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Textuality and Imagination: The Refracted Image of Hegelian Dialectic

Frank Schalow
University of New Orleans, fschalow@uno.edu

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Tulane University

Thinking beyond the parameters of convention, in a way contrary to it, how can we come to grips with that approach which overcomes differences within the unity of a system, namely, with Hegel's dialectical method? From its inception, Hegel's dialectic has continually been the brunt of attempts to modify, improve, and revamp it. These revisions began with Marx's dialectical materialism and later gathered momentum through the efforts of critical theorists who adjust for the initial "materialist" slant, compensating for the overcompensation.[1] In the wake of these successive adjustments, how can we avoid the historicist mode of interpretation and still rise beyond the monolithic structure of the dialectic? How can we appreciate its simplicity without resorting merely to internal criticism or adopting an artificial, external standpoint that seeks refuge in the narrowness of a worldview? The attempt to develop these questions will begin by inviting the most notorious disruption of the self-organizing tactics of the dialectic, namely, the play of imagination.

In its elemental form, the dialectic instills patterns of organization within the chaos of experience, channeling the creative forces into higher levels of development and ultimately capturing them within a circuit of mediation. In radically siding with otherness, imagination does not introduce another stance of identity, which can in turn be

negated at a subsequent stage of the dialectic. Rather, imagination stands as the most extreme emissary of otherness, occupying a place prior to the inception of dialectic in its effort to mediate opposites within the unity of the Absolute. The self-legitimatizing and self-authenticating character of the dialectic remains inherently problematic. An inventory of this problem becomes possible only by turning toward the outermost periphery of any organizational scheme, and disrupting it through the ecstatic play of imagination. Insofar as ecstasy marks the span of distance in which the opposition of terms can occur, the ensuing reinscription of meaning unfolds from across the widest chasm for dispersing that difference, or textuality.

Ultimately, deconstruction must relish the challenge of allowing this abysmal event to reverberate with an innovativeness alien to the dialectic; the nothingness of this creativity diverges from Absolute Spirit's calculative path of development, the "cunning of reason" embodied in its historical unfolding.[2] By exploring its latent kinship with language, we can uncover the creases and folds of the dialectic, its discreet manner of occurrence. Among critical theorists, Adorno took the greatest strides toward appreciating the subtleties of language (*Sprache*), although without tracing the source of its creativity to its intersection with imagination. Only by following the unique conduits of the text, however, can we undo the sedimentation of conventional usage and welcome improvisization at the margins of speech, i.e., the novelty of style. Our discussion will proceed by unveiling: 1) the nondiscursive side of the dialectic, 2) the impact of imagination in monitoring the path of dialectical mediation, and 3) the hiatus and dissonance between the Hegelian nomenclature of the "labor" of thought and the "playful" demeanor of deconstruction which resounds throughout a text.

I. Displaced Anxiety

Language bears the reverberations of tradition and elicits meanings that resonate with those depths. This is an insight concerning the essence of language that Hölderlin helped to spawn during the period of his friendship with Hegel at Tübingen. A sensitivity to the governance within language in its historical setting gives rise to a concern for etymology and, by contrast, to a strategy to combat our reliance on prepacked, sedimented meanings. An eclecticism toward the powers of speech, as it were, takes precedence over the construction of a narrowly confined vocabulary which is tailored to a preset subject matter, a nomenclature imprisoned to convention. And yet Hegel's thinking will display the irony of adjusting itself to grasp that phenomenon whose

parameters are most widely marked by history (i.e., the Absolute), although in a way that can bend conventional usage commensurate with the wealth of appearances constitutive of Absolute Spirit.

To consider the dialectical process in whose history we participate, we must return to the point of Hegel's most basic quandary that holds sway over his formulation of a system: how to ally language with the spontaneous and exhaustive mobilization of the patterns of thought. Because it is only by legitimatizing its own development at every step that the dialectic can prepare an abode for the Absolute, special attention must be paid to the intricacies of expression and to language as our entrance into the self-generating movement of thought. Heidegger addresses this issue in his 1930/1931 lecture course *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*:

> Language forces things into their opposites, sublates them, raises them to genuine truth. Language is in itself mediating; it prevents us from sinking into that which has the character of the this—that which is totally one-sided, relative, and abstract. By turning things into their opposites, language brings about the turning away from what is relative.[3]

In the preface to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel begins by acknowledging the tension between a naive manner of apprehension or "natural consciousness," and the most complete, differentiated mode of comprehension proper to "science."[4] A wide gulf thereby opens up between the two, whose narrowing depends on the power of dialectic to reconcile what at first appears disparate, i.e., consciousness and its object. The attempt to trace the complementarity of the two turns out to be more than an epistemic problem. Rather, to overcome the barriers between them it is necessary to introduce key distinctions into the field of comprehension and thereby accomodate further nuances of expression, which serve as the catalyst to vault consciousness from one level to the next. Thus, in its initial phases, the dialectic has already been awakened to the problem of how to chart the convergence between the truth that philosophy would embrace and its uniquely scientific manner of presentation.

Language emerges ever most prominently as a key factor in the increasing differentiation of the cognitive field, the litmus test for purging the "one-sidedness" of our categories, which precludes the speculative apprehension of the whole. If truth is indeed the "whole"—a questionable assumption, as we will later see—then there can be no confluence of alternative perspectives without overcoming the divisions that are the outgrowth of preset facets of speech. This "pictorial" (*Vorstellung*) or "representational" manner of expression, as Hegel describes it,[5] is a

contaminant in the attempt by thought to purify its element in a way that can serve as the preferred form to gather forth the self-manifestation of the Absolute.

As the dialectic charts the path in the chronicle of Spirit's evolution, the parameters of philosophical inquiry have already been set. But the interpretive presuppositions are not so blatantly transparent during the gestation period of formulating a problem and seeking the appropriate method. Prior to inscribing an immanent rationale or Τέλος there lingers an inertia that the dialectic in its ἐντελέια has already taken the step toward overcoming. In the lagging of that momentum resides an ambivalent point in the alliance between language and philosophy which has not yet been exposed. From this disequilibrium arises the possibility that the former could be the invincible opponent to the later. The goal of constructing a system thereby hangs in the balance; for the autonomy of language remains dormant as a positive feature of thought (i.e., of mediation) and stands instead as an unconquerable obstacle.

For Hegel, the inevitability of the withdrawal of language at this most crucial of all junctures remains excluded from the circle of presuppositions governing the dialectic; the provoking of an unsettling ripple across the entire span of the system goes unnoticed. And yet that very turn toward deferral and disavowal *within* language itself will ultimately supply the catalyst to start the engine of the dialectic, or to provide the hinge for differentiating the terms, which orchestrates the entire movement of mediation. Receding in the background of Hegel's proffering of the dialectical method is a faint tinge of anxiety, a residual inkling of the capricious character of speech in the face of a philosophical task that is designed to fulfill the Absolute's goal of achieving complete presence. Even in the "Bacchanalian revel where no member is not drunk,"[6] there lingers a single-mindedness of task and sublimity of mission that seems to trivialize the amorphous demurral of such an unpredictable disposition as anxiety. Yet whenever a genuine sensitivity to the power of language originates, as it does for Hegel, we can be sure that the influence of an attunement does not lie far behind.

Hegel's *Phenomenology* is most often viewed as a cognitive adventure; yet it is also an exercise in the evolution of language. Recollecting from the beginning what is simultaneously the prefigurement of the end, the preface brings most explicitly to the foreground the inordinate weight granted to language in sustaining the tension of the dialectic. Even the lofty equation of Absolute Spirit with the totality of knowledge would not be inclusive without admitting the corresponding moment of the interpenetration of particular and universal in lan-

guage. Hence Hegel appeals to the "philosophical proposition" or the "speculative sentence" to distinguish that extreme point of mediation where the most supersensuous mode of knowing finds itself through the most elemental enactment of speech.[7]

Camouflaged within the agenda of Hegel's preface is an even more provisional concern as to the precept to distribute the most basic terms or the interweaving of a vocabulary that can capture the complexity of the system. In retrospect, this prefatory note brings forth the undergirding of the pillars that will support the system, or what we might describe as the invisible infrastructure of the joints and hinges comprising the stages of the dialectic. That infrastructure does not embody a further organization of reason, but instead points to the fault line for unbuilding (*abbauen*) what has been constructed.

In this way, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* constitutes itself not only in the thought of the Absolute; it also unfolds in the subterfuge of the text. And the key terms (e.g., Spirit, consciousness, in-itself, for-itself) not only are motifs within the dialectical process but also harbor an array of connotations or otherwise unspoken meanings. Even within the preeminence, uniformity, and mastery afforded to the thinking of the speculative sentence, there remain latent meanings that are equally essential to the transmission of philosophical insight. The tapestry of these meanings comprise something like a linguistic mosaic, whose innermost precept is defined by the heterogenity of expression rather than the univocity of terms. Out of this mosaic arises a completely new understanding of the nomenclature occurring in the distribution of key terms throughout the dialectic.

In the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel shows his awareness of a dilemma that constitutes the heart of his dialectical method: how to apprehend the whole through an intuitive act while tracing the development of its parts through thought.[8] In acknowledging the conflict between intuition and discursivity, along with the need to coordinate the two, Hegel brings to the surface a problem so radical that only an equally innovative method can resolve it.

The extreme disjunction between intuition and concept, however, cannot be mended merely by postulating some higher act of unity. For example, the formula of pure identity (A=A, I=I), whether as the intellectual apprehension of self-consciousness (Fichte) or the aesthetic vision of nature (Schelling), allows the very content it would delimit to fall into disorder.[9] The unspoken factor in the presentation of the Absolute turns out to be that which enters into alliance with absence, that is, the deferring, differentiating power of language. As John Sallis indicates, in pointing to the nascent development of dialectic in Fichte's

thought, any act of determinate negation presupposes the "power of spacing oppositions."[10] This power, which German idealism rather ambiguously ascribes to imagination, ensures that creativity really depends upon difference rather than on restoring identity. The infusion of creativity within language entails a sharp turn toward heterogenity, whose dispersion of pauses and interruptions allows for the genesis of increasingly nuanced patterns of meaning. In the abeyance of a linear structuring of discursivity, in the uncanny "displacement" of our mastery over language, imagination finds its home.[11]

Thus, Hegel's seemingly abrupt turn to the issue of language in the *Phenomenology*, which has curious intimations and overtones in the *Difference* essay, harbors an anxiety born from lingering before the threshold of imparting difference and discrimination. But what can provide the "password" for traversing this threshold? Can it be imagination that unlocks the uncanny power of that word, i.e., as earmarking the differentiating power of language? Could Hegel's own reluctance to grant imagination its due provide an obstacle in his attempt to appreciate the differentiating power of language? Hegel's suggestion that language is an outward foil for the manifestation of Spirit and stands in service of it quite ironically parallels a disclaimer of the centrality of imagination. "Speech is the act of theoretic intelligence in a special sense; it is its *external* manifestation. Exercises of memory and imagination without language, are direct, [nonspeculative] manifestations."[12]

Could there not be in this apparent dissociation of language and imagination a curious paradox: namely, that it is in assessing the limits of all predication that imagination regains its prominence and thereby assists, rather than hinders, the differentiating advent of language? Needless to say, we cannot hope to answer these questions without considering the mosaic of textuality into which Hegel's dialectic remains uniquely inscribed. And this humble effort cannot bear any fruit without consideration of the contributions of the most staunch reformists within the Hegelian school who first grappled with the corollary challenge of "reading" Hegel even before the deconstructive movement, most notably, Theodor Adorno.

II. The Tonality of Thought

Almost a century ago James Stirling published a book under the now presumptuous title *The Secret of Hegel*.[13] Hindsight enables us to put into perspective the suggestion that there is a kind of gnostic message couched within Hegel's writings, an alchemical formula that will yield the philosopher's gold buried in its abstruse language. Carried on the

wave of such a disclaimer, critical theorists like Adorno have radically altered the orientation toward Hegel and transformed the landscape in which we reinterpret the complexities of the dialectic.

Adorno shifts the focus from the goal that the dialectic embodies to the disruptive convolutions of its movement, from the veracity of its doctrine to the critical dissection of any ideology. The most unlikely thinker to follow in Hegel's footsteps turns out to be Nietzsche, whose mockery of Cartesian certainty seems to honor more genuinely the healthy skepticism and caustic edge of dialectical criticism.[14] Thus Adorno widens the radius for interpreting Hegel from the fixed center of the system to the the outer edges of its composition; it is not the preservation of the doctrine itself that takes precedence, but rather its dissemination for an audience which enlists different social and historical presuppositions.

In this way, Adorno extends the vortext of the dialectic to include the responsiveness of the reader. More specifically, Adorno factors into the hermeneutic strategy for "reading" Hegel the initiative the reader himself/herself may exhibit in formulating responses to the crises of the times. Adorno thereby insures that the "content" of Hegel's thought would not be locked into the sterility of a worldview, but would instead be further embued with the spectrum of experiences comprising the reader's unique heritage. Precisely by attributing to the content of the dialectic a further impetus toward change, adjustment, and development, Adorno must approach Hegel's thought from the apparently opposite side of attending to its demeanor, composition, and above all, style (*Stil*). "Abstractly flowing, Hegel's style, like Hölderlin's abstractions, takes on a musical quality that is absent from the sober style of the romantic Schelling."[15]

Symptomatic of Adorno's unique approach is the perhaps derisive tone in the face of the staunchest tenets of Hegel's system. Adorno's iconoclastic tenor resounds emphatically in his disclaimer to read Hegel "against the grain."[16] With a touch of irreverence, Adorno contests the most fundamental and celebrated among all of Hegel's proclamations that the "truth is the whole."[17] According to Adorno, the naive acceptance of this claim is a sign of "untruth,"[18] insofar as the overthrow of the status quo and the resistance to any totalizing ideology provides a clearer indication of a truth.

The dialectic is not merely an instrument of some higher mode of truth, but rather a way of deposing the authoritative grip of such a stance. By the same token, the fuel for overturning any one-sided stance through the fury of dialectical movement lies in exposing the contradictions of the social reality at any given point. Only due to shouldering

the weight of this negativity within the confines of the historical situation does the dialectic explode the rigidity of our thought and categories. For Adorno, the weightedness and intensity of this task captures most precisely Hegel's poignant allusion to the "labor of the concept."[19] Thinking must partake of this labor both because it can never be detached from the the crises of our historical-social situation and because it resists the complacency offered by any single worldview or ideology.

According to Adorno, the dialectic is not inherently hierachical in its development. Such a scenario proves problematic by granting supremacy to the universal and allowing its determination to prevail over the continual readjustment to the novelty of the particular. By contrast, the measure of concreteness may be better served by granting preeminence to the particularity of experience and thus by eliciting ever more differentiated patterns of meanings. The evolution of these patterns and the innovativeness they embody supply a new trajectory to outline meaningful contexts apart from any preset hierarchies. This innovativeness will be reminscent of what Kant first reserved for the role of imagination in a reflective judgment, albeit located more explicitly in the sweep of historical events.

But why would an exponent of Hegel wish to resurrect an archaic notion that adheres to the claim of finitude over the infinity of the Absolute Concept? The answer lies in the fact that the self-contextualizing way of apprehending the specifics of our historical circumstances must continually place its own assumptions in question. In appealing to the dialectic, then, we do not take refuge in the sanctity of an ultimate truth, but instead turn to that dialectical activity for clues to exposing the contradictions in our own social-historical situation. The discomfort of experiencing the abrupt reversal of a unified vision of reality supercedes the assurance of any complete system of truth. In this manner, Adorno gives a new wrinkle to the celebrated Hegelian *Aufhebung*, insofar as succession means overturning identity rather than recovering it in a mediated form. This way of steeping *Aufhebung* in finitude yields a unique variation of Hegelian thought, namely, "negative dialectics."

Yet, if only in name, negative dialectics has no autonomy apart from continually accepting the invitation to undertake increasingly creative readings of the *Phenomenology*. Indeed, "reading Hegel" is not merely a preliminary step to undertaking more original thinking; the supposedly "passive" stance of the reader holds only insofar as such passivity meets with an astonishment before the possibilities for thought hidden in the twists and contortions of the dialectical process. The ability to nurture this astonishment, on the one hand, while entertaining the

full spectrum of possibility, on the other, resides in the ineluctable power of imagination. Because this power is associated with a kind of innovativeness and creativity, Adorno recalls imagination's prominence, without, however, considering its problematic status within the Hegelian text as others have subsequently done.[20] Curiously, Adorno employs a cognate identical with the English term, "Imagination," rather than the German word (*Einbildungskraft*), and uses alternately the expression "*produktiver Phantasie*" to suggest the "productive imagination."[21] He then seeks to justify reviving imagination in this ostensibly un-Hegelian way by invoking the insights of twentieth-century phenomenologists. Specifically, Adorno calls attention to the way Husserl and then Heidegger (in his reappraisal of Kant) propose a "spontaneous-receptivity."[22]

Adorno introduces imagination as the keynote of a philosophy that moves on the wings of reason and favors pure presence at the expense of absence. But is his negative dialectics capable of accomplishing a reversal that resets the parameters of Hegel's thought from a vista seemingly excluded from it? Or is it the case that there are more nuances in the landscape of German idealism than meet Adorno's discerning gaze? Adorno's revealing comparison of Hegel's dialectic as an "anti-text" (*Anti-Texte*) gives us occasion to pause.[23] On the one hand, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is not equivalent with its authorship, which Adorno's concedes in a roundabout way. On the other hand, the ability of negative dialectics to benefit from what is omitted, concealed, and withdrawn—the absence that is the unspoken root of negativity—presupposes an avenue supplied buy the sinews of the text itself. The writing of such a text as "Skoteinos, or How to Read Hegel" must prepare for its own unraveling along the very edges of the dialectic that its exposition would outline. Adorno's hermeneutic quest thereby yields something like a paradox, whose dimensions can be measured only by admitting a more radical enactment of imagination.

If not in criticism of Adorno, is there any way in which his example can provide the opportunity to map out the necessary correlation between imagination and textuality? Is there not in the prospective "reading" of Hegel a nascent topography that could illuminate a literary side to imagination? The answers can only lie in unveiling what remains paradoxical in the Hegelian vocabulary, the incongruent nomenclature which negative dialectic inadvertently activates by allusion rather than by example. Adorno reaches this critical juncture when he considers the presumption Hegel held, which must be exposed in order to appreciate the grandeur of his thinking: "One not insignificant reason for the refractoriness of Hegel's texts is probably that Hegel, with his excessive confidence in the objective spirit, believed that he could avoid

this kind of admixture of the alien, that he could say the unsayable in his ordinary language."[24]

Hegel's own prose parallels the rhythmic motions of the dialectic and thereby rises to a crescendo in harmony with the self-elevation of Spirit as Absolute. But the doubling of language, as accommodating the innermost structure of Spirit, on the hand, and as "mimicking" in "externalized" form (i.e., as an instance of philosophical prose) the unique cadence of dialectical development, on the other, suggests a further differentiation; this more radical mode of difference cannot be addresed within the symmetry of presence characterizing the Hegelian system.[25] Inevitably, a troublesome chord is struck in Hegel's self-interpretation of the dialectical venture. The discordant tonality can be faintly heard as we allow imagination to voice its distinctive mark as "play" in its resounding difference from the keynote of the Hegelian narrative, namely, the exercise of thought as "labor" (*Arbeit*).[26]

III. Τέχνη and Textuality

In contrast to the essentialism of Hegel's thought, there lies an alternative occurrence of *Wesen*. *Wesen* in this sense epitomizes a unique event (*Geschehen*), which complements the power of imagination as a harbinger of possibility. But just as the dialectic has a historical focus, so the event in question brings to a head the distinctive crisis of our age vis-à-vis the advent of technology. As Heidegger emphasized, we must distinguish between the employment of technical apparatus and the *essence* of technology.[27] Yet that distinction makes little sense unless it is drawn against the background suggested by the Greek etymology of the word, namely, τέχνη; the Greek sense of τέχνη as a revealing through craftsmanship marks the intersection between two apparently disparate meanings that span the gulf between metaphysics and its overcoming. The fact that modern technology can be traced to its ancestry in τέχνη, while τέχνη partakes of truth as unconcealment, indicates the complex tapestry of relations which are conjointly intimated in the appeal to *Wesen*.

The variation and interplay of such a "manifold" is one that escapes any purely conceptual framework, even Hegel's; for these distinctions can be maintained only through the disseminating (revelatory) power of imagination, rather than through the synthetic (mediating) function of the concept. The appeal to Greek thought is part of the movement that brings forth the manifold in a more differentiated way without the supervision of the concept itself. An attentiveness to the tonality of language that is crucial for etymology to prove fruitful reinforces

the kind of innovativeness in which new patterns of meaning arise. The creativity is reminiscent of a ποίησις that adds a dimension of artistry and craftsmanship to an otherwise sedimented field of logical schemes which the dialectic supposedly embodies.

Even in its logocentricism the dialectic is not just another form of logic. Perhaps Adorno was one of the first to make this point by indicating the relevance of style in presenting the life of spirit and by seeking the artistic corollary to this life in the occurrence of μίμησις. "What may help . . . in understanding the core of Hegel's thought is recognizing that the conception of totality as an identity immanently mediated by nonidentity is a law of artistic form transposed into the philosophical domain."[28] Yet at the same time the full measure of this μίμησις as the preferred vehicle for understanding remains rather vague—and undifferentiated from the speculative thought it would help to evoke—so long as the disparities within the infrastructure of the system have not also been given weight equal to the actual themes presented.[29]

The venture by negative dialectics to depose the hierarchical and authoritative logical schemes produced by the Hegelian system must also be able to mark the stress points within that construction. These stress points bear the oscillation back and forth between the drive for complete presence and the retreat toward absence. This oscillation can be expressed as play, the sound of ecstasy within the "Bacchanalian revel" (*der bacchantische Tammel*) of the dialectic.[30] But that "revelry" can be voiced, much less heard, only at the outskirts of the system itself, through the confluence of many disparities, the disavowal of any uniform ancestry which enhances the play of the text. The text reshuffles the centrality of the key terms of the system and carries forth their dispersion in order to put a break on the relentless drive toward presence and to reclaim the otherness of the dialectically mediated other as such.

Withdrawing from the purview of the dialectically mediated other is the incongruent nomenclature that inhibits the movement toward otherness itself. The "labor" of the concept is not itself receptive to the rhapsody of play that accentuates the styles of differentiation and of cultivating distinctions that fuels the dialectic. To borrow from Heidegger, may there not be in Hegel's appeal to labor an aspect of logic more properly paired with the drive of modern technology and with the "productionist metaphysics" constitutive of it?[31] Derrida has made us alert to the fact that nomenclature governs the development of thought and the composition of any ontological system. As a vehicle to stabilize the fluidity of language, the identification of terms carries the risk of reasserting authoritarian structures of thought, of

superimposing the comfort of conventional wisdom.[32] Yet even if we grant that the alterity resounding in Hegel's dialectic becomes muffled, may there not still reside at its margins a further dimension of thinking which more directly voices this otherness? Indeed, the dialectic that feeds on the procession of contradictions comes up short before a radical breach, a hiatus in which the claim of finitude intercedes to dampen Spirit's infinite ascent.

Because of this discrepancy within Hegel's thought, subsequent thinkers like Karl Marx perpetuate a confusion that Hegel's thinking is not sufficiently "humanistic" to address the crises of the modern age. The irony of this suggestion is that such humanism turns out to be more akin to the problem than the solution. Indeed, it may very well be the case that Hegel grapples so profoundly with the parameters which define meaning that, despite anticipating its subsequent breakdown within rational schemes of technological dominance, he also rises above the Enlightenment vision of perpetual human progress. Hegel's dialectic comes up against the limits of modernity where the tenacity of its own way of arranging conceptual schemes invites a relinquishment of that version of productivity and τέχνη. The ability to include within the discriminating power of the dialectic the further distinction as to the *essence* of technology seems to exceed the essentializing formulations of Hegel's speculative idealism.

The backdrop of Greek thought, into which Hegel probably had as acute an insight as any modern thinker, casts the greatest light into the darkest recesses of the *Phenomenology*. Within the nomenclature of productivity and labor are complementary signs that enable us to heed a side of Greek thought submerged in the calculative thinking of modernity. To link these signs in a perhaps problematic analogy, we discover that labor has as one of its possibilities the mastery of nature, while within a Greek landscape the converse pursuit of τέχνη proceeds by soliciting its natural complement, φύσις as unconcealment. The apprehension of these two different responses to nature suggests that τέχνη as a mode of craftsmanship fosters the process of unconcealment, rather than cultivating what already lies present before us. When nature is deprived of its "weightedness," it then comes to re-presented (*Vorstellung*) in terms of its use value as a resource, i.e., as "standing reserve." In its modern form productionist metaphysics lacks the finesse to grasp the hidden reciprocity between φύσις and τέχνη. Despite developing an explicit strategy for reading Hegel, Adorno perpetuates a rift between φύσις and τέχνη that is symptomatic of modernity. For him, objective spirit is caught on the horns of the dilemma of endeavoring both to "dominate" and "master" nature,

while trying to coordinate its own labor with the formative principle slumbering in the material conditions of life.[33] Conversely, the more se can sift through the ambiguities in this speech, πρᾶξις, and attunement and become, in Hölderlin's words, "a sign that is not yet read," the more we can appreciate the uncanny message that Hegel's text continues to convey to us.[34]

In the end, Hegel's thought is probably no more or less humanistic than Kierkegaard's. And if Derrida's criticism holds, the thought whose questioning leads to the aforementioned "*die Frage nach der Technik*" may not completely circumvent the humanism and essentialism it repudiates.[35] Nevertheless, only as we traverse the parameters of this outline can we discover how an interplay of imagination creates a finer nuancing of insight so as to preclude a simple classification of thinkers according to discrete methods and worldviews. On the contrary, the venture of imagination proceeds not from a present agenda or conceptual schema, but rather from a manifold of possibilities, as Kant indirectly recognized in the *Critique of Judgment.*

In his discussion of the three realms of Absolute Spirit, Hegel suggests that imagination remains the ally of a mythic mode of presentation which cannot dwell in the highest firmament of truth reserved for philosophy, of science itself. In trying to exclude any content from philosophy that cannot be conceptually mediated, Hegel states:

> Mythology first meets us, and its seems as if it might be drawn within the history of philosophy. It is indeed the product of the imagination, but not of caprice, although that also has its place here. But the main part of mythology is the work of the imaginative reason, which makes reality its object but yet has no other means of so doing than that of sensuous representation, so that the gods make their appearance in human guise.[36]

Like the gods of ancient mythology, imagination becomes a refugee from a more perfect realm where the contours of truth can be fitted within the enclave of the concept. As John Sallis remarks: "In the Hegelian system, imagination belongs to spirit, is one of the activities of spirit."[37] But because imagination must reappear as a signpost to what is alien to this abode, it must remain in play as both a harbinger and guardian of otherness, as the chaotic side to the organized otherness of mediation.[38] Just as religion's confinement to the circumscribed sphere of Christianity does not necessarily eradicate the spirituality of the pagan world, so reason's advance toward the Absolute may not stifle the creativity of imagination. Indeed, as our own history brings us back to Hegel, we discover that even in its darkest denial, in its "occlusion" and palest refraction,[39] imagination harbors its own incandescence and radiance.

In initially keeping its powers in check, the dialectic seeks another facet of imagination to accelerate the dissolution of identity into nonidentity and allows for the rapid fibrillation of its moments. In this way, the spectre of representation that is the holdover of the subject-object dichotomy can be overcome in favor of an even more subtle gyration of the extremes designated by Spirit qua in-itself/for-itself.[40] By the same token, the place reserved for Spirit can be reconstituted apart from its tie to subjectivity, thereby allowing for other connotations of a more improvising and seductive variety distinct from the normalcy of convention. In dislodging the dialectic from the fixity of representational thought, imagination would help to provide this site and court the alterity that, in Derrida's sense, heeds the play of *différance.*

Yet the measure of Hegel's thought cannot become explicit without a corresponding transmutation of Spirit beyond the nomenclature initially assigned to it. Rather than being locked into a mode of presencing qua labor, Spirit displays a lightness of foot that outmaneuvers its traditional counterpart, the "spirit of gravity." By taking on the opposite characteristics of the exhilaration of play, Spirit, like imagination, can walk again in the deft footsteps of poetry. In this transposition, the thinker defers to the poet in order to recover a more authentic saying; the saying of ποίησις marks the return to history's beginning and thus consecrates a place of inhabitation beyond the whirl of technology. Derrida summarizes this development in a concise way: "The spirit founds history and that the sending remains for man a future, the coming of future [*avenir*] or the to-come [*á-venir*] of a coming: this is what Hölderlin thinks as a poet."[41]

The outermost, excentric extremities of the dialectical movement, which imagination traverses, then constellate through its rhapsody and play the ever increasingly differentiated field of language in which the dialectic resides. The dialectic as a reflected image, as mirrored across the spectrum of imagination, performs the most supreme act of disjunction and dissociation, namely, freeing itself from its bondage in reason. Imagination then expands toward the vistas which harbor the inexhaustible diversity of experience, whose permutations can never be captured within the narrow domicile of science. Even the renunciation of science through negative dialectics may inadvertently distort the alterity and otherness whose depths can only be illuminated through a more radical enactment of imagination. The unique mode of craftsmanship that corresponds to the play of the text usurps the calculative plan of reason.

Thus the gentle twists of imagination allow us to discover why a somewhat protracted, if not violent, strategy of dismantlement and

deconstruction is required to elicit the intricacies of Hegelian dialectic. How could it be otherwise given the exhaustiveness of such a system of thought? Yet the constructions we would undo must be shown to imply a greater resource of creativity whose contours, while marked by the parameters of the text, summon us to consider the fragility of both thought and existence.

NOTES

1. Theodor W. Adorno, *Drei Studien zu Hegel* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1963). Translated by Shierry Weber Nicholsen under the title *Hegel: Three Studies* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993). Translation is hereafter cited as *H*, followed by the page number. While citing the English translation, I will refer to the German text to identify key terms.
2. G. F. W. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991), 33. Hereafter cited as *PH*, followed by the page number.
3. Martin Heidegger, *Hegel Phänomenologie des Geistes*, vol. 32 of Gesamtausgabe (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann Verlag, 1980), 90. Translated by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly under the title *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 64.
4. G. F. W. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, vol. 3 of *Werke* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), 20, 29, 30. Hereafter cited as *PG*, followed by the page number.
5. *PG*, 57–58.
6. *PG*, 46. Cf. *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 27.
7. *PG*, 59.
8. G. F. W. Hegel, *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's Systems of Philosophy*, trans. J. S. Harris and Walter Cerf (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1977), 112–14. Hereafter cited as *D*, followed by the page number.
9. *D*, 115ff. Also see John Sallis, *Spacings—Of Reason and Imagination* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 86ff. Hereafter cited as *S*, followed by the page number.
10. *S*, 64.
11. See John Sallis, *Echoes: After Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 201. Sallis appropriately refers to an "ecstasy as homecoming in the abyss."
12. *PH*, 63.
13. James Hutchison Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel: Being the Hegelian System in Origin, Principles Form and Matter* (Edinburgh: Olivier and Boyd, 1898).
14. *H*, 35, 97–99.
15. *H*, 122.
16. *H*, 139.
17. *PG*, 24.
18. *H*, 87.
19. *H*, 22.
20. *S*, 134ff.
21. *H*, 139, 142. See the German text, 126, 129. For a concise analysis of the role

which imagination/fantasy plays in Hegel's thought, along with a critical exploration of their problematic, if not subordinate, status, see Sallis, *Spacings*, 152–55.

22. *H*, p. 140.
23. *H*, 119. See the German text, 109.
24. *H*, 107–8.
25. For an interesting discussion of the unique quality of Hegelian prose, see Dennis J. Schmidt, *The Ubiquity of the Finite: Hegel, Heidegger, and the Entitlements of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: the MIT Press, 1988), 183–84.
26. *PG*, 33–34. Also see *H*, 18 and 21 and compare with the German text, 24, 26.
27. Martin Heidegger, *Die Frage nach der Technik*, in *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1954), 13–44.
28. *H*, 137.
29. Of special note is Adorno's suggestion that "the speculative Hegelian concept rescues mimesis through spirit's self-reflection" (*H*, 41).
30. See Martin Heidegger, *Die Metaphysik des deutschen Idealismus (Schelling)*, vol. 49 of Gesamtausgabe (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann Verlag, 1991), 175.
31. See Martin Heidegger, "*Zur Seinsfrage*", in *Wegmarken*, vol. 9 of Gesamtausgabe (Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann Verlag, 1976), 410ff. Also see Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Art, Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 166ff.
32. See Irene E. Harvey, *Derrida and the Economy of Différance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 211–15.
33. *H*, 24–25.
34. This line from Hölderlin's hymn *Mnemosyne* is quoted by Martin Heidegger in *What is Called Thinking*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1968), 11. For an analysis of how Hölderlin's poetry can provide a more originary inroad to history (*Geschichte*), see Dominique Janicaud, "The 'Overcoming' of Metaphysics in the Hölderlin Lectures," in *Reading Heidegger: Commemorations*, ed. John Sallis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 383–87.
35. Jacques Derrida, "The Ends of Man," trans. Alan Bass, in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), 127–30.
36. G. F. W. Hegel, *On Art, Religion, Philosophy: Introductory Lectures to the Realm of Absolute Spirit*, trans. J. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1970), 285.
37. *S*, 138.
38. See *PG*, 25–31. Here Hegel gives a poignant account of the role of otherness and mediation.
39. *S*, xi–xvi.
40. See *PG*, 24, 31. Hegel examines the criteria for adjudicating the relation between knowledge and its object.
41. Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 78. Also see David Farrell Krell's excellent discussion of the issues raised in this book, "Spiriting Heidegger," *Research in Phenomenology* 18 (1988): 205–30.