

## **Part I** Genealogy and Magnanimity: The Allegory of the Valet

### Plan for Part I:

- a) *Neiderträchtigkeit* and *Edelmütigkeit*
- b) *Kammerdiener* v. hero passage
- c) *Kammerdiener* as allegorical for:
  - alienation
  - genealogy,
  - reductive naturalism, and
  - individual egoism.
- d) Four ways of understanding the difference:
  - Cognitive, objective: matter of fact.
  - Cognitive, subjective: stances.
  - Recognitive and practical: making rather than finding disparity/unity.
  - Implicit: Finding and making explicit an antecedent implicit commitment.

An important perspective on the concept of alienation is provided by two meta-attitudes that are in play throughout the final two-thirds of the *Spirit* chapter. Hegel's terms for these attitudes is "edelmütig" and "niederträchtig."

The *edelmütig* meta-attitude takes it that there really are norms that attitudes are directed toward and answer to. It treats norms as genuinely efficacious, as really making a difference to what individuals do. It understands attitudes as norm-governed, in the dual sense that norms provide standards for assessments of the correctness of attitudes, and that attitudes are subjunctively sensitive to the contents of the norms.

The *niederträchtig* meta-attitude sees only normative attitudes. The norms are construed as at most adverbial modifications of the attitudes: a way of talking about the contents of those attitudes by assigning them virtual objects. *Niederträchtigkeit* is the purest expression of the alienated character of modern normativity (hence culture, self-consciousness, and community).

The *Kammerdiener* passage on *Niederträchtigkeit*:

"[I]t holds to the other aspect . . . and explains [the action] as resulting from an intention different from the action itself, and from selfish motives. Just as every action is capable of being looked at from the point of view of conformity to duty, so too can it be considered from the point of view of the particularity [of the doer]; for, qua action, it is the actuality of the individual. This judging of the action thus takes it out of its outer existence and reflects it into its inner aspect, or into the form of its own particularity. If the action is accompanied by

fame, then it knows this inner aspect to be a desire for fame. If it is altogether in keeping with the station of the individual, without going beyond this station, and of such a nature that the individuality does not possess its station as a character externally attached to it, but through its own self gives filling to this universality, thereby showing itself capable of a higher station, then the inner aspect of the action is judged to be ambition, and so on. Since, in the action as such, the doer attains to a vision of himself in objectivity, or to a feeling of self in his existence, and thus to enjoyment, the inner aspect is judged to be an urge to secure his own happiness, even though this were to consist merely in an inner moral conceit, in the enjoyment of being conscious of his own superiority and in the foretaste of a hope of future happiness. No action can escape such judgement, for duty for duty's sake, this pure purpose, is an unreality; it becomes a reality in the deed of an individuality, and the action is thereby charged with the aspect of particularity. **No man is a hero to his valet; not, however, because the man is not a hero, but because the valet—is a valet**, whose dealings are with the man, not as a hero, but as one who eats, drinks, and wears clothes, in general, with his individual wants and fancies. Thus, for the judging consciousness, there is no action in which it could not oppose to the universal aspect of the action, the personal aspect of the individuality, and play the part of the moral valet towards the agent.”  
[PG 665; emphasis added]

How should norms (what is or is not appropriate, correct, obligatory, or permissible) or normative *statuses* (responsibility, authority, commitment, or entitlement), on the one hand, be understood as related to normative *attitudes* (*taking* performances to be appropriate, correct, obligatory, or permissible, *acknowledging* or *attributing* responsibility, authority, commitment, or entitlement), on the other? The traditional, premodern view saw norms as independent and attitudes as dependent. The objective norms have authority over the subjective attitudes of individuals, which are supposed merely to reflect them, acknowledge their authority, apply them in deliberation and assessment, judgment and action. The modern view sees attitudes as independent, and norms as dependent. The subjective attitudes individuals adopt *institute* norms.

The *Kammerdiener* stands for a *niederträchtig*, relentlessly naturalistic alternative to this *edelmütig*, normative description of concept use. In place of the picture of “heroic” practical sensitivity to norms—trying, in deliberation and assessment, to determine what is really correct, what one ought to do, what one is obliged to do (what “duty” consists in), acknowledging genuine normative constraint on one’s attitudes—this meta-attitude appeals *only* to attitudes, which are not construed as the acknowledgment of any normative constraint on or authority over those attitudes. Reasons are traded for causes.

The general thought is that the possibility of offering a certain kind of *genealogical* account of the process by which a conceptual content developed or was determined can seem to undercut the *rational* bindingness of the norms that have that content.

The first way of understanding the relation between the *edelmütig* normativist and the *niederträchtig* naturalist is as a cognitive disagreement about a matter of objective fact. They disagree about the correct answer to the question: Are there norms, or not?

This objectivist, cognitivist way of understanding the status of the two meta-attitudes toward norms and normative attitudes is not the only one available, however. It is possible to adopt instead an almost diametrically opposed subjectivist meta-meta-attitude. According to this way of thinking, the normativist and the naturalist employ different vocabularies in describing the world. Using one rather than the other is adopting a *stance*. The two stances are incompatible; one cannot adopt them both. One either uses normative vocabulary or one does not. But both of them are available, and both of them are legitimate.

“Just as every action is capable of being looked at from the point of view of conformity to duty, so too can it be considered from the point of view of the particularity [of the doer].” [PG 665]

“No action can escape such judgement,” there is no action in which it could not oppose to the universal aspect of the action, the personal aspect of the individuality, and play the part of the moral valet towards the agent.” [PG 665]

“Nature and the world or history of spirit are the two realities. . . . The ultimate aim and business of philosophy is to reconcile thought or the Notion with reality.” [Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 3, p. 545]

“The consciousness that judges in this way is itself base [*niederträchtig*], because it divides up the action, producing and holding fast to the disparity of the action with itself.” [PG 666]

The claim is that adopting the *niederträchtig* normative meta-attitude institutes a kind of normativity that has a distinctive, defective structure. To say that is to say that *Niederträchtigkeit* is in the first instance a kind of *recognition*, rather than of *cognition*.

“Faith . . . receives at [Enlightenment’s] hands nothing but wrong; for Enlightenment distorts all the moments of faith, changing them into something different from what they are in it.” [PG 563]

“To faith, [Enlightenment] seems to be a perversion and a lie because it points out the otherness of its moments; in doing so, it seems directly to make something else out of them than they are in their separateness.” [PG 564]

The third construal of the *niederträchtig* and *edelmütig* meta-attitudes toward norms and normative attitudes is then that they are recognitive attitudes that have the effect of *practical commitments*. Adopting the *edelmütig* stance of spirit is committing oneself to *making* what we are doing being binding ourselves by conceptual norms, so acknowledging the authority of such

norms, by practically *taking* it that that is what we are doing—by recognitively treating ourselves and our fellows as doing that. On this view normativity (which, because the norms in question are for Hegel all *conceptually* contentful, is the same phenomenon as rationality) is not feature of our practices independent of our practical meta-attitude toward it. “To him who looks at the world rationally, the world looks rationally back,” Hegel says. Normativity and rationality are *products* of our *edelmütig* meta-attitudes, of our practically taking or treating what we are doing (recognizing each other) *as* acknowledging rational commitments. Spirit exists insofar as we *make* it exist by *taking* it to exist: by understanding what we are doing in normative, rational terms. We make the world rational by adopting the recognitively structured constellation of commitments and responsibilities I have—following Hegel’s usage in connection with the community Faith is committed to instituting—denominated *trust*.

*If* the determinate contentfulness of the thoughts and intentions even of the *niederträchtig* is in fact intelligible *only* from an *edelmütig* perspective, *then* anyone who in practice treats what he is doing as judging and acting is implicitly committed thereby to *Edelmütigkeit*. The apparent parity of the two metanormative stances is an illusion. No genuine choice between them is possible. By talking (engaging in discursive practices) at all, we have already implicitly endorsed and adopted one of them, whether we explicitly realize that or (like the *Kammerdiener*) not. On this reading, what Hegel is asking us to do is only to *explicitly* acknowledge theoretical and practical commitments we have already *implicitly* undertaken just by taking part in discursive practices—which is to say, by being acculturated. Explicitly adopting the *edelmütig* practical-recognitive attitude is accordingly just achieving a certain kind of self-consciousness: realizing something that is already true of ourselves.

## **Part II** Confession and Forgiveness, Recollection and Trust

### Plan for Part II:

- a) *Neiderträchtig* hard-hearted judgment assessing the agent as guilty.
- b) Confession by the agent, agreeing with hard-hearted judge.
- c) *Edelmütig* forgiveness of agent by judge.
- d) Recollection is what one must *do* to forgive.
- e) Confessing inadequacy of one’s forgiveness.
- f) Both confession and forgiveness are mutual.

The text that describes the transition to the third stage in the development of Spirit in the concluding eleven paragraphs of the *Spirit* chapter takes the form of a parable, a narrative recounting sequential stages in the relationship between an “evil consciousness” [PG 661] and a “hard-hearted judge” [PG 669–670]: evil [PG 661–662], judgment [PG 662–666], confession [666], refusal of reciprocal confession [PG 667–668], the breaking of the hard heart and confession by the judge [PG 669], forgiveness [PG 669–671], and the achievement of a new

kind of community. (“The reconciling Yea, in which the two ‘I’s let go their antithetical existence, is the existence of the ‘I’ which has expanded into a duality.” [PG 671])

The consciousness that judges in this way is itself base [niederträchtig], because it divides up the action, producing and holding fast to the disparity of the action with itself. [PG 666]

“Now the judging consciousness does not stop short at the former aspect of duty, at the doer’s knowledge of it that this is his duty, and the fact that the doer knows it to be his duty, the condition and status of his reality. On the contrary, it holds to the other aspect, looks at what the action is in itself, and explains it as resulting from an intention different from the action itself, and from selfish motives. Just as every action is capable of being looked at from the point of view of conformity to duty, so too can it be considered from the point of view of the particularity [of the doer]. . . . No action can escape such judgement, for duty for duty’s sake, this pure purpose, is an unreality; it becomes a reality in the deed of an individuality, and the action is thereby charged with the aspect of particularity. . . . Thus, for the judging consciousness, there is no action in which it could not oppose to the universal aspect of the action, the personal aspect of the individuality, and play the part of the moral valet towards the agent.” [PG 665]

The judge still takes it that he can “oppose to the universal aspect of the action, the personal aspect of the individuality,” because *he* still perceives that universal aspect. So the assessor and attributor of actions applies quite different standards to his own activities than he does to those of the ones he assesses. This is an *asymmetrical* *recognitive* relation.

The first step toward a symmetrical, genuinely reciprocal interpersonal recognitive relation is taken by the individual who is judged, who *confesses* its particularity and the contingency of its attitudes.

“Perceiving this identity and giving utterance to it, he confesses this to the other, and equally expects that the other, having in fact put himself on the same level, will also respond in words in which he will give utterance to this identity with him, and expects that this mutual recognition will now exist in fact.” [PG 666]

“The confession of the one who is wicked, “I am so,” is not followed by a reciprocal similar confession. This was not what the judging consciousness meant: quite the contrary. It repels this community of nature, and is the hard heart that is for itself, and which rejects any continuity with the other.” [PG 667]

“As a result, the situation is reversed. The one who made the confession sees himself repulsed, and sees the other to be in the wrong when he refuses to let his own inner being come forth into the outer existence of speech, when the other contrasts the beauty of his own soul with the penitent’s wickedness, yet confronts the confession of the penitent with his own

stiff-necked unrepentant character, mutely keeping himself to himself and refusing to throw himself away for someone else.” [PG 667]

“It is thus its own self which hinders that other’s return from the deed into the spiritual existence of speech and into the identity of Spirit, and by this hardness of heart produces the disparity which still exists.” [PG 667]

The stage is set for the transition to the next and final stage in the development of self-conscious Spirit by the allegorical judge traversing the four meta-meta-attitudes laid out earlier:

- a) First, the judge acknowledges that he is adopting a *stance*, rather than simply acknowledging a *fact*;
- b) Second, the judge acknowledges that the stance is a *recognitive* one;
- c) So the judge acknowledges that which stance he adopts *produces* a community of a certain kind;
- d) Next, the judge must acknowledge that acting and judging (acknowledging and attributing, deliberating and assessing) implicitly presuppose (are intelligible only in the context of) *edelmütig* recognitive stances.
- e) Finally, the judge must explicitly adopt such a recognitive stance and institute an *edelmütig* recognitive community.

“The forgiveness which it extends to the other is the renunciation of itself, of its unreal essential being which it put on a level with that other which was a real action, and acknowledges that what thought characterized as bad, viz. action, is good; or rather it abandons this distinction of the specific thought and its subjectively determined judgement, just as the other abandons its subjective characterization of action. The word of reconciliation is the objectively existent Spirit, which beholds the pure knowledge of itself qua universal essence, in its opposite, in the pure knowledge of itself qua absolutely self-contained and exclusive individuality—a reciprocal recognition which is absolute Spirit.” [PG 670]

Forgiving, like confessing, is a *speech* act, something done in *language*. It is doing something by saying something. That is why Hegel talks about it in terms of the “word of reconciliation [Versöhnung].” [PG 670] Indeed, all the recognitive relations discussed in the last part of *Spirit* are linguistic performances—from the distinctive language by which the lacerated consciousness gives utterance to its disrupted state to the warrant of sincerity and conviction that is the core of the conscientious consciousness’s claim to justification for what it does. “Here again, then, we see language as the existence of Spirit. Language is self-consciousness existing for others.” [PG 652]

“Spirit, in the absolute certainty of itself, is lord and master over every deed and actuality, and can cast them off, and make them as if they had never happened.” [PG 667]

**“The wounds of the Spirit heal, and leave no scars behind.** The deed is not imperishable; it is taken back by Spirit into itself, and the aspect of individuality present in it, whether as intention or as an existent negativity and limitation, straightway vanishes.” [PG 669]

*Forgiveness* is a kind of *recollection* (*Erinnerung*—cf. [PG 808]). What one must do in order to forgive the confessor for what is confessed is to offer a rational reconstruction of a tradition to which the concept-application (theoretically in judgment or practically in intention) in question belongs, in which it figures as an expressively progressive episode.

Characterizing recollecting as forgiving emphasizes that it is not only a *cognitive* and *practical* enterprise—reconstruing judgments and actions—but also the adoption of a *recognitive* stance toward the ones whose judgments and actions are so construed.

“But just as the former has to surrender its one-sided, unacknowledged existence of its particular being-for-self, so too must this other set aside its one-sided, unacknowledged judgement. And just as the former exhibits the power of Spirit over its actual existence, so does this other exhibit the power of Spirit over its determinate concept [seinen bestimmten Begriff].” [PG 669]

“The forgiveness which it extends to the other is the renunciation of itself, of its unreal essential being which it put on a level with that other which was a real action, and acknowledges that what thought characterized as bad, viz. action, is good; or rather it abandons this distinction of the specific thought and its *subjectively* determined judgement, just as the other abandons its subjective characterization of action. The word of reconciliation is the *objectively* existent Spirit, which beholds the pure knowledge of itself qua universal essence, in its opposite, in the pure knowledge of itself qua absolutely self-contained and exclusive individuality—**a reciprocal recognition which is *absolute Spirit*.**” [PG 670]

The authority of the present judge to recognize is balanced by her responsibility to the past. For her entitlement to that authority derives wholly from her claim to be not innovating (clothing contingencies of her own attitudes in the guise of necessity), but *only* applying the conceptual norms she has inherited. The quality of her recollective rational reconstrual of the tradition is the only warrant for the authority she claims for her own assessments and applications of the concept. And that responsibility of the present judge to the past—to the actual content of the concept in question—is administered by future judges, who will assess in turn the precedential authority of the present judge’s construal of precedent, in terms of its fidelity to the content they recollectively discern as having been all along implicitly setting the standards of correctness of applications and assessments of applications of the concept. So the recognitive authority of the present judge with respect to past judges is conditioned on its recognition in turn by future ones.

Trusting is both acknowledging the authority of those trusted to forgive and invoking their responsibility to do so. Prospective trust that one will be forgiven for what one confesses is the recognitive attitude complementary to forgiveness. Together these reciprocal practical attitudes produce a community with a symmetrical, *edelmütig* recognitive structure.

“Whomsoever I trust, his certainty of himself is for me the certainty of myself; I recognize in him my own being-for-self, know that he acknowledges it and that it is for him purpose and essence.” [PG 549]

“With this, we already have before us the Notion of Spirit. What still lies ahead for consciousness is the experience of what Spirit is—this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: “I” that is “We” and “We” that is “I.”” [PG 177]

The explicit acknowledgment of this sharing of responsibility for what is done between the confessing and trusting agent and the forgiving community expresses an expanded practical conception of how *happenings* qualify as *doings*. The unity of actions (what defines their identity) that both the agent who trusts and the community that forgives identify with and produce by adopting these reciprocal recognitive stances (relinquishing claims to merely particular subjective authority not balanced by a correlative responsibility) is a complex, internally articulated unity that comprises both aspects of the disparity that action involves. For it combines as essential, mutually presupposing aspects the action as something that qualifies as such only because it has both specifications under which it is intentional and consequential specifications in terms of actual effects that unroll unforeseeably to the infinite horizon. Both the prospective exercise of authority by the agent and the retrospective exercise of authority by the forgiving community are required to bring about this unity: to make what *happens* into something *done*.