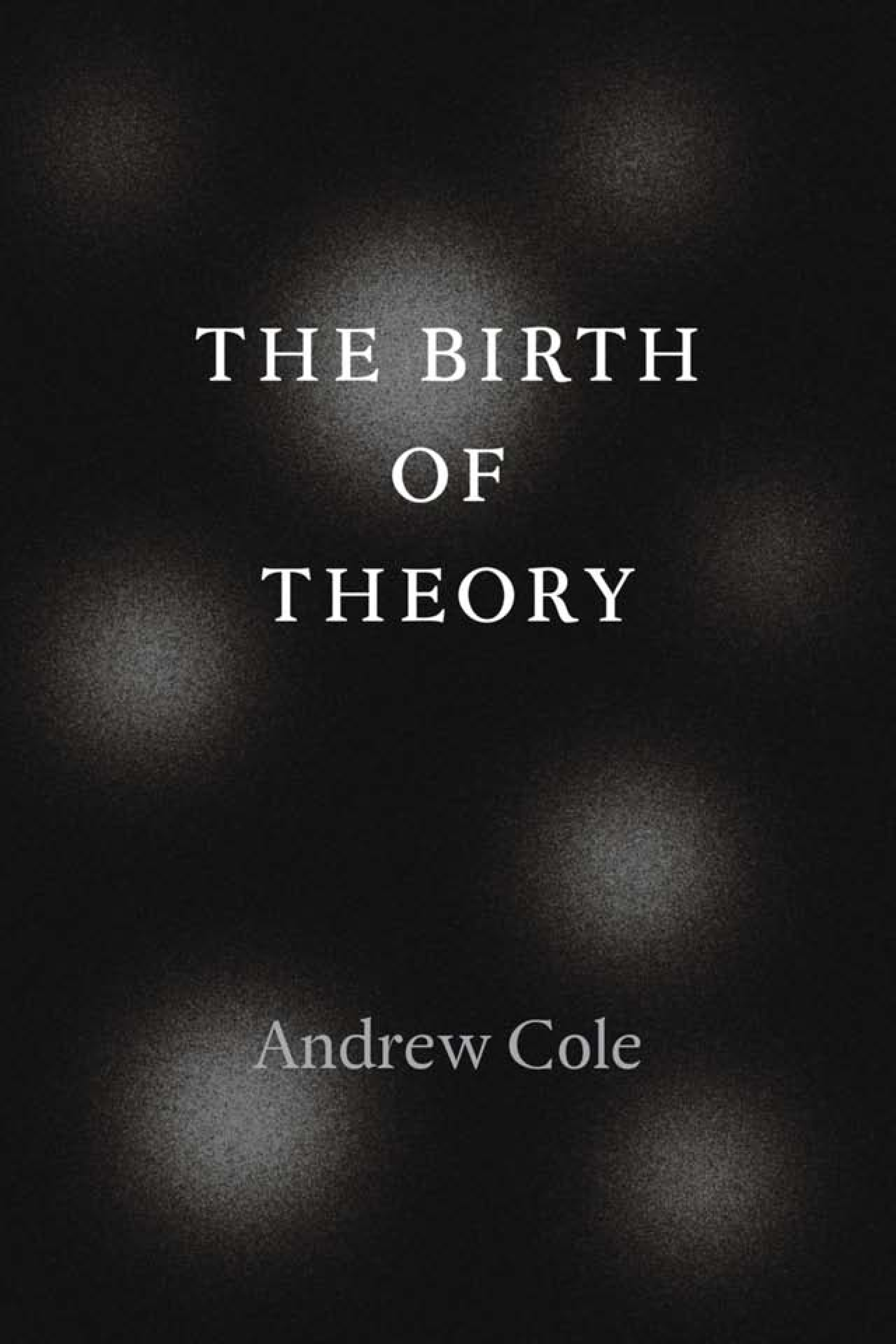

THE BIRTH OF THEORY

Andrew Cole

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for Cathy

Centuries and centuries of idealism have not failed to influence reality.

JORGE LUIS BORGES

The philosopher wishes to preserve a number of fixed values;
he is frightened by the bohemian's dialectical reversals.

JEAN HYPPOLITE

Alter ideas and you alter the world.

FORTUNE COOKIE, Szechwan House, Hamilton, NJ

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Preface

Very like a Whale

All things counter, original, spare, strange.
GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

Whales aren't just for syllogisms—nor are they only for bestiaries. Just ask Melville, who delighted in the thought of the whale and saw the leviathan as something more than a mammal, more than a vertebrate, and nothing short of a marvel, noting its perception to be far keener than the one-eyed pisciform surface depicted in so much traditional art.

Melville tells a bloody tale of whale harvest in his great novel, but along the way he pauses to revere the whale. At one moment, he goes so far as to think like a whale and invites us to think along with him. So let's try. Imagine rejigging your head so that your eyes are located at your ears, like the whale's eyes, on each side of its head. In this case, says Melville, "you would have two backs, so to speak; but at the same time, also, two fronts (side fronts): for what is it that makes the front of a man—what indeed, but his eyes."[1] So it goes with the whale, which "must see one distinct picture on this side, and another distinct picture on that side; while all between must be profound darkness and nothingness to him." And herein lies "a curious and most puzzling" problem, easier to describe than perform, because no human has the mental capacity to process at once *two distinct pictures* shining at each eyeball: "It is quite impossible for him, attentively, and completely, to examine any two things . . . at one and the same instant of time. . . . But if you now come to separate these two objects, and surround each by a circle of profound darkness; then, in order to see one of them, in such a manner as to bring your mind to bear on it, the other will be utterly excluded from your contemporary consciousness." Profound darkness and nothingness overcome you, and you cannot think. For to see two things at once is possible only on two conditions: you would either have to be a whale yourself, or be gifted with a cetacean mind and a leviathan imagination:

> How is it, then, with the whale? True, both his eyes, in themselves, must simultaneously act; but is his brain so much more comprehensive, combining, and subtle than man's, that he can at the same moment of time attentively examine two distinct prospects, one on one side of him, and the other in an exactly opposite direction? If he can, then is it as marvellous a thing in him, as if a man were able simultaneously to go through the demonstrations of two distinct problems in Euclid. Nor, strictly investigated, is there any incongruity in this comparison.

The thrill of thinking, the pleasure of thought, comes in this moment of "combining . . . two distinct prospects" across the great expanse, overcoming nothingness in turn.

Hegel, had he the chance, would have called the whale "dialectic."[2] It is not hard to see why. For dialectic, like the whale, regards two distinct pictures, two different ideas, and combines them into a single thought. But from what depths did this whale-like thought process emerge in Hegel? The origins of dialectical thinking have long been mysterious. Hegel didn't invent this dialectic, as he knew perfectly well. He realized that the roots of his dialectical thinking traced back *not* to antiquity, when the old discipline of dialectic began, but to that age once deemed a darkness itself, the Middle Ages. It was in the Middle Ages that dialectic took on a specific logical form—the dialectic of identity and difference—designed to solve problems that never worried the ancients, such as the problem of nothingness as an absolute negativity. Hegel recuperates the dialectic of identity and difference, and, in so doing, he largely erases the marks of his debt to the Middle Ages—which is why the link between Hegel and medieval dialectic has never been satisfactorily discussed in the philosophical and theoretical traditions he begot.

In this book, I demonstrate how Hegel's dialectic emerged from the philosophical practices of medieval thinkers, mapping as precisely as possible the lineaments of Hegel's debt and the implications of acknowledging that debt (chaps. 1 and 2). Hegel's adoption of this distinctly medieval dialectic was an intellectual risk in the extreme, especially for a young man convinced that he deserved the Berlin chair in philosophy but confined by the academic system to catch-as-catch-can gymnasia teaching. The choice of dialectic placed Hegel in opposition to Kant and countless other philosophers who had viciously mocked dialectic as an outmoded scholastic discipline, a holdover from the dogmatism of the Middle Ages. Hegel recognized that Kant and company didn't fully understand the dialectic they rejected; they failed to see its capaciousness, the philosophical potential of the categories of identity and difference. Even Hegel himself couldn't have foreseen the transformative effects of his choice—that the daring extension of the medieval discipline of dialectic into modernity would ultimately lead to what in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is called "theory."

Hegel responsible for "theory"? Today "theory" generally names the kind of critical thinking applied *against* figures like Hegel, while any mention of "Hegel" in a conversation about "theory" implies the Frankfurt School and "critical theory," where Hegel fares only marginally better. Granted, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse—to take two leading figures—turn to Hegel in an effort to develop a Marxist critique of culture only notionally present in Marx, offering aesthetic theories that do not double as economic laws. While both find Hegel useful, they clearly indicate that Hegel's dialectic stands for ideology: Marcuse's observation that the "very structure of capitalism is a dialectical one" is repeated in Adorno's claim that "mass culture has finally rewritten the whole of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*."[3] The dialectic is the problem, not the solution: as Adorno proclaims in *Negative Dialectics*, "dialectics is the ontology of the wrong state of things."[4] Hegel is valuable for modeling *avant la lettre* the "positive infinity" or closed system of late capital—which means that theory must instead embrace the openness and *potentia* of negative dialectics.[5] For Adorno it is a desideratum, as he says in *Minima Moralia*, to work "in opposition to Hegel's practice and yet in accordance with his thought."[6] This Adornian idea of threading the Hegelian needle—working in oppositional accordance with the dialectic—exemplifies the way in which "theory" has placed Hegel's works behind a mediating concept called "Hegelianism": a sort of translucent scrim that reveals the general outline of Hegel's thought but obscures its details and complexities. Under the rubric of "theory," it becomes impossible to think of Hegel himself in any clear or straightforward way.

The aim of this book is to get behind that mediating scrim in order to think about Hegel's work directly, unencumbered by the weight of Hegelianisms and energized by his daring appropriation of the dialectic of identity and difference. It is also to indicate something specific by the word "theory." By "theory" I mean, above all, the move away from philosophy *within* philosophy itself. Even as Hegel retained Kant's idea of philosophy, he completely broke it apart from within, placing inside the modern academic discipline a figure, a form of thought, that is decidedly medieval and indelibly *linguistic*: dialectic. Hegel discovered and developed his dialectic, working over Kant more thoroughly than those commentators who view Hegel as a Kant 2.0, or for that matter a Schelling++, are willing to admit. In a move central to the philosophical project he imagined for himself, Hegel rejected Kant's view of the Subject, deep within which lies the logical a priori categories that sort and present experience (as "representation"). No amount of history, no contingency of situations, can alter Kant's transcendental subject, always hardwired to present experience by dint of the categories. Yet Hegel yanked out the wires and crossed them (or, as Brecht would have it, he set the Kantian concepts down to dinner to let them fight it out). He extirpated the a priori "forms of experience," as Kant called them, and animated them within narratives whose exposition—whether in the service of phenomenology, logic, history, aesthetics, religion, or indeed philosophy—involves concepts confronting one another dialectically, one relating to the other and taking on the features of its opposite. Hegel's pithy statement that "it is in language that we are conceptually productive" bespeaks the drift of his thought, his move from philosophical foundations to theoretical constructs, from Kantian idealism to dialectics.[7] In so many words, theory is the move from Kant to Hegel.

Quite simply, then, Hegel's turn away from philosophy in the name of philosophy accords with the persuasive definition of "theory" offered by Fredric Jameson: "Theory begins to supplant philosophy (and other disciplines as well) at the moment it is realized that thought is linguistic or material and that concepts cannot exist independently of their linguistic expression."[8] Jameson's definition refers to deconstruction and Althusser, not to Hegel, yet I believe it is important and enabling.[9] It allows us to think of Hegel as a *theorist* who made possible the insights that "all truths are at best momentary, situational, and marked by a history in the process of change and transformation," that "concepts are not autonomous but rather relational," and that the "philosophical problem" is, "namely, that of representation, and its dilemmas, its dialectic, its failures, and its impossibility."[10] The focus of Jameson's definition of theory on linguistic expression also asks traditional Hegelians to rethink what is a fundamentalist stance about dialectical thinking—in other words, to embrace the notion that while dialectical thinking in its modern guise originated in Hegel, it has developed and changed in a very productive way over the past two centuries. I am not referring to Hegel's influence, though I will discuss his direct effect on later thought several times in the pages that follow. Rather, I am pointing to the many examples of lowercase theorizing—the deconstructing of binaries and paradigms, the tracking of identities in difference, the exposition of "intersectional" identity, the critique of ideology, normativity, representation, and institutions—that owe their fundamental structure to Hegel's definition of the dialectic. The widespread use of "dialectical" in the academic and public press alike attests to this very basic notion of "theory" as a kind of critical thinking in opposition to a postulated unity or grand philosophical system, but it also obscures the larger point I will make here about the history of philosophy and theory. I argue in this book that whatever theoretical debt is owed to Marx for these common, so-called dialectical procedures is illusory—illusory, in the first instance, because Marx himself mystifies Hegel where Hegel himself appears most Marxist. Theory, as we have known it and practiced it for a century or more, finds its origin in Hegel—and Hegel himself finds his theory, his dialectic, in the Middle Ages.

By "theory," then, I intend to point to Hegel's own, very sharp dialectical *critiques* of contemporary life whose bite can be felt once some basic facts about Hegel have been grasped. For to speak of his appropriation of "medieval dialectic" requires that we always remember, always acknowledge, something quite obvious about his own historical context. Plainly stated, the late eighteenth-century German world into which Hegel was born was fundamentally still a medieval world, structured by feudalism and by the relationship between peasants and lords. Hegel, moreover, witnessed events, personal and social traumas, as well as wars, that transformed the Middle Ages of his birth into modernity, such as the dissolution of the estates, of the Holy Roman Empire, and of all that goes by the name *ancien régime*. Here, however, because we are dealing with Hegel, whose own dialectical habits of mind meant that there is never a clean and easy break between past and present, we must linger not only on the new but also on the old, not only on the emergent but also the residual, not only the modern but also the medieval.[11] Insofar as much of my own thinking about history is rooted in Marxism—I, like so many, came to Hegel first through Marx—it helps to observe a basic fact about contemporary modes of production that even non-Marxist historians spell out repeatedly.[12] James J. Sheehan, in his magisterial *German History, 1770–1866*, finely documents the fact that Germany remained feudal in Hegel's own lifetime (1770–1831) and beyond. In broad terms, this late feudalism is defined by its peasant/lord relations: "Freeholders and some lessors were legally free, even if the latter were often caught in a web of servile obligations because of the way they held their land. But many, and probably most, German peasants were personally subject to one or more lords; they lived in *Erbuntertänigkeit*, hereditary subjection, which limited their rights to move, marry, and do certain kinds of work."[13] Characterize how you will a given historical present; name it the nineteenth century, call it the twentieth century; celebrate as you may the arrival of this or that new idea or aesthetic: as long as there are feudal arrangements like those Sheehan describes, there is an entire institutional apparatus of expropriation, law, language, and socio-symbolic practice that puts you, or someone, effectively in the Middle Ages. Even if Arno J. Mayer frames this historical matter differently and more broadly by distinguishing between "the old and the new capitalisms" in Europe—between, in other words, agriculture production and industrial production—he shows that the newer model of finance and monopoly capitalism was "in its first rather than its highest or last phase" as late as 1914: "Not only the growth of industrial capitalism but also the contraction of 'premodern' economic sectors proceeded very gradually."[14]

Hegel lived in this earlier time. He was born in the Protestant estates of Württemberg, a feudal kingdom "that had survived into the modern world."[15] His mother taught him Latin at home, grooming him to become a theologian someday, just as young men had been trained to do for centuries. As a boy making his way to the Stuttgarter Gymnasium Illustre, whose curriculum was a mix of medieval and Enlightenment training, Hegel looked upon a town everywhere shaped by the old guild system. Later in life, among the German universities he could have attended—these were, apart from Berlin, all "semi-feudal corporations" with "inherited medieval privileges" and were perceived to be "mere relics of an outmoded scholasticism"—Hegel chose the seminary in Tübingen, where he donned a long black monkish coat, the appropriate garb for a medieval city and university. Of course, you could say that Hegel abandoned these medieval habits once Napoleon came to town and the feudal privileges of these estates were dissolved, including of course those of Württemberg. But you'd only be partly right. By that time, it is true, Hegel counted himself among the revolutionaries. Despite the modernity of his aspirations, however, he found himself, time and time again, enmeshed in the old, medieval social arrangements. Right from seminary in Tübingen, for example, he gained employment in an aristocratic household as a private tutor or *Hofmeister*, more or less a domestic—another very old social station. Yet during his downtime he read "works of English modernity" in the household library and translated an "anti-Bernese pamphlet attacking the quasi-feudal system," upon which that same household depended. Eventually, of course, he acquired positions teaching philosophy; and as he went from post to post, eyeing all along the Berlin chair in philosophy, he endured more of the same, a world in which modern ideals were perpetually confronted by medieval realities. He arrived to take up his job in Nuremberg to find a fundamentally medieval academic institution run by guilds, in which the absence of toilets was the icing on the cake. In Heidelberg, whose beautiful ruined castle overlooked the town—you can catch a stunning view of it on the Philosophenweg—and whose university dated from the early fourteenth century, Hegel participated in a medieval network of exchange, accepting supplementary payments for his work the old-fashioned way: "in kind."

I could go on. But this is enough to sum up one of my main points in this book—namely, as soon as Hegel's historical present is taken as a frame of reference for his philosophy, then that philosophy itself can be properly recognized as a trenchant critique of contemporary conditions, rather than only a mysticism that withdraws from them, as Marx says. To be clear, mine is not a task in historicizing Hegel so much as paying attention to the words he writes on the page, the terms and problems he takes up in his philosophy and which point to his historical present. As I show in chapter 3, for example, his master/slave dialectic is an extended reflection on precisely the kinds of feudal expropriation still practiced in the German states; his description of an *Herr* and *Knecht* in a dialectical struggle is the key, hidden in plain sight, to unlocking the meanings in that most famous passage from the *Phenomenology of Spirit.*

It is a cliché, however a helpful one, to observe that dialectical thinking attends to the "residual" and the "emergent"—these are Raymond Williams's terms—but the more exact, the more capacious, version of this point is to say that Hegel thinks at the temporal conjunction of the medieval and the modern.[16] For every example you could name in which Hegel excitedly used modern ideas to decimate any persistent medieval *residua* (the so-called "Württemberg Debate" of 1815–18 in which he critiqued the belatedness of that state comes to mind); for every outburst of initial enthusiasm for the French Revolution you can cite, you can also discover Hegel writing in a more realistic vein, understanding the practical need to admit that the present was a mishmash of medieval and modern and that social analysis must proceed from this fact if it is to have any chance of shaping a future.[17]

Look no further than his *Philosophy of Right* (1820), in which Hegel argued "for the continued legal recognition of the estates and some of the corporate structures of the ancien régime."[18] He knew that abolishing these medieval institutions was impractical and unrealistic, if for no other reason than the German states had been there and done that (see Napoleon). For that view, he got grief from all sides, and then some. But he continued on in this vein. Very late in life, for example, he wrote "The English Reform Bill" (1831) and parted ways with many of his contemporaries on the question of England's modernization and its consequences. In tones now reminiscent of historical materialism, Hegel writes:

> The moment of transition from feudal tenure to property has passed by without the opportunity being taken to give the agricultural class (*Klasse*) the right to own land. . . .The power of the monarchy was too weak to oversee the

> transition [from feudal tenure to landed property] already referred to; and even after the Reform Bill, parliamentary legislation will remain in the hands of that class (*Klasse*) whose interests—and in even greater measure its ingrained habits—are bound up with the existing system of property rights.[19]

Here, Hegel is speaking of the enclosure movement. He views the practices in a colonized Ireland as especially troublesome and unjust, however "legal":

> The propertylessness of the agricultural class has its origin in the laws and relationships of the old feudal system, which nevertheless, in the form in which it still survives in several states, does guarantee the peasant who is tied to the land a subsistence on the land he cultivates. But while the serfs of Ireland [die irischen Leibeigenen] do on the one hand have personal freedom [persönliche Freiheit], the landlords [die Gutsherren] have on the other hand taken such complete control of property that they have disclaimed all obligation to provide for the subsistence of the populace which tills the land they own…. They [Gutsherren] thus deprived those who were already without possessions of their homes and their inherited means of subsistence as well—all in due legal form.[20]

When Hegel cites the "personal freedom" of Irish serfs, he wants his readers to hear the irony he implies (and his use of the word "freedom" is quite close to Marx's own meaning of the term vis-à-vis day-wage labor).[21] Quite simply, for him, modernization makes feudalism look good by comparison—a point he arrives at, to be sure, out of no love for the medieval period, but which is an idea drawn up from historical circumstances that almost all of Hegel's readers fail to appreciate as they continue to hold him to be the mouthpiece for the Prussian state. It is with that accusation in mind that we might recall that even Marx and Engels faced the facts of their own historical present in their early "Demands of the Communist Party in Germany," proposing ways "to bind the interests of the conservative bourgeoisie to the Government."[22] Grudging concessions to conservatism, apologetics, *realpolitik*, what have you: if Marx and Engels get a pass for acknowledging that the world can't and won't change overnight, slogans or no slogans, then so might Hegel.

When it comes to interpreting Hegel, biography aligns with philosophy, life with work, thought with action. He held modern ideals, was ever impatient with antiquated, feudal institutions, but was thoroughly realistic about the mixed composition of the present, at once modern and medieval. That he propounded a unique version of what we now call "periodization" only confirms this assessment. One of the reasons that Hegel is such a salutary thinker to revisit now is that he had no interest in the contemporary obsession with drawing a distinction between "premodern" and "modern." (Literary critics are especially obsessed with this divide.) For Hegel, there is no period distinction *to problematize*, as the imperative goes, because the medieval is already modern or, to use Hegel's own terms, "romantic."[23] Which means that the present is always peculiarly uneven and inherently dialectical—a present exhibiting every day some new contradiction or break that may take seconds, hours, or years to notice. Hegel offers up a theory of historical unevenness that accommodates all scales of time, all durations from the instant to the larger period or episteme. This idea of "historical unevenness" is echoed, of course, in Marxism, which uses it to characterize the fits-and-starts expansion, globalization, and spatialization of capital. In other words, Hegel is presciently Marxist in his critical thinking, but not for the usual clever reasons that emerge only in retrospect—that is, by reading Hegel through Marx and then winnowing Hegel's proto-Marxian germ from the Hegelian chaff. Instead, the idea here is to recognize in Hegel those ideas that made Marx Marx, and we can be open to this recognition only by bearing in mind two analogies. What the Middle Ages is to Hegel, modernity is to Marx; what feudalism is to Hegel, capitalism is to Marx. These analogies can guide our thinking, I believe, foremost in the refusal to follow Marx all the way in his critique of Hegel, who takes Hegel to task for failing to criticize a capitalist mode of production that was not even there to be seen. But the medieval and feudal modes abounded, and Hegel never tired of critiquing them.

These analogies, likewise, inform my thinking throughout this book on the question of "Hegel and Marx," because they enable new and surprising links between these thinkers and their traditions. As I demonstrate in the chapters that follow, Hegel's theory of medieval eucharistic fetishism shapes Marx's meditation on the modern commodity (chap. 4); Hegel's reflections on the emergence of political economy from medieval institutions constitute a literary historicism that matches, as well as influences, anything evidenced in the later Marxist tradition (chap. 5); Hegel's figural approach to concepts provides for a broader sense of utopian literature as an historical and imaginative form and can, in turn, revitalize dialectical thinking by resolving one the greatest antinomies in theory today—that between dialectics and Deleuze (chap. 6). Each chapter contributes to a cumulative argument about the relevance of medieval dialectic to Hegel and critical theory, drawing into dialectical theory what has always been disavowed, thanks to the usual modernizing impulses in theory, but which has always been there: the medieval dialectic of identity/difference. In fact, the phrase "very like a whale" conveys precisely this problem of recognizing and misrecognizing what Hegel's dialectic fundamentally, and quite straightforwardly, is. In citing these famous words from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, I do not mean to bore anyone with points about the variability of interpretation with quips that a cloud can take any shape and look like anything. But it *can* be said that Hegel's dialectic, having endured some two centuries of criticism, seems like a shape-shifting cloud itself, changing in meaning from book to book, article to article, comment to comment, purpose to purpose. It's all the more crucial at this point, then, to pause, step back, and behold the obviousness of the whole thing and state it in equally plain terms. Clouds look like clouds because they *are* clouds. And Hegel's dialectic, with identity/difference operating as its central mechanism, resembles nothing more than what in the Middle Ages Plotinus and others called "dialectic," which operated with identity/difference at *its* center. Hegel's dialectic resembles that dialectic because it *is* that dialectic. Granted, every student of medieval philosophy (then as now) knows that there are many kinds of dialectic in the Middle Ages involving high scholastic *summae*, university *quodlibets* and *quaestiones*, commentaries on Aristotle and Cicero, sophistic treatises, and so forth. Hegel knew this fact, too, as he regularly lectured on Julian of Toledo and Paschasius Radbertus, Alexander of Hales and John Buridan, Peter Abelard and Roger Bacon, and the Arabic commentaries on Aristotle. But as I show in this book, the medieval dialectic of identity/difference should be the basis upon which historical and theoretical interpretation of Hegel's dialectic proceeds, because it is the one dialectic Hegel chose to adopt for his entire system. By extension, our present-day sense of Hegel's dialectical creativity must be qualified by acknowledging his debt to a Middle Ages still persisting in his own time. For if we don't understand what the Middle Ages has to do with Hegel, if we don't discern what's feudal about his age and what's philosophically medieval about his dialectic, then we won't understand Hegel very well, let alone what makes Hegel *Hegelian*, or for that matter worth reading.

Finally, the larger narrative arc of *The Birth of Theory*, as it moves from the dialectical terms of identity/difference in the first chapter to those of figure/concept in the last, represents an attempt to overcome not only the arbitrary distinctions between medieval and modern but also those between dialectical and anti-dialectical thinking. It is not news to anyone reading this book that the divisions between Nietzsche and dialectics or Deleuze and dialectics are either passionately maintained or simply taken for granted. Perhaps my effort at reconciliation will appear to be an example of dialectics enacting its own cliché, its own caricaturized tendency to subsume opposition and erase difference. But readers know that this is indeed a real opposition in modern theory, especially that between Deleuze and dialectics, and therefore not an easy one to manage. While it is best to let that argument unfold over many pages, I can indicate here that what draws these two theoretical sides together, first and foremost, is the phenomenological style that both have in common, and which is *itself* a premodern dialectical invention. Only by taking on board the ideas of two renowned anti-dialectical thinkers, Nietzsche and Deleuze, can dialectics properly apprehend its own intellectual history rooted in a past whose conceptual challenges and frameworks still energize our current habits of critical thought and—one hopes—the utopian futures we wish to figure.

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I dedicate this book to you, Cathy Dailey—love of my life.

*

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PART ONE

Theory

If the building of a new city in a waste land is attended with difficulties, yet there is no shortage of materials; but the abundance of materials presents all the more obstacles of another kind when the task is to remodel an ancient city, solidly built, and maintained in continuous possession and occupation. Among other things one must resolve to make no use at all of much material that has hitherto been highly esteemed. But above all, the grandeur of the subject matter may be advanced as an excuse for the imperfect execution.

HEGEL

2

The Medieval Dialectic

> The Notion of true dialectic is to show forth the necessary movement of pure Concepts, without thereby resolving these into nothing. . . . We certainly do not find in Plato a full consciousness that this is the nature of dialectic.
>
> There is no good . . . in calling the Middle Ages a barbarous period.
>
> HEGEL

"The dialectic," so often discussed within critical theory, is a product of the Middle Ages and not classical antiquity. That is my claim, which continues from the previous chapter. Hegel was the first modern philosopher to recognize the dialectic in medieval thought and bring it back to philosophical prominence—to boot, at the worst possible time, after Kant had devastatingly parodied dialectic in his "four antinomies" as just so much sham scholasticism; his is just one of countless critiques of dialectic since Descartes.[1] Hegel took an extreme intellectual risk in recuperating dialectic. But it paid off. For his recovery of dialectic, above all, opened the way to theoretical innovation: with dialectic, he made philosophy new, lastingly modern, and enduringly critical.

Yet we ourselves need a new, even if partial, history of the dialectic to appreciate Hegel's intellectual risk and dialectical insight, because the major introductions to dialectic, Hegel, Marx, and almost all of the specialized studies on Hegel, make one fundamental historical claim: that Hegel's dialectic derives from antique or classical sources combined with this or that piece of Kantian or post-Kantian philosophy. Thinkers from Gadamer and Heidegger to Adorno and Badiou hold this position.[2] So much is this the prevailing wisdom that two key resources, *A Hegel Dictionary* and *The Hegel Dictionary*, codify it without having to list the relevant authorities who support it: both define the dialectic as an expression of ancient and modern ideas—the crossing of the *via antiqua* and the *via moderna.* The problem with this predominant view is that it's an assumption built on the wholesale omission of that great middle of intellectual history, the medieval period, which, through the transmission of the relevant classical texts on dialectic and commentaries thereon, makes the crossing of the ancient and the modern possible in the first place.[3] Yet rarely, if ever, do the Middle Ages factor into studies that write the history of dialectic *as* a history of modern, critical dialectical theory, *except* when the aim is to associate Hegel with a given medieval philosopher—a laudable approach in its own right that, frustratingly, amounts to shouting in a bag, because the insights gained by such a comparison are ensconced within the field of medieval studies or philosophy departments (never exactly overrun with Hegelians and Marxists).[4]

A history of the Hegelian dialectic that includes the Middle Ages needs to be written, not for the sake of advancing a specialized agenda in medieval studies about which non-medievalists may not care, but rather because the accurate understanding of Hegel depends on such an inclusive history—which in turn has implications for every field of study impacted by this philosopher's ideas, idioms, and indeed dialectic. The best way to approach this task, I believe, is to write a history of two logical terms that themselves seem, like all logical terms, to have no history, or at least a history that begins in Hegel and picks up in the twentieth-century reception of his work: identity and difference. When I refer to Hegel's dialectical insight above, I mean to describe his use of these two terms in his well-known challenge to the three laws of identity and, above all, his formulation of a new "law of contradiction": "All things are in themselves contradictory." Hegel came to that view by thinking deeply about identity/difference: "Now if the first determinations of reflection, identity, difference, and opposition, have been formulated each as a principle, all the more should the one determination into which they pass over as in their truth, namely contradiction, be grasped and enunciated as a principle: 'All things are in themselves contradictory.' "[5] These "first determinations of reflection" that are identity, difference, and opposition are, to be sure, among Hegel's favorite logical and dialectical terms and, whether he always names them or not, they are as crucial to the function of his dialectic across all of his works as the ubiquitous terms "individual" and "universal."[6]

When Hegel used identity/difference to rethink the three laws of identity, he knew he was onto something new. Approaching ancient problems in a way that never dawned on his predecessors, Hegel influenced countless others after him, especially in the mid-twentieth century when theorists, following Alexandre Kojève's and Jean Hyppolite's expositions of Hegel, examined the dialectic of identity and difference exemplified in the so-called master/slave dialectic (see chap. 3 for examples). To be sure, an equal amount of theoretical work rejected or revised Hegel's dialectical terms—from Adorno's pairing of non-identity and difference in *Negative Dialectics*,[7] Heidegger's ontic reorientation of identity and difference (considered separately in his two famous lectures),[8] Derrida's early attempts to explain différance as a negativity different from the old negations of neoplatonism;[9] to Lyotard's reflections on phraseology and negation in *Le Différend*,[10] Deleuze and Guattari's multiplicity,[11] and Jameson's "difference relates."[12] These examples break apart the paired terms of identity/difference by breaking from identity itself, and all that falls under the rubric of Being and Sameness, in search of a concept or even anti-concept more powerful, more material, more multiple, than "difference." Here, identity is not first, nor One. Difference is all there is, and without identity, difference amounts to a disaggregated Many and takes on a determining force of its own in the work of—to take two other instances—Luhman and Latour.[13] This litany of modern instances, extremely incomplete, is not the only history of identity/difference available to us, however. Even so, this much is clear: the dialectic of identity and difference, including its negative and anti-dialectical supplements, are only modern, only familiar as selected high points of theory because Hegel made it possible.

How so? To answer, we must put Hegel's dialectic of identity/difference into historical perspective (again), asking where, precisely, did the dialectic of identity and difference originate; inquiring when, exactly, did philosophers start talking about dialectic as almost *exclusively* the province of these two logical categories. The answers will point us to the dialectical precedents that most matter to Hegel, and these I name *medieval dialectic*, which is (to be very clear) itself just *one* example of the *many* dialectic practices and traditions available in premodernity. But it is a strong one. As I show in the pages that follow, Hegel turned to the Middle Ages, and its prominent instances of the dialectic of identity and difference, to develop his dialectic and make history, renovating ancient philosophy after Plato and modern "critical" philosophy after Kant, with whom I conclude this chapter.

The Dialectics of Plato and Aristotle

Cards on the table: the medieval dialectic of identity and difference, I argue, begins with Plotinus, a philosopher typically hailed as the last of the antique philosophers and first of the medievals, and includes Proclus, who systematized so many of Plotinus's ideas and transmitted them to later medieval thinkers from Pseudo-Dionysius to Nicholas of Cusa. Hegel's dialectic, I hope to show by the end of this chapter, is a distinctly medieval dialectic for the way in which it, like the dialectic of these earlier thinkers, depends on the terms of identity/difference to make the dialectic itself *work*. To be clear, when I say "medieval dialectic," I do not mean to suggest that there is only one kind of disciplinary practice in the Middle Ages that goes by the name of dialectic. There are as many traditions of dialectic as there are other medieval philosophers who could be included in this chapter. For example, the late medieval English philosopher William Penbygull found roundabout ways toward a dialectical notion of identity and difference, but you have to be steeped in his modes of argument and the particulars of his thought to see it.[14] Indeed, with enough argumentative to-do or, let's say, cookie cutting, you could mold any given thinker into the right dialectical shape, in keeping with the Kierkegaardian dictum that "everything is dialectical."[15] Numerous other philosophers, in other words, could be added to my own discussion and made to conform to the narrative, from Porphyry (even his Aristotelian "tree") to Boethius's logical works,[16] Abelard's *sic et non*,[17] and Aquinas's commentary on Boethius's *De Trinitate*;[18] from John Scottus Eriugena's affirmations and negations in his *Periphyseon*,[19] to Giordano Bruno,[20] and to other thinkers who cling to dialectic as it passes in and out of favor over the years through early modernity. However helpfully such figures would embroider this chapter, they would also complicate and perhaps overcomplicate the dialectic when what's now needed is an exposition that for once risks clarity and simplification; hence, my treatment of philosophers who adopt identity/difference within dialectic in a way that we can instantly recognize.[21]

Yet before I turn to this account, some treatment of ancient dialectic is necessary, so that we can tell the difference between classical and postclassical dialectic. This task is all the more pressing because both Plato and Aristotle spoke of dialectic and both have given much thought to the terms *identity* and *difference.* Furthermore, their ideas remain front and center to most late antique and medieval discussions of dialectic, even those that oppose their methods. My aim for the moment, then, is to establish a comparative baseline, demonstrating whether either ancient philosopher places identity and difference at the center of the art of dialectic itself, and from there I present those medieval philosophers who do exactly that.

In various works Plato defines dialectic (διαλεκτική) broadly as debate,[22] the asking and answering of questions, but dialectic as the art of definition and division as a means to "determine what each thing really is" is overwhelmingly his most frequent explanation of the practice, subsuming the tactics of debate and purposes of dialogue.[23] And it is a practice that involves a keen sense of *likeness*, arranging subjects and things "kind by kind" in the broad investigation of analogies between entities; "not taking the same form for a different one or a different one for the same" is indeed "the "business of dialectic."[24] In ordinary perception, "we bring a dispersed plurality under a single form, seeing it all together—the purpose being to define so-and-so"; yet dialecticians explore the "reverse" of this process, "whereby we are enabled to divide into forms."[25] Chiefly, dialectic involves just this sort of definition and division: "First, you must know the truth about the subject. . . .; that is to say, you must be able to isolate it in definition, and having so defined it you must next understand how to divide it into kinds, until you reach the limit of division."[26] The dialectician thus seeks to partition difference and unlikeness from likeness—a division achieved by cutting up likenesses into smaller and smaller analytical units. Here is a good example:

> Then now you and I have come to an understanding not only about the name of the angler's art, but about the definition of the thing itself. One half of all art was acquisitive—half of the acquisitive art was conquest or taking by force, half of this was hunting, and half of hunting was hunting animals; half of this was hunting water animals; of this again, the under half was fishing, half of fishing was striking; a part of striking was fishing with a barb, and one half of this again, being the kind which strikes with a hook and draws the fish from below upward, is the art which we have been seeking, and which from the nature of the operation is denoted angling or drawing up [aspalienutike, anaspasthai—transliterated Greek].[27]

By these means, the dialectician divides what initially looks to be a whole into its different and opposing parts. And the division goes on and on, even beyond the limits of empirical observation, nonetheless bringing to mind the fullness and plurality of "the many," of which each single member inevitably falls under the One—some genus or form—because without the One, there would be only a collection of singularities, a disaggregated and unknowable reality.[28] Likewise, for Plato, different things themselves do not, and this is key, remain in a local or horizontal relation of mutual determination and only enter into a relation of "likeness" by dint of their participation in the Form of "likeness" itself.[29] Similarly, their difference is understood as participation in the Form of "difference."[30] In sum, individual things always relate to one other by virtue of relating vertically to the Forms.[31]

Plato, as we have already seen, is certainly aware of identity and difference as categories. In fact, he touts these terms as part of his dialectical "discovery" of the five primal forms that comprise all intelligibles and existents:[32] Being, Motion, Rest, Identity, and Difference. And as we will soon see, these last two terms are the basis upon which later thinkers would construct a dialectic of identity and difference. At most, Plato hints at the special powers of "identity" and "difference" but does not take the step to think of these two terms as distinct from the remaining three primal Forms. And, as we recall, Plato dreams up these five forms in order to validate the Parmenidean lesson about being and not-being, and the lingering question of whether "what is not" has "being."[33] He answers this question by recourse to the "science of dialectic,"[34] which thinks of "not-being" in a very special way—chiefly, in relation to the five primal forms.[35] So: when we establish that something is not identical with "existence," such as "motion," then it is, naturally, "different" from "existence" and thus can be called simply "not-existence" or, more colloquially, "what is not existence but something else, such as motion." In other words, Plato is not stating that nothingness exists, but rather that existence isn't everything and that "not-being" is said to "be" on account of the existence of what is not-existence, again, Motion or any of the other primals. Thus, " 'not-being' is a single kind . . . dispersed over the whole field of realities" and is a term designating difference among the many.[36]

Does this mean, then, that Plato suggests that identity/difference defines the relations between the five primals or even existents, as Proclus would do centuries later? It initially looks that way in his proposal that any one primal form is both identical and different, but by this Plato means that forms are identical to and different from themselves. Motion is identical to itself—Motion *is* Motion and thus participates in the form Identity—and Motion is different from itself because Motion isn't, literally, that other primal form called Identity. Here is how Plato puts this strange argument:

> Motion, then, is both the same and not the same; we must admit that without boggling at it. For when we say it is "the same" and "not the same" we are not using the expression in the same sense; we call it "the same" on account of its participation in the same with reference to itself, but we call it "not the same" because of its combination with difference, a combination that separates it off from the same (sameness) and makes it not the same but different, so that we have the right to say this time that it is "not the same."[37]

To be sure, we mustn't allow boggling to obscure the crucial point here, which we already reviewed.[38] That is, a thing or form is identical with itself, or different from itself, by virtue of its *participation* in a Form, not by dint of a differential relationship whereby identity can *only* be defined by its difference from another, lest the entire being/non-being apparatus falls apart: motion/not-motion or, say, rest/not-rest must abide by the logical principle of x/not-x inherent in the original Parmenidean insight about being/not-being. Otherwise, Plato's invention of the five primals is all for naught . . . truly. That we are far from Hegel's landscape of reciprocity as illustrated in the master/slave dialectic, whereby the identity of the master depends on his difference from the slave, could be no clearer than in Plato's formulation of this very relationship in the *Parmenides*: the identity of the master depends not on the slave but on the master's participation in the Form called "mastery."[39]

Aristotle, across his works, offers a more consistent discussion of dialectic than Plato and more overtly logical and argumentative, establishing a version of dialectic that Plotinus and other later Platonists would counter with a new dialectic of identity and difference. Indeed, his version of dialectic even runs exactly opposite to the textbook definition of Hegelian dialectic as the synthesis of opposites. Take, for instance, Aristotle's definition of dialectic in the *Topics*:

> We must say for how many and for what purposes the treatise is useful. . . . For the study of the philosophical sciences it is useful, because the ability to puzzle on both sides of a subject will make us detect more easily the truth and error about the several points that arise. It has a further use in relation to the principles used in the several sciences. . . . It is through reputable opinions about them that these have to be discussed, and this task belongs properly, or most appropriately, to dialectic; for dialectic is a process of criticism wherein lies the path to the principles of all inquiries.[40]

The dialectician must "puzzle on both sides of the subject." Or as Aristotle explains in the *Rhetoric*, one must be able to reason "on opposite sides of a question, not in order that we may in practice employ it in both ways (for we must not make people believe what is wrong), but in order that we may see clearly what the facts are, and that, if another man argues unfairly, we on our part may be able to confute."[41]

By way of pause: this method perhaps will seem familiar, as it appeared in various forms over the centuries. Both Cicero in his *Topica* and Boethius in his *In Ciceronis Topica* and *De topicis differentiis* established a commentary tradition on Aristotle's *Topics* that would last throughout the Middle Ages,[42] be bolstered by Albert the Great's own commentary on the *Topics*, and come to define the discipline of dialectic, as featured in the *trivium* of medieval universities (grammar, dialectic, rhetoric), informing such late works as Philipp Melanchthon's *De dialecta libri* iv (1528).[43] Some, however, tested dialectic's disciplinary distinction from rhetoric, and Rudolf Agricola's *De inventione dialectica* (1479) is a signal example of a turn from Aristotelian dialectic to rhetoric, or some complex combination thereof.[44] But such changes did not stop authors from mocking anyway the syllogistic Aristotelian enterprise of dialectic because it survived at least into the seventeenth century, a point that has been well documented.[45] If anything, it encouraged them. Very early in the turn against dialectic, François Rabelais pens this side-splitting satire in the 1530s:

> Who was befuddled and perplexed when Pantagruel was born? Gargantua his father, for seeing on one side his wife dead and on the other his son Pan-

> tagruel born and so big and fair, he knew not what to say or do. The doubt which troubled his mind was namely this: ought he to weep out of grief for his wife or laugh out of joy for his son? He had good dialectical arguments for both sides. They choked him, for he could marshal them very well in syllogistic modes and figures but he could come to no conclusion. So he remained caught like [a mouse in pitch, or] a kite in the nets of a fowler.[46]

And well into the turn against dialectic, Descartes, who is hailed by many as the first of modern philosophers, twists the knife by writing staidly philosophically in his *Discourse on Method* (1637) about all the doubt that remains in dialectic:

> Concerning philosophy I shall say only that, seeing that it has been cultivated for many centuries by the most excellent minds that have ever lived and that, nevertheless there still is nothing in it about which there is not some dispute, and consequently nothing that is not doubtful, I was not at all so presumptuous as to hope to fare any better there than the others; and that, considering how many opinions there can be about the very same matter that are held by learned people without there ever being the possibility of more than one opinion being true, I deemed everything that was merely probable to be well-nigh false. . . . Nor have I ever observed that, through the method of disputations practiced in the schools, any truth has been discovered that had until then been unknown. For, so long as each person in the dispute aims at winning, he is more concerned with making much out of probability than with weighing the arguments on each side.[47]

So dialectic fails to achieve its own ambitions of “weighing the arguments on each side,” its own goal to move from questions and doubts to answers and probabilities—probabilities never being enough for a certain someone seeking mathematical certainty in his clear and distinct ideas.[48] Authors ranging from Chrétien de Troyes to Jonathan Swift express, and mock, just this aspiration of dialectic to think both sides of a given problem.[49] And so when early modern and modern philosophers parody or insult dialectic as “drivelectic,” or claim that “but for the theologians of those Universities, the Dialectic science would for many ages have been banished from the world,” they (like Erasmus here) had in mind this long Aristotelian tradition.[50] Likewise, these same philosophers hung on John Buridan the tale of “Buridan’s ass”—that silly but sad example in which a donkey, standing between food on one side and water on the other, dies of starvation and thirst because he can’t decide which source of sustenance to consume first: both are equally appealing. Too bad for Buridan, author of that great *Summulae de dialectica*, because he never tells such a tale, but this sort of unearned aspersion gives one a sense of how intensely the dialectic of equipollence was derided.[51] Even

Kant's four antinomies, complete with their anti-medieval aspersions, are, as I show below, consistent with this reaction against the older dialectic logic in the universities. Kant adeptly argues both sides of the four proofs, and for this Hegel will name Kant's dialectic "skeptical," criticize it for the failure to achieve *genuinely* the unity of opposites, and offer in turn his own version, drawing from different medieval traditions *not* aligned with Aristotle.

Suffice it to say that the fundamentally Aristotelian method of pondering both sides of the opposition is a footnote to Plato. Aristotle, for all his differences with Plato on the matter of dialectic,[52] follows his predecessor on this point. As Plato writes in the *Sophist*:

> [Educators] cross-examine a man's words, when he thinks that he is saying something and is really saying nothing, and easily convict him of inconsistencies in his opinions; these they then collect by the dialectic process, and placing them side by side, show that they contradict one another about the same things, in relation to the same things, and in the same respect. He, seeing this, is angry with himself, and grows gentle with others, and thus is entirely delivered from great prejudice and harsh notions, in a way which is most amusing to the hearer.[53]

From here, Plato enlarges the practice of dialectic. He moves from the facile problem of "saying nothing" per the stubborn Sophists (in his view) to a high philosophical discussion of non-being, deploying dialectic to ascertain the five primal forms and merging rhetoric, metaphysics, and ontology. Yet Aristotle, who claims that "Dialectic is merely critical where philosophy claims to know," makes no such leap and rather continues to refine dialectic as the art of refutation.[54] While the dialectician can think both sides of a problem at once, he typically is to choose one side and proceed deductively until he can affirm or deny the statement in question.[55] Usually, his conclusion will find "the contradictory of a given thesis" or "an aporeme," which is "a deduction that reasons dialectically to a contradiction."[56] The dialectician can also contradict a contradiction: the proposition that "one ought to do good to one's friends" meets its contrary in "one ought to do harm to one's friends," which itself should be contradicted with "one ought not to do them harm."[57] At no point do we find the synthesis of opposites, or contradiction, to be anything but problematic. In fact, the synthesis of opposites, of conjoining "both sides," is what, for Aristotle, produces perplexity, not insight: "an equality between contrary reasonings would seem to be the cause of perplexity; for it is when we reflect on both sides of a question and find everything alike to be in keeping with either course that we are perplexed which of the two we are to do."[58] Think the "befuddled and perplexed" Gargantua. (Think, too, I might add, the metaphysical wit and conceit in English poetry, as described by Samuel Johnson: “Wit, may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unalike. . . . The reader . . . is seldom pleased.”)[59]

Aristotle never entertains what we now recognize, thanks to Hegel, as the dialectic of “difference” and “identity,” wherein identity fundamentally depends on difference.[60] Of things, Aristotle says, “if two contraries are equally liable to occur naturally in a thing, and the thing has been defined through the one, clearly it has not been defined; otherwise there will be more than one definition of the same thing.”[61] Or, when speaking of a position one may hold, Aristotle says: “See, for destructive purposes, if the property rendered is a property of the affirmation; for then the same term will not be a property of the negation as well. Also, if the term rendered is a property of the negation, it will not be a property of the affirmation.”[62] By such demonstrations, which account for an array of analytical and rhetorical contingencies, Aristotle offers countless ways of deploying the terms of “sameness” and “difference” to shim apart an adversary’s arguments. If “argument about definitions is mostly concerned with questions of sameness and difference,”[63] the *Topics*, above all, is a veritable manual for employing these analytical and rhetorical terms, enabling one to define what a thing is,[64] and, equally, to discern where an adversary’s arguments falsely associate inherently different things or definitions. Indeed, the dialectician’s job is to “take hold of contraries in whatever way they may be of use both in demolishing and establishing a view”;[65] it is to be alert to finer and finer shades of opposition.[66] Aptly, Aristotle repeatedly calls this practice “destructive purposes.” Plato would call it eristic and advise against it.

In all of this discussion so far, we have been running along the edges of the famous three laws of thought. About the first law—the principle of non-contradiction—Plato and Aristotle are of one mind against Heraclitus’s position that identity can contain difference within itself, that an entity changes because it already contains what it is to become.[67] Aristotle, of course, builds up a more logically articulated defense of the law of non-contradiction than Plato, and he has supplementary examples throughout his work to support it. In the *Topics*, he cautions readers about relatives and insists that dialecticians should ferret out false relatives, cases where one of the relatives in the pair fails to reciprocate.[68] For Aristotle, relative being is not real,[69] insofar as relatives themselves are only a matter of perspective, of naming and comparing, and finding correlatives[70]—though even in this practice he issues the reminder that “it is impossible for a thing to be its own contrary.”[71] Owing to all of these, and many more, examples, there is no mistaking in Aristotle a dialectic of identity and difference, no intimations like we find in Plato, if only Plato had (like Hegel) thought about the negative more deeply.[72] It really should come as no surprise to learn that Aristotle demotes "same" and "different" from the five primals of Plato to ninth in the list of important philosophical terms![73]

Hegel, however, challenged these laws of thought.[74] He was the first to do so, too. This important common insight cannot be emphasized enough. For it admits two related points that remind us of Hegel's novelty, his risks in going against the philosophical grain, and his place in the history of philosophy. He rejects these laws of thought in order, first, to recuperate "contradiction," which "is ordinarily the first to be kept away from things" or viewed as "a blemish, . . . a defect or failure."[75] Instead, he views "contradiction" as the essential, generative principle for "anything concrete, every concept."[76] Second, in the name of "contradiction," Hegel reinstates the operations of identity/difference, viewing all identity as determinate, containing difference within itself. Hegel's familiar emphatic phrase that expresses this new "law of contradiction"—"All things are in themselves contradictory"—is, as I noted at the outset, the culmination of an insight about identity/difference itself: "Now if the first determinations of reflection, identity, difference, and opposition, have been formulated each as a principle, all the more should the one determination into which they pass over as in their truth, namely contradiction, be grasped and enunciated as a principle: 'All things are in themselves contradictory.' "[77] He does this all in the name of dialectic, a way of synthesizing opposites, a way of thinking identity in difference. Not even Heraclitus, what remains of his thought, would call (*pace* the retrospective celebration by Hegel and Engels)[78] these procedures "dialectic." To find this new kind of dialectic, a dialectic *contra* dialectic, we must turn to the post-ancient traditions of philosophy. We must enter the Middle Ages.

After Plotinus: The Dialectic of Identity and Difference

To find dialectical precedents for Hegel is, I argue, to discover where identity/difference emerges as the central terms within the discipline of dialectic and thereafter in medieval philosophy. In short, what is needed is a different history of dialectic from that typically, even if helpfully, given in the focus on the vicissitudes of Aristotle's *Topics* or *Categories* across the centuries. After all, Hegel would hardly look to this tradition to develop his own dialectic if he could proclaim that the aforementioned traditions of dialectic were philosophy only in name:

> Thus in the West hardly anything was known beyond the Isagoge of Porphyry, the Latin Commentaries of Boethius on the Logical works of Aristotle, and extracts from the same by Cassiodorus—most barren compilations; there is also what is just as barren, the dissertations ascribed to Augustine *De dialectica* and *De categorii*s, which last is a paraphrase of the Aristotelian work upon the categories. These were the first make-shifts or expedients for carrying on Philosophy.[79]

These words have, I believe, gotten scholars off the trail when exploring how *other* kinds of medieval dialectic fascinate Hegel, informing his entire system that he still—despite these animadversions—calls dialectic! Those other kinds begin with Plotinus, who offers a distinct dialectical contrast to these aporetic methods, as do philosophers after him in the so-called "neoplatonic" tradition.

"Neoplatonism" is no singular thing, and the term remains an anachronism I hesitate to use but am constrained to do so for two reasons. The first is that scholars routinely refer to the neoplatonic procession and return as dialectical, though not dialectical in a Hegelian way.[80] The second is that prominent thinkers like Gadamer have taken pains to elide this philosophical tradition in the reading of Hegel. In his classic essay, "Hegel and the Dialectic of the Ancient Philosophers," Gadamer cursorily mentions neoplatonism as the "origin" of Hegelian concepts but never explores the specificity of the dialectic within that tradition.[81] Had he looked at all into what he calls "the two thousand year tradition of Neoplatonism" that comes "close to the speculative self-movement of thought as it is explicated in Hegel's dialectic," he might have seen that Hegel's interest in the problems of identity/difference, likeness/sameness points to the postclassical, medieval tradition that brings these terms to the center of dialectic itself.[82] My own contribution in this chapter is to suggest that what puts the "neo" in "neoplatonism," what makes Plotinus and others so different from Plato and Aristotle, is this discrete dialectic of identity and difference, quite evident in so many late antique and medieval examples and by no means reducible to generalizations about neoplatonic "procession" and "return," or for that matter "apophasis," itself the starting point for so much deconstructive engagement with medieval mysticism.[83] Here, I collect examples within this broader medieval dialectical tradition of identity and difference. Any one of them would suffice for an analysis of Hegel, insofar as, in philosophy today, scholars successfully pair Hegel with this or that earlier philosopher in order to describe what is distinctly, even if singularly, Thomist or Platonic about his ideas—the assumption being that a philosopher of note, as Hegel imagined himself to be even during his days lecturing to teenage boys at the gymnasium, would have absorbed the work of his distinguished predecessors, or at least inevitably thought what has been thought before.[84] Yet my case is broader, because the examples are wide ranging, separated by centuries. Perforce I do not argue for the influence of any one thinker and rather only seek to evince what's been overlooked in histories of dialectical critical theory, and the obviousness and ubiquity of a premodern dialectic that is the dialectic of identity and difference—all toward the argument (one of several in this book) that what makes Hegel modern is his turn to the medieval.

And so we begin with Plotinus, who, taking his cue from Plato and departing from Aristotle, expands dialectic beyond rhetoric and the pondering of "both sides" to ontology, metaphysics, and cosmology. In his tract on dialectic, Plotinus explores this expansive dialectic while rejecting efforts to narrow it, stating that "Dialectic does not consist of bare theories and rules."[85] In answering the basic question about dialectic, "what, in sum, is it?" Plotinus replies:[86]

> It is the Method, or Discipline, that brings with it the power of pronouncing the final truth upon the nature and relation of things—what each is, how it differs from others, what common quality all have, to what Kind each belongs and in what rank each stands in its Kind and whether its Being is Real-Being, and how many Beings there are, and how many non-Beings to be distinguished from Beings.[87]

Plotinus's definition, even the syntax of "what each is, how it differs from others, what common quality all have" follows the dialectic order of All that is: when Being is substantiated, identity and difference immediately follow, after which the tasks of observation and description can proceed.[88] Likewise, his emphasis on relation—specifically, "the nature and relation of things"—corresponds precisely to a dialectic analysis of "what each is, how it differs from others, what common quality all have." That Plotinus foregrounds relation in the analysis tells us something about his renewed version of dialectic, whereby relation is something more than a subset category à la Aristotle, Cicero, Boethius, and others. Above all, however, Plotinus's recommendation that dialecticians query about "how many non-Beings [are] to be distinguished from Beings" speaks volumes about a dialectic that requires identity/difference in its abstract and determinate forms (to refer to the terminology of the previous chapter). Why does this dialectic depend on identity/difference? Because it attempts to think across the void of non-being and being and seeks to conceptualize the transition from the former to the latter without giving up and dismissing the problem as a "strange thing"—literally, in

Plato's words, a thing out of place (ἄτοπον or atopon)[89]—or, as in Badiou's unfriendly analysis, "the general ruin of dialectical thought."[90]

It so follows, then, that a major question asked by Plotinus in *Ennead* 5.1 (now called "The Three Initial Hypostases") is: "From such a unity as we have declared The One to be, how does anything at all come into substantial existence, any multiplicity, dyad, number?" He is indeed right to say that this is "the problem endlessly debated by the most ancient philosophers."[91] In addressing it, he has a far more difficult *theological* task than Aristotle or Anselm, because his One is intensely more Other. His God, called the "One," is not an "unmoved mover" like Aristotle's, which moves in a self-caused fashion.[92] As Plotinus admonishes readers, "we may not ascribe motion to it . . . origin from the Supreme must not be taken to imply any movement in it; that would make the Being resulting from the movement not a second principle but a third; the Movement would be the second hypostasis."[93] What's more, Plotinus's One is not an intellect: "The One has no need of minute self-handling since it has nothing to learn by an intellective act."[94] It "neither knows itself nor is known in itself."[95] To boot, it is not even a being, much less the "highest Being" one can conceive, after Anselm. For, as Plotinus states, "the First is not a thing among things"; it is "a Principle which transcends Being; this is the One."[96] It is, rather, non-being, "no member of existence, but can be the source of all"; "in order that Being may be brought about, the source must be no Being but Being's generator."[97] By disassociating the One from movement, intellect, and being, Plotinus has made all the more difficult his task of showing that the One is the origin of exactly these three things, movement, intellect, and being, which, as we will soon seen, compose the second hypostasis, the Intellectual Principle.[98] The point here, meanwhile, is that Plotinus needs to think dialectically to explain the transition from non-movement to movement, non-intellect to intellect, and, most notoriously, non-being to being, because he cannot use easy models of likeness in his explanation, in the manner of Aristotle, who, in proposing God to be an "intellect," can effortlessly argue how intellectual beings spring forth from this already intellectual deity; nor can he shift the problem of nothing and being into the Christian formulation of divine creation *ex nihilo*, whereby the highest Being, "than which nothing greater can be conceived," makes something from nothing—a very ancient Judeo-Christian insight perfected by Anselm, emphatically, as a way around the difficult philosophical problem of nothing: "Let it rather be declared, then, that nothing did not exist before the supreme Being" and that, *stricto sensu*, "not anything" else precedes God.[99]

So Plotinus is really setting up a hard problem for himself when he asks "from such a unity as we have declared The One to be, how does anything at all come into substantial existence?"[100] Or, better, he is setting us up for a dialectical narrative that can attend to the impossibilities of absolute difference, such as that which the divide between being and non-being presents, and *relate* the two sides together, ultimately bringing them into a relation of identity/difference.[101] Plotinus, for instance, explains the genesis of being from non-being, the Intellectual Principle from the One, by conceptualizing identity in difference. In *Ennead* 5.3 (now entitled "The Knowing Hypostases and the Transcendent"), he goes in dialectical steps, first by positing the Intellectual Principle as a negation of the One, emerging now as "the Not-One."[102] From here Plotinus explains that the One and the "Not-One" nonetheless bear a relation to each other that turns on the logical (and Primal) categories of identity/difference: "The second principle [Not-One, i.e.] shows that it is next in order (after the all-transcendent One) by the fact that its multiplicity is as the same time an all-embracing unity: all the variety lies in the midst of a sameness, and identity cannot be separated from diversity since all stands as one."[103] What Plato did not conceive in the distinction between being/not-being, in which "not-being" is not supra-ontological and is only a mode of difference, Plotinus finds in the opposition of one/not-one: a dialectic of identity/difference. Plotinus, in short, takes Plato's binary, being/not-being, and reverses its terms, not-being/being, thereby placing negativity as the starting point of dialectic itself. (In Hegelian terms, Plotinus thinks from the side of the negative.) For the identity of the "Not-One"—again, the Intellectual-Principle—lies in its difference from the One that is not-being, but it is not a difference that is absolute. Indeed, it is a difference that is barely intelligible, bordering so closely on identity itself. As we learned in *Ennead* 5.1 ("Three Initial Hypostases"), and in our investigations in the previous chapter, these two hypostases are proximate and immediate to each other "with nothing intervening"; they are "without mediation."[104] That ever-persistent feature of dialectic involving two sides now, for Plotinus, falls within a single unity, just in the way rhetoric and dialectic themselves now become ontology.

Plotinus, in *Ennead* 5.3 ("The Knowing Hypostases and the Transcendent"), offers variations on this theme of "two sides" falling within a unity, such as "all the variety lies in the midst of a sameness" or "variety side by side with identity"—and in each case, he is bringing to bear the categories of identity/difference, which—Plotinus is prepared to say—give birth to the hypostases: "We have observed that anything that may spring from the One must be different from it. Differing, it is not One, since then it would be the Source. If unity has given place to duality, from that moment there is multiplicity; for there is variety side by side with identity, and this imports quality and all the rest."[105] It should begin to become clear why Plotinus prioritizes the categories of identity/difference above all others, ranking them second only to the hypostases themselves. For these are the only categories that can help him write the narrative of transition from One to many, from non-being to being. It's the only way he can talk about beginnings.

That these terms rank so high in his philosophical system could not be clearer than in the following passage, in which he proclaims:

> Thus the Primals (the first 'Categories') are seen to be: Intellectual Principle; Existence; Difference; Identity: we must also include Motion and Rest: Motion provides for the intellectual act, Rest preserves identity as Difference gives at once a Knower and a Known, for, failing this, all is one, and silent.[106]

This is a major statement, even moment for the history of philosophy: Plotinus compresses Plato's primals, if not reduces them. Motion and rest are now last in the list of primals and serve identity/difference ("Rest preserves identity as Difference," etc.), rather than, as for Plato, the other way around. He also fuses the first two primals, "Intellectual Principle; Existence," having already demonstrated in the tract that there is a "two-sided" unity of these two, the unity of thought and being—an idea, taken from none other than Parmenides and rendered into the first avowed notion of what Hegel would call abstract determination, as I argued in chapter 1.[107] After the Intellectual Principle itself, and indeed coterminous with it, is "Difference; Identity"; Plotinus is compelled to say more about these two primals above all, as the engines of divine intellection: "The objects of intellection (the ideal content of the Divine Mind)—identical in virtue of the self-concentration of the principle which is their common ground—must still be distinct from one another; this distinction constitutes Difference."[108] While the Intellectual Principle knows things perfectly in ways humans never can, it knows them through the operations of identity/difference by which *all intellection*, including human thought, happens. Even where, as in *Ennead* 6.2, Plotinus reverses the priority of these primals and places Motion and Stability before Identity and Difference, we find that, in fact, the very operations of identity/difference define every primal, not only because Rest overlaps with Difference (as above), but insofar as identity/difference, as a process, expresses what it means to be *any* genus: "Genus demands that the common property of diverse objects involve also differences arising out of its own character, that it form species, and that it belong to the essence of the objects."[109]

Where Plotinus uses the terms of identity/difference to draw *analogies* between the divine and human domains (especially cognition), Proclus goes further, using these terms in the attempt to integrate both domains—an effort quite visible, as we will soon see, in his development of the idea of procession and return. In Proclus's immense commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*, one can trace out a variety of threads and influences across the centuries into early modernity,[110] but his contribution to dialectical thought is graspable when taken through our own intentionally narrower topic of the dialectic of identity and difference, the same and other, and like and unlike. Three passages are especially important in this respect—two involving Proclus's explanation of how God (the Demiurge) can make the created order both like and unlike him, and one detailing how it is that the created order bears likenesses and unlikenesses up and down the grades of being, a key development in the dialectic survey of creation to which Plotinus only alluded. Taking his cue from a passage in the *Cratylus* and offering the characteristic gloss that extends Plato's own point, Proclus states:

> There is, then, in the Demiurge a potency and cause able to liken to himself the things that he creates. If this is so, there is in him an idea of likeness by which he makes his creations like himself and one another. But if so, he must also provide the cause of unlikeness to himself on the part of the things created; for it is not possible for a likeness to be brought into being unless there is also a notion of unlikeness; for without this, Plato says (*Crat.* 432c), there would be two Cratyluses, Cratylus and a likeness of Cratylus. Consequently, the things brought into being are unlike him, being perceptible, instead of intelligible; and they must also possess unlikeness to one another along with their likeness. And this, furthermore, accords with the will of the "Father." For the cosmos necessarily comes to be a cosmos from things harmonized with one another, and every harmony is a conjunction of things unlike and different, a proportion which is, as it were, a likeness among the unlike.[111]

Proclus personifies both the Platonic *eidos* and the Plotinian Intellectual-Principle, rendering him a deity who thinks and creates by means of likeness and unlikeness.

Having stated that the Demiurge contains both likeness and unlikeness within itself, Proclus anticipates a question, if not objection: "If we say that that higher being is indivisible, how can it have parts that are divided so as to be unmixed and without community with each other?"[112] To answer, he offers this program statement about identity/difference:

> Consequently, we must not suppose that the Ideas are altogether unmixed and without community with one another, nor must we say, on the other hand, that each one is all of them, as has been demonstrated. How, then, and in what way are we to deal logically with this question? We must say that each of them is precisely what it is and preserves its specific nature undefiled, but also partakes of the others without confusion, not by becoming one of them, but by participating in the specific nature of that other and sharing its own

> nature with it, just as we say that Identity partakes in a way of Difference without being Difference (for there is a plurality in it: not only is it different from Unlikeness but also different from itself), and that Difference likewise partakes of Identity inasmuch as it is common to all other things and in another way is the same as itself; Identity is not Difference, nor Difference Identity; this has been refuted by what we said earlier; and again we say that Unlikeness partakes of Likeness (inasmuch as all Ideas have a character in common they are like one another), and Likeness of Unlikeness, for if Likeness, like all Ideas, contributes something of itself to others, it is unlike them, for otherwise in so doing it would not be the contributor, and the others partakers, and if Unlikeness contributes something of itself to others, it becomes like them, more than that, itself and Likeness becomes like; and that Likeness is not Unlikeness, nor Unlikeness itself Likeness. Likeness as likeness is not unlike, nor Unlikeness as unlikeness like.[113]

All of the "Ideas" (what are commonly called Platonic "forms," in other words) are arranged in relations of identity/difference in the mind of the Demiurge. Even the great Platonic terms of the One and the Many emerge, for Proclus, in a relation of likeness and unlikeness—a key point to which we will return in our interpretation of Hegel.[114]

Between these two fundamental assertions about the structure of the cosmos come Proclus's reflections on procession among the order of beings, what links everything together:

> In general, procession occurs either by way of unity, or by way of likeness, or by way of identity—by way of unity as supercelestial henads, for there is no identity among them, nor specific likeness, but unity only; by way of identity, as in the indivisible substances, where that which proceeds is somehow the same as what it came from, for being all safeguarded and held together by eternity, they manifest identity of part to whole; and by way of likeness, as in the beings of the intermediate and lowest levels, which, though intermediate, are the first to welcome procession by way of likeness, whether in some cases it be identity and difference or likeness and unlikeness that is their cause.[115]

Apart from the "supercelestial henads," which enjoy "unity only" and uniquely partake of the One through analogy (which is a mode of difference), the entire celestial order proceeds or declines by way of identity and difference, from the monads or "indivisible substances" all the way down to the lowest forms of being.[116]

And so what bundles all of Proclus's ideas about identity/difference in the disparate intellectual and sensible realms? Dialectic, of course. Proclus states that there "is need . . . for the dialectical 'survey' (*planē*) in the study of these Forms, to give us preliminary training and instruction for the comprehension of them."[117] But this survey must start in the sensible world, to which "dialectical training" applies itself in the "survey" of "a multiplicity which goes from opposites to opposites," "the mixture of Forms in the sense objects" themselves.[118] Having studied the world of appearance, the dialectician completes the task by reflecting upward: "Like and unlike exist together at the level of sense-perception, but we want to see their interaction also in the intelligible world. This is the desire that Socrates is uttering, dismissing the mingling of visible things, and ascending to the communion of intelligibles, and Parmenides accepts this as expression the sentiments of a notable and magnanimous soul."[119]

Proclus thus authorizes his form of dialectic, at points critical of Plato (putting the "neo" in his Platonism), by linking it back to the Platonic method described in the *Republic*, where Plato states that, by the "power of dialectic," one can "rise to that which requires no assumption" and "proceed downward to the conclusion, making . . . use . . . only of pure ideas moving on through ideas to ideas and ending with ideas."[120] But more than that, Proclus (like Plotinus) sets identity/difference at the center of dialectic and shows that these two logical terms explain the relation of All, from the Demiurge on down, thereby authorizing a strain of neoplatonism that is, on the one hand, dialectical in the sense we recognize today as the interplay of identities and differences, and on the other hand phenomenological, as a study of appearances. In this way, dialectic is conceived to be both a description of beginnings, in ontological and epistemological terms, and a starting point for an analysis whose habits of thought are hoped to adequate themselves to the unfolding relations of All that is and to the divine intellect in which identity/difference operates as the greatest abstraction imaginable. In sum, in both Plotinus and Proclus we find an important moment in the history of philosophy when we can for the first time describe as "dialectical" the discipline of "dialectic"—indeed, an important event that revises Plato's *Parmenides*, in which the namesake figure is, through the art of neoplatonic back projection, rendered into a dialectician of a sort Plato himself never could have conjured up and a dialectic that he was never equipped to conceive.

Medieval Dialectical Phenomenology

So what happens, then, when this very specific kind of dialectic practice is absorbed within Christian theology? Pseudo-Dionysius and a long tradition of dialectical mysticism is what happens and—with them—a whole new set of concerns that, nonetheless, express this very particular medieval dialectic of identity and difference, but now with increasing emphasis on the study of appearances, a phenomenology in which the soul meditates on the contradictions evident in the world of things and appearances (rather than what we found in Plotinus, a cosmological phenomenology of hypostases and other divine entities regarding each other). That the soul inhabits and mediates contradictions is nothing new to philosophy, for Aristotle writes in his *Topics*: “if two contraries are equally liable to occur naturally in a thing, and the thing has been defined through the one, clearly it has not been defined. . . . For how it is any more a definition to define it through this one than through the other, seeing that both are equally liable to occur naturally in it? Such is the definition of the soul, if defined as a substance capable of receiving knowledge.”[121] But Aristotle does not develop this line of thinking; indeed, even in his *On the Soul*, this idea plays a very minor role,[122] and if anything he moves the problem of contradiction to how others (mis)interpret the soul, “those who construct the soul out of . . . contraries” or who say it is a “composition of contraries.”[123] This is to say, philosophy would have to wait for Pseudo-Dionysius (and those after) to develop what is commonly called “dialectical mysticism,” involving meditations on both the soul and the world of appearances, rife with contradictions.[124]

The history we have so far traced of postclassical dialectical thought—a very specific practice of thinking of contradictions in a unity, all in the name of dialectic—would be no doubt amenable to a Christian theologian, Pseudo-Dionysius, who brings contradiction, opposition, and negation to the center of his contemplative system. We will follow his conscientious adoption of the prominent, now long-standing formulations within the medieval dialectic of identity and difference, along with his inclusion of much of the architecture of procession and return put in place by Plotinus and Proclus—the latter of whom he follows at almost every turn and calls as “Hierotheus,” “my famous teacher.”[125]

To begin with, witness his reflections in *The Divine Names*—a work in which Pseudo-Dionysius concedes that “the enlightenment of divine knowledge,” though it happens in the “soul” and not the “mind,” still transpires “through discursive reasoning.”[126] He is, in other words, speaking about dialectic, which is the way to knowledge through the activity of reasoning. That he speaks of unity and difference, including the unity and difference of God, should therefore come as no surprise in light of the foregoing. He writes, for example: “Greatness and smallness, sameness and difference, similarity and dissimilarity, rest and motion—these all are titles applied to the Cause of everything. They are divinely named images and we should now contemplate them as far as they are concerned.”[127] Pseudo-Dionysius calls some of these familiar “primals”—such as “sameness and difference,” “rest and motion”—

"images" and "names," and they are just a few of the dozens he retails in this tract, showing again an awareness of the traditions of dialectic toward which his mysticism ultimately bends, and that is a tradition in which post-Platonic (medieval) thinkers experiment with Plato's primals. It so follows that he emphasizes the categories of sameness and difference, always setting them within dialectical relations, whereby (in many places) identity is constituted by difference: "He precontains all opposites in one, single, universal cause of all sameness," a "difference" that is a "unity amid many forms," "unified differentiations."[128] Simply put, "There is distinction in unity and there is unity in distinction."[129] And, not surprisingly, Pseudo-Dionysius projects these terms into scripture: "All the causes of the unions or differentiations in the divine nature as revealed by scripture were systematically discussed by me to the best of my abilities in my *Theological Representations*," a lost work that would no doubt bear great significance to this inquiry![130]

More than just the obligatory slogans of neoplatonism, these ideas stand at the center of the contemplative and conceptual practice Pseudo-Dionysius recommends to his readers, whose scriptural hermeneutics are the first step toward contemplative ascent. Within the "revealing symbols of scripture," the contemplative seeks what was once a primal, a divine image of "similarity and dissimilarity" written into scripture.[131] That is, he or she seeks "dissimilar similarities," which in turn inform one's observation of the world itself, from which like "dissimilar similarities" can be observed. As Pseudo-Dionysius states in *The Celestial Hierarchy*, "Everything . . . can be a help to contemplation; and dissimilar similarities derived from the world . . . can be applied to those beings which are both intelligible and intelligent."[132] By such contemplation, one is lifted "up through the perceptible to the conceptual," from percept to concept.[133] The mystical task is to think the entire procession of the created world, already dialectically unfolded among the grades of being (Proclus), in one enormous, almost unthinkable, paradoxical thought: "So true negations and the unlike comparisons with their last echoes offer due homage to the divine things."[134] This is, it should be clear, the sort of "true" negation that makes his a "negative theology," not exclusively a matter of apophasis requiring the repeated declarations of what cannot be said, which is all too general of an explanation of what is at stake.[135] Rather, Pseudo-Dionysius prescribes negation in order to make visible the contradictions that then must be thought through, and overcome in the contemplative ascent, only after which point language, words, and figuration fall away and conceptualization takes over.[136] He cautions, however, that the contemplative must "be careful to use the similarities as dissimilarities" and avoid collapsing these differences into identity, "to avoid one-to-one correspondence, to make appropriate adjustments as one remembers the great divide between the intelligible and the perceptible."[137]

These "dissimilar similarities" are the dialectical supplement to his theology, literally, his thesis about God as a unity of difference. As a dialectical form—form, insofar as "dissimilar similarities" can contain any content, any phenomena, any object or creature, including worms—"dissimilar similarities" do what dialectic has always aspired to do: to move from language to concept, sensible to intelligible, matter to ideal, horizontal to vertical, or the inspection of the created order to the contemplation of divine hierarchies. For Pseudo-Dionysius, the "dissimilar similarities" are thought not as some negative capability or insoluble opposition or paradox, as if *relia* was set into the oppositions that beset both the Stoic and the Skeptic in their own versions of dialectic. Rather, humans think through the "dissimilar similarities" by, to use Heidegger's term borrowed from Meister Eckhart, himself a reader of Pseudo-Dionysius, "Gelassenheit," which is a meditative receptivity to paradox itself.[138] Thought brings unity to the dissimilar similars or, if one can bear that tautology, thought is the unity in which the dissimilar similars are thought. What unifies all of these oppositions is the soul, but, as we will see below with Hegel's absolute, these contradictions never disappear and remain in place as the mystic, the phenomenological observer, ranges from difference to difference.

My reference to Heidegger here is not aleatory and means to explain that long arc of intellectual history that puts Plotinus, Proclus, Pseudo-Dionysius, Eriugena, Eckhart, Hegel, and Heidegger all within the same long tradition of dialectical thinking, be it the thinking of the hypostases or that of the mystic—yes, even Heidegger, whose most dialectical moments emerge in his work on mystical thinking. Indeed, he shows that meditative thinking ("das besinnliche Denken") is dialectical through and through; though he never names this thinking "dialectic" as such, his description is on point with the exact kind of dialectic we have been studying here: "Meditative thinking demands of us not to cling one-sidedly to a single idea, nor to run down a one-track course of ideas. Meditative thinking demands of us that we engage ourselves with what at first sight does not go together at all."[139] "One-sidedly": that long-standing dialectical epithet used to condemn non-dialectical thought (as we'll hear uttered a few more times in this book). The mystic in dialectical contemplation moves from paradox to paradox, appearance to appearance, drawing the oppositions into a reflective unity, rather than—as in the tradition of skeptic dialectic—fixing on either side of the contradiction without resolution (a method recently instanced in Slavoj Žižek's "parallax view, constantly shifting perspective between two points between which no synthesis or mediation is possible").[140] For Pseudo-Dionysius, "dissimilar similarities" is a part, then, of the long-standing medieval dialectic of identity and difference, and while we are still, needless to say, many centuries away from dialectic as a form of ideological demystification, we already have at hand in Pseudo-Dionysius the major idea in critical theory made famous by Marx's claim to adopt a dialectical critical practice that gets behind appearances. For Pseudo-Dionysius, one is "provoked to get behind the material show, to get accustomed to the idea of going beyond appearances."[141] How ripe for dialectical thinking this motif will become, as the next chapters of this book show![142]

Pseudo-Dionysius could not have had more influence on western thought all the way up through reformation writers, let alone his enormous influence in eastern philosophy and theology. But there is no greater exponent of these Pseudo-Dionysian dialectical procedures, and no better premodern antecedent to Hegel (as we will soon see), than Nicholas of Cusa, whose work will be our final stop in this partial history of medieval dialectic before arriving at Hegel's own dialectic of identity and difference. This most important of the German scholastics—second only to Eckhart, who, as a reader of Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius, cannot be discounted—perfects these dialectical traditions.[143] He offers his amazingly abstract *Di Li Non Aliud* (On the Not-Other) in the name of all we have explored so far: the *Parmenides*, Proclus's commentary thereon, and Pseudo-Dionysius's ideas about divine otherness.[144] In fact, he aspires to draw these traditions together and supply a helpfully reductive exposition of their contributions *in toto*—"We would like to hear whether or not there occurs to you a briefer and clearer route to the points which are dealt with by the aforenamed [sic] individuals"—while simultaneously and avowedly turning away from the long Aristotelian tradition of logic he will expose to be not sufficiently dialectical in its absence of a proper theory of otherness, with consequences so serious as to rationalize the conclusion that "the Philosopher failed in first philosophy."[145] Yet Pseudo-Dionysius, according to Nicholas, "seems to have come the closest" to a concept of divine otherness, in believing "that the Creator is neither anything nameable nor any other thing whatever," and in so doing "expressed the secret of Not-other, which secret he everywhere exhibited in one way or another."[146] Nicholas here construes the purportedly most important idea of Pseudo-Dionysius to be a "secret"—that is, only latent in his work and recoverable through diligent study—because he wishes to move beyond the kind of "negative theology" that confines itself to what Pseudo-Dionysius made a veritable discipline, the talk of the "unnameable" and ineffable. Instead, Nicholas works toward a conception of the Not-other that is *definable* in language as, I argue, the outcome of dialectics. This concept, taken from Anselm's most famous sentence (see above) but not premised on the so-called ontological argument, "quite closely befigures the unnameable name of God," which "defines itself and every other thing."[147] To closely befigure the unnameable tells us that Nicholas is expanding the limits of what one can do and think in language, boosting the capacities of adequation itself, and this, of course, is the task—imaginative as much as metaphysical—of dialectics.

That Nicholas intends to emphasize the dialectics of negative theology could be no more clear than in the opening paragraphs, which focus on the most ancient and long-standing notion of dialectic as advanced by Plato—dialectic as *definition* and *contemplation*: "If with all your might you turn the acute gaze of your mind toward the Not-other, you will see with me the definition which defines itself and everything."[148] What's remarkable about Nicholas's "definition" here is that the Not-other replaces the human work of dialectic and presents itself, and its powers of definition, as the apex of dialectic itself, the summit of identity/difference, which (as I have already shown), stands for divinity, the *eidos,* and divine mind in a strong tradition of commentary on the *Parmenides*, which itself, as Nicholas is clear to say, lacks a concept of otherness.[149] In other words, Nicholas's "Not-other" collapses identity and difference into this one term; all things participate in this "Form of forms,"[150] insofar as all things are "not other" than themselves: "all these things are other than their respective opposites."[151] It is the last notion, whereby the identity of "all these things" is figured as the "other" of "their respective opposites," that enables Nicholas to think of the entire created order as the "coincidence of opposites [oppositorum coincidentia]," an idea he developed over many years as he pondered the aforementioned Platonic traditions.[152] No wonder, then, that he places this unique model of identity/difference at the center of his system as a definition of all that is:[153]

> For Not-other is the most congruent Form (*ratio*), Standard, and Measure of the existence of all existing things, of the nonexistence of all nonexisting things, of the possibility of all possibilities, of the manner of existence of all things existing in any manner, of the motion of all moving things, of the rest of all nonmoving things, of the life of all living things, of the intelligibility of all intelligible things, and so on for all other things of this kind. I see this to be necessary, in that I see that *Not-other* defines itself and, hence, all nameable things.[154]

One can recognize the now faint presence of the Platonic primals (being, motion, rest) with the Not-other, as a simplex of identity/difference, standing prior to them, prior even to "non-existence" (as a mode of real determination)—a move that, if we think far back in the history of this kind of inquiry, begins with Plotinus.

To say, then, that the Not-other is prior to all, even to what used to be the primals, and indeed to assert that this One is a *simplex* of identity/difference is to introduce, once more, ideas about abstract determination (see chap. 1). It is, moreover, to think abstract determination in relation to the real determination of identity in difference figured forth in the entire created order. Nicholas, this is to say, embraces the greatest problems of dialectic, as did those before him, in thinking about how difference is introduced into the heart of identity. He follows a model quite close to Plotinus's, discussed in the previous chapter, whereby repetition of the same, the iteration of identity in the mode of A=A, produces difference, only here Nicholas adds another term to yield, A=A=A. Of course, I am referring here to his discussion of the three identities of the Trinity, as "Not-other and Not-other and Not-other":

> "Not-other and Not-other and Not-other"—although [this expression] is not at all in use—the triune Beginning is revealed most clearly, though it is above our apprehension and capability. For when the First Beginning—signified through "Not-other"—defines itself: in this movement of definition Not-other originates from Not-other; and from Not-other and the Not-other which has originated, the definition concludes in Not-other. One who contemplates these matters will behold them more clearly than can be expressed.[155]

Where there is movement, there seems to be no movement at all; where there is difference, no difference. Through this accretion of singulars, this replication of identity, however, come both movement and difference, and the distinctions necessary to think of one God as triune. That is, this explanation of the "beginning" of the Trinity centrally involves repetition of the identity that is at once a difference, the "Not-other": "If the same thing repeated three times is the definition of the First . . . then assuredly the First is triune. . . . For this trinity is not other than unity, and [this] unity is not other than trinity."[156]

Nicholas understands, effectively, "abstract determination," just as Plotinus and Hegel do, and he got to it (like Plotinus and Hegel) by thinking on the terms of identity/difference and figuring the repetition of identity as the way to difference. Granted, Trinitarian theology and creedal Christianity—the Athanasian Creed, to begin with—could bring Nicholas to a conception of abstract determination, the *thinking* of and believing in difference where there is no real determination, no real difference: "ut unum Deum in Trinitate, et Trinitatem in unitate veneremur [We worship one God in trinity and the Trinity in unity]." But Nicholas also conceptualizes abstract determination in general (i.e., non-Trinitarian) terms, attempting to think this unique mode of difference in, say, his discussion of the quiddity of quantity, in which he puzzles over how a divine quiddity—divine because "quiddity . . . is the shining forth of the First Quiddity"[157]—can bear any quantity or, for that matter, anything "other than" itself. After all, "quantity is not something necessary to the quiddity of magnitude, as if magnitude were constituted by quantity."[158] But if the human imagination is involved, in addition to the procedures of "mentally view[ing]" quiddity, then abstract difference is imagined: "If magnitude is to be imagined or to appear imaginatively, then quantity is immediately necessary."[159] And if human understanding is involved, then, abstract difference is *known*: "In the understanding magnitude shines forth intellectually—i.e., abstractly and absolutely, before corporeal quantity."[160] These are the procedures of dialectical contemplation, *thinking* difference within identity, quantity within quiddity, that remind one of Plotinus's contemplation of a hypostasis, Nietzsche's contemplative history of dialectic in *The Birth of Tragedy* (see chap. 1), and Hegel's own insight that abstract determination "is such . . ., *for us, in our reflection,*" "belongs . . . to our reflection."[161]

Evidently, Nicholas of Cusa is a dialectical thinker. Yet, had Ernst Cassirer his druthers, we should view him "als den ersten modernen Denker" (*pace* Blumenberg!).[162] Edmond Vansteenberghe goes further in wondering whether the Cusan is "un de pères de la pensée allemande" who anticipates "Tout Hégel."[163] Erwin Metzke says: "Und doch ist niemand dem Denken des Nicolaus von Cues so nahegekommen wie Hegel."[164] These claims may all be true, but true for reasons that are bigger than either Nicholas or Hegel: they both resemble each other because both draw from the larger medieval dialectical tradition of identity and difference. To be sure, this tradition shifts in focus over the centuries, from Plotinus, who effectively moves dialectic from rhetoric, logic, and dialogue to ontology, metaphysics, cosmology, and theology; to Proclus who systematizes dialectic of this precise sort and codifies the centrality of identity/difference to dialectic; to Pseudo-Dionysius, who enfolds dialectic into Christian contemplative practice, the meditation on the contradictions in the world of appearance and the movement through these from difference to identity to difference again; to the rest of philosophical history up to Nicholas of Cusa, who in his tantalizingly quasi-modern way carries on the mystical project within the enclosure of scholastic theology, thinking his way (after all his years of reflection) to a superconcept that is the Not-one, a conflate of identity/difference. My aim here is not to be exhaustive, nor is it to be an Edward Casaubon, all promise and no goods. I intend, rather, to identify when this dialectic of identity/difference emerged, and for what reasons.[165] Having done that, I hope we can now begin to see what Hegel saw in dialectic, and so clearly valued as *the* dialectic—the dialectic of identity/difference.

Hegel's Way

Our task now is to make new sense of Hegel's dialectic—both his great interest in the categories of identity and difference and his words about the dialectic as a problem reaching back to the Parmenides and forward to the present.

If there is anything predictable about the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, it's not that there is a telos to the whole work; rather, it is that Hegel believes in error as a key component of the dialectical process. As he asks in a key passage: "Should we not be concerned as to whether the fear of error is not just the error itself?"[166] The answer, for Hegel, is obviously, yes. But what has now become an epistemological cliché about the necessity of error in any process of discovery and knowing should not screen us from viewing quite how he frames this dialectical insight:

> To know something falsely means that knowledge is not adequate to, is not on equal terms with, its substance. Yet this very dissimilarity is the process of distinction in general, the essential moment in knowing. It is, in fact, out of this active distinction that its harmonious unity arises, and this identity, when arrived at, is truth. But it is not truth in a sense which would involve the rejection of the discordance, the diversity, like dross from pure metal; nor, again, does truth remain detached from diversity, like a finished article from the instrument that shapes it. Difference itself continues to be an immediate element within truth as such, in the form of the principle of negation.[167]

This passage—and the many others like it in Hegel—lacks punch because most who are reading these words right now are, let's be frank, jaded by some combination of Russian Formalism, structuralism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism, all of which express the exact same point about the true and the false differentially conceived. It is even a point that precedes Hegel. But what remains important, and what will not suffer from overemphasis, is that Hegel makes this claim *in the name of identity/difference*—dissimilarity (*Ungleichheit*), distinguishing (*das Unterscheiden*), unity and identity (*Gleichheit*), diversity and difference (*Ungleichheit*). And he offers the claim as his best explanation for how the dialectic *moves*, how it works, its rhythm.[168] Even consciousness, even experience, follows the up and down, back and forth motion of identity/difference.[169]

Granted, we quickly forget the centrality of identity/difference to Hegel as we read his prose, scratching our heads to figure out his exact meaning in any given passage. Adorno put it perfectly: "Hegel is no doubt the only one with whom at times one literally does not know, and cannot conclusively determine, what is being talked about."[170] But even in this case, we are dealing with Hegel's technique, his need to complexify (to borrow the French expression) the dialectic of identity/difference in all its variations and subtleties, if for no other reason than to narrate over the course of hundreds of pages sundry dialectical moments, step by excruciating step, without reduplication. It is in this narrative task that Hegel's vocabulary comes in handy—above all, the terms "in itself," "for itself," and "for and in itself"—which intricately describe kinds of relation, identity and differentiation among, and within, entities.[171] For example, elaborating on one of his more widely known remarks that "the spiritual alone is the actual," Hegel says, "It is essence, or that which has *being in itself*; it is that which *relates itself to itself* and is *determinate*, it is *other-being* and *being-for-itself*, and in this determinateness, or in its self, or in its self-externality, abides within itself; in other words, it is *in and for itself*."[172] And so it goes on, Hegel's penchant for describing, with his peculiar post-Kantian phraseology, all the possible modes of self- and other-relation, all the possible combinations whereby something (be it Spirit or consciousness)[173] differentiates itself within itself, relates itself to itself, and to others—or, and this next part is just as important, all the ways in which something falls back into itself and thus fails to enter into one mode of relation or another, at which point the dialectical movement comes to a halt.

But where the dialectic stops, it soon restarts. That, you can count on. Even in such cases it is not enough to speak of "error" or "failure," for a reading of Hegel demands a more precise generalization, which is what I now propose here: namely, it is often the case that the dialectical process becomes erratic, sluggish, or faltering only when his *preferred dialectic* breaks down into another kind of dialectic quite like those that build on the Aristotelian version of two sides at odds with one another, both with a legitimate claim to the truth of their position. In other words, the dialectic of identity and difference often runs into the sands and becomes, temporarily, a dialectic characterized by antinomy or equipollence, only to regain dialectical momentum when equipollence is overcome. We can observe this feature—it, too, is a narrative pattern—in three famous episodes in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (though I hasten to say it is instanced across the entirety of this philosophical work): the passages on sense-certainty, the lord/bondsman, and the unhappy consciousness.

In his very first chapter on "Sense-Certainty," Hegel describes everyday, unreflective perception of things in the world, as they are given to the senses, as things before our very eyes: “All that [sense-certainty] says about what it knows is just that it *is*; and its truth contains nothing but the sheer *being* of the thing (Sache).”[174] Eventually, however, sense-certainty moves from immediacy to mediacy, from perceiving the sheer plurality of things to a sensing that there are differences among them, as well as differences between me and the objects I perceive:

> Among the countless differences cropping up here we find in every case that the crucial one is that, in sense-certainty, pure being at once splits up into what we have called the two “Thises,” one “This” as “I”, and the other “This” as object. When we reflect on this difference, we find that neither one nor the other is only *immediately* present in sense-certainty, but each is at the same time *mediated*: I have this certainty *through* something else, viz. the thing; and it, similarly, is in sense-certainty *through* something else, viz. through the “I.”[175]

Hegel has just explained “difference” for the first time in the *Phenomenology* proper. As soon as “we reflect on this difference,” as soon as we enter into reflective rather than spontaneous thinking about things, we discover mediation. Certainty originates not only in my mind but through “something else.” Easy enough, but we are not yet at identity/difference, nor for that matter self-consciousness, even if Hegel’s language of reciprocity here conveys exactly that impression, for the simple reason that the lesson about difference here is about the “I” and its sense-certainty, not about the thing. To be sure, Hegel wishes to ask questions about the thing *in* sense-certainty: “What is the *This*,” after all?[176] And in so many sentences he shows that sense-certainty can only answer this question, can only define the thing, by stating what the thing is not.[177] But the trouble is that if you define any object by negation, then you discover its *indifference* to relation: that is, the object “is not in the least bit affected by its other-being.”[178] It is entirely “in itself.” Lest it seem that Hegel thinks that only objects can be indifferent, he turns back to the “I” to make the same point, showing how it falls back into “immediacy” and “indifference.”[179]

There is a lot of back and forth here, and that is Hegel’s point. He gives us a feel for a particular kind of dialectic that cannot function in ways we may expect as we cotton onto the allusions to reciprocity, or recognize the all too brief moments of mediation, the promise of intersubjectivity. His other point, as every commentary will tell you, is that all of this emphasis on the particular (the “This”) generates its opposite, the “universal.” Yet even in that lesson, we understand that difference comes first and makes the universal even possible, a point to which I will return below. For now, we can plainly see that in sense-certainty, there is no forward movement, only circularity; "it is always forgetting" what it learned and "starting the movement all over again."[180] It never achieves the kind of difference—or indeed the kind of identity in difference, and difference in identity—necessary to budge thinking to a new place. Thus, and not surprisingly, Hegel is comfortable winding down his analysis of sense-certainty by associating this kind of dialectic—and he calls it "dialectic" several times in this passage—with skepticism, which is, historically speaking, exactly the kind of dialectic that lacks a workable concept of identity/difference: "It is therefore astonishing when, in the face of this experience, it is asserted as universal experience and put forward, too, as . . . the outcome of Scepticism, that the reality or being of external things taken as Thises or sense-objects has absolute truth for consciousness."[181] So much for the universal. But looking back on all of what we have read in this section, we retrospectively realize that Hegel has in fact staged a skeptic dialectic encounter before naming it:

> In this relationship sense-certainty experiences the same dialectic acting upon itself as in the previous one. I, *this* 'I', see the tree and assert that 'Here' is a tree; but another 'I' sees the house and maintains that 'Here' is not a tree but a house instead. Both truths have the same authentication, viz. the immediacy of seeing, and the certainty and assurance that both have about their knowing.[182]

Hegel calls this situation "dialectic [Dialektik],"[183] because it is a taking of sides in a special way: "Both truths have the same authentication," a conclusion that sorts very well with the kind of skeptic dialectic perfected by Sextus Empiricus in his *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, in the way both sides of a question or problem can be argued as, or authenticated as, truths.[184] That, clearly, is not the dialectic Hegel cares for, but we've gained enough from this section on sense-certainty: we've seen what sort of dialectic results when difference, mediation, and other-being do not stick around, and vanish just as quickly as they appear, dissolved either into the "in itself" or the "for itself."

Not so for the lord/bondsman dialectic. Before Hegel ever names the key players in question ("The former is the lord, the other the bondsman"),[185] he offers some program statements about what's required for self-consciousness to emerge—chiefly, reciprocity:

> Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it exists for another. . . . Its moments, then, must on the one hand be held strictly apart, and on the other hand must in this differentiation at the same time also be taken and known as not distinct.[186]

Differentiated but not distinct, "teils in dieser Unterscheidung zugleich auch als nicht unterschieden."[187] Note Hegel's peculiar vocabulary I described above: self-consciousness has a "twofold significance [Doppelsinnigkeit]"[188] in that its identity—its moment of "in and for itself"—is at once "for another," a difference. What's more, self-consciousness epitomizes identity/difference because it recalls the very ancient problem of being and not-being to which Plotinus and those after him applied these logical terms to good effect: as Hegel puts it, self-consciousness is "aware that it at once is, and is not, another consciousness."[189] When both consciousnesses recognize one another, then they are set into a *relation*, whereby "each is for the other what the other is for it."[190] But if both separate and retreat into "lifeless, merely immediate, unopposed extremes," then "the two do not reciprocally give and receive one another back from each other consciously, but leave each other free only indifferently, like things."[191] And with the term "indifference" (*Gleichgültigkeit*),[192] we come to that non-dialectical designation Hegel uses so very often to describe relations of difference in identity that fail, absent of the desire to reciprocate.

It would seem that in cautioning against "indifference" Hegel anticipates his section on the Unhappy Consciousness, which follows immediately after the lord/bondsman dialectic and stands as an example of how the dialectic of identity/difference can "fall apart,"[193] breaking into Stoicism and Skepticism: the former renders difference into "lifeless indifference," the latter transforms difference into a "vanishing magnitude" and not a determination, not a real difference but "only the abstraction of differences."[194] No wonder, then, that when the Unhappy Consciousness finally appears as an outgrowth of Skepticism above all,[195] it cannot make heads or tails of its relation to the world, and instead resorts to jejune games, making a mockery of the categories of identity/difference:

> It keeps the poles of this its self-contradiction apart, and adopts the same attitude to it as it does in its purely negative activity in general. Point out likeness or identity to it, and it will point out unlikeness or non-identity [Wird ihm die Gleichheit aufgezeigt, so zeigt es die Ungleichheit auf]; and when it is now confronted with what it has just asserted, it turns round and points out likeness or identity. Its talk is in fact like the squabbling of self-willed children [ein Gezänke eigensinniger Jungen], one of whom says *A* if the other says *B*, and in turns says *B* if the other says *A*, and who by contradicting themselves buy for *themselves* the pleasure of continuing contradicting *one another*.[196]

Were these youngsters to use the categories of identity and difference in tandem, and as a way to generate dialectical *relation* (and not absolute difference), they would no longer be divided. They would be *related*, and the Unhappy Consciousness would be resolved. And that is Hegel's point: dialectic without the dialectical operations of identity/difference is worthless and puerile. The *Phenomenology* is rich in such moments (one of the best being §666–71).

In point of fact, you can go through the entire *Phenomenology of Spirit* in this fashion, picking out where identity/difference succeeds, dialectically, and where it falls into a non-dialectic of identity/*in*difference. In other words, my point about identity/difference is by no means local, intended to describe only the colorful or well-known passages by Hegel. Consistently throughout the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (and in the *Science of Logic*), Hegel displays these terms in their operations and—equally compelling—failures, and the sheer number of instances indicates to us that, indeed, these are Hegel's primary dialectical terms.[197] Yet many readers of Hegel have stated that he above all prefers the categories of individual/universal, and it is absolutely true that he does—the interplay between these two terms are on almost every page of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*—but he prefers them in a very specific way that points to the difference between the *content* of the dialectic and its *form* or formal operations. For Hegel, individual/universal does not name an operation of distinction making (or "determination"); rather, they point to a mode of content. These terms can be aptly described as the content of the dialectic itself in all its phases. Identity/difference are, however, as Hegel uses them, operations, processes of distinction making that frequently transform individuals into universals (as above), or universals into individuals, and for these reasons have no content on their own: they are processes of determination. As Hegel says declaratively, "Unity, difference, and relation are categories each of which is nothing in and for itself, but only in relation to its opposite, and they cannot therefore be separated from one another"—after which he goes on to show how these terms effect "the transition . . . from the form of the *one* or unit into that of *universality*."[198] Numerous passages evince the ways in which identity/difference operate as the relay between individual and universal, setting these terms in relation, and even (at one moment) defines the meaning of a universal as "what remains *identical with itself*."[199]

The entire *Phenomenology of Spirit*—the text with which I am chiefly concerned in this book—from its first chapter to its last, exhibits an overarching chiastic structure, with identity/difference appearing first and last and individual/universal emerging in between, appropriately enough, as the products of dialectical mediation. Hegel spoke of his speculative method as a circle, where the ending contains the beginning, but the repetition unfolds in reverse, like chiasmus. That is, in that first chapter on "Sense-Certainty," "difference" first teaches us, as we've already seen, to appreciate "sense-certainty *through* something else" (as above) giving rise to our knowledge of mediation, universals, and the momentary lesson that "it is in fact the universal that is the true content of sense-certainty";[200] whereas, in that final chapter on "Absolute Knowing," Hegel first turns his attention to individual/universal as reciprocal terms—"the movement of the universal through determination to individuality, as also the reverse movement from individuality to . . . the universal"[201]—before discarding them altogether and turning finally to the more ubiquitous and everlasting terms of identity/difference that, strikingly, survive even in the Absolute thanks to the "determinateness" of the Absolute itself: "For the self-knowing Spirit, just because it grasps its Concept, is the immediate identity [Gleichheit] with itself, which, in its difference [Unterschiede], is the certainty of immediacy, or sense-consciousness—the beginning from which we started."[202] Without identity/difference, then, there would be no dialectic of individual/universal or any other binary for that matter, insofar as all binaries are governed by an opposition of terms, each of whose identity is a function of that difference. Without those two terms at all, there would be no dialectic—a point that has as many historical implications as Hegelian ones.

If the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is, famously, the disposable propaedeutic to the *Science of Logic*, or to the rest of Hegel's writings for that matter, then it can be said that Hegel has worked something out here for himself to be featured in his other works: a dialectic of identity/difference that stands above all other dialectics, which includes not only the dialectic of universal/individual but the supreme dialectic of ancient philosophy, our very own starting point in thinking about Plato: the one and the many. In his *Science of Logic* Hegel construes the *quintessential* Platonic dialectic proposition involving the one and the many to be lacking in several respects:

> It is an ancient proposition that *the one is many* and especially that *the many is one*. It should again be observed in this connection that, as expressed in propositions, the truth of the one and the many appears in inadequate form; such a truth is to be grasped and expressed only as a becoming, as a process, a repulsion and attraction—not as being, in the way the latter is posited in a proposition as inert unity. Earlier mention was made recalling Plato's dialectic in the *Parmenides* on the derivation of the many from the one, specifically from the proposition: the one is. It is the internal dialectic of the concept that has been expounded; it is easiest to grasp the dialectic of the proposition, *that the many is one*, as external reflection; and, inasmuch as the subject matter also, *the many*, is a mutual externality, reflection may indeed be external here. This comparison of the many with one another immediately shows that each is absolutely determined just as any other; each is a one, each a one of many; each is

> by excluding the others—so that they are absolutely the same; absolutely one determination is present. This is a *matter of fact*, and all that needs to be done is simply to grasp the fact. If in its stubbornness the understanding refuses to do it, it is only because it *also* has distinction in mind, and rightly so; but distinction is not left out because of that fact, as surely as the fact is no less there despite distinction. One could, as it were, reassure the understanding concerning this simple grasp of the fact of unity that distinction will also come in again.[203]

Why is it that "the truth of the one and the many appears in inadequate form" when it is "expressed in propositions"? This question gets at the root of Hegel's concern not only with ancient dialectic—the propositional content from which the very problem of the one/many is derived as "the one is"—but also with propositions themselves. Hegel here indicates that "such a truth" (of the one/many) "is to be grasped and expressed only as a becoming, as a process," not only as a proposition. If we've eaten our vegetables that is the propaedeutic *Phenomenology of Spirit*, we already know what's required of propositions if they are going to have anything to do with dialectic. That is, in that earlier text, he writes that "dialectical movement . . . has propositions for its parts or elements," but a proposition must not be the assertion of a static position and "mere content" but also a formal process, an "opposite movement," which he calls the "return of the Notion [or Concept] into itself."[204] What any given proposition *says* is less important than how it moves, goes out from itself to propose *something else*, and returns to itself having gone through its opposition: it returns modified, only to repeat the process again.[205] Thus, "this movement . . . constitutes . . . the dialectical movement of the proposition itself."[206] Applying this lesson to the *Science of Logic* in the above passage, Hegel indicates that the ancient dialectic of the one/many must appreciate that "each is absolutely determined just as any other"; only a stubborn expositor would refuse this point—a refusal, Hegel is clear to say, that itself points to the ineluctability of "distinction."

And so? The simple point is before our very eyes. *Hegel applies the dialectic of identity/difference to the ancient problem of the one/many precisely in the way medievals do.*[207] Hegel knows what's up. For him, there is no pure Plato; only a mediated Plato, mediated by centuries of medieval commentary on the *Parmenides*, commentary within which the dialectic of identity/difference was conceived.

Coda on Antinomies: What about Kant?

If it appears that this brief history of the medieval dialectic of identity and difference is a creature of Hegelian observation—that only Hegel would understand the historicity of these logical terms, only Hegel would use them in contradistinction to classical forms of dialectic or zombie forms of modern skeptic dialectic—we should give Kant, hailed at the outset of this chapter, the final say, if for no other reason than to show the proximity of these premodern dialectical problems to what can be loosely called German idealism and, more specifically, transcendental idealism. We would not, after all, want these issues to seem too much of a thing of the past. Or would we?

Kant would say yes. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, he offers a series of dialectic examples in his four antinomies, which mimic that scholastic disputational form of arguing "pro" and "contra" on a proposition as a matter of formal training within the university. Rather brilliantly, he argues both sides, the "thesis" and the "antithesis," of propositions such as, "Does the world have a beginning in time and is limited by space?"[208] In arguing both sides, he shows that both the thesis and the antithesis of any proposition about the world, the composition of things, and the problems of freedom, necessity, and contingency can be thoroughly and persuasively argued. That very demonstration is both the point and the problem: the self-consistency and confidence of each side begins to appear troubling and shows the degree to which each position is rationalized on its own terms. While, technically speaking, Kant intends to expose the outright failure of "pure reason" to understand the difference between the matters of empiricism (or appearances), intuition (or the a priori of space and time), and pure speculation (metaphysics), his overall aim is to expose dialectic to be, to use his phrase, "merely dialectical."

What does he mean by this criticism? I believe Kant intends to show that dialectical arguments, dialectical oppositions, that proceed according to the logic of identity/difference are false ones. In other words, for Kant, the "merely dialectical" seeks to prove itself true by showing its opposite to be false; it establishes its own identity through, obviously, difference.[209] Kant goes on to show that what is lost to both sides caught in a "merely dialectical" scenario—and this point gets at the core of his effort to vitiate the dialectic of identity and difference, ensconce it within the table of categories, and demote its importance to just one of several logical functions, and instead offer his own "transcendental" alternative—is that each opposite is already a false one, an artificial difference mistaken for a real one, because each side is, from the first, talking about different orders of reality: one speaks of appearances, the other of noumena. If you are caught up in the world of appearance, you are not arguing against a supposed opponent concerned with noumena, thereby precluding any effort to construct an opposite as the negative image of your own position, and so forth.[210] Of course, Kant, as is his wont, makes order out of this disorder, stating that all four of the antinomies—again, unbeknownst to the dialecticians—evince a proof for transcendental idealism in the ways they split up reality according to noumena and phenomena.[211] By rather ingenious argumentation, then, Kant casts the dialectic behind as the empty shell of history.

But of what history? The Middle Ages? Kant opts for a distinct anti-medievalism—a "most acute criticism" indeed—to put to rest the flights of fancy notorious among the pure reasoners.[212] For him, the dialectic is a moiety of archaic modes, scholastic argumentation peppered with quasi-feudal ideas about honor and conflict:

> Unfortunately for speculation (but perhaps fortunately for the practical vocation) of humanity, reason sees itself, in the midst of its greatest expectations, so entangled in a crowd of arguments and counterarguments that it is not feasible, on account either of its honor or even its security, for reason to withdraw and look upon the quarrel with indifference, as a mere mock fight.[213]

In viewing the dialectic as a "mere mock fight" involving the noble value of honor and a militaristic sense of security, Kant is rendering the dialectic not only as philosophically irrelevant but as an antiquarian curiosity evoking knights in armor: "For the only battleground for [pure reason] would have to be sought in the field of pure theology and psychology; but this ground will bear no warrior in full armor and equipped with weapons to be feared."[214] Such anti-medievalism freely flows forth throughout the *Critique*: "Fight as they may, the shadows that they cleave apart grow back together again in an instant, like the heroes in Valhalla, to amuse themselves anew in the bloodless battles."[215]

Kant's fish to fry is not medieval philosophy, however. It is contemporary philosophy, especially metaphysics, that has fallen "back into the same old worm-eaten *dogmatism*."[216] In particular, though here without naming names, Kant is referring to the philosopher Christian Wolff, whose "theoretical philosophy" falls rather precisely into the four "propositions" of Kant's antinomies.[217] Wolff is by no means a theological throwback to the Middle Ages—instead, he was an inveterate reasoner using mathematics as a basis for all inquiry[218]—but Kant painted him and his present-day students with the brush of anti-medievalism, in which "what rules is tedium and complete indifferentism, the mother of chaos and night in the sciences, but at the same time also the origin . . . of their incipient transformation and enlightenment."[219] In the preface to the second edition of the *Critique*, Kant is even more explicit in his choice of terms and target. There, he lets us know that contemporary metaphysics are a holdover from an earlier age—"it is older than all other sciences, and would remain even if all the others were swallowed up by an all-consuming barbarism";[220] it is a form of pseudo-debate (or non-dialectic), in which disagreement is the norm and mock contestations the convention: "it is so far from reaching unanimity in the assertions of its adherents that it is rather a battlefield, and indeed one that appears to be especially determined for testing one's powers in mock combat."[221] And here, the target emerges as "the famous Wolff, the greatest among all dogmatic philosophers," heralding the "dogmatic way of thinking prevalent in his age, and for this the philosophers of his as all previous times have nothing for which to reproach themselves."[222] For Kant, Wolff's methods are as old as they come; disagreement in the schools is saddled, if not by *politesse,* then by ungrounded debates that go nowhere and everywhere all at once, devolving into contradictions left and right and never making an advance toward an empirically grounded science.

Hegel would have none of this. And one can be sure it is not on account of Wolff,[223] nor, for that matter, medieval scholastic logic, which, like so many previous schools in the history of philosophy, Hegel found to misunderstand the dialectic, as his lectures on the history of philosophy make abundantly clear.[224] His main objection to Kant comes in both the *Science of Logic* and *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, in which Hegel shows that Kant fails to recognize the key characteristics of dialectical method: "Since each of the two opposed sides contains its other within itself and neither can be thought without the other, it follows that neither of these determinations, taken alone, has truth; this belongs to their unity. This is the true dialectical consideration of them and also the true result."[225] Kant's sham scholastic debate is anything but dialectical because, primarily, both opposed positions neglect to define themselves over and against their Other, *even if* they are talking about different domains. Hegel is quite correct in this criticism, because elsewhere in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant views the dialectical process as the contriving of artificial counter-hypotheses, objections for the sake of objecting that are "not steeled through any law of experience" and which themselves have no limit; as Kant says, "But you could go even further, and indeed raise new doubts, which have either not been suggested before or else have not been driven far enough."[226]

Yet Hegel's *best* objection to Kant—one that opens the door to the next chapter on the lord/bondsman dialectic—revolves around the problem of self-consciousness: "Kantian philosophy no doubt leads reality back to self-consciousness, but it can supply no reality to this essence of self-consciousness."[227] Hegel regards the transcendental subject (what he finds to be Kant's attempt to describe self-consciousness) as "completely void and general," "completely indeterminate and abstract."[228] Kant himself, according to Hegel, "fall[s] into contradiction, what with the barbarity of the conceptions which he refutes, and the barbarity of his own conceptions which remain behind when the others are refuted."[229] For Hegel, Kantianism is as crude and barbarous as the scholasticism Kant himself seeks to caricature in his barbarous antinomies: "This philosophy made an end of the metaphysic of the understanding as an objective dogmatism, but in fact it merely transformed it into a subjective dogmatism,"[230] because "it does not know how to obtain mastery over the individuality of self-consciousness."[231] In other words, Hegel finds Kantianism to be "idealism," a "subjective dogmatism" that can only be overcome or *grounded* when consciousness depends on an Other for definition, a consciousness that will eventually find "difference" and contradiction within itself, within the Other, and everywhere else.[232]

Readers with only a passing familiarity with Hegel's master/slave or lord/bondsman dialectic will recognize its terms here: when consciousness becomes master of itself ("Meister zu werden") and is not subject to the Other, it attains self-consciousness.[233] For Hegel, this very dialectic provides what Kant's transcendental subject could not, "reality to this essence of self-consciousness." My aim in the next chapter is to explain some of the specific features of this "reality," the ways in which Hegel consistently grounds this dialectic of a very material, yet strikingly contemporary sort in the Middle Ages. Hegel, that is, inverts Kant's dialectic (to echo Marx's motif of "inversion") and formulates his own dialectical insights about self-consciousness against the Kantian transcendental subject, which he finds to be overidealized and ungrounded.[234] The medieval terms of both Kant's and Hegel's dialectics make the point. Whereas Kant stages the dialectic as an abstract scholastic struggle in which "no combatant has ever gained the least bit of ground, nor has any been able to base any lasting possession on his victory,"[235] Hegel in his lord/bondsman dialectic proffers a struggle between two persons of different status, the lord and the bondsman, competing for the material possessions upon which their lives depend—first and foremost, land.

PART TWO

History

HORKHEIMER: The idea that freedom consists in self-determination is really rather pathetic, if all it means is that the work my master formerly ordered me to do is the same as the work I now seek to carry out on my own free will; the master did not determine his own actions.

ADORNO: The concept of self-determination has nothing to do with freedom. According to Kant, autonomy means obeying oneself.

HORKHEIMER: A misunderstanding of feudalism.

ADORNO: A necessary false consciousness, ideology.

HORKHEIMER: German idealism, bourgeois ideology: the absolute positing of the semblance of self-determination in feudalism from the standpoint of the bourgeoisie.

3

The Lord and the Bondsman

> It has not occurred to any one of these philosophers to inquire into the connection of German philosophy with German reality, the relation of their criticism to their own material surroundings.
>
> MARX AND ENGELS

> Germany will not be able to emancipate itself from the *Middle Ages* unless it emancipates itself at the same time from the *partial* victories over the Middle Ages.
>
> MARX

Marx's views about Hegel and Hegelianism are well known. What is not well known is that Marx, in writing these remarks above with Engels, overlooked two important things about his predecessor: Hegel *did* in fact connect "German philosophy with German reality," and he deeply understood that "*partial* victories over the Middle Ages" were insufficient. Of course, it is clear what these words are about. Marx, here and elsewhere, needs to declare his difference from Hegel because he adopts more or less wholesale Hegel's dialectic. As he says: "I . . . openly avowed myself the pupil of that mighty thinker. The mystification which dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general form of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner."[1] But had Marx permitted himself to realize that Hegel's dialectic is not simply a mystification but an exemplary instance of relating "criticism" to "material surroundings," we would be thinking very differently about Hegel today. We would understand how presciently Marxist he often is.

In this chapter, I wish to present this different Hegel—a Hegel whose famous dialectic of the master and the slave, above all, can be shown to be a materialist critique of feudalism so rigorous and perceptive, so illustrative of the dynamics of identity/difference, as to be the signal instance of what makes theory "critical" in the first place. We continue, then, to follow the history of identity/difference, pivoting from assessing the place of this logical, dialectical form in medieval philosophy, as outlined in the previous two chapters, to its exemplary operations within the most memorable section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where Hegel places this special dialectic within history, showing in detail how identity/difference, of all logical terms, is an adequate depiction of the struggle for recognition and possession out of which emerges a universal form of self-consciousness at a particular moment in time. We move, therefore, from philosophy and theory to "history," as signaled by the title of Part II of this book, yet—in aspiring to be true to dialectical form—we will be looking closely at Hegel's insights into the connection between history and theory, between criticism and its material surroundings (to echo Marx), discerning what exactly gives Hegel his proto-Marxist edge, what makes him theoretical.

This decidedly critical Hegel comes into view when we recognize that, both by historical accident and ethical conviction, he stood in a privileged place from which to philosophize about feudalism and, in particular, the contemporary relations of lordship and domination—*Herrschaft* (lordship) or *Grundherrschaft* (landed lordship)—practiced in Germany, and only partially identified by Marx.[2] What James J. Sheehan documents in his *German History, 1770–1866*—that Hegel's was a feudal Germany—is corroborated by many other studies:[3] "After reviewing five centuries of agrarian history, Jerome Blum concluded that in the middle of the eighteenth century, 'the face of rural Europe looked much as it had in the Middle Ages. . . . The great mass of people . . . lived at the narrow margin of subsistence, as much at the mercy of the shortage of food as their forbears had been in the thirteenth century.' "[4] Even if after 1750 we may observe the beginnings of improvements in agricultural processes, organization, and education, Sheehan insists that we "should not overestimate the rate or extent of change in the German country side."[5] For our purposes here in historically situating Hegel, it can be noted that Germany, both western and eastern Germany (or Prussia), is a prime example of uneven and mixed economic development with feudal arrangements persisting within the newer capitalist ones long after Hegel's death.[6] This is not to say that Hegel should be read as a sociologist reporting the facts of the feudal matter. It is to say, very bluntly, that Hegel effectively lived in the Middle Ages (if the persistence of feudalism, and so many of the old institutions outlined in my preface, are any indication) and that, accordingly, his narrative of master and slave relations resonates with the feudal political conditions of agrarian Germany. He, in other words, came to a persuasive and lasting theoretical statement about feudalism itself in his master/slave dialectic, knowing full well that the struggle between possession and ownership of land ultimately characterizes the personal relations of domination in *Herrschaft.*

As if in pursuit of this thesis, Herbert Marcuse wrote, "Hegel's early philosophical concepts were formulated amid a decaying German Reich. . . . The remains of feudal despotism still held sway in Germany, the more oppressive because split into a multitude of petty despotisms. . . . Serfdom was still prevalent, the peasant was still a beast of burden."[7] And more specifically, Theodor Adorno remarks that this "chapter of the *Phenomenology* historically conjures up feudalism."[8] Our task is to improve upon these insights by following closely Hegel's dialectical scenario of the master and the slave, teasing out its feudal terms and images, describing its feudal dynamics and logics, and taking stock of the fact that Hegel adds feudal *content* to the already medieval dialectical *form* of identity/difference (chap. 2), resulting in an example that explains struggle, no matter the historical setting.[9] Here, I will assemble and review versions of the master/slave dialectic in Hegel's works where it has never been properly studied in one place—the *System of Ethical Life*, *Philosophy of Right*, *Philosophy of Mind*, the lectures on the philosophy of history—and then return to the most studied example in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where I hope to show that Hegel's presentation of the feudal struggle for possession, considered by most commentators to be abstract and idealistic, is fully embedded in materiality and history.[10]

The Feudalism of the Dialectic

Jean Hyppolite pithily summarizes the lesson of the master/slave dialectic in saying that it "consists essentially in showing that the truth of the master reveals that he is the slave, and that the slave is revealed to be the master of the master."[11] There are several other good summaries of Hegel's insights,[12] but I want to linger on one of the most influential explications of Hegel's dialectic—that by Alexandre Kojève, whose views have led to a consensus of critical opinion about this portion of the *Phenomenology*. Kojève had effectively kicked off the Hegelian renaissance in France with his lectures at L'École Pratique des Hautes Études beginning in the late 1930s. These lectures were heard and/or absorbed by the likes of Georges Bataille, André Breton, Alexandre Koyre, Jacques Lacan, Emmanuel Lévinas, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Raymond Queneau, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Eric Weil.[13] Kojève also had an important colleague in the Hegelian Hyppolite, who translated Hegel's *Phenomenology* into French in the spirit of Kojève's reading, and whose students included Louis Althusser, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault.[14] Hegel's theory of "Otherness," generated by the dialectic of desire and recognition involving the master and the slave, has been ubiquitous in critical writing,[15] thanks in large part to Kojève and his students.[16]

The strengths of Kojève's reading are very clear. Kojève renders the master/slave dialectic as itself a lucid narrative of the coming to self-consciousness, drawing out the Hegelian premise that this coming to self-consciousness involves not simply another's recognition of one's own desire and subjectivity; it also requires putting oneself at risk. As Kojève puts it, "to speak of the 'origin' of Self-Consciousness is necessarily to speak of the risk of life"; it is to speak of a "fight to the death for pure prestige," putting "the life of the other in danger—in order to be 'recognized' by the other."[17] Readers of the English edition of the *Phenomenology* will find these remarks especially illustrative of paragraphs 178 to 189. Kojève also characterizes the remainder of the narrative (paragraphs 190–96 of the English edition) by pointing out that this "fight to the death" must become a different kind of struggle. For, after all, how does a dead person recognize anyone?[18] The "fight to the death" is no option, as it forecloses the opportunities for self-consciousness. There has to be a struggle whereby each side seeks to "overcome" the other, and this is the important point, "dialectically."[19] This is the struggle between the master and the slave per se; both sides resolve the struggle not by eliminating the other but rather by remaining in a relationship of inequality and interdependency. It is the battle of wills and a struggle for recognition.

It is the nature of this inequality that concerns me and which compels me to dare part ways with Kojève and most other commentators, who at this point take an even sharper phenomenological turn than I believe is necessary, a turn toward those perceptual problems of recognition and intersubjectivity in which death becomes a determining factor at the expense of other factors.[20] The trouble is that this phenomenological turn is not, it may seem odd to say, very Hegelian, because this move abstracts and obscures the underlying material problems of possession evident in Hegel's master/slave dialectic. Possession is indeed the glaring missing term in many analyses of this portion of the *Phenomenology*, including Kojève's.[21] This critical omission is crucial because, for Hegel, possession, be it possession of self (as self-consciousness) or of things (as in the mastery of equipmental totalities), is achieved through labor and is expressed phenomenally or socially by one's relationship to labor.[22] Hegel would not want the questions of labor and possession to be kept apart (and neither would Marx, for that matter), nor would he want us to blanket over the specificity of this struggle for possession, overdetermined as it is by rank and status—the feudal particulars of "lord" qua "lord" and "bondsman" qua "bondsman," and their own relationship to labor and property.

I did mean *lord* and *bondsman* and not *master* and *slave*, nor *maître* and *esclave*. And so did Hegel. This is my first point: we have been continuously mistranslating Hegel. Kojève's, Hyppolite's, Lacan's, and Slavoj Žižek's (mis)translations are cases in point, and they are only the tip of the post-Hegelian iceberg.[23] It is indeed the lord/serf or lord/bondsman dialectic, and below we shall see that these feudal terms confirm Hegel's interest in feudal forms of possession in the *Phenomenology of Spirit.* Meanwhile, this is not only a problem of translation. Most English commentators, despite the fact that the most widely used English edition of the *Phenomenology* gets it right in rendering *der Herr* and *der Knecht* as "lord" and "bondsman," hold that Hegel meant nothing by these words other than a generality about masters and slaves. We cannot discount Kojève as an influence here, too, given the ubiquity of what's been called, rightly or wrongly, "French theory" in the academic humanities in the United Kingdom and North America.

Yet Hegel is relatively consistent in his use of terms. In texts such as the *System of Ethical Life*, *Philosophy of Right*, the lectures on the philosophy of history, the *Philosophy of Mind*, and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel uses *Herr* and *Knecht* with purpose and distinction.[24] That he means these to be feudal terms is indicated by the fact that whenever he examines slavery in Greek and Roman society, he prefers a different term, *Sklave*, for "slave."[25] For instance, in *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel explains: "Thus in Roman law, for example, there could be no definition of 'man', since 'slave' [Sklave] could not be brought under it—that very status of slave indeed is an outrage on the conception of man."[26] In the same work, Hegel goes on to compare *Sklaverei* and *Herrschaft*, emphasizing how both slave-masters and feudal lords justify their domination over others:

> The alleged justification of slavery [Sklaverei] (by reference to all its proximate beginnings through physical force, capture in war, saving and preservation of life, upkeep, education, philanthropy, the slave's own acquiescence, and so forth), as well as the justification of a slave-ownership [Herrschaft] as simple lordship [Herrenschaft] in general, all historical views of the justice of slavery [Recht der Sklaverei] and lordship [Herrenschaft], depend on regarding man as a natural entity pure and simple, as an existent not in conformity with its concept (an existent to which arbitrariness is appropriation).[27]

It should be clear, with the insertion of the German terms in brackets, that the English rendering has not served its readers well, for the point of this passage is to say that "the justification of *Sklaverei . . . as well as* the justification of *Herrschaft* as *Herrenschaft*" rest on an idea of humanity as a "natural entity pure and simple" that can be appropriated and taken as property as can (supposedly) any other natural object. While Hegel observes, in other words, that two kinds of domination across history have something terrible in common, he is not claiming that *Sklaverei* and *Herrschaft* are therefore the same. If they were, he would not have used two different terms.[28]

Where these two forms of domination differ is in the distinction between *Sklave* and *Knecht*. Here is how Hegel unpacks the distinction, elaborating on his remarks above:

> The position of the free will, with which right and the science of right begin, is already in advance of the false position at which man, as a natural entity and only the concept implicit, is for that reason capable of being enslaved. This false, comparatively primitive, phenomenon of slavery is one which befalls mind when mind is only at the level of consciousness. The dialectic of the concept and of the purely immediate consciousness of freedom brings about at that point the fight for recognition and the relationship of lord *and bondsman*.[29]

Hegel's thought unfolds across passages—that is the point of his dialectical exposition or *Darstellung*—and this one is no exception. He begins by saying that the science of right (*Rechtswissenschaft*) is already ahead of "the primitive phenomenon of slavery [Sklaverei]," already far beyond any notion of *Recht der Sklaverei* (above) that would justify the enslavement of humans. Where things change is in the "dialectic" that brings about a new situation and a new way of thinking about human freedom—or one could say, the new situation that brings about that "dialectic" between the concept of freedom and the immediate or spontaneous sense of freedom (which is the primitive, non-universal form).[30] Either way, Hegel means to talk about a "dialectic" that wasn't previously available to the "sklave"—namely, "the fight for recognition [Anerkennens] and the relationship of lord and bondsman [das Verhältnis der Herrenschaft und der Knechtschaft]." But when that "dialectic" begins, so too does a new identity (*Knecht*) and a new relation, to self and to other (*Herr*). This distinction explains why Hegel changes terms here, shifting from a discussion of *Sklaverei* to that of *Knechtschaft*, and why—most importantly—he never uses *Sklave* or *Sklaverei* to refer to the *Knecht* and his new opportunities for self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.[31] Hegel wants to keep these terms apart, and he is consistent about these distinctions in his early *First Philosophy of Spirit* (1803–4), in which he never uses the word *Knecht*, because there he is trying to explain how enslavement transpires;[32] and in his later *Philosophy of Mind*, especially sections §432,[33] §433,[34] and §435.[35] There, Hegel observes differences between *Knecht* and *Sklave* in ways consistent with his thinking in the *Philosophy of Right*.[36]

A word makes a world of difference. That Hegel omits *Sklaverei* in the relevant portion of the *Phenomenology* makes historical sense, in turn help-ing us to discern the historical frame of reference in which he sets his lord/bondsman dialectic (if it's not obvious already).[37] For instance, in the lectures on the philosophy of history, he states "that self-consciousness which independence confers, [the Greeks] could not have"; of "the *Greek spirit*," he believes that the principle of freedom "is peculiar to the individual," that freedom is not a universal whereby self-possession can be attained as a moral imperative.[38] The idea of freedom here is not premised on, or motivated by, an antagonism toward a powerful Other nor does it involve that element of mediation that will be crucial to the struggle for possession, land: "Greek freedom of thought is excited by an alien existence; but it is free because it transforms and virtually reproduces the stimulus by its own operation."[39] As such, there is no dialectic of desire or recognition of the kind Hegel lays out in the relevant portions of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, nor a struggle for possession.[40] Indeed, Hegel says in numerous places that ancient slaves never achieve universal self-consciousness. While anyone with a pulse should be politically unsympathetic with that view, political wishes should not distort Hegel's point (though this is by no means to exclude the best possibilities of a Left Hegelianism, which distinguishes the Frankfurt School, especially Adorno). We also cannot assume, as many commentators have, that Hegel's *Herr/Knecht* dialectic is a commentary strictly about classical antiquity.[41] That would be a philosophical mistake—at least in Hegelian terms—and it would be missing Hegel's point about history.[42] For it is only in the Romantic era, as Hegel understands it, only in the European or Christian Middle Ages, in other words, that we begin to see modernity and freedom. In Christianity, "self-consciousness had reached the phases of development [Momente]"; and, "under Christianity Slavery is impossible [die Sklaverei ist im Christentum unmöglich]."[43] Granted, serfdom, as many have noted before, including medieval commentators, is a form of slavery and is explicitly called that, but not all slavery is precisely serfdom—*unless* Hegel is speaking in absolute and undialectical terms, whereby opportunities for self-consciousness are altogether unavailable for the slave who is himself constituted purely as an object, a possession.[44]

Yet, for Hegel, feudalism—whether it is that exampled in the Middle Ages or in practices in contemporary Germany—is the specific political structure and social arrangement within which modernity and freedom are realized, a point to be well taken if we are to give any credence to this important and most widely cited passage:

> In the same way that serfdom [Leibeigenschaft], which made a man's body [der Leib] not his own, but the property of another, dragged humanity

> through all the barbarism of serfdom [der Knechtschaft] and unbridled desire, and the latter was destroyed by its own violence. It was not so much *from* serfdom [aus der Knechtschaft] as *through* serfdom [durch die Knechtschaft] that humanity was emancipated.[45]

Hegel is writing here on the German Middle Ages, but this point is iterated across his oeuvre. It would be unwise to ignore the consequences of the historical specificity of the lord/bondsman dialectic—and the largely feudal frame in which he formulates it.[46] Likewise, it would be unsound to ignore precisely what Hegel means by emancipation "through serfdom." It means that history has to reach a point where *Knechtschaft*, not *Sklaverei*, is prevalent, so that through serfdom (*durch die Knechtschaft*) emancipation and universal self-consciousness can be achieved. My point here is to grant that this particular dialectic can mean many things, even the many things of the French Hegelians, but no amount of idealizing Hegel can do away with the precise terms of feudalism on display here.[47] If we insist on seeing this dialectical scenario as an allegory for all struggles across history, and if we find that its particular set of contradictions and reversals are compelling enough to apply across diverse bodies of thought, then we will want to know how Hegel, in his usual fashion, can carry off phenomenology *as* history: feudalism affords him that opportunity—a first chance to adopt the medieval as a perspective on modernity.

The Dialectic of Possession

Possession swallows its tail.

ED PAVLIC

In seeking to understand the meaning of Hegel's *Herr/Knecht* dialectic as a struggle for possession, we must begin with the classic question of feudalism so well articulated by the historians J. A. F. Thomson and Marc Bloch: "Whose land is this?"[48] Likewise, the historian J. J. Sheehan asks of the German situation, "Who controls the land?" explaining how "this turns out to be an extremely difficult question to answer," owing to the ambiguities of ownership in feudalism.[49] The question, in fact, goes to the crux of the contradiction in feudalism: numerous persons within the feudal hierarchies, from bottom to top, could answer, "This land is mine!" "It is mine because I manage it," says the manorial lord. "It is mine because my family has been working on this land for generations," says the peasant farmer. "No to both of you, this is my land because I hold the deed that goes back centuries," says the neighboring magnate. "No to all three of you, because your deed is false because it was written by monks," says another. And so on. There begins the conflict or antagonism up and down feudal society. Historians are unanimous on the point that feudalism is characterized by this peculiar struggle for possession, a struggle between "ownership" and "effective possession" of land—the former a mode of possession via legal right and military force, the latter a mode of possession via labor. Marxist historians especially, such as Perry Anderson, Barry Hindess and Paul Q. Hirst, and Rodney Hilton, accept that this struggle generated the new forms of peasant self-consciousness exhibited throughout the late Middle Ages, whereby serfs broke their servile bonds and became themselves landholders.[50]

Hegel is working this angle so as to cast the struggle for possession and the contradictions between ownership and effective possession as the motor of his *Herr/Knecht* dialectic, and in so doing he writes in miniature a history of feudalism or, better, a dialectical scenario that pointedly emphasizes the central problem of any feudal formation. That much is clear in the *System of Ethical Life*, the *Philosophy of Right*, and the lectures on the philosophy of history. We shall treat these texts here, bearing in mind that *System of Ethical Life* is especially relevant for being either a draft of the *Philosophy of Right* or the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In these three texts, we find the feudal problems of labor, possession, alienation, surplus, and extraction that will be relevant to our rereading of *Phenomenology of Spirit* and, ultimately, to a sense as to why Hegel is presciently Marxist.

In *System of Ethical Life*, Hegel, in true dialectical fashion, discusses these topics within a narrative frame about the transition from one form of labor to another. He speaks not about the transition from feudalism to capitalism, nor of these as modes of production in the Marxian sense. Rather, his interest is to speak of the ever-changing *relationship to labor* (as opposed to the Marxian interest in the shifting and ever-alienating relationships to the means of production). Hegel calls these two relationships "the living natural relation" and the "fixed relation." The natural relation or natural labor is a whole way of life that satisfies all need through labor.[51] The "fixed" or "universal" relation appears to involve the more historically familiar forms of labor ranging from feudalism to protocapitalism that generate dispossession and alienation. Hegel's chief interest is in the confrontation between these two forms of labor. While his wording on this point seems obscure—"The living natural relation becomes nevertheless a fixed relation which it was not previously; also universality must hover over this natural relation and overcome this fixed relation"[52]—some terminological clarification can help. By *universal*, Hegel does not mean the more colloquial "applicable to everyone or every case" nor the more philosophical sense of "a generality adequate to every particular under its class." Rather, he uses the terms *fixed* and *universal* to speak of an effect, of what happens when a universal *confronts* a particular, when a feudal or protocapitalist form of labor absorbs these specific and various organic labor processes through generalizing demands such as the parceling and specialization of labor tasks. When natural labor confronts for the first time a new, universalized mode of labor not emergent from the particulars of "life," much less the laborer's and family's own needs, when such a universal is imposed on natural labor, alienation begins. Natural labor becomes "partitioned" and "more mechanical, because variety is excluded from it, and so it becomes itself something more universal, more foreign to [the living] whole." Any natural labor that is not integrated into "universality" or the new laboring organization becomes a remainder, a surplus. This surplus becomes the subject of a struggle for possession, and a further cause of alienation.[53]

That the dialectical struggle concerns possession is quite clear, as the following passage indicates: "Thus this possession has lost its meaning for the practical feeling of the subject and is no longer a need of his, but a *surplus*. . . . The subject is [not] simply determined as a possessor, but is taken up into the form of universality; he is a single individual with a bearing on others and universally negative as a possessor recognized as such by others."[54] At one point, Hegel describes this "universal negative" that is now possession as a force, like a magnet, compelled toward unification—in other words, toward repossession.[55] At another point, he speaks of the "recognition of possession."[56] It is in this latter form that we come upon the struggle that would be (for twentieth- and twenty-first century readers) a centerpiece of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and which for Hegel in *System of Ethical Life* assumes the problematics of freedom, property, and possession:

> But because the individual as such is purely and simply one with (his) life, not simply related to life, it is impossible to say of life, as it could be said of other things with which he is purely in relation, that he possesses it. . . . In this recognition of life or in the thinking of the other as absolute concept, the other (person) exists as a free being, as the possibility of being the opposite of himself with respect to some specific characteristic. . . . At this (level) a living individual confronts a living individual, but their power (*Potenz*) of life is unequal. Thus one is might or power over the other. . . . This relation in which the indifferent and free has power over the different is the relationship of *lordship and bondage* (or master and servant).[57]

With regard to the last set of editorial insertions by the translators, Hegel writes: "Dieses Verhältniß, das indifferente und freye, das mächtige ist, ge-

gen das differente, is das Verhältniß *der Herrschafft und Knechtschafft.*"[58] We proceed: "The master is in possession of a surplus, of what is physically necessary; the servant lacks it [der Herr ist im Besitz eines Überflusses des physischen Nothwendigen überhaupt, und der andere im Mangel desselben]".[59] The bondsman recognizes the lord's freedom, the lord as a "free being," but does he recognize his own freedom in this ineluctable power relation?[60] Does he achieve self-consciousness?

The answer to this question brings us to the center of the feudal arrangements, and ever deeper into the *System of Ethical Life*, where Hegel speaks of "the classes" of society. These he divides into three—the "absolute and free," the "honest" class, "and a class of unfree or natural ethical life," which are lords (the military, landed class), the bourgeoisie, and the peasantry.[61] Hegel explains that "the work [of the lordly class] can be nothing but the waging of war or training for this work," and its labor is the "indifferent labor of government and courage"; the military class sees to the "security of their property and possessions" of the other two classes, a view to which Hegel will return in his discussion of this dialectical scenario in the German Middle Ages in the lectures on the philosophy of history. The middle class, the "honest" class, does not, of course, figure anywhere in the lord/bondsman relation, though it does stand as a mediator or administrator between these two classes in the transfer and management of surpluses—looking already like Marx's bourgeoisie, which comes to own labor through exchange.[62] Finally, the third class is the "peasantry," whose labor is "more of a mean, affecting the soil or animal, something living."[63] Through labor, the peasantry expresses its social being, its "ethical life," and stands in a special relation with the first class—the military class, the lordly class, the absolute class: "The ethical life of this class is trust in the absolute class, in accord with the totality of the first class. . . . On account of its totality [as a class] it is also capable of courage and in this labor and in the danger of death can be associated with the first class."[64] It is here that we hear the echo of self-consciousness—a peasantry "capable of courage" at the risk of death, much like the first class, which itself exhibits courage. There is symmetry here, as well as opposition, in other words. There is not only the potential for a struggle between the first and third class but also an opportunity for peasant self-consciousness to emerge out of its dependency.[65]

As is evident to the translators of *System of Ethical Life*, Harris and Knox, Hegel is talking about late feudalism and "the possibility of serfdom."[66] While he seems here to be speaking about a new or transitional feudalism of the kind that creates and sustains a bureaucracy that is a class in itself—the bourgeoisie—he understands these landed, labor relations to be essentially feudal. No early nineteenth-century citation of "the peasantry," at any rate, can bracket the feudal situation of the said peasantry, as Hegel confirmed in his later *Philosophy of Spirit* (1805–6).[67] And any modern historian knows this fact, too. Otto Brunner writes in his authoritative history of Germany: "In Germany, despite revolution and reform, the old 'feudal society,' the old society of the Estates, continued to exist with only minor changes."[68] Walter Schlesinger expands this point:

> Thus, well into modern times, a form of lordship continued that was nothing but the private and public lordship over land and people descended unchanged from the early Middle Ages. The principalities of the Schwarzburgs and the Reuss were constructions of a similar sort, as was the principality of Waldeck whose nineteenth-century "sovereignty" should not deceive us; in reality, here was another undivided lordship from the Middle Ages that had not given way to a "modern" state. Such too was the lordship of Schonburg, swallowed up by the Electorate of Saxony in 1740 but retaining jurisdiction by right of its own authority until 1878—a medieval noble lordship that finally disappeared in the Bismarckian state.[69]

This is not a polemical point, nor one that is particularly theoretical: within such a history, Hegel can see that the fundamental structures of feudalism are present, surviving political changes, and in need of diagnosis. To him the questions of land and *Grundherrschaft* remain available for response, figuration, and philosophy—even given his early enthusiasm for the abolition of the French estates whereby one can celebrate the real-time destruction of feudalism as a slow, but ongoing, process.[70] It is here that we must not explain away, as so many readers of Hegel do, what *Knecht* means—how it is a major contemporary term for the forms of servitude most medieval and many modern Europeans experienced.[71]

We won't need to cite historians further, at least not in a way to make salient Hegel's feudal dialectics. For Hegel himself takes a markedly historical and historicist turn toward feudalism in the *Philosophy of Right*, a work that, again, appears to have been drafted as the *System of Ethical Life*. In the early portions of *Philosophy of Right*, especially in the section entitled "Property," Hegel explains possession, beginning with its literal sense to grasp and use an object and continuing to the more metaphorical forms of possession, which "extend the range of my power" to possess. These extensions are "mechanical forces, weapons, tools."[72] It so follows, Hegel explains, that labor is the work of possession, an act of the will to shape one's surroundings: "To impose a form on a thing is the mode of taking possession."[73] Hegel offers agricultural examples: "tilling of the soil, the cultivation of plants, the taming and feeding of animals, the preservation of game, as well as contrivances for utilizing raw materials or the forces of nature and processes for making one material produce effects on another, and so forth."[74] Eventually, one's desire for possessions transforms into another kind of possession—the possession of self. Here, we have to be clear: Hegel is talking about "self-consciousness" in terms consistent with those in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*—the work of identity formation itself, over and against not just plows and plants and nature, but rather other people, Other consciousnesses from which to distinguish the Self. Hegel says this of the farmer: "It is only through the development of his own body and mind, essentially through his self-consciousness's apprehension of itself as free, that he takes possession of himself and becomes his own property and no one else's."[75]

This is precisely the moment where Hegel speaks of "the relationship of master and slave," or "lord" and "serf" ("das Verhältnis der Herrenschaft und der Knechtschaft"),[76] and indeed it is here that he cites the relevant portion of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, referencing and confirming the notion that the "fight for recognition" should be seen as a struggle for possession. Hegel's point is quite ambitious, actually, charting a social transformation over the course of history, the end point at which slaves recognize themselves and recognize their masters as being dependent on slaves. The beginning of that point, the end of an older model of identity, is the Middle Ages. His subsequent examples make this clear when he starts to qualify notions of possession, such as possession in "use," in which "the distinctive character of the property of a feudal tenant is that he is supposed to be the owner of the use only, not the value of the thing."[77] Other examples include "dominion," "the relations of *dominium directum* and *dominium utile*" that involve "estates in fee with the ground rents and other rents, dues, villeinage, &c."[78] It is here that Hegel makes a crucial revision to the *System of Ethical Life* in the *Philosophy of Right*—namely, that not every plurality of persons can be thought of as a lord/bondsman relation, but rather only those social relations emerging explicitly within feudalism.[79]

Hegel packs all of this analysis into a few pages in the *Philosophy of Right* yet elaborates on these ideas at substantial length in his lectures on the philosophy of history, our final example before returning to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In these lectures, he fleshes out the lord/bondsman dialectic with more concrete (and familiar) historical examples, exploring possession in the German Middle Ages. We can read the passages quoted below with Kojève's "risk" in mind, but also begin to acknowledge the historiographic principle at work in Hegel—the movement from violence to institutions, from the initial "fight for recognition" at the risk of death to the resolution of inequality between the two parties, whereby the latter yields his or her will and property to the former, and whereby the lord/bondsman relation appears as such. Hegel writes:

> The need for protection is sure to be felt in some degree in every well-organized state: each citizen knows his rights and also knows that for the security of possession the social state is absolutely necessary. . . . Men must first be placed in a defenceless condition, before they were sensible of the necessity of the organization of a State. . . . As observed above, the idea of duty was not present in the Spirit of the Germans; it had to be restored. In the first instance volition could only be arrested in its wayward career in reference to the merely external point of *possession*; and to make it feel the importance of the protection of the State, it had to be violently dislodged from its obtuseness and impelled by necessity to seek union and a social condition.[80]

That was the setup. Hegel goes on to trace the historical emergence of the lord/bondsman dialectic, and its attendant struggle for possession:

> Individuals were therefore obliged to consult for themselves by taking refuge with Individuals, and submitted to the authority of certain powerful persons, who constituted a private possession and personal sovereignty out of that authority which formerly belonged to the Commonwealth. As *officers of the State*, the counts did not meet with obedience from those committed to their charge, and they were as little desirous of it. . . . They assumed to themselves the power of State, and made the authority with which they had been intrusted [sic] as a *beneficium*, a heritable possession. As in earlier times the King or other magnates conferred fiefs on their vassals by way of rewards, now, conversely, the weaker and poorer surrendered their possessions to the strong, for the sake of gaining efficient protection. They committed their estates to a Lord, a Convent, an Abbot, a Bishop [*feudum oblatum*], and received them back, encumbered with feudal obligations to these superiors.[81]

Hegel here is explaining in more overt historical terms the conditions necessary for all of his lord/bondsman and, more broadly, feudal dialectics.[82] For Hegel, possession itself is what forms a feudal condition (or realm) in the first place, is what settled the nomads: "The ferocity and savage valor that characterized the predatory life of the barbarians—[is] pacified and brought to a settled state by possession."[83] Here again the narrative moves from Hobbesian natural violence to institutions. And this social transformation brings with it a transformation of desire—a redirection of what Hegel calls the "martial spirit" of the barbarians, now manifesting itself in the fierce protection of "private interests" and "private property."[84] The fight, or the desire for the fight, has been sublimated into political arrangements (bringing us half way to Marx's "relations of production").

Yet in the same way that possession is the very making of the feudalism, it is also its undoing—characteristic of those well-known "dialectical reversals" of Hegel.[85] As we learn in the lectures on the philosophy of history, the internal contradictions of feudalism transform into outright antagonisms—even revolution. Our first task is to think of the dialectical reversal as possession gone wild, the accumulation of so many goods that the entire system risks collapsing under its own weight and can prop itself up only by using ideological means. Enter the medieval church, which possesses the powers of the Holy in the sacraments, which possesses the Truth "in virtue of knowledge, teaching, and training," which possesses "enormous property," and, finally, by way of crusades, which possesses "all Holy places of note—Bethlehem, Gethsemane, Golgotha, and even the *Holy Sepulchre*."[86] The centripetal tendencies of possession in the church especially—and this is Hegel's Lutheranism talking—is what gives feudalism its critical mass, generating ever more the very contradictions that destroy the entire apparatus and make possible the Reformation, Luther, and the modern state.[87] By critiquing the church in this way, Hegel is talking about the worst in "private property" but a potential revolution against its alienating tendencies. We should not only remember these points as we look forward to Marx, who so inveighed against private property, but also bear in mind that we are now alighting upon one of the most clear and telling lessons of the lord/bondsman dialectic itself, as summarized by Hyppolite—a lesson of dependency in possessive lordship.[88] Indeed, for Hegel, this lesson has, in the lectures on the philosophy of history, a feudal twist:

> The principle of free possession however began to develop itself from the protective relation of feudal protection; i.e. freedom originated in its direct contrary. The feudal lords or great barons enjoyed, properly speaking, no free or absolute possession, any more than their dependents; they had unlimited power of the latter, but at the same time they also were vassals of princes higher and mightier than themselves, and to whom they were engagements—which, it must be confessed, they did not fulfil [sic] except under compulsion.[89]

Subinfeudination, the ever-ascending orders of domination characteristic of feudalism, brings a whole new character to the maxim, derived from the so-called master/slave dialectic in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, that the master is really the slave, dependent upon the slave to recognize his or her mastery. The new lesson of this dialectic is that the lord is the serf, no more in possession of the land than the serf, because he stands below a greater lord. Yet, as Hegelian history has it, the serfs begin to repossess themselves (their selves) and form alliances irrespective of lords: "Individuals brought into closer relation by the soil which they cultivated, formed among themselves a kind of confederation or *conjuratio*. They agreed to be and to perform on their own herald that which they had previously been and performed in the service of the feudal lord alone."[90] This, in a very real sense, is a class consciousness that Hegel will call "self-consciousness" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, to which we turn, now that we have established the feudal frame of Hegel's lord/bondsman dialectic.[91]

Phenomenology of Spirit: "Jenes is der *Herr*, dies der *Knecht*"

Because we understand the terms and problems necessary to recognize the feudal frame within which Hegel situates his lord/bondsman dialectic, we can say something more specific than Adorno's throwaway remark cited above, something more than this tantalizing single sentence by Robert Solomon: "The imagery here is rather that of a feudal lord, growing fat and lazy on the sweat of his servant (probably servants, but let's leave it at one)."[92] To be clear, the section in question, entitled "Independence and Dependence of Self-Consciousness," does not start out with feudal references, nor does it declare its medievalism from the first, until the episode itself passes from the struggle to the death to the struggle for recognition and for possession. Yet as soon as it enters into the struggle for possession, Hegel appropriately names the chief players, once called only "two opposed shapes of consciousness": "The former is the lord, the other is the bondsman [jenes is der Herr, dies der Knecht]."[93] This naming is extremely significant, for it is only at this point that the feudal problems of possession, dispossession, and possession in dispossession are on full display, giving full meaning to the subtitle to this section, "Lordship and Bondage [Herrschaft und Knechtschaft]."[94]

Here, for example, is a segment of Hegel's lord/bondsman dialectic that emerges as entirely consistent—in theoretical and historical terms—with the other Hegelian works I discussed above:

> The lord [Herr] relates himself mediately to the bondsman [Knecht] through a being (a thing) that is independent, for it is just this which holds the bondsman in bondage; it is his chain [Kette] from which he could not break free in the struggle, thus proving himself to be dependent, to possess his independence in thinghood [seine Selbständigkeit in der Dingheit zu haben erwies].

> But the lord is the power over this thing, for he proved in the struggle that it is something merely negative; since he is the power over this thing [die Macht über dies Sein] and this again is the power over the other (the bondsman), it follows that he holds the other in subjection [so hat er in diesem Schlusse diesen Anderen unter sich]. Equally, the lord relates himself mediately to the thing through the bondsman: the bondsman, *qua* self-consciousness in general, also relates himself negatively to the thing, and takes away its independence [der Knecht bezieht sich als Selbstbewußtsein überhaupt auf das Ding auch negativ und hebt es auf]; but at the same time the thing is independent *vis-à-vis* the bondsman, whose negating of it, therefore, cannot go the length of being altogether done with it to the point of annihilation; in other words, he only *works* on [bearbeitet] it.[95]

We can now recognize more here than a vocabulary often considered difficult to fathom; we can look for a hermeneutical and historical payoff. Take, for instance, "The lord relates himself mediately to the bondsman through a being (a thing) that is independent," or "The lord is the power over this thing." What is this "being," this "thing"? It is not "life" as is usually glossed with reference to the earlier portions of this episode, but rather "land"—the struggle over which is a struggle for possession, the definition of identity in possession.[96] The bondsman "relates himself negatively to the thing" because the thing is not his, the land is not his. What is this "negation" by which the bondsman relates to land? Negation is work, "cutting," cultivation, the activities of "plowing" cited in the *Philosophy of Right*—all of which are exercises in effective possession of land, a labor or "negating of it" that can never be done, for the bondsman "cannot go the length of being altogether done with it," because no amount of work will bring him into possession of it. *Negation* is, therefore, the appropriate term for this labor, because it is thoroughly alienating for the bondsman.[97] The lord enjoys the fruits of the bondsman's negation or labor through his extraction of this labor, his forcible dispossession and his powerful possession, by which he installs himself between the bondsman's labor and its yield: "For the lord, on the other hand, the *immediate* relation becomes through this mediation the sheer negation of the thing, or the enjoyment of it [Dem Herrn dagegen *wird* durch diese Vermittlung die *unmittelbare* Beziehung als die reine Negation desselben oder der *Genuß*]".[98] The lord gains an immediate relation to the land through, paradoxically, mediation. Hegel clarifies:

> but the lord, who has interposed the bondsman between it and himself, takes to himself only the dependent aspect of the thing and has the pure enjoyment of it. The aspect of its independence he leaves to the bondsman, who works on it.

> [der Herr aber, der den Knecht zwischen es und sich eingeschoben, schließt sich dadurch nur mit der Unselbeständigkeit des Dinges zusammen und genießt es rein; die Seite der Selbständigkeit aber überläßt er dem Knechte, der es bearbeitet.][99]

This is a social relationship: the one who enjoys is not the one who works. The one who enjoys is the one who consumes with a labor of expenditure, a negation of another sort. In short, if the "thing" that is land holds the bondsman "in subjection," it is on account of the feudal arrangement per se, and it is the contradiction inherent in feudalism that creates an opening for the bondsman to escape his servitude.[100]

Thus the lord/bondsman dialectic in the *Phenomenology* is not as ahistorical as it initially seems, nor is it pure idealism, some kind of phenomenological retreat from materiality. Nor is it "social" in the baggiest sense of the term. It is feudal. I shall insist on this reading in view of the suggestion that "it would be wrong . . . to try to build up Hegel's account of this (and other) historical episodes into an historicist reading of the *Phenomenology* as a whole."[101] I cannot claim to have supplied a reading of the "whole" of the *Phenomenology* (though in chap. 5 I will discuss other feudal examples in this work). But any notion that it is "wrong" to think about Hegel more historically and contextually is absurd and contrary to the premises of intellectual history.[102] Such exhortations to keep Hegel in the ideal, as Hyppolite particularly has recommended, have not prevented Hegel's readers, however, from hazarding a historical framework for the lord/bondsman dialectic. This dialectical scenario has been contextualized as having an essentially Platonic foundation,[103] or as referring to ancient Greek culture and reading "almost like a burlesque on Aristotle's account of slavery in the *Politics*,"[104] or as a reflection on the Haitian revolution.[105] To my mind, feudalism is the easier and most obvious answer to the question of historical context for Hegel's *Herr/Knecht* dialectic, since this is after all the historical frame in which, at least according to Hegel, self-consciousness becomes at all possible.

Marx and the Middle Ages

We now can understand more fully the Hegelian background of one of Marx's more classic accounts of ideology and fetishism and witness the establishment within Marxism of a long tradition of critique. I have in mind Marx's claim that in capital "[the] definite social relation between men themselves . . . assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things."[106] This *locus classicus* comes out of Marx's effort to contrast capitalism with feudalism, to contrast capitalism with, I suggest, *Hegelian feudalism* so typified by the lord/bondsman dialectic. From the so-called early Marx to the so-called late Marx, there is no hiding the Hegelian background to Marx's analysis of capitalism's emergence from feudalism.[107] Take the following concession by Marx and Engels in the *German Ideology* to historical commonplaces:

> Nothing is more common than the notion that in history up till now it has only been a question of *taking*. . . . Everywhere there is very soon an end to taking, and when there is nothing more to take, you have to set about producing. From this necessity of producing, which very soon asserts itself, it follows that the form of community adopted by the settling conquerors must correspond to the stage of development of productive forces they find in existence. . . . By this, too, is explained the fact, which people profess to have noticed everywhere in the period following the migrations of the peoples, namely, that the servant was master [daß nämlich der Knecht der Herr war].[108]

From possession to production signals the move from Hegel to Marx. Here, Marx and Engels are transforming commonplaces into facts; what they mean by "the period following the migrations of peoples" is the Middle Ages, feudalism, which in Hegelian fashion supplies the basic lesson of the lord/bondsman dialectic, "that the servant was master."

Indeed, Marx never ignores the explanatory potential of *Grundherrschaft* nor of the lord/bondsman dialectic. As he writes in the later *Grundrisse* (1857–58):

> The relation of personal servitude, or of the retainers to their lord, is essentially different. For it forms, at bottom, only a mode of existence of the land-proprietor himself [Grundeigentümers selbst], who no longer works, but whose property includes, among the other conditions of production, the workers themselves as bondsmen [die Arbeiter selbst als Leibeigne] etc. Here the *master-servant relation* (Herrschaftsverhältnis) as essential element of appropriation.[109]

Herrschaftsverhältnis: this is the feudal relation of domination within *Herrschaft*, which Marx's translator inappropriately renders as "*master-servant relation*." Marx then elaborates upon this relation in a way that evokes not only Hegel's feudal, lord/bondsman dialectic but which mimics the care with which Hegel handled the issues of what makes a *Knecht* and what makes a *Herr*:

> Basically the appropriation of animals, land etc. cannot take place in a master-servant relation [Herrschaftsverhältnisses], although the animal provides

> service. The presupposition of the master-servant relation [Herrschafts- und Knechtschaftsverhältnis] is the appropriation of an alien *will.* Whatever has no will, e.g. the animal, may well provide a service, but does not thereby make its owner into a *master* [*Herren*]. This much can be seen, here, however, that the *master-servant relation* [Herrschafts- und Knechtschaftsverhältnis] likewise belongs in this formula of the appropriation of the instruments of production; and it forms a necessary ferment for the development and the decline and fall of all original relations of property and production, just as it also expresses their limited nature. Still, it is reproduced—in mediated form—in capital, and thus likewise forms a ferment of its dissolution and is an emblem of its limitation.[110]

Marx's terms are very clear, for they were Hegel's terms, to be sure, centered in the latter's various lord/bondsman dialectics.[111] In this passage and in so many other places in the *Grundrisse* Marx is referring to "Herrschafts- und Knechtschaftsverhältnis." As Marx knows, and as Hegel teaches, the "master-servant relation" requires two wills in dialectical relation, a struggle that, as Marx says (following Hegel), has an outcome—namely, the transformation of social and productive relations themselves, "a necessary ferment for the development and the decline and fall of all original relations of property and production." And with that Hegelian insight, Marx goes on to render this dialectic useful for historical materialism, in saying that this feudal dialectic "is reproduced—in mediated form—in capital." In other words, Marx conceives of the Middle Ages, as do many post-Hegelians, as always in decline, always a historical remainder, yet, paradoxically, always a determination even in the age of capital, in which the struggle for possession persists. The terms of feudal "dissolution" thus appear analogous to those same terms in capitalism. If feudalism comes to an end, we can be certain that a certain feudal contradiction survives well into the age of capital, and it is this contradiction that remains central to Marxist thought.

We are now in a position to understand what Marx is doing with the Hegelian Middle Ages in *Capital.* For starters, Hegel himself theorizes the relations of domination in feudalism as a personal relation between individuals: "Individuals were therefore obliged to consult for themselves by taking refuge with Individuals, and submitted to the authority of certain powerful persons, who constituted a private possession and a personal sovereignty out of that authority which formerly belonged to the Commonwealth."[112] Marx accepts this Hegelian view of *Grundherrschaft.* That much is evident when, in the *German Ideology*, he and Engels write that, in feudalism, "the social relations between individuals . . . appear at all events as their own personal relations, and are not disguised as social relations between things."[113] With the

Hegelian Middle Ages in mind, Marx can contrast the modern and the medieval, again and again, as when he writes in *Capital* his most famous words about fetishized social relations in capitalism: the "definite social relation between men themselves . . . assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things."[114] It is only against the background of feudalism's relations "between individuals" that this alternative is even evident. It is only against *and with* Hegel that Marx can offer this formulation, in other words. (In the next chapter, we will explore this very idea in our analysis of Marxian commodity fetishism, which, I will show, draws from Hegel's analysis of eucharistic fetishism in the Middle Ages.)

Suffice it to say here that Marx clearly sees the juxtaposition of feudal and capitalist relations of domination as critically generative, a location from which to view social relations of production as plainly visible, "as they really are." Readers forget that both Marx and Engels in the *German Ideology* made hay of exactly this critical point of view in their reflections on feudalism: "The social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life process of definite individuals, but of individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they really are."[115] And Marx, for his part, resumes this critical stance in *Capital* when, for instance, we are invited to "leave this noisy sphere, where everything takes place on the surface and in full view" and enter "into the hidden abode of production" where "the secret of profit-making must at last be laid bare."[116] Herbert Marcuse knew to articulate this precise move of "going behind" appearances in Hegelian terms.[117] We know that the Marxian critique of ideology emerges out of the theoretical possibilities of the Hegelian Middle Ages—everywhere present in Marx, itself "reproduced . . . in mediated form." Let's now explore this idea more deeply in the next chapter, the idea that the Hegelian Middle Ages matter, in more ways than one, to Marx.

Notes

Preface

1. Herman Melville, *Moby Dick* (New York: Signet, 1980), 319. All remaining quotations in this paragraph are on 320.

2. Melville, I might add, read Hegel; see Joshua and Sterling Stuckey, "The Death of Benito Cereno: A Reading of Herman Melville on Slavery," *Journal of Negro History* 67 (1882): 287–301.

3. Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, 100th Anniversary Edition (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 311–12; Theodor W. Adorno, "The Schema of Mass Culture," *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J. M. Bernstein (New York: Routledge, 2001), 87.

4. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), 11.

5. Ibid., 27.

6. Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: New Left Books, 1974), 16.

7. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy: The Lectures of 1825–1826*, ed. Robert F. Brown and trans. Brown and J. M. Stewart with the assistance of H. S. Harris, vol. 3 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 97.

8. Fredric Jameson, "Symptoms of Theory or Symptoms for Theory?" *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (2004): 403–8; here, 403. There is, to be sure, an analogous idea about the syntax and linguistic construction of thought (or "mental language") that is well established within the philosophy of mind, as Jerry Fodor's *The Language of Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975) clearly shows. Indeed, similar notions were posed in analytic philosophy in the early twentieth century, building on the work of Gottlob Frege and advancing the claim that ontological mistakes are at once linguistic mistakes, as argued by Alfred North Whitehead and Bertrand Russell (*Principia Mathematica*, 3 vols. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910, 1912, 1913]). The philosopher can endeavor to construct a logical language adequate to the object world, as Rudolf Carnap proposed in his "Überwindung der Metaphysik durch logische Analyse der Sprache," *Erkenntnis* 2 (1932): 219–41. There are many more examples, but none of them are *dialectics*, and my interest in this book is to show how dialectics in their Hegelian and

premodern form have a claim not on these other areas of philosophy but on what is generally called "theory" in the humanities today.

9. See Jameson, "Symptoms of Theory," 403.

10. Ibid., 403, 405.

11. Studies that, likewise, tarry with the medieval in their treatment of contemporary theory are Amy Hollywood, *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Bruce Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Erin Felicia Labbie, *Lacan's Medievalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); *The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages: On the Unwritten History of Theory*, ed. Andrew Cole and D. Vance Smith, afterword by Fredric Jameson (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); and "The Medieval Turn in Theory," special cluster of essays ed. by Andrew Cole, *the minnesota review* 80 (2013): 80–158.

12. Suzanne Reynold's *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994) is a cautionary reminder about where medieval economic realities end and social and political relations begin; about how to distinguish one from the other; and about how generalizable the medieval evidence really is. Indeed, one may prefer to focus not on modes of production and remnant medieval institutions and practices (as I do here) but on medieval *mentalités*. Whichever language or discipline one chooses to assess this past, however, there is no denying the large-scale continuities in German institutional, social, political, agrarian history, from medieval to modern.

13. J. J. Sheehan, *German History, 1770–1866* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 97; 101–2. Other studies that confirm the persistence of feudal relations of production in Germany (or the German states) include David Warren Sabean, *Kinship in Neckarhausen, 1700–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), and *Property, Production, and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Mack Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate, 1648–1871* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971); Hans Kohn, *Prelude to Nation States: The French and German Experience, 1789–1815* (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1967).

14. Arno J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 18–19; see also 22.

15. This entire paragraph quotes and paraphrases portions of Terry Pinkard's absolutely excellent *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1, 19 (see 88, 90), 53, 57, 278, 280, 330.

16. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 121–27.

17. See "Proceedings of the Estates Assembly in the Kingdom of Württemberg, 1815–16," in *Hegel's Political Writings*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), 246–94.

18. Pinkard, *Hegel*, 484.

19. *Hegel: Political Writings*, ed. Lawrence Dickey and H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 248.

20. Ibid., 247; *Werke in zwanzig Bänden: Theorie-Werkausgabe* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 11.99.

21. Karl Marx, "Wage Labour and Capital," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), 205.

22. *The Collected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels*, 50 vols. (New York: International Publishers, 1975–2005), 7:4; the editor states that "the leaflet published in Cologne has 'cause of the revolution' instead of 'Government' " (note a).

23. Things get complex, for Hegel, in his reflections on the history of philosophy, but even there, the medieval constitutes the modern, fundamentally; see chap, 1, n. 57.

Chapter Two

1. See my Coda in this chapter.

2. See my discussion of these thinkers below.

3. M. J. Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), s.v.; Glenn Alexander Magee, *The Hegel Dictionary* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 72–75.

4. Dmitri Nikulin, in *Dialectic and Dialogue* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), classifies some medieval philosophers and theologians as either *via antiqua* or *via moderna*, Proclus on the one hand and Nicholas of Cusa on the other; see 28, 31–33, 53–57, as if to say there can be no medieval influence.

5. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. and ed. George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 381 [§955]; note that this edition does not delineate paragraph numbers, but I include them here, in brackets, for ease of reference and comparison; translation modified. The original is: "Wenn nun die ersten Reflexionsbestimmungen, die Identität, die Verschiedenheit und die Entgegensetzung, in einem Satze aufgestellt worden, so sollte noch vielmehr diejenige, in welche sie als in ihre Wahrheit übergehen, nämlich der Widerspruch, in einen Satz gefaßt und gesagt werden: Alle Dinge sind an sich selbst widersprechend" (*Wissenschaft der Logik. Bd.1, Die objektive Logik, Die Lehre vom Wese*, ed. Hans-Hürgen Gawoll and Walter Jaeschke [Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1999], 59).

6. Scholars have rightly (and recently) argued that identity and difference are Hegel's beloved categories and are perhaps the prevailing terms of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, *Science of Logic, Philosophy of Mind* (i.e., the final portion of the *Encyclopedia*), and *Philosophy of Right*. See Philip T. Grier, ed., *Identity and Difference: Studies in Hegel's Logic, Philosophy of Spirit, and Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).

7. "Negative dialectics is . . . tied to the supreme categories of identitarian philosophy as its point of departure" (Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton [New York: Continuum, 1973], 147).

8. Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

9. "The detours, locutions, and syntax in which I will often have to take recourse will resemble those of negative theology, occasionally even to the point of being indistinguishable

from negative theology. . . . And yet those aspects of différance which are thereby delineated are not theological, not even in the order of the most negative of negative theologies" (Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982], 6). The importance of *différance* to deconstruction goes without saying.

10. Jean-François Lyotard, *Le différend* (Paris: Editions de minuit, 1983); *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 65–66; 9–10.

11. *Inter alia*, see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); and, of course, Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton [New York: Columbia University Press, 1994], 80).

12. See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 345, 372, but esp. 31, with its memorable discussion of Nam June Paik, and *Valences of the Dialectic* (New York: Verso, 2009), 70, 498, 514, 532, 540.

13. For Niklas Luhman, the systems theorist of "dedifferentiation," ontology flows from prior distinction ("Identity—What or How?" in *Theories of Distinction: Redescribing the Descriptions of Modernity*, ed. William Rasch (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 115, 118. Bruno Latour's "propositions," which in actor-network-theory help one overcome the Kantian gap between persons and things-in-themselves, "rely on the articulation of differences that make new phenomena visible in the cracks that distinguish them" (*Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999], 143).

14. See A. D. Conti, "Teoria degli universali e teoria della predicazione nel trattato *De universalibus* di William Penbygull: discussione e difesa della posizione di Wyclif," *Medioevo* 8 (1982): 137–203; here, 190.

15. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 116n.

16. Boethius, *Porphyrii Isagoge translatio*, ed. L. Minio-Paluello (Bruges-Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966). See the second tract on the Trinity in *Opuscula Sacra.*

17. I am thinking here of the Abelardian either/or, or *sic et non*, contained within a single identity, as described by Catherine Brown's third chapter, "Negation is Stronger," in her fascinating *Contrary Things: Exegesis, Dialectic, and the Poetics of Didacticism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).

18. Thomas Aquinas, *Opuscula theologica*, vol. 2 (Taurini: Marietti, 1954) (the *Super Boetium De Trinitate* is edited by Mannes M. Calcaterra).

19. See especially the first book of this work of five books: *Periphyseon*, ed. Édouard Jeauneau. Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis 161 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996); and Dermot Moran's *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena: A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages* (1989; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

20. See especially Bruno's *De la causa, principio e uno,* in *Cause, Principle, Unity, and Essays on Magic*, trans. Richard J. Blackwell and Robert de Lucca (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. 99–100. For backgrounds, see Ingrid D. Rowland, "Giordano Bruno and Neapolitan Neoplatonism," in *Giordano Bruno: Philosopher of the Renaissance*, ed. Hilary Gatti (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 97–120.

21. Likewise, something that looks like, or at least operates like, identity/difference can also be found within the tradition of speculative grammar that extends Aristotle's insights into "relative being," beginning with Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae* 17.56, and including Petrus

Helias, Thomas Erfurt, Martin of Dacia, Aquinas, John Duns Scotus, and William of Ockham: these philosophers view as "empty" the kind of relation in which one term depends on an antecedent. Here I am both drawing from and projecting into D. Vance Smith's lucid discussion of speculative grammar and grammatical relation in his *The Book of the Incipit: Beginnings in the Fourteenth Century* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), esp. 159. Also see Rega Wood's fascinating discussion of Richard Rufus of Cornwall, particularly his idea that a point can be predicated of contrary qualities: "Indivisibles and Infinities: Rufus on Points," in *Atomism in Late Medieval Philosophy and Theology*, ed. Christophe Grellard and Aurélien Robert (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 39–64; here, 59.

22. Dialectic is also a cross-examination of an adversary's words, which the dialectician renders into a set of "inconsistencies" placed "side by side, show[ing] that they contradict one another about the same things, in relation to the same things, and in the same respect" (*Sophist*, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989]; I cite from this edition by page number and paragraph number; in this instance, 973/230b). This form of dialectic does not express dialectical thought or synthesis, as I'll delineate it below. Plato simply does not seek to show how the "inconsistencies" eventually line up in a kind of identity in difference, or dialectical resolution, however temporary.

23. Plato, *Republic*, 765/533b. See also 764/532.

24. Plato, *Sophist*, 999/253d.

25. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 511/265e; cf. *Republic*, 769/537c: "For he who can view things in their connection is a dialectician; he who cannot, is not."

26. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 522/277b; see Plato, *Sophist*, 969–70/227a–c. Persons fail at dialectic in the "inability to apply the proper divisions and distinctions to the subject under consideration," pursuing "purely verbal oppositions, practicing eristic, not dialectic" (*Republic*, 696/454a; see 771/539b).

27. Plato, *Sophist*, 963/220e–221c.

28. Plato, *Parmenides*, 954/164e. It stands to reason that Plato offers this explanation of dialectic in the *Statesman*: "Likenesses which the senses can grasp are available in nature to those real existents which are in themselves easy to understand, so that when someone asks for an account of these existents one has no trouble at all—one can simply indicate the sensible likeness" (*Statesman*, 1053/285e) while bearing in mind that "when there are no corresponding visible resemblances, no work of nature clear for all to look upon," the dialectician must work by "reason" alone in a description of unembodied "existents which are of highest value and chief importance" (1053–54/286a).

29. Plato, *Parmenides*, 923/129a–e.

30. Ibid., 940/148a.

31. The following passage, commonly taken to inspire Aristotle's later notion of "relative being," is (to my mind) an argument that sets up the conclusion—that difference is a Form: "among things that exist, some are always spoken of as being what they are just in themselves, others as being what they are with reference to other things" (*Sophist*, 1001/255c). If identity/difference, as we know it now, seems to be intimated here, it is only done so in the service of propositions about intelligibles.

32. Plato, *Sophist*, 1006/259c.

33. See ibid., 983/240c.

34. Ibid., 999/253d.

35. Ibid., 1000–1003 /255a–57b.

36 Ibid., 1007/260b.

37. Ibid., 1002/256a–b.

38. The prose is as boggling as the point itself—a discursive feature that signals the lack of a properly dialectical, uniquely paired, category of identity/difference. Plato's sentences on the "instant," which we examined in the last chapter, result from the same deficiency—in that case, the abstract version of identity/difference. When things get boggling, when certain logical categories such as of identity/difference are nowhere to be found, words proliferate to a limit point and ideas curl in on themselves to become redundant in formulations like, say, difference is different from itself "because of its combination with difference." It is here when dialectic, which seeks to divide identities into their indivisibly constituent parts that, in turn, point upward to the Forms themselves, becomes a language game, an exercise in keeping up with the "emergence of fresh forms" (*Parmenides*, 927/133a), of newly discovered differences. More forms, more words; more words, more forms.

39. Plato, *Parmenides*, 928/133f–134a.

40. Aristotle, *Topics*, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); I cite from this edition by volume number and page number (even though the pagination between volumes is continuous), followed by the paragraph number; in this case, 1.168/101a–b.

41. Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 2.2154/1355a.

42. For Boethius's discussion of Cicero's analysis of relatives or "contraries," "such as master and servant," see Boethius's *De topicis differentiis*, trans. Eleonore Stump (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978; 2004), 66–671197b–1198a. Both follow Aristotle. Boethius also consulted Themistius's paraphrases of Aristotle's organon (which contains the *Topics*, of course): see Stump, "Boethius's Work on the Topics," *Vivarium* 12 (1974): 77–93.

43. Philipp Melanchthon, *De dialecta libri* iv (Haganoe: Secerius, 1528).

44. Rudolf Agricola, *De inventione dialectica libri tres*, ed. Lothar Mundt (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1992). On the transition from dialectic to rhetoric (sometimes accomplished in half measures), see Ann Moss, *Renaissance Truth and the Latin Language Turn* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Jean Dietz Moss and William A. Wallace, *Rhetoric and Dialectic in the Time of Galileo* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003).

45. See the magisterial book by William Kneale and Martha Kneale, *The Development of Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978; 1962), 23–378; see also Marta Spranzi, *Art of Dialectic between Dialogue and Rhetoric: The Aristotelian Tradition* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2011), which focuses on the *Topics* and its long reception.

46. François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, trans. M. A. Screech (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 25. What's truly odd is that Bakhtin, author of the most widely translated and cited study of Rabelais and himself a thinker within the dialectical tradition (an argument I take up in chap. 5), does not discuss this passage.

47. Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, 4th edition, trans. Donald A. Cress (Cambridge, MA: Hackett, 1998), 5, 39.

48. In his *Outlines of Scepticism*, Sextus Empiricus perfected the dialectic of pondering both sides of a given problem (equipollence), but with the skeptic addendum that one withhold judgment along the way: "since the Dogmatists seem plausibly to have established that there is a standard of truth, we have set up plausible-seeming arguments in opposition to them, affirming neither that they are true nor that they are more plausible than those on the contrary

side, but concluding to suspension of judgement because of the apparently equal plausibility of these arguments and those produced by the Dogmatists" (*Outlines of Scepticism*, trans. Julia Annas and Jonathan Barnes [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994], 71 [2.7.79]). Hegel, not surprisingly, trashes Sextus Empiricus: "Scepticism proper . . . is the complete despair about everything that the understanding holds to be firm. . . . This is the high ancient scepticism, as we find it presented specifically in Sextus Empiricus. . . . This ancient high scepticism must not be confused with the modern one that was mentioned earlier (§39), which partly preceded Critical Philosophy and partly grew out of it. This consists simply in denying that anything true and certain can be said about the supersensible. . . . Philosophy does not stop at the merely negative result of the dialectic, as is the case with scepticism" (*Encyclopaedia Logic*, trans. T. F. Garaets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris [Cambridge, MA: Hackett, 1991], 131/§81). See also Hegel's essay, "Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy, Exposition of Its Different Modifications and Comparison to the Latest Form with the Ancient One," in *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of post-Kantian Idealism*, trans. George di Giovanni and H.S. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 313–62; and Michael N. Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

49. As Chrétien says when Yvain and Gawain are set to fight in the romance *Yvain*: "And did they not love one another now? Yes, I answer you, and no. And I'll prove that each reply is correct" (Chrétien de Troyes, *Arthurian Romances*, trans. William W. Kibler [New York: Penguin Books, 1991], 370). Swift speaks of the Houyhnhnms, "Neither is reason among them a point problematical as with us, where men can argue with plausibility on both sides of the question" (Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* [New York: New American Library (Signet Classic), 1983], 288).

50. For the locution, "drivelectic," see Erasmus's *Hyperaspites* (book 2), in *Collected Works of Erasmus: Controversies*, vol. 77, ed. Charles Trinkhaus and trans. Clarence H. Miller (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 354. Erasmus wishes that students at Louvain and Paris "would all accept the commentaries of Lefèvre upon Aristotle's Dialectic" (*The Epistles of Erasmus from his earliest letters to his Fifty-first year*, vol. 2 [Longmans, Green, 1904], 224).

51. John Buridan, *Summulae de dialectica*, trans. Gyula Klima (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

52. See John David Gemmill Evans, *Aristotle's Concept of Dialectic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), for a complete investigation of the *Topics*, above all, and a clear statement of Aristotle's departure from Plato.

53. Plato, *Sophist*, 973/230b–e.

54. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 2.1586/1004b.

55. Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*, 1.39/24a; see *De Interpretatione*, 1.32–33/20b. Likewise, dialectic criticism—or what Aristotle calls "examination"—involves, most frequently, questions that require only yes or no answers (*Topics*, 1.266/158a and *Sophistical Refutations*, 1.291/171b).

56. Respectively, Aristotle, *Sophistical Refutations*, 279/165b and *Topics*, 1.273/162a. Aristotle calls the general premises "primitive"—i.e., first premises: "A deduction is an argument in which, certain things being laid down, something other than these necessarily comes about through them. It is a demonstration, when the premises from which the deduction starts are true and primitive, or are such that our knowledge of them has originally come through primisses [sic] which are primitive and true; and it is a dialectical deduction, if it reasons from reputable opinions" (*Topics*, 1.167/100a).

57. Aristotle, *Topics*, 1.173/104a.

58. Ibid., 1.245/145b; see Aristotle's discussion of the different disciplinary perspectives on the nature of the soul, questioning whether these can be combined, in *On the Soul*, 1.643/403b.

59. Samuel Johnson, *Selected Writings*, ed. Peter Martin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 398. In a similar vein, William Empson says that "part of the function of an allegory is to make you feel that two levels of being correspond to one another in detail, and indeed that there is some underlying reality, something in the nature of things, which makes this happen. Either level may illuminate the other." Empson calls this function "Mutual Comparison" (*The Structure of Complex Words* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989], 346–47).

60. It can be recalled: for Aristotle, dialectical deduction (συλλογισμός) does the work of making difference, as stated in the *Prior Analytics*: "certain things being stated, something other than what is stated follows of necessity from their being so" (1.40 [24b]). This is a difference in language, chiefly syllogism. See also Aristotle, *Topics*, 1.167/100a–b, with the emphasis on reasoning from "reputable opinions."

61. Aristotle, *Topics*, 1.254/151a; see 256/152b. Of all entities, only the "soul" can bear these oppositions (*Topics*, 1.254/151a; see below).

62. Ibid., 1.229/136a.

63. Ibid., 1.169/102a.

64. Ibid., 1.180/108a–b.

65. Ibid., 1.188/112b.

66. Ibid., 1.207/123b.

67. "It is obvious that the same thing will never do or suffer opposites in the same respect in relation to the same thing and at the same time" (Plato, *The Republic*, 678 [436b]); "the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject and in the same respect" (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1588 [1005b]).

68. See Aristotle, *Topics*, 240/142a. In the following, Aristotle preempts the logical work of identity/difference: "the contrary named by the privation must of necessity be defined through the other; where as the other cannot then be defined through the other named by the privation; *for else we should find that each was being made known by the other*" (*Topics*, 248/147b; emphasis mine).

69. As I believe is his meaning. Real things, of course, are related to other real things. The point is that "relative being" does not materialize as actual being within any thing. Rather, relatives are a matter of perspective and comparison: Aristotle in chap. 7 of the *Categories* emphasizes what is "properly spoken of" relatives and their correlatives and concludes: "It is perhaps hard to make firm statements on such questions without having examined them many times" (14/8b). See Pamela Michelle Hood, *Aristotle on the Category of Relation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004), for alternative interpretations.

70. Aristotle, *Categories*, 1.12/7a–b.

71. Ibid., 1.10/6a.

72. To follow Plato's thought process but apply it to a line of thinking he did not pursue: let's say that not-x is identical with itself but let's also establish, as the method requires, that not-x is not the Form known as Identity, in which not-x participates by virtue of being identical with itself. And so not-x is different from itself, participating in the form of Difference or not-x, which returns us immediately to not-x = not-x and to the strange assertion that not-x participates in itself. The point here is that the strictly logical operator of not-x already admits

identity/difference, but Plato did not conceptualize this because he rejected thinking strictly on the side of negation, on the side of not-x, out of which positivity emerges.

73. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 2.1017b27–1020b8.

74. For Hegel's statement on the "laws of thought," see Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 374–84 [§931–63].

75. Ibid., 382 [§957], 384 [§963].

76. Ibid., 384 [§963].

77. Ibid., 381 [§955]. Naturally, Hegel revisits the example of motion discussed by Plato (mentioned above), but unlike Plato is able to apply the categories of identity, difference, and contradiction in his explanation: "Something moves, not because now it is here and there at another now, but because in one and the same now it is here and not here; because in this here it is and is not at the same time. One must concede to the dialecticians of old the contradictions which they pointed to in motion; but what follows from them is not that motion is not but that it is rather contradiction as *existent*" (382 [§958]). He also discusses (though does not name) Aristotle's insights into relative being; see 383 [§960].

78. Hegel writes: "There is no proposition of Heraclitus which I have not adopted in my Logic [sic]" (*Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3 vols., trans. E. S. Haldane and Francis H. Simson [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955], 1.279; the epigraph to this chapter is at 2.49). I use this translation, because the most recent translations omit this interesting material in the effort to provide chronological snapshots of Hegel's thinking late in life—extracting material thought to be delivered at an earlier date. See also Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (Chippendale, AU: Resistance Books, 1999), 72.

79. *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3.37.

80. When scholars speak of dialectic with respect to Plotinus, they almost always pursue the non-Hegelian meaning of the term (consequently setting aside identity/difference), and when they refer to the Hegelian dialectic in relation to Plotinus—a very rare comparison—they typically omit the classical and medieval texts and practices that go by the same name. See Sarah Rappe, "Introspection in the Dialectic of the *Enneads*," in *Reading Neoplatonism: Nondiscursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 67–90; Bernard Collette, *Dialectique et Hénologie chez Plotin*, Cahier de Philosophie ancienne, n. 18 (Brussels: Ousia, 2002); Annamaria Schiaparelli, "Plotinus on Dialectic," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 91, no. 3 (2009): 253–87. John Shannon Hendrix's task is not to define dialectic or dialectical method apart from the expected description of the interplay between particulars and universals: "The Intellectual Principle is the realization of the dialectic of reason, in that it contains both the particular and the universal, in that it participates in both Reason Principle and the One" (*Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Spirit: From Plotinus to Schelling and Hegel* [New York: Peter Lang, 2005], 128; see also 123, 124, 128, 140). The long-forgotten twenty-nine-page tract by H. A. Overstreet, *The Dialectic of Plotinus*, University of California Publication in Philosophy (Berkeley: The University Press, 1909), offers a laudable start in comparing Hegel and Plotinus.

81. Gadamer argues that there is "absolutely nothing of this [Hegelian dialectic] in the dialectic of the Ancients" (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic: Five Hermeneutical Studies*, trans. P. Christopher Smith [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976], 16), yet Hegel, somehow, was able "to conjure up the speculative content hidden in the logical instinct of language," concealed in ancient philosophy like Plato's and Aristotle's (31). Hegel simply misread classical philosophy but nonetheless "worked out his own dialectical method by extending the dialectic of the Ancients and transforming it" (31; on Hegelian misreadings, see 23, 28, 30). Yet amidst such claims are tantalizing sentences about neoplatonism, which Gadamer passes over,

not mentioning even one philosopher by name: "Hegel relies above all on Plato's *Parmenides*, his understanding of it being shaped in large part by Neoplatonism's theological-ontological interpretation" (21; cf. 16); "The Neoplatonic origin of these concepts is not accidental" (32; see 32–33). None of these connections Gadamer pursues.

82. Gadamer, "Hegel and the Dialectic of the Ancient Philosophers," in *Hegel's Dialectic*, 32–33; see also Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, 362–79.

83. See Derrida's influential essay, with its meditations on *dénégation*: "How to Avoid Speaking: Denials," trans. by Ken Frieden, in *Languages of the Unsayable: The Play of Negativity in Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 3–70. For a contextualizing and suggestive study, see Stephen Gersh, *Neoplatonism after Derrida: Parallelograms* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

84. Hannah Arendt writes that "in his time speculations Hegel has a strange predecessor. . . . That is Plotinus" (*Life of the Mind* [New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1981], 44). See also Werner Beierwaltes, "Hegel und Plotin," *Revue internationale de philosophie* 24 (1968): 247–51; Markus Gabriel, "Hegel und Plotin," in *Hegel und die Geschichte der Philosophie*, ed. Dietmar H. Heidemann and Christian Krijnen (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007), 70–83; Gabriel Chindea, "Le problème de la déduction des catégories chez Plotin et Hegel," *Revistă de studii etnologice şi istorico-religioase* 9 (2008): 13–22; Oliver Davies, "Thinking Difference: A Comparative Study of Gilles Deleuze, Plotinus and Meister Eckhart," in *Deleuze and Religion*, ed. Mary Bryden (New York: Routledge, 2001), 76–86.

85. Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna, abridged with an introduction and notes by John Dillon (New York: Penguin, 1991); cited by page number, followed by book- and chapter number in brackets, here 27 [1.3]. As Dillon notes, Plotinus "puts Aristotelian and Stoic logic in its place" (27n34).

86. For a general discussion of this tract, see Annamaria Schiaparelli, "Plotinus on Dialectic," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 91, no. 3 (2009): 253–87.

87. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 26 [1.3].

88. Plotinus offers a much simpler definition of dialectic that is more strongly ontological than either Plato's or Aristotle's version, because while in the *Categories* (not a work on dialectic, we can remember, but absorbed into late medieval treatises on dialectic), Aristotle discusses the ten categories of reality, Plotinus states that the entire created order is already dialectical, that the soul operates dialectically just as the forms do. While Plotinus is sparing in his use of the word dialectic, it is proper for us to apply the adjective to his thought, since indeed his meaning is precisely that.

89. *Platonis Opera*, ed. John Burnet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903), 156b. See chap. 1.

90. Alain Badiou sifts through the "general ruin of thought as such by the entire dialectic of the one" (*Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham [London: Continuum, 2007], 31) and seeks to dismiss "negative theologies" (26) and, by implication neoplatonism, by going straight to their source—namely, Plato. Above all, he challenges the Platonic notion of the "non being of the one" to show that, in Plato's *Parmenides*, non-being is itself a form of being by "participation in the being-ness of to-be-non-being" (32). Because the "one" falls on the side of being, Badiou concludes that there is never "one" and only ever multiplicity or, better, multiples of multiples (29). And in a fashion that may seem Lacanian, the "one" exists only as a discourse-effect, an "operation," or indeed symptom that expresses itself from "behind" representation (24–25; 36). In this way, Badiou allegorizes premodern thought as a species of the apophatic modern.

91. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 353 [5.1]; see 355.

92. Aristotle solves this question in his God, the "unmoved mover" (*Physics* 8.5–6/258b–60) who sets its own inherent potentiality into motion, thus producing the actuality of all beings; the question of what "causes," "produces," or "changes" things concerns, in the "first science" that is theology, "motion" (*Metaphysics* 12.2/1269b 8–18), the movement from one state of being to another.

93. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 353–54 [5.1].

94. Ibid., 377 [5.3]. As Plotinus puts it, "Aristotle . . . begins by making the First transcendent and intellective but cancels that primacy by supposing it to have self-intellection" (358 [5.1]; see 380 [5.3]).

95. Ibid., 381 [5.3].

96. Ibid., 355, 359 [5.1]; see 402 [5.5].

97. Ibid., 355 [5.1], 361 [5.2].

98. Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 387–90 [5.4], which Dillon (387) determines to be an earlier tract more careless about the distinction between the One and being and intellection; see for example 389. What makes this earlier position different from the latter quoted in my main text is, quite simply, the clear borrowing of language from Plato's *Timaeus*, 42e (borrowings noted by MacKenna, 389nn69–70) that we do not find in the later tract. Here, simply, Plotinus is too Platonic. Plotinus himself acknowledges this weakness in Plato's thought, writing: "With all his affirmation of unity, his own writings lay him open to the reproach that his unity turns out to be a multiplicity" (*Enneads*, 357 [5.1]).

99. St. Anselm, *Basic Writings: Proslogium, Monologium, Cur Deus homo, Gaunilon's on Behalf of the Fool*, trans. S. N. Deane, 2nd ed. (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1962). Cited here: *Proslogium*, 8 [chap. 2], *Monologium*, 71 [chap. 19]. See, generally, *Monologium*, 52–56 [chaps. 8–9], 70–72 [chaps. 19–20]. To be clear, Anselm does deal with identity and difference, but only after having established God as Being—a move that deprives these logical categories of their greatest explanatory capacity in dealing with the impossible dialectical transition from nothing to being; see *Monologium*, 101–07 [chaps. 38–44]. Likewise, his discussion of "the terms *master* and *servant*" (ibid., 42 [chap 3]) reveals limits in his capacity to conceptualize identity in difference in a manner like . . . Hegel.

100. Plotinus's difficulties are compounded by the fact that he does not *consistently* follow the tradition of *tolma*—the Hellenic idea that the One became so intensely self-knowing as to become audacious in the wish to leap out toward multiplicity and Otherness. See A. H. Armstrong, "Gnosis and Greek Philosophy," in *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 87–124, see esp., 116; N. J. Torchia, *Plotinus, Tolma, and the Descent of Being* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 18, 31, 43. Cf. *Enneads*, 347 [5.1], 362 [5.2], where it seems to me that Plotinus, as is his wont, refers to established ideas (most often, the gods of Greek mythology) to reference familiar points of knowledge but re-orient them toward his own system.

101. In the twelfth century, the dialectic question of non-being, non-existence appears in ways more complex (and humorous) than Augustine could have predicted when he made his original association between evil and non-being. In Vitalis of Blois's *Geta*, dialectic leads the title character "not out of *aporia* but further and deeper into it: 'Therefore I am, therefore I am nothing. Damn this dialectic that completely undoes me' " (quoted in Brown's *Contrary Things*, 53).

102. Plotinus, *Enneads*, 382 [5.3].

103. Ibid.

104. Ibid., 354 [5.1].

105. Ibid., 383 [5.3].

106. Ibid., 352 [5.1]

107. See ibid., 351 [5.1]; 357 [5.1]. Plotinus fuses the Intellectual-Principle with being: "everything, in that entire content, is Intellectual-Principle and Authentic-Existence; and the total of all is Intellectual-Principle entire and Being entire" (351).

108. Ibid., 352 [5.1].

109. Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen Mackenna (Burdett, New York: Larson Publications, 1992), 549 [6.2], which is not available in the abridged version cited above; cf. Badiou, *Being and Event*, 37.

110. Raymond Klibansky, "Plato's *Parmenides* in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: A Chapter in the History of Platonic Studies," *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 1 (1941–43): 281–335.

111. *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, trans. Glenn R. Morrow and John M. Dillon (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 109.

112. Ibid., 124.

113. Ibid., 125.

114. This crucial point, which anticipates Hegel's treatment of the universal and individual as a relation of identity/difference, requires an explanation. In Book II, Proclus goes on a detour to discuss this long-standing problem of the One and the Many, criticizing Plato for failing to include these two terms among the five primals: "Plato in the *Sophist* failed to list the One and the Many among the greatest kinds" (ibid., 132). He boldly states "that [the] One and Many are the most general of the kinds, the source of each Form's being both one and many" (131–32). Next, he immediately declares the One and the Many to be like another set of terms; they are "analogous to the primary Limit and the primary Unlimited" (132). Yet by suggesting that the One and the Many are analogous to Limit and Unlimited, Proclus enfolds this older Platonic binary right back into questions of likeness and unlikeness, insofar as he states, not many pages earlier in his commentary, that Limit and Unlimited are analogous to likeness and unlikeness, which are features of the Demiurge's intellect: "There is then a demiurgic Likeness and Unlikeness, the former analogous to the cause of the Limit, the other correlative with the Unlimited. The former brings things together (which is why he [Plato] says . . . "The like is like to the like"); the latter is separative, delighting in procession and variety and movement" (110). Try as he might, then, Proclus cannot get away from these terms of likeness and unlikeness, even if he attempts (unsuccessfully) to place the One and the Many above them—to say nothing of the fact that analogy—itself a mode of comparing likenesses among *differentiae*—is at stake here.

115. Ibid., 118. See also this elaboration: "And we must remember also that monads of all things whatever that are said to exist produce some of them as if from the entirety of their natures but diminished for particular instances, their specific character being preserved but becoming more partial in them. . . . For all images will naturally deviate in their essence from their paradigms—not to have the same formula, but one similar to that from which they came" (ibid.).

116. The henads are, in fact, connected to this order by means of yet another mode of likeness, *analogy*: each henad is "analogous . . . to the One" (ibid., 404). And henads relate to the monads by means of their "principle . . . in the monads which hold together multiplicity" (ibid.). See Proclus's example of the principle of light; 404–5.

117. Ibid., 346.

118. Ibid., 347.

119. Ibid., 347–48.

120. Plato, *Republic*, 746 [511b–c].

121. Aristotle, *Topics*, 245 [151a–b].

122. "That which cognizes must be its objects potentially, and they must be in it. But if there is anything that has no contrary, then it knows itself and is actually and possesses independent existence" (Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 685 [430b]).

123. Ibid., 646 [405b] and 650 [407b]. See also Book II, chaps. 11–12, on the contraries of the *sensoria* (672–75 [422b–24b]).

124. For even Plotinus and Proclus, try as they might, do not surpass Aristotle in thinking of the soul in this fashion. Plotinus states that "Dialectic . . . has no knowledge of propositions—collections of words—but it knows . . . what the schools call their propositions: it knows above all the operations of the Soul [and] what is affirmed and what is denied" (*Enneads*, 28 [1.3]). Proclus, for his part, takes this notion in a different direction, stating that in the soul, contradictions exist: "in souls the contraries . . . are unextended, yet they are multiple and separate and exhibit excursions and gyrations in performing their functions. But the contraries in Intellect, being unified to the highest degrees, partless and immaterial, and constituted by a single form are in created company with one another. . . . The contraries in souls exist with one another as such" (*Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 114).

125. "The Divine Names," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 65.

126. Ibid., 78. For the Greek and Latin text, see J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Graeca*, 161 vols. (Paris: Geuthner, 1857–89), 3.767–68.

127. *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 115.

128. Ibid., 116, 117, 67.

129. Ibid., 61.

130. Ibid., 63.

131. Ibid., 115.

132. "The Celestial Hierarchy," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 151.

133. Ibid., 147; see 149.

134. Ibid., 152–53. On modern paradoxical thought experiments, see Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

135. See "Mystical Theology," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 136.

136. Ibid., 138, 139.

137. "The Celestial Hierarchy," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 152.

138. See Martin Heidegger, "Conversation On a Country Path about Thinking," in *Discourse on Thinking* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); originally published as *Gelassenheit*, 1959. On the connection to Eckhart, John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990), 171. See also Reiner Schürmann's helpful collection of Heidegger's assessments of Eckhart in his "Heidegger and Meister Eckhart on Releasement," in *Heidegger Reexamined: Art, Poetry, and Technology*, vol. 3, ed. Hubert Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (New York: Routledge, 2003), 295–319.

139. *Martin Heidegger: Philosophical and Political Writings*, ed. Manfred Stassen (New York: Continuum, 2003), 93.

140. Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 4. Žižek turns to the non-dialectical traditions of dialectic as a remedy for Marxism: "To theorize this parallax gap properly is the first necessary step in the rehabilitation of the philosophy of *dialectical materialism*" (ibid.). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has argued for the necessity of "double binds" in modern life, the inhabiting of (at least) two identities and "learning to live with contradictory instructions" in the age of globalization; see *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 1.

141. "The Celestial Hierarchy," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 153.

142. Yet we should be clear that Pseudo-Dionysius preserves the "dissimilar similarities" (ibid., 151) from emerging into total identity—"one must be careful to use the similarities as dissimilarities . . . to avoid one-to-one correspondence" (152)—which I take to be a truly neoplatonic point, consistent with the kinds of critical questioning Parmenides put to Socrates when it seemed that the former was exhibiting his lack of training in dialectic (Plato, *Parmenides*, 935 [135d]) and proposing there to be a correspondence between Forms and things (927–28 [133c–d]). Indeed, as Pseudo-Dionysius states in the *Celestial Hierarchy*, "Everything, then, can be a help to contemplation" ("The Celestial Hierarchy," *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 151)—if, granted, one is an initiate (see 152).

143. After all, any medieval philosopher who speaks of the "negation of the negation" obviously is relevant to a discussion of Hegel! See, for instance, his (now incomplete) tract known as "Existence Is God," in Meister Eckhart, *Parisian Questions and Prologues*, trans. Armand A. Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981), 95, 100. The most widely available selection of Eckhart's writing, however necessarily limited that selection is, exhibits relevance to these considerations. Eckhart shows that contemplative "detachment" or *abegescheidenheit*—Heidegger's other favorite medieval term along with *Gelassenheit*—is, among other things, the method by which a person moves from difference and Otherness to identity and equality with the ground that is the One, the essence without distinction out of which the hypostases come: that "simple ground . . . into which distinction never gazed, not the Father, nor the Son, nor the Holy Spirit" (*Meister Eckhart: the Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, trans. Edmund Colledge and Bernard McGinn [New York: Paulist Press, 1981], 198 [Sermon 48]; see 181 [Sermon 2]). Eckhart proposes that negation is required to move from difference to identity insofar as detachment is, properly, this negation: "Now detachment approaches so closely to nothingness that there can be nothing between perfect detachment and nothingness" (286 ["On Detachment"]). Powerfully, he emphasizes that "detachment wants to be nothing at all" (ibid., 287). But this negation is in the service of likeness: "As far as it can, every agent makes something like itself, and its makes the other itself, that is, makes the other from other into itself. It begins from the other, withdraws from it, and draws it to itself" (146). Building on, yet refocusing, Aristotelian ideas in the *Metaphysics*, Eckhart proposes: "What is in the One is one" (146 ["Selections from the Commentary on John"]). Yet as we have seen, any discussion of the one and the many, must now be framed in the terms of likeness and unlikeness, and on this score, he elaborates later in his commentary: "As long as anything is becoming something else, it always has the grief of unlikeness and restlessness. . . . This is the case in what we are discussing: As long as we are not like God . . . we are restless and troubled about many things" (ibid., 172–73). On Heidegger's use of these terms from Eckhart, see S. J. McGrath, *The Early Heidegger and Medieval Philosophy: Phenomenology for the Godforsaken*, 134–50. For the aforementioned references to Aristotle, see Eckhart, *Essential Sermons, Commentaries*, 331, nn.108, 110; note 109, however, attributes Eckhart's words to Aristotle's *On the Soul*, but nowhere does there seem to be a match. Finally, on the potential link between Eckhart and Plotinus, see Eduardo Briancesco, "Memoria e identidad en la experienci de Eckhart," *Escritos de Filosofia* 19.37–38 (2001): 121–40.

144. See Jasper Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-Other: A Translation and an Appraisal of De li non aliud* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 29 [1]; 117 [90]; 127 [100]; 133 [106]; and 29 [1]; 33 [5]; 83–109 [54–82].

145. Ibid., 29 [1]; 117 [89]. Cf., 141–51 [114–25], where the list of propositions begins to read like Aristotle's *Topics* in its forensic approach.

146. Ibid., 33 [5]. Nicholas of Cusa, as Blumenberg shows, brings contemplation to its highest point of observation, negating not only the self ("the mystic's ardent desire") but transcending creation in its entirety, "observing the world 'from outside' and 'from within'—between the standpoints of God and man" (Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983], 515). By thinking that "divinity and nothingness have become interchangeable" (514), Nicholas "for the first time" deals with the "traditional antinomies of metaphysics" (514). Blumenberg is right that Nicholas overcomes antinomies but does not account for precisely how he comes to this achievement through identity and difference.

147. *Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-Other*, 35 [7]; 33 [5]. As Nicholas says of his invention of this term out of Anselm's so-called ontological argument: "It is that which for many years I sought by way of the coincidence of opposites—as the many books which I have written about this speculative matter bear witness" (*Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-Other*, 41 [12]).

148. Ibid., 31 [4]. For more on the Cusan and dialectic, see C. L. Miller, *Reading Cusanus: Metaphor and Dialectic in a Conjectural Universe* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2003).

149. Picking up on the limits of Plato's theorizing of otherness and the neoplatonic insight into this quality, Nicholas writes: "Dionysius the Areopagite said that even God is called Other—something which is denied in the *Parmenides*" (*Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-Other*, 129 [100]). To be sure, the expected relations of identity and difference can be found in Nicholas's work, too: all things, issuing from God, bear a relation of identity in difference in the more traditional philosophic sense; Nicholas's discussion of "Trajan's column" confirms this reading (see 63–65 [34–35]); and all things bear a relation of identity and difference to one another, as his discussion on the "carbuncles" confirms (see 75 [45]).

150. See ibid., 69–71 [41]; see 53 [23]; 59 [31]; 67–69 [38]; on participation, see 65–67 [36], 73 [43].

151. Ibid., 51 [21]. Jasper Hopkins, in *Nicholas of Cusa's Metaphysic of Contraction* (Minneapolis: A. J. Banning Press, 1983), states: "Nicholas's discovery of the twofoldness of the ontological dimensions, and therefore of the duality of the ontologies (i.e., the ontology of identity and the ontology of difference), is the nucleus of the entire Cusan philosophy" (36). This is a very important point, though I would add (by now, obviously) that the discovery is not only Nicholas's. See also Nancy J. Hudson, *Becoming God: The Doctrine of Theosis in Nicholas of Cusa*, which argues that the procession-return model, which maps onto difference/identity and potentially robs creatures of their individuality (174), is not accepted by Nicholas, since he rejects "theosis as return" (173) on the grounds that if there is "participation" then there is never difference to begin with, and so no return is necessary.

152. *Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-Other*, 41 [12]. Summarizing Hegel's reading of Giordano Bruno, Hans Blumenberg states: "The *coincidentia oppositorum* . . . is not the dialectic" (*The Genesis of the Copernican World*, trans. Robert M. Wallace [Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987]), 384. Elsewhere, he finds the *coincidentia oppositorum* to posit a "world-bound language" that can nonetheless "lead upward beyond world-boundness precisely by negating . . . perceptual contents." He suggests that this "method" reflects Nicholas's "negative theology," in which transcendence is praxis, the activity of thinking to the "limit of theoretical accomplishment" (*Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, 491). Blumenberg, aware of Nicholas's reading of Plotinus and interest in neoplatonism (496–87; 501, 517, 523; cf. 515) and the translatability of his method across theology, anthropology, and cosmology (492; 507), omits a crucial point, however: *this*

is obviously dialectic. His reasons for this omission are straightforward and consistent with his attack on the secularization thesis: in the same way the modern is not a secularized Middle Ages, modernity cannot brook having its inventions, such as the dialectic, back projected into the Middle Ages and called "method" (495; see 496–97). Blumenberg's view is widely shared, for what we come to know now as "the dialectic," with the definite article, is discussed with seldom reference to the strong premodern antecedents that go by the same name.

153. For a kindred study, see Werner Beierwaltes, *Identität und Differenz: Zum Prinzip cusanischen Denkens*, Rheinisch- Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Opladen: Westdeutscher, 1977).

154. *Nicholas of Cusa on God as Not-Other*, 45 [16].

155. Ibid., 49 [19].

156. Ibid., 47 [18].

157. Ibid., 27 [27].

158. Ibid., 57 [29].

159. Ibid.

160. Ibid., 59 [30].

161. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 84 [§193].

162 Ernst Cassirer, *Individuum und Kosmos in der Philosophie der Renaissance: Die platonische Renaissance in England und die Schule von Cambridge* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1927), 11.

163. Edmond Vansteenberghe, *Le Cardinal Nicolas de Cues (1401–1464)* (Paris, 1920; reprinted in Frankfurt am Main: Minerva, 1963), 282.

164. Erwin Metzke, "Nicolaus von Cues und Hegel: Ein Beitrag zum Problem der philosophischen Theologie," *Kant-Studien* 48 (1956–57): 216–36; here, 216.

165. Mine is not, to be clear, a historiographic demonstration that medieval philosophy "worked its way" to identity/difference, which is then purportedly perfected and made appropriately critical in modern dialectal and post-dialectical thought. Rather, philosophers used it for centuries after Plotinus and Proclus, rather consistently. There are, as I noted at the outset, a variety of philosophical investigations different from those I discuss here, but even these specialized inquiries uniquely involve the same kind of thought, the thought of identity in difference, that was the invention of the Middle Ages.

166. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 47/§74.

167. Here I use the translation entitled (confusingly) *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie, 2nd ed. (Courier Dover Publications, 2003), 22, which better translates this passage than Miller (23/§39): "Man kann wohl falsch wissen. Es wird etwas falsch gewußt, heißt, das Wissen ist in Ungleichheit mit seiner Substanz. Allein eben diese Ungleichheit ist das Unterscheiden überhaupt, das wesentliches Moment ist. Es wird aus dieser Unterscheidung wohl ihre Gleichheit, und diese gewordene Gleichheit ist die Wahrheit. Aber sie ist nicht so Wahrheit, als ob die Ungleichheit weggeworfen worden wäre, wie die Schlacke vom reinen Metall, auch nicht einmal so, wie das Werkzeug von dem fertigen Gefäße wegbleibt, sondern die Ungleichheit ist als das Negative, als das Selbst im Wahren als solchem selbst noch unmittelbar vorhanden."

168. See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 38/§61.

169. Ibid., 52/§82; 55/§86. In these paragraphs I intentionally focus on Hegel's most widely known work, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. But this text is not, clearly, his earliest effort to reflect on identity/difference. Rather, the following work is: *Jenaer Systemwürfe II: Logik, Metaphysik, Naturphilosophie*, ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1982), which was unpublished in Hegel's lifetime but written in 1804–5. See especially the *Logik*.

170. Theodor W. Adorno, “Skoteinos, or How to Read Hegel,” *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 89.

171. This is not to exclude “for another” (115/§189), or “für ein anderes” (Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*: *Theorie-Werkausgabe* [Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970], 3.150), as detailed in that chapter on the lord/bondsman dialectic.

172. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 14/§25.

173. It’s here that we can recognize that, likewise, Spirit itself is not a phantom but a form—the sum total of all these relations of difference, but a sum that is itself in a relation of identity/difference to its parts: it is and is not its parts, thereby reminding us that whatever counts as a historical whole is never complete or without contradiction, real or abstract. As such, then, it is right to think that Spirit stands as the figure (not Hegel’s term) for identity/difference itself.

174. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 58/§91.

175. Ibid., 59/§92.

176. Ibid., 59/§94.

177. See ibid., §96.

178. Ibid., 60/§96.

179. See ibid., 62/§103, 63/§105.

180. Ibid., 64/§109.

181. Ibid., 64–65/§109. I second H. S. Harris that Hegel here is speaking against skepticism: see his *Hegel’s Ladder*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 1.211, 215–16; on the significance of ancient skepticism (as opposed to modern), see 1.225, 228.

182. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 61/§101.

183. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, 3.86.

184. J. N. Findlay’s note indicates that Hegel’s target here is “the perpetual phenomenalism of Kantianism” (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, 528n238–39).

185. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 115/§189.

186. Ibid., 111/§178.

187. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, 3.145.

188. Ibid.

189. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 112/§184.

190. Ibid., 113/§186.

191. Ibid., 114/§188.

192. Here Hegel uses the adverb *gleichgültig* (*Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, 3.150).

193. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 120/§197.

194. Ibid., 121/§199; 123/§202.

195. Hegel writes: “Consciousness itself is the *absolute dialectical unrest* [die absolute dialektische Unruhe] this medley of sensuous and intellectual representations whose differences coincide, and whose identity is equally again dissolved, for it is itself determinateness as contrasted with the non-identical. But it is just in this process that this consciousness, instead of being self-identical, is in fact nothing but a purely casual, confused medley, the dizziness of a perpetually self-engendered disorder” (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, 124–25/§205; *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, 3.161).

196. Ibid., 125–26/205; *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, 3.162; see also Preface, 16/§28.

197. Failure itself is, as Hegel, says in his Introduction to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, central to the dialectical mode: “Since consciousness thus finds that its knowledge does not correspond to its object, the object itself does not stand the test; in other words, the criterion for testing is

altered when that for which it was to have been the criterion fails to pass the test; and the testing is not only a testing of what we know, but also a testing of the criterion of what knowing is. *Inasmuch as the new true object issues from it*, this *dialectical* movement . . . is precisely what is called *experience* [*Erfahrung*]" (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, 54–55/§85–86; see also 62/§102).

198. Ibid., 219/§363; 220/§364.

199. Ibid., 147/§245; see 70/§116. Note how Hegel speaks of "mere *universals*, though each has its own essence against the other" (22/§39); of "this universal . . . *afflicted with an opposition*" (76/§128); of the "self-contradictory moments of individuality and universality" (259/§431); and "the contradiction of giving to what is particular an actuality which is immediately universal" (298/§489).

200. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 60/§96.

201. Ibid., 480/§789.

202. Ibid., 491/§805, trans. modified; *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, 3.589–90. See generally, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 489–91/§803–6. From these passages to the very end, Hegel speaks of becoming, withdrawal, inwardization, negativity, and history.

203. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 140/§357.

204. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 40/§66; 39/§65.

205. See also ibid., 55–56/§86–87.

206. Ibid., 39–40/§65.

207. Charles L. Griswold refers to (but does not elaborate upon) "Hegel's neoplatonist interpretation of the *Parmenides*" in the lectures on the history of philosophy (see "Reflections on 'Dialectic' in Plato and Hegel," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (1982): 115–30; here, 117; referring to the Haldane edition, *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 2.60–61).

208. Here I paraphrase the "transcendental idea" of the first antinomy; see Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 470–71. Note that this first one is a version of Aristotle's dialectic topic in *Topics*, 101b28–33.

209. Kant rejects as "merely dialectical" (*Critique of Pure Reason*, 519) the opposing viewpoints, "two judgements dialectically opposed to one another" that are false "because one does not merely contradict the other, but says something more than is required for contradiction" (518), and that something more is itself erroneous and helplessly regressive (see 502, 508–9).

210. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 518, on the distinction between dialectical opposition and analytic opposition, which is true opposition.

211. "The above proofs of the fourfold antinomy are not semblances but well grounded, that is, at least on the presupposition that appearances, or a world of sense comprehending all of them within itself, are things in themselves" (ibid., 519). In other words, Kant offers a dialectical solution of his own. Stating that the "two dialectically opposed judgments . . . may be false" (518), Kant "can point to the dialectic as an example of the great utility of letting the arguments of reason confront one another" (519) because the truth of "appearances" has been established: they are "nothing outside our representations" (ibid.) but in this we discover that appearances have a "transcendental ideality" and "are things in themselves." Behold, the "transcendental dialectic" (ibid.), in which the two vastly different positions produce, in this dialectic, the same thing—a thesis about appearances as "objects of sense" (ibid.).

212. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 590.

213. Ibid., 497; I have retained Kemp Smith's translation of "a mere mock fight" (*Immanuel Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith [New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965],

423) for Guyer and Wood's "mere shadow boxing," because it is clear throughout that Kant means to depict vapid chivalric contests and traditional warfare, not pugilistic face-offs. More generally, see Guyer and Wood, eds., 497–98, and the following colorful passage: "Thus instead of charging in with a sword, you should instead watch this conflict peaceably from the safe seat of critique, a conflict which must be exhausting for the combatants but entertaining for you, with an outcome that will certainly be bloodless" (647).

214. Ibid., 645.

215. Ibid., 652. A technical contextual matter should be addressed. When Kant was finishing both the first and second editions of his *Critique* (1781, 1787), he was living in the age of "modern warfare," in which conflict by cavalry and sword was replaced by dragoon units, musket battalions, and new ballistic weapons, "machine[s] that could wreak as much havoc as one hundred men" (Geoffrey Wawro, *Warfare and Society in Europe, 1792–1914* [New York: Routledge, 2000], 1). See also Gunther E. Rothenburg, "Armies and Warfare during the Last Years of the Ancien Régime," in *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 11–30, esp. 13, 14, 18. Bearing in mind that Kant was from Königsberg, Prussia, we can note Rothenburg's discussion of the considerable and influential military advances in ballistic weaponry and tactics under the Prussian monarch Frederick the Great (16–19). My point is that Kant, in his *Critique*, clearly and purposely describes scholastic, dialectical debate as an *antiquated* model of warfare between noble, sword-wielding contestants with otiose chivalric ambitions. For his thoughts on contemporary war, however, see his essay "Perpetual Peace," in *Perpetual Peace, and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983).

216. *Critique of Pure Reason*, 100 ("Preface to First Edition," original emphasis).

217. See Christian Wolff, *Philosophia prima, sive Ontologia* (1730), *Cosmologia generalis* (1731), *Psychologia rationalis* (1734), and *Theologia naturalis* (1736–37). Kant's critique did not stop Hegel from carrying some of the same burdens of proof (cosmological, ontological). See Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God*, ed. and trans. Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon, 2007).

218. See John Edwin Gurr, *The Principle of Sufficient Reason in Some Scholastic Systems, 1750–1900* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1959).

219. *Critique of Pure Reason*, 100 ("Preface to First Edition," original emphasis).

220. Ibid., 109.

221. Ibid.

222. Ibid., 119, 120. Kemp Smith renders this second passage as: "the philosophers of his time, and of all previous times, have no right to reproach one another" (33).

223. Hegel did not deem Wolff to be a medieval throwback and would insist, instead, that this philosopher did not absorb enough medieval philosophy, rejecting the traditions as embodied by Boehme: "The philosophy of Wolff is hence no doubt built on foundations laid by Leibnitz, but yet in such a manner that the speculative interest is quite eliminated from it. The spiritual philosophy, substantial in a higher sense, which we found emerging first in Boehme, though still in a peculiar and barbarous form, has been quite lost sight of, and has disappeared without leaving any traces or effects in Germany; his very language was forgotten. . . . In theoretic philosophy Wolff first treats of Logic purified from scholastic interpretations or deductions" (*Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3.350).

224. "Just as the Sophists of Greece wandered about amongst abstract conceptions on behalf of actuality, so did the scholastics on behalf of their intellectual world" (ibid., 3.44). Likewise,

for Hegel, Platonic and neoplatonic texts exhibit a dialectic concerned exclusively with opposition or union with the One.

225. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, vol. 1, trans. A. V. Miller (1969; Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1989), 197; see also 192, 234, 236.

226. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 663; see 645 and 664.

227. *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 426.

228. Ibid., 437.

229. Ibid., 447.

230. Ibid., 427.

231. Ibid., 426.

232. Ibid. Hegel writes of Kant's transcendental subject, "It apprehends simple thought as having difference in itself, but does not yet apprehend that all reality rests on this difference" (426). In discussing Kant's antinomies, Hegel writes: "But the Kantian philosophy does not go on to grapple with the fact that it is not things that are contradictory but self-consciousness itself. Experience teaches us that the ego does not melt away by reason of these contradictions" (451).

233. More fully: "sie weiss uber die Einzelnheit dies Selbstbewußtseins nicht Meister zu werden, beschreibt die Vernunft sehr gut, thut diess aber auf eine gedankenlose, empirische weise, die sich ihre warheit selbst wieder raubt" (Hegel, *Werke: Vollständige Ausgabe durch einen Verein von Freunden des verewigten*, ed. Philipp Marheineke et al., vol. 15 [Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1844], 502).

234. For a related argument, see Jürgen Habermas, "From Kant to Hegel and Back Again—The Move towards Detranscendentalization," *European Journal of Philosophy* 7 (1999): 129–57.

235. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 109–10; see also 663: "There is nothing in this to fear, though much to hope, namely that you will come into a possession that can never be attacked in the future." Conversely, in the "Transcendental Dialectic," Kant speaks of "possession" in a different sense, saying that a philosophical inquiry based on a properly non-dialectical understanding of "principles"—and the distinction between a priori and a posteriori knowledge and forms—can "incite us to tear down all those boundary posts and to lay claim to a wholly new territory that recognizes no demarcations anywhere" (385–86). This passage is tricky, but Kant here is distinguishing between the "transcendent," which involves, for instance, valid claims about a priori categories, and the "transcendental," which is an "illusion" (385).

Chapter Three

1. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage, 1977), 103 (postface to the Second Edition).

2. Max Weber has defined these terms most memorably; see his *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischoff et al., 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), esp. "Types of Legitimate Domination," 212–16, at 214; and on feudalism, see 255–65; also see "Power and Domination" and "Political and Hierocratic Organizations," 53–56.

3. Other studies that discuss feudal Germany (or the German states) include David Warren Sabean, *Kinship in Neckarhausen, 1700–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 1984), and *Property, Production, and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Mack Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate, 1648–1871* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971); and Hans Kohn, *Prelude to Nation States: The French and German Experience, 1789–1815* (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1967).

4. J. J. Sheehan, *German History, 1770–1866* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 97, 101–2 (Sheehan's ellipses).

5. Ibid., 102, 105.

6. See Perry Anderson's comments on Engels's letter to Bloch, in *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London: NLB, 1974), 236–37; and Robert Brenner, "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe," in *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe*, ed. T. H. Aston and C. H. E. Philpin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 45. Scholars of medieval Germany and of late feudalism have similarly noted Germany's uneven economic development. See, for example, in addition to Anderson, Otto Hintze, "The Nature of Feudalism," in Fredric Cheyette, ed., *Lordship and Community in Medieval Europe: Selected Readings* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1968), 22–31; Otto Brunner, "Feudalism: The History of a Concept," in Cheyette, *Lordship and Community*, 32–61, at 46, and, *Land and Lordship: Structures of Governance in Medieval Austria*, 4th ed., trans. Howard Kaminsky and James Van Horn Melton (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); Walter Schlesinger, "Lord and Follower in Germanic Institutional History," in *Lordship and Community*, ed. Cheyette, 64–99.

7. Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, 100th anniversary ed. (New York: Humanity Books, 1999), 12–13; see also 3–4.

8. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, ed. and trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 345.

9. In describing his historical present as feudal, Hegel is positing a national or state unity that is otherwise absent before the unification of the German states under Bismarck. He is, in short, making a singularly polemical statement about the present and excluding (as we will see below in his *System of Ethical Life*) the small-merchant economy of the time. When one restores the emergent mercantile middle class to the historical and polemical scenario, one gets Marx. The point here is that Hegel deliberately chooses the medieval frame of reference to the exclusion of others.

10. For a recent attempt to read Hegel's master/slave dialectic in context of discourses of freedom in the age of colonial slavery, see Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), who argues that Hegel "knew about real slaves revolting successfully against real masters, and he elaborated his dialectic of lordship and bondage deliberately within this contemporary context" (50). I grant the first assertion—and wouldn't exclude the Haitian Revolution from any consideration—but the second does not necessarily follow, for reasons that will become clear when I discuss a different "contemporary context," a persistently medieval or feudal one. See note 71.

11. Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit,"* trans. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 172.

12. See J. N. Findlay's commentary to the English translation of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* by A. V. Miller (see n. 93 below); Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); and John O'Neill, ed., *Hegel's Dialectic of Desire and Recognition: Texts and Commentary* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 7. O'Neill's edition contains an abundance of typos and should therefore be checked against the original versions.

13. It is not certain that Sartre attended Kojève's lectures, but it is clear that he held a great interest in the master/slave dialectic, following something of the then current philosophical fashion in France.

14. See Jean Hyppolite, *Préface de la "Phénoménologie de l'esprit"* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1966).

15. Robert B. Pippin, in *Hegel on Self-Consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), persuasively argues that this dialectical episode has divided philosophical disciplines, the practical from the speculative, and that the two can be brought back together via a renewed understanding of Kant.

16. For more on the French background, see Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975); Michael S. Roth, *Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); Shadia B. Drury, *Alexandre Kojève: The Roots of Postmodern Politics* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1994). Primary texts are conveniently collected in *Hegel's Phenomenology of Self-Consciousness: Text and Commentary*, trans. Leo Rauch and David Sherman (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999). René Girard wrote on this dialectic, too; see his *Mensonge romantique, vérité romanesque* (Paris: Grasset, 1961), 101–17, though this clearly needs to be studied more.

17. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the "Phenomenology of Spirit,"* ed. Allan Bloom and trans. James H. Nichols (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 7.

18. See ibid., 8, 14–15.

19. Ibid., 15.

20. See ibid., 10–29. Peter Osbourne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde* (Verso: New York, 1995), 71, 76, notes that Kojève, after Heidegger, renders this dialectical narrative into a "philosophy of death," which "makes it extremely unreliable as an interpretation of Hegel."

21. References to "Being-for-itself" do not begin to appreciate the issues of possession as self-possession.

22. Kojève obscures this link, citing the dynamics of labor (*Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 24–25) but neglecting possession, save for this fleeting point: "The man who desires a thing humanly acts not so much to possess the *thing* as to make another *recognize* his *right*—as will be said later—to that thing, to make the other recognize him as the *owner* of that thing" (40).

23. Without pointing to the consequences of mistranslation, Žižek writes in a note: " 'Lordship' and 'Bondage' are the terms used in the translation we refer to (Hegel, 1977); following Kojève, Lacan uses 'maître' and 'esclave', which are then translated as 'master' and 'slave' " (*The Sublime Object of Ideology* [New York: Verso, 1989], 26). For more on this matter, see chap. 4, n. 64.

24. This linguistic point has been appreciated only recently, and very briefly at that; see Gadamer in O'Neill, *Hegel's Dialectic of Desire*, 167; Chris Arthur, "Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic and a Myth of Marxology," *New Left Review* 142 (1983): 67–75, at 69; and Osborne, *Politics of Time*, 71–72. Buck-Morss points to but does not pursue the meaning of the German terms *Knecht* and *Herrschaft* (*Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, 52n90, 53n91, 62n119).

25. In the following instances where Hegel analyzes forms of domination and work, he makes important distinctions between classical slavery and medieval serfdom: G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 15, 18, 20, 30, 32, 39, 48, 53, 68, 162, 221, 241, 261 (*Werke*, 7:31, 39, 41, 72, 78, 99, 123–24, 142, 145, 183,

305, 409, 510); Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 229–30, 254–55, 256, 262, 287, 300, 301, 309, 312, 315–16, 334, 339 (*Werke*, 12:282–83, 311, 313, 320, 349, 364, 366, 375, 379, 382–83, 403–4, 410).

26. "So z. B. wäre für das römische Recht keine Definition vom *Menschen* möglich, denn der Sklave ließe sich darunter nicht subsumieren, in seinem Stand ist jener Begriff vielmehr verletzt" (Hegel, *Werke*, 7:31; *Philosophy of Right*, 15). Here and elsewhere, German terms inserted into English translations come from *Werke*.

27. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 48; *Werke*, 7:123. Nick Nesbitt energetically tries to explain away the *Herrschaft* or feudalism (medieval and modern) I have identified in this passage (48/§57) in a version of this chapter I published in 2004. He suggests, instead, that Hegel here is critiquing "Atlantic slave labor" (*Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment* [Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008], 121). Nesbitt claims that in the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel "no longer speaks of *Knechten* and *Knechtschaft*," thus abandoning his interests in feudalism once displayed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (120). Nesbitt celebrates his claim, averring that "no commentators seem to have noticed" this shift from the earlier to the later text (ibid.)—the supposed shift from feudalism to modern slavery. Well, commentators haven't noticed because it didn't happen. Look at the German text. There in the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel *does* in fact refer to *Knechtschaft* in the very passage Nesbitt discusses at length using only the English translation: "die Dialektik des Begriffs und des nur erst unmittelbaren Bewußtseins der Freiheit bewirkt daselbst den Kampf des Anerkennens und das Verhältnis der Herrenschaft und der Knechtschaft [The dialectic of the concept and of the purely immediate consciousness of freedom brings about at that point the fight for recognition and the relationship of lord *and bondsman*]" (*Werke*, 7:123; *Philosophy of Right*, 48, trans. modified). Again, as the passage plainly shows, Hegel discusses *two* systems of domination in his assessment of "historical views" (ibid.): *Sklaverei*, *Herrschaft*, *Herrenschaft*; *Recht der Sklaverei*, *Herrenschaft*. I am obviously sympathetic with any attempt to radicalize Hegel as Nesbitt tries hard to do, but facts are sometimes stubborn things, and Nesbitt's reading of Hegel here is confused. See also note 47.

28. The latter forms of slavery upon which *Herrschaft* depend cannot be thought of as different in *moral* terms from ancient forms of domination, which is why Hegel is comfortable in tracing continuities between forms of domination or *Herrschaft* from the so-called Oriental cultures to Roman societies to those in the German Middle Ages: "The transition to Greece . . . shows itself also externally, as a transmission of sovereignty [Übergang der Herrschaft]—an occurrence which from this time forward is ever and anon repeated. For the Greeks surrender the sceptre of dominion [Herrscherstab] and of civilization to the Romans, and the Romans are subdued by the Germans" (*Philosophy of History*, 221; *Werke*, 12:273). See also Hegel's consideration of *Herrschaft* in Rome in *Philosophy of History*, 306–12; *Werke*, 12:371–79.

29. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 48; Knox's translation modified, and emphasis added. The whole passage in German is:

> Der Standpunkt des freien Willens, womit das Recht und die Rechtswissenschaft ist über den unwahren Standpunkt, auf welchem der Mensch als Naturwesen und nur als an sich seiender Begriff, der Sklaverei daher fähig ist, schon hinaus. Diese frühere unwahre Erscheinung betrifft den Geist, welcher nur erst auf dem Standpunkte seines Bewußtseins ist; die Dialektik des Begriffs und des nur erst unmittelbaren Bewußtseins der Freiheit bewirkt daselbst den Kampf des Anerkennens und das Verhältnis der Herrenschaft und der Knechtschaft. (*Werke*, 7:123-24).

30. On "primitive" self-consciousness, see below.

31. Hegel in other places maintains this distinction between the unself-conscious slave of antiquity and the feudal serf who may achieve self-consciousness. See Hegel, *Philosophical Propaedeutic*, trans. A. V. Miller, ed. Michael George and Andrew Vincent (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 62; *Werke*, 4:80–81; and *Philosophy of History*, 259.

32. "If in his own case he stops short of death, he only proves to the other that he will accept the loss of a part or the whole of his possessions, that he will risk a wound but not life itself; then for the other he is immediately not a totality, he is not absolutely for himself, he becomes the slave of the other" (G. W. F. Hegel, *"System of Ethical Life" [1802/3] and "First Philosophy of Spirit" [Part III of the System of Speculative Philosophy 1803/4]*, ed. and trans. H. S. Harris and T. M. Knox [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1979]), 240; see also 238: "Wenn er an sich selbst innerhalb des Todes stehen bleibt, sich dem anderen nur erweist als Verlust eines Teils oder des ganzen Besitzes daran setzend, als Wunden, nicht das Leben selbst, so ist er für den anderen unmittelbar eine Nicht-Totalität, er ist nicht absolut für sich, er wird der Sklav des anderen" (*Jenaer Systementwürfe: Das System der spekulativen Philisophie: Fragmente aus Vorlesungsmanuskripten zur Philosophie der Natur und des Geistes*, ed. Klaus Düsing and Heinz Kimmerle, vol. 1 [Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1986], 221, 11–16). As this passage makes clear, Hegel appropriately names this individual a slave because this *Sklav* has surrendered his possessions and his self in order to save his own life. Accordingly, there is no "cognizance of the other as such" (Hegel, *First Philosophy of Spirit,* 240), and therefore no dialectic or struggle. Hegel would never describe a *Knecht* in such a situation, because that identity always assumes an Other in the technical sense—which is why, incidentally, he names the *Knecht* as such in the lord/bondsman dialectic of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (115/§189) only after the struggle to the death has been resolved, with neither party dying but with the subordinate not taken as a *sklave*, nor ever named that.

33. In §432 (and its *zusatz*) of the *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel begins with the problem: "The fight of recognition is a life and death struggle [Der Kampf des Anerkennens geht also auf Leben und Tod]" (*Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace, together with the *Zusätze* in Boumann's text [1845], trans. A. V. Miller [Oxford: Clarendon, 1971], 172/*Werke*, 10.221). He does not name the two sides in the struggle—no *Sklave,* no *Knecht*—apart from saying that each is a "natural being." If one "natural being" kills the other, then there is no struggle for recognition. Likewise, "if only one of two combatants fighting for mutual recognition succumbs, no recognition is achieved, for the survivor receives just as little recognition as the dead" (172). Hegel clarifies: "We must here remark that the fight for recognition pushed to the extreme here indicated can only occur in the natural state, where men exist only as single, separate individuals" (ibid.). In other words, in this "natural state," there is no "civil society"; hence, the fight to the death. For in civil society, already, "man is recognized and treated as a *rational* being, as free, as a person" (ibid.). The earlier "natural state of . . . self-consciousness" must therefore be overcome or sublated within civil society by a universal form of self-consciousness, which compels persons to recognize others as they wish themselves to be recognized. The point is that in §432 (and its *zusatz*) there is no proper lord/bondsman dialectic. Hegel then adds a curious rant against "duelling" (173), a "barbarism of the Middle Ages [in die Roheit des Mittelalters]" and a cultural holdover from feudalism (*Feudalsystem*) still practiced in modern society. Interestingly, however, he acknowledges that even in the medieval period, "civil society" is "more or less developed" (ibid.) And so his critique of the Middle Ages contains with it the kind of contrast we're examining, wherein the universal form of self-consciousness is possible in the Middle Ages (and later) but not in a scenario comprised of "natural beings"—that is, not in an earlier historical moment.

34. In §433 (and its *zusatz*) of the *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel turns to the next moment by naming the new identities and struggle: “Thus arises the relation of lord and bondsman [das Verhältnis der Herrschaft und Knechtschaft]” (173, trans. modified/*Werke*, 10.223). So, too, arises “man’s social life and the commencement of political union [das Zusammenleben der Menschen, als ein Beginnen der Staaten]” (ibid./ibid.). Where the unevenness of the relation emerges is in the preservation of aspects of the previous moment, the earlier “natural state of life [Natürlichkeit des Lebens].” Hegel knows to elaborate on this idea by drawing another historical contrast, lest this reference to the “natural state of life” confuse. And so he turns to the Greeks and Romans, not to discuss *Herrschaft und Knechtschaft* but rather “Sklaverei” (*Werke*, 10.224), in which—whenever freedom was obtained by revolts and so forth—that very “freedom still had the character of a natural state [die Bestimmung der Natürlichkeit]” (174/*Werke*, 10.224). But not so for the freedom the *Knecht* pursues, as described a few paragraphs later in §435: the “passage to universal self-consciousness [den Übergang zum allgemeinen Selbstbewußtsein],” the “beginning of true human freedom [den Beginn der wahrhaften Freiheit des Menschen]” (175/*Werke*, 10.225). Hegel, again, is making contrasts between the ancient and the medieval.

35. In §435 (and its *zusatz*) of the *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel makes another historical contrast to talk about the necessity of going through a phase of unfreedom in order to attain freedom—a “necessary moment in the formation of every human [ein notwendiges Moment in der Bildung jedes Menschen]” (ibid., trans. modified/ibid.). He speaks of Athens and Rome (again) as examples of the prehistory of domination, especially by the Athenian tyrant Peisistratos (“Herrschaft der Peisistratiden”). As I have already shown (see n. 28, e.g.), Hegel will from time to time use the term “Herrschaft” to refer to forms of domination across history, and this is no exception. Yet note how he immediately makes a distinction as he concludes this digression: he refers to “serfdom and tyranny”—that is, to *Knechtschaft*, which he had been discussing all along, and *Tyrannei*, as embodied by Peisistratos. Finally, he offers this sobering sentence that absorbs the very point of his historical contrast: “Those who remain serfs [die Knechte bleiben] suffer no absolute injustice; for he who has not the courage to risk his life to win freedom, that man deserves to be a slave [Sklave]” (ibid./ibid.). The *Knecht* who doesn’t seek his freedom and realize his universal form of self-consciousness will indeed be a *slave*. I interpret this passage to be saying that, yes, the fight to the death is necessary, it is after all an early step in the relevant section of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but there are other steps beyond this one, taking us into the lord/bondsman dialectic. You could say, then, that if Hegel’s section on self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* follows a historical trajectory, then it clearly shows that a struggle to the death (the earlier natural mode of attaining freedom) precedes the struggle for possession (the later, medieval/modern mode of attaining freedom).

36. Here’s another example of Hegel’s distinction making in the *Philosophy of Right*: “Examples of alienation of personality are slavery [Sklaverei], serfdom [Leibeigenschaft], disqualification from holding property, encumbrances on property, and so forth” (*Philosophy of Right*, 53 [§66z]; *Werke*, 7.142).

37. Zdravko Kobe cautions me that Luther’s Bible translation “doesn’t use Sklave at all” (pers. comm.) and instead uses *Knecht* to render passages like Galatians 3.28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free [Knecht noch Freier], there is neither male nor female.” I would note, however, that this was a very common translation and term, as witnessed in contemporary hymns such as “Ihr Knecht’ des Herren allegleich” from the sixteenth century—*Knecht* here meaning “servant of the lord,” not “person sold into slavery, bound in chains, and forced to work on plantations in the Colonies.” The point, simply, is that Luther

and other reformers are using the contemporary language of servitude in their vernacular theology—i.e., the very terms that have meaning for 98 percent of the population who were at the time feudal serfs.

38. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 275, 238; *Philosophy of Right*, 220–22.

39. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 238.

40. Further, Hegel writes: "Of the Greeks in the first and genuine form of their Freedom, we may assert, that they had no conscience" (*Philosophy of History*, 253).

41. Steven B. Smith, "Hegel on Slavery and Domination," *Review of Metaphysics* 46 (1992): 97–124, agrees with this point (see 100, 107–10), but still maintains that Hegel's lord/bondsman dialectic is a commentary on ancient slavery.

42. Hegel writes that slavery was "a necessary condition of an æsthetic democracy, where it was the right and duty of every citizen to deliver or listen to orations respecting the management of the State in the place of public assembly, to take part in the exercise of the Gymnasia, and to join in the celebration of festivals. It was a necessary condition of such occupations that citizens should be freed from handicraft occupations; consequently, that what among us is performed by free citizens—the work of daily life—should be done by slaves. Slavery does not cease until the Will has been infinitely self-reflected—until Right is conceived as appertaining to every freeman, and the term freeman is regarded as a synonym for man in his generic nature as endowed with Reason. (*Philosophy of History*, 254–55; *Werke*, 12:311).

43. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 319 and 334; *Werke*, 12:403. See also *Philosophy of History*, 328 and 333. What Hegel means by "Slavery is impossible" is that slavery is "ontologically" impossible. On the "absolute Unfreedom" of late medieval sacramental practices, see "absolute slavery" (*Philosophy of History*, 378), which imprecisely translates "die absolute Unfreiheit" (*Werke*, 12:455). Likewise, "die Obedienz der unfreiheit" (*Werke*, 12.458) is translated as "the obedience of Slavery" (*Philosophy of History*, 380).

44. One passage appears to go against my case about Hegel's distinctions between the medieval *Knecht* and the ancient *Sklave*: in Imperial Rome, "[i]ndividual subjectivity. . . . finds so little limitation in the will of others, that the relation of will to will may be called that of absolute sovereignty [Herrschaft] to absolute slavery [Knechtschaft]" (*Philosophy of History*, 315–16; *Werke*, 12:383). These are, however, not Hegel's words but rather the ideas of one of his students that made it into Karl Hegel's or Georg Lasson's inclusive editions. This statement is not in the lectures of 1822–23 (*Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* [1822/1823], ed. Karl Heinz Ilting, Karl Brehmer, Hoo Nam Seelman [Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1996], 417–18), nor is it in the first edition of the lectures of 1830–31 edited by Eduard Gans, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1837), which here only (and appropriately) tells of "der Sklaven" (325; see 325–26). Furthermore, the passage is absent from Heimann's notes from 1830/31 (*Philosophie der Geschichte: Vorlesungsmitschrift Heimann [Winter 1830/1831]*, ed. Klaus Vieweg [Munich: Fink, 2005], 156–57). Gans himself correctly writes: "Im Altertum waren es Sklaven, im Mittelalter Lehnsherr und Vasall, heute ist es der Herr und der Knecht. . . . Zwischen der Sklaverei und der Lohndienerei ist kein grosser Unterschied" (*Naturrecht und Universalrechtsgeschichte: Vorlesungen nach G. W. F. Hegel*, ed. Johann Braun [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005], 63).

45. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 407, trans. modified; *Werke*, 12:487.

46. The most articulate opposition to the idea that Hegel uses feudal terms here is Malcolm Bull, "Slavery and the Multiple Self," *New Left Review* 231 (1998): 94–131, at 103–4.

47. Nesbitt, for example, misreads Hegel's pertinent section in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (misidentified by Nesbitt as §57), describing its "overall focus on *Sklaverei*" and instead follows

Buck-Morss in viewing it as a commentary on the Haitian Revolution (*Universal Emancipation*, 227n69). Nesbitt's claim is misleading, because Hegel is precise in his terms and, again, never once mentions the word *Sklaverei* in these germane passages, so there is nothing "overall" about it apart from the projections of the interpreter.

48. See J. A. F. Thompson, *The Transformation of Medieval England, 1370–1529* (New York: Longman, 1983), 144. See also Marc Bloch's formulation: "The word ownership, as applied to landed property, would have been almost meaningless. . . . The tenant who from father to son, as a rule, ploughs the land and gathers in the crop; his immediate lord, to whom he pays dues, and who, in certain circumstances, can resume possession of the land; the lord of the lord, and so on, right up the feudal scale how many persons are there who can say, each with as much justification as the other, That is my field! Even this is an understatement. For the ramifications extended horizontally as well as vertically and account should be taken of the village community, which normally recovered the use of the whole of its agricultural land as soon as it was cleared of crops; of the tenant's family, without whose consent the property could not be alienated; and of the families of the successive lords" (Bloch, *Land and Work in Mediaeval Europe: Selected Papers*, trans. J. E. Anderson [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967], 115–16).

49. Sheehan, *Germany History*, 93. *Herrschaft*, as Sheehan defines it, is essentially a struggle for possession—namely, control over land (see 25–26).

50. See Barry Hindess and Paul Q. Hirst, *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production* (London: Routledge, 1975), 261; Perry Anderson, *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* (London: NLB, 1974); Rodney Hilton, *Class Conflict and the Crisis of Feudalism: Essays in Medieval Social History* (London: Verso, 1990).

51. Hegel, *System of Ethical Life*, 117: "Love, the child, culture, the tool, speech are objective and universal, and also are bearings and relations, but relations that are natural, not overcome, casual, unregulated, not themselves taken up into universality." The German *System der Sittlichkeit* is in *Schriften und Entwürfe (1799–1808)*, vol. 5 of *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Manfred Baum and Kurt Rainer Meist (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1998); citations are given in the notes, where relevant, following page references to Harris and Knox's translation.

52. Hegel, *System of Ethical Life*, 117. Indeed, it seems that here Hegel is exploring the process of "sublation."

53. Life and labor part ways, and need is reoriented: "This sort of laboring, thus divided, presupposes at the same time that the remaining needs are provided for in another way, for this way too has to be labored on, i.e., by the labor of other men." And because my labors are a means to satisfy another's needs, rather than a means for possession, satisfying my own needs and wants, labor is alien to me: "But this deadening [characteristic] of mechanical labor directly implies the possibility of cutting oneself off from it altogether; for the labor here is wholly quantitative without variety" (*System of Ethical Life*, 117).

54. Hegel, *System of Ethical Life*, 118. The editors, Harris and Knox, comment: "At the earlier level enjoyment followed on the satisfaction of a need. Machinery makes possible the accumulation of capital, a surplus going beyond the satisfaction of a particular individual's need" (118n19).

55. "Owing to the new difference, the relation of the subject to his labor is superseded, but because infinity, i.e., legal right as such, must remain, there appears instead of that ideal connection with the surplus [possession] its conceptual opposite, the real connection with use and need. The separation is starker, but for that very reason the urge for unification [is stronger too], just as the magnet holds its poles apart, without any urge of their own to unity, but, when the

magnet is severed, their identity being cancelled, [we have] electricity, a starker separation, real antithesis, and an urge for unification" (Hegel, *System of Ethical Life*, 120).

56. Ibid., 123.

57. Ibid., 124–25.

58. Hegel, *System der Sittlichkeit*, 305, my emphasis.

59. Hegel, *System of Ethical Life*, 126; 306.

60. "Might, or rather might individualized as strength, decides who dominates; and here, where the entire real personality is the subject, the relation of lordship and bondage must enter immediately" (*System of Ethical Life*, 138).

61. Ibid., 152.

62. Ibid., 153–56.

63. Ibid., 156; 338.

64. Ibid., 156.

65. We also bear in mind that for Hegel the peasantry is indeed a *class* in his sense of the term, which distinguishes it from "the class of slaves," which "is not a class." "So ist also z. B. der Sklavenstand kein Stand; denn er ist nur ein formell allgemeines; der Sklave verhält sich als einzelnes zum Herrn" (*System der Sittlichkeit*, 334). More fully: "According to the true concept of a class, the concept is not a universality which lies outside it and is an *ens rationis*; on the contrary universality is real in the class. The class knows itself in its equality and constitutes itself as a universal against a universal, and the relation between the different classes is [not] a relation between single individuals. On the contrary (by) belonging to a class the single individual is something universal and so a true individual, and a person. Consequently the class of slaves, for example, is not a class, for it is only formally a universal. The slave is related as a single individual to his master" (Hegel, *System of Ethical Life*, 152).

66. Hegel, *System of Ethical Life*, 156n39.

67. See *Hegel and the Human Spirit: A Translation of the Jena Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit (1805–6)*, trans. Leo Rauch (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983), 162–63.

68. Otto Brunner, "Feudalism: The History of a Concept," in Cheyette, ed., *Lordship and Community*, 46; see also Brunner, *Land and Lordship*. One cannot avoid seeing the adage about the "revolution happening in France as politics, in Germany as philosophy" lurking here.

69. Walter Schlesinger, "Lord and Follower," in Cheyette, ed., *Lordship and Community*, 92. See also Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, 272, 274, 276, 278. Schlesinger's article must be appreciated in its fuller, original form for its compelling analysis and citation of medieval literary materials such as the Anglo-Saxon poem *Genesis A*, which illustrates antecedent forms of *Herrschaft* that we might construe as informing Hegel on some level, and which might be relevant to a larger project to historicize Anglo-Saxon poetry in a materialist and transchannel fashion. See "Herrschaft und Gefolgschaft in der Germanisch-Deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte," *Historische Zeitschrift* 176 (Munich, 1953), 225–75; the German text of my block quotation is on 273.

70. See Joachim Ritter, *Hegel and the French Revolution: Essays on the Philosophy of Right*, trans. Richard Dien Winfield (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982); and Robert Wokler, "Contextualizing Hegel's Phenomenology of the French Revolution and the Terror," *Political Theory* 26 (1998): 33–55.

71. It is appropriate to remark here, perhaps polemically, that there are two predominant ways of reading the "radical Hegel" on the question of the Haitian Revolution and, more broadly, the modern forms of racialized slavery I've been suggesting were not Hegel's concern at

this point in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. One way is represented by Buck-Morss's *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*, which pursues what Hegel "must have known" about Haiti but never says. There are many titles of this sort. The other way is exemplified by C. L. R. James, author of an influential study of the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd ed., rev. (New York: Vintage, 1963), which apprehends precisely the feudal problems I am illustrating throughout this chapter—particularly in the construal of slaves as "peasants." And of course James writes in the Marxist tradition, offering such works as *Notes on Dialectics: Hegel, Marx, Lenin* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill, 1980). I would also include Cedric J. Robinson here. His *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Zed Press, 1983) is a foundational text, in which chaps. 1 and 4 deal with racialization at the end of feudalism. Lastly, Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967; 1952), argues, in part, for the limits of reading the lord/bondsman dialectic in the colonial context.

72. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 46. One can of course multiply the relevant contrivances here.

73. Ibid., 47.

74. Ibid. Given references such as this, we should not always generalize about "Nature" in our readings of Hegel, but rather attend to forms of working on "nature"—agriculture.

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid., 48; *Werke*, 7:123.

77. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 52.

78. Ibid., 51 and 53; *Werke*, 7:136. Hegel refers here to the "*contractus emphyteuticus*" (51) or, more commonly, "emphyteusis," a land use agreement, in which possession of land is granted under certain conditions of use such as the paying of taxes, rents, etc. This isn't necessarily a feudal practice, but Hegel here is suggesting that it is.

79. See Hegel, *System of Ethical Life*, 125.

80. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 369–70.

81. Ibid., 370.

82. On how lord-vassal relations took on an idiosyncratic character within the general feudal system, see the sources collected in *Das Lehnswesen in Deutschland im hohen und späten Mittelalter*, ed. Karl-Heinz Spieß and Thomas Willich (Idstein: Schulz-Kirchner, 2002).

83. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 396.

84. See ibid., 370 and 371, respectively.

85. Here we may contrast the gravity of possession in the Middle Ages with its relative and rather unmitigating significance in earlier historical moments; see Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 229–30, 231, 256, 295, 303, 309, 311.

86. Ibid., 377–78, 381, 393, 416.

87. See ibid., 371, 383.

88. Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, 172.

89. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 384.

90. Ibid., 384.

91. It is no wonder, then, that at the center of many readings of Hegel's lord/bondsman dialectic is a sense of revolution; indeed, this dialectic provides, and explains, those opportunities for the raising of consciousness. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Pocket Books, 1956); Alexandre Kojève, "Desire and Work in the Master and Slave," in O'Neill, ed., *Hegel's Dialectic of Desire*, 49–65, at 60; and Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*.

92. Robert C. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel: A Study of G. W. F. Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit"* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 451.

93. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 115; *Werke*, 3:151.

94. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 111; *Werke*, 3.146.

95. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 115–16; *Werke*, 3:150–51. The ideas expressed here first appear in Hegel, *System of Ethical Life*, 122–23.

96. Kojève's gloss on Hegel's "thing" is too abstract. Kojève doesn't specify the *thing* as *land*, because he ignores the feudal context of the *Phenomenology* (see *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 17). An example of this abstracted analysis is the way in which Kojève posits that "food" is a thing: "For example, [the lord] eats food that is completely prepared" (18). But, we ought to ask, where does this food come from? Who prepares it, and how? It comes from land prepared by the bondsman. Kojève's designations, "natural existence" (22), "Nature" (23), or "raw material" (24) are not specific enough, nor Hegelian enough (granting that the last phrase is Hegel's), in the *material* ways that Hegel intends.

97. Here I follow Kojève's insight that "all action is negating" (*Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 4; see also 5 and 17).

98. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 116; *Werke*, 3:151.

99. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 116; *Werke*, 3:151.

100. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 115.

101. Robert Stern, *Hegel and the "Phenomenology of Spirit"* (London: Routledge, 2002), 86, who follows Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure*, 27–50. See also Pinkard, *Hegel's "Phenomenology,"* 54–55; and Osbourne, *Politics of Time*, 72.

102. My positing a feudal frame here should not be misunderstood as an attempt to literalize Hegel's dialectical scenario or to forget that this is a phenomenology, always already susceptible to allegory and transposition.

103. See George Armstrong Kelly, "Notes on Hegel's 'Lordship and Bondage,'" *Review of Metaphysics* 19 (1966): 780–802, who writes, "The problem of lordship and bondage is essentially Platonic in foundation, because the primal cleavage in both the history of society and the history of the ego is at stake" (788).

104. See Smith, "Hegel on Slavery," 104, 102, respectively.

105. See Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*.

106. Marx, *Capital*, 165. Marx and Engels also memorably comment on feudalism in the *German Ideology*: "The social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life process of definite individuals, but of individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they really are" (*Marx-Engels Reader*, 154). For further consideration of the Hegelian background for Marx's critique of ideology and fetishism, see chap. 4.

107. The Hegelian Marx was once a lingering question within Marxism—with the parameters of that debate established by Lukács, who read Marx as a Hegelian, and Louis Althusser, who against Lukács sought to winnow the younger Hegelian Marx from the later, supposedly un-Hegelian Marx of dialectical materialism; see Althusser's "On the Young Marx," in *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Vintage, 1970), 49–86. This is not the place to settle questions about Marx's Hegelianism. Marx, of course, would develop some very critical things to say about Hegel's ideas about labor, possession, and private property, but Marx's objections are not always substantial, correct, or even consistent with his own premises about history; see *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, 3 vols. (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1906–9), 3:722n188.

108. *Marx-Engels Reader*, 196; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, vol. 5 (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1969), 64.

109. Marx, *Grundrisse*, ed. and trans. Martin Nickolaus (New York: Penguin, 1993), 500; *Marx-Engels-Werkausgabe*, vol. 42 (Dietz: Berlin, 1983), 423.

110. Ibid., 500–501/ibid., 423.

111. Chris Arthur is incorrect to suggest otherwise, when arguing that Kojève concocted the notion that Marx referred to Hegel's lord/bondsman dialectic: "The only difficulty with these presuppositions of the secondary literature is that Marx *never refers* to this section of the *Phenomenology*—never mind giving it any importance!—when, in his 1844 manuscripts, he embarks on a 'critique of Hegel's dialectic'. He discusses the *Phenomenology* as a *whole* and draws attention to its last chapter especially; he singles out three other sections for praise; but not one of them is on the master-servant dialectic. This should make us suspicious, therefore, of the claims made for the 'master-slave' " ("Hegel's Master-Slave Dialectic and a Myth of Marxology," 69). One need only refer to the *Grundrisse*, consult the fuller German version (not the English excerpts), and approach the passage with some flexibility and imagination about what Hegelianism means and could mean to Marx.

112. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 370. Hegel held the view of "this relation of bondage or of person to person" from early on; see *System of Ethical Life*, 126; *System der Sittlichkeit*, 306.

113. *Marx-Engels Reader*, 170; see also 168–69, and cf. 165–70 with 173.

114. Marx, *Capital*, 165.

115. *Marx-Engels Reader*, 154.

116. Marx, *Capital*, 279–80.

117. "Under the repressive conditions in which men think and live, thought—any mode of thinking which is not confined to pragmatic orientation within the status quo—can recognize the facts and respond to the facts only by 'going behind' them. Experience takes place before a curtain which conceals and, if the world is the appearance of something behind the curtain of immediate experience, then, in Hegel's terms, it is we ourselves who are behind the curtain" (Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* [Boston: Beacon, 1991], 185).