

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEGEL'S IMMANENT APPROACH: ANCIENT
SCEPTICISM AND THE METHOD OF *PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT*

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BARIŞ ENGİN AKSOY

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submitted by **BARIŞ ENGİN AKSOY** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of **Master of Arts in Department of Philosophy, the Graduate School
of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Yaşar KONDAKÇI
Dean
Graduate School of Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Şeref Halil TURAN
Head of Department
Department of Philosophy

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif ÇIRAKMAN
Supervisor
Department of Philosophy

Examining Committee Members:

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Çetin TÜRKYILMAZ (Head of the Examining Committee)
Hacettepe University
Department of Philosophy

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif ÇIRAKMAN (Supervisor)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Philosophy

Assist. Prof. Dr. Refik GÜREMEN
Middle East Technical University
Department of Philosophy

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last Name: Barış Engin
AKSOY

Signature:

ABSTRACT

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEGEL'S IMMANENT APPROACH: ANCIENT SCEPTICISM AND THE METHOD OF *PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT*

AKSOY, Barış Engin

M.A., The Department of Philosophy

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif ÇIRAKMAN

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This thesis tries to read ancient scepticism as a precedent of Hegel's method in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and Hegel as the fulfillment of scepticism, as both the most radical form and overcoming or sublation of it. The intersection between Hegel's *Phenomenology* and ancient scepticism is specifically located in the so-called Agrippan modes presented by Sextus Empiricus; what the thoroughly immanent procedure at work in these modes and Hegel's procedure, in the *Phenomenology*, of measuring the shapes of consciousness with themselves share is the move of giving up an external notion of justification, not adopting an outsider position, not importing any external criteria into what is to be evaluated. The thesis also tries to show that the *Phenomenology* goes a step further than ancient scepticism in also giving up a notion of truth to which ancient scepticism ultimately remains tied and which leads to its famous "suspension of judgement." And this extra step is connected to the *Phenomenology*'s recourse to the procedure of staging; not being content with purely conceptual elaboration, it forces different shapes of consciousness into staging themselves, exemplifying their claims and therefore exposes a dimension of them which would have stayed hidden otherwise: their truth.

Keywords: Ancient scepticism, Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Immanent evaluation, Staging

ÖZ

HEGEL'İN İÇKİN YAKLAŞIMININ GELİŞİMİ: ANTİK ŞÜPHECİLİK VE *TİNİN* *FENOMENOLOJİSİ*'NİN YÖNTEMİ

AKSOY, Barış Engin

Yüksek Lisans, Felsefe Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Elif ÇIRAKMAN

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Bu tezde antik şüpheciliği Hegel'in *Tinin Fenomenolojisi* kitabında başvurduğu yöntemin erken örneği olarak, Hegel'i ise şüpheciliğin hem en radikal biçimi hem de alıkonulup aşılmış hali olarak gösteren bir okuma sunulmaya çalışılıyor. *Fenomenoloji* ile antik şüpheciliğin kesişim noktası Sextus Empiricus'un metinlerinde sunulan Agrippa modları olarak belirleniyor: bu modlardaki prosedür ile Hegel'in *Fenomenoloji*'de başvurduğu prosedürün ortak noktası, dışsal bir gerekçelendirme kavrayışından vazgeçilmesidir. Tezde aynı zamanda, antik şüpheciliğin en nihayetinde bağlı kaldığı ve “yargının askıya alınması” sonucuna yol açan hakikat anlayışından da vazgeçen *Fenomenoloji*'nin antik şüphecilikten bir adım ileri gittiği gösterilmeye çalışılıyor. Bu adım *Fenomenoloji*'nin sahneleme prosedürüne başvurmasıyla ilişkilendiriliyor; salt kavramsal incelemeyle yetinmeyen *Fenomenoloji* farklı bilinç şekillerini kendilerini örneklendirmeye zorlar ve aksi takdirde gizli kalacak olan hakikatlerini açığa vurur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Antik şüphecilik, Hegel, *Tinin Fenomenolojisi*, İçkin değerlendirme, Sahneleme

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Hegel and scepticism” appears to be an empty set at first sight: one would not associate the philosopher of the absolute with a stance that questions the possibility or justification of any kind of knowledge – especially with ancient scepticism, with its universal suspension of judgement. In the case of Kant, for instance, there is an obvious relationship, through the influence of Hume, with scepticism: the push of Hume’s challenge awakening Kant from his dogmatic slumber, leading him to a critique of metaphysics (“pure reason”), as the story goes. Hegel, on the other hand, appears to be not really bothered with sceptical doubts, questions, attacks, not worried about the possibility of true knowledge. In any case, it appears that one would not need to be concerned with scepticism in order to understand Hegel’s philosophy. And yet, we see him designating his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, among other things, as “a self-consummating scepticism”; and also, in one of his early texts, he takes up the relationship of scepticism with philosophy in detail, going as far as identifying the original form of scepticism as at one with philosophy.

In this thesis, I propose to use ancient scepticism as a privileged entry point into Hegel’s philosophy; but also Hegel as a privileged lens to see scepticism in a new light: ancient scepticism as a forerunner of Hegelian philosophy, or Hegelian philosophy as the most developed form of scepticism. More specifically, there is an intimate connection between the two at a precise point: ancient scepticism is usually defined (and self-defined) with its principle of “equipollence” – for each and every claim one can equally defend its opposite, leading to undecidability and suspension of judgement. All the other devices (or “modes”, “tropes”) developed alongside the principle of equipollence seem to be provided as an accessory to it. But, I would claim, Agrippan modes constitute an exception in this regard; since they do not simply present an application of the equipollence principle, but demonstrate that

there is *no need for it*. One does not need to counter a claim with its opposite, because that claim includes its opposite within itself. That is to say, externally opposing a claim with its equally justifiable opposite necessarily presupposes the self-identity, or consistency of that claim; but Agrippan modes work differently, in that they do not challenge rationalist claims directly, but only show that a consistent application of their own principles would render any justification of them impossible. This *immanent* approach at work in the Agrippan modes is the signature of Hegelian philosophy.

Of course, the ancient sceptic in applying its Agrippan modes is a Hegelian in practice, not in theory. There is no adequate notion of the procedure of determinate negation, or immanent reading in ancient scepticism; and that is why it ultimately does not manage to get beyond the dogmatic presuppositions that it appears to be challenging (concerning truth). ‘There is no way to reach the (dogmatic notion of) truth (i.e. a truth that needs an external support or justification), so no need to worry about truth (as such)’: this might be the formulation that encapsulates sceptical approach. On the other hand, in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* specifically, we encounter not a suspension but a sublation of judgement: negation is not the final word, there is also a positive dimension at stake; the immanent undermining does not end up with a simple negation of a claim, but with its developed form. Thus, while trying to show the intimate connection between ancient scepticism and Hegel, I will also delineate the point at which they part ways, ultimately leading to the appearance of their relationship as constituting an empty set.

In this thesis, chapter 2 takes its cue from the usual criticism raised against scepticism in its ancient, radical form: that it refutes, undermines itself due to the fact that in its attack against the possibility of rational justification it itself relies on rational argumentation. I shall try to show, in this chapter, with the help of Alan Bailey, that this self-refutation argument is actually based on presuppositions not really adopted by scepticism, that they are ultimately dogmatic presuppositions projected onto the sceptic. And in contrast to this criticism, ancient scepticism at its most radical, i.e. in the Agrippan modes, amounts to evaluating dogmatism on its own terms, through its own principles, measuring it by itself – *without a projection of external presuppositions*. These modes show that, in contrast to the “self-

refutation” charge brought against it, what is at stake in Pyrrhonian scepticism is a self-refutation of *dogmatism itself*. What allows these Modes this kind of a privileged perspective that enables us to observe dogmatism refuting itself is their implicit rejection of “transcendent” criticism. They constitute one of the earliest formulations or systematizations of an “immanent” approach or procedure. Since the sceptic has no positive starting position that it aims to defend, or to use as a standard to judge other positions, since it acknowledges no ultimate “objective” standard, this impels it almost spontaneously to an immanent evaluation.

In the second part of the chapter, I shall try to link this immanent approach with its full-blown representative in the history of philosophy: Hegel and his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The lens of Hegel allows us to see ancient scepticism in a more positive light, to see that the usual charge of “self-refutation” against scepticism misses its target; but it also allows us to formulate another version of “self-refutation” argument against it, locating a self-contradiction, even a dogmatist element in the sceptical procedure, this time not in its using rational arguments to attack rational justification claims, but in its famous step of “suspension” of judgement emerging after its investigations.

Hegel himself is quite explicit about this connection of his philosophy with ancient scepticism, designating the *Phenomenology*, a book that ends with “absolute knowledge” no less, as a “self-completing scepticism.” In an early writing called “On The Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy” (1802) he even proposes to see scepticism as one with philosophy as such. Chapter 3 provides a close reading of this early text and then compares it with the slightly but importantly different interpretation of scepticism provided in Hegel’s lectures on the *History of Philosophy* (1825-26). The chapter concludes by connecting this developing engagement with scepticism with the properly immanent approach first emerging in the *Phenomenology*, emphasizing the change it implies regarding Hegel’s early philosophy. One of the most prominent points revealed by the difference between these two treatments of scepticism is the changing status of the “beginning” or “origin” in Hegel. While in the “Relationship” essay, the idea is that philosophy was one in the beginning (encompassing scepticism as well), before “the fall”, that it was already there fully-formed and it kept appearing throughout history in more or less

distorted forms in different particular philosophies, with the shift in Hegel, philosophy becomes historical; more precisely, history and philosophy cease to exclude each other, philosophy does not stand outside history, but develops within it. And when it comes to the problem of how to begin philosophizing, the change in Hegel's approach leads to giving up an initial, supposedly secure, "true" position isolated from any falsity, to the idea that beginning with the "true" will always end up with dogmatism.

Chapter 4 elaborates on the changed status of beginnings in Hegel through an analysis of the three beginnings of the *Phenomenology*: the Preface, the Introduction and the Sense-Certainty chapter. Hegel's answer to the problem of how to begin philosophy, which also lies at the core of the sceptical attack against rational knowledge, can perhaps be seen as one of the most original contributions of his philosophy. The three beginnings of the *Phenomenology* all display a sceptical move, a self-undermining beginning that is offered by Hegel as an antidote to beginning dogmatically. They present a solution to the problem of beginning by divesting it from its privileged status: one does not begin with the truth; one *cannot* begin with the truth.

In contrast to "dogmatic" philosophizing, there is no "true" beginning in Hegel: what you get in the beginning is not the foundation upon which everything else is built. More precisely, it is a starting point, it is an origin, but not a solid one, not a solid rock; on the contrary, it is the first rock *to be lifted* precisely. The way to "absolute knowing" opens up by the self-destruction of this rock; right on the first page of the first chapter, we read that the starting point presents us with the poorest form of knowledge – but this does not take away its status of beginning. This is why a sceptical attack directed at the beginning of Hegel's philosophy does not make sense: this philosophy itself begins by a sceptical attack at its beginning.

Chapter 5 tries to show the positive side of this self-undermining procedure. In contrast to the sceptical procedure which works only negatively, thereby ending up with the suspension of judgement against any claim/proposition, Hegelian procedure runs into something, a bit of truth in each and every form of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*. But this "bit" is something to which consciousness is necessarily blind, even though this "truth" never stops being articulated out in the open;

therefore its truth appears to it as external, as an “other”. The phenomenological observer and a scene to stage the forms of consciousness are required for this truth to be visible. Each of the forms of consciousness, defined by a certain configuration of knowing, takes the stage in turn and performs for us. And this moment of performance or dramatization, this acting out is not something secondary, but constitutes the only possible test that one can appeal to in the *Phenomenology*, in order not to rely on unfounded, dogmatic criteria.

This means that there is no positive model in Hegel, no ideal state to measure the current state, no normative model. The standard, measure or criterion lying within a figure of consciousness means that it is internally divided, it is “double” in itself – what it says or enunciates, its statement is compared with its process of enunciation. And that is the reason why in Hegel exemplification (as staging) functions in a completely different way than the ordinary use of examples. I shall try to show this difference through contrasting it with Kant’s notion of exemplification and provide some examples of it from the *Phenomenology* and elsewhere. This chapter ends with a brief discussion of the problem of “ending”, suggesting a reading of the final chapter, the infamous “absolute knowing” as a completely empty, contentless, formal touch that simply points backwards.

CHAPTER 2

SCEPTICISM AS THE SELF-REFUTATION OF DOGMATISM

There is a common understanding that scepticism, especially in its radical, that is, universal form, can be easily countered or refuted by simply turning the tables against it, by using its own universal doubt against itself. This is based on the assumption that scepticism is unable to confront its own pronouncements being put into question, being doubted: for example, if any proposition can be countered with its opposite (the principle of equipollence), this proposition itself can be countered with its opposite, that is, not every proposition can be countered with its opposite – this is equally defensible or reasonable, according to sceptic’s own terms. And it is common to think that pointing out this dimension of “self-application” of sceptical principles is enough to answer and refute radical scepticism, that this constitutes a “self-refutation” of scepticism, that scepticism cannot account for this. I will try to show in this chapter, with the help of Hegel, that this is not the case, that scepticism is not that easily shaken and this supposedly “immanent” reading of scepticism is not really immanent, but helps us discern a truly immanent reading right at the core of scepticism itself. And this will also help us discern Hegel’s own “immanent” procedure in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* more clearly.

Now, the charge of “self-refutation” seems to be the most frequent and supposedly effective argument directed against scepticism throughout the history of philosophy. The substance of the charge is that the sceptical procedure, while showing the failure of any claims of rational justification, relies itself on a rational argumentation procedure, therefore unwittingly falls into a contradiction. Alan Bailey (1990), in an article called “Pyrrhonian Scepticism and The Self-Refutation Argument,” argues against this argument and then goes a step further and shows in a quite compelling

way that this argument actually applies to dogmatism itself.¹ Bailey unpacks the self-refutation objection and the presuppositions it is based on and shows that these presuppositions are not shared by the sceptic, that they are ultimately dogmatic presuppositions projected onto the sceptic; moreover and in contrast to this, the mode of thinking established by ancient scepticism, specifically in the Agrippan modes, amounts to evaluating dogmatism on its own terms, through its own principles, measuring it by itself – *without a projection of external presuppositions*.

I will argue in this chapter that Sextus Empiricus' Pyrrhonian scepticism is at its most radical and universal in the so-called "Five Modes of Agrippa". These modes show that, in contrast to the "self-refutation" charge brought against it, what is at stake in Pyrrhonian scepticism is a self-refutation *of dogmatism itself*. Specifically in the Five Modes of Agrippa, we are allowed a perspective through which we can observe dogmatism refuting itself; the sceptic's procedure allows us to observe this refutation otherwise remaining invisible. What allows these Modes this kind of a privileged perspective is their implicit rejection of "transcendent" criticism. They constitute one of the earliest formulations or systematizations of an "immanent" approach or procedure. Since the sceptic has no positive starting position that it aims to defend, or use as a standard to judge other positions, since it acknowledges no ultimate "objective" standard, this impels it almost spontaneously to an immanent evaluation. I will try to link this immanent approach with its full-blown representative in the history of philosophy: Hegel and his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel himself is quite open about this connection and even designates the *Phenomenology*, a book that ends with "absolute knowledge" no less, as a "self-completing scepticism." I will argue for the logic behind this designation and that it allows to see scepticism in a completely different light: although the usual charge of "self-refutation" against scepticism misses its target, as I will argue, another version of "self-refutation" argument can be formulated against it, locating a self-contradiction, even a dogmatist element in the sceptical procedure, this time not in its

¹ In the beginning of his *Outlines*, Sextus defines scepticism as an attitude (and *not* a doctrine) by differentiating it from what he calls "dogmatism" through the emphasis on continuous "investigation": "When people are investigating any subject, the likely result is either a discovery, or a denial of discovery and a confession of inapprehensibility, or else a continuation of the investigation" (PH I.1). The designation of dogmatism encompasses not only Stoics, Epicureans and Aristotelians who "discover" something, but also the so-called Academic sceptics who claim that no discovery of knowledge is possible, therefore ceasing to be in an investigative position by holding onto an ultimate, albeit negative answer. The sceptics, on the other hand, are still investigating.

using rational arguments to attack rational justification claims, but in its famous step of “suspension” of judgement emerging after its investigations.

2.1. Five Modes of Agrippa

Now, to start over again, according to the charge of “self-refutation” against skepticism, since the target of scepticism is rational justification (in the sense that none of our beliefs and actions can ever be rationally justified), when the sceptic argues against it through rational means – offering reasons against it – this becomes a self-defeating, self-refuting procedure: if the reasons offered are good reasons, then this itself becomes a successful argument rationally justified, hence turning into an instance of the thesis that at least some beliefs can be rationally justified. The sceptical attack against rational justification turns into an example of what it attempts to refute. “Thus it seems to follow that the argumentation employed by the global sceptic must be wholly incapable of providing any genuine support for his scepticism” (Bailey 1990, 27).

The means employed for a certain end here undermines the end itself: the form of argumentation, the simple fact that there is an argumentation, belies the content of sceptic’s attack itself. This is similar to the case of someone saying, “I am not able to talk.” When the sceptical attack on rational justification is based on good, solid reasons, it becomes an example of what it is supposed to refute – success means defeat in this case, for the sceptic. “Moreover the self-refutation argument is still immensely popular today: no other argument against global scepticism seems to have the same air of brutal finality,” says Bailey (1990, 28).

A first point to mention about this debate is its connection to another classical dispute concerning ancient scepticism, a dispute over the scope of ancient scepticism’s attack on beliefs:

Many interpreters of Sextus agree that life without belief is impossible; but instead of concluding that Sextus’ scepticism is absurd, they maintain that Sextus does not require a life without belief. According to some interpreters, Sextus wants us to abandon belief – but only a certain class or type of belief, not any belief whatsoever. That is to say, Sextus is not sceptical *tout court*. According to other interpreters, Sextus does not require us to give up belief at all – it is something quite other which we are to abandon. (Barnes 2000, xxii-xxiii)

Jonathan Barnes (1982) formulates this dispute in terms of two types of scepticism: “rustic” vs. “urbane” Pyrrhonism.² The “rustic” type of scepticism designates an all-encompassing scepticism, a scepticism without exceptions, *epokhé* towards everything, every single issue – so literally no belief is allowed here. In contrast, the “urbane” type of scepticism has a more limited target: only philosophical and scientific matters are in its scope. So in this latter version, everyday, ordinary beliefs get a pass; they do not come under *epokhé*. One could reformulate this distinction as general vs. special scepticism, or universal vs. particular scepticism. Barnes’s initial answer to the question of the scope of the Pyrrhonist’s belief in Sextus’ *Outlines* is that “the general tenor of *PH* is ... indubitably rustic. But *PH* also contains important intrusions of urbanity” (18).³

On the other hand, Miles Burnyeat (2012) interprets the sceptical suspension as a “rustic”, universal one:

When the skeptic doubts that anything is true ... he has exclusively in view claims as to real existence. Statements which merely record how things appear are not in question – they are not called true or false – only statements which say that things are thus and so in reality. ... If *epochê* is suspending belief about real existence as contrasted with appearance, that will amount to suspending all belief, since belief is the acceptance of something as true. There can be no question of belief about appearance, as opposed to real existence, if statements recording how things appear cannot be described as true or false, only statements making claims as to how they really are. (210)

If suspension is “suspending belief about real existence as contrasted to appearance”, then that means suspension of “all belief” in the sense of “acceptance of something as true.” One cannot make an exception out of appearances in this case and limit the scope of suspension, according to Burnyeat, since statements about appearances do not count as “claims to real existence” in the first place, so they cannot be true or false.

But Barnes thinks that this may be the wrong way of looking at things and that this whole rustic/urbane opposition may be a misleading and false opposition. He suspects that there may be some silent presuppositions of the initial question that needs to be questioned. Barnes’s (1982) ultimate view on the question is as follows: “What is the extent of *epokhé* recommended by the Pyrrhonist of *PH*? The question

² The terms are borrowed from Galen.

³ The abbreviation *PH*, throughout the thesis, refers to *Outlines of Pyrrhonism (Pyrrhoniae Hypotyposes)* by Sextus Empiricus.

is misconceived, for it rests upon a silly presupposition. *Epokhé* may be broad or narrow. Pyrrhonism may be rustic or urbane. Everything depends on the state of the particular patient” (19). The medical metaphor, which is invoked by Sextus himself, is the basis upon which Barnes’ ultimate position stands. You cannot prescribe the same medicine or the same amount of it to each and every patient, so you cannot propose a single *epokhé* that applies to each and every Pyrrhonist. How far *epokhé* goes, what it includes – this all depends on the patient and the disease one is suffering from. *Epokhé* can include any issue one faces at a certain point in life; content (scientific, philosophical or ordinary beliefs) does not really matter, anything will do. “It is absurd to suppose that a Pyrrhonist can produce a single formula, applicable to all men in all conditions, or pronounce generally that every patient needs so much *epokhé* and so many Tropes a day” (19). A case-by-case *epokhé*, a “medicinal” *epokhé*, a cure for the metaphysical illness (onto-plague, ontovirus?) that we are all prone to.

The import of this debate concerning the scope of suspension of judgement is that one can easily think a way out of the “self-refutation” argument relying on an “urbane” interpretation of Pyrrhonism. An obvious strategy would be that since the targeted beliefs in the sceptical way consists only of scientific or philosophical ones about “unclear” issues, turning the sceptical weaponry against itself (as in the “self-refutation” argument) violates the terms of the debate: the sceptical refutation itself has no claim to be a scientific or philosophical belief or argument about an unclear issue. This would be an easy way out of the self-refutation claim. Similarly, Barnes’ conclusion that attempts to evade the opposition between the “rustic” and “urbane”, implies, or at least allows for an answer to the self-refutation charge by simply stating the “medical” inappropriateness of applying these modes to themselves, since this move would not be “healthy” relative to the condition of the “patient” insofar as it disturbs the supposed equilibrium achieved through the suspension of judgement.

However, *pace* Barnes, in the five modes (or *tropes*) of scepticism attributed to Agrippa, we have maybe the strongest expression of the conclusion that there can be *no* rationally justified claim, *no* claim more plausible than its contrary. The modes themselves include no qualification concerning a piece-by-piece application, or any restriction to scientific or philosophical beliefs. Imposing any such restriction can

only imply an arbitrary external imposition based on Sextus' or some other sceptic's personal preference in this case. In the "Introduction" to *Outlines*, Barnes (2000) himself takes notice of this dimension:

... it is an error to characterize Sextus as a local sceptic *tout court*. On the contrary, there is more than a streak of globalism in his thought. The Five Modes make this clear. The Modes are used throughout the *Outlines*; dozens of individual arguments appeal, implicitly or explicitly, to one or more of them; and many other arguments, while not literally using one or other of the Modes, rely upon forms of argument which bear a close family resemblance to them. (xxvi)

For example, the third mode concerning relativity says that *everything* is "relative to the judging subject and to the things observed together with it" (*PH*, I.167). "One thing is plain," says Barnes, "the Mode works everywhere if it works anywhere; it destroys everything if it destroys anything" (Barnes 2000, xxvi). That is, any proposition, whether it is scientific/philosophical or belonging to ordinary beliefs, is subject to these modes, according their internal logic. Moreover, compared to other modes and even the basic method of equipollence,⁴ Five Modes take center stage when it comes to the actual procedure of Sextus in the second and third books of the *Outlines*. Again, as aptly put by Barnes, "as for their philosophical power and significance, there is no comparison: the Ten are puerile, the Five profound" (xviii). So, in spite of all the efforts of Sextus at certain points in the *Outlines* to limit the sceptical suspension of judgement, "the Five Modes are a contribution to global scepticism; and insofar as Sextus uses them, he is a global sceptic – despite himself" (xxvi-xvii). There is an obvious tension in the text of the *Outlines* on this point: Sextus himself recognizes "that every object of investigation can be referred to these modes" (*PH*, I.169), but again, a little later on, he warns us when analyzing sceptical phrases in general – presumably including what the modes themselves say – that "you must remember that we do not use these phrases [sceptical phrases] about all objects universally, but about what is unclear and investigated in dogmatic fashion, and that we say what is apparent to us and do not make firm assertions about the nature of externally existing things" (*PH*, I.208). So this tension shows that the source of the debate about the scope of the sceptic's suspension of judgement has a solid base in Sextus' text and it is evident from his repeated warnings that he wants to limit the application of the Five Modes as well. But these warnings also show an

⁴ "Scepticism is an ability to set out oppositions among things which appear and thought of in any way at all, an ability by which, because of the equipollence in the opposed objects and accounts, we come first to suspension of judgement and afterwards to tranquility" (*PH*, I.8).

awareness that when left alone, the Modes themselves function in a completely universal, “rustic” manner, without regard to any difference in kind in the objects on which it functions.

Incidentally, it is not only the Five Modes that point to a “rustic” scepticism; the method of “equipollence” itself in principle has no regard for a distinction among contents. Michael Forster, for example, pursues this line in his studies on the close connection between ancient scepticism and Hegelian philosophy. This is what Hegel sees as a virtue in the method of equipollence, according to Forster (1998): since “it avoids any essential reliance on beliefs; the use of the method to attack particular beliefs does not require a retention or holding firm of *other* beliefs as a basis for the attack”, “it enjoys general applicability” (129). This is a method that does not hold on to a secure, fixed rock while attacking and that is precisely why it is “a method which can be used to attack any and all beliefs regardless of content, rather than being restricted in applicability to some subset of beliefs having a specific kind of content” (130). Again, even though Sextus frequently tries to limit its scope, trying to spare “appearances” from its wrath, if someone brings forward *any* claim to a sceptic, the logic of equipollence demands its due application always.

Now, to go back, what are the Five Modes of Agrippa precisely? Sextus presents them as a set of modes producing suspension of judgement, and one can easily see that what is at stake here is specifically the problem of “justification” (and therefore “truth”). These modes are supposed to demonstrate that any proposition can be shown to be ultimately lacking a proper justification that would resolve the problem of equipollence, that would allow one to rationally choose one proposition against its possible contrary in a conflict of opinions. Accordingly, the first mode simply points to the plurality and conflict of opinions concerning any subject matter: throughout history all kinds of opinions on any subject have been asserted and there is no obvious way to decide among them. The third mode points to relativity: an object appears differently relative to the subject perceiving it and to her other perceptions at that moment; there is no obvious way to decide which of these appearances is the true one, which one corresponds to the nature of the object itself. So these two modes (1 and 3) point to the variation in thinking (opinions) and perception concerning objects of thought and objects of perception respectively. Now as a way of deciding

among these conflicting opinions and perceptions, one can have recourse to justification, rationally proving one of the options over the others. But the second mode kicks in at this point and indicates that the process of justification or grounding proves to be a never-ending process: what is put forward as proof or ground itself needs to be proved, and this second proof also needs to be proved and so it goes. There is no way of reaching a beginning point, each ground itself needs to be grounded, there is no ultimate ground, no zero level of justification. In this predicament one can decide to forgo this process and instead attempt to select a ground that is ungrounded as a hypothesis, a supposedly self-justified or self-evident starting point supposedly exempt from any need of justification, a simply assumed starting point that would allow the other propositions/arguments to be grounded through this ungrounded ground. But the fourth mode simply replies to this evasion with a contrary hypothesis: one can simply choose on the same basis the contrary position as the ungrounded ground. And finally, the fifth mode blocks the remaining path of circularity: when the proof itself is proved through what it is supposed to prove, the proposition to be proved is assumed to be true in order to prove its proof. So, this mode says that we can assume neither. The ultimate outcome is “suspension of judgement”.

It follows that no claim can be rationally justified in an axiomatic way, that is through choosing one point as a supposedly self-justified or self-evident, exceptional hypothesis and basing all other claims on this zero point. Circularity is not an option, that is, we cannot use a proposition supposed to be justified as a support for its own justification; so linear justification is the only way. But the problem is that linear justification does not have an endpoint, one must keep on justifying the justifications themselves and this goes to infinity. So, these five tropes seem to say that “no claim in any area of discourse ever possesses any rational justification whatsoever” (Bailey 1990, 30). There is no way of rationally deciding between the variety of options that we encounter in the first and the third modes concerning any object (of thought and perception).

2.2. Scepticism as Fulfilled Dogmatism

Is this “argument”, proposed in the Five Modes, consistent or is it self-refuting and self-defeating? Can it be said in a rationally justified way that no claim can be rationally justified? What is the status of Sextus’ sceptical claims? If the five tropes constitute a solid, rationally justified “net” that justifies that there is no rational justification possible, what is its own status? Can this position be conceptually consistent?

I think that a sceptic like Sextus would be perfectly willing to agree that when one argues against rational justification in a successful way, with good reasons, one ends up producing a rational justification oneself. He would count this as one of the parties, the positive party, in a state of equipollence concerning the existence of rational justification. He would, however, immediately counter this positive party’s position with an argument showing the impossibility of rational justification (through the modes of Agrippa, through pointing to the *content* of the modes) – and conclude that one cannot decide on this issue either way. Let us remember the procedure of equipollence: “By ‘equipollence’ we mean equality with regard to being convincing or unconvincing: none of the conflicting accounts takes precedence over any other as being more convincing” (*PH*, I.10). So, the contradiction indicated in the self-refutation claim would not be a problem for Sextus, because he does not actually adopt a negative position on any issue – at least he should not. Regarding this contradiction as a self-refutation is to misleadingly attribute to the sceptic a determined position on this issue. This would actually constitute a refutation only in the case of someone actually defending that none of our beliefs and actions can ever be rationally justified.

For instance, at *PH* II.130, when setting up an equipollence between the claims “There are signs” and “There are no signs”, Sextus, as a suggestion that there are signs, indicates that “the phrases brought against signs” – the propositions arguing against the reality of signs – “either signify something or signify nothing. If they are insignificant, how will they shake the reality of signs? And if they signify something, there are signs.” Significant phrases against the reality of signs are themselves signs – this is the same form of argument brought against the sceptic concerning rational justification and we see it being used here as part of an equipollence established by

Sextus himself. We can translate the argument Sextus invokes into the terms of justification easily: if the two sides are formulated as “There is (such a thing as) rational justification” and “There is no rational justification”, then any argumentation for the latter, negative side, against rational argumentation, is either a justified argumentation or not. If it is not justified, it cannot shake the first position’s confidence in the existence of rational justification; if it is justified, it is itself a rational justification (proving its own impossibility). So there is nothing surprising in this conclusion concerning justification from the perspective of Sextus. This is not a disavowed, “hidden” dimension of his thinking, quite the contrary, what this charge accomplishes simply amounts to knocking on an open door. Sextus would plead guilty to this “charge” quite happily.

Accordingly, the core of Bailey’s argument is that the charge of self-refutation can only be formulated from the position of dogmatism: there is no problem of self-refutation when one looks at the sceptical claims from a sceptical perspective. One can easily see that Sextus does not conceive his own position and Agrippa’s five modes specifically as a sound argumentation: “they may be unsound, and there may be more than those I shall describe” (*PH*, I.35). So, “the Pyrrhonist would presumably wish to describe himself as simply seeking to persuade the dogmatist to abandon his belief that there are such things as good reasons for accepting some claims and rejecting other” (Bailey 1990, 37).

Bailey ingeniously turns the table on the dogmatist. He shows that *Agrippa’s modes are nothing but the elaboration of the principles of rationality accepted by dogmatism itself*. No self-respecting rationalist can deny the constitution and force of the “sceptic’s net”, without denying his own commitments to the principles of rationality. The upshot is that we do not deal with a simple opposition here; scepticism is nothing but a fulfilled dogmatism, a consequent dogmatism. There is no external attack here, scepticism is not an external opposition to dogmatism, but an *inherent one, an inner negation*. Infinite regress, circularity and hypothesizing – these are illegitimate according to the dogmatist’s own principles; it is not the sceptic who establishes their illegitimacy from outside. This is also how Jonathan Barnes (2000) describes this aspect of the sceptical strategy:

The premises which Sextus uses are, typically, premises taken from the books, and put into the mouths of the Dogmatist; and the inferences typically follow patterns which the Dogmatists themselves are committed to accepting. ... In the arguments over relativity in I. 137-139, Sextus does not, of course, prove that everything is relational; but he does prove that, given certain presuppositions common to ancient Dogmatists, then everything is relational – and that is precisely what he wants to prove. (xxix-xxx)

Let us remember what Sextus says about Agrippan modes: “But I make no affirmation either about their [the modes’] number or about their power – they may be unsound, and there may be more than those I shall describe” (*PH*, I.35). This is not exactly the attitude of someone *adopting* these modes as her own arguments. These modes are ultimately the dogmatist’s arguments, or rather they constitute the unfolding or consummation of arguments based on “certain presuppositions common to ancient Dogmatists”. These are patterns constructed on the basis of the dogmatist’s considered criteria for rationality. For example, the infinite regress problem that is raised in the second mode is not really an invention of the sceptic, but it is accepted as something to be avoided for proper reasoning by the dogmatist herself. “Thus the dogmatist is quite unable to avoid accepting the proffered tropes as constraints on rational justification” (Bailey 1990, 39).

What Bailey exposes can be formulated thus: *scepticism is not simply the opposite of dogmatism, but it is a fulfilled, consummated dogmatism*. Or, scepticism is the “truth” of dogmatism (in the Hegelian sense of the term). What scepticism does through the Agrippan tropes is to take seriously the fundamental presupposition of dogmatism, according to which what is justified and what is justifying stands in an external relationship to each other. Doing this, the sceptic displays the implications of dogmatic rationalism, and shows that it leads to a dead-end, to a self-contradiction. So one can say that a sceptic is nothing but a dogmatist awakened from its dogmatic slumber. Incidentally this also fits Sextus’ “origin story” regarding the emergence of sceptical attitude:

Sceptics began to do philosophy in order to decide among appearances and to apprehend which are true and which false, so as to become tranquil; but they came upon equipollent dispute, and being unable to decide this they suspended judgement. And when they suspended judgement, tranquility in matters of opinion followed fortuitously. (*PH*, I.26)

2.3. From External to Immanent Justification

I think that the charge of self-refutation directed against the sceptical position not only misses its target (there is no “self” avowed, no self-consistent position to be refuted here), but also serves to cover up the fact that scepticism is the self-refutation of dogmatism itself, that scepticism is ultimately nothing but a consequential dogmatism. But Bailey – and ultimately scepticism itself – stops at this point. There seems to be only one option left for a dogmatist awakened from its slumber: suspension of judgement – that is, giving up on the project of rational justification, renouncing it, and living on without worrying about foundations or grounds.

Agrippan modes are a perfect example of what Hegel calls “determinate negation”: an immanent critique which does not assume an external position towards its object, but only measures it with itself, with its own criteria, on its own terms. But this is also the point where a problem appears: right at the point where scepticism takes the step of “suspension of judgement”, a crucial presupposition of dogmatism creeps in and becomes accepted by scepticism itself: “Although the Pyrrhonist is now free to adopt a new set of standards, he cannot think of any epistemological principles that possess any more plausibility than those he has just discarded” (Bailey 1990, 43). What starts out as a determinate negation (an immanent negation of the dogmatic notion of justification), through a hasty generalization – “justification *as such* is neither possible nor impossible” – stops thinking and ends up with the suspension of judgement.

But isn't there another option here? An option that indicates that the sceptic's final step of suspension is itself not a conclusion that imposes itself, but a jump, a jump based on the implicit and full acceptance, in the final instance, of the dogmatist's notion of justification? Bailey implies a crucial point, without explicitly stating it: he exposes the ground, the silent presupposition of the five modes themselves: *justification is always external; what is justified and what is justifying are always external to each other*. So what is said to be undecidable in the sceptical discourse is not simply any justification, but a *dogmatic* justification, that is a justification in which what is justified and what justifies stand in an external relationship. One could proceed from here, by changing the conception of justification itself, to an idea of justification which measures a proposition in another way, with itself for instance: an

immanent evaluation and justification or refutation. If the external justification is a self-contradictory notion – precisely what is established by the five modes – it means that one should change the notion itself, it means not that *justification is undecidable*, but a particular notion of justification is not defensible (hence “determinate negation”). But scepticism gets stuck at the notion of external justification; it cannot spare this notion and therefore, instead of sublating it, arrives at the suspension of judgment – and this is the point where it becomes dogmatic, unjustifiably sticking (albeit undecidedly) to a conception of justification that is proven by it to be self-refuting and self-contradictory. It actually gets suspended on to a dogmatic presupposition.

What is interesting is that this idea of “immanent” justification is not something foreign to scepticism, but it is actually what is being performed, staged right in front of our eyes in the Agrippan modes. This is precisely what occurs in these modes, after all, as I tried to argue before. So, what scepticism remains blind to is the crucial dimension of *its own operation*. What does this mean precisely? One can see the sceptical procedure in the Agrippan modes specifically as a justification procedure concerning the possible existence of dogmatic justification, a justification procedure that turns out to be a refutation. And this is a justification procedure that does not depend on an external point as a standard to measure what is to be justified. It does not bring in its own ideas, its own presuppositions into the picture. It remains completely immanent. It simply compares a position (the dogmatist position, in this case) according to its notion of itself with its actuality, with what it actually amounts to and shows that there is something lacking in its own notion of itself, it cannot meet the standard it sets itself. But scepticism is not aware that what it is doing in its process of immanently negating the dogmatist’s notion of justification itself constitutes a possible notion of justification that avoids the trap of presupposing an external relationship between the moments of what is to be justified (or refuted) and what justifies (or refutes). A sceptic might object that this option would result in a dead-end as well, that even this transformed notion of justification would not survive the immanent critique, but at this point the important thing is that it does not get any hearing due the sceptic’s ultimate attachment to a dogmatic notion of justification.

2.4. Hegel as the Fulfillment of Scepticism

Miles Hentrup (2018), in an article called “Self-completing Scepticism,” indicates this line of thought nicely. Hentrup tries to specify the form of scepticism that Hegel calls “self-completing scepticism.” Hegel identifies this “scepticism” with the *Phenomenology of Spirit* itself and sees it “at one with every true philosophy.” Hentrup’s main argument concerns the fact that this corresponds to none of the historical forms of scepticism. Actually, Hegel discerns a dogmatism even in the most radical version of scepticism, namely, Pyrrhonism.

The above mentioned claim, the high praise concerning scepticism is found in an 1802 article by Hegel, called “Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy.” This is a comprehensive review of a book by an important sceptic of the time, G. E. Schulze; but Hegel also offers here an account of ancient scepticism in its different forms and in its difference from modern scepticism before asserting that “scepticism itself is in its inmost heart at one with every true philosophy.” Now, which scepticism is this? Hentrup (2018) argues through a close analysis of the Scepticism essay and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that “there is in fact one particular form of skepticism that Hegel exalts ... but it cannot be confined to any given historical epoch” (2). Accordingly, Pyrrhonism may be the most important, most radical version of scepticism, but what Hegel has in mind is still a “sublated” Pyrrhonism.

Hentrup admits that, in the Scepticism essay, ancient scepticism serves as a positive example against the contemporary version (specifically Schulze, but ultimately Hume). Interestingly, Hegel claims here that there is in the end no meaningful difference between Academic scepticism and Pyrrhonism, that this is only a formal difference that “the [Pyrrhonian] Sceptics in their subtlety undoubtedly attached some meaning” (Hentrup 2018, 9). Even though there is a certain progress one can isolate when it comes to Sextus Empiricus and Pyrrhonism, it is still burdened with a dogmatism that it shares with dogmatism proper. Dogmatism in Hegel’s account, argues Hentrup, minimally consists of the adherence to the principle of non-contradiction: “What makes a given claim dogmatic, for Hegel, is not that it fails to accord with certain norms of justification (as in, for example, the informal fallacy of ‘begging the question’), but that it is made in denial of the concomitant truth of its

contradictory” (10). This is the difference between “propositions of reason” and “propositions of understanding,” in Hegel’s terms.⁵

Now, the principle of non-contradiction says that a proposition can be true or false, but not both at the same time. And Sextus’ scepticism, with its own famous principle of “equipollence” – “to every account an equal account is opposed” – leading to “suspension of judgement”, seems not to adhere to the principle of non-contradiction. This is precisely the point where ancient scepticism proves itself to be superior according to Hegel’s account: he clearly states that there are "no better weapons against dogmatism on finite bases" (Hegel 1985, 335) than the Five Modes of Agrippa. However: "Against dogmatism, they must necessarily be victorious therefore; but in the face of philosophy they fall apart internally, or they are themselves dogmatic" (335). Hentrup argues that even Pyrrhonism remains confined to the principle of non-contradiction and this is why the scepticism “at one with philosophy” cannot be identified simply with Pyrrhonism. Why exactly?

True, the Pyrrhonist deals with the opposition of the given contradictory claims, but the fact that she passes into a suspension of judgement from these oppositions implies that “she takes their mutual exclusivity for granted ... that is, she assumes that of two opposing and equipollent claims, only one can possibly be true” (Hentrup 2018, 14). So “in interpreting contradiction as a token of error, as what effects that ‘standstill of the intellect’ from which no knowledge may proceed, it ‘posits something finite, something burdened with an opposition ... as the Absolute’ – namely, *opposition* itself” (14). So, even though ancient scepticism allows a critique of modern scepticism, it is still burdened with a dogmatic presupposition – it still functions within the propositional form specific to “understanding”, and not within “reason” (i.e., philosophy itself). Since genuine philosophy always sublates the principle of contradiction, even the modes of Agrippa become dogmatic when turned against philosophy itself, beyond dogmatism. Because the application of these modes

⁵ The difference between “propositions of reason [*Vernunft*]” and “propositions of understanding [*Verstand*]” concerns the principle of noncontradiction: basically, propositions of understanding are defined in Hegel as attached to the principle of noncontradiction in an unquestioned manner and unable to think contradiction as anything but an error in reasoning, hence always exposed to an equipollence attack due to their clearcut opposition to their contraries. The propositions of reason, on the other hand, do not only not avoid contradiction in themselves, they are essentially connected with the structure of contradiction – that is why, Hegel claims, that they have no opposite.

to philosophy inevitably reduces a proposition of reason to a proposition of understanding, that is, basically to a proposition *which has an opposite*.

And the “self-completing scepticism” that Hegel introduces in the *Phenomenology* and which could be seen as the motor of the whole development in the book is the sublation of ancient scepticism in this sense. Here is the crucial claim of Hentrup (2018):

As opposed to Pyrrhonism, the skepticism which ‘only ever sees pure nothingness in its result and abstracts from the fact that this nothingness is specifically the nothingness of that *from which it results*’ (PS [*Phenomenology of Spirit*], 51),” self-completing skepticism “identifies a positive, determinate product issuing from the oppositions which it engages – a product, that is, which not only negates, but simultaneously preserves, the oppositions through which a given form of consciousness is made intelligible. (19)

So, this is a scepticism without *epokhé*, a scepticism that does not stop at opposition but precisely *moves* through oppositions.

There is an interesting issue that arises between Hentrup’s and Forster’s approaches to the Pyrrhonism-Hegel connection. Forster sees the method of equipollence rather than the Five Modes as basically the essence of Pyrrhonism – as Sextus himself explicitly says, by the way. Because of that, he conceives the Hegelian approach – in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* specifically – as a *defense* against ancient scepticism and underestimates the scepticism at work in Hegel’s work itself; he interprets dialectics as a defense against radical scepticism. Forster does not emphasize the connection between sceptical procedure and “self-contradiction,” since in the method of equipollence there is an external opposition constructed: each proposition or argument is to be contradicted by its opposite. However, Agrippan modes show that it is possible to refute a proposition without externally setting up an opposition to it and instead just letting it unfold and stage its consequences in an explicit way. Equipollence still kicks in at a certain point in these modes (in the mode concerning hypothesizing), but it is not the essential move, one cannot reduce these modes to the method of “equipollence” – but maybe equipollence can be easily reduced or simplified into them.

In sum, although Hegel (1985) says that there are “no better weapons against dogmatism on finite bases” (335) than the Five Modes of Agrippa, in Hegel there is a sublation of Skepticism as well. “If Hegel suggests in the Skepticism essay that

Pyrrhonism is notably superior to the modern skepticism of Schulze, this is only because the former manages to articulate what is problematic about dogmatism – not because it remains impervious to it” (Hentrup 2016, 60). I proposed above that the step of “suspension” at the end concerning rational justification implies a dogmatic acceptance on the side of the sceptic herself, the acceptance of a dogmatic notion of justification. Hentrup complements this at a more general level, by showing that the Pyrrhonist move to “suspension of judgment” in the face of conflicting claims implies an acceptance that both contradictory claims cannot be true at the same time. So, there is an implicit acknowledgement of the principle of noncontradiction here; and this time, it is not a matter of just following the dogmatist on its own terms – this is a presupposition *of the sceptic himself* implied in the step of *epokhé*, this step belongs to the sceptic after all, not to the dogmatist.

CHAPTER 3

(EARLY AND LATE) HEGEL ON SCEPTICISM

As already stated in the last chapter, Hegel himself dedicates ancient scepticism an extended treatment and high praise in one of his early writings from the Jena period: “On the Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy, Exposition of its Different Modifications and Comparison of the Latest Form with the Ancient One” (1802). I will first present a close reading of this text in this chapter and then compare it with the slightly, but importantly different interpretation provided in Hegel’s lectures on the *History of Philosophy* (1825-26). Finally, I will try to connect this engagement with scepticism with the properly immanent approach first emerging in the *Phenomenology*, emphasizing the change it implies regarding Hegel’s early philosophy.

The “Relationship” essay is the review of a book called *Critique of Theoretical Philosophy* (1801) by G. E. Schulze, a famous sceptic of the time. Schulze was a prominent figure against the immediate post-Kantian effort of Reinhold to provide the missing foundation that would complete the Kantian philosophy. This supposed foundation, a first principle that he called “the principle of consciousness” would, Reinhold hoped, protect Kant’s system from any kind of sceptical attack. So, the immediate issue of Hegel’s essay is Schulze’s sceptical attack against Reinhold and Kant, an almost line-by-line criticism of Schulze’s recent book, but he also examines a larger issue within this frame: the difference between ancient radical scepticism (Pyrrhonism) and its modern form (represented here by Schulze).

As we saw in Chapter 2, Pyrrhonist scepticism, as presented in Sextus Empiricus’ writings, involves suspending belief concerning any claim due to its opposite being equally (neither more nor less) defensible, equally justifiable (the principle of equipollence). Neither the first claim nor its opposite can obtain a certain victory,

because the rational justification procedure for each one always leaves a gap, through which an unfounded hypothesis or a “bare assertion” sneaks in, showing that ultimately no claim can be rationally justified in a way that would exclude its opposite. And the modes compiled by Sextus are intended to somewhat formalize the possible sceptical responses in this direction, towards “suspension of judgement”.

Hegel takes ancient scepticism in this radical version in the “Relationship” essay and contrasts it with modern scepticism, which he sees as a diluted version at best. And what generally separates modern scepticism, according to Hegel, is the fact that in this case there is always an exception to sceptical doubt. For example, in contrast to the ancient sceptic, a Humean sceptic has no doubt about her sense impressions; any doubt concerning those impressions corresponding to something real in the external world is based on that initial certainty.⁶ And specifically for Schulze, Hegel points out, what is called “the facts of consciousness” have a status of certainty that is not open to question: one cannot doubt what is going on within consciousness. Thus doubt kicks in only after this supposedly undoubtable truth: though we can be certain of the facts of consciousness, how can we be certain of the correspondence between those facts and external reality?

3.1. Scepticism “at One with Philosophy”: Propositions of Understanding vs. Propositions of Reason

The crucial and original point of this essay is the alliance that Hegel proposes between scepticism (in its proper form) and genuine philosophy. There is a historical and a conceptual dimension to this proposed alliance. On the historical side the story goes like this: at the beginning scepticism was simply an integral part of philosophy proper, there was no distinction between them, but there has been a separation, a break at some point, leading to scepticism first becoming a distinct form, a negative thinking turned against the certainties of common sense and understanding (just like philosophy in this regard but without any positive claims of its own), and afterwards turning against philosophy as well. This is the historical side of the relation

⁶ This reminds one of the debates concerning the possible scope of the sceptic’s “suspension of judgement”. In terms of that discussion, modern scepticism can be said to constitute an “urbane” form of scepticism.

conceived by Hegel between scepticism and philosophy, but there is also a conceptual side to this relation which is framed by a distinction between two types of propositions: “propositions of understanding” and “propositions of reason” (Hegel 1802, 324).

According to this distinction, genuine philosophy (as opposed to “dogmatism” or common sense) works with contradictory propositions, i.e., propositions of reason that suspend the principle of contradiction in contrast to propositions of understanding. This is not a criticism of reason, of course. On the contrary, Hegel thinks that there is recognition on the part of real philosophy that one must suspend the principle of contradiction in order to put forward any “true” proposition – this is like a formal requirement for philosophy: *no contradiction, no truth*. The examples of Spinoza’s propositions from the *Ethics* make his point clear:

By cause of itself I understand that whose essence involves in itself existence; or that whose nature can only be conceived as existing.

God is the immanent, not the transient cause of the world. (Hegel 1985, 324)

What is distinctive about these two propositions is that they are built upon a contradiction explicitly assumed. The first one brings together two terms that are normally *defined* by their mutual exclusion:

the concept of essence or nature can only be posited, inasmuch as existence is abstracted from; the one excludes the other; the one is only definable as long as there is an opposition to the other; let both be posited bound together as one, and their bonding contains a contradiction, so that both are negated together. (Hegel 1985, 324)

So: the contradictory bonding of two opposite terms performs an operation, an operation of double negation; in so far as one proposes an essence that “involves in itself existence”, both “essence” and “existence” gets negated. Or, with the second example, we see the concepts of cause and effect being negated in one and the same move: a cause (God) being immanent means that it is “one with the effect [the world]”, but “the cause is only cause, inasmuch as it is opposed to the effect” (324). The point here is that propositions such as Spinoza’s can be broken up, analyzed into two assertions, one of them saying “A”, the other “not A”:

In that every such proposition of Reason permits resolution into two strictly contradictory assertions, e.g., God is cause, and God is not cause; He is one and not one, many and not many; He has an essence which is itself eliminated once more, since essence can only be comprehended in antithesis to form, and His form must be posited as identical with His essence; and so on. (Hegel 1985, 324-325)

Thus what makes a proposition belong to reason is its implicit challenge to think two contradictory assertions *at once*. And both these assertions are implicitly negated by simply a positive affirmation. By saying “cause of the world” the proposition makes God stand opposed to the world as its effect, while at the same time the adjective “immanent” (*taken on its own*, in abstracted form) means that God is *not* the cause of the world. Thus we witness the birth of a different notion of cause from the ruins of a double negation, or from the sublation of an oppositional thinking.

Hegel inverts here the usual valuation of the principle of contradiction as a formal truth, or as a necessary but insufficient condition of the truth of a proposition, and regards it (non-contradiction) as a formal *untruth*:

The so called ‘principle of contradiction’ is thus so far from possessing even formal truth for Reason, that on the contrary every proposition of Reason must in respect of concepts contain a violation of it. To say that a proposition is merely formal, means for Reason, that it is posited alone and on its own account, without the equal affirmation of the contradictory that is opposed to it; and just for that reason it is false. To recognize the principle of contradiction as a formality, thus means to cognize its falsity at the same time. (Hegel 1985, 325)

In each proposition of philosophy there is a sublation of the principle of contradiction occurring and Hegel calls this “the negative side” of every genuine philosophy. And here comes the point about scepticism being at one with philosophy: propositions of philosophy (or reason) might be regarded as taking into account the equipollence principle in an implicit way. Two opposite assertions that might constitute two sides of an equipollence argument are here asserted at the same time, in one and the same move, to the effect that both are cancelled or negated. “Against every argument there is an equal one on the other side,” the equipollence principle states, and in propositions of reason these equal arguments (e.g., “God is cause” and “God is not cause”) *always* come together *on the same side* and destroy each other. One “can set this negative side in relief and set forth for himself a skepticism out of each of them” (Hegel 1985, 325), but true philosophy is “neither skepticism nor dogmatism and is thus both at once” (323). Thus the main point of the conceptual integration of scepticism and philosophy is the close bond between the equipollence principle and the sublation of the principle of contradiction.

Going back to the historical side of the relationship, as mentioned before, Hegel posits an initial unity that was broken afterwards. According to his account, the first form of scepticism (“the old school”) emerged by isolating and tearing itself away

from genuine philosophy, that is, from “the philosophy that includes skepticism within itself as well” (Hegel 1985, 329). But at first there was no opposition against philosophy (or reason), but against only common sense (or understanding) and this is what Hegel calls “genuine” or “authentic” ancient scepticism:

The genuine ancient skepticism sets itself into striking contrast with the shape in which Sextus presents to us the skepticism that is cut off from philosophy and turned against it. To be sure, the authentic skepticism does not have a positive side, as philosophy does, but maintains a pure negativity in relation to knowledge, but it was just as little directed *against* philosophy as *for* it; and the hostile attitude that it adopted later against philosophy on the one hand, and against dogmatism on the other hand, is quite separate. (330)

Thus what is presented in Sextus’ writings is an evolved or rather, *devolved* version of an original form, according to Hegel (and this process of regression comes to a peak with the modern form). He also distinguishes the “tropes” that we encounter in Sextus accordingly and assigns the ten tropes to the first, authentic scepticism and the five tropes (of Agrippa) to the devolved version. The ten tropes⁷ “to which the old school [Pyrrho] was confined, are directed, like all philosophy generally, against the dogmatism of ordinary consciousness itself” (Hegel 1985, 330). Thus the first ten tropes were directed not against philosophy (or sciences) of their time, but against ordinary understanding – just as philosophy itself was. This can be seen, first, from the way

they are raked together haphazardly and they presuppose an undeveloped reflection, or rather an absence of deliberation on the part of reflection in the matter of having a doctrine of one's own, and a clumsiness that would not be present if skepticism had already had to face the task of criticizing the sciences. (331)

And second, the content of the ten tropes shows that “no single one of them is concerned with Reason and its cognition; all of them concern only the finite, and the understanding, or the cognition of the finite throughout” (Hegel 1985, 332). The finite, the understanding, the cognition of the finite – in this essay all these terms refer to ordinary common sense and its dogmatism in contrast to philosophy, reason or “speculation”. Ordinary common sense (or consciousness) “holds fast to the given, the fact, the finite” as certain and secure, and the ten tropes in their haphazard,

⁷ Ten tropes (of Aenesidemus, which Hegel mistakenly attributes to Pyrrho) in his terms: “the uncertainty of all things and the necessity of *epoche* . . . (1) from the diversity of animals; (2) of men; (3) of the organization of the senses; (4) of circumstances; (5) of situations, distances, and places; (6) from muddles (in which nothing presents itself to the senses in purity); (7) from the diverse sizes and properties of things; (8) from the relationships (i.e., because everything stands in relationship to something else); (9) from the frequency or rarity of happening; (10) [from the diversity] of education, of customs, of laws, of mythical faith, of prejudices.” (Hegel 1985, 331)

unsystematic appearance function as an undermining of this certainty (based on sense perception), their target is ordinary consciousness: “it likewise calls upon appearances and finite cases for help, and [re]cognizes their untruth, by way of their diversity, along with the equal right of all of them to count as valid, i.e. from the antinomy that is to be recognized in the finite thing itself” (332). The ten tropes are here regarded by Hegel as fighting appearances *through* appearances themselves: due to all the diversity (of circumstances, people, customs etc.) pointed out in them, it turns out that there is no appearance or finite case that can be taken as privileged, as coinciding with truth. The whole field of understanding is undermined from within; there is no way to decide or judge when it comes to sense perception, each perception has equal right to validity. In that sense there is not much difference between (the beginning of) philosophy itself and this first form of scepticism; in both cases there is an undermining of ordinary common sense and “the presentiment of a higher truth” (332). Although there is a separation, a rupture that gives birth to scepticism, scepticism initially works not against philosophy, but in tandem with it; it does philosophy’s work in its own way, *a way that speaks to ordinary consciousness in its own terms*. Hegel even proposes at this point an identification between the sceptic’s famous “ataraxia” (equanimity) and the Stoic “apathy”:

Well then, since [early] skepticism had its positive side in character *alone*, it did not give itself out for a decided option [*haeresis*] or school, but rather . . . for an *agoge*, an education for a way of life, a formative process . . . From this positive side it is just as obvious that it is not alien to any [true] philosophy. The ‘apathy’ of the Stoics and the ‘indifference’ of the philosophers generally, must [re]cognize themselves in the skeptic ‘ataraxia’. (333)

Early scepticism had no positive doctrine or school, but it had its positive side in the sense of a way of life, “a formative process” that resulted in “ataraxia” and in this respect was not really different from Stoicism or philosophy in general. But this unity, not only between scepticism and philosophy, but also between *all* diverse forms of philosophy,⁸ was broken (“due to accident of time”), “the diverse philosophical systems went apart from one another completely” and oppositions emerged: “‘apathy’ now became opposed to ‘ataraxy’, and the dogmatics of the Porch counted for the Sceptics as their most direct opponents” (Hegel 1985, 334). And Hegel relates the “five tropes” of Agrippa that I focused on in the last chapter to this moment of separation:

⁸ At this point in his thinking Hegel works with the idea of a true, “one” philosophy at the core of every different form of it.

The *five later tropes* of skepticism, which make up the genuine arsenal of its weapons against philosophical cognition, are wholly and exclusively related to this complete separation of philosophies, and the complete fixation of their dogmas and dividing lines, and likewise related to the contemporary orientation of skepticism against dogmatism on one side, and against philosophy itself on the other. (334)

According to Hegel, it is not that Agrippan modes are purely and simply “bad” in themselves, but the use of them against philosophy (or philosophical propositions) inevitably perverts its target. Thus depending on their direction these modes obtain two opposite meanings:

. . . directed against dogmatism they appear from the point of view where they belong to Reason, setting the other term of the necessary antinomy alongside the one asserted by the dogmatism; directed against philosophy on the other hand, they appear from the side where they belong to reflection. Against dogmatism they must necessarily be victorious therefore; but in the face of philosophy they fall apart internally, or they are themselves dogmatic. (Hegel 1985, 335)

Against dogmatism, which is defined as a one-sided assertion, inevitably evoking its opposite, “there are no better weapons” than the Agrippan modes; they are on the same side with Reason, they act like, or as Reason. But when they are applied to philosophy, “they appear from the side where they belong to reflection” and become dogmatic themselves. The reason for this change is that according to Hegel it is not possible to apply these tropes to philosophy, since the opposite assertion they provide is already included or recognized in philosophical propositions.

Thus how exactly do these modes work against dogmatism? The essence of dogmatism is positing something which has an opposite, something which *excludes* something else and is, in that sense, finite as the absolute. When the absolute is posited as something finite, i.e. as limited by what is outside its scope, by what remains external to it, the third of the Agrippan modes (“relativity” or “relationship”) applied here, acting as Reason, easily shows that this absolute has “a relation to what is excluded from it, and only exists through and in this relation to another, so that it is not absolute” (Hegel 1985, 335). The third mode states that any object appears in a certain way *relative* to the other objects perceived together with it and again, *relative* to the perceiving subject. Therefore what is posited as the absolute, self-standing and not grounded by anything other than itself – *if it has an opposite*, as in the case of the dogmatic absolute – shows itself to be only relative. When this relationship (of what is supposed to be the absolute and its other) is conceived as each one having its ground in the other, we have reciprocity or circularity (the fifth mode): what is

supposed to be the proof depends on what is supposed to be proven by it. If only one of them would be grounding and the other grounded, then the grounding one itself must either be grounded in an other (and this opens up to a never-ending process – the second mode), or must be grounded in itself (and in this case, it can be easily counteracted with asserting its opposite as the ground – the fourth mode). “Finally that finite Absolute of dogmatism must also be a universal, but this will necessarily not prove to be the case, since it is a limited thing; and this is where the *first* trope (of diversity) has its place” (336). All of them together work to bring out the opposite of that which is asserted as the absolute, thereby disputing its absoluteness.

Now since this rational aspect (of showing or activating the excluded, opposite moment) of Agrippan modes is already contained in Reason, when they are turned against propositions of reason, they distort them into propositions of understanding, into oppositional statements: “the skeptical attack makes Reason either an absolutely-subjective, or an absolutely-objective [totality], and either a whole or a part” (Hegel 1985, 337). These oppositions are not immanent to rational propositions, they are imposed from without, by the sceptical attack itself. So something very interesting happens in this case: the Agrippan modes show themselves to be dependent on dogmatic assumptions, when turned against philosophy; *they cease to be an immanent approach and turn into an external critique.*

In sum, in this early text of Hegel we see that he regards ancient scepticism, the radical form of scepticism as presented in Sextus Empiricus’ writings, as much more developed than its modern form (associated most commonly with David Hume). He sees a kind of deterioration or downfall in this passage: the limited scepticism of the modern form is scepticism only in name; it has its own dogmatic presuppositions that can be easily challenged by the ancient form itself. While the principle of the ancient form (“equipollence”) and the modes associated with it brings destruction (to ordinary and dogmatic beliefs) *without any exceptions*, the modern form makes things easier for itself by taking exceptions (by taking feelings, sensations or mental contents as indubitably certain) and basing its doubts (concerning, most prominently, the correspondence between those certain things and the “reality” out there) on these dogmatic beliefs. In this regard, modern scepticism can definitely take positive

positions on at least some issues (in contrast to a thoroughgoing, exceptionless suspension of judgement in the case ancient scepticism), and has propositions that it takes as undoubtedly true, thus involving presuppositions, or a dogmatic element. The crucial difference can be summed up in this way: there is ultimately no suspension of judgement in the modern form; on the contrary, positive and negative judgements can be formed precisely due to some fundamental, unquestioned assumptions. Unlike its modern form, ancient scepticism does not need to base its objections on any presupposed belief on its part, but simply compares dogmatic propositions with their own presuppositions – just like Hegel himself will do in the *Phenomenology*, with a little extra step that will connect them with each other. But the ancient form itself, when it began to attack indiscriminately philosophy as well as common sense, when it began to treat propositions of reason (i.e. propositions that involve contradiction and are produced by a double negation, therefore has no opposite) as propositions of understanding (i.e. one-sided, ordinary propositions), when it turned from the initial ten tropes to the five tropes, turned against philosophy and paved the way for this downfall.

3.2. From the “Relationship” to the *Phenomenology*: The Sublation of Oppositions

The reading of this early essay also helps us see something distinctive in the *Phenomenology*, an important change in Hegel’s approach. That is, there is a problem in this essay that I would like to point out: there is something like an *opposition* at work in it: reason vs. understanding, in its different guises and under different terms. And this opposition and the clear privileging of reason against understanding goes against the whole point of the essay, I think. We see here the propositions of reason emerging “on their own,” spontaneously, as it were, with no connection to the propositions of understanding. Hegel shows, it is true, that there is a sublation at work here, reason is ultimately a sublation of understanding, and in this sense, there is a relationship (of development) between them; but ultimately, the whole field of understanding is left out of the field of “genuine” philosophy and left behind as “dogmatism,” as “dross.” There is autonomy of reason and it seems that one can simply begin with Reason, with the propositions of reason.

For instance, when discussing the propositions of Spinoza, Hegel himself had to point out the “implications” of them, the “implied” steps in the proposition: he himself constructs a bridge between the ultimate form of the proposition and the steps of negation (which suspends the ordinary relationship between cause and effect, for instance) involved in its production. And this lack of explicitness, or lack of development, this immediate way of formulating is what cuts off the connection between understanding and reason, or “common sense” and philosophy. One has to supplement them with a development in order to grasp them properly. Although there is obviously a point to Hegel’s “defending” of philosophical reason against importing into it external oppositions as foreign assumptions, there is really nothing that prevents this “importing” in those propositions themselves, due to their lack of development, their emerging fully-formed at once. They may hint at the path traversed in their construction, but they definitely do not suspend or sublimate oppositional thinking (the ordinary notion of cause in opposition to its effect, for instance) explicitly. The propositional form by itself is not enough; it does not allow this sublation.⁹ Therefore they themselves inevitably present themselves *against* something, or they do not enter into an explicit relationship with their supposed other. That is why there is also a point to the sceptical attack against this kind of reason.

The oppositional structure that emerges in the “Relationship” essay (the opposition between understanding and reason, or the “propositions of understanding” and the “propositions of reason”) can be seen as a guideline to reading the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. While Hegel insistently tries to separate philosophy proper from false candidates in the essay, there is no place for an *opposition* between understanding and reason in the *Phenomenology*; understanding is not simply the “other” of reason or philosophy. This means that it does not make any sense to talk about a “genuine” scepticism directed not against philosophy, but something else (dogmatism, understanding, common sense, etc.). This is also reflected in the fact that Hegel refers to the method of the *Phenomenology* as itself scepticism, a “self-consummating” scepticism. In this designation scepticism is no longer regarded as

⁹ We will see in the *Phenomenology* that a proposition, *just because it is a proposition*, can never constitute truth: it will turn out that even the kinds of propositions (“propositions of reason”) privileged here, renamed as “speculative” propositions in the *Phenomenology*, cannot function as fundamental principles on their own.

acting in line with philosophy, in its fight against understanding, but as constituting an exemplary procedure to be followed and developed. Because in the *Phenomenology* Hegel does not assume any point of view as true from the beginning; there is no reason or philosophy against its alternatives, because he restricts his moves with an immanent progression. There is no place for an external comparison or criterion in the *Phenomenology*. More precisely, even in the “Relationship” essay one can see an immanent approach in the reading of modern and ancient scepticism, but there is a lack of connection between this immanent “critique” and Hegel’s own position, the position he defends, which is called reason, philosophy or speculation, alternately. Even though he sees intimations of truth in other points of view (in ancient scepticism, for example), philosophy ultimately does not need them, and there is no bridge between them. One can put it this way: setting out his own (“true”) position and the (immanent) evaluation of other positions proceed in their own separate channels, as separate movements; but with the *Phenomenology*, what can be called the true position is itself constituted by, emerges through the development of other positions – and there is no other way for it to emerge, since the “positive” is *nothing but* the development of the “negative”. Thus, in terms of the *Phenomenology*, what is presented here (and this applies to all his texts from the pre-*Phenomenology* period) as philosophy is nothing but “a bare assertion” that we are expected to embrace. It may not have an opposite alternative that would challenge it, but this is not enough to embrace it: one may not challenge it in equipollence fashion, but one does not have to accept it just on this basis, *just because there is no other coherent alternative*. To sum it up, one can say that Hegel, by the time of the *Phenomenology*, grasps the dimension that remains unexploited in the sceptical, immanent approach: the “positive” dimension that emerges with the immanent negation. And this possibility changes everything; it transforms scepticism from a purely negative, negating approach, constantly pointing out internal contradictions in dogmatic assertions and nullifying them, into a movement of sublation, of *Aufhebung*.

To bring out this important change in Hegel more clearly, I will briefly dwell on the discussion of scepticism presented in his *History of Philosophy* (almost twenty-five years after the “Relationship” essay) and also scepticism as one of the shapes of

consciousness presented in the *Phenomenology*. Here is the crucial passage from the *History of Philosophy* in this regard:

Skepticism stands pat with the negative as a result. It sticks with the result as a negative, saying that this or that has an internal contradiction; therefore it dissolves itself and so it is not. Thus this result is the negative, but this negative is itself just another one-sided determinateness over against the positive. That is to say, Skepticism functions solely as understanding. It fails to recognize that the negative is also affirmative, that it has positive determination within itself, for it is negation of negation. (Hegel 2006, 302)

We have seen in Chapter 2 that scepticism as a self-refutation of dogmatism gets stuck at the negative: Agrippan modes, for example, show that it is not possible to rationally justify any claim within the framework of a certain notion of justification adopted by dogmatism (or understanding) itself, “saying that this or that has an internal contradiction; therefore it dissolves itself and so it is not” (Hegel 2006, 302). The final step leading to “suspension of judgement” involves failing “to recognize that the negative is also affirmative, that it has positive determination within itself” (302), that is, failing to recognize the opening for a different notion of justification there.

This failure of recognition concerning the positive in the negative takes a prominent role as well in the section called “Scepticism” towards the end of the Self-Consciousness chapter in the *Phenomenology*, located between “Stoicism” and “Unhappy Consciousness.” Scepticism is characterized here as “the realization of that of which Stoicism was only the Notion,” as “the actual experience of what the freedom of thought is” (*PhG*, 123).¹⁰ Stoicism as merely the notion of “freedom of thought” is followed by scepticism as the “realization”, as “the actual experience” of it: what remains a mere assertion in Stoicism becomes real, actual in scepticism. Broadly speaking, scepticism as a form of consciousness is constituted by the fact that thinking here tries to prove its freedom from objective reality: scepticism, “in the certainty of its freedom, makes this ‘other’ [objective reality] which claims to be real, vanish” (*PhG*, 124). But the problem is that, since the only way to prove this freedom is making the other vanish, consciousness turns out to be dependent on the other. This creates a never-ending process of negating a content that is given to it. If stoicism puts the object into the form of thought as a way of knowing itself in it, scepticism is the negation of the object within the form of thought; in order for the

¹⁰ The abbreviation *PhG* refers to the *Phenomenology of Spirit (Phänomenologie des Geistes)*.

object to be consciousness itself, thinking here negates all independent content. The problem of stoic consciousness is precisely the “otherness” of the content of its thinking, its external nature; but to the extent that the content of thinking remains as a given in scepticism as well, the activity of negating does not allow it to establish its independence. Precisely in the act of establishing its independence from the other, it exhibits dependence to it (albeit in the form of a negative relationship, in a similar way to “desire” and its practice of consumption). Richard Dean Winfield (2013) provides a helpful summary of the actual, historical practice and self-understanding of ancient (radical) sceptics:

The ancient skeptics, however, do not lay claim to any final knowledge that knowing is impossible. Instead, they engage in a practice that they understand to be an ever-continuing occupation. The activity of the skeptic is not something that can ever be gotten beyond. . . . If the skeptic succeeded in annihilating all normative claims, there would be no occasion for its thinking. There would then be no presence of the self as a thinking self. The activity of skepticism is rather always parasitic upon some judgments that are to be put into suspension by showing that there are equal arguments on both sides of the matter. (78)

So this is the self-contradiction that scepticism exhibits: while it is supposed to be the consciousness of a free, independent consciousness, it turns out that its object is an unfree, dependent consciousness. This contradiction paves the way for the transition to “unhappy consciousness”, the new figure appearing as the “truth” of scepticism. The two contradictory aspects of consciousness will be explicitly united in the unhappy consciousness: independence-and-dependence.

Hegel touches on something that closely resembles ancient scepticism in the Preface to the *Phenomenology* as well, in the context of emphasizing that the progression in the *Phenomenology* constitutes a complete, exhaustive series (of the forms of natural, “unreal” consciousness). There is a necessary and complete movement at stake here and this feature is provided by the fact that “the exposition of the untrue consciousness in its untruth is not a merely negative procedure” (*PhG*, 50). Hegel attributes this one-sided, merely negative view to natural consciousness itself, but more specifically, there is a “a knowledge which makes this one-sidedness its very essence” and constitutes one of the form of consciousness we will encounter on the road of despair: scepticism as such, “which only ever sees pure nothingness in its result and abstracts from the fact that this nothingness is specifically the nothingness of that from which it results” (*PhG*, 51). So one can say that, in contrast to Hegel’s “properly” sceptical procedure, scepticism itself does not see the result of its

negation as producing a new form, but as mere nothingness, as a dead end. What makes the immanent and necessary progression in the *Phenomenology* possible is precisely this positive, productive side of negation; however, instead of a “determinate negation,” scepticism only accomplishes an abstract negation, an unproductive negation. So scepticism itself creates a kind of despair (concerning natural consciousness and its hope of knowledge), but this is not a systematic, complete despair, as it were: only piecemeal negations that are not interconnected, not in a necessary relation with each other. It allows the untrue mode of knowledge “to run away into an empty nothing” and therefore misses “what was true” in it (*PhG*, 56).

So what is the connection between scepticism as a method (of the *Phenomenology*) and scepticism as a form of (self-)consciousness? One can see that the negativity without exceptions is the obvious common point: this exceptionless negativity that characterizes scepticism as a form of consciousness is the reason why scepticism as a method is similar to the method of phenomenology and at the same time the reason why one ultimately differs from the other. The problem is not the exceptionless character of its negativity, but rather its not perceiving the “positive” in its all-negating activity. And this recognition of the positive dimension in what is being negated (the operation of *Aufhebung* ultimately, or “determinate negation”) is what makes the phenomenological method a thoroughgoing scepticism, or a “fulfillment” of scepticism, not a negation but sublation (*Aufhebung*) of it.

Now this recognition of the positive within the negative can be seen to be lacking also in Hegel’s “Relationship” essay. The major indication of this is that the point emphasized in the above quoted passage from the *History of Philosophy* never appears in the essay: as we saw, the only criticism of scepticism there concerns it mistakenly turning its weapons against rational or philosophical propositions, thereby distorting them. There is no talk about failing to recognize “that the negative is also affirmative.” Scepticism is again recognized as a purely destructive, negative movement and this character of it is actually *affirmed* (as its being at one with philosophy) when turned against understanding. But in the *History of Philosophy*, we read that scepticism “functions solely as understanding” – and *never as reason*, one might add, not even when it is turned against “propositions of understanding.” This

fundamental difference that appears between the two texts and the two evaluations of scepticism points to a path constructed in Hegel's approach in the meantime, a path connecting all possible positions or points of view, dismissing none of them as "not philosophy", immanently reading all of them, not adopting a "superior" position of "reason" or something else.

There is another difference between the discussions of scepticism presented in the "Relationship" essay and in the *History of Philosophy* and that is the change in the status of "ten modes (of Aenesidemus)" and "five modes (of Agrippa)". While in the "Relationship" essay the ten tropes (of Aenesidemus) are regarded as much more naive and therefore innocent, and the five tropes as already the beginning of the fall in the history of scepticism, in the *History of Philosophy* there is a kind of reversal: the ten tropes fall out of favor *precisely due to their naivety*. And this is related to a difference in view of the early period of scepticism:

In Pyrrho's Skepticism there was not yet evident much cultivation and much orientation toward specific thoughts, toward philosophy; his Skepticism was directed more to the sensible domain. A Skepticism of that sort could be of no great interest in the context of philosophy's development as Stoicism, Epicureanism, Platonism, and so forth. For Skepticism to emerge with a commensurate philosophical stature it had first to undergo development itself on the philosophical side. That was the doing of Aenesidemus and Sextus Empiricus. (Hegel 2006, 305)

Hegel still attributes the ten modes to Pyrrho and still conceives them as "directed more to the sensible domain,"¹¹ but this is not a merit now, but the sign of a lack of development: "The older ones pertain more to the sensible domain and belong to a less cultivated thinking. They are directed principally against what we call the common belief in the truth of things or of the sensible" (Hegel 2006, 305). The five modes, on the other hand, "pertain to thinking, to the dialectic of the concept. They refer to a different, more cultivated standpoint of reflective thinking, and a definite concept is evident in it" (312). Thus Hegel now sees a development or cultivation in the passage from the ten modes to five modes, and not a fall. The one pertains more to the sensible domain, the other more to thinking; there is a lack of abstraction in the first group (they can be easily simplified into a smaller number), the second group,

¹¹ He also throws a stone at Schulze in passing (for old times' sake?): "Skepticism essentially was very far from holding the things of immediate certainty to be true. In recent times Schulze in Göttingen has put on airs with his Skepticism; he has even written an 'Aenesidemus' and has also expounded Skepticism in other works, in opposition to Leibniz and Kant. This new Skepticism accepts what is quite contrary to the old – namely, that immediate consciousness or sense experience is something true" (*ibid.*, 309).

due to its abstraction level, includes within itself the first group and more. The fact that the five tropes can be and was used against philosophy and its peculiar propositions does not constitute a blemish anymore. There is no separation or rupture from an initial unity (between scepticism and philosophy, and between different forms of philosophies); the idea or “fantasy” of original unity or wholeness (which can be regarded as the real cause of Hegel’s mistaken historical attributions) drops out of the picture.

And this may be interpreted as part of a general change in Hegel’s thinking concerning “beginnings”, both with regard to thinking and history: the beginning, what is initial or original, loses all its privileges; even more, it becomes the poorest, emptiest point with the *Phenomenology*. It becomes what is to be negated, not an authenticity to be returned, but a necessary uncultivatedness that needs to be dealt with properly, in a way that blocks any nostalgic aspirations as well. This marks the end of an important historical idea that we see in the “Relationship” essay: the idea that philosophy was one in the beginning, before “the fall”, that it was already there fully-formed and it kept appearing throughout history in more or less distorted forms in different particular philosophies. Philosophy becomes historical now; more precisely, history and philosophy cease to exclude each other, philosophy does not stand outside history, but develops within it.¹² And when it comes to the problem of how to begin philosophizing, the change in Hegel’s approach leads to giving up a supposedly secure, “true” position (“reason”) isolated from any falsity. The crucial point in this change can be formulated thus: even though your starting point is not dogmatic in the sense of being non-contradictory, not allowing any opposition to itself, it can still be dogmatic in the sense of being ungrounded, in the sense of being a presupposition – beginning with the “true” will always end up with dogmatism.

¹² “Hegel is the furthest removed from the standard (always somewhat caricatured) notion of metaphysics, where things are most precious and richest at their origins, and then incur a subsequent degradation. Degradation is empowering, and more generally speaking, negation is empowering” (Dolar 2020, 43).

CHAPTER 4

THREE BEGINNINGS OF THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT

I would like to begin this chapter from the issue of “beginning”, with a passage from a book on Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness*:

The following objection to Sartre’s procedure needs to be considered. Sartre, I said, regards previous philosophical accounts as biased implicitly and unwittingly, on account of the method they adopt, against freedom. But what, it may be asked, makes Sartre’s approach any less tendentious? From the standpoint of, say, Spinoza, Sartre’s presumption that freedom is the appropriate concept with reference to which human identity should be fixed is just as unfounded as Spinoza’s substantialism appears from Sartre’s standpoint; the Spinozist will regard the manner in which Sartre’s conception of man appears to have been designed in the light of his desired conclusion that man is free, as a criticism and a philosophical weakness. Clearly, we encounter here a deep and wholly general difficulty of a metaphilosophical nature – that of how any philosophical system can command assent, if it must proceed from some basis which counts, from the standpoint of some other system, as ungrounded and dogmatic. For those who are not persuaded by *Hegel’s claim to have worked his way beyond this problem*, there is a limit to what can be done with it, and if philosophy is to get started, it must start somewhere. (Gardner 2009, 24-25, emphasis mine)

What Gardner calls here “a deep and wholly general difficulty of a metaphilosophical nature” is that of “how any philosophical system can command assent, if it must proceed from some basis which counts, from the standpoint of some other system, as ungrounded and dogmatic.” This problem of an ungrounded basis that haunts each and every philosophy, Gardner suggests, is something that cannot be solved, something that one should learn to ultimately accept as it is – at least “for those who are not persuaded by Hegel’s claim to have worked his way beyond this problem” (Gardner 2009, 24-25).

So: if you are not a Hegelian, you must start somewhere, start *dogmatically* and be resigned to it. As implicitly recognized by Gardner, the problem of beginning dogmatically is perhaps *the* issue for Hegel’s philosophy. Hegel’s philosophy (and maybe philosophy as such) stands and falls with this claim (at least according to its own terms) and his claim to “have worked his way beyond this problem,” if valid, constitutes a unique point in the history of philosophy.

We saw in the previous chapter that this same problem lies at the core of the ancient sceptical approach. It is one of the favorite targets of sceptics, easily undermining dogmatic systems, even constituting them as dogmatic in the first place. And it can be seen as the ultimate “reason” for adopting a sceptical position when it comes to the problem of justification. This is a permanent stain for any philosophical or scientific claim or system, the original sin that is carried through all the way into its results, marking it with a permanent liability, therefore constituting the ultimate motivation for “suspension of judgement.” But what is, according to ancient, radical scepticism, the unsolvable problem, an impasse for philosophy becomes, in Hegel, precisely the pass, the way out, the lever for philosophy. How exactly?

There are actually three beginnings in the *Phenomenology*, the work that is one of the obvious candidates for the beginning of Hegelian philosophy itself, of Hegel’s mature philosophy, the work where Hegel becomes Hegel: the Preface; the Introduction; and the first chapter of the journey of consciousness presented in the work, the first shape of consciousness (sense-certainty). And how Hegel deals with these three points sheds light on his approach to the problem of beginning.

4.1. The “Preface”: The Impossibility of a True Beginning

The *Phenomenology* presents a solution to the problem of beginning by divesting it from its privileged status. One does not begin with the truth; one *cannot* begin with the truth. And the whole Preface to the *Phenomenology* can be seen as constructed around the relationship between truth and falsity; this is the guiding thread that connects the various discussions, themes, criticisms, assertions. And this relationship also provides the clue to the problem of beginning, since the basic concern when it comes to beginning is that of finding a stable, proper, “true” starting point that would guide and guarantee the process that comes afterwards, guarantee the truth of what comes after it as well. If one can isolate such a point, such an axiomatic beginning, then everything will follow effortlessly, with absolute certainty, it seems. But precisely this operation, isolating such a ground in the form of a fundamental proposition that is true as such has always proven to be a thorny issue.

The Preface, as a piece written sometime after the completion of the actual book, after the journey of consciousness is completed, has a weird status, a content that is at odds with the usual function of a preface. And Hegel begins by acknowledging this weirdness: “It is customary to preface a work with an explanation of the author’s aim, why he wrote the book, and the relationship in which he believes it to stand to other earlier or contemporary treatises on the same subject” (*PhG*, 1). However, “in the case of a philosophical work”, “whatever might appropriately be said about philosophy in a preface . . . none of this can be accepted as *the way in which* to expound philosophical truth” (1).

So, when it comes to philosophy (Hegelian philosophy, one might add), a customary preface would actually betray the work that follows it, a preface would betray what it prefaces. This is due to the usual form of preface as consisting of a summary, of aims and results: what the goal of the work is and what it did achieve ultimately. And then, after this opening move, Hegel goes on to write an extensive preface which *does* deal with the results of the work it prefaces. And the main result of this specific work can be formulated like this: “Results, on their own, are false.” Any kind of result, any summary of results is false, just by being a presentation of results, a mere bunch of assertions disconnected from their process of development, from “the way in which” they are to be expounded. So: what we have here in the Preface of this work is a result that actually subverts itself, a self-subverting result, a result that basically says, “I am lying, do not trust me.”

At one point Hegel says that “because the system of the experience of Spirit embraces only the *appearance* of Spirit, the advance from this system to the Science of the True in its *true shape* seems to be merely negative, and one might wish to be spared the negative as something false, and demand to be led to the truth without more ado.” And then he asks: “Why bother with the false?” (*PhG*, 22) I would like to pick this apart. At first sight Hegel seems to be describing here a classical movement, a process, a progression, an *advance* – an advance from ‘appearance’ (the system of experience of Spirit) as basically ‘the road to truth’ to ‘truth’ itself (“the Science of the True in its true shape”) as the final destination. At the end of *Phenomenology* all the destinations on the road to absolute knowing turn out to be “false” in some way, inadequate, misleading, only an appearance of knowledge. One begins with the false,

the illusory, the appearance and slowly gets to the true by discarding the falseness, or rather by refining the false – at the end the true awaits us as the reward of our efforts, as the diamond extracted, carved out from coal. It may be necessary to traverse this path, but the path itself is a necessary evil at best, the cost of reaching the final destination, reaching the true. So, it is natural to “wish to be spared” this “negative” path and directly take the up the truth – at least once it has been reached somewhere by someone. “Why bother with the false?”

This configuration of ‘true’ and ‘false’ is commonsensical, keeping them apart as opposites and existing on their own. “‘True’ and ‘false’ belong among those determinate notions which are held to be inert and wholly separate essences, one here and one there, each standing fixed and isolated from the other, with which it has nothing in common” (*PhG*, 22). So: no common point, no intersection, no overlapping between ‘true’ and ‘false’ – and also no development involved in either of them: fixity and utter separation. “Against this view it must be maintained that truth is not a minted coin that can be given and pocketed ready-made. Nor is there such a thing as the false, any more than there is something evil” (22). No ready-made truth, or false for that matter.

The whole *Phenomenology* can be seen as so many mistakes, a series of figures that ultimately turn out to be ‘false’, all of them misconceptions. But all these mistakes – in their totality – can also be seen as truth and nothing but the truth, developing itself in and through its determinate moments, i.e. a way to the self-determination of the truth. Without halting at these mistakes, without being misled, without – why not – a certain naivety, we would never arrive at the truth. ‘Arrive’ may be the wrong word, since there is nowhere to be arrived at, no truth awaiting us *before we arrive at it*. The final destination, the result only gets constructed through the movement of arriving at it. At any single point on this journey we only see our current step, the next step does not reveal itself until we deal with the current one exhaustively. And truth comes at the end, gets produced at the end, as a result, yes – but not as an isolated point, but as the whole process of getting there. The whole process, the whole advance, all the mistakes, all the misconceptions not only pave the way to truth; truth itself is nothing but this way itself, to the end. Truth is the path to itself. – One can add that this conception means that “absolute knowing,” the final

destination of the journey presented in the *Phenomenology*, is a completely empty point that only points to this conception: a completely formal touch, a punctuation mark, a period basically.¹³ There is no absolute *knowledge* waiting for us as content, but only absolute *knowing*.

So, according to Hegel, the assumption of a separation between the path and its product (i.e., its final destination) does not work, it does not make sense. There is only one consistent implication of treating truth as a separable result: making it an impossibility, blocking the way to it – and afterwards rationalizing it by recourse to the limited capacities of our finite mind. This has a simple reason: if we are not in some way always already in truth, we will never be, we can never be. And this ties up with a prominent theme in the other beginning of the book, the Introduction: critique of an epistemological thinking which claims to make no prior ontological commitments (trying to learn swimming before jumping into the water). The presupposition that sustains this vision is precisely a truth that stands over there, opposite to us, to cognition, waiting to be grasped or to reflect itself – as an already formed thing. Formulating the problem of (true) knowledge in this way, we are already lost, according to Hegel.

What is the alternative, the “correct” way of looking at the relation between falsity and truth? “To know something falsely means that there is a disparity between knowledge and its Substance. But this very disparity is the process of distinguishing in general, which is an essential moment [in knowing]” (*PhG*, 23). Knowing falsely implies a disparity, a disparity between knowledge and its substance as the process of distinguishing in general, as an essential, indispensable moment in knowing. “Out of this distinguishing, of course, comes their identity, and this resultant identity is the truth” (23). So there comes a moment of identity, identity between knowledge and its substance, which is called the truth. But disparity does not simply disappear at the end, does not become discarded, does not become a “dross”: “But it is not truth as if the disparity had been thrown away, like dross from pure metal, not even like the tool which remains separate from the finished vessel; disparity, rather, as the

¹³ As Mladen Dolar (2017, 88) puts it, “the absolute knowledge is nothing but the realization that the truth was produced on the way, unwittingly, and that there is nothing more to learn there, no wisdom to possess . . . except for what has been learned on the way.”

negative, the self, is itself still directly present in the True as such” (23). Disparity, the ‘false’ remains a part of the true as such.

But Hegel immediately adds that precisely for this reason saying that ‘the false is part of the true’ or “a moment of the true” is wrong itself: “Just as to talk of the unity of subject and object, of finite and infinite, of being and thought, etc. is inept, since object and subject, etc. signify what they are outside of their unity, and since *in their unity they are not meant to be what their expression says they are*, just so the false is no longer qua false, a moment of truth” (*PhG*, 23). So when we posit a relationship of unity in the sense that the false becomes a “component part” of truth, we end up using these terms in terms of an *external* unity, like “oil and water”. In the development of their true relationship a different picture appears: something like a double vision – the same process, the same whole can be seen either in terms of the false or the true, there is a point of intersection, or rather they become internally united.

At the beginning of the second paragraph of the Preface, Hegel attributes the antithesis between truth and falsity to conventional opinion. And he talks about the result of applying this distinction to philosophy, or rather “fixating” on it: this kind of opinion “expects a given philosophical system to be either accepted or contradicted; and hence it finds only acceptance or rejection. It does not comprehend the diversity of philosophical systems as the progressive unfolding of truth, but rather sees in it simple disagreements” (*PhG*, 2). And here comes an organic metaphor:

The bud disappears in the bursting-forth of the blossom, and one might say that the former is refuted by the latter; similarly, when the fruit appears, the blossom is shown up in its turn as a false manifestation of the plant, and the fruit now emerges as the truth of it instead. These forms are not just distinguished from one another, they also supplant one another as mutually incompatible. (2)

Previous moments appear as merely negative, “yet at the same time their fluid nature makes them moments of an organic unity in which they not only do not conflict, but in which each is as necessary as the other; and this mutual necessity alone constitutes the life of the whole” (*PhG*, 2).

Thus he provides the clue for the organization, the structure of *Phenomenology*: the figures (shapes/forms) of consciousness that follow one another make the previous

ones 'obsolete', false in the usual sense of the term. Sense-certainty turns to be untenable, inconsistent when looked at from the perspective of perception; perception becomes untenable when looked at from the perspective of understanding; and then self-consciousness comes and makes the whole section on consciousness dubious. But one *should* be mistaken, misled, taken in, in order to realize that. *There is no shortcut*. The possibility of any kind of shortcut is an illusion, a retroactive illusion, an illusion that one may avoid or bypass the detours, the false roads and *still get to the standpoint that can see them as false*. Directly beginning with "the absolute" as the ultimate truth, discarding the previous development as a ladder to that truth, ends up, again, as a mere assertion that can be easily counteracted by asserting its opposite. "Knowledge is only actual, and can only be expounded, as Science or as system" and anything that can serve as "a so-called basic proposition or principle of philosophy, if true, is also false, just because it is only a principle. It is, therefore, easy to refute it" (*PhG*, 13). But, of course, this structure always produces the temptation to extract the results as "basic principles", severed from their development and present them as the "views" of Hegel the philosopher. The history of reception of the *Phenomenology* is largely determined by this kind of operation, with many different candidates, different propositions (for instance, "the true is the whole" or "substance is subject") for the place of absolute knowledge. This retroactive illusion is not simply a mistake, I think, but a necessary or structural illusion that cannot simply be avoided but recognized and worked through.

So philosophical systems – just like the figures of consciousness in *Phenomenology* – do not ask for an evaluation in terms of an acceptance or rejection. What they ask for is not a *critique*. What they ask for may be called an engagement, an engagement that sees them already within truth in some capacity – even when they do not see themselves in this way.¹⁴ So why bother finally? Because bothering with the false, tarrying with the negative is itself bothering with the true. Because there is no other way.

¹⁴ One should maybe emphasize that what is at stake here is not a pedagogical concern, this is not a device to help us grasp things better – first showing the false and only then coming to the true. No, this device is inherent to truth itself, so it is not a matter of choice, it is not about how we present things. It may well be the case that this is a productive pedagogical approach (going through a series of 'this is not it' motions), but the reason for this lies in the matter itself.

4.2. The “Introduction”: Critical Beginning, or Cognition Before Cognition

The approach of critique in contrast to Hegel’s phenomenological or descriptive approach brings us to the Introduction. Hegel begins the Introduction with a discussion of the “critical” method as a possible, even natural beginning, or more precisely, with the fundamental assumption of it:

It is a natural assumption that in philosophy, before we start to deal with its proper subject-matter, viz. the actual cognition of what truly is, one must first of all come to an understanding about cognition, which is regarded either as the instrument to get hold of the Absolute, or as the medium through which one discovers it. (*PhG*, 46)

This assumption that before we start proper cognition (“of what truly is”), we need preparation, with the aim of cleaning up, refining, sharpening, and determining the limits of our cognition as a faculty, is natural, says Hegel. It may be regarded as the dominant approach in modern philosophy, going back to Descartes and his method of doubt, but the most recent reference of Hegel’s discussion here seems to be Kant and critical philosophy. So we have here a supposedly conscientious, prudent candidate for the beginning problem of philosophy: first of all, get clear about your own cognition, without worrying about true knowledge (knowledge about things) or the absolute. The first question to be settled is the extent to which our faculty of knowing can satisfy the demands of knowledge.

This project of the “critique of cognition” is seemingly primarily motivated by the fear of error, according to Hegel. The uncritical, unlimited reason of metaphysics leaves philosophy exposed to the constant risk of grasping nothing but “clouds of error” (*PhG*, 46). Unexamined cognition is like an uncalibrated compass that can lead one anywhere, a device, an instrument that cannot be trusted. But Hegel questions the possibility of this critique of cognition “before cognition”. In David Lamb’s (1980, 9-10) words, he “was the first philosopher to question the intelligibility of a critique, and to reject the assumption that the foundations of human knowledge, or indeed any of the sciences, could be examined as a precursor to their active employment.”

Thus, the Introduction of the *Phenomenology* takes its beginning from the description and enactment of the usual kind of introductions – just like in the Preface and the sense-certainty chapter, the opening move consists of adopting and making explicit the usual assumptions, this time attached to an introduction. It sets out the

coordinates of the traditional way of beginning philosophy, the way that was dominant at the time: “the traditional ritual of examining the foundations of knowledge,” as Lamb (1980, 10) puts it. This setting out also enacts a break with this ritual, since the move of making these coordinates and assumptions explicit makes this way of beginning untenable. It shows how this supposedly unbiased beginning is loaded with unfounded presuppositions. It shows that what it presents as a result is actually already implied in these presuppositions; so, the critique unwittingly actually discovers only what it itself puts there in the first place.

As seen from the above quotation from the Introduction, the model of cognition at stake in the critical approach is this: the absolute is on the one side, waiting to be captured, we are on the other side, trying to capture it and in between them stands the cognition as the means of this capture. And when one tries to examine cognition as to its capability of providing us with access to the absolute, it always comes up short, of course. This seems to be a result of the unbiased examination of cognition, but it is actually built into the model from the beginning; there is no other result possible within this framework. This conception of the relation between cognition and the absolute makes the cognition an inevitable distorting mediation, that would never allow us access to the “purity” of the absolute. So, for example, Kant’s very first step, the seemingly unproblematic, natural idea of examining the faculty of cognition prior to its actual employment already implies that absolute knowledge (knowledge of the thing-in-itself, in Kant’s terms) is impossible. One needs to accept this impossibility from the outset in order to begin such an examination; this presupposition is the condition of possibility of the Kantian critique.¹⁵

After this description, the description and consequent undermining of the “critical” beginning, Hegel goes on to describe his own approach which is to be seen as the result of the initial examination. If one cannot examine cognition before the activity of cognition, as a preparation, if this always implies crucial presuppositions sneaking into our thinking, one can turn, instead, to actual forms of cognition (appearances of

¹⁵ “Meanwhile, if the fear of falling into error sets up a mistrust of Science, which in the absence of such scruples gets on with the work itself, and actually cognizes something, it is hard to see why we should not turn round and mistrust this very mistrust. Should we not be concerned as to whether this fear of error is not just the error itself? Indeed, this fear takes something – a great deal in fact – for granted as truth, supporting its scruples and inferences on what is itself in need of prior scrutiny to see if it is true.” (*PhG*, 47)

knowledge) themselves, to catching them in the act, so to speak (“... knowledge is only actual”). This implies *not* assuming a position of superiority or authority vis-à-vis those appearances, “judging” them from some kind of true or “scientific” viewpoint:

. . . when confronted with a knowledge that is without truth, Science can neither merely reject it as an ordinary way of looking at things, while assuring us that its Science is a quite different sort of cognition for which that ordinary knowledge is of no account whatever; nor can it appeal to the vulgar view for the intimations it gives us of something better to come. . . . One bare assurance is worth just as much as another. (*PhG*, 48-49)

So, instead of rejecting them, keeping itself pure and clean, proper “science” (philosophy) should accept that it is itself no different in the beginning, that it is also an appearance, coming on the scene. This means giving up a secure vantage point, giving up beginning with your own trusted and true principles, giving up judging, giving up “critique” and entrusting yourself to an *immanent* progression, to observing knowledge “in the act”, observing “appearances of knowledge”, to “phenomenology” in its Hegelian sense. This observation produces not simply a refutation, but also a “development”, a “remedying”:

If the refutation is thorough, it is derived and developed from the principle itself, not accomplished by counter assertions and random thoughts from outside. The refutation would, therefore, properly consist in the further development of the principle, and in thus remedying the defectiveness, if it did not mistakenly pay attention solely to its negative action, without awareness of its progress and result on their positive side too. (*PhG*, 13)

Thus it is in this sense that the examination of critical beginning, beginning with an examination of the faculty of cognition before its actual employment, opens up the way of the *Phenomenology* in the sense that it shows how it is not possible to examine cognition separate from its employment, from its activity. Hegel’s phenomenological observer learns this lesson and takes it as a positive one, as a solution to the problem of *justification*. If cognition cannot be treated in isolation from its performance, this means not that there is no way of evaluating it, but that there is no way of evaluating it from the outside, with external criteria. Shapes of cognition can be compared with their actual performance, they can be compared with “themselves.” We already saw this “method” of immanent staging (or “sublation”) in practice in the Introduction’s treatment of the critical beginning; its real birth, its conceptual birth occurs *as a result of* that staging – so: in the Introduction, we witness it giving birth to itself, as it were.

4.3. Sense-Certainty: Beginning as a Self-Undermining Move

This brings us finally to the last beginning, the first shape of consciousness, which is called sense-certainty: “Sense-certainty appears to be the truest knowledge; for it has not as yet omitted anything from the object, but has the object before it in its perfect entirety” (*PhG*, 58). This is how Hegel depicts, as a first impression or initial appearance, sense-certainty: this seems to be the “truest” knowledge, because in front of it the object is “in its perfect entirety”, not missing anything – so in sense-certainty we have the object immediately in front of us: sense-certainty is pure immediacy; there is no intervention, no mediation between consciousness and the object. Immediacy functions as the guarantee of “true” knowledge.¹⁶

But, as is well known, this initial appearance of knowledge does not stand “the test of experience”, immediate knowledge turns out to be not so immediate. The supposedly immediate sensuous “This” keeps eluding the consciousness, or rather, it remains at the level of “meaning”, of “what I mean” in contrast to the level of “saying”, of “what I actually say.” Immediate knowledge turns out to be unutterable and knowledge through sensing turns out, in experience, to be consisting of empty universals and therefore the “poorest” form of knowledge ultimately. The effort to know reality immediately, directly, without any kind of intervention produces only abstractions, generalities that cannot pick out anything singular, any singular presence, any specific thing here and now.

So, there is a constantly missed encounter here between consciousness and pure immediacy. Does this then imply an impossibility precluding access to the purely immediate object “in itself”, with the usual consequence of scepticism regarding true knowledge of the world? Or, does it uncover pure immediacy itself as an illusion to be discarded? In short, is there *only* an epistemological or *also* an ontological lesson to be learned from the experience of “sense-certainty”? In other words, is there something wrong here with the means or the end? This is important, since if

¹⁶ “It [sense-certainty] takes its object to be there before it immediately and thinks that nothing of the object is hidden from view: it believes that it has before it the sheer *being* or unalloyed *immediacy* of the thing. It takes itself in turn to *know* such immediacy immediately. It does not know its object by means of concepts, but takes itself to be directly acquainted with it” (Houlgate 2013, 31-32).

objectivity as pure immediacy is only impossible *for us*, it stays there as an ideal point, out of reach but all the more desirable for that reason.

Now, unmediated sensing of an object is supposed to reveal the truth of it, because everything in this case comes from the object, consciousness is purely receptive here, there is no activity on the part of consciousness. “Merely receiving the given here and now”: that is the formula that captures the claim of sense-certainty. Sense data, the data that comes from senses “here and now” is the purest, because in sensation subjectivity is completely withdrawn – sensation corresponds to a suspended subjectivity, there is nothing of the subject (and therefore only objectivity) in the data we get from sensing. So there can be nothing false, no place for error in sense-certainty, in immediate contact with the object in front us right now. (This is the scenario that Hegel also describes in the “Introduction” (*PhG*, 47), when he addresses the idea of subtracting the contribution of the instrument (cognition) from the result to get the “objective”, absolute truth.)

This is the first, simplest form of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, it is the starting point. Each form constitutes a claim about what is “objective” and in the course of the experience these claims are tested by being “enacted”. When there is a failure, a discrepancy between the claim and its “enacted” form, the criterion that was supposed to determine what would be “objective” changes as well. Consciousness learns something from the discrepancy. But how exactly is the criterion tested in experience?

Hegel repeatedly emphasizes that there is a double perspective at stake in this process: on the one hand we have the consciousness that is going through the experience of its claim, on the other hand the perspective of “us” as the observer of this experience. This is the “invention” that Hegel relies on to avoid starting philosophy with “bare assertions”, with unfounded first principles. The criteria themselves are open to question at the beginning, not a solid rock that the philosopher can bring along or rely on to progress further.

Now, regarding the claim of “pure immediacy” as the criterion for true knowledge, Hegel initially simply adopts this claim (although since he has the habit of presenting the results of the testing beforehand, in the first paragraphs of the relevant sections, it

might appear that he simply rejects sense-certainty out of hand). Hegel as the “observer” does not dispute this claim or propose an alternative. He simply pushes sense-certainty to test itself and sets the stage for this experience. Again, how does this testing process, this “experience” go? How does consciousness act upon its claim (of pure immediacy, in this case)? And how does the discrepancy which shows that the criterion is problematic emerge? Is there another criterion to test the criterion of “pure immediacy”? Can “experience” itself constitute this other criterion that is above all of them?

Immediate knowledge, what is received immediately from the object here and now – can this be the “truest” knowledge, the knowledge that one can build upon? What does the experience show? It shows that the “meaning” or intention behind each “acting” turns out to be at odds with the actual expression or formulation. Something happens in between, something always goes wrong in the transition from the “meaning” to the expression. One cannot get away from the expression; it expresses the truth, it always catches up to us, it gives us away, it gives the truth away. We cannot but stage what we are blind to; *what we avoid gets staged inevitably*.¹⁷

So in the case of sense-certainty, the expression (putting into words, uttering and then “pointing out”) constitutes the experience of its claim, its testing of itself. One tries to put into words the present (here-and-now), particular, even unique object and the result is an expression that is the complete opposite of it (a bare universal “this”, “here”, “now”). In this way sense-certainty experiences the vanishing of its certainty. The immediate “this,” or “here-and-now” as the object of sense-certainty shifts at this point to a mediated “this”, a “this” that involves negation, or “a thing with properties” – from a single, discrete object, a sensed pure presence to a sensuous universality.

So there is no pure, immediate contact with the object that afterwards gets exposed to mediation or distortion (in the form of thinking, for example). Mediation comes first. The criterion for true knowledge was “pure immediacy”, but the knowledge

¹⁷ “Of course, we do not *envisage* the universal This or Being in general, but we *utter* the universal; in other words, we do not strictly say what in this sense-certainty we *mean* to say. But language, as we see, is the more truthful and since the universal is the true [content] of sense-certainty and language expresses this true [content] alone, it is just not possible for us ever to say, or express in words, a sensuous being that we *mean*” (*PhG*, 60).

produced in this way shows itself to be anything but immediate. You try to express the certainty of a single sensation, a sensation limited to here and now and it turns out that this is impossible, or rather, that this results in something completely opposite. This experience teaches consciousness a paradoxical lesson that immediacy does not come before mediation, that immediacy is always already mediated. What presents itself as the most immediate, hence privileged form of cognition (sense-cognition) is not able to grasp any immediate object and loses not only its object, but also its criterion, since the criterion (pure immediacy) “for testing is altered when that for which it was to have been the criterion fails to pass the test” and “the testing is not only a testing of what we know, but also a testing of the criterion of what knowing is” (*PhG*, 54-55). When consciousness takes the form of perception, the criterion becomes “self-identity”, i.e., knowing the object as identical to itself, and this time, in experience, what plagues consciousness will not be the issue of mediation but of diversity.

Sense-certainty is the form of cognition/consciousness that presents itself, that *itself claims* to be the most immediate form. As can be seen from what happens in this section of the book, the claim of immediacy does not belong to Hegel himself, he is not the one who regards sense knowledge as purely immediate. At the beginning he simply takes it as it appears, as it presents itself. And the problem that appears with sense-certainty is not that the knowledge it produces is somehow insufficient, wrong or anything like that, but simply the fact that it proves itself to be not what it claims to be, that it does not follow its own criterion (pure immediacy) in its actual operation, in its performance, that it is always already entangled with mediation. Sense-certainty itself betrays its own commitments; it is not actually what it presents itself to be.

So, the general structure of the first shape of consciousness being presented, what can we say about the choice of sense-certainty as the “first”? What makes it the first shape, the starting point of this pandemonium? Is this beginning itself exposed to the usual sceptical charge, the charge of being simply a “hypothesis” and therefore easily replaceable with its opposite? What would be the opposite of sense-certainty? This last question, I think, gives us a sense that these usual questions about the beginning do not work here somehow. And this is because, in contrast to “dogmatic”

philosophizing, there is no “true” beginning in Hegel: what you get in the beginning is not the foundation upon which everything else is built. More precisely, it is a starting point, it is an origin, but not a solid one, not a solid rock; on the contrary, it is the first rock *to be lifted* precisely. The way to “absolute knowing” opens up by the self-destruction of this rock; right on the first page of the chapter, we read that the starting point presents us with the poorest form of knowledge – but this does not take away its status of beginning. Therefore, a sceptical attack directed at the beginning of Hegel’s philosophy does not make sense: *this philosophy itself begins by a sceptical attack at its beginning* (and we see the same structure in the other two beginnings of the *Phenomenology*).¹⁸

¹⁸ As Mladen Dolar puts it: “With his stance that the origin is empty, the poorest of all, the most dilapidated, impoverished, reduced, scarce, meager, shrunk, devoid of qualities, Hegel is quite unique in the history of philosophy” (Dolar 2020, 43).

CHAPTER 5

STAGING/EXEMPLIFICATION AS THE TRUTH OF THE SHAPES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Last chapter tried to analyze the three beginnings of the *Phenomenology* in their relation to the usual conception of beginning, which is also the target of sceptical attack, regarded as maybe the weakest link in the chain of rational argumentation. The chapter ended with the note that Hegelian philosophy makes its beginnings precisely through a sceptical attack toward itself, a self-undermining move that is not simply a negative, but also an enabling move that opens up the path to absolute knowing. The positive, enabling side lies in the fact that all forms of consciousness and spirit that we encounter in the *Phenomenology* “tell us something true about themselves – but at the same time this truth is external to them” (Moder 2017, 19). What does this mean exactly? Let us remember the sequence in the *Phenomenology*: perception is the truth of sense-certainty, understanding is the truth of perception; self-consciousness is the truth of consciousness; reason is the truth of self-consciousness; spirit is the truth of reason . . . The first is the truth of the second and this truth is told by the second one itself – but in such a way that it is “external” to the first one. We are not dealing with a relationship of opposition here, the first does not constitute the opposite of the second; it rather includes or encompasses the second – *plus its truth*.

The truth of sense-certainty, for instance, is what sense-certainty utters or tells us *unknowingly* and “in spite of itself”; that is why its truth appears to it as “external” or other than itself. But *from the perspective of perception*, the truth of sense-certainty is immanent to it. Gregor Moder (2017, 21) brilliantly proposes to borrow the Althusserian concept of symptomal reading to capture this relationship: perception is the symptomal reading of sense-certainty. The concept of “symptomal reading” is developed by Althusser (in *Reading Capital*) as an alternative form of reading

employed by Marx. In contrast to an ordinary reading which takes its object as a presupposed unity of saying-and-meaning, waiting simply to be received by it, symptomal reading focuses on the points where cracks or fault lines emerge between the two, which point to a “repressed” second text within the first, manifest one, the points where “political economy is necessarily blind to what it produces and to its work of production” (Althusser and Balibar 2009, 25):

Such is Marx’s second reading: a reading which might well be called ‘*symptomatic*’ (*symptomale*), insofar as it divulges the undivulged event in the text it reads, and in the same movement relates it to a *different text*, present as a necessary absence in the first. . . . the *second text* is articulated with the lapses in the first text. (29)

Or, in Moder’s (2017) words:

The concept of symptomal reading was a tool that Althusser developed in order to explain Marx’s critique of the classics of political economy like Ricardo and Smith; its central point was that Marx did not add a positive, affirmative content to what the classics already said, nor did he separate valid points from the invalid. For Althusser, what Marx did was something altogether different: namely, Marx read classics with those very classics themselves and thus revealed in their text what their text was saying inexplicitly. (151)

“Inexplicitly” *for themselves*, one should add here, or rather, *explicitly but unknowingly*. Moder’s claim is that Hegel reads Spinoza (and what he calls other “identity systems”) specifically in this way and shows that “the Spinozist system produces its own truth in spite of itself” (*ibid.*). I think one can extend this claim to the whole of Hegelian dialectics: that is why we can assert Hegelian philosophy as *never operating without a standard, yet with no standard of its own*.¹⁹

Let me add some support for this claim. At some point in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (2006), Hegel, while praising Plato’s *Philebus* and *Parmenides* as belonging to “a higher type of dialogue”, makes a distinction between the “esoteric” and “exoteric” sides of Plato’s philosophy. But, interestingly, this does not correspond to the usual distinction between what is inner and what is outer, what is reserved for the initiates and what is for the masses: “The esoteric side is the speculative element that is *written and in print* but that remains still something

¹⁹ This is a paraphrase of David Lamb’s beautiful line from his *Hegel – From Foundation to System* (1980, 33-34); the original passage comparing Hegel and Wittgenstein goes like this: “The fallacy is this: it is clear that Wittgenstein is employing a standard for distinguishing sense from philosophical nonsense. Therefore his method is not descriptive. In Hegel’s case the inference is similar: although Hegel claims to be making no contribution, talk of the absolute and ‘one-sided shapes of consciousness’ presupposes that he is operating with a standard, namely the absolute. Against this position, however, it must be argued that *neither Wittgenstein nor Hegel operated without a standard, yet they had no standard of their own.*”

hidden for those who have no concern to grasp it; it is *not a secret and yet it is hidden*” (202-203, emphases mine).

Thus what is “esoteric” or the “speculative element” is not a reality behind the appearance of the “exoteric” side; actually both sides are “on the same side” here, i.e. on the side of appearance. The “speculative” is like an open secret, open for the ones who have the eyes or ears (or desire?) for it, secret for those who do not (maybe even for Plato himself). So: esoteric yet written, explicit yet hidden. This is the formula that perfectly encapsulates the primary concern of “a symptomal reading”, or “a symptom reader.”

5.1. The Requirement of Observation: The Necessity Only “For Us”

One can describe the whole method and the process in the *Phenomenology* as one big unraveling of “open secrets” and link the requirement for the consciousness of being observed to this paradoxical structure. *One must be observed* to be able to grasp one’s open secret or “esoteric” side. Or: one is necessarily blind to one’s own truth – even though this “truth” never stops being articulated out in the open. And this also applies to the forms of consciousness and spirit in the *Phenomenology*. Each of them, defined by a certain configuration of knowing, takes the stage in turn and performs for us – performs what? Ultimately its self-division. Performance reveals self-contradiction, a division which otherwise stays hidden. This moment of performance or dramatization, this acting out is not something secondary, but constitutes the only possible test that one can appeal to in the *Phenomenology*, in order not to rely on unfounded, dogmatic criteria.

Hegel describes the movement in the *Phenomenology* from one form of consciousness to another as a wholly immanent process: beginning with sense-certainty, “we” as the phenomenological observer do not bring any external standard or presupposition into the process; consciousness itself carries within itself the standard needed to measure it *with itself*. Now, if that is the case, one might ask: Why do we need the standpoint of the observer then? Why do we need this minimal contribution – observation – from outside? Why does this process need to be

observed at all? Why the staging, why the audience, why all the theatrics? Why not a self-propelling process without being observed?

Phenomenology of Spirit, as “an exposition of how knowledge makes its appearance”, or “the path of the natural consciousness which presses forward to true knowledge” (*PhG*, 49), constructs this exposition or path by beginning from the simplest, minimal configuration of consciousness as sense-certainty. This path is supposed to consist of all possible forms of knowledge claims and this exhaustiveness is guaranteed by the necessity at work in this process, carrying it to its ultimate conclusion. And the path is everything: none of the stations on the way constitutes the truth on their own – not even “absolute knowing.” Famously, “the true is the whole” (*PhG*, 11). But, crucially, the necessity at stake is available only to us, the phenomenological observer: all knowledge claims, all forms of consciousness need to test themselves, but within this testing process (which Hegel calls “experience”) there is a moment that necessarily eludes consciousness. Precisely what constitutes the necessity of progression necessarily eludes consciousness. So, the phenomenological observer is needed ultimately to make the show go on. Consciousness does all the work, but the observer is needed to pluck the fruit of its labor. There is a blind spot for consciousness in its experience and this “spot”, this “secret” that appears, but appears only *for us* and not for the consciousness, is what Hegel calls the “truth” of each form of consciousness (or configuration of knowledge).

Towards the end of the “Introduction” to the *Phenomenology* (55-56), Hegel tells us that the way in which “the succession of experiences through which consciousness passes is raised into a scientific [i.e., systematic and necessary] progression” is a specific “way of looking” that is contributed “by *us*”; “it is not known to the consciousness that we are observing.” Here he is talking about the points of articulation that connect the experiences of consciousness in a necessary sequence. “But it is just this necessity itself, or the *origination* of the new object, that presents itself to consciousness without its understanding how this happens, which proceeds for us, as it were, behind the back of consciousness” (56).

As Hegel indicates, although there is a necessity in the transitions, this necessity does not correspond to a force that implacably pushes each form to its ultimate sublation.

As Jean Hyppolite (1974, 24) puts it, this necessity “has meaning, only for philosophic consciousness, and not for the consciousness which is itself engaged in experience.” So, consciousness itself sees the emergence of the new object as not necessary but contingent; it sees “what it held to be the true and the in-itself disappear, and at the same time it sees a different object *appear* as though it were a new thing, something *discovered*” (24). The new truth, the new object appears for consciousness not as the result of the previous movement, hence not as a sublation. More precisely, Hyppolite formulates this as “two necessities”: “the necessity of the negation of the object, effected by consciousness itself in its experience, in the testing of its knowledge, and the necessity of the appearance of the new object which takes shape through the prior experience” (25). The second necessity is available only for the phenomenological observer and this is what goes on behind the back of consciousness. The process (of actualization) needs to be observed: the inherent doubleness at stake in the self-division requires a perspective that allows “seeing double”. Hegel repeatedly emphasizes that there is a double perspective at stake in this process: on the one hand we have the consciousness that is going through the experience of its claim, on the other hand the perspective of “us” as the observer of this experience. This is the “invention,” the device that Hegel relies on to avoid starting philosophy with “bare assertions,” with unfounded first principles.²⁰

Regarding this double perspective at work in the *Phenomenology*, the crucial point is that the result of its experience for consciousness has a purely negative value. It sees the process only as a loss, a loss of its truth: “It entrusted itself absolutely to ‘immediate sensuous certainty,’ then to the ‘thing’ of perception, and to the ‘strength’ of understanding; but it discovers that what it thus took to be the truth is not, and it loses its truth” (Hyppolite 1974, 13). There is actually a positive dimension to this loss, a dimension that allows the process to continue, that allows the transition to the new object and the new form of consciousness, but this dimension is only *for us*, i.e., the phenomenological observer.

²⁰ This is how Hyppolite (1974, 9) describes Hegel’s non-interventionist, “descriptive” strategy: “Hegel . . . describes common consciousness much more than he constructs it. The philosopher disappears in the face of the experience he apprehends, and naive consciousness enters into its own experience and thus sees both itself and its object change.”

This is also why, in reading the *Phenomenology*, a common (first) impression is that one grasps each position individually, on its own, rather quickly than the points of articulation or transitions between them (“the transition problems, the ‘you can’t get there from here’ problems in the *Phenomenology*,” as Robert Pippin [1993, 58] calls it). Articulating them with each other means exhibiting them in a relationship in which one position is a response to another’s deadlock; it means that it has its logical genesis in a previous position. Grasping the basic structure of “perception” or “understanding” on their own, thinking of possible examples from the history of philosophy is not so difficult, when compared to grasping “understanding” as a response to “perception.” And this job of connecting ultimately belongs to “us” as the phenomenological observer.

If one conceives each form of consciousness and spirit in the *Phenomenology* as a structure, then each of them turns out to “stage” a truth that is quite different than what it initially claims for itself, and the gap between the two, that is, between what this structure initially claims to be and what it is in its enactment in experience, is not simply something contingent or avoidable.

At this point one may ask – and it has been asked – if seeking for consistency or non-contradiction is not itself an external criterion imposed from outside? There may be certain positions or forms of consciousness that do not recognize the authority of the principle of non-contradiction, after all. There may even be certain forms that explicitly embrace contradiction as the right way to go (like Hegelian philosophy itself, incidentally). Thus, the question is: does Hegel in the *Phenomenology* impose from outside non-contradiction as some kind of meta-criterion, presupposed to be accepted by each and all forms, thus violating his own terms from the beginning? I think there is a difference here in the location of contradiction: the contradictions uncovered or observed by the phenomenological observer are not on the level of content – saying contradictory things at the same time. This kind of charge may be easily or proudly accepted by certain philosophies. But not when it comes to the contradiction between one’s own self-understanding and one’s enactment or performance of its position. Because this “comparison” tends to produce fascinating inversions, inversions in which it is almost impossible to recognize yourself: a strongly insistent materialism turns out to be pure idealism, a radical scepticism turns

out be an unacknowledged dogmatism in practice, etc. Or even, a form of consciousness that officially embraces contradiction may turn out to be a slave to the principle of non-contradiction in practice. So there is not an external imposition here on Hegel's part, but simply the testing of a claim to self-consistency or self-identity that is immanent to all knowledge claims that define themselves through their opposition to other claims. A self-understanding that is based on opposition necessarily implies a claim to self-identity.²¹

5.2. The Hegelian Use of Examples

In the Hegelian dialectical process, a figure of consciousness "is not measured by any external standard of truth but in an absolutely immanent way" (Žižek 2008, xx). In other words, there is no gap here between a figure of consciousness and an external standard (that it succeeds or fails to reach), but only an immanent gap, that is, a gap "between itself and its own exemplification/staging" (xx). There is no positive model in Hegel, no ideal state to measure the current state or to be approached, no normative model. The standard, measure or criterion lying within a figure of consciousness means that it is internally divided, it is "double" in itself – what it says or enunciates, its statement is compared with its process of enunciation. And that is the reason why in Hegel exemplification functions in a completely different way than the ordinary use of examples.

What is the usual way of functioning of examples? Immanuel Kant (1996), in his Preface to the first edition of *Critique of Pure Reason*, perfectly encapsulates the usual approach, when he discusses a distinction between "the discursive/logical distinctness" and "the intuitive/aesthetic distinctness" of his text (11). Discursive distinctness arises through concepts, intuitive distinctness through examples, and Kant here bemoans the fact that due to the "magnitude and multitude" of his work,

²¹ Stephen Houlgate (1986) provides a similar line of thinking concerning this question (applied to Nietzsche's thinking, as an example), locating the contradiction at stake in Hegel's procedure at a "fundamental level": "What Hegel is concerned with is whether a mode of consciousness is consistent in the sense that it has the character that it thinks it has, that it is what it thinks it is. . . . Even a mode of consciousness such as Nietzsche's, in which no claim to explicit consistency is made, can still be examined to see whether it understands its character and limits properly. And where its self-understanding and its character conflict, consciousness can be said to contradict itself at a fundamental level. In a case such as Nietzsche's the contradictions that are uncovered will not necessarily be the ones that he himself is proud to admit to" (175).

he had to sacrifice the intuitive distinctness of it and cut out the examples and illustrations he provided in the first draft of the book. But, he adds, this is not a crucial loss, since, although examples and illustrations are necessary, they “are necessary only from the *popular* point of view, and there is no way to adapt this work for popular use. The genuine experts in this science have less need for such simplification, which, though always agreeable, might here even have had consequences running counter to my purposes” (12). What kind of consequences they might have?

the aids to distinctness, while helpful in *parts* of a book, are often distracting in the book as a *whole*. They keep the reader from arriving quickly enough at an overview of the whole; and with all their bright colors they do cover up and conceal the articulation or structure of the system, even though that structure is what matters most if we are to be able to judge the system's unity and sturdiness. (12)

So: examples as a secondary embellishment, an intuitive support for the uninitiated, not really necessary for work's true addressee (the expert), who can see and grasp the bare structure, the conceptual articulation of the work without any aids, which is ultimately what matters. I would propose that the Hegelian examples function in a completely opposite way: the conceptual articulation on its own is never enough in this perspective, it is constitutively lacking, missing a fundamental dimension *of itself*, which only emerges through its examples. We encounter this fact again and again in the *Phenomenology*: Hegel first presents us the conceptual articulation, the “idea” of a certain shape of consciousness and then through a specific exemplification, or staging, we get the dimension that is missing in the conceptual form, which, of course, betrays the idea, or rather, displays what is “repressed” in it, or its truth.

This difference in the Kantian and Hegelian use of examples can be explained through the usual supposition that is at work in Kant, which is that *the example functions as a particular of what it exemplifies, which is the universal*. In this perspective, of course, the idea comes first and there is no way for a proper example, by definition, to contradict what it exemplifies: a mismatch between the example and the idea simply indicates that the example is poorly chosen, it has no bearing on the idea itself. The conceptual articulation gives us everything we need, there is no essential need for an “otherness”, or “self-othering” in order to see the true picture. In contrast to this, the Hegelian example functions as the “symptom” of what it

exemplifies: *a properly selected example never fits its idea*; or, one might say that an example that perfectly fits its idea, that brings no additional essential insight into it (the Kantian notion of example) is completely superfluous, it just supports the self-deception or repression at work in it.

One helpful conception regarding this structure – the presentation of the claim of a form of consciousness in the form of an argument and then its staging – is provided by Robert R. Williams in his distinction between “eidetics” and “empirics”. Williams (1992, 133) formulates the double perspective in the *Phenomenology*, the distinction between the perspective of consciousness and that of the observer, as “the basis of a distinction between eidetics (analysis of the concept), and empirics (concrete investigations of the concept in determinate form), as it appears in everyday life to ordinary consciousness.” According to this, *eidetics* corresponds to the presentation of the concept “for us”; it is “an exploration of meaning at the general level of ontology, namely the study of possibility” (144). So: “a bracketing of fact and an elaboration of meaning” (147). The “factual” questions that are bracketed in this way by the eidetic analysis are then studied by *empirics*: empirical analysis takes up “the general eidetic structures in their concrete determinate actualization” (144).

Now, Williams employs this distinction between eidetics and empirics as an explication of the distinction between the perspective of consciousness and the observer specifically for Hegel’s analysis of the concept of recognition. But he does not limit it to the case of recognition but puts it forward as a general structure of exposition in the *Phenomenology*. So first comes the general concept of recognition from our phenomenological perspective; second, “particular forms and determinate modes of recognition from the perspective of ordinary consciousness in the natural attitude” (Williams 1992, 15). And he warns against the danger of supposing that the empirical part fully exhausts the possibilities of the concept of recognition:

It is important not to identify or confuse the concept of recognition with one of its possible instances or examples, e.g., master and slave. Such confusion leads many to the erroneous conclusion that master/slave exhausts Hegel's theory of intersubjectivity. This overlooks the point that the eidetic concept supports alternative modes of realization, and that master/slave is a deficient mode of recognition. The other possibilities include friendship, love, the devotion between brother and sister, and reconciliation. (16)

There is a complementarity between eidetics and empirics here: eidetics reveals that “recognition is more than a mere concept”, that “action is necessary to recognition”

(Williams 1992, 157). So eidetics shows that on its own it is not enough, it is not enough to take up recognition as a concept, but “an empirics of recognition qua action is also necessary” (157). Williams sometimes uses the word “transcendental” in combination with the “eidetic” (“eidetic-transcendental insight” [157], for example) and this seems to imply that in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel first gives us the necessary conditions, *how* a certain concept (recognition, in this case) has to be (reciprocal action) and then, in a second step, examines “the modes of realization” of that concept (and shows that the master/slave realization is “deficient” with regard to the transcendental/eidetic structure of recognition, for example).

While not disputing Williams’ specific conclusion about recognition (that the master/slave dialectic does not exhaust the concept of recognition), I propose to read the moments of what he calls “empirics” in the *Phenomenology* as moments of staging, dramatization, performance, enactment of concepts. I think this changes the relationship between these two dimensions (eidetics and empirics) in an important way: in contrast to the empirical instantiation of a transcendental conception, *staging* a conception is meant to *test* it, so it is not a deficient form of realization, but is meant to reveal the deficiency in the conception that it realizes, which would otherwise stay hidden.²² So the moment of exemplification can be understood as a response to a requirement, a requirement *inherent* to concepts, that in order to properly grasp a concept one needs to move beyond the conceptual level, or: the concept reveals its true nature in another level, the level of enactment. The example actually teaches us more than the perspective it exemplifies.

Above all, one can say that dramatization/staging/exemplification manifests the truth of a position in a way that mere thinking or argumentation cannot, that dramatization has a revelatory power. A simple example is provided by Todd McGowan (2019): looked at from a Hegelian perspective, Spinoza’s elaborate system itself is all we need to undermine it, everything is there: “In the act of articulating his system, Spinoza disproves it” (109).²³ How exactly? The act of articulation, the act that expresses the system betrays or refutes the system itself, because there is simply no possible space within the system, more precisely within his theory of substance that

²² “There is a certain success of the example, precisely when it undermines its concept, brings something extra into it, or points to a certain conflict in it” (Hansen 2021, 120-121).

²³ The question of whether or not this reading of Spinoza is adequate is bracketed here.

would allow one to state its structure. We have an idea, a thesis argued for – and the expression of this thesis (“substance is one and indivisible”) refutes it. That is to say, there is no way for this thesis to be articulated in a consistent manner, in a way that is not self-undermining – there is a thesis here (in Spinoza’s theory of substance) that makes it impossible for it to be expressed: *if there were such a substance, Spinoza would not have been able to articulate such a thesis about it.* And the act of expression/articulation/enunciation/formulation/symbolization exposes this point. The fact that a certain position is articulable contradicts here with that position.

The result is that what appears is the complete opposite of what is meant or intended: the intention is to argue for the indivisibility of substance and the result of the act that was supposed to show this is to stage that substance as divided. The intention and the appearance/performance point at opposite ends:

Spinoza’s philosophy ends up showing the opposite of what he intends and thereby paves the way for Hegel’s own ontological claims. Hegel takes Spinoza’s self-contradiction as an affirmation of the subjectivity of all substances, even the whole itself. Whenever we think we can identify an independent and self-identical substance, a divided subject is lurking. (McGowan 2019, 110)

Another example is how Hegel (2006) reads the “simple” concept of becoming in his *Lectures on History of Philosophy*:

The main thing, therefore, is the development of the universal out of a familiar representation. The direct consequence may be that consciousness is surprised to find that in what is questioned, or in the view that it has held till now, there lies something that it does not believe to be the case. For instance, everyone is familiar with becoming, and with how we represent it. In our reflection, what becomes is not and yet it also is; there is both being and nonbeing in it. 'Becoming' is defined in this simple way, and yet it is a unity of immensely distinct terms too, namely, of being and non-being and becoming – all together – a unity in which being and non-being are posited as utterly identical. We can find it astonishing that there is such an immense distinction in this simple representation. (134)

Something lying in your own view, catching you by surprise; the simple, familiar representation of becoming turning out to be “a unity in which being and non-being are posited as utterly identical” (*ibid.*). The act of articulation that betrays what is being articulated, this performative contradiction (in contemporary terms) finds maybe its clearest development in the *Phenomenology* towards the end of the Reason section, in what is called “reason as lawgiver.” Hegel examines here the commandment “Everyone ought to speak the truth.” This universal commandment is contradicted first of all by the one who is saying it, by the fact that in the act of saying that “everyone ought to speak the truth” the condition of “according to his

knowledge and conviction” is left out of the saying, left as an implicit condition, as something *meant*: “It said: everyone ought to speak the truth; but it meant: he ought to speak it according to his knowledge and conviction; that is to say, what it said was different from what it meant; and to speak otherwise than one means, means not speaking the truth” (*PhG*, 254).

The upshot is that you are not speaking the truth when you say that “everyone ought to speak the truth.” Then Hegel tries to improve the commandment, making explicit what is implicit in it: “everyone ought to speak the truth *according to his knowledge and conviction at the time*.” What happens now, with this “improvement”? The content of the commandment turns into something contingent (on what I know to be true at a certain point in time), it loses its universality:

But with this correction, what the proposition wanted to enunciate as universally necessary and intrinsically valid, has really turned round into something completely contingent. For speaking the truth is made contingent on whether I can know it, and can convince myself of it; and the proposition says nothing more than that a confused muddle of truth and falsehood ought to be spoken just as anyone happens to know, mean, and understand it. (*PhG*, 254)

Making what is implicit explicit destroys the universality in the content of the commandment. If we now try to make another correction, this time adding the condition that the truth *ought to be* known, thereby eliminating the contingency brought in by the first correction, another contradiction appears, because “Sound Reason was at first supposed to possess immediately the capacity to speak the truth; now, however, it is said that it ought to know, that is to say, that it does not immediately know what is true” (*PhG*, 255). This contradiction between meaning and saying and the subsequent effort of rectification (which causes new problems, new contradictions) is something we have already seen in the “sense-certainty” chapter: in the very act of saying, in the act of articulation you betray something, you betray that which is said in that act of saying, you betray “what is said”, the content of the saying; in the case of sense-certainty, “the very attempt to isolate and refer to an ultimate particular causes it to evaporate into everything” (Lamb 1980, 84).

5.3. “Absolute Knowing”: The End that Points Back

Hegel’s philosophy can be aptly described as “a philosophy of misrecognition.” Truth arises here *only* through misrecognition, not only of the consciousness

concerning itself but also of us as readers: Hegel is the philosopher of necessary detours. We keep expecting to get the real secret at the end (absolute knowing), we read the book with this promise of final revelation, to come at a future point. And what we get in the end is a complete anti-climax: there is no finally revealed secret at the end, or rather, the only thing that is revealed at the end is the fact that this secret was already revealed on the way – that *we have kept reading it, without knowing it*. At this point the movement of looking forward that has been at work from the beginning stops: there is nothing to look forward to anymore. And the opposite movement, looking backward, taking account of the path traversed up to this point reveals that this path itself constitutes the truth.²⁴ Hegel provides explicit hints at this final change of perspective in the Preface, gives all kinds of spoilers; but this is still a surprising shift, a shift that *could not have been spoiled* in some sense: without going through all the mistakes, errors, misrecognitions that constitute this path, we would have never grasped what “absolute knowing” tells us. (And the efforts throughout history to find some kind of formulation, some content that coincides with the supposed ultimate knowledge contained in this chapter demonstrates that this purely formal shift of perspective is not a guaranteed outcome at all.)

The genius of *Phenomenology* is that it takes us, or the structure of our desire into account from the beginning: it takes into account, or relies on the fact that we will expect the final secret to come at the end, that we will regard the chapters that bring us to that point as simply the path to the secret, to the final revelation and miss the fact that everything already happens on this path, that we will need a final push to see this. The path to truth that was supposed to be the means to an end, at this point, turns out to be truth itself. This is the final misrecognition to be confronted, to be dismantled.

There is a necessary deception that is built into the structure of the *Phenomenology*: it keeps deceiving us with new twists and turns – even though it warns us right at the beginning about this deception. There is no new knowledge awaiting us at the end, there is no absolute truth extracted from all the errors, distilled from them; but this illusory expectation, this supposition is not simply a joke on Hegel’s part, it is

²⁴ “But the development of a truth is the in-itself of that truth, and in the absence of the movement by means of which it arises, it is merely an assertion” (Hyppolite 1979, 228).

necessary: without this initial misrecognition, there would have been no way for the truth to arise. There is no truth without deception.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

With respect to his relationship with scepticism, Hegel has a unique position in the history of philosophy: not being a sceptic himself, he felt no need to fight against it either; on the contrary, he regarded scepticism as a valuable ally of his own philosophy and of philosophy as such, ultimately. This thesis turned out to be an attempt to provide an explanation for this uniqueness. What is in Hegel's philosophical approach that allows for such a rapprochement and, vice versa, what is in scepticism that deserves high praise from the philosopher of absolute knowing?

First of all, one should say that scepticism does not function in Hegel's philosophy as a helpful antidote, as a valuable rival that constantly keeps philosophical thinking in check, that keeps it straight, preventing it from unjustified, questionable excesses (this approach can be seen in Fichte and, to a certain extent, in Kant). This kind of role attributed to scepticism, the role of a scarecrow against metaphysical forays, is totally foreign to Hegel's thinking. As seen in Chapter 3, Hegel has a quite genuine appreciation for scepticism, to the extent that he tries to remind its modern version the more radical roots lying in Sextus Empiricus' writings. He bemoans, in his early text on scepticism ("Relationship"), the fact that what goes under this name in his own time simply is not sceptical enough, that it *believes too much*. Modern scepticism, with Hume as its most prominent figure, is disappointing insofar as it takes too much on faith: yes, it insists on the gap between consciousness and external reality, never allowing direct contact between them, marking the conceptual products of the mind with an indelible subjectivity or relativity, but this insistence is ultimately based on an acceptance of the mind's direct access to itself. There is an area of thought that is immune to any sceptical doubts: one can doubt everything *except* the contents of consciousness.

In contrast to this, Hegel emphasizes the “exceptionless” stance of ancient form of scepticism: according to this reading, there is no claim, no proposition, no belief that is immune to ancient sceptic’s famous “suspension of judgement.” Now, this reading opens onto a debate with a long history: did ancient scepticism really have a universal scope? Or, is it even possible to be exceptionless in this regard? We saw in Chapter 2 that this continuing debate has its source in the ambiguity of Sextus’ own writings: although the principle and modes of scepticism (equipollence, the ten modes, five modes, etc.) are in principle applicable indiscriminately to any claim whatsoever, Sextus himself at certain points tries to limit them to so-called “scientific/philosophical” claims. In any case, Hegel clearly takes ancient scepticism as a universal stance.

From this perspective, without any positive position or belief to hold onto or rely on, how does scepticism operate? Simply by adopting the presuppositions of its “opponent,” by measuring dogmatic claims with themselves, on their own terms. The clearest demonstration of this, as I have tried to show with the help of Alan Bailey’s brilliant article, is the so-called Agrippan modes. In the operation of these modes one witnesses maybe the earliest precedent of Hegelian immanent reading at work: they are nothing but the staging of rationalist presuppositions in an explicit manner, thereby showing the otherwise invisible, contradictory notion of justification on which they are built. Therefore, the usual charge of “self-refutation” directed against ancient scepticism (precisely due to its universal scope) is based on a “dogmatic” perspective which inevitably misses the irony that they are witnessing their own story in scepticism. Scepticism stages *their truth* for them. But there is a double irony here, since scepticism itself ultimately does not manage to get out the dogmatic horizon; with all its insistence on suspension, it never manages to suspend the dogmatic notion of justification that it stages to be contradictory. This is why it ends up as a completely negative movement, a “suspension of judgement.” And this is the point where Hegel and ancient scepticism part ways.

Hegel’s take on ancient scepticism is not simply full of praise, of course. His “Relationship” essay reads like a story of downfall: once upon a time (at Pyrrho’s time) there was an authentic scepticism that was at one with philosophy, directed against common understanding, with its ten modes challenging only sense

perception; but then came the process of separation and the enmity towards philosophy, ending up with the modern version, which is the ultimate downfall. The most important point in this story is the fact that, according to Hegel, the enmity towards philosophy is based on a misrecognition: philosophical propositions (or propositions of reason) are treated as if they were ordinary propositions (or propositions of understanding); that is to say, as propositions that have opposites or contradictories. But Hegel emphasizes that true philosophy cannot be opposed through the principle of equipollence, because it carries its own opposite within itself; in other words, it involves the suspension of the principle of non-contradiction.

However, in his late commentary on ancient scepticism, from the post-*Phenomenology* period, we saw that there is a shift in his approach, which I formulated as the sublation of the opposition between understanding and reason. While arguing for philosophy having no opposite, the early essay still relies on an opposition between philosophy and non-philosophy, which also underlies the privileging of “original”, or first scepticism. Now, in the *History of Philosophy*, the late period of ancient scepticism (and five modes) is privileged as a more developed form of the beginning (while the negative evaluation of modern scepticism is preserved). As I argued in Chapter 3, this shift in the reading of ancient scepticism can be related to a shift in Hegel’s general approach to beginnings or origins, a full expression of which can be found in the *Phenomenology*.

The problem of beginning constitutes an important target for Agrippan modes, as we saw in Chapter 2. The impossibility of making a rationally justified beginning is one of the upshots of these modes: the mode concerning hypotheses directly relates to this issue, but the second mode presents a never-ending process of justification as well. The problem of beginning can be specified as making a “true” beginning, a beginning upon which one can build on confidently, a foundation that can somehow withstand sceptical assaults. But since the issue is not simply the content of the beginning, coming up with alternative principles (*cogito*, the principle of consciousness. . .) can never be the answer. Hegel’s answer at this point is unique in the sense that he gives up the search for a true beginning and simply begins with the false, trusting precisely in a shaky foundation. In this move, the beginning loses all its traditional privileges and starts to be seen as the poorest, emptiest point; not a

stable point of reference, but something to be negated and by its negation opening up a path of development.

The connection between this answer to the problem of beginning and the immanent approach is easy to see: the *Phenomenology* begins just like a sceptic, with no position to defend or attack, with no settled answer to the question of truth; it begins with the form of consciousness that claims to be the most immediate contact with reality and simply takes it on its own terms. It stages that consciousness in making its knowledge claims and shows it crumbling under its own weight, unable to meet its own criteria. This not simply an argumentation against sense-certainty: we see it trying to prove itself, altering itself under the pressure of performance, in a back-and-forth that ends up with a transition. This is the drama of the self-refutation of sense-certainty. This dimension can be detected even in the Agrippan modes, I think. The form of dialogue in which Sextus presents them also stages for us a scene of confrontation: the dogmatist says something, in response to which comes the answer of one of the modes; the dogmatic tries another tack and again gets stuck – the modes work in an interconnected way, envisioning all possible maneuvers from the dogmatist.

The *Phenomenology* begins like a sceptic, I said, but it does not end up as one. It does not end up as a purely negative movement, but in each negation a positive dimension emerges as well. So immanent negation does not produce an emptiness, a nothingness, since the negated form of consciousness unwittingly carries its truth within itself – and one should say that there is no other truth than the truth of a falsity in this perspective. The immanent gap, the gap that displays itself in the operation of staging, the distance of a form of consciousness from *itself* is what makes truth possible; or: there is such a thing as truth, because “one” cannot be one (self-identical). In other words, there is no place here for a truth that somehow stands above, that can be grasped with a gaze from nowhere. But this truth is something which consciousness is necessarily blind to.

And that brings up the role of the phenomenological observer: ultimately, in the staging – and *only* in the staging – of each form of consciousness we witness its self-division. The conceptual articulation on its own does not reveal this split; an “othering”, a transposition to an other scene is necessary. This moment of

performance or dramatization, this acting out is not something secondary, but constitutes the only possible test that one can appeal to in the *Phenomenology*, in order not to rely on unfounded, dogmatic criteria. The concept reveals its true nature at another level, the level of enactment; or exemplification actually teaches us more than the perspective it exemplifies.

The entwinement of truth and falsity, the dependence of the emergence of truth on misrecognition is not only stated by Hegel in the Preface, but also built into the structure of the *Phenomenology*. We see over and over again the enactment of this idea, beginning with sense-certainty and up to absolute knowing. The immanent gap or non-identity or self-contradiction which appeared in the first chapter keeps getting worked through, developed – until it is recognized as unavoidable, until all the hopes of overcoming it are dashed. And the absolute knowing simply puts a mark of period on this whole effort.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Hegel'in *Fenomenoloji* kitabı üzerine iki temel düşünce çizgisi üstünde duruyor bu tez: ilki içkin yaklaşım, belli bir konunun/düşüncenin/iddianın kendi şartları, önkabulleri üzerinden değerlendirilmesi, herhangi bir dışsal ölçütü işin içine katmadan ölçülmesi; ikincisi ise sahneleme işlemi, yani bir kavramın, düşüncenin sahneye çıkmaya, kendini örneklendirmeye, açığa vurmaya zorlanması, soyut bir tümel olarak kalmasına izin verilmemesi. Tezin temel amacı bu iki çizgi arasındaki bağlantının ortaya konması ve birinin diğerinin sonucu olduğunun gösterilmesidir. Bu yoldaki başlangıç noktası ise Hegel'in antik şüphecilikle ilişkisinin irdelenmesidir; bu sayede söz konusu iki çizgiye şüpheciliğin "tamamına erdirilmesi" diyebileceğimiz bir sürecin parçası olarak daha belirgin bir görünüş kazandırmak hedeflenmektedir.

"Hegel ve şüphecilik" ilk bakışta boş küme gibi görünür: mutlak bilginin filozofu her tür bilginin imkânını ya da gerekçelendirilebilirliğini sorgulayan bir duruşla ilişkilendirilmez – hele ki her yargıyı askıya alan antik şüphecilikle. Kant söz konusu olduğunda, örneğin, şüphecilikle Hume vasıtasıyla bariz bir ilişkinin varlığından bahsedilebilir: Kant'ı dogmatik uykusundan uyandıran Hume'un metafiziğin ("saf akıl"ın) eleştirisine giden yolu açtığı rivayet edilir. Oysa şüpheli sorular, saldırılar, doğru bilginin olanaklı olup olmadığı sorusu Hegel'i pek ilgilendirmemiş gibi görünür. Hegel felsefesini anlamak için şüphecilikle ilgilenmeye hiç mi hiç gerek yok gibidir. Ne var ki *Tinin Fenomenolojisi* adlı kitabı için "kendini tamamlayan/sonuna kadar giden bir şüphecilik" tabirini kullandığını görürüz Hegel'in; daha erken tarihli metinlerinden birinde de şüphecilik ile felsefe arasındaki ilişkiyi ayrıntılarıyla ele alır, hatta şüpheciliğin ilk biçimini felsefeyle birlik içinde görür.

Şüphencilikle ilişkisi bakımından felsefe tarihi içinde özgün bir konumdadır Hegel: kendisi şüpheli olmamakla birlikte şüphencilğe karşı savaş verme ihtiyacı hissetmemiş, aksine, şüphencilği kendi felsefesi ve en nihayetinde felsefenin kendisi için değerli bir müttefik olarak görmüştür. Bu tez bu özgün konumun bir açıklamasını sunma girişimi oldu. Hegel'in felsefi yaklaşımında böyle bir yakınlığa imkan sağlayan nedir; şüphencilğin Hegel'den, mutlak bilmenin filozofundan bu kadar övgü almasını sağlayan nedir?

Öncelikle şüphencilğin Hegel felsefesinde faydalı bir panzehir gibi, felsefi düşünmeyi sürekli kontrol altında tutan, yoldan çıkmasını, aşırıya kaçmasını önleyen kıymetli bir hasım gibi iş görmediğini söylemek gerekir (bu yaklaşımı Fichte'de ve bir ölçüde Kant'ta görmek mümkündür). Şüphencilğe böyle bir rol, metafizik aşırılıklar karşısında korkuluk rolü atfetmek Hegel düşüncesine tamamen yabancıdır. 3. Bölüm'de görülebileceği gibi, Hegel şüphencilğe gerçek bir takdirle bakar; öyle ki modern şüphencilğe Sextus Empiricus'un yazılarında yatan radikal köklerini hatırlatmaya çalışır. Şüphencilik üzerine erken tarihli metninde ("İlişki") kendi zamanında şüphencilik diye bilinen şeyin yeterince şüpheli olmadığından, *fazla inançlı* olduğundan yakınır. Hume başta gelmek üzere modern şüphencilik çok fazla şeye inandığı için hayal kırıklığı yaratır Hegel'de: evet, bilinç ile dış gerçeklik arasındaki mesafenin, aralarında doğrudan bir temas noktası olmayışının, zihnin kavramsal ürünlerinin öznel ve görelilik damgası yemesine neden olan gediğin altını çizer modern şüphencilik, ama bu ısrar en nihayetinde zihnin kendi kendine doğrudan erişimi olduğu düşüncesine dayalıdır. Yani her türlü şüpheden muaf bir düşünce alanı vardır: her şeyden şüphe edilebilir, ama bilinç içeriğinden şüphe edilemez.

Buna karşı antik şüphencilğin istisna tanımayan tutumunu vurgular Hegel: bu okumaya göre, antik şüphencilğin "yargıyı askıya alma" adımıyla muaf olan hiçbir iddia, hiçbir önerme, hiçbir inanç yoktur. Bu yorum uzun bir tarihi olan bir tartışmaya dokunur: Antik şüphencilğin gerçekten evrensel bir kapsamı var mıydı? Bu bakımdan istisnasız olmak sahiden mümkün müdür? 2. Bölüm'de, halen devam eden bu tartışmanın kaynağının Sextus Empiricus'un yazılarındaki bir ikirciklilik olduğunu göstermeye çalışıyorum: şüphencilğin ilkesi ("eşgeçerlilik") ve modları (on mod, beş mod vb.) ilkece her türlü iddiaya uygulanabilir olsa da, Sextus belli

noktalarda bunları “bilimsel/felsefi iddialar”la sınırlı tutmaya çabalar. Ama Hegel antik şüpheciliği düpedüz evrensel bir duruş olarak alır.

Bu tezde antik şüpheciliği Hegel felsefesi için ayrıcalıklı bir giriş kapısı, Hegel’i de şüpheciliğe taze bir ışık düşüren ayrıcalıklı bir mercekle kullanmayı öneriyorum: Hegel felsefesinin öncülerinden biri olarak şüphecilik, yahut şüpheciliğin en gelişmiş biçimi olarak Hegel felsefesi. İkisi arasında bilhassa bir noktada çok yakın bir bağ mevcuttur: antik şüphecilik genellikle “eşgeçerlilik” ilkesiyle tanımlanır (kendini de böyle tanımlar) – her iddianın karşıtı da aynı ölçüde savunulabilir, bu da karar verilemezliğe ve yargının askıya alınmasına yol açar. Eşgeçerlilik ilkesinin yanı sıra geliştirilen diğer tüm aparatlar (“modlar”) yardımcı rolde gibidir. Ama Agrippa modları bu bakımdan bir istisna oluşturur aslında; zira bu modlarda eşgeçerlilik ilkesinin bir uygulamasından ziyade, eşgeçerlilik ilkesine *hiç gerek olmadığı* gösterilir. Bir iddianın karşısına zıddını koymaya gerek yoktur, çünkü o iddia zıddını kendi içinde taşır zaten. Bir iddianın karşısına aynı ölçüde gerekçelendirilebilir olan karşıtıyla çıktığımızda, o iddianın kendi kendine özdeş ya da tutarlı olduğunu baştan kabul etmiş olursunuz ister istemez; ama Agrippa modları bu şekilde iş görmezler, rasyonalist iddialara doğrudan karşı çıkmak yerine söz konusu iddiaların kendi ilkelerine tutarlı bir şekilde bağlı kalındığında o iddiaların gerekçelendirilmesinin mümkün olmadığını gösterirler. İşte Agrippa modlarında iş başında olan bu *içkin* yaklaşım Hegel felsefesinin alameti farikasıdır.

Sextus Empiricus Agrippa modlarını yargının askıya alınmasına, yargısızlığa götüren beş mod olarak sunar ve burada esas olarak “gerekçelendirme” meselesi söz konusudur. Her önerme için eşgeçerlilik sorununa çözüm getirecek, karşıtıdan ziyade o önermenin rasyonel olarak tercih edilmesini sağlayacak bir gerekçelendirmenin en nihayetinde eksik olduğunu gösterme amacı taşır bu modlar. Buna göre, birinci mod herhangi bir konuda çok sayıda kanaat bulunduğuna ve bu kanaatlerin birbirleriyle çatışma içinde olduğuna işaret eder: tarih boyunca her konuda türlü türlü kanaatler öne sürülmüştür ve aralarından birinde karar kılmanın bariz bir yolu yoktur. Üçüncü mod göreliliğe işaret eder: nesnel kendilerini algılayan özneye göre ve o öznenin o anki diğer algılarına göre farklı görünür; bu görünüşlerden hangisinin doğru olduğuna, hangisinin nesnenin doğasına karşılık geldiğine karar vermenin bariz bir yolu yoktur. Yani bu iki mod (1 ve 3) düşünce

nesneleri ve algı nesnelere ilişkin düşünce (kanaat) ve algılardaki çeşitliliğe işaret eder. Birbirleriyle çatışan bu kanaat ve algılar arasında karar vermenin bir yolu olarak gerekçelendirmeye, seçeneklerden birinin diğerleri karşısında rasyonel olarak kanıtlanmasına başvurmak mümkündür. Ama bu noktada ikinci mod devreye girer ve gerekçelendirme ya da temellendirme sürecinin sonu gelmeyen bir süreç olduğunu ortaya koyar: kanıt veya zemin olarak öne sürülen şeyin kendisinin de kanıtlanması gerekiyordur, bu ikinci kanıtın da kanıtlanması gerekiyordur – sonsuza kadar gider bu. Bir başlangıç noktasına ulaşmak mümkün değildir, her temelin kendisinin de temellendirilmesi gerekir, nihai bir temel, gerekçelendirmenin sıfır düzeyi yoktur. Bu durumda bu süreçten vazgeçip temellendirilmemiş bir temeli, kendi kendini gerekçelendirdiği veya bariz doğru olduğu kabul edilen bir başlangıç noktasını hipotez olarak almak denenebilir; diğer önermeler/argümanların bu temellendirilmemiş temel vasıtasıyla temellendirilmesini sağlayacak farazi bir başlangıç noktası seçilebilir. Ama dördüncü mod bu hamleye karşıt bir hipotezle yanıt verir: buna göre, temellendirilmemiş temel olarak seçilen konumun tam karşıtını da seçmek mümkündür. Son olarak beşinci mod geriye kalan tek yolu, döngüsellik yolunu kapatır: kanıtın kendisi kanıtlaması gereken şey yoluyla kanıtlandığında, yani kanıtlanması gereken önermenin kanıtını kanıtlamak için o önermenin doğru varsayıldığı durumda devreye girer ve ikisinin de varsayılmayacağını söyler. Nihai sonuç “yargının askıya alınması”dır.

Bu modlardan, hiçbir iddianın aksiyomatik yoldan, yani bariz doğru kabul edilen bir nokta, istisnai bir hipotez seçip diğer tüm iddiaları bu sıfır noktasına dayandırarak (rasyonel olarak) gerekçelendirilmesinin mümkün olmadığı sonucu çıkar. Burada döngüsellik de çare değildir; yani gerekçelendirilecek bir önermeyi kendi gerekçelendirilişinin dayanağı olarak kullanmak mümkün değildir. Yani çizgisel gerekçelendirmeden başka yol yoktur. Ama çizgisel gerekçelendirmenin sorunu da bir son noktası, bitiş noktası olmamasıdır; gerekçelerin kendilerinin de gerekçelendirilip durması gerekiyordur ve bu sonsuza uzanan bir süreçtir. Yani bu beş mod rasyonel gerekçelendirme diye bir şeyin mümkün olmadığını söylüyor gibidir. Düşünce ve algı nesnelere konusunda birinci ve üçüncü modlarda karşımıza çıkan seçenek bolluğu içinde rasyonel olarak bir karara varmak mümkün değildir.

Bu açıdan bakıldığında, olumlu bir konum veya inanca tutunmayan şüphecilik nasıl iş görür? “Hasmı”nın önkabullerini benimseyerek, yani dogmatik iddiaları kendi kendileri üzerinden ölçerek. Alan Bailey’nin nefis yazısının yardımıyla göstermeye çalıştığım gibi, bunun en bariz örneğidir Agrippa modları (“beş mod”). Bu modların işleyişinde Hegelci içkin okuma prosedürünün belki en erken örneğine şahit oluruz: rasyonalist önkabullerin açıktan sahnelenmesinden, böylece yaslandıkları gerekçelendirme anlayışının çelişkili olduğunun gösterilmesinden ibarettir bu modlar. Dolayısıyla antik şüpheciliğe (tam da evrensel kapsamından dolayı) sıklıkla yöneltilen “kendi kendini çürütme” suçlaması, şüphecilikte anlatılanın kendi hikâyesi olduğunu ıskalayan “dogmatik” bir perspektife dayalıdır. Şüphecilik dogmatizmin kendi hakikatini sahneler. Ama burada çifte bir ironi vardır, zira şüphecilik de çelişkili olduğunu sahnelediği dogmatik gerekçelendirme anlayışını askıya almayı başaramaz en nihayetinde. Bu yüzden tamamen olumsuz bir hareket olarak, “yargının askıya alınması” olarak son bulur. Ve Hegel ile antik şüpheciliğin yollarının ayrıldığı nokta da burasıdır.

Agrippa modlarının uygulanışında antik şüpheci pratikte Hegelcidir elbette, teoride değil. Antik şüphecilikte belirlenimli olumsuzlama ya da içkin okuma prosedürü konusunda yeterli bir kavrayış yoktur; en nihayetinde (hakikat konusunda) karşı çıkar görüldüğü dogmatik önkabullerin ötesine geçemeyişinin sebebi de budur. ‘(Dogmatik) hakikate (yani dışsal bir destek veya gerekçelendirme gerektiren hakikate) ulaşmak mümkün olmadığına göre hakikati dert etmeyi bırakalım’: şüpheci yaklaşımı özetleyen formülasyon bu olabilir. Oysa Hegel’de, bilhassa *Tinin Fenomenolojisi*’nde, yargının askıya alınması değil alıkonulup aşılması söz konusudur: burada son sözü söyleyen olumsuzlama değildir, olumlu bir boyut da ortaya çıkar; içkin değerlendirme iddiaların basitçe olumsuzlanmasıyla değil daha gelişmiş biçimleriyle son bulur. Dolayısıyla, antik şüphecilik ile Hegel arasındaki yakın ilişkiyi göstermeye çalışırken, yollarının ayrıldığı noktayı, aralarındaki ilişkinin boş küme gibi görünmesine yol açan noktayı da yalıtılmak gerekir.

Tezin 2. Bölümü şüpheciliğin antik, radikal biçimine yöneltilebildik eleştiriden yola çıkıyor: rasyonel gerekçelendirme imkânına saldırırken kendisi de rasyonel argümantasyona başvurduğu için kendi kendini çürüttüğünü, baltaladığını söyleyen eleştiriye. Bu bölümde bu kendi kendini çürütme argümanının aslında şüpheciliğin

benimsemediği önkabullere dayalı olduğunu, bunların en nihayetinde şüpheciye yansıtılan dogmatik önkabuller olduğunu göstermeye çalışıyorum. Bu eleştiride görülenin aksine, antik şüpheciliğin uç noktası olan Agrippa modları dogmatizmin kendi benimsediği ilkeler üzerinden, *dışsal önkabuller yansıtılmadan* değerlendirilmesine karşılık gelir. Bu modlar, kendi kendini çürütme eleştirisinin aksine, Pyrrhoncu şüphecilikte asıl *dogmatizmin* kendi kendini çürütmesinin söz konusu olduğunu gösterir. Bu modların dogmatizmi kendi kendini çürütürken gözlemlememizi sağlayan böyle ayrıcalıklı bir perspektif sunabilmesinin nedeni “aşkın” eleştiriyi zımnen reddediyor olmalarıdır. “İçkin” bir yaklaşım veya prosedürün en erken formülasyonlarından, sistematizasyonlarından birini oluşturur bu modlar. Şüphecinin savunmaya çalıştığı ya da diğer konuları yargılamak için bir ölçüt olarak kullandığı olumlu bir başlangıç konumunun olmaması, nihai bir “nesnel” ölçüt tanımaması, neredeyse kendiliğinden içkin bir değerlendirmeye götürür onu.

Bölümün ikinci kısmında bu içkin yaklaşımı felsefe tarihinde en gelişkin temsilcisiyle, Hegel ve *Tinin Fenomenolojisi* ile ilişkilendirmeye çalışıyorum. Hegel merceğinden bakıldığında antik şüphecilik daha olumlu bir ışık altında görünür, kendi kendini çürüttüğüne ilişkin eleştirinin hedefini ıskaladığı fark edilir; ama aynı zamanda, antik şüpheciliğe dönük başka bir “kendi kendini çürütme” argümanı oluşturmak durumunda kalırız: şüpheci prosedürde bir çelişki, hatta dogmatik bir unsur belirir; bu sefer rasyonel gerekçelendirme iddialarına saldırırken rasyonel argümanlar kullanılmasında değil, soruşturmalarının ardından ortaya çıkan “yargının askıya alınması” adımıdır.

Antik şüphecilik ile kendi felsefesi arasındaki bu bağlantı konusunda Hegel de çok açıktır: *Fenomenoloji*'yi, yani “mutlak bilme” ile sona eren bir kitabı “kendi kendini tamamlayan şüphecilik” olarak tayin eder. Hatta “Şüpheciliğin Felsefeyle İlişkisi” başlıklı erken tarihli (1802) bir yazısında şüpheciliği felsefeyle bir olarak görmeyi önerir. Tezin 3. Bölümü bu metin üzerine yakın bir okuma sunduktan sonra, metinde sunulan şüphecilik yorumunu Hegel'in *Felsefe Tarihi* derslerinde (1825-1826) sunduğu, ufak ama önemli farklar içeren yorumla karşılaştırıyor. Hegel'in şüphecilikle ilişkisindeki bu gelişimi ilk olarak *Fenomenoloji*'de ortaya çıkan gerçek

anlamda içkin yaklaşımla bağlantılandırarak, bunun Hegel'in ilk dönem felsefesi bakımından işaret ettiği değişimin altını çizerek sona eriyor.

Hegel'in antik şüphecilik üzerine görüşleri de tamamen övgülerle dolu değildir elbette. "İlişki" yazısı bir düşünüş hikâyesi gibidir: bir zamanlar (Pyrrhon zamanında) felsefeyle birlik içinde olan, on moduyla sağduyuya, olağan anlayışa, duyu algısına karşı duran sahici bir şüphecilik vardı; ama peşinden ayrılık süreci ve felsefe düşmanlığı baş gösterdi ve nihai çöküş noktası olan modern şüphecilikle son buldu bu süreç. Bu hikâyenin en önemli noktası, söz konusu felsefe düşmanlığının, Hegel'e göre, bir yanlış tanımaya dayalı olmasıdır: felsefi önermelere (ya da akıl önermelerine) olağan önermeler (ya da anlak önermeleri) gibi, yani karşıtı olan önermeler gibi muamele edilmiştir. Oysa Hegel eşgeçerlilik ilkesinin hakiki felsefeye karşı kullanılmayacağını, zira kendi karşıtını kendi içinde taşıdığını vurgular; başka bir deyişle, felsefi önermelerde çelişmezlik ilkesinin askıya alınması söz konusudur.

Gelgelelim, *Fenomenoloji* sonrası dönemde Hegel'in antik şüpheciliğe yaklaşımında bir değişiklik olur; bu değişikliği tezde anlak-akıl karşıtlığının alıkonulup aşılması olarak formüle ediyorum. Felsefenin karşıtı olmadığını savunan "İlişki" yazısı buna rağmen felsefe ile felsefe-olmayan arasındaki karşıtlığa dayalıdır; şüpheciliğin ilk biçimine ayrıcalık tanımamasının altında yatan da budur. Oysa *Felsefe Tarihi*'nde şüpheciliğin geç dönemi (ve "beş mod") başlangıcın daha gelişmiş biçimi olarak ayrıcalık kazanır (modern şüpheciliğe ilişkin olumsuz değerlendirme ise varlığını sürdürür). Tezin 3. Bölümü'nde antik şüphecilik yorumunda ortaya çıkan bu değişimin Hegel'in başlangıçlar veya kökenler konusundaki genel yaklaşımında meydana gelen değişimle ilişkilendirilebileceğini savunuyorum; bu değişimin tam ifadesi *Fenomenoloji*'de karşımıza çıkar.

Şüphecilik üzerine bu iki değerlendirme arasındaki farkın açığa çıkardığı en önemli noktalardan biri, Hegel'de "başlangıç"ın veya "köken"in statüsünde meydana gelen değişimdir. "Şüpheciliğin Felsefeyle İlişkisi"nde felsefenin başlangıçta, "düşüş"ten önce bir olduğu (şüpheciliği de içine alan bir bütün olduğu), oluşumunu çoktan tamamlamış olduğu ve tarih boyunca az çok çarpıtılmış biçimler altında farklı felsefelerde kendini gösterdiği düşüncesi hâkimken, Hegel'deki değişimle birlikte felsefe tarihsellik kazanır; daha doğrusu, tarih ile felsefe birbirini dışlamaz hale gelir, felsefe tarihin dışında durmak yerine tarih içinde gelişir. Felsefe yapmaya nasıl

başlanır sorusu üzerinden bakıldığında, Hegel'in yaklaşımındaki bu değişim “güvenli”, “doğru”, her türlü yanlışlıktan ayrılmış bir başlangıç konumundan vazgeçilmesine, “doğru”dan başlamanın her zaman dogmatizm olacağı düşüncesine yol açar.

Tezin 2. Bölümü'nde başlangıç meselesinin Agrippa modları için önemli bir hedef olduğunu görürüz. Rasyonel olarak gerekçelendirilebilir bir başlangıç yapmanın imkânsızlığı bu modlardan çıkan sonuçlardan biridir: hipotez kullanımına ilişkin mod doğrudan bu konuyla ilgili olduğu gibi, ikinci mod da sonu gelmeyen bir gerekçelendirme süreci sunar. Başlangıç meselesi “doğru” bir başlangıç yapma, güvenli bir temel olarak kullanılabilir, şüpheli saldırılara karşı durabilecek bir başlangıç yapma sorunu şeklinde açıklanabilir. Ama mesele başlangıcın içeriğinden ibaret olmadığı için, alternatif ilkeler (*cogito*, bilinç ilkesi . . .) bulmak hiçbir zaman yeterli bir yanıt oluşturmaz. Hegel bu noktada benzeri olmayan bir yanıt sunar: doğru başlangıç arayışından vazgeçip yanlıştan başlar, sağlam olmayan bir temele bel bağlar. Bu hamleyle birlikte başlangıç noktası geleneksel ayrıcalıklarının hepsini kaybeder ve en zayıf, en boş nokta olarak görünmeye başlar; sağlam bir gönderme noktası olmaktan çıkıp olumsuzlanması gereken, olumsuzlanmasıyla birlikte bir gelişim yolu açan bir şey olarak belirir.

Tezin 4. Bölümü, *Fenomenoloji*'deki üç başlangıca – “Önsöz”, “Giriş” ve “Duyu-Kesinliği” – dair bir analiz üzerinden Hegel'de başlangıçların statüsünde nasıl bir değişim meydana geldiğini ayrıntılandırıyor. Hegel'in felsefe yapmaya nasıl başlanır sorusuna verdiği yanıt felsefesinin en özgün katkılarından biri olarak görülebilir. *Fenomenoloji*'deki üç başlangıçta da Hegel'in dogmatik başlangıcın panzehiri olarak öne sürdüğü şüpheli bir hamle, kendi altını oyan bir hamle görürüz. Başlangıç sorununa çözüm olarak başlangıcı ayrıcalıklı statüsünden arındıran bir çözüm sunar üçü de: buna göre, “doğru”dan başlanamaz, “doğru” başlangıçta *olamaz*.

“Dogmatik” diyebileceğimiz felsefe yapma tarzının aksine Hegel'de “doğru” başlangıç diye bir şey yoktur: başlangıçta duran şey her şeyin üstüne bina edildiği bir temel ya da zemin değildir. Daha doğrusu, bir başlangıçtır, bir kökendir, ama sağlam bir kaya değildir; aksine, yerinden *kaldırılması* gereken ilk kayadır tam da. “Mutlak bilme”ye giden yol bu kayanın kendini imha etmesiyle açılır; daha ilk bölümün ilk sayfasında başlangıç noktasının bize en zayıf, en sefil bilgi biçimini sunduğunu

okuruz – ama başlangıç olma statüsünü ortadan kaldırmaz bu. Hegel felsefesinin başlangıç noktasında şüpheli bir saldırının anlamsız olmasının nedeni budur: bu felsefenin kendisi başlangıcına dönük şüpheli bir saldırıyla başlar.

Başlangıç meselesine verilen bu yanıt ile içkin yaklaşım arasındaki bağlantıyı görmek zor değildir: *Fenomenoloji* tıpkı bir şüpheli gibi, savunulacak veya saldırılacak bir konum olmadan, hakikat meselesine verilmiş bir yanıtı olmadan başlar; gerçeklikle en dolaysız temas olduğunu iddia eden bilinç biçimiyle ve onun önkabulleriyle yola çıkar. Söz konusu bilinç biçimini bilgi iddialarında bulunurken sahneler ve kendi ağırlığını kaldıramadığını, kendi ölçütünü karşılayamadığını gösterir. Duyu-kesinliğine karşı bir argümantasyon değildir burada söz konusu olan: duyu-kesinliğinin kendini kanıtlamaya çalıştığını, performans baskısı altında, bir gidiş geliş hareketi içinde kendini değiştirdiğini ve sonunda bir geçişin ortaya çıktığını görürüz. Duyu-kesinliğinin kendi kendini çürüttüğü bir drama seyrediyoruz. Bu boyutu Agrippa modlarında da tespit etmek mümkündür. Sextus bu modları bir diyalog biçiminde sunar: dogmatist bir şey söyler, modlardan biri buna yanıt verir, dogmatist başka bir yol dener ve yine tıkanır – modlar birbirleriyle bağlantı içinde iş görürler, dogmatistin muhtemel manevralarının hepsini hesaba katarlar.

Fenomenoloji şüpheli gibi başlar, ama şüphelilikle kalmaz. Salt olumsuz bir hareket olarak devam etmez, her olumsuzlamada olumlu bir boyut da ortaya çıkar. İçkin olumsuzlama bir boşluk, bir hiçlik üretmez, zira olumsuzlanan bilinç biçimi hakikatini farkında olmadan kendi içinde taşıyordur. İçkin mesafe, sahneleme prosedüründe kendini gösteren mesafe, bir bilinç biçiminin *kendisiyle* arasındaki mesafe hakikati mümkün kılan şeydir; yahut “bir” bir olamadığı, kendi kendine özdeş olamadığı için hakikat diye bir şey vardır. Başka bir deyişle, yukarıda bir yerde duran, dışarıdan bir bakışla kavranabilen bir hakikate yer yoktur burada. Ama bu hakikat bilincin ister istemez kör kaldığı bir şeydir.

Tezin 5. Bölümü bu kendi kendini baltalama prosedürünün olumlu boyutunu göstermeye çalışıyor. Sadece olumsuz yoldan iş gören ve bu şekilde her türlü iddia/önerme karşısında yargının askıya alınmasıyla son bulan şüpheli prosedürün aksine, *Fenomenoloji*'deki Hegelci prosedür her bilinç biçiminde bir parça hakikate toslar. Ama bu “parça”, bu “hakikat” açıkta, ortalık yerde ifade bulmasına rağmen, bilincin ister istemez kör kaldığı bir şeydir; bu yüzden kendi hakikati bilince dışsal

bir şey gibi, bir “başkalık” gibi görünür. Bu hakikatin görünürlük kazanması için fenomenolojik gözlemci ve bilinç biçimlerinin ortaya konacağı bir sahne şarttır. Bilincin belli bilme konfigürasyonları üzerinden tanımlanan biçimlerinin her biri sırayla sahneye çıkıp bizim için bir performans ortaya koyarlar. Bu performans ya da dramatisasyon uğrağı ikincil bir şey değildir; *Fenomenoloji*'de temelsiz, dogmatik ölçütlerden uzak durarak başvurulabilecek tek muhtemel sınamayı oluşturur.

Bu da bizi fenomenolojik gözlemcinin oynadığı role getirir: sahnelemede – ve *sadece* sahnelemede – en nihayetinde her bilinç biçiminin kendi içinde bölünmüş olduğuna şahit oluruz. Kavramsal artikülasyon kendi başına bu bölünmeyi açığa vuramaz; bunun için bir “başkalaşma”, başka bir sahneye aktarılma şarttır. Kavram esas doğasını başka bir düzeyde, sahneleme düzeyinde açığa vurur; yahut örnek bize örneği olduğu perspektiften daha fazlasını öğretir.

Doğru ile yanlış arasındaki bu dolaşıklık, doğrunun ortaya çıkışının yanlış tanımaya bağlı olması Hegel'in hem Önsöz'de ifade ettiği bir şeydir, hem de *Fenomenoloji*'nin yapısına işlenmiş durumdadır. Duyu-kesinliğinden başlayıp mutlak bilmeye uzanan yolda bu düşüncenin tekrar tekrar sahneye konduğunu görürüz. İlk bölümde kendini gösteren içkin mesafe ya da özdeşsizlik ya da çelişki işlenmeye, geliştirilmeye devam eder – kaçınılmaz olduğu fark edilinceye kadar, üstesinden gelme umutları tamamen tükeninceye kadar. Mutlak bilme de tüm bu çabaya bir nokta koyar sadece.

Yani Hegel'de pozitif bir model, mevcut durumu ölçmek için kullanılacak ideal bir durum, normatif bir model yoktur. Ölçütün bilinç figürlerinin kendi içinde yatıyor olması bilincin içeriden bölünmüş olduğu, kendi içinde “çift” olduğu anlamına gelir – ne dediği, kullandığı ifade sözceme süreciyle karşılaştırılır. Hegel'de (sahneleme olarak) örneklendirmenin olağan örnek kullanımından çok farklı işleminin nedeni de budur. 5. Bölüm'de bu farkı Kant'ın örneklendirme anlayışıyla karşıtlığı üzerinden göstermeye, *Fenomenoloji*'den ve başka yerlerden buna dair örnekler sunmaya çalışıyorum. Bölüm sonunda “son”lar üzerine kısa bir tartışma sunuluyor, *Fenomenoloji*'nin son bölümü olan meşhur “mutlak bilme”yi tamamen boş, içeriksiz, biçimsel bir dokunuş, sadece geriye dönük bir ok olarak gören bir okumaya işaret ediliyor.

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YAZARIN / AUTHOR

Soyadı / Surname : Aksoy
Adı / Name : Barış Engin
Bölümü / Department : Felsefe / Philosophy

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