

## Authenticity with Teeth : Positing Process

© David Kolb 2005

forthcoming in *Philosophical Romanticism*, ed. Nikolas Kompridis  
Bates College

Shakespeare's Polonius announces the kinds of drama offered by the players Hamlet has invited.

The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene indivisible, or poem unlimited. (Hamlet, act II, scene 2)

This multiplication is based on accepted types of drama. Any set of social or artistic or behavioral norms can generate new types by combining the old. We have rock, rap, country music, country-rock, and could have country-rap. But changes can go far beyond this, providing new types to be combined and new modes of combination. Goethe's Faust is none of the player king's types, and then Beckett invents more. Impressionists and post-impressionists did not just add to the genres of painting; they changed the goals and practices of painting so that older genres were redefined in the new context. Modern capitalism and representative democracy brought new modes of social individuation, new kinds of associations, new dimensions of combination and mutation. The whole space of possible actions was reconfigured.

As moderns or postmoderns we cherish such novelty. We live within ranges of normatively sorted possibilities, from explicit social rules to artistic genres and scientific methods, from language rules to codes of law to appropriate behaviors for courthouses and ballparks. Norms define acceptable individuals and actions: more tightly in the law and older norms of politeness, less so with recent politeness norms and artistic genres.

With the shattering of the ideal of an static traditional society, we expect changes in such norms. The changes come sometimes with fanfare, sometimes in ways unnoticed until later retrospection reveals them. They accelerate as older norms are experienced as restrictive. Yet novelty by itself is not always good. Merely replacing old by new systems of government or artistic genres is not enough. If galactic aliens arrived and enforced on us a new religion or social system, the novelty alone would not make that change something to be approved. If art moved towards more restrictive artistic genres, or society toward less social mobility, such novelty might not be welcomed. We hope for changes that enlarge the space of possible actions.

In what sense can the space of possibility be enlarged? When the rule of castling was introduced into the game of chess, the game changed. It was possible physically to have moved chess pieces in a castling way before, but it would not have been possible within the rules of the game. Austin's observations about when performatives succeed are apropos here. Speaking strictly, what is achievable after a change of norms was possible beforehand, though not approved or

perhaps even recognized as possible. A castling move was not included in the state space of the allowable moves, though it was included in the larger space of possible arrangements of pieces of wood on the board. Impressionism was possible in 1500, in the sense that paint could have been laid on canvas in those patterns. But its real possibility had to wait for social and artistic developments to make room for its act of making new room.

We would like to understand new possibilities and norms as resolving tensions or meeting unmet needs. What the new completes or improves may not be an explicit aspect of the previous set of normative practices. It could be an implicit problem or unnoticed contradiction. Yet the new should not just be extruded from the old by an algorithmic process or inertial continuation. It should be more than a recombination of elements already present. We hope for genuinely novel expansions of possibility that yet remain authentic to what we have been.

The most familiar notion of "authenticity" demands that an individual or society stay faithful to some normative content. This might be an individual's ideals or family tradition. It might be a social patrimony of values, roles, practices, institutions, or teachings. But through time in the history of the individual or the society, the patrimony must be handed on to future selves or generations. There is no avoiding the hermeneutic task of interpreting, and perhaps reforming or attempting a return to some original meaning of the patrimony. But then the problem of defining the criteria of authenticity challenges the direction of any reinterpretation.

If authenticity is seen as involving a fixed patrimony, then change will be an external event that happens to that content. An authentic core is to be sheltered from the change, but skepticism attends any attempt to define that core or its legitimate successors.

However, there is another way to envision authenticity. Social formations could be seen as concretions within some larger process that itself provides guidance. It can do so, not because the process has a fixed goal that provides a criterion, but because the process has internal conditions, structures, or moments that demand their own expression.

In the following sections I take Hegel as an example of this way of conceiving authenticity. I make some references as well to Deleuze, a most resolute anti-Hegelian. Though Deleuze would violently repudiate the historical directionality of Hegel's analyses, they share an approach to authenticity where the "being" of the current social formation comes in a process with moments or aspects that should be made explicit elements in our social formations. The goal of authenticity might acquire some bite from these ideas, so that it could help judge changes that go beyond recombinations of the past.

## **Hegel and Change**

Hegel attempts to think social and artistic changes that provide both novelty and continuity. His dialectical investigations present a self-developing structure of concepts and follow temporal

developments in thought, art, and institutions. He tries to show unpredictable novelty which nonetheless deals with tensions in earlier formations.

In his treatments, changes are not just added on to what went before. Each new logical concept reconfigures the whole, each new shape of spirit redefines everything in the practice of thought or art or society. Basic notions of individuality change, as do the kinds of relations and combinations that are possible. Such novelty is deeper than combinatorial play with previously defined individuals and relations.

Hegel is applauded for providing novelty that goes beyond recombinations of the past. But he is accused of reabsorbing the changes into a unitary developmental process. Hegel's situation is more complex, though, and even if we doubt his overall program we can learn from his treatment of normative change. There are three features in his approach that are relevant: how goals are conceived, how forms are related, and how the process posits its own form.

First, Hegel argues that while there are ongoing goals for the overall series of changes, those goals are not adequately describable by the earlier formations in the series. The dialectic introduces structures and norms that are unthinkable in terms of earlier structures that they encompass and replace.<sup>1</sup> For instance, Hegel thinks that fully actualized and institutionalized human freedom is the goal of history, but that this goal cannot be adequately conceived until it is well nigh achieved. Particular changes are also new: Roman citizenship could not be understood nor predicted in terms of Greek city membership. Medieval cathedral sculpture will not fit the concepts or practices appropriate for Greek temple sculpture, and neither of them can show art's ultimate self-transcendence. We come to self-presence within systems of thought and practices of politics and culture that are already underway trying to accomplish their own explicit goals, but which are stages of processes that turn out to have fuller goals, though those goals are not graspable within the current formation.

Second, Hegel sees the structures of a given intellectual or artistic or social formation as themselves inclining toward change. It is not necessary to shock them from outside. A social formation can be described abstractly as embodying this or that complex pattern or structure. But for Hegel this is not an adequate description. The connections of the abstract pattern must also be seen, and those connections go beyond similarities and differences. Abstract patterns and structures have their own internal tensions and mutually constitutive relations with those they arise from and those they transition into within a larger process that supports the being of any formation. These continuities and connections go beyond resemblance and formal overlaps, since they are in an order of connection and generation. The process, as the condition for the possibility and existence of the current formation, also brings the novelty that will transform that formation. Hegel's logic follows a series of conceptual structures as they reveal their constitutive

---

<sup>1</sup> For example, in Hegel's logic, the paired categories in the second section (ground and grounded, essence and appearance, cause and effect, and the like) are not extensions of the single categories of the first section (quality, quantity, and the like), and neither section can properly enunciate the full goal of the logic.

relations with their opposites and their mutual dependencies within larger structures.<sup>2</sup> Dynamism does not need to be added from the outside, since the conditions for the stability of a current formation also require or offer novelty.

Third, and most important for this essay, the process of form and change develops towards its own self-presentation. Hegel argues that the final content of the process of development will be the explicit manifestation of all the moments that comprise the form of that process. What exists as philosophies, arts, or institutions is not a collection of finished or static results of the process of thought and social development, but rather is that process showing itself to itself. The process is defined neither by its present shape nor by any static structure. The process of manifestation manifests itself.

The manifestation of itself to itself is therefore itself the content of spirit and not, as it were, only a form externally added to the content; consequently spirit, by its manifestation, does not manifest a content different from its form, but manifests its form which expresses the entire content of spirit, namely, its self-manifestation. In spirit, therefore, form and content are identical with each other. (Encyclopedia 383z)

All that remains here as form for the idea is the method of this content -- the determinate knowing of the currency of its moments. (Encyclopedia 236)

The absolute idea has for its content only this, that the form determining is its own fulfilled totality, the pure concept. (The Science of Logic 825)

The process of thought and socially-mediated self-consciousness manifests itself by positing its own motions and moments. To posit a moment is more than to become aware of it. It is to let that moment be the dominant feature of a formation, after which it will be taken up explicitly into a more complex whole.<sup>3</sup>

In this way, the method is not an external form, but the soul and the concept of the content. It is distinct from the content only inasmuch as the moments of the concept, each in itself, in its determinacy, reach the point where they appear as the totality of the concept. Since this determinacy, or the content, leads itself back, along with the form, to the idea, the latter presents itself as a systematic totality, which is only one idea. Its particular moments are in-themselves this same [idea]; and equally, through the dialectic of the concept, they produce the simple being-for-self of the idea. -- as a result the

---

<sup>2</sup> Strictly speaking, for Hegel "process" is a term more applicable in the philosophy of nature and spirit than in the logic itself.

<sup>3</sup> "True spirit, however, is just this unity of the absolutely separate moments, and, indeed, it is just through the free actuality of these self-less extremes that, as their middle term, it achieves a concrete existence." (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 521)

science [of logic] concludes by grasping the concept of itself as the concept of the pure idea for which the idea is. (Encyclopedia 243, my emphasis)

In philosophy, some particular concept of reality or subjectivity can be central in a philosophical system, then be redefined as a subordinate aspect of a new system. Hegel sees these developments in actual fact as well as in the pure thought of logic. In politics, for instance, authoritative unified subjectivity appears as royal power, which has its day and then is reduced to a functioning aspect of the more supple whole of constitutional monarchy. Genres of art, ethical systems, and sets of social institutions all emphasize different moments as they refigure their overall process.

Hegel's logic aims to provide the basic moments of spirit's process. It defines a self-coincidence which is not from any one subject position but is the self-presentation of the process that generates subject positions. The overall logical form of the process tells Hegel what moments need to be explicitly posited. But this overall logical form must then be itself treated in terms of itself, that is, the abstract form of the process must be explicitly posited as a "real" process in appropriate spheres of objectivity, and so fully developed and brought to itself.<sup>4</sup>

This is not some mysterious ontological dynamism but the process of thought and socially-mediated self-consciousness coming to be and know itself. Less adequate normative formations cannot handle the self-reflections and intertwined moments involved. In social structures, inadequacies show up as a growing inability to provide full freedom to individuals who are nonetheless becoming more defined by that freedom. In art, inadequacies show up when artistic content and form refuse to fit well together, and the role of the artist becomes unstable. In philosophy, inadequacies show up as an increasing inability to take fixed categories and binary oppositions as final even while they are being asserted. No pattern is stable unless it has explicitly posited all the mediations and moments necessary for its own existence, and those usually lead beyond it.

As Hegel turns to nature and history, the patterns from the logic show up in governmental institutions, the history of religions, the basic functions of organisms, and so on. Critics charge that Hegel is applying what amounts to an algorithm for the generation of normative formations.

---

<sup>4</sup> The logic is not useful for guiding future developments, because the explicit knowledge of the logical moments comes late in the game, and also because Hegel does not think that historical change is consciously guided. The rational present was to transform itself, and Hegel did not think in terms of avant-garde groups leading the way. He was at best very cautious about the self-appointed artistic and political radicals of his day. The major motors of change in society and thought do not operate under conscious control; self-awareness is more a result than a cooperating cause. In the preface to his *Philosophy of Right* Hegel famously urged us to seek the rose in the cross of the present, and he claimed that whatever is effective and actual is by that very fact also deeply rational. He seems to urge quiet acquiescence since "whatever is, is right." Yet we know that Hegel also wrote extensively about the inadequacies of German political and social systems, and that he worked with government bureaucrats and students who sought significant changes. Comprehension is retrospective, yet it can enable criticism. Once a new formation is coming into being, for instance democratic constitutional government, it can be invoked to criticize lagging institutions, as Hegel did for German governmental arrangements.

There are some defenses that Hegel can offer. One is that the overall logical form of the process is not available until the final moments in the process. Thus there is no distant meta-view; no algorithm is applied from the outside. Another is that the moments of the process are embodied within contingent detail. Once he is faced with a particular historical formation, such as the politics of his native Württemberg, or a proposal such as the English reform bill, Hegel can compare the situation or the proposal to the requirements for the full positing of the form of the social process, and so make criticisms and suggestions. But he cannot move from the a priori structures to concrete details, for these latter are truly contingent.

Whatever the success of these defenses, there are also more sweeping objections that can be raised about the success of Hegel's logical closure and transparency, and against the necessity of his list of moments. In this essay I am not trying to judge Hegel against these and other charges, though I doubt that his project can fully succeed. I want rather to point out that whatever the success of his particular project, his ideas provide lessons worth considering when we are trying to elaborate a concept of social authenticity.

This essay explores the idea that by positing the moments<sup>5</sup> of their own process, intellectual, artistic, and social formations could expand their possibilities, and so could arrive at normative formations that are truer to the way that norms come about. The results would be more authentic. In what follows, I first investigate how a normative formation can be expanded through the positing of the form of its process.<sup>6</sup> Then I ask whether such expansion always produces a better formation. Then I consider whether deviations from Hegel undermine the effort to learn from him, and close with a few remarks about the situation today.

## Positing Moments

Positing is not a self-interpretation performed in the privacy of one's mind or in the implicit self-consciousness of a group. It puts a moment "out there" in public as recognized in the explicit working of an institution or a cultural practice. This is more than a linguistic act, though it could happen through the development of institutionalized linguistic practices. Aspects of a normative formation which were subordinate and somewhat indefinite become more prominent and explicitly defined, and the whole formation reconfigures. This expands the set of norms, since new explicit dimensions of action become recognized and governed.

One way of describing this expansion, taken from physics, might be to say that it complicates the state space set up by a system of norms. A set of elements (which could be types or individuals)

---

<sup>5</sup> Although the non-Hegelian examples cited later involve elements or aspects rather than moments in the Hegelian sense, I will continue to use the word as a placeholder for whatever a particular analysis reveals to be the internal structure of the process.

<sup>6</sup> I am ignoring Hegel's discussion of how moments are posited in nature, and concentrating on social and artistic formations, although the non-Hegelian examples I suggest, Deleuze and Whitehead, do apply their ideas to nature as well as to social and artistic examples.

plus their qualities and relations create an abstract space containing all the possible states the system could be in. For instance, two individuals, each of which could have either of two qualities, generate four possible descriptions of the whole. Individuals A and B, each of whom can be either blue or red, give four possible system states AbBb, AbBr, ArBb, ArBr.) Add relations (A could be above or below B) and the number of combinations multiplies. This could be imagined as a space with a dimension and axis for each quality. The system as a whole would then occupy one location in this abstract space, and its changes could be mapped as a trajectory through this space of states. The state space, no matter how complex, depends on the specification of the initial individuals or types and measurable qualities. "Measurable" here need not refer to scientific measurement -- instead of a physical system, think of a system of etiquette rules. This system sets up a space of possible actions. Each addition of a new individual (say, single parents) or a new type or a new quality (say, Friday informal dress) adds a dimension to the whole space and enlarges the number of possible states for the system. Norms identify preferred regions of this state space. More radical changes may reconfigure all the dimensions of the state space. This will likely enlarge the total repertory of possible actions available to a society but it might also, for instance in a modern bureaucracy, reduce the number of possibilities open to a single individual, because the new roles had more tightly defined spheres of operation.

Such changes are not primarily those personal self-redefinitions that revolutionize an individual's life history. Hegel would say that the content of such new selves is not an individual product; the alterations move within an intersubjective space of alternatives that has been enlarged through other than individual creativity. Similarly, authenticity to process will not be primarily a quality of a particular individual. It is on the social level that the process can make its own structure and movement actual for itself, in the development of forms for life that are truer to the way that action possibilities and norms come to happen.

In Hegel's aesthetics artworks always unite form and content, but in the first phase of art, symbolic art, the issue of the adequacy of form to content is not a matter of concern. With the development of classical art, a proper balance of content and form becomes an explicit norm. In romantic art, the action of social and individual subjectivity in going beyond the union of form and content becomes explicitly recognized, although it was implicitly functioning all along. With each phase the self-interpretation of what artists do changes, and the institutional norms change as well, so the space of possible art works is reconfigured. In politics, the moments Hegel describes as the universal, particular, and individual are present in any formation, but as they are explicitly recognized and given interacting institutional roles, government moves from tribal leadership towards a representative democracy with intricately intertwined governmental agents.

But we need not stay with Hegel for examples. Gilles Deleuze would never be labeled Hegelian, and his concepts of identity, sense, and possibility are very far from Hegel, yet there are parallels in his thought to the motions just described. Deleuze offers an ontology of events which, though it has no dialectical moments in Hegel's sense, has interacting elements (pre-individual singularities and forces, Ideas, concepts, problems, etc.) These are active in the being of any normative formation. There is no goal-oriented historical development, but some normative

formations will more fully express the interplay of these elements than others.<sup>7</sup> Deleuze urges us to create individual and social structures which embody this interplay more explicitly. Avant-garde art is an example, where the explicit creation-discovery of new possibilities becomes an institutional norm.<sup>8</sup>

Oppression for Deleuze is not just a matter of particular factual structures getting in the way of particular wills and desires. A society organized as much as possible in terms of striated space and its social analogues is oppressive, for Deleuze, not just because of factual repressions of this or that particular desire, but because that sort of society ignores or represses constitutive elements of the process that allows societies to exist at all. The mode of being of any structure is within a process that is "for" novelty and new intensities. We are called to be that newness and so to create normative formations that allow us to enact the whole process more explicitly.

Deleuze's notions, applied to institutions, challenge the modernization that Hegel applauds. Rational transparency is seen as limiting human possibilities by imposing centralized and striated systems that classify and assign to each a fixed place, caging the dynamism of individual and pre-individual desires. Still, while Deleuze's writings are full of images of flight, nomadism, schizoid break-outs, and anti-systems, total discontinuity is not a goal.<sup>9</sup>

Hegel distrusts the notion of genius and other eruptions, preferring to see individual insights as part of rational social processes. Deleuze on the other hand sees rationality as a normalizing pressure on individual and social eruptive events of new forces and wills. What I want to point out is that despite their opposed orientations both Hegel and Deleuze affirm a self-becoming process whose interacting elements or moments need to be explicitly and publicly posited within

---

<sup>7</sup> An earlier thinker whom Deleuze quotes with approval, Alfred North Whitehead, again no Hegelian, also develops an ontology of events in which various factors (eternal objects, creativity, past formations, subjective aim, etc.) cooperate in any concrete actual entity. He too urges us to develop social structures and artistic practices that make more room for the explicit interplay of these elements, and in so doing increase the sphere of possible actions and creative expressions. (See, for instance, Whitehead's discussions in the later chapters of *Adventures of Ideas*.)

<sup>8</sup> See Deleuze's analyses in *Difference and Repetition* and the comparative evaluations of cinematic forms and social realities in *Cinema 1 and 2*. His institutional judgments are most fully expressed in *A Thousand Plateaus*. There is no doubt that talking about Deleuze in the context of Hegel tends to present Deleuze as more rationalistic and more interested in continuity than he really is. But making corrections by talking more about bodies, forces, breaks, and becomings will only emphasize further that Deleuze has a theory of the becoming of normative formations that wants to have all its elements recognized and functioning explicitly. I am not suggesting that Deleuze derives this from Hegel; both of them are dependent on Spinoza and Leibniz for the basic strategy.

<sup>9</sup> "Staying stratified, organized, signified, subjected--is not the worst that can happen; the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse, which brings them back down on us heavier than ever. This is how it should be done: lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times." (*A Thousand Plateaus* 161)



normative formations to allow for full freedom. In both cases an enlargement of normative formations occurs through explicitly positing the underlying process's moments and elements.

### **Authenticity and Value**

But is there any reason to conclude that such changes lead to normative formations that are better than the earlier ones? Do such expansions automatically produce normative formations that should be valued more highly?

An enlargement of possibilities may remove an earlier restriction, perhaps one unfelt until the new space opened up. But is it enough to show that some restrictions has been lifted? Why should this be better? It fits with modern sensibilities, but that does not establish that it was an improvement. The enlargement of possibilities might dilute and dehumanize, as with the increasing specialization of factory labor. Or it might open up a nihilistic expansion leading away from any concentrated goals and towards a consumerist thirst for novelty without significance.

One possible response to such worries might be to seek an independent criterion that distinguished those cases when expansion and complexification were positive values. Hegel argues that they are positive when at the service of authentic freedom defined in terms of the rational self-presence of the whole process. He avoids endless dilution by finding structures that close upon themselves, though they leave open their lower level determinations. Deleuze sees the value of expansion and complexity depending in Nietzschean fashion on the type and direction of the willed intensity. He favors openness over closure, but with the proviso that affirmative forces repeat and maintain generous intensity.

Another response might be to dodge the question by claiming that what should be judged better or not, virtuous or not, is not the normative formation itself but particular paths through the space of possible actions it opens. This leads to familiar debates about relativism and about what criteria should be used to judge the paths.

A more exigent response would be to show that a previous normative formation was unable in practice to provide paths of action that would be judged virtuous and good even on its own terms. This resembles Hegel's procedure in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which narrates the failure of shapes of consciousness to provide paths of action that fulfill their own internal norms. Their failure stems from their inability to posit crucial moments in the process of their own becoming.

The *Phenomenology* is Hegel's richest and his most questionable self-developing sequence. Many commentators find segments of it convincing, but few are persuaded that the whole has the kind of necessity Hegel claims. Even if the book's progression does not work out in its own terms, nevertheless it suggests a method: to examine a normative formation as to whether it can meet its own criteria, with an eye to the self-affirmation of larger processes. If such evaluations

are possible, and lead to changes, they will bring new dimensions that enlarge the space of action when the earlier formation is enfolded into the new.

Some normative formations demonstrate their failure to posit crucial moments by changing into new formations that are more authentic to the structure of the process. In such cases, even when the change leads to a breakdown of previous social patterns, the new formation can be judged an improvement.

One historical example Hegel offers is drawn from pre-revolutionary France. It is a social formation that officially defines itself by an interplay between a central royal power representing universal goals and duties, and talented and noble people finding their self-identity in serving those universal ends. This seems on the surface a stable and clear set of norms and social roles, but the paths of action defined by the norms do not lead where they are supposed to lead, because the a crucial moment demands to be posited explicitly: individual free subjectivity.<sup>10</sup>

The self-definition of the nobility depends on honor given from a central source. This nobility must fashion itself according to norms that gradually change from military glory to witty court service. Others become dependent on wealthy bourgeois, who are also fashioning themselves according to changing norms. Hegel focuses on a growing awareness in all groups that their selves are both identified with and alienated from the social role definition they receive from others. As the act of receiving a normatively valid identity from another becomes increasingly self-aware, the person's inner self is perceived as a pure process of choice and reception without any given natural normative content.

It finds confronting it its own, but alienated, self as such, in the shape of an objective fixed reality which it has to receive from another fixed being-for-self. (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 516)

As regards the aspect of that pure actuality which is its very own, its own 'I', it finds that it is outside of itself and belongs to another, finds its personality as such dependent on the contingent personality of another, on the accident of a moment, on a caprice, or some other utterly unimportant circumstance. (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 517)

It is absolutely elastic and . . . rejects this disowning of itself which would make its being-for-itself into something alien, and rebels against this reception of itself, and in this very reception is conscious of itself. (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 518)

---

<sup>10</sup> The section is "The World of Self-Alienated Spirit: Culture and its realm of actuality" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, paragraphs 488-526, especially paragraphs 512-522. For a fuller discussion, see Pinkard's *The Sociality of Reason*, 157-165.

The self-consciousness which rebels against this rejection of itself is immediately absolutely self-identical in its absolute disruption, the pure mediation of pure self-consciousness with itself. (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 520)

The honest culture of service evolves into a culture of flattery and deceit, together with a group of purer people announcing that they are above such decadence. But that belief is punctured by a cynical talk that sees through and ridicules these pretensions, as well as the honor and goodness of the noble ideals.

When the pure 'I' beholds itself outside of itself and rent asunder, then everything that has continuity and universality, everything that is called law, good, and right, is at the same time rent asunder and is destroyed. All identity dissolves away. (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 517)

The self no longer defines itself in terms of universal principles of right and duty. "It exists in the universal talk and destructive judgment which strips of their significance all those moments which are supposed to count as the true being and as actual members of the whole." (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 521) This historical process, for which Hegel cites Diderot's Rameau's Nephew, begins to posit a new moment of negation and pure subjectivity that was not explicit in earlier normative formations.<sup>11</sup> Hegel sees the Enlightenment as an attempt to find public content for this empty self. Later Hegel argues that the Terror in the French Revolution attempts to institutionalize a version of this free selfhood, but fails spectacularly.<sup>12</sup>

The reason for that failure is revealed in the sections of the *Phenomenology* where this free selfhood turns out to have its own internal moments of universality and particularity that need to be posited if it is to be lived without destructive results. The interaction and increasing recognition of these moments develop in the *Morality* section, and they are posited affirmatively

---

11 The moment of self-consciousness for itself is pure self-presence but without the ability to generate content out of itself because it is too negatively defined. "The self sees its self-certainty as such to be completely devoid of essence, sees that its pure personality is absolutely not a personality." (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 517) This empty self affirmation will be taken up and reworked in the *Morality* section, with its Kantian echoes. In the complex structure of the *Phenomenology* there are prefigurings of this movement in earlier sections such as those on *Skepticism* and the *Unhappy Consciousness*.

12 The failure of the Terror is foreshadowed in this comment about the cynical discourse: "In such talk, this particular self, qua this pure self, determined neither by reality nor by thought, develops into a spiritual self that is of truly universal worth. It is the self-disruptive nature of all relationships and the conscious disruption of them; but only as self-consciousness in revolt is it aware of its own disrupted state, and in thus knowing it has immediately risen above it. In that vanity, all content is turned into something negative which can no longer be grasped as having a positive significance. The positive object is merely the pure 'I' itself, and the disrupted consciousness in itself this pure self-identity of self-consciousness that has returned to itself." (*Phenomenology of Spirit* 526) It would be interesting to compare this with contemporary postmodern attempts to disrupt false consciousness and false unities; there are significant similarities and equally significant differences.

in the "reconciling yes" at the end of that section. Though public, this mutual recognition still lacks institutional authority. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* tries to develop a theory of institutions adequate to such a complex notion of self and freedom.

The move from a medieval normative formation focused on honor and service to the cynical norms of pre-revolutionary France appears to be a degeneration from honesty and noble intention. But Hegel sees it as progress because it posits structural moments of human freedom that were not given their full due before. The bad effects of the change will be repaired not by a return to an earlier simplicity but by positing further moments and mediations still obscured in the Rameau formation. So this change can be judged progressive because it moves along the process of making human selfhood in society fully self-present and publicly recognized in all its dimensions.

The goal is to develop institutions that show in their operation the process that creates and sustains them. In this example the seeming degeneration makes explicitly operative a moment of that process. The resulting normative formation is then truer to its own mode of being as embedded in a historical process involving the moments that are gradually being posited. In this sense it is more authentic.

Authenticity provides value not so much on its own but as a condition for other important values. For instance, in Kierkegaard and Sartre the authenticity of the mode of choosing is supposed to guarantee that the values of freedom and subjectivity are affirmed. In Heidegger, who rejects talk of values, authenticity demands that a choice or a normative formation be more open to its structural temporality and so to the possibility of creative responses and responsibilities, which Heidegger judges positively.

But authenticity to process demands that there be some internal structure to the process that creates and sustains normative formations. In his novels and plays Sartre writes powerfully about people caught in situations that demand revision of their values, and he describes the agonies of people torn by past loyalties, their own desires, and envisioned futures.<sup>13</sup> Yet in his early theoretical writings the moment of decision is insulated from all determination by the past or by any personal or social content or inclination. In *Being and Nothingness*, the man on the cliff path is not in anguish at the difficulty of the choice facing him, but at the possibility that a choice will occur. He is not in anguish while deciding whether or not to throw himself off the cliff; his anguish occurs because he cannot know whether or not in the next moment a redefining irruption unconnected with his current self might decide to jump off the cliff. The self, in the ordinary sense of an ongoing actor with a definite set of values and tendencies, emerges from a choice that has no internal structure and can give no reasons, since that choice creates the framework within which reasons will be evaluated. Sartre tries to buttress this theory with a doctrine of the fundamental project. A basic choice of style of being provides a framework to which other choices can be faithful. But the fundamental project itself exists as a willed continuity that can be

---

<sup>13</sup> See for instance the plays in Sartre 1949, especially *Dirty Hands*.

broken and changed at any moment.<sup>14</sup> There is no fixed patrimony and authenticity is reduced to formal compliance with the process of choice, but that blank process can offer no internal guidance.

Heidegger shows another variant of the problem. In *Being and Time* he does not propose a disconnected blank choice. He speaks of us as "thrown projects" that find ourselves cast into activities and goal orientations already ongoing. We are never in a state of sovereign independence with respect to values and possibilities. There are projects and goals that we did not establish but that themselves establish our activity. The task of authenticity is not self-creation but decisive self-re-interpretation. The general lines of our selfhood are predefined by the overall "meaning of being" of our time, and by the more particular tasks of our generation. Those determinations are not thing-like presences but openings and calls that require further definition and interpretation. We can return to the call or project that has opened our situation, and find new possibilities not developed in the current configuration of meanings and norms. We retrieve the new by moving decisively and creatively as we break through everyday average sets of norms and possibilities. This authentic return, however, requires a privileged insight about what counts as an appropriate retrieve from the origin. Heidegger had trouble giving content to this advice, and his notorious embrace of the Nazi movement shows that the reinterpretation and discernment called for lack usable criteria and slip towards social determinism despite his rhetoric of heroic isolation. Though Heidegger would not use Hegel's term, the "moments" he finds within the process of meaning and norm creation cannot offer the guidance Hegel finds. Heidegger's analysis remains formal in a way that Hegel avoids with his self-referential form-as-content, though this last is purchased at a price too high for Heidegger.<sup>15</sup>

In Sartre and Heidegger the process that is to become authentic does not have the kind of internal structure that might provide guidance about what kinds of choices and changes would be authentic and better than their alternatives. Deleuze, by contrast, can recommend particular cultural trends and modes of life as more authentic and as providing human freedom and flourishing in the terms defined by his ontology of events. In addition, he would say that the

---

<sup>14</sup> Sartre tries to argue that authenticity provides a criterion that can guide choice, or at least exclude some choices as inappropriate, but his Kantian maneuvers in *Existentialism Is a Humanism* are not successful. Sartre's ideas resemble the thesis of Descartes (and earlier of Al Ghazzali and the Muslim Asharites) that God remakes the world anew at each successive moment, and can alter its laws and patterns at any time. Al Ghazzali uses the conception of continuous re-creation to deny any notion of necessary connection among events, and draws Hume-like conclusions about causality being a fiction resulting from habituation. For Al Ghazzali this allows for divine interventions and miracles, because God can choose to have any event followed by any other, so the corpse could speak, the cotton refuse to burn. The early Sartre allows similar discontinuities within the self. Later, in his rapprochement with Marxism he develops a doctrine of dialectical constitution of the self in mutuality, as opposed to any simple causality either by social reality or by individual freedom. Whether this succeeds is debated, but at least it softens the dualisms of the early Sartre.

<sup>15</sup> See the discussions of Heidegger's notion of authenticity in Zimmerman's *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity* and his *Eclipse of the Self*, and the comparisons with Hegel in my *Critique of Pure Modernity*.

acceptance of the new formation enacts a criticism of the old, showing where it failed in comparison with the new. If this were translated into his own concepts, Hegel would agree.<sup>16</sup>

## Juxtapositions

I have been suggesting that something akin to a Hegelian strategy might be implemented without the full Hegelian system. But there is a problem: Hegel's logic is meant to provide a definite and finite list of the correct moments of the self-positing process. The ways in which those moments might be found posited in the spheres of actuality are many and contingent, but the logical moments themselves come in a self-generated and closed series. If we have doubts about the success of Hegel's self-generating series, should we continue to talk about a process of self-positing?

Positing means putting the moments out there institutionally, where they open spaces for action. If there are correct moments to the process, and if we have misconceived them, our misguided attempts to enlarge our sphere of action should create friction between what we posited and what ought to be posited, as in the Rameau example. This is another point on which, for very different reasons, Hegel and Deleuze (as well as other more naturalistic thinkers) might agree.

But what if there is no finished list of moments to be posited? Why not endless additions and complexities? Another and yet another new political scheme or cultural norm? For instance, new artistic movements can be multiplied indefinitely, each further complexifying the institution of art. However, even if the process has no end, at some point -- art has already reached it -- the institution can explicitly posit the repetitive process itself. Creating new art genres becomes a criterion of artistic stature. Novelty is expected; the endless series becomes a return of the same. A kind of self-conscious closure envelops the ongoing lower-level novelties.<sup>17</sup> This "modern" turn is the self-grasp of the structure of processes of change. Such moves to a higher level sameness are typical of modern institutions in politics, art, and science. Fundamentalisms in all these areas resist such moves.

The same objection can of course be repeated against the second-level process. But the same answer applies: The process that needs institutional positing is the reflective-regressive move itself. Positing the process of reflection in institutional terms that can be shared by multiple coexisting normative formations -- that is our social, political, and artistic task.

---

<sup>16</sup> Even someone as pluralistic as Derrida, who sees an indefinite multiplication of modes of self-reference and self-reflection, still has them stand under some quasi-transcendental conditions that can judge some normative formations more explicit than others about the unconditional demands and the porous unities of the process that lets them be. Thus he can write in criticism of some modes of conceiving European unity in *The Other Heading*, or discuss Marxist visions in *Spectres of Marx*.

<sup>17</sup> In Hegel's terms, this is a move from bad to good infinity. Hegel sees this as inevitable, but Deleuze fights against this modernist move by urging the creation of new modes of life that are incommensurable with older artistic or cultural institutions. Nonetheless he still talks about the overall moments of the process of innovation.

But who are we? The world is filled with migrants and media. The galactics mentioned at the beginning have shown up and, rather than forcing their ways upon us, have settled down next door, showing off their ways and wares. Today's world points up limitations in Hegel's version of authenticity to process. He thinks about linear, one-stage-at-a-time changes. But we are surrounded by juxtaposed normative formations that have no inner relation to our own yet are offering themselves along many different directions. We do not have to wait for our possibilities of action to be expanded by dialectical development. Possibilities get enlarged by juxtaposition. A song here, a food there, a different mode of address, a few foreign words learned, and new norms establish themselves.<sup>18</sup> Or norms are forced by education, or by economic or political pressures. And besides the social osmosis and the social engineering there is the omnipresent marketing.

In this situation, is a notion of authenticity still useful? It can still be useful, because the authenticity discussed in this essay is not a matter of faithfulness to some particular pattern or value expressed in an earlier normative formation. It is authenticity to a process rather than to a patrimony. What makes a change authentic in this sense is that it posits or makes institutionally explicit more of the moments or elements of the process that sustains normative formations. In the contemporary situation, this could help choose among proffered new customs and values, and to distinguish authentic enlargements of action from those resulting from manipulated desires.

Cultural and social juxtapositions need further investigation that might look at such encounters in terms of a second level process analogous to the institutionalization of novelty in art. Many social critics have emphasized overarching processes which treat juxtaposed cultural differences as material for fads and consumerism. This returns the discussion to the issue mentioned briefly above about personal life choices and social possibilities. The issue would be whether juxtaposition requires an antecedent open field so that the fragments can touch one another. This then connects to a basic issue present in most philosophical traditions today: what kinds of unity and self-reference are required for the space of meaning and norms to function? And that lands

---

<sup>18</sup> Hegel himself lived in a world where such juxtapositions were beginning to happen, but he conceptualized them in terms of one dynamically changing cultural formation, northern Europe, faced with frozen remnants of older cultural formations such as China and India. He relied on the insulation given by spatial distance, and did not think through the relations of non-dialectical difference among those formations in their growing presence to one another. Hegel did think about how the pressures of bourgeois social economics would lead to colonial trade and exploitation, but he conceptualized that as the European model transforming backward formations, not as a relation of difference and mutual juxtaposition.

us in the middle of discussions pioneered by Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, which lead toward a richer notion of social authenticity as authenticity to process.<sup>19</sup>

## Bibliography

Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Difference and Repetition*. Translated by Paul Patton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

Deleuze, Gilles. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Written with Felix Guattari. Translation by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

Derrida, Jacques. *The Other Heading*. Translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Nass. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.

Derrida, Jacques. *Spectres of Marx*. Translated by Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Hegel, G. W. F. *The Encyclopedia Logic*. Translated by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991. References by paragraph number.

Hegel, G. W. F. *The Science of Logic*. Translated by Arnold Miller. London: Allen and Unwin, 1969. Reference by page number.

Hegel, G. W. F. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by Arnold Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977. References by paragraph number. I have slightly altered some of the translation.

Hegel, G. W. F. *Philosophy of Right*. Translated by T. M. Knox. London: Oxford University Press, 1952.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh. Albany: SUNY Press, 1966.

---

<sup>19</sup> In this regard one could ask, in Wittgensteinian fashion, whether there is any such thing as "the process of reflection" (or of norm creation and sustaining) rather than a motley assemblage of varied mechanisms. As in other debates about transcendental conditions, the issue turns on what justifies and makes possible gathering the assemblage together, on the temporal continuity of the process, and on whether the gathered elements are what they are only in the implicit context of the other elements in some kind of whole that includes self-reference of thought and action.



Kolb, David. *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger, and After*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Pinkard, Terry. *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness*. Translated by Hazel Barns. New York, Philosophical Library, 1956.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Three Plays*. Translated by Lionel Abel. New York: Knopf, 1949.

Whitehead, Alfred North. *Adventures of Ideas*. New York: Free Press, 1933.

Zimmerman, Michael. *Eclipse of the self: the Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1981.

Zimmerman, Michael. *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, and Art*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.