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CHAPTER 22

PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

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22.1 INTRODUCTION

THIS is a chapter about philosophy of history, a topic I will approach through the lens of Hegel. Hegel's approach to history is "philosophical," because it is more than a mere catalogue or record of past events. Hegel is interested in determining whether meaningful connections can be discovered in past events. That is, he looks for patterns in history and asks whether lessons can be learned from history—lessons, for example, about the nature of human freedom and about whether humanity is making moral progress over the long term. Like Marx and Nietzsche, the other two figures I consider briefly in this chapter, Hegel engages in a philosophical consideration of history in that he raises questions about the nature of the evidence history can provide for our claims about its purpose and meaning.

The subject matter of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* is world history.[1] Although the term "world," as he describes it, "includes both physical and mental [*psychische*] nature," he tells us that the "substance" of his philosophy of history is mental nature or "Spirit [*Geist*]" (*PH* 19/29). The "essence" of Spirit, on his definition, is freedom (*PH* 20/30). World history "presents... the development of Spirit's consciousness of its freedom" (*PH* 67/86). It tells the story of how Spirit's consciousness of its freedom is actualized in the various domains of its activity: in religion, science, and art; in ethics, politics, and law.

Hegel's world history is a history not of individuals but of peoples. Moreover, it is concerned "only with those peoples that have formed states" (*PH* 41/56).[2] Hegel acknowledges

[1] Hegel lectured on the philosophy of world history five times beginning in 1822. The first edition of the *Lectures* was prepared from Hegel's lecture notes by his pupil Eduard Gans in 1837. Later editions are compilations that rely on Hegel's notes and on student transcripts of his lectures. My in-text page references to the *Lectures* ("*PH*") cite, first, the 1988 English translation by Leo Rauch (which I occasionally alter), and second, Volume 12 of the 1970 German Suhrkamp edition, edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (so in this case, *PH* 3/11). For discussion of the various English and German editions of the *Lectures*, see in the Suhrkamp edition, pp. 561–8. See also Joseph McCarney, *Hegel on History* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 7–9; and George Dennis O'Brien, *Hegel on Reason and History: A Contemporary Interpretation* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 3–6.

[2] See also *PH* 16/26, where Hegel writes that world history is concerned with "individuals that are nations, with wholes that are states."

that much of interest can happen to a people prior to its coming together to form a state. Families may coalesce into tribes, tribes may develop into rich cultures with sophisticated languages and form nations that wage wars (*PH* 66/85). But for Hegel, what happens to a people prior to the formation of a state belongs strictly speaking to "pre-history" (*PH* 63f./82f.). World history only properly begins when Spirit becomes conscious of its freedom, and Spirit becomes truly conscious of its freedom only when it advances to the stage at which it recognizes that it must allow itself to be governed by "rules, laws, universal and universally binding directives" (*PH* 65/83). Prior to forming a state, a people's freedom exists as "only a possibility" (*PH* 62/81).[3]

The foregoing summarizes the *subject matter* of Hegel's philosophy of history. As for some of the *lessons* Hegel believes we should draw from world history, he announces in his Introduction to the *Lectures* that his discussion of world history will offer us "proof" of the truth of Anaxagoras' thesis that "*nous*" or "reason" "rules the world," and that world history has been "the rational, necessary course of World Spirit" (*PH* 13–15/20–5, 28/40). Hegel notes that this commitment to the rationality of history is commonly expressed in religious terms as the idea that there is a "divine providence [*Vorsehung*] presiding over the events of the world" (*PH* 15/25). He tells us that his philosophy of history will indeed demonstrate that "God governs the world" and that the "content of His governance, the fulfillment of His plan, is world history" (*PH* 39/53).[4]

In endorsing the thesis that world history is rational, Hegel says he joins Anaxagoras in opposing those (such as Epicurus) who attribute everything that happens to chance (*PH* 15/24). Sometimes Hegel seems to defend an even more radical thesis. He sometimes conveys the impression that he believes chance has *no* role to play in world history whatsoever. This message is suggested when he writes, for instance, that "the world is not subject to chance and to eternal contingencies" (*PH* 15/25), and that Spirit does not "toss itself about in the external play of contingencies" (*PH* 58/75).[5]

Hegel's confidence in the rationality of world history is furthermore apparent when he asserts that history teaches us that the "real world is as it ought to be" (*PH* 39/53). Although remarks like this appear to imply that Hegel turns a blind eye to the reality of

[3] At one point, Hegel remarks that history only properly begins with the "consciousness of personality" (*PH* 63/81). History in Hegel's sense in other words begins only when individuals are in a position to recognize each other as "persons," that is, as free agents entitled to rights. Although the idea of the value of persons has its roots in Christianity, on his account, Spirit only reaches the stage of "complete ripeness" in the modern period of Protestant northern Europe (hence, his claim that world history only properly begins with the "Germanic peoples" (*PH* 21/31, *PH* 97/140)). Although Hegel's lectures on world history begin with a discussion of the ancient orient, he takes himself there to be considering a kind of *pre*-history, since it is his view that these cultures lack both the recognition of individuals as "persons" and institutions that reflect that elevated awareness. For a balanced discussion of these points as well as of Hegel's alleged Eurocentrism, see McCarney, *Hegel on History*, pp. 142–51.

[4] For more passages along these lines, see, for example, *PH* 42/57, where Hegel claims he will demonstrate that the state is the "the divine idea, as it exists on earth." He characterizes world history as the "march of God in the world" at *PH* 16/26, 23/33, 39/53, and also in his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* ("*PR*"), ed. Allen W. Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), § 258A.

[5] Further passages: The world is not a "mad or foolish happening" (*PH* 39/53). World history is "not the abstract and non-rational necessity of a blind fate" (*PR* § 343).

human misery and presence of evil, he is no Pollyanna. He describes world history as a "slaughter-bench [*Schlachtbank*]" (*PH* 24/35). In his words, it would be no "rhetorical exaggeration" to "paint the most fearful picture of the misfortunes suffered by the noblest of nations and states as well as by private virtues" (*PH* 24/35).

Hegel describes the course of world history not just as rational but also as *progressive*. The development of world history, in his words, is an "advance from the imperfect to the more perfect" (*PH* 60/78; see also *PH* 57/74). Since Spirit is the "substance" of world history, on his account, the "advance" he has in mind refers to an advance in human freedom. World history progresses through various stages of maturity. The stages are objectified in the form of "world-historical National Spirits [*Volksgeister*]," and the stages exhibit "determinate shapes of ethical life" in government, art, religion and philosophy (*PH* 82/104; see also *PH* 56/73). The "Germanic peoples," Hegel proudly proclaims, stand at the apex of this development. "Through Christianity," these peoples have arrived at the awareness that "every human is free by virtue of being human" (*PH* 21/31).[6]

Finally, Hegel tells us that his world history is a "theodicy," a "justification of the ways of God" (*PH* 18/28). He aims to show that "whatever was intended by the Eternal Wisdom has come to fulfillment" in the realm of Spirit. He believes world history warrants us in concluding that, for all the miseries humans have inflicted upon each other, "evil has not prevailed . . . in any ultimate sense" (*PH* 18/28).

In this chapter, I am most interested in Hegel's discussion in the Introduction to his *Philosophy of History* of the *method* he brings to his study of world history. I say very little about, and do not set out to assess, his particular descriptions of the histories and characters of specific nations. I focus on Hegel's method, because my principal concern is to shed light on the *justificatory basis* he takes himself to have for the bold claims outlined above. That is, I wish to clarify his view of the epistemic *standpoint* he occupies in telling his story.

Among the reasons Hegel's method is of interest is that it contains clues to how we should understand what appears to be a deep inconsistency in his philosophy of history. On the one hand, he tells us that world history is a history of the progress of Spirit (whose "essence" is freedom). On the other hand, however, he asserts that advances in the development of Spirit proceed in accordance with "conceptual necessity [*Begriffsnotwendigkeit*]" (*PH* 81/104). The process of world history, he says, arises from the "concept of world history" (*PH* 67/86), and the actualization of Spirit in time is the unfolding of "what it already is implicitly" (*PH* 58/75). In writing that world history is the carrying out of "God's will for the world" (*PH* 23/33), Hegel seems to invite us to infer that, as he understands it, history is the unfolding of a divine plan that has been fully laid out from the start.

Although these latter remarks have a fatalistic ring to them, Hegel nevertheless insists that freedom and necessity have been "reconciled [*ausgesöhnt*]" in his time (*PH* 42/57). What kind of reconciliation can he have in mind? The answer to this question is obviously linked to his particular understanding of the terms "freedom" and "necessity"—and it is here that his methodological commitments are illuminating. As we will see, Hegel's methodological assumptions place limits on what he believes the possible objects of his inquiry

[6] As I mentioned in note 3, by "Germanic peoples" Hegel has in mind Protestant Europe (Germany, Scandinavia, and England). What unites these cultures is neither race nor language, but a certain kind of self-awareness—a self-awareness which he believes is objectified in Reformation Europe.

can be. His methodological assumptions thus constrain what he means by the concepts "freedom" and "necessity". By considering the method Hegel brings to his philosophy of history, we can shed some light on his understanding of the reconciliation of freedom and necessity.

In the final section of this chapter, I briefly review reactions to Hegel's philosophy of history by the two later nineteenth-century figures Marx and Nietzsche. Their critical reception of Hegel gives us a glimpse into later nineteenth-century developments in the philosophy of history.

22.2 Hegel's "Philosophical" Approach to History

In his Introduction to the *Lectures*, Hegel informs us that he will defend the thesis that the rationality of history—or the ways of divine providence—*can be known* by us. This turns out to be a central objective of his philosophy of history. He praises Anaxagoras for appreciating that "reason rules the world," but bemoans the fact that, for Anaxagoras, the ways of providence must remain hidden from us (*PH* 16/25).[7] Hegel states that his aim, in contrast, is to "recognize the ways of providence in history" (*PH* 16/26). The story he has to tell about how God's will reveals itself in history is not just a piece of faith or speculation but has an *evidential basis*.[8]

Hegel asserts that we discover the ways of providence by considering history itself—by examining written records and archaeological data, by listening to oral reports, and so forth. Indeed, this is our *only* means of access to divine providence, in his view. Hegel thus announces that he will provide historical "proof" that "there is a divine providence presiding over the events of the world." He will "take history as it is, and proceed historically, empirically" (*PH* 13/22; see also *PH* 15f./25, *PH* 19/29).

In keeping with his stated commitment to proceed historically, Hegel expresses his opposition to those who interpret history through the lens of what he calls "*a priori* fabrications [*apriorische Erdichtungen*]" (*PH* 13/22). He dismisses the approach, for example, which puts forward as "fact" the "fiction" of a "primordial condition" or "Paradise" in which an "original, primeval people" received direct instruction from God (*PH* 13/22). He associates the reliance on a priori fabrication with an approach to history he labels "reflective"; and he mentions as an instance of this approach the "higher criticism" of "Germans" such as Friedrich von Schlegel.[9] On Hegel's characterization, the "reflective" historian is

[7] It is clear from these pages that Hegel is critical of Leibniz and Kant for the same reason. They, too, deny that we can know the ways of providence.

[8] Hegel insists here that his view is consistent with the Christian doctrine of revelation: God has "allowed human beings to understand what He is, so that He is no longer hidden and secret. With this possibility of our knowing God, the obligation to know Him is placed upon us. God wants no . . . empty heads for His children" (*PH* 17/27).

[9] "Let us leave all such *a priori* constructions to the clever professionals, for whom (in Germany) such constructions are not uncommon" (*PH* 13f./22f.). Hegel is explicit in a note at *PH* 61/79 that he has Schlegel's 1829 *Philosophy of History* in mind as someone who practices this kind of approach.

content to replace historical data with "subjective notions"; she introduces into her reading of history the "unhistorical abortions of a vain imagination" (*PH* 9/18f.).

In light of Hegel's criticisms of the "a priori fabrications" of the reflective historian, it is curious that he sometimes characterizes his own approach as "a priori" (*PH* 68/87). His own method for interpreting history, then, seems to somehow be at once empirical or historical *and* a priori. His method is empirical insofar as it is guided by the assumption that our thinking about history must attend to the facts. In his words, world history is "subordinated to the given and to what exists." His method is at the same time a priori, however, because it is a "philosophical" approach to history, and because philosophy brings to history "thoughts of its own" (*PH* 10/20). Hegel acknowledges the appearance of a contradiction here. But he insists that there is no contradiction, because although the historian has the duty to attend to "what exists," this is never a matter of a purely passive absorption of the facts. Our attention to the facts *cannot* be simply passive, according to Hegel, because human perception is invariably accompanied by thinking. As he puts the point in his Introduction, there is "thinking in our perception, our cognition and intellect, in our drives and volition" (*PH* 10/20).[10]

Hegel's brief remarks on the scientific method of Johannes Kepler shed more light on how he understands his consideration of world history to be at once empirical and a priori. Kepler relied on observation in his study of the planets, but he did not, in Hegel's words, "derive his laws of planetary motion simply by staring up at the heavens" (*PH* 68/87). Kepler relied in addition on "a priori cognition": he "had to have *a priori* acquaintance with ellipses, cubes, and squares, and with the theory of how they are related, before he could invent—from empirical data—his immortal laws" (*PH* 68/87). Here Hegel highlights the fact that Kepler's observations, rather than simply receptive, were aided by his acquaintance with geometrical forms and the laws governing their relations. Kepler brought to his investigations the "elementary concepts" of his science. In another text, Hegel mentions Kepler's effort to grasp the order of the solar system "according to the laws of music harmony."[11]

In similar fashion, Hegel's study of world history is the product of something more than a merely passive absorption of the facts. Hegel characterizes his method as "a priori" because he wishes to underscore the fact that, like Kepler, he cannot avoid bringing a conceptual framework and set of methodological assumptions to his collection of historical

[10] We differ from other animals in this respect, in Hegel's view. As he writes elsewhere, the human animal, in contrast to other animals, "is a thinking being, a born metaphysician." *The Encyclopaedia Logic (with the Zusätze): Part I of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (with the Zusätze)*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1991), § 98 A; see also *Encyclopaedia Logic* § 24 A1. Hereafter cited as "*EL*".

[11] *Philosophy of Nature*, trans. Michael John Petry (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1970), § 280. Hereafter cited as "*PN*". This is Part II of Hegel's *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*. In an earlier section of this discussion, Hegel writes that Kepler "discovered his laws empirically, by working inductively with the observations of Tycho Brahe" (*PN* §270 A). At the same time, it was Kepler's "unshakeable belief in the inherent rationality of the facts that led him to his discovery" (*PN* § 270 A). Hegel clearly values Kepler's approach over that of Newton who espoused a strict "materialism" (*EL* § 136 A2) and thus supposed that God was inaccessible to cognition. Newton "expressly warned physics to beware of metaphysics"; "but to his credit . . . he did not conduct himself with his warning at all" (*EL* § 98 A1).

data. At the same time, however, Hegel clearly does not consider his philosophy of history to be an exercise in "a priori fabrication." Somehow, his a priori method is significantly different from the "higher criticism" of the "reflective" historian, who introduces into her observations the "unhistorical abortions of a vain imagination" (*PH* 9/18f.)

Hegel seems convinced that the "reflective" historian suffers from a certain naïveté. She believes she brings to her study of history concepts that spring *ex nihilo* from her reflective or imaginative powers; she has the capacity to generate concepts (or "ideas") thanks to her capacity to wholly rise above her particular place in history. She awards her ideas of the rationality or providence of history this special kind of status.

From Hegel's point of view, the naïveté of this position stems from its assumption that human reflection is *capable* of such lofty flights—capable of achieving complete detachment from the realm of the actual. Hegel's opposition to this assumption is a central theme of all his works. The assumption reflects a failure to appreciate what he takes to be a fundamental fact about us, namely that:

> each individual is the child of his people, and likewise the child of his time . . . No one is left behind by his time, *nor can he overstep it* (*PH* 55/72; emphasis added).[12]

Hegel discovers not just naïveté but also a certain *vanity* in the a priori fabrications of the reflective historian. The charge of vanity is puzzling, at least if it is supposed to be directed at those (such as Kant) who hold that precisely *because* the concepts of historical progress and of divine providence refer to objects *outside* the realm of human experience, such concepts cannot contribute to our knowledge of that realm. How can this position be anything other than an expression of a *modest* assessment of the limits of our cognitive powers? What justifies the charge of *vanity*?

Here, it is worth pointing out that Hegel does not deny that concepts referring to objects such as "God" or the "rationality of history" or "freedom" are significantly different from concepts describing the nature and behavior of objects of empirical science. That is, he does not set out to altogether collapse the distinction between objects of natural science and objects of faith or speculation. Hegel's charge of vanity is instead directed at a certain understanding of the *basis* of that distinction. The position of the "reflective" historian that Hegel thinks is not just naïve but also vain is the one we considered a moment ago: it attributes excessive abstractive capacities to human reflection. In overestimating our powers of abstraction, it encourages bloated claims—if not about the scope of our scientific *knowledge*, then about our capacity to transcend our age in *thought*. This overestimation of our abstractive capacities shows up in grandiose assertions about the absolutely fixed nature and limits of human knowledge, and the absolutely fixed boundary separating science and faith.[13] Hegel expresses his impatience with this kind of vanity in the following passage:

[12] Hegel asserts his commitment to this thesis in the Preface of his *Philosophy of Right* as well: "As far as the individual is concerned, each individual is . . . *a child of his time*; thus philosophy, too, is *its own time comprehended in thoughts*. It is just as foolish to imagine that any philosophy can transcend its contemporary world as that an individual can overleap his own time" (*PR* 21/26).

[13] Hence, what Hegel refers to as Kant's "supreme inconsistency." On the one hand, Kant acknowledges that, "the understanding knows only appearances." On the other, he asserts that this cognition [*Erkennen*] is itself "*something absolute*," in that he insists that "cognition can go no further—this is the *natural*, absolute *limit* of human knowledge [*Wissen*]" (*EL* § 60).

> When the Divine Being is placed beyond the reach of our knowing and beyond human affairs altogether, we gain the convenience of indulging in our own imaginings. We are thereby freed from having to give our knowledge some relation to the Divine and the True. On the contrary, the vanity of human knowledge and subjective feeling receives a complete justification for itself. And when pious humility places the knowing God at a distance, it knows full well what it has thereby gained for its arbitrariness and vain efforts (*PH* 17/27).

Those who insist that God is unknowable, grant themselves permission to specify God's nature any way they please. In convincing themselves that evidence in support of their claims is unavailable, they save themselves the trouble of looking for it.

From our discussion in this section, we can conclude that the method Hegel brings to his study of world history is a moderate a priori approach. Hegel offers this method as a sober alternative to that of the "reflective" historian who considers herself justified in indulging in "unhistorical abortions of a vain imagination" (9/18f.). For Hegel, no ideas or concepts of human imagination are ever *wholly* products of pure reason or unconditioned imagination. Our claims—even about objects of speculation—invariably reflect where we are. Although our historical investigations cannot be purely passive, they are not the outcome of wholly unbridled flights of abstraction either.[14]

22.3 Our Historically Grounded Knowledge of Providence

We have just been considering a central thesis of Hegel's philosophy of history, namely, that we can know the ways of divine providence (or, equivalently, know the rationality of history). Hegel is convinced that we can know divine providence by means of evidence that is empirical or historical. The task of a philosophy of history, as he understands it, is to appeal to historical facts in justifying a story about the way in which God's will has revealed itself in world history.

We also saw, however, that attending to historical facts is not, for Hegel, merely a matter of opening up our senses to the world. This at least in part explains why he describes his own approach to world history as "philosophical." His approach, he says, is a "thoughtful

[14] For Hegel, Plato is a good example of a philosopher who assumes that human reason is capable of lofty flights of pure intuition or reflection. Plato assumed that the origin of his idea of the model republic was a form of insight or intuition that allowed him to wholly escape his time. For Hegel, however, this Platonic ideal is not in fact the product of special insight into an extra-mundane reality. As he writes in his *Philosophy of Right*, Plato's model republic is instead, "the embodiment of nothing other than the nature of Greek ethics" (*PR* 20/24). Likewise, Kant's insight into the supreme principle of practical obligation is not the outcome of a form of reflection that successfully abstracts away all merely contingent presuppositions. Underlying Kant's conception of the conditions of practical obligation are historically contingent assumptions (for example, about the nature of the human will). This is what Hegel has in mind when he charges in §135 of the *Philosophy of Right* that Kant's derivations of particular duties from his categorical imperative invariably "presuppose content." Kant relies for his derivations not just on the formal requirement that our maxims avoid self-contradiction, but also on various contingent background assumptions.

consideration of history" (*PH* 10/20). A "thoughtful" or "philosophical" consideration of history acknowledges the role concepts and methodological assumptions play in guiding our collection of evidence. It is an "a priori" approach; but, as we just saw, it is a *moderate* a priori approach. While granting that we bring thoughts or concepts to our collection of facts, Hegel's "philosophical" consideration of history renounces vain pretensions to transcendent insight. It acknowledges that even our most abstract concepts are historically grounded.

We can now move on and ask: how can these features of Hegel's method help us solve the puzzle with which we started? How can they, in other words, clarify the reconciliation of freedom and necessity Hegel claims to discover in his age? And what does Hegel's moderate a priori approach reveal about the meaning of his fatalistic sounding remarks about the course of world history?

As our discussion so far suggests, any story we tell about the progress or rationality of history (any story we tell, then, about divine providence) is a story we tell, in Hegel's view, from *within* history. The historian has a duty to attend to the facts, to justify her narrative with reference to historical evidence. But since the historian cannot wholly escape her world, her story is at the same time anchored in that world. Her narrative thus invariably reflects, and is made possible by, the spirit of her age.

This point about the historically grounded nature of our concepts, and about the limits of our powers of abstraction, has implications for how we should interpret Hegel's own pronouncements on the rationality and necessity of world history. As we have seen, Hegel wishes us to recognize that his claims are something *other* than "a priori fabrications." He does not presume that he can justify them by appealing to pure reason or transcendent insight. Instead, he understands that even his most abstract generalizations are to some extent indebted to his own particular vantage point. His generalizations, then, about what does and does not belong to the rationality of history; about what is and is not evidence of historical progress; about what can and cannot be historically knowable—these are generalizations he makes from his particular place in history. They result from his "thoughtful" consideration of history, that is, from his conceptually mediated collection of data and discovery of regularities or causal relations. Even his insistence upon the "conceptual necessity" of historical progressions is a product of this procedure. It derives from the narrative he constructs—not from vain imagination or pure reason, but from his historically grounded inquiry into what is and has been.

I have been emphasizing the fact that Hegel's commitment to the historically conditioned nature of his reflections on history follows from his insistence upon the limits of our powers of abstraction. The point, once again, is this: since no thinker can overleap her age, no thinker can justifiably award her thoughts timeless validity. It is important that we notice, in addition, that Hegel does not take this thesis about the limits of our abstractive powers to imply that knowledge of the rationality and progressive nature of history (knowledge of the ways of divine providence) is unavailable to us. On the contrary, his thesis about the limited nature of our reflective powers is precisely what allows him to "save" this kind of knowledge.

Characterized in such general terms, this strategy may remind us of Kant, since it infers from a premise about the limits of our cognitive powers, a conclusion about how we nonetheless are entitled to attribute to ourselves a certain kind of knowledge. But Hegel's strategy departs from Kant's in crucial respects. First, the thesis that we can wholly

escape history in thought, or that our reason can generate concepts that are absolutely a priori or absolutely pure, is a thesis Kant affirms but Hegel denies. Second, the knowledge Hegel believes he is able to "save" (including knowledge of the ways of divine providence), is not knowledge that can be considered universally and necessarily valid—not even in the restricted sense of universally and necessarily valid for beings like us. The knowledge Hegel believes he is able to "save" is instead in principle *revisable*.

A scientist like Kepler determines the laws governing planetary motion with the help of his thoughtful consideration of empirical data. From his thoughtful consideration of the data, he separates out what is essential from what is merely accidental. He proceeds in this manner without pretending to possess trans-historical insight. He is mindful that his findings may be falsified tomorrow, and that the line between the essential and accidental may therefore need to be redrawn.

Hegel holds that the philosopher proceeds in much the same manner. She does so, even though she brings to her inquiries a different set of concepts than those of the natural scientist (*PH* 68/87). Like the scientist, the philosopher is engaged in a thinking consideration of what is. She learns from her historical studies that there have been various conceptions of the aim and rationality of history throughout history, as well as various interpretations of the nature of human freedom. On the basis of the historical evidence, she concludes that, overall, the trajectory of world history has been progressive. She in addition recognizes that her own historical narrative may someday be superseded.

If this interpretation of Hegel's methodological commitments is on the mark, then we have grounds for concluding that the key assertions of his philosophy of history we reviewed earlier are accurate (his claims, namely, that evil has not prevailed in human history; that there has been progress in the development of human freedom; and that freedom and necessity have been reconciled in his time)—all of these are claims which have at best a *provisional* validity, in his view. They have a provisional validity, because Hegel is aware that, in his reflections on history, not even *he* is capable of overleaping his time. He has a certain story to tell about the rationality of history, a story about where we should draw the line between what is essential and what is accidental in history. But he tells that story from where he is. From where he is, the historical evidence so far suggests that the line between the essential and the accidental will likely need to be redrawn.[15] World history, after all, is "still on the march," as Hegel writes (*PH* 28/40). So far, the evidence suggests that its story will go on being rewritten.[16]

[15] As Hegel notes in *EL*, the "agreement between is and ought is not rigid and unmoving" (§ 234 A).

[16] Following a discussion of the "old age" of history, that is, of the "Germanic world" in which Spirit achieves its "complete ripeness," Hegel looks back on the road Spirit has traveled and notes that whereas the "length of time is something entirely relative,... Spirit belongs to the dimension of eternity and has no actual length" (*PH* 98/141).

As should be obvious from my remarks here, I do not endorse the view that, for Hegel, world history terminates with his philosophy. Although I cannot sufficiently defend this claim here, the preponderance of evidence seems to favor the thesis that, by the "end" of history, he means something like "end of an era." Hegel is indeed convinced that Spirit in his time has overcome a certain set of problems that have long plagued philosophers. In his own time, Spirit has thus reached an apex or culminating point (hence Hegel's remarks about how freedom and necessity in his time have been "reconciled"). But this thesis that a resolution to a certain set of philosophical problems has been achieved is consistent with the claims that "Spirit belongs to the dimension of eternity" and that world history is "still on the march." For a careful consideration of these difficult issues, see McCarney in chapter 11 of his *Hegel on History*. See also Philip T. Grier's essay, "The End of History and the Return of History," in Stewart, Jon, ed., *The Hegel Myths and Legends* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), pp. 183–98.

22.4 The Reconciliation of Freedom and Necessity in Hegel's Time

We are now in a better position to explain what Hegel has in mind when he claims that, in his age, freedom and necessity have been reconciled (*PH* 42/57). In my introductory remarks, I proposed that his method—his "philosophical" approach to history—places constraints on what he can *mean* by the terms "freedom" and "necessity". I noted, in addition, that his method limits what he can judge to be the suitable means of *justifying* his particular understanding of these terms.

Taking the justification point first: an implication of our foregoing discussion is that Hegel's defense of the thesis of reconciliation must rely on an appeal to evidence that is historical, evidence drawn from his own "thoughtful" or "philosophical" consideration of history. As he writes in his *Philosophy of Right*, "Spirit is only what it does" (PR § 343).[17] If we seek to *know* the nature or essence of Spirit, we need to consult not pure reason or insight, but rather the *history* of Spirit's activity. We need to gather data about how its effort to realize its freedom has been exhibited in the various domains of its activity: in religion, science, and art; in ethics, politics, and law.

As for what Hegel can have in mind by the terms "freedom" and "necessity", we can conclude from our earlier discussion that he does not consider the meaning of these terms to be fixed. Their meaning undergoes transformation as history progresses. Hegel gives us an example of such a transformation in his sketch of three key moments in the course of freedom in world history. The course of freedom began in the ancient orient, he tells us, with the idea that only *one* person is free; it advanced to the Greek and Roman world, in which *some* were considered free; and it has culminated in the "Germanic world" with the idea that *all* persons are free (*PH* 93/134). The changes Hegel tracks here are not simply changes in quantity. He wants us to notice, too, that underlying the changes in quantity are transformations in Spirit's understanding of its freedom. Over the course of its history, Spirit has adhered to *various* conceptions of its freedom and its right. Over time, it has altered its self-conception, and correspondingly, its aims and demands. It has altered its understanding of its relation to necessity as well. The "reconciliation" to necessity that Hegel believes Spirit enjoys in his own time is a result of this historical process.

We can now move on to ask: precisely in what ways does Hegel believe that, in his time, Spirit is reconciled to necessity? This question will be the focus of my attention in the remainder of this section. I will indicate an answer to it, very briefly, by highlighting three important respects in which Hegel considers freedom and necessity to be reconciled in his age. I draw my evidence from his discussion in his Introduction to his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* of how the modern "ethical" state has come to be. Hegel gives us a highly condensed version, in these pages, of the story of the modern development

[17] Hegel makes similar remarks at *PH* 77/104: the "essence" of Spirit, he writes, is to "*act*..., to be its own deed, and its own work."

of freedom and its associated institutions that he elaborates in much greater detail in his *Philosophy of Right*.[18]

On Hegel's portrayal, the development of modern Spirit began when Spirit understood that it could not satisfactorily actualize its freedom in a natural or "state of nature" condition. The freedom of modern Spirit is reconciled with necessity, then, at least in this first sense: it recognizes that it can only satisfactorily realize its freedom if it submits to a certain kind of constraint. It understands that its freedom cannot simply consist in the unrestricted effort to satisfy its private ends and appetites.

Of course, Spirit is already subject to some constraint in the state of nature. Most obviously, it is limited in what it thinks and does by laws of nature—laws that require it, for example, to attend to its biological needs. Moreover, a particular will in a state of nature has to contend with the fact that, insofar as it is not alone, its pursuit of its ends may sometimes conflict with the pursuits of others. But as Hegel tells the story, the particular will in the natural condition discovers that it cannot successfully pursue its freedom without (paradoxically) submitting its freedom to *further* limitation. Its transition to a "higher" standpoint requires that it accept the fact that it shares with other particular wills an interest in realizing its freedom. The transition requires the particular will to acknowledge that it can secure its freedom only by joining others in forming civil society, a society in which this common interest is ultimately recognized and protected by laws of a state.

If the particular will is to secure a truly successful transition out of the state of nature, the laws to which it submits must be of a certain kind. Hegel takes it to be a special achievement of modern Spirit that it recognizes a law as valid only if "everyone agrees to it [*übereinstimmen*]" (*PH* 45/61). On his account, the modern will acknowledges that, in addition to the interests that *distinguish* it from other wills (interests that derive from its particularity), it *shares* some interests with all other wills (interests that derive from its universal aspect). The modern particular will understands that both the basis of its freedom as well as the legitimacy of laws rest on the fact that, in common with all other particular wills, it is capable of freedom and is thus a "person." The freedom of modern Spirit is thus reconciled to allowing itself to be governed by laws that are valid only insofar as they can be endorsed by every particular will. As just noted, the validity of these laws derives from the fact that they reflect the ends or interests of all persons; they have their basis, that is to say, in the nature of the will as free (in what Hegel refers to as the will's universal aspect).

A second respect in which the freedom of modern Spirit is reconciled to necessity, in Hegel's view, is therefore this: the particular will recognizes not just that its freedom must consist in more than in the unrestricted pursuit and satisfaction of its private ends and appetites. It recognizes, in addition, that it can satisfy its freedom only if it conforms to laws that are universally valid. These are the impartial and effectively enforceable laws of the modern state; as universally valid, they are laws that the universal aspect of the particular will gives itself. The particular will is free, then, only to the extent that it is *self-necessitated or self-determined* (necessitated, that is to say, by itself qua universal). Modern Spirit is thus reconciled to the fact that its freedom is a form of *self*-constraint.

As for a third respect in which Hegel judges freedom and necessity to be reconciled in his own age, we just saw that the laws to which the modern free will submits are laws

[18] See the discussion from the Introduction that begins at *PH* 43/58.

that it takes to originate in its universal aspect. The third reconciliation is achieved by casting off a *particular conception* of the will as a universal. Hegel is convinced that Spirit in his time has advanced beyond the view that the will qua universal is a will that transcends actual, empirical reality and is capable of a special, non-temporal form of causality. The freedom Hegel takes Spirit to enjoy in his time is in other words no longer understood as having its basis in a world outside or beyond the actual world. Spirit instead takes its freedom to refer to the 'higher' part of its *this*-worldly nature, to its self-conscious subjectivity. Spirit in Hegel's time is reconciled to necessity, then, in that it does not conceive of its freedom as wholly opposed to or other than the realm of necessity, the realm of nature. In this third respect, its freedom is reconciled to necessity.

22.5 Spirit as Master of its own Fate

I have highlighted three (but certainly not the only) respects in which Hegel considers Spirit in his age to be reconciled to necessity: (i) Spirit is reconciled to the fact that it can realize its freedom only if it submits to law or constraint; (ii) it is reconciled to the fact that, since its freedom derives from its universal aspect, its freedom is a form of *self*-constraint; (iii) Spirit, furthermore, recognizes that its universal aspect is a feature it possesses as a being belonging to *this* world, the domain of nature or necessity.

In highlighting these three forms of reconciliation, part of my purpose has been to lend support to the thesis that, for Hegel, the meaning of the terms "freedom" and "necessity" undergoes transformation in history. Hegel looks back over the history of Spirit and discovers development in what Spirit identifies as its ends and purposes, in its self-understanding, and in what it takes to be its freedom and its right. The development is propelled forward by conflict.[19] The particular will that initially thinks of itself as the only will entitled to property, for instance, learns in its encounter with others that it cannot sustain this self-conception. In its confrontation with others, the particular will must revise its self-understanding. In particular, it must grant that it is not the sole bearer of rights, and that others who are also capable of freedom (and are thus also "persons") are entitled to rights as well.

Notice that none of the above three forms of reconciliation commits Hegel to a *fatalistic* account of the course of world history. That is, nothing in the story we just sketched implies that he aims to persuade us that the various moments of Spirit's historical progression are set from the start. We so far have no reason for supposing, then, that Hegel believes Spirit is reconciled to necessity in the further sense that it recognizes that its freedom is fated or pre-determined. On the other hand, the forms of reconciliation we have just considered are not necessarily *incompatible* with a fatalistic view either. And this means that if we wish to clear Hegel of the charge that his philosophy of world history is fatalistic, we have to do more than merely indicate that he understands freedom and necessity to be reconciled in the aforementioned three ways.

[19] "The process of development . . . is for Spirit a hard and endless struggle against itself" (*PH* 59/76).

I cannot wholly clear Hegel of the fatalism charge here, but I want to conclude this section with some observations that cast doubts on the charge's plausibility. Our foregoing discussion allows us to dismiss at least one interpretation of what a commitment to fatalism could amount to, for Hegel. If fatalism commits us to the idea of a force or agency that controls all that happens in history from entirely *outside* the realm of history, then we have good reason to suppose that this is not a view Hegel endorses. This form of fatalism relies on an appeal to an extra-mundane reality; it assumes we have the capacity to wholly transcend the realm of the actual at least in thought. We saw earlier, however, that Hegel rejects this latter assumption. We thus have reason to conclude that he also rejects this version of fatalism.

Of course, one might propose an alternative reading, according to which Hegel's defense of fatalism is based not on the insights of pure reason but is rather itself *historical* in nature. That is, it could be the case that he defends fatalism with the help of the very same moderate a priori method he uses to justify his claims about the rationality and progressive nature of history. Although this proposal cannot be as easily dismissed as its predecessor, it nonetheless leaves us the considerable challenge of explaining how a fatalistic interpretation of world history could be, for Hegel, an interpretation of the course of *Spirit*, that is, an interpretation of human *freedom*. Hegel after all describes Spirit as the master of its own fate. In its struggle to realize its potential, Spirit encounters various forms of resistance. Over the course of history, it encounters forces that threaten to obstruct its path: laws of nature, its own natural drives, other wills seeking to realize their own ends. In the process of negotiating these limits, Spirit redraws its own nature. Spirit is in this way, as Hegel puts it, the "result of its own activity" (*PH* 82/104). Its essence is "to be its own deed, and its own work" (*PH* 77/99). These remarks do not settle the interpretative question, but they cast doubt on the thesis that, for Hegel, the fate of Spirit is settled in advance.

22.6 Further Developments: Marx and Nietzsche

On the interpretation I have been defending, human freedom is not, for Hegel, a mere idea or ideal of pure reason. Its concept does not pick out a special object which transcends the realm of nature and which can thus neither be known nor even investigated empirically or historically. But Hegel does not hold that human freedom simply *reduces* to nature either; we are more than just biological machines, in his view. Unlike other animals, we have the capacity to reflect on the natural as well as contingent historical conditions that confront us. Thanks to this capacity, we can in some cases change both the conditions themselves and our way of thinking about them. In our interactions with concrete natural and historical conditions, our self-understanding as well as the nature of our freedom can take on new shapes. Our freedom is in this way indebted to the realm of the actual. It does not reduce to nature, but it is nonetheless empirically conditioned.

Needless to say, the reception of Hegel's theory of freedom and philosophy of history has not always been as charitable as the one I have provided here. Neither of two of his most noteworthy nineteenth-century successors, Marx and Nietzsche, discovers in his philosophy of history the kind of reconciliation between freedom and necessity I have just outlined. Both appeal to perceived deficiencies in Hegel's system to justify their own approaches to the philosophy of history. Marx seeks a remedy for the excessive apriorism or abstractness he discovers in Hegel's thought; he urges that we attend more closely to the concrete or material conditions of human freedom. Nietzsche shares Marx's distaste for abstract speculation and likewise enlists history in his investigations into the origin of value and nature of freedom. We learn from undertaking a "genealogy of morals," he thinks, that the various conceptions of the good and of human freedom throughout the ages are unique manifestations not of the power of pure reason or of transcendental insight, but of the psychological drive he calls the "will to power." While recommending the virtues of a genealogical approach, however, Nietzsche also warns of the dangers of *too much* attention to history. An over-developed historical sense, in his view, depresses the will to life and cripples the creative impulse. It effectively *undermines* our freedom.

It would be difficult to make the case that Marx and Nietzsche are careful readers and critics of Hegel. But my aim in this final section is not to assess the merits of their respective representations of Hegel. I review their criticisms in order to highlight some developments in the philosophy of history triggered by the reception of the Hegelian philosophy.

Marx's assessment of Hegel's philosophy is by no means wholly negative. He acknowledges his debt to the Hegelian conception of human reason or Spirit as an active, transformative force—a force that, in its efforts to achieve ever more adequate forms of freedom, is capable of transforming both itself and the world around it.[20] Marx nonetheless sees himself as taking the philosophy of history in a new direction, one which he believes is free of the flaws of the Hegelian system. He endorses Ludwig Feuerbach's characterization of Hegel as an "abstract realist" who reduces the "concrete" into a mere "predicate of thought."[21] For both Feuerbach and Marx, the abstract nature of Hegel's system is tied to Hegel's failure to appreciate the extent to which material conditions determine the nature of human consciousness. Human consciousness owes its very nature to a variety of material forces: to nature itself, as well as to concrete social and political reality. As Marx puts it, it is not "consciousness that determines life"; rather, "life determines consciousness."[22]

[20] As Marx writes in his 1844 "Critique of Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy in General," "the great thing in Hegel's *Phenomenology*... is simply that Hegel grasps the self-development of man as a process..., as alienation and transcendence of this alienation;... he thus grasps the nature of work and comprehends objective man, authentic because actual, as the result of his own work." This is from the third manuscript of Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, Lawrence H. Simon, ed. (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994), p. 84. German edition: Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Werke, Ergänzungsband, Erster Teil* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1968), p. 574.

[21] See Ludwig Feuerbach's (1843) *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Manfred Vogel (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1986), §29. *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft*, in *Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. Erich Thies, Vol. 3 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975), pp. 247–322.

Marx mentions this text and attributes to Feuerbach the insight that Hegel "found only the *abstract, logical, speculative* expression of the movement of history, not the *actual* history of man" (Simon, p. 80; Dietz, *Werke, Ergänzungsband, Erster Teil*, p. 570).

[22] *The German Ideology* (Simon, p. 112; Dietz, Vol. 3, p. 27).

Commenting on Hegel's *Phenomenology*, Marx argues that Hegel's abstract realism is responsible for his defective treatment of the history of human freedom. On Marx's reading, Hegel's history of our efforts to overcome various forms of unfreedom or alienation is nothing more than a history of alienation *in thought or consciousness*. We overcome alienation, on this interpretation of Hegel, simply by changing our mindset, by coming to see our situation in a new way. The slave achieves freedom, then, by recognizing that both his servitude and the power of the master are not reflections of the nature of things, but are rather consequences of historical contingency.[23]

Following Feuerbach, Marx condemns Hegel for ignoring the extent to which human nature is more than merely thinking nature (more than just consciousness or reason). As an "abstract realist," Hegel devotes too little of his attention to the fact that "man is a natural being" with "actual, sensuous objects for his nature as objects of life-expression."[24] As real, sensuous beings, we have real versus merely ideated objects of need and desire. We do not satisfy our real hunger merely by thinking about food. Instead, we satisfy our hunger, Marx insists, by consuming concrete objects of need—objects truly "outside" the self.[25]

Since we cannot achieve freedom simply by thinking our way out of our problems, what is required is that we confront the *real* or *material* causes of alienation. Marx's prescription is that we both abolish religion and confront the economic and political causes of human misery. Confronting the economic and political causes of our misery means directing our attention to the real phenomena of production. We need to understand how we produce our means both of subsistence and of satisfying our more complicated needs (for example, for power and status). The idea here is that who we are, how we live, and even how we think of ourselves, is intimately connected to the things we produce and our means of producing them.[26]

Marx's critique of Hegel thus leads him to understand the philosophy of history in what he takes to be a fundamentally non-Hegelian way. For Marx, it is not sufficient to undertake a merely thoughtful consideration of human history. A serious philosophy of history must set out to describe not just abstractions, but "real individuals, their actions, and their material conditions of life."[27] It must include a critique of the *concrete* causes of unfreedom, a critique that expresses itself not just in thought but also in action.[28]

[23] "With Hegel's identification of man and self-consciousness, the alienated object or alienated essence of man is nothing but *consciousness*, merely the thought of alienation, its *abstract* and hence empty and unreal expression, *negation*. The transcendence of externalization is thus also nothing but an abstract, empty transcendence of that empty abstraction, the *negation of the negation*." *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (Simon, p. 93; Dietz, *Ergänzungsband, Erster Teil*, pp. 584f.).

[24] *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (Simon, p. 87; Dietz, *Ergänzungsband, Erster Teil*, p. 578).

[25] "A being which does not have its nature outside itself is not a natural one... is not objective." *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (Simon, p. 88; Dietz, *Ergänzungsband, Erster Teil*, p. 578).

[26] Compare, for example, a society that relies on slave labor with one that does not.

[27] *The German Ideology* (Simon, p. 107; Dietz, Vol. 3, p. 20). "In direct contrast to German philosophy, which descends from heaven to earth, here one ascends from earth to heaven" (Simon, p. 111; Dietz, Vol. 3, p. 26). Marx was not interested in offering, from a reflective distance, a mere philosophy or interpretation of world history. Rather, his aim was to defend what G. A. Cohen refers to as a "theory" of history. That is, he sought a solution to present crises by means of a close up and practically efficacious account of the "inner dynamic" of history. See *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 27.

[28] In his 1844 essay, "Toward a Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction," Marx writes: "Thus it is the *task of history*, once the otherworldly truth has disappeared, to establish the *truth of this world*. The immediate *task of philosophy* which is in the service of history is to unmask human self-alienation in its unholy forms now that it has been unmasked in its holy form. Thus the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics" (Simon, p. 28f.; Dietz, Vol. 2, p. 379).

In his 1874 essay "On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life," Nietzsche outlines a different kind of concern.[29] He warns us there of the consequences for human freedom of an *over-developed* historical sense. Reverence and even nostalgia for the past can be harmless and even laudable, but not when it results in hostility towards the future (§ 8). A preoccupation with the past is especially dangerous, he suggests, when combined with the Christian and Hegelian thesis that all that has happened in history is part of a "world process" governed by inexorable laws no individual or culture can control (§ 9).[30] A commitment to the inevitability of the world process depresses the human spirit. It encourages submissiveness and passivity; it reduces to futility the exercise of our critical faculties. "If every success contains within itself a rational necessity... [and] is a victory of the logical or of the 'idea'," Nietzsche writes, "then quickly down on your knees and up and down on every rung of the step ladder of 'success'!" (§ 8). Nietzsche is convinced that the Hegelian system is infected by this "idolatry of the factual [*Götzendienste des Tatsächlichen*]" and for that very reason poses a genuine threat to human freedom (§ 8).

Nietzsche not only attributes to Hegel a fatalistic philosophy of history, he in addition defends the common criticism that Hegel assumes that world history ends with his own philosophy.[31] With Christianity, the Hegelian philosophy preaches that the "end of the world is near" and that judgment day is soon upon us (§ 8). The Hegelian philosophy thus inherits Christianity's hostility "toward all new planting, bold attempting, free desiring; it resists every flight into the unknown because it does not love there, does not hope there" (§ 8).

Nietzsche's larger message in this text is not that we should wholly ignore or be contemptuous of history. The point is rather that human freedom and creativity require as a condition of their possibility a certain degree of *forgetfulness*, a certain capacity to resist what he calls the "tyranny of the actual" (§ 8). The great individual or "highest specimen" is not crippled by "retrospectivity"; he has faith in the future and greets the unknown with hope (§ 9). He is a leader, not a follower; he "swims against the historical waves" (§ 8). The great man of history concerns himself not just with the "so it is" but also with the "so it ought to be" (§ 8).

I very much doubt that, as Nietzsche suggests, Hegel is either crippled by restropectivity or hostile towards the future. Although I have not set out here to assess the merits of these charges, I will suggest in closing that in revealing himself to be a great champion of human freedom and creativity, as well as a fervent critic of pretensions to transcendent freedom and insight, Nietzsche demonstrates that he is perhaps more Hegelian than he thinks he is.

[29] *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, trans. Peter Preuss (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1980). Most of Nietzsche's remarks on Hegel appear in sections 8—10 of this work. "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben," part two of Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*, in Vol. 1 of *Friedrich Nietzsche: Werke in drei Bänden*, ed. Karl Schlechta (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1982).

[30] "[T]here has been no dangerous change or turn in the German education of this century which has not become more dangerous through the enormous influence, continuing to the present moment, of this philosophy, the Hegelian" (§ 8).

[31] "[F]or Hegel the apex and terminus of the world process coincided with his own Berlin existence" (§ 8). See my remarks on this issue in note 16.

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CHAPTER 23

EDUCATION

LINA STEINER

23.1 Introduction

"The French Revolution, Fichte's *Science of Knowledge*, and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* are the three greatest tendencies of the age," Friedrich Schlegel remarked in *Athenaeum* Fragment No. 216 published in 1798.[1] According to Schlegel, the revolution which put an end to feudalism in France, a treatise by his contemporary Johann Gottlieb Fichte stressing the primacy of practical over theoretical reason, and, last but not least, a famous pedagogical novel by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, were all signs of a major historical shift. By the time Schlegel published this particular fragment, however, many felt that the ideals of the French Revolution—including its chief slogan, *liberté, égalité, fraternité*—had been discredited by revolutionary violence and the turn to terror. But the generation that was raised on Rousseau and the Enlightenment and came of age at the turn of the nineteenth century could not wholly abandon their beliefs in human benevolence and perfectibility or in the possibility of autonomy and a more equitable and harmonious society. Many of Schlegel's contemporaries were convinced that the insatiable ambitions of Napoleon Bonaparte and other political players on one hand, and the immaturity of the general public on the other, were the chief causes of the downfall of the French republic. In order to build a lasting republic, a new type of human being would first have to be created.

Educating a new generation of politically informed and engaged citizens rather than obedient subjects became the main goal of Prussian educational reforms, which were spearheaded by polymath scholar and diplomat Wilhelm von Humboldt who became the minister of education in 1809. These reforms, which unfolded during the Napoleonic wars, testified to the world that despite military defeat and occupation the German spirit remained unbroken. Thus, while the anti-Napoleonic coalition was planning military rebuttals, a group of intellectuals in Berlin, including Wilhelm von Humboldt, Fichte, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and several others, plotted a German cultural renaissance.

[1] The *Athenaeum Fragments*, No. 216. The *Athenaeum* which appeared twice a year between 1798 and 1800, was the theoretical organ of the early Romantic movement in Germany. It was coedited by Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel.