a thinking attitude which strives to characterize how our conceptual experience is what constitutes the "rational experience" of the world.
In effect, it is a thinking mediation of the past with the present which is not a peculiar gift of the intelligent few, but the very condition of our thinking which makes 'scientific' thought possible and available to all. Thus, against the classical doctrine of the initiated, Hegel answers:

Intellligibility is the form in which science is offered to everyone, and is the open road to it made plain for all. To reach rational knowledge by our intelligence is the just demand of the mind which comes to science. For intelligence, understanding (Verstand), is thinking, pure activity of the self in general; and what is intelligible (Verständige) is something from the first familiar and common to the scientific and unscientific mind alike, enabling the unscientific mind to enter the domain of science. (Phen., 76-77).

It is well to recall Hyppolite's questions about the language of the Preface in which he asks that we consider Hegel from a standpoint which belongs neither to positive science nor classical ontology. That is, we consider Hegel from the point of view of the unscientific mind entering the domain of science. "What is the place of this thought and of its language?" he asks. For Hyppolite, the language of the Preface is philosophical language in its purest form. He notes that in this extraordinary work Hegel refuses to discuss either the structure or conclusions of the Phenomenology, or the reasons why such an account is in principle impossible. In other words, the Phenomenology and the Logic constitute the only valid justification and authentication of why he proceeds as he does. In their place the Preface

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presents a masterful account of philosophizing \textit{per se} as a phenomenological description of the relationship between thought and its objects, or of consciousness as "consciousness of" an object which is its own. For Hyppolite, the force of Hegel's argument is his view that all possible knowledge is expression, it must be expressed, and that the binding together of thought and its objects is in and through language. As he says:

The "Preface" is thus situated between Hegel's two main works (in my opinion, the rest of the system doesn't have the same importance) both of which are very close to our problem of language, ... On one hand, ... is speech (parole) and on the other language (langue), or something even deeper than language. On one hand we have ordinary consciousness, which speaks and about which the philosopher speaks, and on the other is that entity which speaks within a structure of unfathomable depth, which is philosophic thought \textit{par excellence}. 183

And he adds:

... for Hegel there is no thought outside of the unity of signifier and signified. Moreover, for Hegel this unity is not the world, but rather the meaningful "mapping" [decoupage significatif] of the world and the structure which this mapping describes. 184 There is no thought outside of language.

Gadamer, as well, is also emphatic about the place of language in Hegel's philosophy. For Hegel, he says, the "speculative is only actual ... when it is expressed." 185 And

\begin{align*}
183 & \text{Ibid., p. 159.} \\
184 & \text{Ibid., p. 160.} \\
185 & \text{Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hegel's Dialectic, op. cit., p. 32. Alexander Kojève is even more pronounced in his estimation of the importance of language for Hegel. "Man is not only a being that thinks - i.e. reveals Being by Lo-}
\end{align*}
yet, to say that all thought must be expressible or sayable may seem rather trivial to a modern audience long-acquainted with the reduction of philosophy to language analysis; of Reason to careful speech. But this viewpoint has not always been the accepted way of proceeding in philosophy. Plato, for example, advanced a quite opposed point of view, as we shall see below. It should not be inferred from this that Hegel is a precursor of the analytic approach to language, however. In fact, his understanding of language is a rejection of both the classical discourse of uncommunicable intelligibles and the modern preoccupation with univocal designation and formal analysis. As Cook remarks, "Hegel's concept of language is based in large part on the qualities resident in language as a spoken, temporal medium." The purpose of the following discussion is to examine this notion of language.

Hegel rejects the view that knowledge expresses itself most fully in visions or word-images which represent, and present, the true as essentially inexpressible 'eidoi', 'Forms', or 'noumena'. These he holds to be dreams or fan-

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gos, by Speech formed of words that have a meaning. He reveals in addition - also by speech - the being that reveals Being, the being that he himself is, the revealing being that he opposes to the revealed being by giving it the name Ich or Selbst, I or Self," Introduction To The Reading of Hegel op. cit., p. 36.

cies which, from the point of view of thought, are only "superficial" (Phen., 74). What cannot be said, cannot be true: "Consequently what is called unspeakable is nothing else than what is untrue, irrational, something barely and simply 'meant'"—or intended (Phen., 160). In this respect, the modern advocates of a "poetic expressionism" of political discourse would do well to remember that philosophical word-imagery patterned on the Platonic dialogues or, what is even more fashionable today, the Faustian-cum-Nietzschean will to poetic illusion,\(^\text{187}\) can only express sensuous forms of feeling, emotion or desire. They cannot do the work of demonstrating the inner necessity of poetic intuition and word-imagery which sensuousness claims as its own. To be brief, for Hegel language mediates thought and reality, Being and Meaning, and is the medium in which human agency and its me-

\(^{187}\) Hans Vaihinger, "Nietzsche and the Doctrine of Conscious Illusion," in Nietzsche - A Collection of Critical Essays, Robert C. Solomon, (ed.), (Garden City:Anchor Books, 1973), pp. 82-104. As Hegel remarks in the Phenomenology: "It is not a very pleasing spectacle to observe uncultivated ignorance and crudity of mind, with neither form nor taste, without capacity to concentrate its thoughts on an abstract proposition, ... confidently proclaiming itself to be intellectual freedom and toleration, and even the inspiration of genius. ... philosophizing by the light of nature, which thinks itself too good for conceptual thinking ... [it] takes itself to have direct intuitive ideas and poetical thoughts ... fictitious creations that are neither fish nor flesh, neither poetry nor philosophy." (Phen., 126). (This criticism is aimed directly at much of the contemporary social and political theorizing which goes by the name of 'culture critique', especially the unpardonable excesses and lack of rigour exemplified in such journals as Telos or the Canadian Journal of Social and Political Thought.)
4.2 CLASSICAL LOGOS AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE WORLD

...Owing to the inadequacy of language, ... no intelligent man will ever dare to commit his thoughts to words, still less to words that cannot by changed, as is the case with what is expressed in written characters. ...

It is only when all, ... names and definitions, visual and other sensations, are rubbed together and subjected to tests in which questions and answers are exchanged in good faith and without malice that finally, when human capacity is stretched to its limits, a spark of understanding and intelligence flashes out and illuminates the subject at issue. That is why any serious student of serious realities will shrink from making truth the helpless object of men's ill-will by committing it to writing. In a word, the conclusion to be drawn is this; when one sees a written composition, whether it be on law by a legislator or on any other subject, one can be sure, if the writer is a serious man, that his book does not represent his most serious thoughts; they remain stored up in the noblest region of his personality. If he is really serious in what he has set down in writing 'then surely' not the gods, but men have robbed him of his wits.

With Plato the 'art' of writing is a technical skill which seeks to represent what is teachable through communicable symbols. It is obviously of great benefit to the technical sciences and to certain practical endeavors whose basic principles are teachable, i.e. communicable. Philosophy, however, is for Plato an activity which cannot be taught directly or expressed in written language. Writing,

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188 Jean Hyppolite, Marx and Hegel, op. cit., p. 169.
189 Plato, Seventh Letter (344), op. cit., p. 140-141.
like sound, produces knowledge which is conceived with the aid of sensuous symbols while philosophy, because it deals only with "what is that always is" (Timaeus, 27D), is apprehension by intelligence and reason. To a certain degree Platonic philosophy presupposes the possibility that contemplative modes of thinking proceed from their own ideality much in the same way that mathematics or geometry are thought to operate, i.e. as ideal languages of pure thought. This is not meant to imply that Plato equated philosophical thinking with arithmetical reasoning, for he seems to have believed that pure contemplation transcends such modes as well. More particularly, Plato argued that ordinary speech or written language can never communicate, or capture in words, the experience or nature of the fundamental "spark" required to shift thinking to this contemplative stage; nor can the contents of pure contemplation be rendered in words. As such, with Plato the "unscientific mind" (Verstand) can never enter the domain of science (Vernunft) through language or writing. As Plato has Socrates tell Phaedrus:

[I]t shows great folly — as well as ignorance ... to suppose that one can transmit or acquire clear and certain knowledge of an art through the medium of writing, or that written words can do more than remind the reader of what he already knows on any given subject. 190

For Plato, the movement of knowledge from the ekasia of physical gestures and ordinary speech to sophia as apprehension of the Forms is a journey beyond the concatenation of

190 Plato, Phaedrus (275), op. cit., p. 97.
arbitrary sounds to the discourse of necessity called **logos**. The common person, he adds, is incapable of apprehending such discourse in its purity as either the inner movement of the soul (** psyche **) or the outer nature of things (** physis **). This is why religious and mythical stories are so vital to all established communities. They convey the moral teachings which, as law and custom, inner and outer, constitute the ** ethos ** or general disposition of a community and its attitudes towards right conduct. They imitate good behaviour in words. This is why Plato was quite prepared to censor the poets, especially Homer, and to banish those artists whose mimetic representations failed to extol only the highest virtues in the actions of the gods and great men. 191 This is because in demonstrating weakness in the character of such figures, the poets destroy the ** ethos ** which binds individuals of different ** psyche ** and disposes them to act in certain ways. Written accounts or theatrical performances, Plato believed, which represent the divine or the superhuman as weak, wilful, vain, corrupt; ** bref **, human, become part of the popular culture and thereby no longer inspire children to emulate greatness or goodness. Where the subject is not changed by such accounts or performances, the inner and outer become separated, criticism becomes possible, culture becomes an external activity, and art becomes the process of

191 Plato, Republic Book III, (386aff.). (Bloom translation), op. cit., pp. 63ff. See also, Iris Murdoch, The Fire and The Sun, op. cit.
representing things as they are. Mimesis, that is, is a form of alienation. In other words, Greek culture with its emphasis on social formation and community habits (Sittlichkeit) was brought under the pressure of an individual morality (Moralität) which was increasingly undisciplined in its attitudes toward existing institutions and mores. Plato's ambivalence towards Athenian life, his desire for both change and restitution, and his understanding of philosophy as both a contemplative and practical science, are all reflected in his ambivalent attitude toward language and writing.

Plato's notion that all corruption of the soul begins in youth, just as the beginning of the the world is a falling into error, is not unlike the Christian doctrine of genesis in which the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is the only sphere where pure individuality could be realized. Plato's doctrine of language, however, finds its clearest Biblical analogy in the story of the Tower of Babel where a priestly class is given charge of the knowledge of tradition and education in order to maintain the sacred texts, and to restrain the power of individuality to change language and therewith to corrupt society. For Plato, spoken language and written speeches are fraught with sensuousness and emotion, and while they inspire human actions, they do so without reason. Neither the activity of contemplation, or thinking thought as pure thought, nor its contents can be
said. The esoteric content of inspirational stories, like the sacred teachings of the priestly class at Babel, must remain mysteries which infuse the present with meaning. To employ a spatial metaphor, Platonic philosophy operates between the words, sentences and extended speeches of tradition in the empirically empty spaces which thought and its sacred content alone occupy. There is no actual content per se because actual content is always expressed in a language which is derivative of the one and true language which human imperfection had already diversified and corrupted.

In this way classical philosophy could not perceive its function as the 'underlabourer' of the various branches of technical science. Its task was to raise thinking from the fluidity of human knowledge and speech confirmed by sensuous experience to the level of a master science which illuminates the ideal meaning-giving "essences" of things. As a result, the contest between the Socratic-Platonic philosophy and the Sophists' art of public speaking was primarily a struggle for the name of master science. The problem of language as both the medium for communicating what is true, and as a tool for thought, thus became highly problematical. This is because the notion of a master science for Plato was essentially the view that the ideal language could be intimated by philosophy, while for the Sophists the fluidity of experience was made the focus of its linguistic attention. With the Sophists, the function of language was to imitate
this fluidity as closely as possible in order to grasp the flow of expressions and counter-assertions which constituted the available knowledge of the moment. Forms of speech are, for the Sophists, forms of life which express the boundary of what is knowable at any point in time.

Plato's第七信and thePhaedrusargue that while technical matters require communication (they normally involve either assent or command), the essence of a form of life is always present in its ordinary discourse but cannot be expressed in its language. In other words, knowledge of what is true, good, just and right; for example, is beyond the fluidity of language but is nevertheless present, though not consciously so, in the popular discourses of the people. It is hidden and must be recovered. This is because popular discourse is a reflection of the materiality of existence; it is by nature always in the process of becoming what it is and is not. Consequently, it is an element of the conventionality of sensuous life. Philosophical 'talk', however, seeks to recover the permanent strata (physis) which links forms of life (nomos) to the transcendent order of nature (logos) through the intellect (nous).

This does not mean that Plato was always clear in his assessment of the place of language in philosophy. On several occasions he speaks disparagingly about its role in thinking, while in other dialogues a certain ambivalence is evident. In the Cratylus, for example, Plato has Socrates de-
bate whether language attaches form to content by nature (Cratylus), or whether it is simply a matter of convention (Hermogenes). While Socrates is generally of the view that "representation by likeness is superior to the use of arbitrary sounds, but despite the attractive force of likeness he feels obliged to accept a complementary factor - conventionality, custom, habit."192 For Plato, the problem of language is thereby posed in terms of likeness and arbitrariness, of meaning and sound, and this division frames his distinction between technical or finite knowledge and fundamental knowledge. That is, to know something as such is quite different from the knowledge of the forms which give meaning to our ordinary understanding of things. As Jaspers points out, this also implies that Plato believed that the way in which different forms of knowledge are communicated must also be different.193 Fundamental knowledge of the permanent strata of the "inexpressibles" cannot be communicated by the symbols of ordinary speech, but finite knowledge can be taught. This poses an important dilemma for Plato's conception of philosophy.

Having no object, does it not seep away into the ineffable. But a truth that cannot be communicated in any way is no longer truth. If direct communication is impossible we must communicate indirectly. How this can be done became with Plato a fundamental question of philosophy. He did not answer it conclusively. It can neither be under-


stood nor solved by purely theoretical insight. Plato was the first to see the radical importance of this question. 194

There is another sense, however, in which Plato recognizes the intimate link between philosophy, as a special mode of communication, and the natural, spoken language of the people. Plato's objection is really to written communication in which the instinctive naturalness of speech, especially as demonstrated in the flow of serious question and answer, is given over to a restrictive system of written signs. 195 Writing must be taught and what can be taught directly is always imitative - it is always untrue. It is a facsimile of the true which, paradoxically, destroys the essential it wishes to imitate the instant it circulates as a fixed permanent text. Like art, writing is representation, and while truth can be imitated in oral dialogue, it cannot be mimetically reproduced in writing. In the Phaedrus, Plato recounts the mythical story of Theuth, the Egyptian

194 Ibid., p. 21.

195 Hegel, however, suggests that Plato's recourse to the language of myth and poetic imagery was not for the purposes of disguising his meaning but that it was "partly the impossibility of expressing himself after the manner of pure thought that makes Plato put his meaning so, and also such methods of expression are only used by him in introducing a subject." (Lectures, 1, 87-88). Hegel notes that the manner of exposition in the Parmenides is more straightforward, thus suggesting that Plato did not consciously conceal the meaning of his thoughts. In the final analysis, however, Hegel quotes Aristotle approvingly to the effect that it is not worthwhile "to treat seriously those whose philosophy takes a mythical form," (Metaphysics, III, 4), because "this form is not suitable to philosophy," ibid., p. 87-88.
God to whom the invention of writing is attributed:

But when it came to writing, Theuth declared: 'Here is an accomplishment my lord the king, which will improve both the wisdom and the memory of the Egyptians. I have discovered a sure receipt for memory and wisdom.' 'Theuth, my paragon of inventors,' replied the king, 'the discoverer of an art is not the best judge of the good or harm which will accrue to those who practice it. So it is in this case: you, who are the father of writing, have out of fondness for your offspring attributed to it quite the opposite of its real function. Those who acquire it will cease to exercise their memory and become forgetful; they will rely on writing to bring things to their remembrance by external signs instead of their own internal resources. What you have discovered is a receipt for recollection, not for memory. And as for wisdom, your pupils will have the reputation for it without the reality.'

In several important instances, Plato's criticism of written philosophical communication is analogous to Hegel's critique of modern philosophy. For Plato, the written sign imposes an arbitrary, external meaning-structure on philosophical reflection which distorts the work of memory and dulls creative imagination. Similarly, Hegel believes that formalized canons of interpretation impose an equally arbitrary and external meaning on the content of philosophy. But there is a major difference between the two positions as well. Plato's apprehension about written communication and the mimetic arts of expression testify to his belief that philosophy is an inherently political as well as contemplative activity. While philosophy has no content given to it - it is its own content - it is nevertheless a discourse.

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about truth which is expressed in language. This is simply another way of saying that the content of philosophy in-and-for-itself is salutary, but its communication may be used for good or evil purposes.\(^{197}\) Hegel, however, holds to the even more radical view that philosophical discourse reflects not only the power of the freedom of thought, but that it also must necessarily reflect the actual contradictory, intellectual practices of a given historical epoch.\(^{198}\) Like the Sophists, Hegel believes that forms of life are forms of discourse and what is present to speech is the boundary of our thinking. That is to say, philosophy expresses the truth that obtains in the contradictions manifested in the language, mores and productive forms of lived-experience. Thus, while Plato taught that the evanescence of sensual existence is overcome by a thinking which fixes experience in the rigid categories of thought, Hegel inverts this way of proceeding. He argues that the fluidity of the life-world is itself the dynamic process of thought-thinking-thought in

\(^{197}\) Plato, *Phaedrus*, (275D) and *Seventh Letter* (341E), op. cit., p. 97 and 136.

\(^{198}\) Thus, of Plato's philosophy, Hegel remarks: "Plato's Republic, which passes proverbially as an empty ideal, is in essence nothing but an interpretation of the nature of Greek ethical life. Plato was conscious that there was breaking into that life in his own time a deeper principle which could appear in it directly only as a longing still unsatisfied, and so only as something corruptive. To combat it, ... aid had to come from on High and all that Plato could do was to seek it in the first place in a particular external form of that same Greek ethical life. ... he did fatal inquiry to the deeper impulse which underlay it, namely free infinte personality," (Phil. of Right, 10).
and through the manifold ways in which the world is expressed as a rational whole. Thought and reality are both fluid and this fluidity is embodied in language.

Plato taught that philosophy is a salutary activity which could moderate the struggle for power in the polis, and, more importantly, that it could master the "corruptive invasion" of the new subjective spirit of the Sophists by confining personality to the objective ethicality of membership in the State. The language of myth could have the dual political effect of revealing to the philosophically initiated and concealing from the many this new power of subjectivity enunciated in the Sophistic art of public speaking. The "myth of the metals" is an obvious allusion to the power of language to agitate public opinion. The philosopher-cum-politician is required, therefore, to couch explicit meaning in the artifices of metaphor and poetic imagery. Or, what is the same, men of base metals are without sufficient reason (Nous) to grasp the true meaning of metaphor and will gladly accept the identification of mythos with logos. This is because public opinion is impious (Euthyphro) - it contains no reasons why a person ought to act on its dictates. Its only concern is with the style and persuasiveness of the presentation. Ordinary language for Plato is the vehicle of public opinion and, consequently, the medium of political and intellectual irresponsibility. This is why the Platonic political speeches always act at two levels: They employ a
consistently beautiful word-imagery and rhetorical style which seeks to persuade its audience, while concealing a complex dialectic in which the true meaning of the political virtues is neither hidden nor expressed in the play of words — it is beyond natural language. This is indeed a highly serious form of irony because the listener who is incapable of moving beyond the emotiveness and pleasure of words, no matter how sophisticated his or her knowledge of language might be, is never able to comprehend their meaning. This is because language is contingent and can only express contingency; it cannot penetrate to the core of necessity.

Plato's attack on public speeches and written works was motivated by important political considerations. This is what Hegel meant by saying that Plato saw the emerging subjectivity of Greek life as a "corruptive invader." With Plato the contradiction between personality as self-creative expression and the State as objective ethical assertion was reflected in the decadence and prevarication of the Sophists' art of public speaking. Oratory and rhetoric are fundamentally negative instruments which can only be preempted by a philosophical discourse which proclaims fundamental knowledge of the "on High", even though Plato recognized that the power of utopian ideals could only delay for a short while this revolution in thought and experience.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁹ The term "utopian" is here referring to Mannheim's distinction between ideological and utopian ideals. "Utopias... transcend the social situation, for they... orient conduct towards elements which the situation, in
This is because Plato's exhortatory language loses its axiological appeal the moment reason recognizes that the ideal situation which is demanded can never be actualized. It exists in language only. This realization is reflected in the decline of the place of mythos in thought, that is to say, when foundational myths are recognized as stories which appeal to emotion only. Plato's desire to return to such a stage in human evolution represented for Hegel the deep ambiguity of a world shifting from language to speech, mythos to logos, natural necessity to freedom of thought. This is why Plato treated the battle with the Sophists at both a philosophical and political level. At the political level it was a struggle to restore, a social ethics of custom through recourse to a discourse of pious beliefs and noble lies, and at the level of philosophy it attempted to transcend a life-world it could no longer control.  

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As Hegel remarks: "It may be said that Philosophy first commences when a race for the most part has left its concrete life, when separation and change of class have begun, and the people approach toward their fall; when a gulf has arisen between inward strivings and external reality, and the old forms of Religion, etc., are no longer satisfying; when Mind manifests indifference to its living existence or rests unsatisfied therein, and moral life becomes dissolved. Then it is that Mind takes refuge in the clear space of thought to create for itself a kingdom of thought in opposition to the world of actuality, and Philosophy is the reconciliation following upon the destruction of that real world which thought has begun. When philosophy with its abstractions paints grey in grey, the freshness and life of youth has gone, the reconciliation is not a reconciliation in the actual, but in the ideal world. Thus the
would have the philosopher become king — and the king, philosopher — but this could only occur in the ideal world of the Republic. The priestly class, in other words, would restore the sacred meaning and mysteries of tradition through the maintenance of its language by social force. This force was to be exercised in combating and preventing the Sophistic tendency to corrupt the language of tradition by changing accepted meanings or by employing it critically against itself. But even Plato recognized that the Verfallsgeschichte, or falling into history, of language, its diversification and corrupting influences could not be stemmed for long. As Hegel remarks:

... men do not at certain epochs, merely philosophize in general, for there is a definite Philosophy which arises among a people, and the definite character of the standpoint of thought is the same character which permeates all the other historical sides of the spirit of the people, ...

Hence political history, forms of government, art and religion are not related to Philosophy as its causes, nor, on the other hand is Philosophy the ground of their existence — one and all have the same common root, the spirit of the time. (Lectures, I, 53, 54).

For Hegel, the Platonic Forms are creative expressions of the spirit of Greek life. More particularly, they represent the otherness of the actuality of Greek culture in its movement from the natural harmony of community to subjective individual standards of behavior and thought. In fifth century

Greek philosophers held themselves far removed from the business of the State and were called by the people idlers, because they withdrew themselves within the world of thought. (Lectures, I, 52).
ry Athens, for example, education became a routine activity and this in itself is highly instructive. Whereas before the idea of educating the youth in politics would have seemed an unnecessary waste of time and effort, for life in the polis constituted the only necessary political education, during Plato's age the art of educating had become widespread. Indeed, the Sophists were in fact the first teachers who advocated training in the art of public speaking because they sought not only reasons for thinking such and such, but also the most appropriate ways in which to communicate these reasons. Amongst the Sophists, Socrates appears as the first great teacher of the power of this new subjectivity and it is not simply coincidental that his dialectic sought to dissolve the non-rational dependence on accepted meaning in favor of a rational discrimination of what is true and good. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that is, is not only the product of divine ordinance, but it was also the tree of philosophy — the tree of intelligibility and communicability. In his Lectures, Hegel makes the point of stressing Socrates' notion of moral self-responsibility, or, what is the same, of Socrates employing language to look inwardly for the meaning of the reality "which had disappeared" (Lectures, 1, 409). Language, that is, was made the focus of the freedom of our thinking and, more importantly, of our self-determination. For Plato, however, communal life was the greatest freedom and philoso-
phy had as its major function the protection and restitution of an ethical order which refused to recognize the subjective freedom of its individuals. As a result, neither modern secular man nor Socrates is suited for happiness in Plato's Republic.

The language of the philosopher-king, i.e., the discourse of intelligibles which cannot be communicated, serves to restrict the power of natural language—it restricts the ability of an individual to make free choices. The Republic, therefore, does not meet Hegel's ultimate criterion of what constitutes "true" knowledge, viz., knowledge which sets man free.\(^{201}\) And yet, this does not detract from the Republic as an attempt to provide a rational account of both the Greek form of life, and the organic unity of community and individuality as the basis of the State. In effect, an account of the universal foundations of the State as the rational embodiment of either the nature or the limits of human freedom has been the ideal which every subsequent political theory has sought to delineate. For Hegel, however, philosophical language which expresses the "true" is, at the same time, the expression of freedom—this is what he means when he says that such discourse is the substance and sub-

\(^{201}\) As Glenn Gray argues: "For Hegel freedom was, first of all, intellectual awareness on the part of the individual of his place in the scheme of things. No philosopher has had greater confidence in the power of the mind than Hegel. It is the prime article of his faith that the truth which frees is knowable," idem., Hegel's Hellenic Ideal, op. cit., p. 6. (My emphasis).
ject of our freedom. Without freedom of speech, there is no true State.

Plato argues that written philosophy must circulate among those who have business with it, and those who do not. Consequently, it circulates among those who would employ philosophical reason for public good and those who would manipulate such knowledge to satisfy private ends. He draws a clear distinction between emotion and reason, or, what means the same, between popular discourse which expresses will, and philosophy as the voice of pure reason. There is serious dialectic and sophistical rhetoric, but only the few philosophers are capable of making such a distinction. The common person has no understanding of philosophy and, with Plato, is seen to treat those who speak well as identical to those who think well. And each of these activities is ultimately related to the problem of acting well, or possessing political virtue. This raises two fundamental questions about language and politics, and consequently about philosophy and political life. What is the relationship between oratory and philosophy as ways of communicating political virtue? And can the "political art" of justice be taught? It is worth recalling that this is a discussion about political commentary, or about interpreting and communicating political ideas. As such, these questions lie at the centre of this exercise for if fundamental knowledge of political virtue cannot be communicated and if the political art of
justice cannot be taught, then political commentary can have no practical interest for the common affairs of humanity.

In the Gorgias Plato attempts to answer the first question. Of the Gorgias, which is named after the first teacher of rhetoric in Athens, Sir Ernest Barker remarks: "The interest of Plato in oratory ... is twofold. He is partly concerned with the art of rhetoric as a method of education; he is partly concerned with the actual practice of oratory as a means of acquiring office and influence." Oratory, or the art of speaking well, poses both a philosophical and practical problem. Philosophically, the real power of rhetoric is its capacity to compete with philosophy for the position of master science, and thus to proclaim its notions of justice or virtue superior to the claims of philosophy. As we saw earlier in Chapter Two, Socratic irony represents an important response to the simple art of rhetoric because Socratic dialectic is a method of dissolution which negates the conventional grounds upon which rhetoric draws its power of persuasion. For Plato, the first principles of rhetoric are always false principles which pander to conventional moods and styles of expression, and upon which the art of speaking well is applied in order to mask these underlying philosophical deficiencies. Oratory, that is, must of necessity pander to accepted opinion, or what is already believed to be true, otherwise it would be regarded as simple

story-telling, and thus lose its powers of recognition and persuasion. Gorgias makes his argument for rhetoric precisely on these grounds because, as he says, what is expressed in language is merely words — not knowledge. In this Gorgias is not advocating a purely relative view of things in a fashion analogous to Protagoras, as we shall see below, but is arguing that Being cannot be known, and what cannot be known cannot be expressed. Thus, because Being cannot be known, Gorgias treats those who claim such knowledge with utter disdain; the ridiculous is made to appear true, and the true ridiculous. Gorgias is a portrait of the sceptic. His rhetoric is essentially the art of negation which functions to promote the non-communicability of fundamental knowledge, and thus it advances the view that there is an eternal separation between principles of public life as purely conventional and philosophy as a self-enclosed system of pure thought. There is, in other words, an eternal separation between the political art of public speaking and the philosophical art of contemplation. But because rhetoric expresses itself in the language of truth, Plato counters that we must therefore treat rhetoric in the same way we assess conventional attitudes or beliefs. He responds to rhetoric in the same playful fashion in which it is presented. He suggests that sophisticated speakers begin from what is acceptable and build formidable systems upon falsehood. He has Socrates employ an identical, simple iro-
ny to show that Gorgias is indeed speaking on behalf of fundamental knowledge, even though he claims that such knowledge is impossible. As Jaspers notes:

An ambiguous irony can quickly lose its profound meaning. Without meaning of its own, it becomes an instrument of destruction, the language of nihilism. Laughter kills. This irony follows the principle of Gorgias: answer the ridiculous with seriousness, the serious with ridicule. This irony discloses nothing but nothingness. It is not the self-effacing language of the Eros, but a weapon serving the power of nothingness. Directed against all seriousness as such, it is the groundless warfare of a tumultuous non-being.

Philosophical irony ... expresses the certainty of a fundamental meaning. Perplexed by the discrepancy between the simplicity of rational discourse and the ambivalence of appearances, it strives to attain the truth, not by saying it, but by awakening it. It strives to give an imitation of the hidden truth.

True dialectic is never about technical knowledge but about the foundations of meaning, that is to say, dialectic is the retrieving of knowledge of that which is not yet realized as self-conscious expression. This is the source of the problem of communicability for Plato because how do we communicate what is not yet communicable, or what has yet to be recollected? The theory of anamnesis is Plato's response to the problem of the possibility of knowledge, but it is not an answer to the problem of communication, especially in the field of politics. Between the amnesia of ordinary discourse (historical existence) and the anamnesis of the Forms (contemplation) lies the practical world of cultural and pol-

203 Karl Jaspers, *Plato and Augustine*, op. cit., p. 27.
itical arrangements, a proper understanding of which is never wholly subsumable under a model of purely contemplative vision. In effect, Plato's unwillingness to accept written philosophical communication is not only because it circulates among both rightful and untrained readers, but also because the reading of philosophy, or subjects such as the "history" of philosophy, have the potential effect of weakening the process whereby the mind recalls its previous existence as soul and from which the questions of Being and meaning are posed as Idea.\textsuperscript{204} Forgetfulness is not overcome in writing - because it is a tool forged by forgetfulness - but, with Plato, in thought. This leads to the second question, to wit whether or not the political art of justice can be taught. If philosophy carries with it the capability of grasping or intimating the divine rhythm of Logos, and if justice properly understood is participation in this discernible order (phronesis), then how do we teach justice?

\textsuperscript{204} Hegel's response to Platonic philosophy as a noetic form of recollection is expressly a phenomenological and hermeneutical. "Philosophy is not somnambulistic but is developed consciousness; ... a continuous weakening. Such work is not only deposited in the text of Memory as forms of times gone by, but is just as present and as living now as at the time of its production. The effects produced and work performed are not again destroyed or interrupt ed by what succeeds, for they are such that we must ourselves be present in them. ... The conquests made by Thought when constituted into thought form the very Being of Mind. Such knowledge is thus not learning merely, or a knowledge of what is dead, buried and corrupt: The history of Philosophy has not to do with what is gone, but with the living present." (Lectures, 1, 39).
In the *Protagoras*, Plato adopts a different point of view. In the *Gorgias* he addresses the incommunicability of fundamental knowledge in terms of the problems of scepticism, i.e. we cannot express the true because it must be recollected, not because it is unknowable, and written language weakens the power of Memory to accomplish this end. In the *Protagoras*, however, he wants to suggest that the sceptical attitude follows from the relativistic understanding of principles of right conduct and thinking. The dialogue is really a contest between Socrates and Protagoras for the mind of Hippocrates, a young man who wishes to be instructed in the science of Athenian philosophy. 205 Socrates' central argument is to the effect that the Sophists employ dialectic in a fashion which continues to rotate about issues without ever putting forward a systematic point of view. In other words, the Sophists employ rhetoric to negate another's position by advancing a series of different propositions, beliefs, or concerns. Out of this diversity of opinion, which is dependent on the cultivation of memory

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205 There is a deep ambiguity in the *Protagoras* as Guthrie notes in his Introduction to the dialogue. "An endless controversy has been aroused by the fact that in this dialogue he apparently makes Socrates enunciate and defend a doctrine regarded by many as the direct antithesis of what Socrates is likely to have taught in real life. Is he trying to show that, however outrageous a thesis Socrates chose to put forward, he could beat the Sophists at their own style of argument? Or does he aim only at putting on record some of the brilliant talk of that golden age of conversation which was just over, ... Is the main purpose of this dialogue dramatic, and not philosophical at all?" op. cit., p. 9.
to record the multiplicity of perspectives and on the power of understanding to analytical distinguish points of view, the rhetorician easily advances his own particular position as representative of what is best possible. Thus the Sophists' art of rhetoric is an art of public speaking which teaches young people how to manipulate popular discourse for political ends. For Protagoras, the art of political science is the art of virtue which can be taught. This is because the idea of an adequate concept of justice is simply the product of our ability to keep the available notions of justice in mind when assessing the rightness or appropriateness of some public policy. That is, all notions of justice are particular, and justice itself is relative to the particular circumstances of a specific time and location. For Protagoras, justice is what people say justice is. Plato responds to the dual problems of scepticism and relativism as problems of speech, and, more particularly, as the corruptive effects of writing. As he notes in the Phaedrus:

The fact is, Phaedrus, that writing involves a similar disadvantage to painting. The productions of painting look like beings, but if you asked them a question they maintain a solemn silence. The same holds true of written words; you might suppose that they understand what they are saying,
but if you ask them what they mean by anything they simply return to the same answer over and over again.

The crux of Plato's argument is that philosophy, as a contemplative activity, makes nothing—it's function is to grasp the forms which give meaning to things. Writing about such matters, and to a certain extent speaking about such things, produces only illusions or imitations of the real. Such imitations are not only unreal, but they provide false and misleading notions of the true. And yet, if philosophy and art, truth and falsehood, Being and non-Being, are experienced as the expressibility of the finite and the inexpressibility of the infinite, then Plato's dialectic can function adequately only at the level of pure ideality. Consequently, political virtue can never really be taught in the same sense in which the citizen grasps the surface meaning of what is said in ordinary conversation. Thus, the Republic becomes the imitation by the many of the imitations of the few of an inexpressible whole. This, indeed, is the political lesson of the Republic. Not only is everyday existence a barrier to truth, but all the arts and practical sciences are equally devoid of reality; they operate at the

207 Plato, Phaedrus (275D), op. cit., p. 96.

208 This is clearly evident in Plato's own writings where dramatic form and philosophical seriousness are brilliantly fused. More particularly, the dramatic form overcomes the forgetfulness of descriptive prose but at the expense of a systematic presentation of the unity of different 'logoi' which dialectic is meant to elaborate. This, to be brief, is the crux of Hegel's critique of the mythopoetic approach to philosophy.
level of appearances. This is why Plato argues that allegory and metaphor do not express what is true, but operate at the level of appearances as well. The poet-philosopher will thus never say in words what is truly intended while the common person who is by-nature predisposed to appetite, or wilful sensuousness, can comprehend surface intentions only, i.e. the world as appetite. The language of appetite is thereby made the language of ordinary politics; and the true meaning of politics must therefore be given an aura of sacred kerygma, or oracular pronouncement. Plato makes this point in his doctrine of the divided line, and in the allegory of the cave. In both, language obtains in the shadow world of appearances only, and out of this world the poet-philosopher must forge new political illusions which condemn the majority to an unreal world of words.

Socrates’ life reflected the tragedy of human existence as a dialectical struggle for meaning; or as a mortal struggle between the power of thought to seek a measure of self-expression and the universe of political power which both fosters and limits this very freedom. While everywhere Plato seems to suggest that intellect can and must transcend the sensuous irresponsibility of non-philosophical political existence, (tragedy), he does so by reducing daily life to non-reality. Tragedy, likewise, is an appearance on the stage of non-life because Plato fails to accord due weight to these contrasting powers. As such, Platonic dialectic,
while marking a step forward from the inconclusiveness of Socratic irony, limits our power to express the unity of thought and actuality in words. Aristotle understood this well. While he agreed with Plato that the contemplative life is the best possible form of living, he disagreed on what constitutes a valid notion of truth, and a fortiori, what philosophy is about. For Aristotle, philosophy seeks the universal in things, not beyond them. As such, representative expression, especially poetry and painting, because they seek to grasp or imitate the true in things, do indeed contain 'some' truth. More importantly, it was Aristotle who initiated the question of the relationship between words and things systematically and while he still regarded tragic poetry as an imitation of truth, he nevertheless suggested that it often succeeds in conveying what is true. In other words, speech and writing are mimetic artifices, but mimesis which is directed at general meaning (the universal) is not everywhere and always untrue.  

As Aristotle argues in his Poetics, the poet's job is "not to report what has happened but what is likely to happen: that is, what is capable of happening according to the rule of probability or necessity. Thus the difference between the historian and the poet is not in their utterances being in verse or prose ...; the difference lies in the fact that the historian speaks of what has happened, the poet of the kind of thing that can happen. Hence, poetry is a more philosophical and serious business than history; for poetry speaks of universals, history of particulars." Aristotle's Poetics, translated and introduced by Gerald F. Else, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1970), pp. 32-33. Universals alone express the truth for Aristotle.
universality and art which seeks to grasp universality through representation contains truth for Aristotle. Of political science, however, Aristotle tells us that it is both a philosophical and practical science which aims at knowledge of the good and at the moral welfare of all citizens. Such a science, he says, is not reducible to a logic of resemblance but is conditioned by its particular manifestations and expressions. 210

Both Plato and Aristotle did agree on one important point: The world is structured in such a way that it can be known, and the problem for philosophy is to establish how such knowledge is discerned and communicated. In the classical period the issue of language was intimately related to the structure of the Cosmos, 211 while, as we shall see, in the modern period the problem of language is related to the structure of the mind and the nature of our judgements. These differing orientations are, in turn, extremely important in assessing the difference between the "Great Tradition" and "New History" approaches to interpreting the mas-


211 Sir Ernest Barker makes this argument when he states that Plato's notion of justice conceives the right "order" of the soul and the social system as a "single principle of order [that] informs earth and heaven and men and gods, holding them all together in fellowship and friendship, in temperance and justice, whence it is that the universe has received its name of Cosmos," Greek Political Theory, op. cit., p. 158. In the Physics, (252a - 12), Aristotle explicitly makes 'nature' the source and cause of order in the cosmos.
ter texts in political theory. This is because the Great Tradition advances the view of a binary esoteric-exoteric meaning of texts and, following Plato, argues that the significance of a reading is wholly determined by esoteric considerations, or by what is never explicitly stated. True meaning is always "between the lines." As we shall see, the problem is not with esoteric meaning, for there is always something "more" involved in the content of speaking or writing than is directly expressed, but with how thought comes to "possess us" instead of how we come to possess it. For the New History, however, language is itself the content in which mind reflects meaning - history becomes the record of language-games, and the history of political theory is made a disconnected circle of speech-acts.

4.3 HISTORICAL REASON AND THE STRUCTURE OF MIND

Jacques Maritain has argued that what distinguishes modern philosophy from classical thought is its conception of the nature and scope of the intellectual vision upon which philosophy is grounded. Though such a bold assertion will

212 Jacques Maritain remarks about Descartes that his philosophy has "but one function: vision. A fixing of the pure and attentive intelligence on such or such object of thought, with well defined lines, with nothing of the implicit or virtual, grasped fully and wholly by absolutely original and primary vision and with a certitude grounded on itself alone - that is what Descartes calls intuition, "intuitus," and it is to that henceforth that everything in the cognizant understanding is reduced," Three Reformers - Luther, Descartes, Rousseau, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1950), p. 57.
undoubtedly rankle certain contemporary analytic philosophers, the point should be clear. What separates Aristotle from Descartes, for example, is not 2000 years of Schoolmen's logic, or laborious metaphysics; rather, it is a fundamental hermeneutical shift in the determination of the originary vision which constitutes the foundation of philosophy. Cartesianism, for Maritain, is a theory of the originary "spark", "jolt", or "intuition" which constitutes the pre-conceptual source of the philosophical. In classical thinking, Logos is the discernible structure of human, divine and physical nature from which arise the multiple representations of things. For Descartes, the origin of right thinking lies in the innateness of our mind's ideas and these alone produce the dianoetic visions upon which the mind establishes the certitude of its understanding. Whereas the Greeks distinguished the will or passion from reason, or the sensuous from the intellectual, modern thought after Descartes sought to connect the will as an active agent to reason as the power of understanding. More particularly, classical philosophia sought to determine the good, the just or the beautiful as that which is true irrespective of human cognitive powers, while modern thought inverted these questions and looked instead to why there is error and misunderstanding in our ethical, philosophical and empirical judgements. As Paul Ricoeur notes:

The inquiry into error is not unconnected with the earlier meditation on evil. It differs from it in that it shifts the emphasis from ethics to epis-
temology. The study of the problems of the will becomes now merely an aspect of a larger enterprise the aim of which is to clarify the foundations of knowledge - knowledge being understood in the sense of the exact sciences. The theory of judgement is the framework of this new approach which is given its classical exposition in Descartes' Metaphysical Meditations (Fourth Meditation). By transferring the entire weight of error to the will, Descartes frees 'the power of understanding' from all suspicion that it might be responsible for error.

Recognition of the problem of error and misunderstanding, which is another way of talking about the problem and conflict of interpretations, intensified the question of the relationship between language and philosophy in the modern period. In sum, these may be divided into two essentially different orientations to language which reflect the contrasting philosophical standpoints of the Enlightenment and Romanticism. On the one hand, the Romantics generally held that philosophical language reflected the debasement of modern culture, that is, the alienation of natural man from himself and his fellows. In moving away from the culture and language of the people philosophy lost its inherently practical link with the interests and concerns which it is meant to articulate. As such, the Enlightenment merely expressed the level of corruption and artificiality of the emerging bourgeois culture. On the other hand, there were several Enlightenment writers who came to view language as

an instrument or tool, and thereby available to either the passions or reason. To do philosophy required clear and precise definition in order to prevent human beings from falling into error. Popular discourse, that is, was perceived as the source of error because its principal use is normally to express appetite. In both the Romantic tradition and the Enlightenment, however, there emerged a strong opposition to the classical division of pure thought from the artificial world of will and action. With both of these modern movements, philosophy is immersed in sensuous reality and the problem of language is confronted directly. Hegel's theory of language is an attempt to reconcile: 1) the Romantic sensitivity to popular discourse and culture as forms of life; 2) the Enlightenment notion of a pure sign system, and, 3) the classical problem of inexpressible truth.

As we saw earlier with Locke, the question of language was directly related to the possibility of overcoming, or at least diminishing, the errors of human judgement. In order to accomplish this feat, Locke suggested that the Wit must be harnessed to the expression of possible experience. His notion of Wit, it should be noted, is analogous to Plato's understanding of the Sophists' art of rhetoric - the arbitrary assembling or combining of any set of ideas which on the surface appear congruous and which may have some public influence. Locke wished to limit such prattle to a form of
judgement based entirely on method. His "historical, plain method" involved the careful distinguishing of "one idea from another, wherever the least difference is discernible, so as to avoid being "misled by similitude" into mistaking one thing for another." 214 Cold, calculative ratiocination coupled with an empiricist understanding of the relationship between words and things became with Locke the redemptive source for avoiding certain errors. In effect, Locke advocated the view that philosophy ought henceforth to see its task as an ongoing project of reducing the use of words to universal, conventional designation. In other words, the various sciences were to deal with the validity of empirical propositions and philosophers were to restrict themselves to theories of validation, brief, with epistemology. Consequently, philosophy has no business with speculative questions about the empirical world; it may criticize various epistemological approaches, but it cannot in itself constitute a mode of interpretation. This is what was meant earlier when it was suggested that modern philosophy is not a participant in the intellectual effort to make sense of the world; it merely adjudicates the proper implementation of various language-games. A.J. Ayer makes this point when he argues that Locke understood that the business of philosophy is to analyse claims to knowledge, and not "to affirm or deny the validity of any empirical propositions." 215 Locke, as a

result, nowhere suggests that words and things are identical because his theory of language is purely conventional: Words refer to or designate things in the representationalist sense that they are 'our' signs for external things. Ideas, including moral ideas, are not intended to reflect on anything outside of our minds. As such, philosophy is reduced to language analysis.

In both instances, i.e., knowledge of physical nature and of moral good, Locke begins with an already developed language, grammar and syntax. It is an account at the level of common sense of an already rational intelligibility of the meaning of things. But, as Hegel remarks, "in starting out from the present mind, its abstract representations and sense of moral duty, do we not in fact deny the very content—the in—and—for-it-self—which philosophy is meant to investigate" (Phil. of History, III, 312). Lockeanism is a theory of ordinary consciousness as an empirical acquaintance with the world in which there is no hint of how we are to know the truth of the actual content of our representations. It is the acceptance of a purely accidental order of things, an acceptance which is not unlike the underlying attitude of the New History approach. More particularly, Locke's epistemology and moral philosophy is traditionally described as practical and passionate. He is represented as a kind of utilitarian hedonist who understood the primordi-

al role of will and passion, pleasure and pain, in the act of thinking, and thus of philosophy. And yet, while there is definitely a utilitarian attitude here, it is nevertheless the stuflifying, banal passion of the profit and loss statement. It is passion without what Hegel calls "desire", (Begierde) that is, the desire which seeks to make external things conform to our requirements, instead of merely seeking to discover that they do. It is precisely such desire which compels philosophy to move beyond epistemology to the social world, from discovery to change, theory to praxis.

It is this Lockean view of judgement within the bounds of utility, of cold calculative discourse without desire, that is countered in the Romantic tradition. In the pioneering work of Giambattista Vico, for example, language was intimately related to the development of secular history. Where Locke had attempted to reduce the power of desire to the art of definition, Vico sought instead to reconcile the power of making and of knowing without obliterating their differences. For Vico, history has meaning for us, and we


217 J.N. Findlay, Hegel - A Re-Examination, op. cit., p. 96. (Author's emphasis).

can know this meaning, because it is made by human beings. What is made (poiesis and praxis) can be understood while nature which is God's creation can never be fully comprehended. Thus, historical knowledge is not a chance record but a unity of meaning which can be ascertained. Without such a concept of unity, Vico argued, the inductive assimilation of the empirical record can have no meaning. He attempted to decipher the unity of history in different ways, including an analysis of the growth of nations, the development of law and the changing functions of language. In all cases, however, these developments were examined from the point of view of poiesis as the progressive rationalization of the world. Because he was essentially Platonic in outlook, Vico conceived history as a cyclical movement from the barbarism of pre-logical sensuous existence to the rationality of human communities governed by written law and formal bonds of association. What is more significant is that Vico sought to relate this development to the changing functions of language, and it is this aspect of his writings which have drawn the most attention in the modern period.  

For Vico, the major stages in the development of communities from primitive communalism to the legal State also represent three different language types.

In the *Scienza Nuova* (1725), Vico proposed to write the "ideal eternal story" of mankind as a cyclical history of three stages; the mythical, the heroic, and the age of the people. In the theocratic or mythical stage religious fear, in the face of natural phenomena led to a belief in supernatural power (*Mana*). In the heroic age, or the age of aristocracy, this fear gives way to belief in a transcendent God and the realization of an inner and outer sphere of Being. Finally, in the democratic age, or age of the people, society is represented as the apex of human possibility and God becomes functionally unimportant, or irrelevant, to the concerns of the age. God, we might say, is relevant only at the level of what Hegel called "essence," or when the species requires the 'otherness' of a transcendent personality to answer the questions which reason has set for itself. It is a rational era in which freedom and culture flourish, and from which the "ricorso" of human history begins its descent to primitivism once again.²²⁰ More importantly, however, Vico argued that each of these stages produces its own form of verbal expression, or what Frye calls its "own kind of language."²²¹ For Vico, these are, respectively, the poetic, the heroic, and the vulgar, or what Frye calls the "hieroglyphic, the hieratic, and the demotic."²²² In the mythical


age, language is initially silent because intersubjective communication is carried out by means of physical signs and gestures. During this stage, communities, as associations of need, produced the first articulated language which was symbolic or poetic, that is to say, verse form was a natural and spontaneous way of expression, and was the major form in which the world was rationally experienced as a whole. It would be interesting to see how closely Heidegger's "poet" is an attempt to recapture this linguistic spontaneity and immediacy. More particularly, Vico's speculations about verse expression were the first to anticipate the now widely held view that the Homeric epic form was not the product of a single individual but a community of bards. In other words, the Homeric epics could well be a collaborative effort which mirrored the prevailing structure of verbal expression. \textsuperscript{223} In the second stage, which includes classical philosophy and aristocratic, pre-Renaissance societies of the feudal type, language was hieratic and its principle form was allegorical expression. As we saw with Plato, during this stage the use of language is dominated by elites whose message is always hidden in the verbal playfulness of the dominant discourse. The figure of Hermes, son of Zeus and herald of the gods, clearly reflects this stage of verbal expression. Hermes was both the messenger of the gods

and playful jester. While his major function was to transmute messages from the gods—this is why he is depicted as having wings on the sides of his cap and sandals—he was also supposed to make these messages comprehensible to mortals. Oftentimes, however, he purposely confused mortals and hid the meaning of the messages in word-play. Hence the modern term hermeneutics implies this double sense of rendering intelligible that which is not immediately available to the understanding, and of uncovering what is "hidden" from human comprehension. In this, the heroic age, ordinary speech and written language were suspect because they were viewed as direct forms of expressing what cannot be communicated directly, i.e. the divine messages. This is because, as Plato argued, the written word and natural languages are not sufficient to communicate the truth.

In the last stage, Vico argued that language becomes totally descriptive. It is made up of vocables whose meaning are freely determined by the speaker, and in which this freedom produces the polysemy of words. At its height philosophy ultimately will lose its power of univocal reduction, and thus its power to comprehend the world as a rational whole. In this age, democratic society and its demotic use of natural languages represent the beginning of a descending spiral toward eventual silence once again.

Barbarism, that is, is muted language; it is silence. For Vico, as well as Croce, Frye, Taylor and others, language is not an instrument forged by reflection for the purpose of intersubjective communication in the sense in which it is normally presented in the demotic age. It is rather a spontaneous response by individuals to a world they must make intelligible through language. When people think about the world, they speak. The forms of language change, however, from non-metonymic verse and the absence of a subject-object distinction to allegorical prose in which an inner reality and the outer world is intimated in a flow of verbal expressions (logoi). Finally, descriptive language is human speech and written words which are modified to operate as designative signs only (lexis). This is why the demotic stage, of which Locke is clearly representative, wished to replace the noble Greek and Latin by "vulgar" language, and in which grammar becomes a necessary discipline or device for communicating matters. At this point language itself comes to be seen as a technical instrument which is separable from its expressive moment, or, with Locke, the understanding and the Wit. Language, as such, must be distinguished from its use: it becomes a series of arbitrary sounds and designations which require a formal lexion and rules of proper usage in order for communication to take place. In this period, which continues to be reflected in Locke's empiricist progeny, the democratic age is indeed the
age of rationality because even the intuitive naturalness and spontaneity of language must be made to conform to instrumental rules or principles of right speech and right thinking. The need for such rules is co-extensive with the freedom of descriptive prose, or so this thinking suggests, because the natural flow of spoken language must be countered by linguistic forms of understanding which instrumentalize our linguistic freedom.

In the transition from poetic verse to allegorical expression, the issue of language becomes problematic for the first time, as our discussions of the Platonic dialogues demonstrated. This is because the entire question of human understanding had to be reposed in light of the development of philosophy as a particular and extraordinary form of rational experience and communication. In the Platonic dialogues this changing form of verbal expression was reflected in the use of allegory and metaphor. With Locke and Kant, however, an entirely different form of verbal expression produced a qualitatively different answer to the question of human knowledge. They attempted to set limits on our ability to communicate by treating language purely as a sign system, and in doing so they separated language from its expressive moment, lexis from logos. With Locke, for example, human language was no longer open to spontaneous understanding but was made to conform to a lexicon of univocal designation. This kind of thinking is illustrated with startling
irony in the refrain of a modern beer commercial: "Say what you mean, and mean what you say, in this world of today!" Individuals, that is, must now be trained to conform to the accepted use of symbols in order to expand the dominion of analytic understanding over the freedom to "make" language the potential for an expansion in human creative thinking. In this way the limits of our ability to speak uniformly about the world are really the limits of the mastery of science to effectively control human thought. In the ricorso of Vico's ideal eternal story, this dominion of designative symbol over expressive speech may well be interpreted as the muted voice of a impending barbarism to come. Demotic language is technologism. Or is it? Is it not also the case, and for which Vico could not have foreseen, that democracy is also the recognition that our ability to communicate in a variety of effective forms establishes its own rules, and that, with Rousseau or Hegel, the real task of thinking in the modern period is not to pursue the representational limits of what is expressible in terms of the contemporary present and its verbal authorities. Rather, the task is to extend our ability beyond the limits of the dominant modes of expression and to probe the absences that pervade the hegemonic discourses of the moment. As Hegel says, the real task of philosophy is always already beyond the subject.

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Before undertaking an analysis of Hegel's theory of language, the "expressivist" movement will be more fully developed in the following subsection. The account of "expressivism" is not intended to advance the interests of an interpretive political science against explanatory models currently in use, nor does it seek to advocate the new teleology of purposive action promoted by Taylor, Winch and others. In other words, while intersubjective meaning structures and forms of interaction may indeed be the proper basis upon which to erect a new science of politics, the emphasis here is on the relationship between acts of understanding and modes of expression in the interpretation of historical texts of the tradition. What is sought is not a new sociology of interpretation, but a clear account of the Hegelian understanding with which to critically assess existing exegetical and interpretive practices in the history of political theory.

4.4 UNDERSTANDING AND EXPRESSION: ROMANTICIST HERMENEUTICS

As we saw in Chapter Three, the modern notion of understanding, especially its Kantian formulation, represented a radical departure from the classical tradition. Kant's major contribution was to the effect that the operations of the understanding are essentially formative in nature because they condition the possibility of thought and experi-

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ence. The Copernican Revolution in philosophy, or the transcendental Kunstlehre, meant that human understanding is present in all cognized objects such that all knowledge claims express an aspect of human rationality. Kantianism, in other words, is a philosophy of the rational idea.

Thus understanding (Verstand) is the capacity for rational thought, denoting man's ability to know and recognize things for what they are. Understanding (Verstehen) is present in all thought and conscious experience as an expression of man's rationality, his rational competence (Verstand).

To a certain extent modern hermeneutics, as opposed to Biblical exegesis, originates in this Kantian consciousness but with a passion that far exceeded the staid Konigsberger. In the work of Schleiermacher, the first in the tradition of what later became known as Romanticist hermeneutics, there was an attempt to fuse the dual impulses of transcendental philosophy and Romanticism. While he followed the Kantian form of questioning quite closely, Schleiermacher's concept

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227 Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, "Understanding and Interpretation: Toward a Definition of Literary Hermeneutics," in Joseph P. Strelka, Literary Criticism and Philosophy, op. cit., p. 49.

of the understanding differed significantly: Whereas Kant had restricted the understanding to the cognizing facilities, Schleiermacher proposed a concept of *verstehen* in which the art and science of interpretation involves a creative reconstruction of the past. By questioning the conditions of the possibility of understanding historical texts, Schleiermacher was in fact asking about the active role of the reader in interpretation. Like other moderns, moreover, he was not concerned so much with understanding as with misunderstanding, i.e. how and why does the reader make interpretive mistakes, and wished to develop a set of interpretive strategies which would directly address the meaning of written historical texts. As such, for Schleiermacher the problem of interpretation arises with the recognition of human impotence in discerning the meaning of a past which was made by humans. It arises most fundamentally when a text that stands before "me" appears strange and incomprehensible. Schleiermacher approached this problem in two distinct ways: one grammatical and the other psychological.229 Though Dilthey and subsequent thinkers were to develop their critiques of historical reason on the basis of a psychological formulation, our primary interest here is with Schleiermacher's theory of language, i.e. the grammatical. In several important ways it will help to clarify the direction of Hegel's thinking about language.

Schleiermacher's theory of language owes an important debt to both Herder and von Humboldt. In his essay on the Origin of Language (1772), Herder had argued that it was "natural" that man invented language: "Language is nature itself finding expression in the mind of man." Herder's notion of the origin of language is clear if it is recalled that Enlightenment thinkers generally conceived language as a purely conventional sign system—a tool for communication invented by man. What Herder implies is a radical alternative to this position because he asserts that while language "might have been invented by a recluse it is not based on any social convention."

As all nature sounds; so to Man, creature of sense, nothing could seem more natural than that it lives, and speaks, and acts. A certain savage sees a tree, with its majestic crown; the crown rustles! That is stirring godhead! The savage falls prostrate and worships! Behold the history of sensuous Man, that dark web, in its becoming, out of verbis nomina—and the easiest transition to abstract thought!
... the earliest dictionary was thus a sounding pantheon.


231 Ibid., Brehier, p. 182.

Von Humboldt was not as taken with the problems of origins, however. And yet, his general lack of concern with the genesis of language did not mean that he shared the Enlightenment's distaste for the primitive. Rather, for von Humboldt, all of the available information about primitive language, mores and associations suggested that the act of naming was not for the purpose of denoting one object as opposed to others (univocal designation), but reflected a complex, organic activity in which different words and different languages represent different experiences and understandings of the world. Grammar is therewith a kind of intricate natural logic which integrates descriptions into a complex view of the world as a rational whole. Moreover, language is always a way of expressing these different conceptions of the world.

Man lives with his objects chiefly—in fact, since his feeling and acting depends on his perceptions, one may say exclusively—as language presents them to him. By the same process whereby he spins language out of his own being, he ensnares himself in it; and each language draws a magic circle round the people to which it belongs, a circle from which there is no escape save by stepping out of it into another.

In a fashion analogous to von Humboldt, Schleiermacher viewed understanding as an activity which is similar in form to speaking. This implied that writing is a special form of speaking, involving levels of competence in both the au-

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233 Ibid., p. 9.
tor and, as importantly, in his or her own original and subsequent public. The basic aim of interpretation is to reconstruct the meaning-structure and linguistic context in which an author sought to express a point of view. "The meaning of every word in a given passage has to be determined in reference to its coexistence with the words surrounding it." 235 The concern with language in interpretation first articulated by Schleiermacher represents an important turn in hermeneutics towards linguistics and away from the pre-eminence of a self-reflecting ego. This is because language for Schleiermacher is not simply an interpersonal system of exchange; language is also the medium through which "the individual speaker's life process and internal history" are expressed. 236 These two different language functions permitted Schleiermacher to develop a theory of interpretation which involved both the analysis of language and its changing communicative context. The first, as we noted above, is a matter of grammar and the second a question of psychology. This distinction in turn implied the need for both a logic of sign systems and a theory for reconstructing the mental experience of an author. As we shall see, Hegel's theory of language and its ancillary theory of interpretation represent a radical development of Schleiermacher's romanticist hermeneutic. This is because if, on the

236 Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, "Understanding and Interpretation," op. cit., p. 50.
one hand, the grammatical function of language is forced to its logical extreme what results is a theory of linguistic usage and competence which necessarily terminates in the dissolution of the central role of the subject as either author or reader. Paradoxically, that is, a purely grammatical approach arrives finally at the position where language, rather than the speaker, is what speaks. Again, this is reminiscent of Heidegger's view that man doesn't make use of language, language makes use of man. On the other hand, Schleiermacher, Dilhey and the later historical school's psychologic hsermengetic, if forced to its logical extreme, eventuates in the rejection of linguistic structuration in favor of a notion of an historically-defined, yet unique, expressive act. In short, Hegel rejected this distinction between the grammatical and psychological because of its unreconciliated assertion. For Hegel, such thinking had the effect of reducing acts of interpretation to a species of art criticism in which individual statements and their linguistic context are ultimately divorced from a truly historical and conceptual science. In Hegelian language, the grammatical and psychological remain at the level of "essences", of universal and particular, and have yet to move on to true singularity or individuality.

Hegel incorporates a number of important insights from the early hermeneuticians, however. The first, and perhaps most important, is that historical context and acts of un-
derstanding are not separate moments or events of concern to different sciences, but a circle of meaning formation in development. This is what is meant by the oft-mentioned notion of a "hermeneutical circle," or the view that there is a whole from which individual parts receive their true meaning. And yet, with Hegel there is no sense of a permanent substructure from which the multiple determinations of meaning are given. Schleiermacher, however, like Plato, (perhaps because of the object of his interpretive studies, i.e. the Bible) advances the notion of permanent reality which infuses the human world with meaning. Thus, he argued that there are essential and eternal categories which are both made manifest in our psychological attitudes and expressed in the linguistic habits of the master authors. In this sense, he could argue that a reconstructive hermeneutic of historical and linguistic context could produce a faithful reproduction of authorial meaning. We could, that is, understand a text better than its author. The function of interpretation was thus to uncover and reveal this discourse of permanent essences without destroying the specific context of its various historical expressions. Misunderstanding could be overcome by a return to the "truly real" which gives meaning to individual texts. Schleiermacher's hermeneutical circle was meant to address this problem conceptually such that the "grammatical" was meant to adumbrate the unity of language within the multiplicity of words, and the 'psychological'
expressed the particularized meaning of an individual's expression within the context of a unified meaning-giving formation.

As Palmer remarks, however, there is a logical contradiction in Schleiermacher's formulation of the circle of meaning - in fact, it is a contradiction in all of its hermeneutical formulations - viz., that to know something requires a knowledge of the whole before we can understand its various parts. Schleiermacher attempted to overcome this problem by asserting the occurrence of a "leap" into the hermeneutical circle, or a kind of 'thrownness' into meaning, which transcends simple acts of historical understanding. In other words, hermeneuticists become diviners. But, with Schleiermacher, the act of divination required a theory of interpretation, as well as a significantly high degree of linguistic competence and grammatical knowledge. It is this divinatory character of Romanticist hermeneutics, especially its notion of a leap into truth which simultaneously transcends its own present while immersing thought in the past, which Hegel thoroughly rejected. Such thinking, he argued, cannot lay bear the conditions of knowledge but only presumes that its thinking must be the case. But this in no wise diminishes Schleiermacher's language-centered hermeneutics, even though he too later in his work turned from language to the psychological in the hope of establishing a

theory of the "reconstruction of the mental experience of the text's author." This work was continued after Hegel by Dilthey whose Kantian-inspired critical idealism, i.e. the critique of historical reason, came to be the foundation of the Geisteswissenschaften as the science of purposive human action.

4.5 ALIENATION AND LANGUAGE: HEGEL'S VERGEHENSTANDLICHUNG

The German term "vergegenstandlichung" is normally rendered as "objectification", though this translation is not much help in grasping its significance. This is because it refers to the complex process of culture-formation "whereby a subject externalizes himself [through labour or the use of language] and thereby becomes an object which, as a part of his environment, may react back on him; [it is] the actualization of a subject in cultural objects." The actualization of the subject in culture is not, however, a linear historical process, or the history of man as an instrumental self-making, nor can it be construed as the reduction of cultural objects to the expressive acts of a solitary ego. Rather, for Hegel, it is a social and conceptual process. Thus the term 'objectification' seeks to capture the process.

238 Ibid., p. 89.
239 Joseph Bleicher, Hermeneutics, op. cit., p. 270. Bleicher renders the term as "objectivation" as opposed to "objectification", but, like most neologisms, more confusion than comprehension is transmitted in this subtle difference.
whereby the subject moves outside itself into an environment which is always already socially and conceptually constituted - it appears as other. For Hegel, this life-process, in so far as it pertains to cultural objects, is a thinking, acting and saying mediation in which subjects and objects are continuously changed by mutual interaction. This interaction is dialectical and thus entails struggle and alienation as well as reconciliation and creation. Culture, however, is with Hegel fundamentally self-estrangement. In light of our interests here, this is clearly evident in the confrontation with historical texts of tradition whose meaning appear impenetrable, even though they are recognized as cultural objects, i.e. as man-made. For Hegel, the issues of culture and self-estrangement are intimately related to language. This is illustrated again in the example of historical texts which employ language to convey meaning, yet their meaning remains other - alien, strange and incomprehensible. Language, that is, is the medium which gets the limit-possibilities of both thinking and experience. Heidegger makes a similar point when he argues that language is "the medium within which the thinking of philosophy and every kind of thinking and saying move and rest".240 Or as Hegel adds:

Language and labour are outlet expressions in which the individual no longer retains possession of himself per se but lets the inner get right outside him, and surrenders it to something else. ... the point to observe is how this relation is determined, and what is to be understood by the inner finding expression in the outer. (Phen., 340).

This comparison of Hegel with Heidegger is not intended to suggest that they are in agreement, though their differences are nowhere as great as they are often presumed, but only to highlight the turn to language in the modern period. Unlike the analytic tradition, however, German philosophy has tended to see language as an ontological fact, i.e. as part of 'human nature', rather than as a convention fabricated by mankind to facilitate an instrumental being in the world; or a being among things. Hegel's contribution to this thinking lies in his view of language as both the medium of Reason and Dasein's self-estrangement from its own expressions. More particularly, Hegel refused to reduce Reason to language tout court, preferring instead to argue that language, including the sensory activities of hearing and speaking, sets the historical limits of Reason's expressibility but is not itself the limits of Reason. While I have attempted assiduously to refrain from the notion of 'Spirit', this is what Hegel means by the term, viz. Reason is embodied in language and in thought but it is not reducible to either.

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It was a basic principle of Hegel's thought that the subject and all of his functions, however 'spiritual', were inescapably embodied; and this in two related dimensions: as a 'rational animal', that is, a living being who thinks; and as an expressive being, that is, a being whose thinking always and necessarily expresses itself in a medium.

The relationship between Hegel's notions of Reason (Verstand) and Spirit, and his view that language is the medium in which the subject thinks and speaks (Verstand), reflect the dialectical character of his concept of cultural development (Bildung). With Hegel, language is the natural organ of Reason as well as the "most immediate expression of man's rationality." But, as 'immediate expression', language is that which reflects, orders, and objectifies — it is the movement toward 'objectification' and this movement is what Hegel calls Bildung. As Cook remarks, for Hegel the "movement towards objectification... best expresses what he means by "Spirit" (Geist)."

Objectification, from the standpoint of the Subject, necessarily involves a process of self-articulation and self-abnegation; or, in the language of Hegel, the inner becomes outer, the outer becomes other which stands over and against the inner voice of thought or conscience. This is the activity of dialectic which is best exemplified in the tragedies of Socrates and Antigone. Thus

244 Ibid, p. 28.
we might say that historically the first written tragedies represent the 'immediate expression' of human rationality coming to be conscious of itself as a truly thinking subject. Existentially, this means that the inner self seeks recognition and thus requires the presence of others - in pain one cries out, in happiness one rejoices; "I" objectify.

It is the Word, which pronounced, externalizes and empties him who pronounces it, but which is nevertheless taken up immediately, and only in this taking up of itself does the Word exist. Thus, the differences which are made, are just as immediately dissolved; truth and reality are precisely this self-circular movement.²⁴⁵ (Science, 483).

The nature of the process of objectification in culture is an extension of Hegel's model of the spoken word described above. And yet, there is also an important difference between Hegel's model of the spoken word as immediate expression and what he calls 'Spirit's self-estrangement in culture.' In so far as the phenomenology is concerned, the model of the spoken word is analogous to Vico's "hieratic" stage of verbal expression in which talk operates at the level of essences, of the inner and outer, and reflects the classical view of the world as radical other; it is a world that can no longer be immediately expressed in words. Hegel's notion of 'Spirit's self-estrangement in culture' is, however, a description of modernity, exemplified in its de-

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 126. This is a slightly amended translation by Cook from the Wissenschaft der Logik, Zweiter Teil, p. 104.
motic use of language and in the fact that culture is no longer an apparent sphere of mediation and continuity. In other words, the subject is now unchanged in its confrontations with the past because speech is the eternal repetition of self-conscious individuality, the self qua self. At this point "estrangement ... takes place in Language, in words alone, and language assumes here its peculiar role" (Phen., 529-530). By this Hegel means that language becomes important for itself, and not for the content it seeks to convey. Analogous to our discussion of Locke, this age dispises the past, the primitive and the existing natural and social order from which it originates. Findlay expresses Hegel's sentiments in exceptionally clear terms: "Its essential attitude is one of alienation, divorce, distance from every sort of natural being. For the variety of things and persons that occur naturally in the world or society it has only an undiscriminating contempt, much as a horticulturalist might despise the "wild" varieties of the geranium or the rose. For it excellence is essentially something made, thoughtfully and deliberately constructed or cultivated: its one desire is to polish, refine and reshape itself and the world. This consciousness is also much concerned to pass judgements on things as good or bad, the good being what is conformable to itself, what represents the triumph of 'culture' over chance or nature, the bad whatever repre-
sents the corresponding defeat. 246

This "civilized" state of society is characterized by its exhaltation of State-power and wealth, and each has its own particular language. There is no need to detail Hegel's extremely laborious and convoluted account of this development other than to note that here language becomes crucially important because the subject, sheared off from culture as the sphere of truth, must now find in language the force to master its complete alienation. Romanticist hermeneutics, or the reconstruction in language (grammatical) of the mental experience of an author's text, can be read as an attempt to reach beyond this moment, i.e. the complete alienation of self from the past. In this sense it is man's alienation and detachment from what is perceived to be only an external, accidental world which, for Hegel, brings about the treatment of language as something made, an accident to be polished and cultivated for instrumental use. In other words, culture is treated as so much cosmic garbage to be taken up or discarded by circumstance and need. This extremely forceful exertion of individuality, says Hegel, must give way, however, and this occurs when the self qua self recognizes that all of its own expressions originate "in a consciousness certain of itself as a subject in a world of other subjects." 247 To be brief, this recognition of the

246 J.N. Findlay, Hegel, op. cit., p. 120.
247 David Cook, Language in Hegel, op. cit., p. 90.
subject as self in a world of subjects, i.e. in a intersubjectively-constituted world, is essentially the moment that hermeneutics arises. It is the moment when human purposes, aims and goals are seen to infuse culture, and this recognition of human agency makes possible for the first time a truly historical account of knowledge. Such a science, Hegel argues, must be philosophical in this respect: it represents a higher stage of human self-awareness than could be obtained from either a natural science of abstract, material externalities, or from the ahistorical ontology of classical thought in which otherness is overcome only ideally.

4.6 HISTORY AND LANGUAGE: THE HEGELIAN SYNTHESIS

As has been noted on several occasions, Hegel is adamant in his refusal to accept a transhistorical model of the Verfallsgeschichte of reason into history. This is why he objects to the early romanticist musings about the origins of speech. Implicit in many of their formulations was a conception of primitive speech as somewhat pure; primitive talk, that is, was one with the divine rhythm of nature, subject and object were one. This speculative assertion led the Romantics to see the rise of specialized languages, especially philosophy, as a dechirement of the modern world from the spirituality and communality of the past. That is, they made a point of stressing the process of cultural self-estrangement discussed above. Such languages were without
spiritual content, they argued, and represented an individualistic discourse of the self qua self which mirrored the artificiality and bogus civilization of bourgeois culture. Their musings about the origins of language involved both a philosophical and practical point of view. Practically, it reflected a deep disenchantment with bourgeois life—what Hegel calls the discourse of State-power and Wealth—especially the artificial mores, good manners and effrontery of pre-revolutionary Europe. Philosophically, they represented a strong denunciation of the identification of the leben-swelt with rational reflection. Byron is perhaps the best remembered protagonist of the Romantic credo: "The tree of Knowledge is not the tree of life." Against the prevailing Lockeanism of his time, William Blake applauded this new temperament as well: "I am happy to see and feel that men are craving for a better diet than the wretched trash they have been fed with for the last century ... commanded by the fixed telescope of Mr. Locke's human understanding."²⁴⁸ And finally, Goethe's Faust is even clearer in its praise of the romanticist conception of the history of philosophy as the journey from logos to erlebnis, from dialogue to discourse, word to deed.²⁴⁹


²⁴⁹ This is in reference to Faust's study of St. John in "Faust's Study (ii)":

'Tis writ, 'In the beginning was the Word.' I pause to wonder what is here inferred. The Word I
With the Romantics, the question of language and its place in human understanding was initially a far more political question than a strictly philosophical puzzle. Couched in the Romantic symbolism of humanity's fall into history, the early analyses of language attempted to recapture both the lost poetry of the mnemonic structure of language and its function as the guardian of the spiritual agreement between individuals in a community (homonopia). Rousseau, for example, though he maintained himself by writing and music-copying (among other creative exercises!), reacted violently against the written word, proclaiming it the most vile of perversions of an already corrupt and artificial civilization. Herder was not as extreme, even though he too saw speech as an expression of the original harmony and naturalness of pre-reflective communal life. With Hegel, however, the question of genesis is displaced by a hermeneutical circle in which language and history are made to reflect the process of expressive self-development, from immediate expression to Idea. And yet, Hegel was deeply affected by the Romantic vision because it contained the ideal towards which all serious thinking is naturally predisposed, viz. the unity of subject and object in harmonious freedom. This is the vision which had guided Romantic speculation to its pristine image of the oneness of man in pre-history. With Hegel, 

... The Spirit comes to guide me in my need, I write, 'In the beginning was the Deed.'
this ideal was made to give way to an idea of history which is not a falling away from perfection but a phenomenological and conceptual movement toward possibility. Language is the focus of this movement because, as he says, the "forms of thought are first of all set out and laid in language" (Science, 39). This means, among other things, that an adequate understanding of what is (Being) must also involve an understanding what has become (human); human beings live in the fullness of a tradition.

The question of language was posed at an already advanced moment in the development of human knowledge; a moment in which the old notions of language had become problematic. Paradoxically, one might say that language became a problem for itself. This is made clear in the opening discussions of the Phenomenology where Hegel counters the claims of sense-certainty by arguing that such immediate knowledge is impossible; it is always mediated by words. While his arguments are developed more thoroughly below, the point here is that it is through speech that language insinuates itself into the historical process as a definite determination of thought and reality. Language is thereby never wholly personal, as in its acquisition and particular use, but reflects a moment in the evolution of the human species as a definite stage in the development of consciousness. If truth and goodness, therefore, do not dwell outside of language as essence, thingness, noumena or logos, but is that which mani-
fests itself in language and its use, then any science which claims truth must for Hegel grow out of the study of language. While Hegel was not the first to raise the issue of language for the historical sciences, he was nevertheless the first to prepare the ground for a view of the human sciences as expressly historical, interpretive and linguistic. In passing, I do not mean to suggest by this that political science is reducible to language, i.e. that language is a 'principle' of politics, only that language is a condition of the possibility of politics.

In any branch of science the language of expression is specialized, symbolic or abstract, and a large part of theoretical activity - if not all of it - is to make abstract language intelligible. In fact, the history of political theory is taken up mostly with rendering the master texts into language which is comprehensible to students with little or no previous exposure to such writings. As this process develops the language of expression becomes more specialized and abstract. The reason for this is evident. What is desired is that students grasp the meaning of the texts conceptually so that other experiences can be translated into conceptual form. In this sense the task of political commentary is always hermeneutical because it moves from within specialized language, which represents a text as an embodied whole, to ordinary language in which we are most at home and easily comprehend, but which is fluid, polyse-
mous and equivocal. The purpose of theoretical thinking is essentially to translate the fluidity of experience and expression back into conceptual language. This implies a circle of interpretations. On the one hand, knowledge proceeds historically from ordinary language which voices the concerns and unintelligibles that find their resolution in higher forms of thought only; that is, it proceeds to abstract language or pure symbolism (mathematics) - from equivocal speech to univocal abstraction. On the other hand, with Hegel the function of philosophical thinking is to move from the abstract, static conceptualizations to fluid categories so as to express the dynamic of reality and thought concretely in terms of their own self-movement, i.e. as concrete universals.

As we saw earlier, any systematic field of investigation is a structure in which content and method are correlative and this can now be expressed in terms of language. In other words, the abstract categories of a specialized language contain their own internal rules or standards of formalization. This is simply another way of saying that a particular tradition of discourse is constituted by an ever-expanding historical process of linguistic formalization moving within its own specific field of logical determinations. For Hegel, this process must be approached both historically and conceptually. In the opening chapter of the *Phenomenology*, i.e. Sense-Certainty, and in his *Logic*, Hegel demon-
strates that without language there are no concepts, and without concepts no universals. He shows that in the case of sense certainty what at first appears to be the richest kind of language is really the poorest knowledge. This is because sensuous immediacy is always limited to the 'here' and 'now', and to 'this' and 'I', but these are not in the objects but in the self. And, for example, what is now is always mediated, it is always a negation of a previous now.

... it is precisely language which is invoked to counter sense certainty's direct but opaque intuition of the immediate, in the night in which all cows are black; it is language which is introduced from the start to sustain the mediation of the immediate through the entire breadth of experience from sense certainty to the self-transparency of thought thinking itself. The brunt of the argument against the claim of sense immediacy ... is that it cannot be said ... To say the singular "this," "here," "now," and "I" is to relate them to others of their kind and therefore to universalize them.

If, as Hegel says, concepts are always universals; and if the true is always expressed as universal; and if thinking is possible only in and through language, then from the very beginning language has expressed man's rationality. Conversely, irrationality is that which cannot be expressed or grasped conceptually, it lacks universality, and must take the forms of dreams, fancies or illusions. This is why psychoanalytic theories, for example, translate the stories and images, or word-descriptions, of analysands into pathologies, i.e. theories or conceptual schemes. In other words,

these images acquire their meaning through translation into concepts, and concepts acquire their meaning from their relation to other concepts in a logical structure.

"... language is the work of Thought: and hence all that is expressed in language must be universal. What I only mean or suppose, is mine: it belongs to me — this particular individual. But language expresses nothing but universality; and so I cannot say what I merely mean." (ENC., 20,31)

Hegel's point is that "I" can never say what is merely intended. Language expresses universal concepts only and, as such, "I" as author or speaker have no proprietary rights over meaning. Language does not point to a universal 'me' or to a referential other but is the home of thought — the thinking ego and its experience is always "We": or, as Hyppolite remarks, the "very conditions of intersubjectivity" are, for Hegel, always already contained in language. In other words, Hegel argues that it is futile to believe that meaning is a set of arbitrary reference points only and that the task of interpretation is to align an author's words with an abstract set of historical or psychological categories. Thinking takes place in and through language, not in and through the isolated ego. This is what Hegel means when he says "I" can never say what I merely intend.

It is a fact of philological evidence that the languages that peoples have spoken in their rude conditions were highly elaborate; ... a comprehensive, constant grammar is the work of thought which reveals its categories in it. It is, moreover, a fact that with advancing social and polit-

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ical civilization this systematic product of intelligence is blunted, and language becomes poorer and less subtle. (Reason, p. 77).

From the standpoint of history, Hegel argues that reason is already at work in the world as a natural logic embodied in the activity of signification long before logic or grammar were formalized. However, the real work of interpretation which overcomes the self-forgetfulness of historical understanding is in conceptual thought; it is dwelling in the universality of truth available in language and through which a thinking mediation of the past with the present is possible. This does not mean that such a thinking is reducible to the semantic functions of ordinary speech or to the patterned vocality of sounds. These fields of empirical study must be left to their respective sciences. For Hegel, the possibility of a thinking mediation of past and present was not possible in pre-history, that is, in pre-logical or pre-conceptual societies. This is perhaps one of the most widely misunderstood elements in Hegel's thinking about history. His concept of pre-history is not a Romantic reference to primitivism measured by the standard of civilization, for such talk is itself a reflection of the process of alienation, but the realization that history is the product of the process of mediation in its movement toward the possibility of unifying reason with reality. Pre-history is with Hegel the condition of mere existence in time, in the endless repetitive circle of nature; or life determined solely by immediate need and the bonds of nature.
... the spreading of peoples over the earth, their separation from one another, their comings and wanderings - all this remains in the obscurity of a voiceless past. These are not acts of a will becoming conscious of itself, not acts of freedom giving itself phenomenal form and true reality. These peoples do not partake of the true element of history, in spite of their development of language. Therefore they have not attained historical existence. (Reason, 77).

Language in its sheer externality does not show itself as a single or complete structure, but rather appears as a multiplicity of different sign systems. Language, that is, appears as ever so many natural languages, distinct, particular and unrelated. It is to the great benefit of modern linguistics, and de Saussure in particular, to have conceptually distinguished these activities as the homogeneity of language (langue) and the heterogeneity of speech (parole). There is one langue as a finite structural unity of sound and many possible paroles, dead and alive, as differing sign systems. Analogously, Hegel argues that the many paroles of philosophical systems, or of specialized intellectual languages, are correlative of their conceptual unity, or underlying langue, taken as a whole. This unity is analogous to his concept of history, moreover; it is not a single vision amplified in its possible polysemic representation, but a dialectical process of negation and mediation, of a coming to structural or rational self-knowledge in time. For this reason Hegel refuses to reduce rationality

to language as langue, or thinking to structure without process, arguing that rationality is "in language, but cannot be taken as language. Language may then be the medium in which dialectic takes place, but it is not really the motor by which the dialectic moves."253 It is conceptual thinking which transcends the merely temporal and sensual immediacy of existence, i.e. it transcends the sheer repetitiveness of signs. Reason expresses in language (as logic) the actual movement (as history) of our coming-to-be conscious of the world as a rational structure. Language, therefore, is not really consciousness per se but its expression, the expression of real and actual possibility, or as Hegel would say, "the actuality of rationality and the rationality of actuality." This disclosure of the world as a movement toward rationality does not deny freedom, but attests to the creative power of a priori thinking, to the freedom of thought in its struggle to express concrete principles of reason exemplified in and through history.

Where Hegel differs from his predecessors is that he refuses to accept the view that technical languages are somehow closer to the "truth" than ordinary discourse. We pay a high price for precision where language is removed from life and closed off from the world, but we also pay a heavy toll when ordinary meaning fails to rise above the innocence of the immediacy of signification. For Hegel, the spirit which

infuses the historical moment is embodied in its language; in fact, with Hegel certain languages, especially his beloved German, are closer to true philosophical expression than others. While there is no need here to address Hegel's lavish praise of the spirituality of German as a natural language of philosophy - Gadamer is still promoting this idea today 254 - the role of ordinary language requires closer attention. Hegel nowhere suggests that philosophy ought not to develop its own general terminology, his own work as well as the history of philosophy makes this clear, only that philosophical terms necessarily grow out of ordinary speech and natural language. That is, philosophy reflects forms of life primarily. These forms of life, in turn, reflect an underlying coherence or structure in our myriad perceptions and conceptualizations of the world, but this is not a structure constituted by specific facts. Facts, like language, continuously change and it is the nature of this transformation and transmission of forms of knowledge which constitutes the task of philosophy. As David Lamb remarks:

Hegel's point is that at different levels of knowledge different facts are undisputed. Certain things are taken as immediate data, even though at another level their very recognition is mediated. ... There is no item of knowledge that is purely or absolutely immediate. 255


This is why Hegel is opposed to the view that there ought to be a specific formalized language of philosophy such as the mathesis universalis of Galileo or Leibniz, i.e. it would involve an undisputed, immediate presence. More particularly, spatially-oriented modes of expression such as symbolic languages fail to capture the temporal dimension which Hegel believes records the real movement of thought as history. In the Philosophy of Spirit, which forms the third section of the Encyclopaedia, Hegel treats these issues (Enc., 459). 256 He begins by stating his objection to what he calls "hieroglyphic" or pictorial language, and proceeds to note his preference for the spoken as opposed to the written word. The first objection is directed at those thinkers who assert that "something" particular is given to us immediately through the senses as the source of our knowledge - this is similar to Russell's notion of "knowledge by acquaintance." "Hegel's argument, ... is essentially the argument that even pointing and mere acquaintance require concepts as the conditions of their possibility." 257 Hegel is emphatic that without language there could be no acquaintance in any meaningful sense because acquaintance presumes some prior knowledge and communicative competence. In order to have knowledge something must be said, and language is the medium in which both a recognition of an object

256 Cf., J.N. Findlay, Hegel, pp. 303ff.

and its separation from the self are first encountered. As Marcuse notes, language is where the "first integration between subject and object takes place."\textsuperscript{258} Marcuse interprets Hegel to mean that language is what allows the self to assert its desire against the will of others such that his interpretation is an explicitly political elaboration of the master-slave dialectic.\textsuperscript{259} While this inference may indeed be warranted, Marcuse is thereby also alluding to the paradoxical nature of Hegel's understanding of speech. This is because just as the will has no permanent essence for Hegel — it is the world made to conform to the actions of the subject — language likewise has no permanent essence — it is the subject conforming to the world.\textsuperscript{260} "The attempt to express the essence of language is something that cannot be expressed in language."\textsuperscript{261}

What strikes Hegel is the elasticity of the spoken word — it disappears the moment it is uttered — and the equivocality of language. These two properties of words, and a for-tiori of sentences and texts, form the cornerstone of Hegel's theory of language. From this perspective, Hegel argues that our descriptions of things are never merely personal, but essentially social because it would be impossible

\hspace{1em} \textsuperscript{258} H. Marcuse, \textit{Reason and Revolution}, op. cit., p. 75.
\textsuperscript{259} Ibid., p. 75.
\textsuperscript{261} David Lamb, \textit{Hegel - From Foundation}, op. cit., p. 31.
to comprehend the shifting connotations and denotations of words outside of the modes of discourse which constitute the life-process. This sociability is the source of our categories of thinking and expression, as well as the social basis of human knowledge. It is what provides these categories with their objective status, for they are not now nor were they ever merely private in respect of knowledge claims. Words mediate subject and object. For Hegel, the notion of the social (sittlich) is not an aggregated consensus of individual expressions, but, in so far as it touches on the problem of thought, language is concerned with culture, and what concerns culture is Spirit or Mind. 262 As a vehicle for Reason, Hegel says that language is an objectifying medium which manifests the work of intelligence (ENC., 459), and agrees with von Humboldt that different discourses embody different ways of conceptualizing the world as a rational whole. As Taylor remarks: For Hegel "we cannot clearly distinguish the content of thought from what is 'added' by the medium." 263 For Taylor this is evidence of Hegel's 'expressivism' or the view that language is more than a set of signs, but a "tension in unity" between signifier and signified in which language is always "something more" than the act of naming or designating.

262 Michael Rosen, Hegel's Dialectic, op. cit., p. 125.
263 Charles Taylor, Hegel, op. cit., p. 82.
In a recent work, Michael Rosen rejects the view that Hegel held to an expressivist theory of language, remarking instead that he is in fact an anti-expressivist.264 Rosen argues that while Hegel accepts that there is no thought without language, he rejected the view that languages shape thought. Rosen is of the view that for Hegel language is only a set of signs. It is difficult to assess either contention textually because Hegel had very little to say about language per se, though the importance of language for philosophy is noted in all of his major works. Rather than follow either Taylor or Rosen on what constitutes the "expressivist" theory of language,265 it is perhaps more important to note that Hegel nowhere makes language identical to thought. In other words, it is one thing to say that when we think, we speak; but this does not mean that thinking and saying are identical, as Plato made clear. And yet, this distinction can be stretched too far such that thought loses all contact with the active doings and sayings of individuals, and philosophy is put forth as pure ideality. The metaphysical holism of Hegel's discourse of Spirit, and the open-ended dialogue of expressivist subjectivity, are binary views of Hegel which require closer examination because each implies a specific view of the place of language in inter--

264 Michael Rosen, Hegel's Dialectic, op. cit.

265 Rosen's work is a doctoral dissertation written in consultation with Taylor at Oxford University. (Ibid., Preface).
pretive understanding.

Hegel rejects the thesis of an unmediated historical reconstruction of the past because, as he says, the philosopher is both historian of philosophy and a thinker immersed in the present; the present, that is, is what brings about the search for intelligibility. The purpose of philosophy is thus not to convey the past as past, or to locate oneself as lord over all that has come before, but to grasp thought in its movement. Language, however, is the vehicle of this movement but, with Hegel, it cannot express this movement—it can only express the "moments" but not the spaces which constitute the pure logical activity which unites diverse expressions. This is why the Logic is so crucial for Hegel because it seeks to display the dynamic of Reason which connects moments of expression, i.e. forms of consciousness. Language is a sign system which establishes the concreteness of these moments as definite stages of awareness and self-awareness—they can be said—but logical relations are the pre-conditions of the possibility of each of these moments and its expression. It is in this sense that language is the medium of dialectic but not the motor by which it moves. Obviously, however, language as the expression of this dynamic does indeed point beyond itself to new forms of intelligibility, but only in so far as the dialec—

266 Ibid., p. 135.
267 Ibid., p. 136.
tic is propelled by more than words.

Hegel's theory of language is thereby intimately related to his dialectic and to his view of history. Dialectics operate in the spaces in which the transition from expression to thought and thought to expression, or nature to mind and thought to Spirit, takes place. And yet, this dialectic is not the transhistorical dynamic of a transcendent or immanent logic which operates beyond the social world. History is the human struggle to find and express meaning, and it is this struggle which, in the final analysis, motors the dialectic. Otherwise, man would not make his own history, he would merely do as he pleases. In the foregoing chapters an attempt was made to demonstrate the dialectical, historical and linguistic aspects of Hegel's theory of interpretation. In sum, I have argued that it is a hermeneutic theory which does not seek to reconstruct the temporality of thought-systems but to mediate the past with the present through the linguisticality of our thinking. It is essentially a hermeneutic of suspicion; not, however, because it seeks to change the world in the name of an infinite awareness, but because the very act of interpretation is a realization that full meaning is still absent from the world. Such absence requires that all existing standpoints in so far as they claim a certain validity remain open to challenge; and yet, this is not meant to suggest merely a critical attitude. For Hegel, and here I take the history of the interpretation
of Marx as exemplary, the approach to the master texts is an attitude of mediative care to represent the integrity of the text while submitting the world to critical scrutiny. Texts embody the thought and expression of the world as a self-making but it is a making which is always a self-forgetting as well. Thus to scrutinize historical texts of the tradition in such a way as to acquire historical knowledge only, that is, knowledge in which the subject remains unchanged, is to participate in this forgetfulness. For Hegel, the purpose of knowledge as "true" knowledge is to free thought from arbitrariness and accident in order to render what now appears to be arbitrary or by chance in terms of its relational necessity. In effect, the real strengths of Marxism are precisely the order it brings to bear on the diversity of social and cultural phenomena, and, even more importantly, its firm belief in the power of the freedom of thought and action to transcend the delimitations of the immediate moment and its static forms of consciousness. We study the past to remember; and to remember is always to actively participate in the process called culture, or Bildung. With Hegel, Bildung is a kind of cultivation which follows from what he terms Entfremdung (alienation), or the fact that theoretical insight is always a "wrenching out of one's immediate world."²⁶⁸ Herein lies the importance of studying the classics.

²⁶⁸ Daniel Cook, Language in Hegel, op. cit., p. 20.
The need for separating consciousness from its natural, immediate condition so that its potential may be realized is filled by the remote world and language of the classics. By appropriating such alien material we, so to speak, separate ourselves from ourselves: we gain the psychic distance necessary to become thinking, rational beings. 269

269 Ibid., p. 21
Chapter V

POLITICAL THEORY: ANCIENTS AND MODERNS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The following critical remarks about the prevalent modes of interpreting the master texts in political theory are not meant to diminish the scholarly achievements of the author's discussed. On the contrary, their work is here assessed because it constitutes what is generally characterized as the "best" available teachings on how to interpret the classical normative tradition; and because each writer in his or her own specific manner has something valuable to contribute to our understanding of both the intellectual past and the political present. This is why the major schools of political commentary demand a serious and careful reading, that is, a honest respect for their hermeneutical efforts. What follows, however, is not a critical or substantive evaluation of their interpretations of specific historical texts or epochs, but an examination of what each considers the art and science of political commentary to be. This is because each of the major schools or authors discussed, either explicitly or implicitly, have advocated certain notions of interpretation and understanding, as well as of communication and meaning. Each advances its own hermeneutical position.
The study of the history of political theory is principally a matter of higher education and professional training today. It is concerned with the transmission and transmutation of that part of our intellectual culture which has sought for a deeper understanding of the meaning of political life or, what is the same, it is about the prospects of using and renewing political knowledge. It is in this sense that political philosophy is 'zetetic', or a seeking after and recalling what is true about political life. As such, the serious student of the history of political thought is most often a teacher who, inspite of the pervasive rhetoric of modern science as the highest cognitive activity for humanity, continues to be inspired by and seeks to inspire in his/her audience a sensitivity for the heritage of Western philosophy and political thought. Its aim is to participate in the possibility of a better, more well-informed understanding of the political. And yet, to hope for something better is obviously not a very solid foundation from which to assess our intellectual traditions, for it would seem to assign the burden of error to the past; it would be to accept a positivistic view of possibility. Moreover, it would, as Riker suggested, mean that the history of political thought could provide only wisdom and not knowledge. Surely it can be argued that the master thinkers all believed that mankind in general could benefit from their advice, and that the common lot of humanity is best served by those who best
think and act on its behalf. In the language of Riker's political science, the master thinkers were frankly 'partisan' in their advice and in their thinking about what constitutes the best possible political regime. For the modern science of politics, this is evidence of their lack of objectivity and, consequently, it also signifies the limits of their understanding. As a result, contemporary political science often looks upon its theoretical past as the source of potential hypotheses to be sustained or refuted according to available evidence. In its search for ideological neutrality, the partisanship of the classic texts is often forgotten, and what is sought is an analytic vantage point from which to survey the question of political things impartially. Values and facts must be distinguished; Ought and is sundered.

The commentators discussed below, however, are not devotees of ideological detachment or scientific neutrality; each is concerned to take a stand and to argue its rightness passionately and convincingly. This does not mean that detachment is not a virtue for scholarship, only that the serious thinker can never stand outside, uncommitted, or free to judge the appropriateness of a position. As Trotsky noted, "only a participant can be a profound spectator."\(^{270}\) In a similar manner, Herbert Marcuse has argued that partisanship is a radical commitment to a multi-dimensional culture.

not 'one dimensional man'; it is a commitment to contest the ideal of non-commitment which flourishes in technocratic society. For Marcuse this meant that an intellectual's foremost task was to overcome the disciplining of free thought in order to maintain the heterodoxy of rational experiences - aesthetic, political, cultural, etc. - by refusing to reduce all thought to the monochromatic formalism of scientific rationality. 271 Thus, of the classics and their understanding in the modern period, he says:

The neo-conservative critics of leftist critics of mass culture ridicule the protest against Bach as background music in the kitchen, against Plato and Hegel, Shelley and Baudelaire, Marx and Freud in the drugstore. Instead, they insist on recognition of the fact that the classics have left the mausoleum and come to life again, that people are just so much more educated. True, but coming to life as classics, they come to life as other than themselves; they are deprived of their antagonistic force, of the estrangement which was the very dimension of their truth. The intent and function of these works have thus fundamentally changed. If they once stood in contradiction to the status quo, this contradiction is now flattened out. 272

Marcuse is here advancing a basic principle of Hegelian interpretive theory: The intellectual, in so far as he or she participates in the tradition by drawing forth the power of its "antagonistic force" - and thus the medium of its truth - is committed to saying what is true. Robbed of this dimension, the classics become an advantage to the status quo; they become working hypotheses which are either true or


272 Ibid., p. 66.
false, useful or superceded; or sources of sensuous enjoyment which no longer excite the critical imagination. Indeed, this is what Hegel meant by true knowledge as that knowledge which frees thought from its own orthodoxy, it frees thought from simple talk about appropriate means to available ends. This view of the role of the intellectual as both committed partisan and truth-seeker, though contradictory on the surface, will serve to focus attention on the interpretive strategies discussed below. The modes of interpretation examined in this chapter are essentially conservative politically and represent what Ricoeur has called the hermeneutics of respect. Both the Great Tradition and New History approaches to commentary are motivated by the desire to conserve the tradition in its integrity as both practical and theoretical, or what Aristotle called phronesis and theoria. Both, however, differ significantly on what constitutes the practical and its relationship to theoretical understanding, though both are inclined to accept the notion of theory as etymologically derived from the Greek theoros, i.e. a public representative of the holy or sacred at festivals. For the Great Tradition this has come to mean a keeper and sustainer of secrets, while with the New History it is about the relationship between Being and Time, or philosophy and history. The following chapter discusses both of these approaches to political theory, especially the concept of tradition which separates their respective hermeneutical efforts.
5.2 LEO STRAUSS: THE ESOTERIC WRITINGS

In so far as the strength of a writer’s influence can be measured by the number of self-ascribed disciples, the late Leo Strauss is undoubtedly still the most influential historian of political thought today. While there are those who argue that Strauss was not, in fact, an historian of ideas but a philosopher, the following examination treats Strauss as both a teacher of political theory and as a thinker who advocated a specific approach to understanding the master texts.

In the opening remarks to his “What is Political Philosophy?” before a Jerusalem audience, Strauss notes ironically that such a topic is perhaps out of place in the “faithful city.” This is because while Jerusalem is the focus of revelation, of the promised city, Athens is the birthplace of the ‘ideal’ city, of human reason as the ground of political excellence. For Strauss, political philosophy is about the ‘ideal’ city, that is, about discerning knowledge of the good which is necessarily always in opposition to ordinary political opinion, and this implies the question of political action.

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274 Leo Strauss, What is Political Philosophy, op. cit., p. 9.
All political action is ... guided by some thought of better or worse. But thought of better or worse implies thought of the good. The awareness of the good which guides all our actions has the character of opinion: it is no longer questioned but, on reflection, it proves to be questionable. The very fact that we can question it directs us towards such a thought of the good as is no longer questionable - towards a thought which is no longer opinion but knowledge. All political action has then in itself a directedness towards knowledge of the good: ... For the good society is the complete political good.

What Strauss means is that Athens was the birthplace in which this manner of political thinking initially appeared and in which political philosophy first emerged. Socrates is here taken as the principle example of the art of political philosophizing, of directing his thoughts towards knowledge of the good. And yet, with Strauss there is also a sense in which political philosophy really begins with Plato and Aristotle to the extent that they were the first to attempt to link science to political philosophy, or knowledge of the "nature of all things" to knowledge of the "nature of political things."276 In other respects, however, the Socratic quest for knowledge of what is right and good was based on the prospect of acquiring knowledge through unassisted thought; it was a form of questioning which rejected revelation as well as the belief that the unassisted mind could not penetrate to the core of fundamental knowledge. Philosophy proper is the continuous search for such knowledge, and

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276 Ibid., p. 11.
a fortiori, political philosophy is the quest for fundamental knowledge of political things. Thus, for Strauss, political philosophy is a branch of philosophy, both in its originary beginning and subsequent development, though in the modern period we have lost sight of this link. As a result, the decline of political philosophy in modernity reflects a profound forgetfulness about the quest for fundamental knowledge of the principles of right conduct, and of what would constitute the best political regime.

For Strauss, philosophy is the manner of treating an investigation - "a treatment which goes to the root and is comprehensive" - while "political" is the subject-matter. In going to the roots of something, he says in a fashion analogous to Socrates, we are not in "possession of the truth, but quest for the truth. The distinctive trait of the philosopher is that "he knows that he knows nothing," and that his insight into our ignorance concerning the most important things induces him to strive with all his power for knowledge." What induces this thinking is the quest to replace opinion, the element of society, with knowledge, the core of philosophy. In this way Strauss can argue that political philosophy is opposed to revelation, or the divine authorization of what is good and therewith valuable and important to political life. Political philosophy is inher-

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277 Ibid., p. 10.
278 Ibid., p. 11.
ently the intellectual labour of a solitary individual, of recollection without divine assistance, who stands in opposition to the realm of opinion and, therefore, his fellow citizens. Political philosophy is thereby not indifferent to the distinctions between doxa and episteme, nomos and physis, truth and opinion, as is contemporary political science. In times past, he argued, it was possible to listen to the masters, to stand in the light of their political knowledge; today, however, wisdom is no longer a valued possession. Without a desire to possess political knowledge, the individual is incapable of contemplating the nature of political things, and this, to be brief, is why Strauss believed that political philosophy has declined in the modern period.

For Strauss the function of political commentary is to recall the wisdom of the past, i.e. its knowledge of political things, in order to prepare the ground for political philosophy. From this perspective, we might say that Strauss saw his task as both historian of political thought and political philosopher, though he always made clear that his teaching did not claim knowledge of the true nature of political things. Rather, he suggested that the classical teaching constituted the most authentic form of questioning to the extent that it posed the problem of politics in terms of humanity's highest ideal - to know the truth. From this perspective he could argue that the classical ideal, viz.,
of political life "guided by nature rather than convention," is superior to the modern teaching which believes that the citizen must be trained, that is, human beings are without an essential nature and are thereby infinitely malleable. Thus he set Plato-Aristotle in opposition to Machiavelli, the first teacher who, according to Strauss, advocated a strict division between morality and politics, or, in other words, politics is convention and rule by law, custom and habit, i.e. force. Added to this distinction, he noted that modernity is characterized by the belief that chance can be mastered, and, for Strauss, the two greatest offspring of this thinking are positivism and historicism. From this perspective, Strauss makes a fundamental claim about how to read the history of political thought; it is a discernible movement away from "high" to "low" ideals of what it means to be a human being. The tradition, he argued, has become a movement away from the possibility of thinking political excellence to the actuality of a world which is thoroughly estranged from the concept of eternity, and therefore from goodness and truth. In effect, modernity is best characterized as a self-estrangement from the origi-

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279 Ibid., p. 27.


nary focus and primary basis of man's desire to quest for knowledge of the natures of all things. The obliteration of eternity, he contended, arose with the modern hubris of sovereign analytic reason and its belief in the possibility of mastering chance, and with the discovery of history as the focus of man's coming to absolute responsibility for his own actions. Modern man made himself master of the world, but at the price of never really knowing what is fundamental or good.

Strauss' understanding of political philosophy was conditioned by his particular reading of classical political philosophy. He argued that the classical teachings were directly related to political life, that they were practical as well as theoretical teachings. As a practical activity, classical political virtue "designated the skill by virtue of which a man could manage well the affairs of political communities by deed and by speech." Excellent politicians were not, however, rhetoricians but instead were those possessed of the knowledge and skill required to deal effectively with individual cases. Political science is not the skill of the legislator but the "knowledge which would enable a man to teach legislators." It is the ability to transmit to legislators an awareness of the permanent strata

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283 Ibid., p. 82.
284 Ibid., p. 88.
of meanings which inform particular situations. In order to apprehend Strauss' reading, it is important to see that he was not talking about an intellectual discipline or a practical skill which is accessible to all. Politics is about the skill of governing, and of those things which are effected by the skill of statesmanship; and political science is knowledge of the nature of political things which could improve the art of rulership. It is about knowledge which is possessed by the few philosophers and is made available to the natural aristoi of a community. Its function is not to provide an understanding primarily, but "right guidance," or to reveal to those who rule well a philosophical appreciation for what is initially a pre-philosophical craft. As such, political philosophy is intended for what Strauss called "decent men", not simply "intelligent men", and surely not those like Machiavelli who are incapable of distinguishing between decency and indecency. His teaching is addressed to those who alone can comprehend the seriousness of its fundamental question;

That question is so simple, elementary and unobtrusive that it is, at first, not even intelligible, ... This distinctly philosophic question is "What is virtue?" What is that virtue whose possession - as everyone admits spontaneously or is reduced to silence by unanswerable arguments - gives a man the highest right to rule?  

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285 Ibid., p. 88.
286 Ibid., p. 89.
287 Ibid., p. 90. Cf., Hwa Yol Jung, "Leo Strauss' Conception of Political Philosophy," The Review of Politics,
In other words, the statesman must first possess such virtue in order to ponder its philosophical implications, and such virtue must itself be possible in the pre-philosophical activity of legislating for it to become a subject of possible philosophical reflection. As such, political philosophy only begins with reflection on the nature of those political activities which occasioned the desire to wonder aloud about the highest or ideal good, that is, with the desire to rise above opinion to science. This means for Strauss that truly "decent men" will desire to move beyond political life to philosophic life, and thus to the whole range of questions about Being itself. In this Strauss followed the Platonic metaphor of the divided line, from simple opinions to contemplation of the dianoetic virtues.288 At this point the desire to guide the legislator gives way to the life of contemplation, or the philosophic life. Such a life, however, is only possible in good regimes, i.e. in a political society which balances the different "natures" of its citizens.

For Strauss the possibilities of a life of contemplation are severely limited in the modern period because of the rise of historicism. He believed that political philosophy is not inherently historical (it is not technical knowledge); philosophy being that discipline which seeks the uni-

versal, timeless, and true, while history is that which deals with knowledge of particulars, temporal situations and change. This is why he could argue that there is a major difference between the history of political philosophy and political philosophy. In an essentially Aristotelian fashion, he contended that knowledge of particulars (constitutions, laws, habits) is important to political philosophy, but only in so far as it provides information with which to inquire into the true nature of political things. As he said, historical knowledge is only "preliminary and auxiliary to political philosophy; it does not form an integral part of it." Consequently, the history of political philosophy is also preliminary and auxiliary to political philosophy.

While Strauss has several interesting things to say about the transition to the modern historical approach, his major point seems to be that the classical thinkers rejected the possibility of a history of philosophy, i.e. they rejected the view that history could be an object for fundamental knowledge. In effect, they rejected the possible reconciliation of history and truth. This is because history is the record of change, of accident and chance, and thus can provide insight only into that which is particular and transient. What is particular and temporal was, for the Greeks,

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untrue and unreal; such 'things' are part of the illusory appearance of material existence. Political philosophy, however, is non-historical in a deeper sense for Strauss because no philosophy ever refutes another philosophy, but only contradicts it.

It confronts us then with the philosophic question as to which of two given contradictory theses concerning political fundamentals is true. ... Even if history could teach us that the political philosophy of the past has failed, it would not teach us more than that non-historical political philosophy has hitherto failed. But what else would this mean except that we do not truly know the nature of political things and the best, or just, political order?

We can ask, then, what could Strauss possibly mean by a non-historical political philosophy, the ideal of which confirms the activity of classical teaching and refutes the modern turn to history? In order to answer such a question Strauss, rather interestingly, quoted Hegel approvingly to the effect that the classical thinkers started out from an awareness of political things as they are present to "natural consciousness." He then argued, again following Hegel, that this manner of proceeding was subsequently changed as a result of the development of a tradition of thinking — the history of political theory — and what emerged was a mediated understanding of the nature of political philosophy. In other words, students of political things now begin their education with texts, and the inherently practical nature of

290 Ibid., p. 62.
291 Ibid., p. 75.
such teachings is increasingly lost or forgotten. Unlike Hegel, however, Strauss argued that the tradition which emerged, in so far as it fails to consider the practical implications of the non-historical political philosophy, was made a captive of historical consciousness. But for Strauss the tradition is a tradition only to the extent that the history of political philosophy is conceived as a special kind of inquiry in which its history is not a progressive unfolding of meaning, but an amplification and elucidation of the problem of discerning what is universally true in both our inherited and independently acquired political knowledge. In other words, the record of the history of political philosophy ought not be confused with the activity of non-historical political philosophy as the perennial quest for political knowledge of what is good.

For Strauss the inquiry into this activity, as well as the place of inherited knowledge, and the prospects of a deeper insight into the timeless nature of philosophical truth, are not to be conceived historically. By this he did not mean to suggest that the historicity of texts can be neglected, or that the peculiar styles and modes of writing exercised in different epochs are not important. On the contrary, knowledge of the history of political thinking is important for two quite different reasons. The first is that it is the source of that information with which to begin the activity of thinking the true nature of political
things; and second, it is to preserve the tradition in order to allow the quest for fundamental political knowledge to continue. This implies that the student must not be simply informed, but well-informed, or that the author's "true" intentions are revealed. How such a reading is possible was for Strauss a fundamental problem of commentary on the tradition. Before assessing Strauss' critique of modern interpretation, i.e. historicism, his theory of reading is discussed below.

In numerous writings, especially Persecution and the Art of Writing and "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing", Strauss made the point that political philosophy is often characterized by a style of esoteric writing. In adopting an essentially Platonic understanding, Strauss argued that there is an inherent contradiction between philosophy, or "true" science, and opinion, and that the task of political philosophy is to replace "opinion about "all things" by knowledge of "all things"." Strauss recognized the contradictions in this proposal, however, because this task, if completed, would constitute the dissolution of society. In other words, he recognized the inherently subversive character of the classical teaching, to wit that the ideal towards which it aspires must eventuate it the destruction of what exists

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292 Leo Strauss, Persecution and the Art of Writing, (Glencoe, Ill.:Free Press, 1952); and "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing," in What is Political Philosophy, op. cit., pp. 221-232.

293 Ibid., Forgotten Writing", p. 221.
and its replacement by something 'better'. Political philosophy, that is, threatens and endangers the status quo.

Hence philosophy or science must remain the preserve of a small minority, and philosophers or scientists must respect the opinions on which society rests. To respect opinions is something entirely different from accepting them as true. Philosophers or scientists who hold this view about the relation of philosophy or science and society are driven to employ a peculiar manner of writing which would enable them to reveal what they regard as the truth to the few, without endangering the unqualified commitment of the many to the opinions on which society rests. They will distinguish between the true teaching and the socially useful teaching as the esoteric teaching; whereas the exoteric teaching is meant to be accessible to every reader, the esoteric teaching discloses itself only to very careful and well-trained readers after long and concentrated study. 294

This approach to texts is evidently an elaboration of the Platonic teaching, as we have seen, but it is also, for Strauss, a necessary form of communication, especially in such thinkers as Locke and Spinoza. 295 The latter were concerned to advance arguments which were not only a danger to society, e.g. Spinoza's veiled criticism of revealed religion, but which, as a result, would bring reprisals from the politically powerful if their intentions had been made clear to all readers. This is because the element of society is

294 Ibid., p. 221-222.

295 Cf., Leo Strauss, Spinoza's Critique of Religion, (New York: Schocken Books, 1965) and Richard Cox, Locke on War and Peace, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960). The latter is a development of Strauss' thesis that the ambiguities in Locke are meant for the exoteric reader, while his true meaning is contained in the "secret", essentially Hobbesian, writings.
opinion, and teachings which have the effect of altering
opinion endanger both society and its rulers. Philosophy
always calls mundane authority into question. For Strauss,
therefore, the serious intentions of an author are those
which remain secret, and yet are accessible to the few. As
he said: "Esoterism necessarily follows from the original
meaning of philosophy, provided that it is assumed that
opinion is the element of society."296 In itself, the sug-
gestion that the intentions of an author may be veiled, ei-
ther because of the subversive character of the writing or
out of fear of persecution, is undoubtedly a valuable inter-
pretive suggestion for it may prevent the reader from fall-
ing prey to the habit of seeing only ambiguities and contra-
dictions where a substantive position is presented. But
Strauss seems to be saying more than this. The brunt of his
argument is that the private thoughts of the master think-
ers, in so far as they are directed at timeless truth, can-
not be reduced to the historicity of their thinking because
such an attitude would prevent us from treating their writ-
ings seriously. That is, if the most private thoughts of a
master thinker, or the esoteric writings, were reducible to
their historical contexts, then this would mean that the
present commentator knows more fully than the master thinker
what he or she thought; and that such thoughts are not true,

296 Leo Strauss, "Forgotten Writing," op. cit., p. 227. See
also Paul Norton, "On Leo Strauss' Critique of Histori-
cism," paper presented to the CPSA, (May, 1978), London,
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but historically conditioned. We would, said Strauss, begin with the knowledge that what is to be studied is false or, at best, partial, and therefore with no real reason to be taken seriously. And he noted:

> History of philosophy necessarily presupposes the persistence of the same fundamental problems. Thus, and this alone, is the trans-temporal truth which must be admitted if there is to be a history of philosophy.

What, we can ask, is Strauss' own esoteric teaching, or his private thoughts which remain hidden? On the surface it is evident that Strauss sided with the classical teachings of Plato and Aristotle, and was opposed to modern principles of thought and action. And yet was he totally at variance with the modern teaching? Of the latter, Strauss had a certain regard for Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger and their somewhat prodigal son, Kojève. All of these are called 'serious' and philosophers, terms which have high significance for Strauss. Why Strauss would have argued that the latter, especially Hegel and Heidegger, were of merit is not clear since on most occasions his mention of them is presented in a rather critical tone. There are two ways of assessing this apparent contradiction: the first is that they were

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297 Ibid., p. 229.

concerned to restore philosophy as the quest for the truth of Being, or as the highest science, and thus of certain merit; or second, that their teachings, including their esoteric meaning, grasped the deep secret of the relationship between philosophy and political life which Strauss believed must remain hidden from public view, lest the terror of this teaching be unleashed on a world incapable of comprehending its true significance. In terms of the first perspective, Strauss makes clear that all of these thinkers were too deeply affected by the historicist tendencies of modernity to ever conceive philosophy in terms he would find congenial. They are moderns and therefore deficient, or so the surface reading tells us. In respect of the second perspective, it is here that Strauss is more truly at one with the modern teaching, and this is demonstrated in his debate with Kojève on ancient and modern tyranny. 299

The crux of the surface argument is that for Strauss the classical teaching on tyranny is the proper diagnosis of this condition from which modern social science can learn much about the true nature of dictatorships, the modern form of tyranny. Kojève, following Hegel, is represented as the rejection of classical teaching and the historical reconciliation of Socratic non-historical philosophizing with the

modern political teachings of Machiavelli and Hobbes, the
syncretism of force and truth. Thus it seems to be a
straightforward debate between the ancients and moderns
about knowledge of political things; - or is it Strauss'
usual way of hiding his own convictions? In other words,
the casual reader of Strauss is normally caught by the im-
mense scholarship and careful analysis of his commentaries.
In large measure, Strauss made it abundantly clear that he
cared to keep the tradition of non-historical political phi-
losophy in its integrity and fullness. What results is that
Strauss appears to be guiding the reader through complex and
serious issues about the nature and purpose of political
things while stressing the putative superiority of classical
wisdom over both modern political theory and contemporary
political science. Beyond the surface of scholarship and
philosophical appeal, there is, however, a special teaching
which in many respects is similar to Kojève - Hegel but
which advances a different classical prescription. There is
no need here to describe all of the details which separate
Strauss and Kojève on the question of tyranny. The central
point of their discussion is not about tyranny per se, but
about philosophy and tyranny. It is about the question
"What is philosophy?"; what relationship exists between the
philosopher and the political?; and what is the place of
history in our deliberations about such questions? Strauss'
major point is that the classics well understood the fini-
tude of human nature and thus could not have raised questions about the possibility of universal happiness. History, as a result, could not have been given the meaning of a progressive realization of an ideal such as freedom. Such an ideal is the product of philosophical contemplation, discernible by only a very few, and possibly only as the philosophical life. There is, in other words, an unbreachable wall between philosophy and politics as forms of life, even though the philosopher must try to provide moral direction to society—remembering, however, that the fulfillment of the ideal of happiness as a universal condition of humanity is utterly impossible. Implicit in this teaching is the view that while the wise person can guide the politicians, such guidance is possible only to the extent that the separation between true knowledge and opinion is irretrievable for all but the very few. Thus Strauss can argue that the political philosopher is determined by the ever-recurring search for fundamental knowledge, and part of this zetetic activity is the public performance of the philosopher who, by sharing his concerns with society, retains this gulf which makes the philosophic life viable, i.e. the tradition of non-historical political philosophy.

Strauss was aware that universal happiness is possible only when society is filled with wise persons, something the classics knew to be impossible. Or is this his real teaching? Is not Strauss also saying that the gulf between
knowledge and opinion is the place where superstition and terror abide, - the place of 'noble lies' - and that these elements are fundamentally necessary for society to cohere. In this he is not objecting to the Kojeve - Hegel theses of death and recognition, of struggle to overcome the mean slavery of existence, or of the deliverance of mankind from the labyrinth of superstition; on the contrary, Strauss is supremely conscious of the power of human thought to answer its own questions. This is what frightens him, especially Kojeve's boldness in announcing that we must now await the final moment of history, that is, the aufhebung of philosophy in the universal and homogeneous State. Strauss realizes that this is not a religious teaching about apocalyptic redemption from evil and deliverance from ignorance, but a philosophical teaching about the transcendence of Mind over Nature, of Hegel over Athens.

On the surface, Strauss seemed unconvinced by the implication that the non-wise will come to rule over all in the name of a fully naturalized and humanized wisdom which transcends the zetetic character of classical philosophy. The Wise-Tyrant knows that there is no true philosophy, only a final wisdom, and is thereby unaffected by the prattle of good and evil, right and wrong. This is because universal happiness is not a noetic or moral condition but a form of life in which the possibility of human happiness is actualized in the State which is capable of providing all that is-
potentially desired or required. The division of human natures, i.e. the noetic, appetitive and spirited elements of the psyche, is overcome finally and eternally, and with it the struggle for recognition, the struggle to the death, is sublated, or so Kojève suggested. It would be a mistake to blindly aver that the historical programme outlined by Kojève is not probable, and thus a truly philosophical thinking in the Aristotelian sense. Of this Strauss is keenly aware. This is because Strauss' own understanding of the Verfallsgeschichte of philosophy must eventuate in some such consideration, i.e. either in the tyranny of the non-wise and the destruction of philosophy, or in the aufhebung of Nature by Mind and its potential liberating or tyrannical final outcome.

Strauss' prescriptive answer to this thesis is to revert to classical philosophy and its notions of the tripartite nature of the individual. In his concern to detain the sublation of metaphysics, the world of immutable essences, he contended that the thesis of the end of history is itself an historical teaching and thus suspect; that, as a result, the Wise-Tyrant will not know what he is doing; and that philosophy must now defend itself against its own historicist tendencies. In other words, the esoterism of this teaching must be made known only to those few who are willing to defend philosophy; noble lies must be told to hide the truth of modern thought. For Kojève - Hegel this truth lies in
the transcendence of philosophy, or the naturalization and humanization of metaphysics, as the condition of the possibility of universal happiness. Such a State would be one which recognizes that all human beings are not by nature different and unqualified to determine in the end what is good and valuable. It would no longer require the guidance of the philosopher. For Strauss, this is a frightening teaching which must be taken seriously, but it is one which he has spent a lifetime trying to conceal. As he says of this thinking:

The philosophers in their turn will be forced to defend themselves or the cause of philosophy. They will be obliged, therefore, to try to act on the Tyrant. Everything seems to be a re-enactment of the age-old drama. But this time, the cause of philosophy is lost from the start.

For Strauss, the study of the history of political philosophy is for the purpose of defending the cause of philosophy, that is, fundamental knowledge of the natures of all things. But political life is its greatest danger, just as philosophy is society's greatest threat, and to the extent that the two remain in syncretic tension, the cause of philosophy is not lost. This is why the philosopher is a public person, for he maintains the value of philosophy only as long as the legislator requires guidance. This remains true, however, only to the extent that the need for legislation, of pacifying the natural differences of psyche which promote conflict between citizens, is not directed at the

300 Ibid., p. 226.
possible conditions of universal happiness. Thus, Strauss rejects the prospect of a philosophy of interpretation which, as Hegel says, prepares the unscientific mind for scientific labour, or, a fortiori, a political consciousness which prepares humanity for the potential of universal happiness. As a result, Strauss rejects both the theory of interpretation and the theory of politics which underlie Hegel's turn to history. Before summarizing Hegel's response, Strauss' position should be more clearly examined.

Strauss was not of the opinion that the non-wise ought not rule, or that non-philosophical leadership is a threat to human happiness and societal harmony. Rather, Strauss argued that happiness is ultimately related to man's highest activity, i.e. philosophy, and that the individual is only truly happy when he is pursuing this end. As a result, the highest aim of the philosopher must be to keep philosophy alive on earth because its realization is, in effect, the divine life. This is just another way of saying that the zetetic ideal of philosophy, i.e. we do not know what we are doing and thus must seek for answers, is the essence of philosophy proper and must be kept alive. The moment we are capable of saying that universal happiness is possible, whether for philosophical, technological or scientific reasons, the cause of philosophy is weakened. Thus Strauss attacked the modern claims of philosophy, science and historical research on the grounds that they have narrowed the
classical vision of excellence rather than broadened it. By this he means that the modern thinkers have raised the possibility of universal happiness in terms of man's potential to master Nature through making, not knowing, or poiesis and praxis rather than noesis, and this represents an inversion of the classical hierarchy of knowledge. To demonstrate this shift away from episteme as the highest activity, he shows how the various elements of modern thought represent significantly "lower" visions of human excellence than do the classical models. What emerges is a detailed map of the falling-down of Western political ideals, or the tradition as a movement from high to low ideals of human possibility. While his thinking contains elements of the thesis which imputes a decline in Western civilization similar to the Spenglerian drama, it is primarily an indication of Strauss' optimism about the power of philosophical knowledge to affect history. And yet, this places us in a position to demand of Strauss that he explain how the fundamental, timeless truths whose quest constitutes the tradition of non-historical political philosophy are identifiable with a logic of historical decline. Must we not have some concept or understanding of the infinite in whose name the finiteness of contemporary thinking is described and evaluated? Strauss' argument is that the esoteric writings of the classical thinkers contain an assumption of the infinite, or an ideal of the ideal Structure of things, which must remain the model for our
present deliberations. But, because only a few are capable of penetrating to the core of this secret meaning, the thesis of decline becomes self-authenticating. The few who know the truth, know it to be true, and the rest—presumably this author and his audience—must either accept or reject, without reasons, this assertion. Again, however, we are in no real position to reject it if it is indeed the truth. Thus, we must accept what Strauss has to say uncritically, as well as his scholarly denunciation of the moderns as prima facie evidence of its authenticity. This situation, it is worth noting, is even more exacerbated by Strauss' claim that he too did not know what is true. This is not meant to belittle Strauss' obvious achievements, however, but to take into account the ambiguity of his position, a position which, I believe, is meant to confuse the ordinary reader purposely. In sum, Strauss argued that modern political theory and contemporary political science are fundamentally historicist, they reject the form of thinking which is directed towards concepts of eternity and infinity, and thus they presume to master fate and chance. They presume to master God and History. For Strauss, however, philosophy has meaning only in so far as the space between knowable things and unknowable truth is occupied by those few who are capable of guiding the many to think seriously about eternity and infinity, and thus that whole range of diachronic virtues, arts, and actions which constitute the
in-betweenness of political existence. The reiteration of such thinking is what constitutes the tradition of political philosophy, of which the history of political philosophy is the empirical, i.e. imperfect, record.

Strauss' debate with Kojève is not simply about the ancient versus the modern understanding of philosophy. It is also about rationality and the place of reason or knowledge in history. It is a commonplace of modern thinking to conceptualize history in terms of rational-constitution in that what is historically constituted is man-made, and that reason is made manifest in the institutions, activities and habits of the social life-world. On the surface, Strauss is definitely more akin to the traditional conservative orthodoxy of classical rationalism and its separation of Reason and History. And yet, such a classification misses the point of Strauss' enterprise. This is because for Strauss "the quarrel between the ancients and moderns concerns eventually, and perhaps even from the beginning, the status of individuality." 301 Not, however, the individuality of private interest so much in evidence in liberal theory, but individuality in the classical sense of Nous or intellect as a form of human Being, and as self-consciousness. Otherwise, Strauss' theory of esoteric writing could have no meaning if the personality of the author, and his or her expression, are not understood as essentially a consciousness of self.

301 Leo Strauss, Natural Right and History, op. cit., p. 323.
Strauss intentionally evades this issue in his debate with Kojeve by reducing the philosophical argument to a question of psychological motivation. He said philosophers, as particular natures, transcend the temporality of their existence because they do not seek recognition, i.e. they go to the market place unwillingly. That is, to seek after truth is not an ambition, i.e. an appetite, but a way of living in accordance with their nature which is to quest after the true but never to possess it as one does desired objects. This is in obvious reference to Kojeve - Hegel's theory of recognition as the motor of history, its creative negativity, and as that form of consciousness which recognizes the gulf between theory and practice. Self-consciousness is a mode of thinking and acting which seeks to transcend the distinction between Nature and human nature; it is the coming to consciousness of the radicality of our freedom in history. As we noted earlier, for Hegel Socrates was the first to announce this power of self-creative thought and to demonstrate its tragic character existentially. Thought and action, in so far as they are brought together in the creative personality, constitute history; this is what made Socrates not merely a tragic figure but an historical actor of supreme consequence.

Strauss was supremely aware of the meaning of Kojeve - Hegel, of the equation of human being with Time, and Time with Concept, but it is a teaching which, I suggest, Strauss
thought ought not to be made public. As an esoteric teaching it is a serious thinking. For Strauss the transcendence of nature in the self-making of history must leave the great bulk of humanity without standards of appropriate conduct originally thought to derive from Nature. Thus, Strauss felt compelled to teach publicly that the modern individual should return to the ancestral past, to the originary derivation of good from Nature and to the quest for knowledge of its essence, because such thinking grasps the moral problem of existence in terms of Reason and Nature. These, and these alone, were the source from which the ideal standards of human conduct were initially adduced. This is why as a teacher of the history of political philosophy, Strauss taught the importance of immutable standards for the maintenance of public or civic good, and thus why he found in classical thought the charm of Nature which seduces opinion to recognize the higher authority of philosophical wisdom. Strauss the philosopher, however, must have well-understood that in accepting the ideal city of Socrates that the power of reason it unleashed was too great a force to surrender its freedom to the antinomies of truth and opinion, knowledge and faith, reason and history. It would, as Hegel argued, continuously seek their reconciliation. In the end Reason must rule the ideal city and destroy the promised land because man alone has a history, and it is in history that the city is made. The ideal city locked outside of
time is life, in accordance with the bond of Nature, the endless repetitive circle of its own finitude.

Strauss responded publicly to this teaching in an altogether unconvincing fashion. He chose to look on modernity as Plato did on the Sophists, reducing all arguments to either relativism or the hubris of enlightened scientific rationality. All humanity, that is, cannot be free. Preferring instead the practical orientation of Antiquity and its division of labour, he argued that the republic of letters must discriminate between the few who think and the many who labour; that young minds must be trained to accept the wisdom of their elders, and that opinion should continue as the element of society. In the final analysis Strauss' disciples are perhaps the best evidence of this reading. In their retirement to the Academy, the Straussians constitute a large and growing community of scholars whose intellectual denunciations of modernity have become increasingly shrill. Politically conservative, they refrain from the pressing questions of the day and prefer to retreat to excavations of the esoterism of the history of political philosophy. All of the masters have secret meanings which they alone can penetrate; and with each new archeology comes a renewed faith in the absolute, ideal standards of right and good announced in classical thought. This conception of the history of political philosophy has had the effect of reinforcing the notion of tradition as a trans-historical activity of
which the Straussian alone are sole heirs and rightful progeny. In becoming a cult whose leader can no longer control his teaching, the Straussian as a group are dogmatic and inflexible, and this has resulted in the spectacle of Socratic philosophizing once again raised to the level of an ideal cosmos outside of time. As historians of ideas, the Straussian have reduced the art and science of political commentary to a bland intellectualism which sees political virtue in silence and non-participation—the classics are 'flattened out'. Perhaps this is the greatest irony of Strauss' own teaching: The possibility of political philosophy in the modern period is the recognition that the power of reason in history is self-making, but that the history of political philosophy conceived as a trans-historical ideality prevents this truth from going public. Strauss, that is, was prepared to lie to the youth in order to maintain the dream of a philosophical republic, a republic for the few who think, rather than accept that the universal happiness of the species lies in making its own happiness, not in thinking about it. As Hegel says, the rational is wirklich: it is effective history.

The concept of tradition which emerges from the Straussian teaching is based on his notion that philosophy cannot refute itself; it can only contradict itself. On the surface this would appear to reinforce his claim to the trans-historical nature of philosophy and to the separation of
Reason and History. With Hegel we saw that this conception is a thinking at the level of essences, and that such a teaching if it takes itself seriously, is the true form of the unhappy consciousness. In large measure the surface texts of Strauss' writings illustrate clearly the circle of self-estrangement which is the touchstone of this mode of consciousness: Where there is accepted truth, for Strauss it is only opinion, and where there is only opinion, there is truth, and this leads to a series of distinctions between doxa and episteme, philosophy and revelation, Reason and History, etc. Being is made identical to itself, such that change, work, labour and empirical existence must all be characterized as the exoteric display of esoteric Being. Tradition, as such, is the action of those who think the self-identical nature of Being - it is timeless, whole and true. This means, however, that the infinite in whose name the finiteness of existence is grasped must be prior to philosophical reflection. In this way Strauss' concept of tradition is about origins and the primordiality of the world as reason or logos, as well as about knowledge of this order and its discernible nature.

As a disciple of Athens, and not Jerusalem, Strauss understood that the separation of being and existence, good and essence, poses a genuinely philosophical problem which is not answered in the theology of revealed religions. Good is not a problem of evil, but of reason. His identification
of Good with Reason, and of both with tradition is the cornerstone of his public teaching. This is because what emerges is a concept of tradition which is entirely dependent on an ideal unity of Reason and Good. We learn this ideal through a proper, non-historical reading of the history of political philosophy, and we employ this ideal in the act of philosophizing about the present condition of political knowledge. The ideal as ideal is never actual, nor can it be actualized without destroying its ideality. Thus political philosophy always terminates in the absolute separation of its thinking from actuality, or in self-estrangement from the world. It is in this sense that Strauss' concept of tradition is ultimately a denial of the possibility of thought moving beyond the contradictions it alone has set for itself; or, as Hegel argued, it is a refusal to see that the contradictions which the mind desires to impose on the external world are always already resolved in consciousness. The esoteric writings of Professor Strauss, if this reading is correct, are evidence of the insufficiency of his concept of tradition.

Strauss is not alone in advancing a notion of a "great" tradition of political thinking which spans 2000 years of Western history, nor in his belief that the contemporary world reflects a decline in the tradition. Others, especially Eric Voegelin, Hannah Arendt, and Sheldon Wolin share Strauss' fear that the cause of philosophy is now threat-
ened, and that the Wise-Tyrant is not a special form of political existence but the dominion of technology over the human spirit. Each of these writers, however, has provided a different perspective and prescription, and it would be wrong to suggest that they are easily grouped under a single banner. With Voegelin, for example, the modern crisis has its origins in the development of a gnostic sensibility which exalts the narcissistic love of rational human knowledge and its dominion of nature and human nature over the "love of being." Gnosticism is the belief that ultimate truth is discernible, if only by the few, and, for Voegelin, is fundamentally a denial of the transcendent order of being. In this, he is at extreme odds with Strauss' rejection of the promised city, but he agrees with Strauss about the virtue of classical philosophy. Classical wisdom, he argued, taught that philosophy is the love of wisdom, not wisdom itself, for only God is wise. It is the condition of placing oneself in a specific relationship to the transcendent order, a way of being in the world, which alone gives meaning to human existence. Philosophical understanding originates in an intuitive grasp of this transcendent source.


303 Eric Voegelin, Gnosticism, op. cit., p. 18.
of meaning, and it is from this onto-theological order that prescriptions, images and ideas of right order and conduct are ultimately derived. In this way Voegelin can argue that classical philosophy is the source of the archai and aitiai, the principles and foundations of the best possible teaching on public morality. This is why he stated that "in its essentials the classical foundation of political science is still valid today."  

For Voegelin, the ultimate purpose of the study of history of political theory is a vision of the good as the right order of soul and society, an ideal republic, which is beyond formal or epistemological exactness. As a vision of the truth of public life, classical political theory teaches a way of being in the world which sets itself over against modernity's belief in the subjective control of the world. For Voegelin, this way of being is revealed poetically in the symbols, experiences and representations of the actual order in history, and the task of the political theorist, then, is the placing of oneself in relation to the transcendent as philosophia, such that both the empirical and theoretical order of our representations reveal them-

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305 Eric Voegelin, Gnosticism, op. cit., p. 15.
307 Cf., Dante Germino, Political Philosophy and The Open Society, (Baton Rouge:Louisiana State University Press, 1982).
selves in the fullness of their ontological significance. The study of the history of political theory becomes a sustained meditation on classical political philosophy, or a noetic testimony to the love of classical wisdom, which directs itself unrelentingly at any subjective rational system or doxology which holds the infinite truth of being, and its principles of right order, within immediate cognitive grasp. 308 For Voegelin, then, classical ontology is the foundation and vindication of the immense political accomplishment of classical Greece; it is the source of the principles and foundation of politike episteme, or the true science of the right order of the soul and society:

The decisive event in the establishment of politike episteme was the specifically philosophical realization that the levels of being discernible within the world are surmounted by a transcendent source of being and its order. 309

For proponents of the Great Tradition, the rise of modern historical consciousness has had the effect of turning history into mere subjectivity. They argue that philosophy, in order to overcome this development, must now return to a concept of the infinite, or a directedness towards that which is not known, in order to ground the concept of the subject which plays so crucial a role in modern thinking. This is because a concept of the infinite implies a view of the world as exterior, as something other to be experienced ———

309 Ibid., p. 18.
in its exteriority; and not an otherness of subjective consciousness to be realized in human thought and action. The tradition as such is a record of the freedom of thought to grasp this exteriority in its multiple determinations but only in so far as it can be intimated noetically. And yet, it is difficult to maintain such a claim if one retains the rationalist prejudice of Plato—Aristotle to the effect that concepts such as the good must follow from clear and distinct ideas, i.e. that they are dianoetic and thus subservient to reason. In other words, it would have to be argued that reason as logos is exterior to human thought (Nous), initially foreign and completely other, and that the human mind is never in full possession of it. While the few who think are capable of intimating this vision of things in the divine logos, the great bulk of humanity is left to pursue appetite and desire, and therewith in need of perpetual direction. But history, as Hegel demonstrated, is a negation of just such a view of things—history is the movement toward a unity which negates the separation of interiority and exteriority upon which the Great Tradition is grounded. The result of this Hegelian standpoint, moreover, is not the eternal separation of Reason and History, of the few who think from the many who labour, but the prospect of a reconciliation of these oppositions in the unity of theory and practice, of thought and labour as self-making. History, that is, is the effective making of the world to conform to
the Concept - it is not the eternal estrangement of the world from thought. The Great Tradition, following Hegel, must be seen to fail to move beyond its own self-made world of essences to an attitude of thinking which apprehends such contradictions in their true dialectical character, i.e. as problems of their own making which find their source in the actual historical discourse about what is called political theory. This brings us to a consideration of the New History approach to political commentary because it originates in the view that the historical discourse of political thought can be examined most clearly by positive historical methods of research rather than by speculative assertions about philosophical truth.

5.3 THE NEW HISTORY: TIME AND LANGUAGE

As with the Great Tradition approach to the history of political theory, the New History represents a variety of methodological and philosophical positions which are difficult to reduce to a single hermeneutic strategy. And yet, there is a strong core of agreement among the New Historians about the need to develop a more true historical approach to interpretation. What is required, they argue, are historical techniques of research, including linguistic and historiographical methods of analysis, with which to reconstruct the context in which the classical texts were written. The major proponents of the historical approach are
J.G.A. Pocock, John Dunn and Quentin Skinner. Their critique of the Great Tradition is directed at two quite distinct problems; the first is the assumption of the philosophical unity of the tradition; and the second is a question of methodology.

It should be clear from the outset that politically the New History, like the Great Tradition, is fundamentally conservative in its appreciation of why one ought to study the classical tradition of political thought. What separates their respective hermeneutical projects is that the New Historians reject the belief that political commentary is participation in a zetetic search for timeless, boundless truth, or that it is a propaedeutic to the real work of political philosophy. As Skinner notes:

When we attempt ... to locate a text within its appropriate context we are not merely providing historical "background" for our interpretations; we are already engaged in the act of interpretation itself.

Before examining the New Historians' view of the "act of interpretation", their concept of tradition should be clear. This is because their disagreement with Great Tradition scholars over the purpose and methods to be used by historians of political ideas emerges from their rejection of the notion of a non-historical political philosophy. Pocock is the most significant of these writers because he has sought to portray the Great Tradition as excessively narrow in its interpretive concerns and ill-equipped to define for contemporary society the true nature of the tradition.

There is a point at which historical and political theory meet, and it can be said without distortion that every society possess a philosophy of history - a set of ideas about what happens, what can be known and what done, in time considered as a dimension of society - which is intimately a part of its consciousness and its functioning. How these images and ideas of time arise, function and develop may be studied as part of the science of society.

In siding with a conservative strain of modern thought forcefully articulated by Burke and Oakeshott, Pocock envisages the place of tradition in that larger expanse of society which includes the passing on of norms, habits, or mores through ritualized or institutionalized forms. That is, he is not talking about an intellectual tradition specifically, but argues that cognitive traditions must be examined in light of a broader concept of social formation and continu-


ity. He suggests that just as societal tradition is continuously in the process of conceptualizing and reconceptualizing its past, for this is what constitutes our link to the past, intellectual traditions operate similarly. In other words, history records the "wide variety of attitudes and strategies which men may adopt towards society's continuity and the sources of its authority; these are political phenomena, forming part of the organization and extension of society's consciousness of, and in, its political life." 313

For Pocock, how a society conceptualizes its past necessarily contains its own self-images of "society, time and history." 314

Pocock is concerned to investigate not only tradition as the repetitions of actions, but to address the place of historical consciousness, or time-consciousness, as an important element of change in a society's outlook on the past. In effect, he wishes to examine how historical consciousness may represent more than an awareness of tradition, but also a form of consciousness which recognizes the diversity and multi-dimensionality of actions and behaviours of which tradition is only one form. Thus, while tradition tends to view the past as an ever-narrowing inheritance of receptions, modes of action and knowledge - reiterated self-images - history records the superabundance of change and novelty

313 Ibid., p. 235.
314 Ibid., p. 235.
which allows us to investigate a society's self-image critically. In this way Pocock can argue that historical analysis is required in order to broaden our awareness of the tradition of political theory, including further excavations of peripheral thinkers and events which would enlarge our present focus on the "epic thinkers".

Pocock directly confronts the Straussian understanding on two accounts. The first is that it is historically untrue to conceive the tradition as a closed structure of zetetic philosophizing dominated by a single set of reiterated, perennial questions that began with classical political philosophizing and which has been interrupted by modernity, i.e. by the development of positivism, historicism or liberalism. Second, such a conception - the "myth" of tradition - rests on a fundamental fallacy: The assumption that what is philosophically true is historically actual, or the fallacy of "misplaced historical concreteness" in which the Verfalls- geschichte of theory ascribed to the texts themselves is really only a convention of contemporary scholarship.

In terms of his first objection, Pocock makes the important argument that the Great Tradition "fails to give due weight to Augustinian antipolitics" by which he means that the classical conception of the unity of reason and politics in the polis, or the via antiqua, was fundamentally challenged by the Christian doctrines of grace and revela-
They tend to ignore the fact that there was a time when the "moderns" were the Christians, specifically those of the via moderna who held to Augustine's contention that revelation and the actions of grace had outmoded ancient politics and ancient philosophy, and that the two could never again be joined. It is a smug parody of Thomism to hold that the web was reknit in history ... and that there is a single warp of Aristotelian politics which only Machiavelli or Hobbes or whoever succeeded in disrupting. 316

To be brief, the crux of Pocock's argument is that not everyone in the history of political theory, including the "epic theorists", accepted the secular rationalism of classical Antiquity, i.e. the 'ideal' city as antecedent or superior to the promised city or the City of God. The "great tradition," he says, "is bad history: but bad history is only contingently the product of myth, since myth aims at creating something other than history." 317 Pocock is here developing Gunnell's notion of the "myth of tradition" but in a way which broadens Gunnell's criticism. 318 This is because as a historian, Pocock wishes to retain the sense of continuity which allows us to reconstruct the past. If, that is, the history of political theory constituted only a


316 Ibid., p. 563.

317 Ibid., p. 564.

reiterable trans-historical mode of questioning, then its history proper would have importance only to the antiquarian who derived some pleasure out of knowledge of thoughts or activities which hold no meaning for the present. On the other hand, Pocock rejects the view that political thought is wholly reducible to its sociological or historical context, or that its logical or conceptual elements, i.e. its claim to philosophical truth, be rejected. Rather, he argues that in order for a reader to adequately assess such claims, it is important to recognize and to try to reconstruct a writing in its linguistic, social and historical contexts. In effect, Pocock wants to substitute a history of tradition for the "myth" of tradition.

In order to advance what might be called the conceptual and historical aspects of political theory, Pocock has attempted to apply Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions to the history of political ideas. He begins by rejecting Kuhn's view of "revolutionary thought" and in its place adopts the notion of a "conceptual revolution." He contends that the history of political theory is a series of paradigms and transformations, and that what is required is a sociological and linguistic investigation of the paradigmatic instances of political thought and action. This is to be followed by a comparative historical analysis in order to elucidate conceptual changes in how we have come to under-

stand and experience political life. He conceptualizes paradigms as institutional forms — as stable and durable over time — and argues that this state of durability allows for a certain amount of reproduction. This, he contends, is what makes theory possible.\textsuperscript{320} Theory, as a result, is equivalent to what Kuhn calls "normal science" and language is its central medium.

Because men in speaking commit themselves to a load or fabric of meanings greater than they can control, it is possible for others in reply to employ the same words to convey the loads of meaning they desire to select. Communication is possible only because it is imperfect. Because we effect one another's most intimate behavior by the spins we impart to words as they pass to and fro between us, it is possible for the linguistic polity to synthesize conflict with the recognition of interdependency. Politics is a game of biases in the asymmetrical universe of society.\textsuperscript{321}

Leaving aside the definite non-revolutionary character of this thinking, Pocock is here noting that politics is participation is a convergence of language games which is never altogether fixed, and that the task of the historian of political ideas is to balance the diversity of possible language games which operate in a somewhat durable and stable paradigm or tradition. As such, he denies all forms of dialectical politics on the basis that dialectical thinking necessarily implies a antecedently determined victor because the rules of the language game are preset in its favor. While conceptual paradigms change, language is treated as a

\textsuperscript{320} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 280.

\textsuperscript{321} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 287.
kind of neutral structure which allows us to penetrate to the core of the diverse political language games operating at the same time or over time. Language endures while history is change. In the end, Pocock makes historical interpretation into a rather formidable defense of liberalism as the acceptance of necessary bias in communication.

While Pocock has tended to operate at a rather high level of abstraction, Skinner has attempted to develop a more analytical and linguistic hermeneutic. He has argued that the recovery of meaning advocated by Pocock is possible because language is a artifact which embodies and objectifies meaning. In developing certain tenets of ordinary language analysis, especially its pragmatic, action-oriented understanding of meaning, Skinner believes that it is possible to reconstruct authorial intentionality through an analysis of the conventions of language and social action in which an author participated. In effect, he argues that such historical archaeology can allow the contemporary interpreter to construct a model of the text in light of its historicity, and to examine the text in light of this model. C.B. Macpherson's "possessive market society" is just such a model of interpretation, though most of the new historians have argued that Macpherson's "Marxism" makes the understanding of this period both retrospective and retrodictive, i.e.,

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unhistorical. Politics, it seems, clouded his understanding of politics! Skinner, nevertheless, is not afraid to argue that the history of political theory is in fact the history of political ideologies, and that our understanding of politics is enhanced when we come to see the profoundly ideological character of political thought. The political theorist operates within a field of conventions, speech acts and linguistic meanings whose analysis constitutes a method of historical interpretation.

Gunnell has criticized Skinner's approach on a number of occasions, but his main attack is that Skinner had made the cardinal error of assuming that epistemology, that is, the theory of knowledge which arises out of language philosophy, is the "foundation of inquiry." As we saw in the discussion of Hegel, this assumption implies that there is, or can be, an epistemological cum philosophical doctrine which in principle is capable of assessing the validity of our interpretive standpoints as political theorists. The contradictory nature of this position ought to be clear: The attempt to move away from conceptual analysis to historical interpretation has had the reverse effect of calling into question the need for a more solid philosophical foundation. As Skinner states: "With the ebbing of confidence in empiricist epistemologies and their accompanying claims to provide us with a methodology for the human sciences, those of us who

try to practice these disciplines ... come to feel an increasing need to look for renewed philosophical help. 324

The crux of the New History approach is that a text cannot be encountered independently of its author, and its author is never independent of the conventions and activities in which meaning is contextualized. It would be a mistake to see in this anything other than a hermeneutic norm to follow in reading a text; it does not constitute a method of interpretation. As a norm it directs the reader's attention to those elements of social and historical context which may help to clarify the meaning of an author's words in terms of their particular historical significance. All of this is good and fine. However, the assumption that language and linguistic usage in itself embodies authorial intentionality, and the ancillary notion that a model of linguistic conventions can unlock the deep secrets of what an author intended, either consciously or unconsciously, is not a norm. They are philosophical statements about meaning and history which are not authenticated by the fact that they are philosophically respectable in certain intellectual circles. In fairness, the New Historians are well-aware that a large amount of conceptual labour remains, and that the possibility of historical reconstruction is an exceedingly difficult problem. What motivates their turn to historical research

is the assumption that political understanding, i.e. political discourse, is ultimately related to political behavior. What is required, therefore, is a more detailed mapping of the historical links, exemplified in the tradition of political thought, between context and expression. Hegel's critique of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics of reconstruction would go a very long way in helping to clarify these issues.

In spite of the summary description of these arguments, the problems of interpretation and meaning are demonstrably central to much of what contemporary political theorists are attempting to say. While there is no consensus on any specific interpretive approach, few serious scholars are convinced that the activity of Strauss or Voegelin, for example, is not a highly important endeavour, or that it ought to be dismissed on grounds of its purported mythological or ahistorical framework of normative analysis. As a result, the New Historians' advocacy of historical research techniques should not be seen as a *prima facie* denial of the integrity of the Great Tradition, but rather as a specifically different orientation to the question of meaning formation and its origins. And, more importantly, to pose the question of interpretation in terms of a strict opposition between philosophical truth and history, not matter which is privileged, would be to lose the problem irretreivably. If we do, then we must either deny the legitimacy and importance of one set of scholarly activities, or proceed scepti-
cally with the task of interpretation without knowing what we are trying to do or say.

This discussion is clearly linked to Hegel's theory of language presented earlier. While it was directed at the problem of authorial intentionality in the sense that language is distinguishable from its use in respect of the concerns and wishes of speakers, this does not mean that a text is wholly separable from its author. For Hegel, a text may embody the intentions of its author but its meaning is never reducible to its intended purposes. Rather, Hegel's view is that the interpreter must reconcile the "spirit" with the "letter" of the text in a fashion analogous to legal or Biblical exegesis. By this he meant that texts embody meaning, and that such meaning is neither reducible to nor distinguishable from its actual embodiment in a text. While on the surface this may appear to be an impossible demand for how it is that meaning is said to be and not to be in the text. For Hegel, this is because a text manifests or brings forth its meaning in language but language is not the motor by which meaning develops. Language is the medium in which thought is expressed, but it is not the medium of expression of purely private ends or intentions. Language, for Hegel, cannot have intentions. People, individuals, have intentions, wishes or desires, but language itself contains none of these. People intend, language signifies - intentions are particular, words universal. Expressed in another way,
we can say that people hold opinions while words hold meaning. The purpose of interpretation is to elucidate meaning and not to describe personal opinions or intentions or, what is the same, the function of interpretations is to bring forward the particular meaning made manifest in the universality of language. As Soll explains: "The meaning of a word or concept is its Be deutung, not its Meinung."\(^{325}\) The crux of Hegel's argument is that particulars (opinions, intentions, desires, etc.) cannot be expressed in language; only thoughts that are universal are expressible (Gedanken).\(^{326}\) This is why he can argue that the notion of reconstructing authorial intentionality as a private creation which is expressed in words, or what an author intended to mean, is really an impossible demand. The categories employed to cognize the world are social products — they are shared by others (Verstehen) — and are not the private creation of unique individuals. People acquire such categories through language; language is the home of thought and reason (Vernunft), of universality and meaning. Interpretation as such is that part of phenomenological science in which language is the source of the possibility of retracing the development, elucidation and expansion of meaning as a determinate and necessary progression of universal reason — and not of authorial intentions. We can, that is, know the


\(^{326}\) Ibid., p. 101.
meaning of a text, but not the particular intentions of its author. Thus to expect that the full meaning of a text can be elucidated from knowledge of the socio-historical context of its writing is, for Hegel, in any event, a failure to move beyond contingency to the necessity of thought thinking thought. In summary, the great tradition sees the task of the study of the history of political theory as an exercise in the recovery of lost meaning, or the revendication of the wisdom of classical philosophia and its ideal model of authentic political life: not, however in order to restore a forgotten and retrievable actuality but to re-establish and re-affirm the universality of criterial standards disclosed in classical political science. It is only in light of these standards as the principles and foundation of true public speech that evaluations of the meaning and purpose of contemporary political discourse are possible. The New Historians, however, reject the philosophical concept of tradition which guides this description and argue positivistically that the contradiction between history and philosophy, or actuality and philosophical truth, is ultimately indissoluble. That is, they reject the absolute mediation of the Great Tradition and its assumption of a simultaneously primal and final foundation of political science. In the preceding analysis of Hegelian phenomenology an attempt was made to evaluate these descriptions of the nature and purpose of the study of political theory. The purpose of this
discussion was not to favor one over another, but to demonstrate the forcefulness of Hegel's argument about the relationship between actuality (Wirklich) and philosophical truth. Briefly, the following arguments were advanced in reference to the analysis of Hegel: First, contra the Great Tradition, the study of inherited texts is an historical as well as a philosophical task, that is, a phenomenological and logical task, directed at demonstrating how principles of reason reflected and embodied within the linguisticality of texts in the classical tradition are made concrete or realized in actual or historical experience, and conversely, that actuality or "effective" history has to do with the principles of reason it discloses. Secondly, contra the New History, that in an important sense the study of the master texts does, indeed, attempt to reach beyond history toward such a unity, not in order to negate or overcome actuality but to uncover within its layered textuality a meaning for the conduct of political life which engenders a continuous conversation about human possibilities. In this way the study of texts in the classical political tradition remains a practical and theoretical activity, consistent with its original formulation, but an open process that no single vision closes.
Chapter VI

POLITICAL COMMENTARY AND POLITICAL UNDERSTANDING

6.1 INTRODUCTION

As with most interpretive disciplines, the majority of historians of political theory are not followers of a specific school of interpretation or a particular hermeneutical approach. Eclecticism in the employment of both epistemological and methodological norms reigns supreme in the study of the history of political theory as well. There are those, however, who would translate this eclecticism into a claim for the uniqueness of political commentary, such that the interpretation of the master texts is made to appear as a special art whose level of performance is almost entirely dependent on the talent and perspicacity of the interpreter, i.e. the text plus me. To a certain degree this understanding implies a division between the few who are capable of developing "good" interpretations and the remaining under-labourers. And it also suggests that arbitrariness, especially in the form of idiosyncratic intuition, is a fundamental element of the craft of political commentary on the master texts.

The lack of a unified method or technique of interpretation is not in itself suprising given the exegetical and
historical problems of deciphering the meaning of historical-theoretical texts. However, the widely-asserted claim advanced on behalf of political commentary as either an autonomous or independent intellectual activity vis-à-vis philosophy and other interpretive disciplines does require careful analysis. This is because such claims involve a view of political theory as a craft or art to be practiced, and that the continuity and consensus which has developed as a result of these practices constitute the proper form of political interpretation. In other words, political theory is what political theorists have done and still do. As a result, proponents of this view suggest that unnecessary emphasis on methodology or conceptual analysis, i.e. on philosophical problems, has the potential of involving theorists primarily with questions about what they ought or should be doing rather than with what they in fact do, and that interpretive methodology tends towards a depoliticization of political theory.

In recent years it has indeed become fashionable to argue the autonomy and independence of the study of the history of political theory in its relation to both philosophy and contemporary political science. The crux of this argument seems to be that while these disciplines may supplement each other, the special content of the history of political theory, i.e. reflection on the meaning and purpose of political life, embodies both a practical-historical and theoretical-
conceptual component which cannot be grasped fully by strictly philosophical, normative or analytic procedures. As a result, commentary on the classic texts is said to employ both a distinct mode of discourse and a particular form of argument, or manner of truth-telling, which differ categorically from other discursive or poetic practices. In support of this position, Hanna Pitkin has noted that the relationship between political theory and philosophy is a "sometimes" affair — sometimes they "will be useful to each other or even overlap; sometimes they will be far apart, and conceptual or philosophical problems may get in the way of work in political theory." 327 And Deborah Baumgold argues that "commentary on political theory is a substantive mode of discourse in its own right, and it is, specifically, a mode of political discourse." 328 The purpose of this chapter is not to contest these propositions as formulated above, at least not directly, but to investigate the kinds of arguments which underlie them and their implications for the study of the history of political theory. In short, the chapter argues that these claims are not epistemological or methodological per se, but suggest a phenomenological understanding of the nature and scope of the history of political theory.

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327 Hanna Pitkin, L. Wittgenstein and Justice, op. cit., pp. 300-301.

6.2 THE PRACTICE OF POLITICAL THEORY

No matter how thoroughly we pursue the three main aspects of political theory – reflection on basic concepts, analysis of alternative views and the pursuit of normative truth – we must remember that political theory is unique as a philosophical subject because it is conducted in a specifically political context. There is no easy definition for politics; it is too complicated an enterprise.

This introductory statement to a recent text on political theory is instructive because it poses the problem of political commentary clearly. Political theory, according to this argument, is a quasi-philosophical subject which takes place within its own specific context, i.e. the political. But, the authors say, there is no clear definition of this context. How, then, is political commentary to be understood if it takes place within a context which, it seems, is "too complicated" to define? More particularly, what is political context? In order to attempt a response to these questions it is important to re-address the matter of the interrelationship between philosophy and political theory once again. First, as was noted in Chapter One, political theory is not a branch of philosophy if by this we mean a branch of a particular intellectual discipline; but it is philosophical in the broader sense of participating in a manner of inquiry which asks certain kinds of questions, e.g. questions about good, justice, virtue, and other topics as they relate to questions about political action, institu-

tions, etc. As Aristotle has argued, lines of inquiry are relative to the kinds of objects under investigation to the extent that no particular form or method of analysis ever captures the totality of any object. Likewise, Hegel's archaeology of knowledge demonstrated clearly that different ways of conceiving and justifying our intellectual claims result from the multiplicity and range of possible experiences, and that it is foolhardy to believe that any singular epistemological or methodological principle or technique can envelop the vast storehouse of possible meaning. Neither Aristotle nor Hegel, however, ever suggested that the complexity of this task warranted the assumption that diverse cognitive efforts must forever remain hermetically distinct from each other such that philosophy and political theory must be seen as autonomous and independent spheres of intellectual labour. At best, political theory is relatively autonomous of general philosophy to the extent that it is also concerned with practical questions about political institutions, forms of communal life or political values. In this sense political theory has an interest in social and political action as well as in the more directly philosophical questions of goodness, truth, etc.

A fair amount of the criticism levelled against the Straussian concept of political theory follows from the view that undue emphasis has been placed on the superiority of philosophy as a form of knowledge. As a result, or so this
argument suggests, Strauss made philosophy a superior form of life as well, and in doing so denigrated political society to the level of mere appetite and tawdry opinion. This understanding, it seems clear, is really a willful misunderstanding of the Straussian project to the extent that it fails to see that Strauss was not concerned to say that philosophy is possession of truth and knowledge. Rather, his argument is to the effect that the philosophic life is a search for fundamental knowledge while political life, in so far as it provides the leisure time (schola) and the freedom to philosophize, sets the conditions for the possibility of such a quest. While we may disagree with this conception, Strauss nowhere says that all political problems are potentially remedied by philosophical reflection; only that political problems reflect philosophical problems and that without philosophical guidance it is impossible to adequately comprehend the true nature and meaning of political life. Obviously, there is a range of political questions about representation, authority, the State, etc., which require an intimate knowledge of political history in order that philosophical arguments about such matters are not overly simplistic and naive.

Since our tradition puts considerable premium on philosophical skill and not enough on intimate knowledge of political history, institutions and political life in general, it is not uncommon to find highly sophisticated philosophical systems which have a rather poor political content and whose analysis of political life are naive and simplistic. When their philosophical subtleties are pared away, some of them seem to rest on noth-
ing more elevated than unexamined prejudices shared with the masses.

While I am not convinced that "sharing prejudices with the masses" is ever eradicated by possessing political knowledge of particulars, or that there is always error in such biases, the general theme of this criticism is worth bearing in mind. What is less clear, however, is how possession of particular political knowledge ameliorates the loss of political sensitivity in much contemporary commentary. This is because such political knowledge is more accurately information about the subject, but such practical knowledge in no wise establishes what constitutes its political character. To know "intimately" the history of political institutions or events does not guarantee knowledge of the political per se, except, that is, if it is assumed that politics is wholly practical and technical in a fashion analogous to medicine or engineering. As such, the history of political theory would be reducible to a kind of diagnostic study of symptoms, policies, or conjectures about political life as they relate to the prevailing pathologies of the moment. The history of political theory would thus become a story of various attempts to solve specific problems, or particular reactions and expressions to particular events. To a certain extent, the New Historians tend towards such a conception of the master texts... but with the

proviso that how these problems are addressed tell us a good deal about the nature of political action. And yet, they also argue that "renewed" philosophical aid is required if this approach is to proceed. John Dunn, for example, betrays the ambivalence of this approach.

Do the traditions of understanding politics which have been developed in Europe over the last two and a half millenia possess any real residual capacity to direct us in the face of the world which now confronts us? Do they still exert any real imaginative or moral purchase upon this world which we, as a species, have remade so drastically? Or are they simply crazed myths clashing meaninglessly in a night which they can neither understand nor illuminate?

At the heart of Dunn’s questions, as well as with the Great Tradition’s obsession with decline, is the question of whether or not the history of political theory is a living tradition of thought and determination, or, like Latin, a practice outmoded by time. It is in this sense that the differences between the New History and Great Tradition are really about the function of interpretation: Are we, they ask, historians of political ideas or political philosophers? There is, however, a third approach which refuses either mantle, preferring instead to advance a notion of political commentary which is neither strictly historical nor primarily philosophical. Following Professor Baumgold, this view is called Political Commentary. It is not an approach, however, but a general understanding of the craft of inter-

preting the master texts which assumes a continuity of practices guided by a special understanding of the political.

Baumgold objects to both the New History and to recent attempts to apply either historicist methods or the herme-neutical understanding of Gadamer, Habermas, Ricoeur and others to the history of political theory. She argues that the appropriation of alien techniques of analysis "threatens to depoliticize the study of the history of political theory and to transform it into a branch of interpretive inquiry, more akin to literary criticism than to political argument."332 While it is never clear that Baumgold is prepared to address Dunn's questions, she is nevertheless prepared to accept that there is a tradition of political commentary, and that the tradition is alive and well. By tradition, Baumgold means "a customary kind of practice" involving those who "study the history of political thought" and who are prepared to advance "any deliberately political treatment of the tradition."333 She adds: "The fundamental propositions themselves ought to be acceptable to any commentator whose work is intentionally political."334 By political, as opposed to philosophical or historical interests, Baumgold means "engagement in the world, the world being also [the

332 Deborah Baumgold, "Political Commentary", op. cit., p. 928.
333 Ibid., p. 928.
334 Ibid., p. 928.
political theorist's] object of study.\(^{335}\) While it is not very clear what this statement is meant to entail, Baumgold appears to suggest that political theory ought not to be overly concerned with the historicity of meaning. The central concern or primary interest of political theory is with the political, but nowhere is it explained what this is supposed to mean. In effect, political theory is what political theorists do, and out of which arises issues of purely political interest as opposed to exegetical or historical concerns. There is nothing particularly uncommon in this assertion since most practitioners of the various humanities and human sciences would be hardpressed to define their subject matter in other than very general terms. What Baumgold is arguing, however, is the case for a special understanding which grows out of a set of distinct practices, and that this convergence of practices and understanding is what establishes a tradition of political theory. In the language of contemporary philosophy this is very close to what is called a phenomenological perspective. Baumgold, in other words, is making a philosophical and historical argument even though she seems to think that such considerations only get in the way of work in political theory.

The idea of political commentary is founded on two propositions: first, that commentary is an autonomous, substantive mode of discourse, not simply a derivative report on the writings of others; and second, that commentary on political theory is a

species of political writing. 336

In short, what Baumgold means is that interpretation is not a second-order mode of inquiry but shares a style of political writing which should not be distinguished from the first-order writing of the original texts. Both, that is, are a form of first-order inquiry. Added to these two propositions is a third prescription: "Commentary ought to be deliberately and transparently political in character." 337 What Baumgold is suggesting is that political commentators should attempt to copy both the style and comprehensiveness of the classic texts and that a "good" interpretation is one which emulates the masters under whom political theorists have apprenticed. This approach, in turn, is dependent on how well the appropriate criteria of political theory are employed. For Baumgold, there are three such criteria: first, as a "species of action, moral judgement is appropriate"; second, as a species of political action, "political judgements apply regarding both content and method"; and third, as 'an interpretive mode of political discourse, commentary is required to be truthful." 338 As a result, the political theorist is concerned to elucidate the nature and scope of moral and political judgements advanced by the masters and to do so in a truthful fashion.

336 Ibid., p. 930.
337 Ibid., p. 930.
338 Ibid., p. 931.
It is doubtful whether anyone would disagree with such norms, or that traditionally the practice of political commentary has not sought to meet such requirements. The crux of the problem, however, is whether or not such provisional norms of interpretation are sufficient to grasp the complex meaning of political texts, or the equally problematic relationship of these texts to the 'world'.

It is instructive that Baumgold argues the need for a concept of tradition, or at least the "idea" of tradition; and yet it is limited to the notion of tradition as guidance. The masters are exemplary writers under whom theorists apprentice, and it is their exemplary character which constitutes the ideal towards which each subsequent generation of political theorists must aspire. In pursuing this line of thought Baumgold in fact reduces the study of the history of political theory to two essentially practical guidelines. The first is that commenting on the history of political theory has the effect of exposing the "foundations of ordinary political thinking"; and second, such exposure may help to clarify contemporary political problems. And she concludes:

The only fully satisfactory commentary would be one which synthesized interpretive rationale, application and findings in a political vision not unlike the visions of the great theorists.

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339 Ibid., p. 934.
340 Ibid., p. 939.
A major concern of proponents of political commentary is to move the interpretation of master texts beyond the morass of modern epistemology, and to make interpretation a more practical and deliberately political activity. This is because the underlying assumption is that political judgements are essentially practical in nature, and while moral judgements and truth-telling are important, they must be approached from the vantage point of specifically political considerations. The fundamental flaw in this approach, however, is that such a reading of the classics in no wise guarantees that the political evaluations made by the commentators are justified, textually or otherwise. That is, if it were to be argued that political evaluations are justified on the basis of political arguments alone, then it is incumbent on proponents of this view to state clearly what political, as opposed to philosophical or interpretive, arguments are. If political commentary is not a second-order inquiry, but first-order in the sense of being somehow equivalent to the original texts, then surely the same or similar rules involving either factual or necessary premises and their logical derivations must obtain. If not, then how do they differ? In other words, it is not enough to say that commentators are participants in the same order discourse as the masters — such claims must be demonstrated. Without such demonstration, interpretation becomes a derivative inquiry and this means that commentators can assess
only the logical relations which obtain between either the empirical or evaluative propositions in the original texts. That is, interpretation is a form of critical analysis.

Baumgold, however, has suggested that as a first-order writing the history of political theory and political commentary are not overly concerned with conceptual or logical problems. Their primary interest is with the "world", that is, empirical or evaluative propositions about the nature and limits of political life guided by the tradition of thinking about such matters. This means, therefore, that ultimately political principles cannot be justified philosophically or conceptually. How, then, are they justified? For proponents of political commentary the problem of justification is often side-stepped and, in its place, two significantly different orientations are presented. The first takes its direction once again from language philosophy and argues positivistically that political commentary has as its only task the clarification of concepts employed in political arguments. This is the Oxford School of political analysis and is much concerned to analyse contemporary political dilemmas as problems of language. The second approach is well-represented in the work of John Gunnell whose major theme is that "theories of knowledge can never replace

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knowledge of theories.\footnote{342}

6.3 \textbf{POLITICAL THEORIA AND TRADITION}

Gunnell is perhaps the most outspoken critic of all the major schools of political interpretation, especially the Great Tradition and New History approaches.\footnote{343} In several major writings Gunnell has sought to portray the present state of the history of political theory as thoroughly lacking in political insight and too overburdened with philosophical and methodological inquiries. Interestingly, Gunnell himself has never written on subjects other than the methodology of interpretive inquiry as it applies to political theory and modern political science. He is thus not a good representative of his own advice.

\ldots as a concept, activity, and product, political theory is largely a metatheoretical invention rooted in various doctrines derived from epistemology, methodology, and a fascination with various forms of philosophical transcendentalism. From the very beginning of political science as an academic discipline and profession, its conceptions of theory have been based on images derived from historical and philosophical interpretations of the canon of classic texts and from philosophy of science. This dependence reached an acute stage during the last three decades as a wide range of political theorists attempted to live out metatheoretical fantasies. Political theory has become a wax museum of philosophical monstrousi-
ti es. 344

It should be noted that Gunnell is actually describing the development of the American cum modern science of politics and the place of traditional political theory in its development. In this specific context, he is right to argue that political theorists spent most of their efforts attacking the growth of behavioralism and not enough of their time attending to issues of particular political importance.345 The same cannot be said of Europe, however, and it is only partially true of Canada as well. Not all political theorists were raised on Sabine and Easton, and not all political theorists are primarily concerned with the growth of behavioral political science. And yet, Gunnell's central focus on the rise of 'metatheory' has found a responsive audience to the extent that his view of political theory as an activity which is "alienated" from the original mode of political theorization, and thus from politics as well as its own history, is a sentiment widely-shared in the discipline.

Metatheory begets metatheory, but it is also required in order to deconstruct metatheory. Metatheory is not necessarily pathological. But when it is divorced from substantive theories and the practice of activities which it purports to analyze and yet is simultaneously viewed as their foundation, difficulties begin. And these are the


difficulties that have beset political theory. 346

Gunnell's phenomenological cry of "back to politics" is analogous to Baumgold's assertion of the need for "intentionally political" considerations to override epistemological or interpretive issues. However, in certain writings Gunnell has spoken approvingly of the work of Gadamer and Ricoeur, for example, and of the essentially hermeneutical character of political interpretation.347 What Gunnell is attempting to outline is a programme which allows for a reconstruction of political theory along the lines of the classical notion of théoria but which is expressly political and not what he calls metatheoretical, i.e. theories inspired primarily by philosophical, epistemological or methodological interests. In order to accomplish this task he has sought to restore the classical meaning of théoria as seeing or observing. In modern times, he suggests, theory has taken on the meaning of a gap between knower and the reality known, or between the viewer who sees and the what which is seen, and that this manner of proceeding has alienated the contemporary political observer from the world. In wishing to return to the classical notion of théoria, he is


forced to conclude that modern forms of understanding, especially modern theories of knowledge and truth, are the actual source of many of our current dilemmas, including our inability to understand the classics. More precisely, he adopts Aristotle's concept of the bios theoretikos, the life of the philosopher, as the source for an ideal notion of the theoros as both an active and contemplative observer. It is this vision of the bios theoretikos which he sees exemplified and amplified in political theory from Aristotle to Marx, an activity which has subsequently been submerged in the development of the philosophy of science, especially as a result of its distinctions between fact and theory, observation and abstraction, and empirical and evaluative propositions. As importantly, Gunnell sees the rise of historicism as equally at fault because it is the source of what he calls the myth of tradition advanced by Strauss and others. Strauss, that is, is equally a product of the growth of historicism which he had taken such pains to demonstrate as the root cause of the decline of political theory. In other words, Strauss' metatheoretical claims about non-historical political philosophy had the effect of producing a mythical, trans-temporal concept of the history of political theory; or, his interpretive approach concerning how to read the tradition was mistaken for the actual tradition—a scholarly convention became identified with actual historical con-

The origin of this fallacy of "misplaced historical concreteness" lies in the view that there is a great tradition of thinkers who participated in a world-historical mission to comprehend and explain all things, and that such a mission was capable of being perpetuated. Thus, subsequent generations were invited to join in this trans-temporal mission, including its "holy war" against the behavioralist, historicist, and postivist infidels. For Gunnell, however, this myth of tradition has already entered into decline and while it continues to exist in a somewhat attenuated form, new disciples are now unlikely.

Gunnell’s arguments are, in many respects, very similar to the early writings of Jurgen Habermas. Habermas makes the point that the classical notion of theory "presupposes the distinction between Being and Time, a distinction underlying Ontology." He argues that as a result of setting Being for Logos, the classical concept of theoria contained within it a distinction between the notion of Being; as con-

349 John Gunnell, "The Myth of Tradition," op. cit., p. 133. As Gunnell says: "[W]hat has been taken to be the tradition is a piece of academic folklore. ... It is one thing to engage in a conversation with the past and quite another thing to stage a conversation with the past." ibid., pp. 133-134.


351 Jurgen Habermas, "Knowledge and Interest", ibid., p. 37.
stant and certain, and the transitory social world of opinion, or the Lebenswelt.

The philosopher regarding the eternal order is forced to adjust himself to the cosmos, to reproduce its order in himself. Through mimesis he recreates in himself those proportions which he observes in the workings of nature, and which can also be found in the harmonic progressions of music. In this way theory extends over into the practical life by means of an adjustment or adaptation of the soul to the ordered movement of the cosmos: theory imprints its form on life and, in the ethos, is reflected in the attitude of the person who subjugates himself to its discipline.

Habermas, as well, is here making reference to Aristotle's bios theoretikos, or to the syncretism of the activity of theory as observation of order and of life lived according to theory, as the source and foundation of the subsequent development of all of the different sciences and arts. Science, that is, is initially the product of a form of theoretical and practical life, but it is the specific practical and cognitive interests which arise in the life-world that, in turn, have brought about the development of modern scientific culture. But just as the modern notion of theory segregates fact and interest, the modern scientific culture, in so far as it separates the realm of reflection from observation, has alienated itself from our shared historical culture, i.e. from the life-world which is the source of scientific-cognitive interests. This development, Habermas argues, reflects a forgetfulness of the classical attitude

352 Ibid., p. 37.
of *theoria* because it rejects the "practical functioning of theory" in favor of a notion of theory as method, or predetermined observation.353 As a result, the classical unity of mimesis and the bios theoretikos, of *theoria* and *kosmos*, has now been sundered by methodologism, and consequently the practical attitude and interests which underlie scientific inquiry have been sacrificed to a programme of "value neutrality" with its attendant methodological restrictions (Wertfreiheit). For Habermas, this development can no longer be reconciled with classical *theoria*; or, what is the same, modern scientific thought is incapable of thinking the unity intended by classical theory because it has alienated the theoretical from the practical - it has placed "an abstract 'should' in opposition to a pure 'is'."354 The same is true in the field of the historical-interpretive sciences where, he argues, historicism "has become the positivism of the non-natural sciences."355

With both Habermas and Gunnell the major culprit in this dechirement of knowledge and interest, or theory and practical concern, fact and value, is and ought, is the development of modern epistemology with its view that there is a codifiable way of knowing 'things' and a distinct methodological approach follows from such a code. For Habermas, this de-

velopment represents little more than the need to legitimate existing scientific norms. In this sense it reflects Hegel's critique of *raisonnement* as the timidity to think the problem of the unity of practical and theoretical reasoning; and it also reflects the acquiescence of modern philosophy to its prescribed role as non-participant in the life of the *lebenswelt*. Disembodied epistemology, in other words, acts as a legitimating authority which has the effect of disciplinary theorists to see political objects in light of the peculiar concerns and problems of epistemology - "it simply directs attention away from [political objects]." 356 In sum, epistemology tout court is an alienated and alienating enterprise which reflects, on the one hand, the decline of *theoria* as inherently practical, and, on the other, the rise of *wertfrei* social science as a programme of legitimization.

The problem of interpretation, to the extent that it is posed solely in terms of exegetical techniques or methods, is similarly an expression of the same desire to dissociate political theory from its real objects of inquiry in order to facilitate the "sublime internalization of already well-established norms," and thus further alienate the classics from actual politics as well as from their own history. 357 Thus, as Christian Bay noted, the history of political theory has become a source for the legitimation of the status

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357 Jurgen Habermas, "Knowledge and Interest," op. cit., p. 40.
quo; or, as Marcuse argued, the classics are "flattened out" by the thin veneer of the illusion of objectivity which modern notions of knowledge bring to the reading of classic texts.

We are free to continue to rely on rote ignorance and free therefore to perish with categorical and vague imperatives. We are also a little free not to do these things. 358

This "little freedom" to contest the rote ignorance of methodologism and disembodied epistemology is not meant to suggest that the critical function of epistemology ought to be discarded, or that an understanding of theories of knowledge has no place in the study of political theory. On the contrary, in the interpretation of the master texts there is a critical or lapidary function to perform to the extent that the messages of these writings are not set inviolably in stone to remain unchanged for all time. It is inevitable that interpretation must involve critical exegesis, of ferreting out meaning which is beyond the self-understanding of an author, and of assessing what is flawed, inconsistent or poorly expressed. In order to perform this critical function the political theorist requires some awareness of what constitutes an appropriate argument, including both the criteria of intelligibility of various knowledge claims as well as knowledge of the structure of such arguments. 359

Hegel, such matters are not to be restricted to questions of knowledge in abstractio - as in the "idling" categories of Kant's epistemology - but must be demonstrated in the actual operation of knowing. Here, however, Gunnell appears to slip this issue by arguing that a major distinction must be drawn between theory in politics and theories about politics (metapolitical theory). As he says: "This is simply a matter of being clear about the distinction between theory in politics and theories about politics (metapolitical theory). Making the distinction is the first step in ending pernicious alienation altogether, transforming it into reflective distance." 360 His concern with "theory in politics" is about forms of thinking and inquiry which relate directly to political questions, while a "theory about politics" is reflection on how theories as modes of thinking and expression are related to political life and discourse. The first is directly concerned with the political; the second with theorizing in general and only tangentially with politics. Put simply, there are political theories and there are theories about political theory, and the political commentator's concern ought to be with the first of these. Think about politics, he asserts, not about thinking about thinking about politics: "The transcendental mode of theorizing at the metapolitical level must be rejected." 361

360 Ibid., p. 35. (Gunnell's emphasis).
On the surface Gunnell's arguments have the appearance of sound advice. His central point is that philosophy cannot in and of itself determine what theorists do, or ought to do, any more than logical positivism or the philosophy of science in general can tell the scientist how to operate. It is supreme arrogance on the part of modern philosophy, he argues, to even suggest that branches of philosophy can legislate what methods are appropriate or what constitutes a rational investigation for the various natural and human sciences. In effect, he is advocating a form of quasi-phenomenological understanding in that he insists that the various branches of knowledge are self-formative and thereby self-authenticating. In a fashion somewhat analogous to the work of the later Husserl, Gunnell implies that the correctness of a scholarly activity is found precisely within its own well-established ways of proceeding.  

362 In other words, political theorists are what political theorists do in the phenomenological sense of being guided by an ideal which is embodied in the actual practices of political theory. His critique of the transcendental notion of tradition follows from this thinking in that he conceives political theory as a set of interconnected and identifiable practices and problems. What links diverse theories, however, is not a logic

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361 Ibid., p. 39.

of transhistorical immanence or transcendence, but rather a particular way of viewing and talking about political objects (theoria) which has developed historically. As importantly, he contends that the correctness, flaws, ambiguities and contradictions in political theory are not philosophical shortcomings but arise out of its internal mode of procedure and particular development. It is worth recalling that for Husserl a tradition implied that the major concepts and operations of a science are structured in such a way that they are reiterable and reproducible without variation over time. This is evident, for example, in its purest form in geometry where every young schoolperson is trained in the elementary Euclidean theorems. For the phenomenologist, the task is to uncover the meaning and validity of such practices by retracing the concepts and operations back to a original meaning-giving intuition, or an act of ideal constitution in pre-theoretical experience. This is why Husserl could argue that phenomenology, as a rigorous science, could investigate how the way things are done is consistent with an original meaning-giving intention or act of ideal constitution. 363

Unlike geometry, however, the history of political theory is a cultural and practical, not a purely scientific, tradition in which the questions of reproduction and variation over time pose a number of serious interpretive problems.

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For instance, how do we judge whether our reproductions of the master texts are authentic and not a distortion or loss of original meaning? Or, in posing the question in this fashion do we not render a suitable answer impossible because it suggests that a text has a "essence" or inner truth which alone vindicates or refutes its various commentaries? What sort of radical *epoche* is involved to penetrate this inner core, that is, do we suspend our historical, conceptual, logical, normative or philosophical attitudes in order to lay bear consciousness for the reception of the essence of the pure political meaning of the content? From the standpoint of Hegelian phenomenology, however, the meaning of a text is not an essence or uncontaminated interiority which conforms to our understanding when we desert the world of actual knowledge, but rather a process of development which necessarily out-distances the self-understanding of both authors and interpreters. The tracing and retracing of this development is thereby a function of the logical and historical process of meaning constitution, neither of which is subsumable under a model of pure essences such that the "essence" of a text is amplified across time and between generations of students.

Gunnell's notion of political theory guided by an "ideal" model lacks the sophistication of both Husserlian phenomenology and Hegelian hermeneutics. Nevertheless, he is attempting to promote a phenomenological approach to the act
of theorizing about political objects. This is evident in his argument that the history of political theory is a history of a unique sort of intellectual practice and that its internal operations represent the boundary of its possible knowledge. Following Hegel, Gunnell notes that there can be no external philosophical or epistemological principle or standpoint from which to assess these internal practices—in sum, the study of the history of political theory is self-authenticating. Thus, Gunnell attempts to produce an approach to political interpretation which involves a rather simple notion of an "ideal" manner of theorizing. Drawing on Max Weber's notion of the "ideal type", Gunnell makes the point that his ideal manner of theorizing is not a theoretical construction in the same sense in which Weber had sought to characterize such constructions as forms of social scientific thinking, but is drawn historically. Plato, he says, represents the "ideal" political theorist.

6.4 POLITICAL THEORY: IDEALITY AND ATTITUDE

I would argue that Plato may be fruitfully considered as the prototypical political theorist. ... What I wish to suggest is that the characteristics of political theory as an ideal type ... are most fully represented in Plato's work and that it is possible to draw interesting parallels between his work and that of such figures as Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau. 364

Gunnell's notion of the 'ideal' political theory is not unlike Baumgold's view that the practice of political commentary must attempt to emulate the master thinkers. Where they differ, however, is in Gunnell's delineation of the characteristics which ought to be copied, and his ancillary notion that these characteristics constitute an ideal mode of political theory. He begins by distancing Socrates from Plato and argues that while Socrates "exposed the illusions and hypocrisy of Athens, Plato not only diagnosed the ills of the city and chided its intellectuals and politicians but confronted the polis with a radical vision of a new society and concerned himself in some detail with various dimensions, both theoretical and practical, of the problem of realization". There are several contentious points in this reading of Plato as well as in the assumption that what separates the critical intellectual from the political theorist is the development of an imperative "ought" or vision which confronts the existing order. In effect, Gunnell hints that while philosophy per se may perform the important function of sharpening our critical faculties, the real work of political theory is the capacity to direct such thinking towards a vision which radically contests existing opinions about right political action. In other words, political theory, unlike philosophy, is directly related to political action, especially action which promotes change.

365 Ibid., p. 137.
In a very fundamental sense, the criterion for distinguishing political theory as a particular kind of creative activity and body of literature is the degree to which the vision of the theorist is inseparable from the problem of restructuring political society in terms of that vision. Like that of the artist, it is a vision that demands incarnation and requires public expression.

Günnell is here making a fundamental claim about the nature of political theory and of Plato's contribution to this development. What he is saying is that whereas philosophy generally seeks to know a certain phenomena prior to considering the problem of transformation (Aristotle), the political theorist qua theoros sees the same phenomena in such a way that the demand for change is inseparable from the understanding or knowledge we have of it (Plato). As such, political theory is fundamentally different from philosophy because its central focus is the question of transformation, and not primarily the search for knowledge. This further implies that the political theorist embodies a special attitude or vocation which is always, in some respects, outside of normal political action to the extent that the demand for transformation is alien to the ethos of ordinary political life. Günnell finds this attitude clearly reflected in all of the Platonic dialogues and suggests that in the reading of Plato this element should be made the primary focus of a political theorist's education. In effect, he finds in Plato the source for Marx's dictum about philosophers only in-

\[\text{366} \quad \text{Ibid., p. 138.}\]
interpreting the world whereas the point is to "change" it. 367

This, he says, is a central characteristic of political
ty theory as an ideal type, viz. the ability to confront the
world with a radical vision and to promote such a vision
through the marshalling of rigorous theoretical arguments.
Political theory, that is, requires a prise de conscience in
which the entire breadth of political thought is conceived
as a call to arms against existing conditions. And yet,
ironically, it is a call to arms which, as the biographers
of Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau,
etc., have demonstrated, is characterized by a healthy un-
derstanding of 'real' politics.

Socrates is a critic and his life exemplifies the
conflict between philosophy and politics, but he
is a part of society and eventually unwilling to
escape his sentence of death in respect for the
sanctity of the laws of the polis. Yet the theo-
rist is caught up in a higher mission and tends,
like Plato, to refuse the role of physician to a
sick society and to seek an opportunity to partic-
ipate in a new beginning. He does not resign him-
self to sacrifice. In a period when the social
cosmos has "run down," the "true Statesman" may
not rule, but he is the vehicle of truth and the
only means for the Idea to enter history. In
these circumstances, he cannot risk "his life in
vain without any hope of accomplishing any-
thing." 368

A cynic might regard this advice as little more than a
combination of "keep your head down!" and "let others do the
dirty work!"; neither of which seems remotely close to the
exalted importance of political theory as the "only means of

367 Ibid., p. 148.
368 Ibid., p. 149.
the Idea to enter history." What Gunnell is saying, however, is that throughout the history of political theory the thinkers who have had the greatest impact on political history were precisely those whose radical vision most directly confronted the existing order, and whose subsequent fear of reprisal effected their style of writing. Unlike Strauss, however, Gunnell argues that each directed his thoughts of a better régime to the public at large and not towards a small coterie of intellectuals who alone could comprehend and perpetuate such teachings. This is why he argues that in general political theorists are not involved in ordinary political action but in what he calls "extraordinary" action. The political theorist is the "author of a new order shaped in his own image. His impulse is that of the artist to give birth to the vision of symmetry and beauty which grows within him. It usually finds concreteness only in words, but this, nevertheless, tells us something about the literature of political theory and its obsessive concern with beginnings, foundations, and creations."369

For Gunnell, the primary impulse which guides the theorist is the possibility of reconstructing the political world in terms of a model which is not concerned with nature per se, but with a copy of nature which is purified and released of the vicissitudes of chance. All political theory, that is, aims at overcoming history to the extent that it

369 Ibid., p. 154.
desires to found political activity on a more permanent footing. And yet, in so far as the gap between power and knowledge alienates theory from direct political action, political theory is itself a form of self-estrangement from the world. This situation, he says, is "in part because the vision of the theorist is too brilliant for society to perceive unmediated." 370 Because political theory blinds society to the real possibilities of change, the political theorist must therefore try to dull the brilliance of his message with the power of beautiful words and images. He must, in other words, paint pictures and create illusions which mediate the sharpness of his understanding in order that the message be carried into history, i.e. embodied in the norms and institutions of historical society. The illusions of political theory, like Machiavelli's Prince or Hobbes' Leviathan, perform a dual function; they seek to destroy existing myths and to replace them with new visions; and they are testimony to the fact that all society is created and maintained through collectively-shared illusions or myths. — "If, as Aristotle argued, political science is the master science, the political theorist is the master illusionist." 371
Gunnell provides a rather poetic image of political theory, but is it a model which clarifies the task of interpretation? In large measure it is a view of theory not as "normal science" but as "extraordinary science," and it is one in which claims to knowledge seem removed from its general activity. It seems clear that Gunnell believes that those aspects of theory which penetrate the flow of history find their source and origin in the self-images of the various theorists, and that the dynamic of this interpretation is the symbolic power of new illusions to destroy existing myths. Leaving aside for the moment the question of the relationship between order and idea, Gunnell's contention that political theory is a visionary art involving levels of illusion and imagery requires careful criticism.

Gunnell's notion that a political theorist reflects an attitude which can accommodate both the demand for transformation and the search for knowledge simultaneously is drawn from his special reading of Plato. Unlike Aristotle, Gunnell claims, Plato did not undertake to know the nature of political things before investigating to what degree such knowledge allows the theorist to see how he can change or control a given situation or phenomena. In other words, Plato did not distinguish purely philosophical activity from political understanding, but, in fact, made political understanding a higher priority. The problem with assessing this interpretation is that Gunnell argues that philosophical ar-
guments are not appropriate, and thus Plato's political science must be evaluated solely on the basis of his political teaching. Moreover, because this teaching is essentially an illusory vision whose strength is to be measured by its capacity to destroy the Sophistic teachings of his time, we must therefore assess to what extent Plato's vision was superior to prevailing opinion. For Gunnell this is demonstrated in two ways: the first is Plato's extension of Socratic criticism to a radical vision of a new political society; and second, that this vision transformed our very understanding of the political, that is, it represented a transformation of "political nature." In sum, Gunnell's arguments are primarily at the level of poiesis, not episteme, because he wants to suggest that "good" political theory is not simply about change but does bring about a fundamental transformation in how we conceptualize political phenomena. This is why he can say that the master thinkers have each caused humanity to change its political outlook, and that our present understanding is richly enhanced when we come to realize the nature and scope of these changes.

Gunnell's argument that Plato represents a step forward on Socratic moral philosophy - that Plato is the first political theorist - is problematic. As was argued in Chapter Two, it is possible to argue that from the standpoint of political understanding, Plato represents a retreat from the

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372 Ibid., p. 158.
radicality of Socratic thought to the extent that he made political thinking an activity accessible to only the very few and that the structure of the ideal polity is one which functions to satisfy the needs of the initiate only. This is not to say that Plato's undemocratic instincts rendered his political teaching void; such thinking is best left to idealogues. Rather, the Platonic political teaching is one which establishes the appropriateness of thinking that illusion, including noble lies and pious beliefs, are in fact the best we can expect from the disorder of sensuous existence, and thus the political theorist is free to create whatever myths he requires in order to promote his own self-image and self-understanding of the best order. Socrates, however, was concerned to examine the reasons why we hold to certain political opinions, to show the vacuousness of these reasons, and to promote the idea that the human intellect can penetrate surface myths and pious illusions and move to the core of meaning which alone allows us to determine what is right and good. It is the illusions of philosophy which permit the creation of political illusions, and this is why Plato retreated from the disorder of Athenian politics to a vision of the ideal polity "on High." The historical fact that Socrates sacrificed his life does not in any way detract from his political teaching, no less so than the spectacle of Plato erecting an abstract state in which no one but he could find happiness.
On the second point, that Plato transformed our understanding of the political, Gunnell is on much safer ground. It is undoubtedly true that Plato's salutary image of philosophy and statesmanship coming together, and his demand that justice, virtue and right order be embodied in the structure of the State, represent an exhilarating vision. In effect, the Republic is a testimony to the power of reason to transcend the purely political and in so doing to provide the intellect with a space in which to think the possibility of an ideal philosophical structure. That is, it is a vision which suggests that the political theorist must transcend the illusions of his own time, think freely and fearlessly about higher possibilities, but only in order to return once again to the realm of political phenomena with his own visions of structure and order. Like Hegel's critique of Schleiermacher, however, this model of political theory is infused with a divinatory element — the political theorist divines new worlds and these models constitute a set of ideal norms which somehow are engulfed in the vicissitudes of history and, lo and behold, they emerge at a later time as values embodied in actual institutions, behavior and popular understanding.

It is difficult to see how Gunnell's thinking can address the problems of interpretation in other than very superficial ways. This is because while his critique of existing practices is often insightful and to the point, his own pre-
scriptive model constitutes little more than a plea to retain the inherent radicality of the classics. In this sense Gunnell is reacting chiefly to his own society, especially its weak intellectual traditions and the declining order of its polity. In his obsessive concern with the debilitating effects of methodologism, Gunnell is prepared to forego any discussion of interpretation which is not aimed at radicalizing political understanding. While we may wholeheartedly endorse this prescription, we are still left with the problem of assessing what is meaningful in the history of political theory, and whether or to what extent this form of intellectual activity still retains a meaningful core that is potentially translatable into political action. Is Gunnell's 'ideal' demand for transformation, or the hermeneutic attitude it evokes, a sufficient basis from which to reconstruct political theory?

6.5 POLITICAL THEORY: ORDER AND THE OPEN SOCIETY

Just as Plato, in the Republic, found the answer to disorder in the relationship between psyche and city, that is, in the discovery that disordered souls create political chaos and that political chaos in turn releases the springs of disorder in the human soul, every theorist ultimately seeks the answer to political order, and finds the basis of his design, in this same relationship. Every political theory is a venture in the search for the true nature of human being which in one way or another becomes the model of the city whether the city is considered to be, as for Aristotle, a space for moral development or, as for St. Augustine, a dispensation by God for the restraint of
The issue of order, as Gunnell rightly notes, is at the core of the history of political theory. From the concept of the polis, through the catholic or universal community, to the modern nation-state, successive epochs of theory have attempted to delineate the nature of right political order, and, consequently, political science, properly speaking, is ultimately concerned with this central question. Gunnell sees the question of order as intimately related to the question of human being, and notes that the political theorist is that person who is not only involved in discerning order, but in its ideal creation as well. To the extent that society lacks a true science of politics, the problem of disorder will persist and thus the need for political theory will also remain. From this perspective the master thinkers represent experiments in the ideal constitution of the unity of the individual and the city since each in his or her own fashion has made manifest elements of human being qua human and qua being in their construction of ideal politics. In bringing forward elements of the psyche, or the order which animates the soul, Gunnell is suggesting that political theory is an adventure in which the theorist returns always to the problem of beginning. With each new re-

373 Ibid., p. 159.
374 Cf., George Sabine, A History of Political Theory, op. cit., Introduction to 3rd edition; and Dante Germino, Political Philosophy and the Open Society, op. cit., p. 137ff.
turn, however, there is added clarity and conviction on the part of the theorist, but also a deeper pessimism about collective possibilities. In this sense the order which is brought to self-understanding through the study of the masters also brings to consciousness a profound awareness of the lack of order permeating society. Thus the theorist must attempt to reproduce this inner order in public form — or the order he sees within himself must be shown to obtain in all others (theoria).

Gunnell, in quoting Aristotle and Augustine, implies that this process of mimésis and theoria, in so far as it is directed at the general problem of political order, reflects the ideal character of political theory. In other words, classical political theory is about the possibilities of humanity in general which, like Locke's "industrious and rational" bourgeois or Aristotle's "zoon politikon," must be distinguished from the possibilities for change in specific cultures or historical collectivities. Thus, with classical liberal theory, for example, there is the dominant theme of humanity as consumers and producers overcoming the ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural determinants of existing collectivities — bourgeois man is universal. Similarly, Marx's concept of the universal class of working persons is equally a testament to the ideal character of classical political theory, to wit that transformation implies a fundamental change in political nature which transforms the real—
ity of humanity as a universal community. And yet, in the contemporary "open society" in which God, the Greek philosophical ideal, or the hope of happiness through technique, have lost their purposiveness and direction, is Gunnell's ideal political theory still possible?

There may be an important sense in which the open society and political theory are incompatible. This is not to imply that the open society is necessarily the good society that transcends ideology and stands beyond the need for criticism and the remedial vision of the theorist, but rather that the theorist may be an anachronism in a society marked by condition of extreme tolerance and the soft despotism of mass society that opposes by ignoring.

Is Gunnell's point that modern society is without an ideal which fosters transformation; or is it that such thinking is no longer possible in the contemporary world? Are we, that is, free to float aimlessly between the idealisms of an unfettered individuality ruthlessly pursuing its own self-activated passions; or collective determinism which eclipses all spiritual visions and reduces thought to the endless struggle for self-mastery? In all of the major approaches to political interpretation there is a profound sense of rudderlessness, of a cybernetics without the kubern
etes or helmsman, and the possibility that political theory has perhaps exhausted its energies. In this sense Gunnell is perhaps the least helpful of thinkers because he believes that the entropy he finds in political theory can be forestalled by avoiding the profound questions about the pros-

pects of renewed theory; and in their place he provides an ideal which is as timeless and wholesome, though limited, as Strauss' non-historical political philosophy. His basic prescription is to think fearlessly and freely as the ancients did, for history alone will decide who is right. But, as we saw with Hegel, the ability to do so is now severely limited by the very history which Gunnell so cavalierly assumes. Today we live in a world which freely admits of almost any hair-brained construction because it is without the will to justify or clarify its claims. In fact, there is now a strong tendency to assert that justification is evidence of a lack of freedom, and that the truly thinking person authenticates nothing, he merely destroys and creates anew.

Gunnell, it seems, is caught between the attraction of ancient political theory and the deconstructionist tendency of modern criticism, but what, then, we may ask is the purpose of studying the classics if it affirms only the need to create new illusions. Even Marx, who well-understood that there comes a time and place when the "arm of criticism" must give way "to the criticism of arms," was supremely conscious of the need to penetrate beyond illusion to the core of the truth of modernity. Otherwise, praxis is irrational if it is not action directed at a rational reconstruction of the existing illusory world. More importantly, while Gunnell speaks so eloquently of the need for a keener histori-
cal understanding, his ideal political theorist always transcends history to the extent that visions and self-images presume to tell the world how it must be; as if, as Hegel tells us, the world has awaited all this time to be told how it ought to be and is not!

The owl of Minerva takes flight, not into fantasy and illusion, but when the world no longer betrays its actual secrets and thereby passes over to the custody of human thought and action the historical focus with which to begin the process of reconciliation once again. If history is a self-making, and if political theory is a record of that self-making, then the task of the historian of political theory is to grasp the actual movement of this process as effective history (Wirkungsgeschichte). What this means, according to Hegel, is that the theorist, like the historian of philosophy, is neither more knowledgeable nor well-placed than original thinkers in view of the situatedness of all thinking — for no one is all-Wise — but is still nevertheless more fortunate to the extent that the tradition which lies before us offers an extremely wide and superior horizon than does the narrow immediacy of natural consciousness. The problem, however, is how to place ourselves in this tradition and to bring tradition into the presence of our own situation such that the narrowness of our thinking is extended and broadened. This further implies a stand towards

tradition in which what appears as dead and past is restored to life; not, however, as Lazarus brought back, but as the living and breathing element of tradition which, though forgotten, continues to infuse thought and its determinations.

It is not likely that the study of the history of political theory will lead to a revival of political theory, but at least it may reawaken a sense of the possibility, or at least the ideal, of a creative reordering or constitution of social life. 377

The notion that classical political theory has reached the end of its time, but that it did so without realizing its own possibilities, is a thinking which anyone with an Hegelian sensibility would find difficult, if not impossible, to accept. Unlike those who bridle at the concept of an end to history, Gunnell's exception to Hegelianism is quite different. Implicit in his pessimism about the prospects of political theory is the view that intellectuals have always been alone and that what connects their isolated efforts is an arbitrary history which requires renewed direction, much of which must flow from the radical brilliance of their visions. This is really a variant of the theory that history is propelled by great personages, some of whom are masters of great events while others are les éminences grise of great opinions which revolutionize given situations. In the final analysis, Gunnell's theory of the sublation of political theory is more accurately a lament for the perceived inability of presentday society to contemplate.

the possibility of a radical reconstruction of the existing order. Hegel's concepts of freedom and dialectic, and the power of criticism and negation which they enunciate, stand in stark opposition to Gunnell's loss of hope and his desire to arrest thought at the portal of partial truth and bad history. Like Strauss and others, Gunnell sees the achievements of political theory as always an ought to be - the political theorist is unhappy consciousness who must forego actuality for a vision of the "on High", and then he has little choice but to sit alone among the angels or come back to earth to despise his fellows. The possibility of overcoming such thinking is Hegel's primary philosophical achievement, the central elements of which are discussed in the following conclusion. The crux of this argument is that commentary on the history of political theory has fallen victim to the intellectual self-image of the age; and that as practitioners we are free to choose either the dogmatism of a non-historical political philosophy or the despair of a thinking which is prepared to dismiss the tradition of political theory for a new categorical imperative authorizing what ought to be. And yet, we are a little free not to accept either.
Chapter VII
CONCLUSION

In a world increasingly preoccupied with rapid and complex systems of electronic communication, the speculative task of interpreting the meaning of "old books" must seem inconsequential to the vast majority of people. Like medieval monks, the contemporary student of the history of political theory has no natural audience and little direct impact on the public realm. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that many political theorists have chosen to retreat from actuality to the ideal world of Periclean Athens; in its stillness the political theorist retains a place of high esteem. But it is nevertheless a retreat from reality, from knowledge and moral response, to an ideal locale where thought is impervious to the vicissitudes of time, and therewith of social action. It is a retreat into the stillness of space whose ideal, infinite standards are forever untouched by the mundane temporality of passion and need. And yet, for Hegel at least, the resolute refusal to accept such a sphere of unintelligibility is what constitutes the real accomplishment of modern thought because it represents an end to the "independent subsistence" of philosophy; or, as Hegel says, Mind has come home to the actual world and the
world is humanized and naturalized in the process. In effect, this is what he means by art, religion, and philosophy as Absolute Spirit; or the progressive rational and expressive embodiment of human knowledge in the actual world such that reality is made concretely more human.

In their retreat to a Golden Age, contemporary political theorists have sought, sometimes consciously but often unconsciously, to reject this human accomplishment, and in its place have endowed philosophia with an inherent naturalness and spirituality which tends to depreciate the enormous expansion of modern empirical knowledge. Underlying this attitude is the view that while scientific or technical knowledge expands arithmetically, our sense of moral purpose and spirituality decline exponentially. In the face of this confusing tableau, the retreat to a putatively higher moral culture and its idealized form of political life betrays not only the ambivalence of the moment, but also a deep longing to transcend its political practices and philosophies as well. It is therefore not too difficult to appreciate those who, alternatively, find little or no sustenance in the tradition of political theory, and who frankly affirm that it has nothing to teach modernity - that, in other words, the tradition is dead.

For those already convinced that the tradition is without residual meaning, and who affirm that technology, class or gender differences demand a wholly novel mode of social
Theorizing, which confronts the intellectual past in order to destroy it, this discussion will appear futile. This is because the tradition, for such readers, is a history of domination, of false idols and pernicious myths, and to treat such a record with seriousness is to participate in the perpetuation of alienation. More particularly, proponents of this view would have us marshal our creative efforts in a wholly negative, critical fashion in order to hasten the work of deconstruction already well underway.

In simple terms, the purpose of this work is to suggest that if we are to reject or idealize the tradition then we should be very clear about what this is meant to accomplish, as well as about the desire which prompts such feelings. This has little to do with existing interpretive practices, however, because even if the prevalent modes of tradition are unsatisfactory, this in no wise is reason to believe that the tradition itself is meaningless. All that this suggests is that we rethink these attitudes in such a way that the apparent emptiness of our professional duties is confronted directly and that we have the courage to address students with knowledge and not with unmediated feelings, fears or uncertainties about the meaning of the history of political theory for contemporary political life.

What this discussion has sought to illustrate is that the history of political theory is poorly used if it is assumed that the function of our deliberations is to tell the world
how it ought to be — as if pernicious alienation departs on
the demand of some new categorical imperative which author-
izes a particular form of knowledge, economic group or biol-
ogical category. Like Socrates, the student of cultural
tradition is not the master of an ideal world, nor the vic-
tim of an insensitive society, but a participant in the actu-
al world whose primary labour is to comprehend society's
self-image and self-understanding. As such, the task of in-
terpretation is not for the purpose of creating new politi-
cal illusions and images but to participate in the working-
out of existing contradictions. This activity is inherently
conservative in the banal sense that it seeks to preserve
meaning in its originary guise, but it is nevertheless polit-
ically subversive in that it strives to comprehend the neg-
ative element, or the unsaid and unaccounted for, in soci-
ety's self-understanding. The merit of this work is, I
think, its attempt to ponder the question of why the tradi-
tion has seemingly come to an end; why, that is, it appears
a dismal failure both practically and theoretically such
that it seems to demand either a retreat to an idealized
past or its resolute rejection, i.e., a flight into fancy or
despair.

If the rejection of tradition requires knowledge in order
to sustain and direct new forms of emancipatory understand-
ing against its inherent alienation, then how is such knowl-
edge made possible? This dissertation has argued from sev-
eral different points of view that one is never entirely free of history in either its formative effects or self-understanding, and that the question of transcendence or transformation is poorly posed if by it we mean freedom from residual modes of understanding and ways of life. We can reject tradition if it is seen as a static, lifeless appendage, something reducible to a single or set of factors, for in so doing we place our own self-image over and against the practical understanding which motivates the age. While such visionary thinking is undoubtedly beneficial, it has little to do with the task of interpreting tradition. This is not to imply that social theory ought not to be explicitly critical in its intention or application, only that critical political theory operates within a context of meaning which requires an understanding of tradition. And it is precisely this problem which must be addressed in order to assess the validity and applicability of our critical stands. In the end it is perhaps our inability to deal with the tradition that leads many to reject its residual meaning and to affirm that the present context is wholly differentiated from its history. Such affirmation, however, is only an idealization of the immediate critical consciousness such that all that has come before is seen as a non-realization of the unmediated understanding of the present movement. Thus technology, class or gender are purported to stand alone, but their Being is only a purporting to stand alone.
The modern attitude towards Hegel reflects this ambivalence, not because he presumed to stand at the end of history, but because he was seen to arrogate too much to thought and not enough to creative imagination, critical deconstruction and practical action. But if Hegel accorded Mind too great a role in humanity's contest to master the infinite, then surely the modern-disciples of Athens have depreciated the power of thought because they have left it too small a place to speak on behalf of the universality of mankind. As well, moreover, those moderns who reject the hermeneutics of tradition are of no greater help in assessing the role and function of the history of political theory either. This is because, no serious thinker can long sustain the void of nothingness to which the pure hermeneutics of suspicion must eventually succumb. Neither of these positions assails the myth of individual independence which flourishes in most intellectual circles today. Hegel, by contrast, spoke on behalf of public freedom and collective independence which is progressively made available to all through struggle and knowledge. Freedom, that is, is not a psychic distance prompted solely by the inner demands of private will.

From the point of view of interpretive understanding, what is required is what Gadamer has called a "fusion of horizons" whose boundaries are only partially set by tradition because the present is being "continually formed."\(^{378}\) As

such, neither the present nor the past is therewith reducible to either abstract subjectivity or disembodied objectivity. And, a fortiori, neither constitutes an appropriate place from which to begin the task of interpretation; or, as Hegel noted, real thinking begins at the boundary of the subject, or where the subject is not.

In the Phenomenology the great bulk of the discussion is directed at the problem of understanding moral experience. The master-slave dialectic, no less than the unhappy consciousness or Spirit's self-estrangement in culture, are all concrete manifestations of how, on the one hand, we have responded to empirical knowledge and, on the other, to religious experience. In the language of Hegel this is what constitutes the relationship between human beings and history, viz. the progressive reconciliation of knowledge with moral purpose as the subject and substance of freedom. With Hegel, however, art, religion and philosophy have reached, within the problematics of freedom each had sought to adumbrate, the zenith of their power to reconcile meaning and expression, and thus a "higher" stage of human embodiment must await a new dawn. This is why in the last pages of the Phenomenology he speaks of the "night" of self-consciousness, of a new stage of "existence," and of a new "embodiment." It is, I believe, only in this sense that Hegel's notion of an "end to history" takes on a concrete meaning,

379 Cf., Judith Shklar, Freedom in Hegel, op. cit.
the principal function of which is a call to begin once again the task of rethinking the past but from the standpoint of the need for a qualitatively different kind of thinking and expression.

Here it has to begin all over again at its immediacy, as freshly as before, and thence rise once more to the measure of its stature, as if, for it, all that preceded were lost, and as if it had learned nothing from the experience of the spirits that preceded. (Phen., 807).

This is not a call to return to philosophy, religion, or poetic expression as traditionally conceived and practiced, however, but is more accurately the recognition that the repetitive circle of these embodiments has been broken; or, as Hegel says in respect of philosophy, it has passed through and abandoned its independent subsistence and is "borne anew from the womb of knowledge." 380 Thus, to think as if we had learned nothing is not a recommendation to treat all knowledge in a purely skeptical fashion. For Hegel, to suspect knowledge is already to have surpassed the boundary of its independence, and thus its immediate existence, and is really the beginning of the process once again whereby this new knowledge is brought to self-consciousness and expression. In this way Hegel is not saying that "god is dead" or that philosophy is sublated in the Nietzschean sense that both have somehow departed from the world scene, but that the traditional ways in which the world has been understood have given way to new forms of thought and deter-

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380 Phen., p. 807.
mination which have yet to be experienced in their concreteness and immediacy. We might say, following Hegel, that the subject has been radically changed in modernity but that it is not yet a subjectivity which has been self-consciously won by thought. In this way there is a great need to comprehend the tradition in order to recognize what would constitute a radical new beginning.

Marx's notion of the species moving from the pre-history of class antagonism to actual history as universal freedom is, to a certain extent, an important characterization of the thrust of Hegelian thinking. As importantly, however, Sartre's lament for the prospects of freedom in a classless society still constrained by material scarcity is a reminder that the Hegelian synthesis remains far removed from actuality. Moreover, the destruction of nature by technique which results from maintaining the separation of scientific rationality and will, illustrates the distance still to be traversed by human beings in their struggle to reconcile the activities of the intellect and emotion.

In the end Hegel understood in a fashion analogous to classical philosophy that the dream of perfecting the species lies in our ability to deal effectively with the seeming contrariety of intelligence and passion, that is, between reason as determination and the will as an arbitrary and ca-

pricious power. Hegel recognized that only when intellect and will are reconciled can human beings risk "true" recollection. In other words, to recollect is to risk one's individuality and private psychic freedom by transferring our intellectual attention away from the security of a world already available to critical scrutiny to a concept of the world as essentially an intersubjective web of embodied meaning. What is intersubjectivity but recognition of the social, interpersonal and contextual nature of lived experience, the meaning of which demands a level of self-understanding. And what is "Spirit" but just such recognition—the self-understanding which arises from shared experience, or tradition. Even in his earliest writings at Jena, Hegel employed the concepts of labour, property, law, needs, etc., to express this process wherein human beings come to shed their abstract character—I and other, man and nature, logic and emotion—and that with reconciliation achieved, thought must necessarily return to its history as the actual, not abstract, truth of human being.  

The discussion of language was meant to highlight this process by demonstrating how the problem of interpretation is itself a rickly historical and practical mode of consciousness. It is, in fact, the coming to consciousness of the recognition of intersubjectivity, and of the inadequacy

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of existing modes of thought to penetrate the core of meaning. Vico's theory of differential language types was employed to suggest that a retreat to classical philosophia represents a return to a discourse of inexpressibles which necessarily divides humanity externally, i.e. it divides those who think (intellect) from those who labour (will). As importantly, when language is employed in a wholly designative fashion in order to distinguish reason from passion, the self becomes divided internally, that is to say, human beings are torn between that element which thinks, and that element which feels and cares. From the standpoint of Hege-
lian phenomenology, it is precisely this latter instance which constitutes the hermeneutic moment, for in recognizing the incapacity of traditional modes of thinking and expression to reconcile this distinction, the Self must seek in the activities and thoughts of others for its own self-understanding.

The reconciliation of intellect and will in the intersubjectivity of the life-world follows from Hegel's notion of a "history without a subject." This is not, however, identifiable with the Nietzschean cum post-structuralist illusion of disembodied power relations which have conspired to deplete humanity of its individuality. Rather, it is the Hegelian view of human beings struggling collectively to overcome alienation and thus to free personality from the arbitrary and capricious bondage of private will. While
there is nothing inherently wrong with seeing contemporary society as a slave to capital, administrative authority or technique, problems do arise when power is made the sole issue of political theorizing. This is because the study of power in its effects on political, economic or gender relations tends to hypostatize the notion of power, such that henceforth all social relations are reducible to the issue of domination. History, as a result, becomes the record of nothingness, a banal negativity in which the future is simply more of the same pernicious past and present.

The foregoing study of tradition was not for the purpose of sustaining the liberal myth of individual freedom in the face of the pervasive relations of power which dominate contemporary life, but it was to keep the Hegelian-Marxist understanding of freedom alive. Marx's hermeneutics of suspicion understood well the bourgeois self-delusion of autonomous personality, and it was this knowledge which allowed him to advance his own critical position. Today, however, those who parade under the banner of deconstruction and who pride themselves as liberators from the barbarism of power relations, find in history nothing of worth or importance which might contest their singular attitudes. Thus, even Marxism is consigned to the dust heap of history in favor of the immediate moment in which spontaneity, creativity and action are restrained by little more than the availability of an audience. In this respect the issue of interpre-
tation is deeply ironical because how we read a master text is of little importance if we believe such an activity is participation in the process of alienation, and thus refuse to read them. The conflict of interpretations is a problem only for those who find in tradition something of worth and benefit, and there are exceedingly few who do so today. What is required is an extensive treatment of the issues of interpretation and political understanding at work in the actual process of trying to elucidate the meaning of the master texts. The purpose of this discussion was to defend the study of the history of political theory; now the task is to illuminate the importance of this intellectual labour for political life. What is required is a modern theory of political understanding which retains the normative significance of traditional political theory while addressing itself critically to an age which is without a valid concept of political right.

A runner who is exhausted is not necessarily about to depart this world, however, but may after suitable refreshment be able to carry on with renewed energy. I don't want to pursue such an inept metaphor too far, but I think it is valid to say that social and political theory is currently going through a period of transition, rather than terminal collapse. There is no need to release hold of "modernism" yet, to renounce the ideals of the Enlightenment as false gods to be replaced by a brutish acquiescence in the reality of power.

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