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Book Review of *Hegel's Development: Night Thoughts (Jena 1801-1806)*, by H.S. Harris.

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The history of Hegel's philosophical maturation has itself been a matter of tumult and sharp polemic since Rosenkranz laid down his pen. Less than two decades after Kimmerle's revision of the chronology of the Jena writings, working with either scant or refractory materials, Henry Harris has managed to fashion an account of these vital years in Hegel's development that is both historically convincing and philosophically articulate. He has, as he intended, here lashed together the crossbeams of history and philosophical consciousness and proved himself capable of the next and final act, a full critical interpretation of the *Phenomenology*.

I shall abstract from the lively detail of Harris' exposition in order to present, in bare outline, his argument for a three-phased transformation of Hegel's vision of the system in the years 1801-1806 and for a novel view of how the published works of 1807 and beyond embody "the philosophical system." Harris' contentions are important, deserving of wide debate, and readers' acceptance or rejection of them may well result in Hegel being accounted "the philosopher of individuality" in future histories, rather than "the philosopher of the absolute." But first let me note some features of Harris' interpretive method. Since much of the Jena material is fragmentary, tortuously detailed, and voiced in the foreign tongue of Schelling's conceptual vocabulary, Harris often carries forward texts or even phrases of the *Differenzschrift* to decipher if not the letter, then at least the direction of later texts. Since that document remarkably anticipates later directions in Hegel's thinking, and since as its translator Harris presumably understands its every nuance or suggestion, this technique is fruitful. Harris' hermeneutical standard is philosophical coherence, and he generally eschews staking an interpretation on the dating of a text or fragment. For the same reasons mentioned above, Harris chooses to build his general characterization of the three Jena epochs on catch-phrases culled from Rosenkranz's account of the lectures of the period or from Hegel's letters, labelling the system of 1801 "the intuition of God's eternal human incarnation," the system of 1803 "through philosophy to learn to live," and the system of 1805 "to teach philosophy to speak German." Harris' method, like many of his metaphors, it seems, is musical: If the critic can establish a philosophical *theme* that the reader can recognize as *Hegelian*, then perhaps some sense can be made of the whole score, the fragmentary, compressed, and tortured texts of the Jena years.

From the *System Program* of 1796 through 1803, Harris finds the young Hegel basically under the influence of Schiller's ideal of an aesthetic harmonization of all human drives. What changes when Hegel joins Schelling in Jena in 1801 is not the centrality of Fichte's question, "How must the world be constituted if I am to be a moral being?" to defining the task and direction of philosophy, but the standpoint for answering that question. Fichte's stance of subjectivity, and with it the subordination of the theoretical to the practical, is replaced by the self-sufficient standpoint of the speculative, or

intellectual in tuition. By the latter term both identity philosophers mean a cognitive or theoretical stance which 1) abstracts from everything individual or idiosyncratic in the thinker, 2) abstracts from the "preponderance of consciousness" or from subjectivity as such, and thus attains to 3) insight into the reciprocal overlap (as Schelling described it, the *Ineinsbildung*) of nature and spirit. Hegel first conceives the task of logic (or "critical logic" as he called it) as a negative vehicle for achieving the impartiality of intellectual intuition; its destruction of the finitude (or bad infinity) of empirical science paves the way for a speculative or "poetic" philosophy of nature, which Hegel models more on Plato's *Timaeus* than on Newton's *Principia*. The polemical essays of the *Critical Journal* display this destructive attitude as well, here aimed at the popular contenders (or pretenders) in the field of philosophy.

The central idea of Hegel's four-part system of 1801, as Harris reconstructs it, is to view both nature and spirit as equally and alike "the intuition of God's eternal human incarnation." This system's logic is twofold; a preparatory criticism of finite modes of cognition motivates the ascent to the infinite, while a purely speculative logic considers the idea as syllogism, the identity of the laws of identity and contradiction, and the ascent of thought to the unconditioned in the ontological argument. In the philosophy of nature "the idea comes down to earth," and is first viewed in the movements of the aether, that is, in the neo-Pythagorean celestial mechanics of Kepler. Hegel's treatment assimilates mere motion to "life" and views animate life as the highest expression of nature. Thirdly, in the philosophy of spirit, the idea is seen to be embodied in the free ethical community of a people which shapes its political agreement from the strictures it places on family and tribal ties and the annihilation of individuality it demands in sacrifice and war. The death as liberation theme manifests Hegel's peculiarly Christian interests, which are displayed fully in a fourth and concluding division entitled, "Resumption into a Whole." This resumption is the philosophy of religion, viewed as the evolution of religious consciousness from Greek religion to Catholicism, to the Protestant religion of freedom. Much of the resumption was evidently given over to a rational exposition of trinitarian theology. The texts that survive from this period are few, the *Dissertation on the Orbits of the Planets* of 1801 and the *System of Ethical Life* of 1802. Harris

himself attempts to reconstruct the trinitarian elaboration of system or "Triangle of Triangles" that Rosenkranz reports. Not only is Prof. Harris' reconstruction ingenious, but it virtually *demonstrates* the systematic, interconnected character of Hegel's thought at this early date. Harris is only tentative on the date of the "Holy Triangle" scheme, citing affinities with the *Difference* essay and the *Dissertation*, but a cryptic passage from Schelling's *Bruno* (published in April 1802) confirms his conjecture: "You could comprehend the law according to which distances increase among the stars that possess life most perfectly if you give some further thought to what we have already discussed. But you would understand it more readily if you were aware of the mysteries of the triangle" (*Werke*, 4 [Stuttgart: Cotta, 1856], pp. 273-274). Schelling's comment is unintelligible in its own context.

With Schelling's departure from Jena in 1803 Hegel was left on his own and free to move in his own direction. According to Harris, he turned sharply away from the impersonality of identity philosophy, thematized the problem of the individuality of the thinker, and resurrected the idea of the philosopher's social mission. "The true need of philosophy," announces Hegel in a lecture, "arises from nothing else but this, to learn from it and through it how to live." Harris represents this dramatic shift in focus variously: 1) What had been the critical objection to Fichte in 1801, "the preponderance of consciousness," now becomes the essential thing. 2) No longer are Schiller's aesthetic harmonization of human drives or Kant's moral ideal of a rational community Hegel's guiding ideas; in their place meditations on the need for philosophy are brought forward from the 1801 *Difference* essay. 3) The dynamism of the eternal incarnation of God as evidenced in the history of religious consciousness turns the thinker to the explicit task of overcoming Greek fixity of thought. Or 4), the tranquil Spinozistic parallelism of identity philosophy bursts asunder and calls the philosopher's individuality and subjectivity into question. (A similar problem besets Schelling's identity philosophy after 1802, but it is unhappily solved by recourse to a mythical account of individuality as a "fall" from the idea.)

Hegel's 1803 system is tripartite in structure; the "resumption" in the history of religious consciousness falls away, as does the centrality of religion in the life of spirit as such. In its first part, logic or

metaphysics, this system abandons the earlier idea of a destructive purging of the categories of finitude and attends instead to the formation of individual consciousness. This metaphysics situates individuals in their world in three stages, advancing from considerations of the need for philosophy to a review of the finite and defective forms of cognition, and from there to a consideration of the structure of consciousness as such. The 1803 philosophy of nature, in Harris' view, radically alters the 1801 vision of nature as the eternal incarnation of God, and declares instead that nature is the other-being of spirit or the death of God. So must nature be viewed by a philosophy which takes as its sole task the recognition of deity inside human cognition. Harris' lengthy treatment of all the natural phenomena compassed in the 1803-04 *Naturphilosophie* is lucid and detailed, and can be taken as emblematic of all of Hegel's early attempts in this area. Transitioning to a treatment of the 1803-04 philosophy of spirit, Harris argues emphatically that Hegel is a materialist, not a theist, that human self-consciousness is existing self-cognizing spirit which is existent and self-cognizing *there alone*, and that, in general, Hegel's consistently maintained philosophic goal was to put the affective force of religious consciousness behind the scientific view of human life. The culmination of the 1803 system is a sustained meditation on the human community as the locus of meaning and meaningfulness, and on the crucial ways that language, education, and social recognition serve as conditions for the coming to be of persons. What Hegel here achieves, contends Harris, is an impersonal doctrine of the absolute value of rational personality.

In 1805-06 Hegel's vision of system undergoes yet another transformation, brought on by what Harris calls a "phenomenological crisis." The 1803 system had turned its attention to the individual abstractly considered, but now Hegel, impelled by his enduring conviction of the social mission of philosophy, focuses on the problem of concrete or existing individuals and their education into the philosophic stance. Hegel announced in his initial lecture for the winter semester of 1804-05 that philosophy was not esoteric (as in Schelling's formalism or Boehme's mysticism) but popular, "popular" in the sense that it digs down into the stuff of ordinary experience to reveal the presence of the divine, but also in the sense that it works within the medium of ordinary language. Hegel writes that his goal is

"to try to teach philosophy to speak German," and we cannot think this goal is accidental or extrinsic, for, as he put it in *Faith and Knowledge*, "the concept is itself the *mediator between itself and life*." "

This new "populist" vision of philosophy's goal puts Hegel's hitherto formulated ideas of the systematic function of logic under stress. In 1805-06 he divided his lectures into logic or speculative metaphysics and real philosophy; he seems simply to ignore the idea of a preliminary or critical logic and to want to open the system with a fully articulate and self-justifying science of metaphysics. With this move, however, the problem of a beginning asserts itself, and it is all the more acute since philosophy is now supposed to speak in the tongue of ordinary experience. In the systematic space vacated by critical logic, Harris contends, the *Phenomenology* will come to be as a science that is at once speculative and introductory. What in 1801 was seen as the necessary propaedeutic to philosophy, the sacrifice of subjectivity in *critical logic*, will become in 1807 the *phenomenological sacrifice of self as such*, a cognitive surrender to the absolute in both cases. Thus over the course of the Jena years, argues Harris, what Hegel generally accomplishes is the transformation of the whole of identity philosophy (the critical theory, or idealistic reconstruction, of experience) into a preamble to the Idea.

Ample texts remain for the 1805-06 philosophies of nature and of spirit, and Harris provides a detailed, sometimes philosophically impassioned, exposition of each. The *Naturphilosophie* casts off the materialistic guise of its 1803 exposition and reverts to the theological physics of 1801, which begins with the primal motions of the aether and proceeds all the way up to the organic processes, now viewed as the natural correlate of the people's communal life. The philosophy of spirit announces that the reality of the cognitive aspect of the total natural process is spirit. It stresses the interdependence of the community and the individual: Ethical substance is human nature and is the producer of human individuals, but its ultimate *cause* is the freedom of individuals. Initially, ethical substance necessitates and coerces human behavior, which later, after education and experience, comes into its legacy of freedom and finds its fulfillment in the realms of political association, art, and religion. To these considerations Harris appends an interpretation of a system-diagram which appears in the

margins of Hegel's discussion of organic process. It traces the cyclical course of the human individual's life and experience within the permanent frameworks of nature and society and shows how the individual comes into spiritual possession of the whole. These few pages could stand as a "resumption" of Hegel's whole philosophy and are a remarkable philosophical achievement on Harris' part.

Harris concludes this massive study with a free-form preview of his interpretation of the *Phenomenology*, suggesting a reading of Hegel's mature system that promises to end the seemingly endless *Phenomenology* versus *Encyclopedia* debate. *The system is quadripartite, argues Harris, with the Phenomenology serving as a prelude to the logic, philosophy of nature, and philosophy of spirit in the theoretical perspective, while in the practical (or educational) perspective, it serves as a prelude to the triad of speculative philosophy, real philosophy, and absolute knowledge. The very goal of the system as a whole is the retrieval of the Phenomenology in the philosophy of spirit, for, contends Harris, the essence of the Phenomenology, both as systematic introduction and as science, is that it be the cross of logic and history on which individuality dies and is resurrected as cognition. It thus fulfills the ideal formulated in 1803, learning from philosophy how to live -or rather, not exactly how to live, but what life is all about. And this learning involves the vindication of our claim as persons to freedom within the order of nature. "We must understand," writes Harris, "how historical freedom is naturally possible (what its nature is), given that the order of nature is logically necessary for the realization of freedom in history." This understanding is precisely the reconciliation of nature and spirit which was the aspiration of identity philosophy since 1801, and it alone is the meaning of Hegel's incessant God-talk. " ... Hegel turned the speculative tradition of Christian panentheism into a properly critical philosophy-i.e., one in which 'God' has no transcendent status whatsoever, being only the Gestalt in which the transcendental structure of experience appears as a whole."*

Adjectives simply fail the writer faced with the task of evaluating Harris' study. The book involved ten years of labor, translation of most of the major texts included. Harris brings to bear a vast amount of erudition and research on the technical tasks of dating a fragment or

interpreting Rosenkranz's lecture reports. *Night Thoughts* furnishes us for the first time with a coherent account of how Hegel came into possession of his philosophy, and helps us see how the would-be *Volkserzieher* of Bern and Frankfurt came to be a systematic philosopher *without a major change in ideals or goals*. Professor Harris' account of Hegel's philosophical debts, honest and non polemical as it is - for instance, in its refusal to exaggerate the differences between Schelling and Hegel in their years at Jena - lets what is bold and unique in Hegel's philosophy come to the fore, namely, that "the idea comes down to earth," teaches human individuals about the natural and social constraints upon their rationality, and leads them to a richer and fuller appropriation of their historically and socially *achieved* rationality. That one book can do all this, and still be graced by wit, charm, and style-admittedly in an idiosyncratic style, one unafraid to announce its conclusions under the rubric "Recessional Voluntary," since Hegel had in 1801 called the labor of philosophy "divine service" - is quite amazing. No one seriously interested in Hegel should fail to read it.