

February 24, 2019

**82<sup>rd</sup> Annual Marquette University Aquinas Lecture  
February 24, 2019**

**Heroism and Magnanimity:  
The Post-Modern Form of Self-Conscious Agency<sup>1</sup>**

**I. Introduction: Three Ages of Spirit**

Hegel thinks that the most important event in human history—the single biggest thing that ever happened to us—is the extended transition from long-standing traditional forms of life to distinctively modern ones. The great thinkers of the Enlightenment—and in particular the philosophers in the canonical tradition that leads from Descartes to Kant—worked out ideas that articulate the characteristically modern understanding both of our cognitive, practical, and political activity, and of the world we know about, and act in and on. But Hegel was the first to see modernity whole: the first to see those new Enlightenment modes of *understanding* as of a piece with the massive rolling *practical* changes in social, political, and economic institutions that gave rise to them and to which they gave voice—the first to see the Enlightenment as the form of consciousness and self-consciousness appropriate to a new world and a new way of being in the world.

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<sup>1</sup> This lecture is adapted from *A Spirit of Trust: A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology*, forthcoming from Harvard University Press, 2019.

To do that, he introduces and develops an original conception of the *subject* of this great sea-change: what he calls “*Geist*,” Spirit. *Geist* is us as discursive beings, knowers and doers, and it includes all of our norm-governed doings, thinkings, sayings, practices, and institutions, and all of their products.

Prelapsarian traditional understanding took normative statuses to be features of the objective world. How it is proper to behave, how things ought to be done, what things are “fitting,” proper relations of subordination and superiority are all thought of as central features of how things anyway are, like the weight of stones or the color of the sky. People’s stations and their corresponding duties are construed as being what they are antecedently to and independently of the practical attitudes of those whose stations and duties they are. It is the job of individual subjects to reflect those self-standing normative statuses in their attitudes, to shape their acknowledgements and attributions of authority and responsibility so that they fit the pre-existing normative facts. The principle that animates traditional *sittlich* forms of *Geist* is commitment to the *norm-governedness* or *status-dependence* of *normative attitudes*.

The contrasting core modern idea, articulated and developed by Enlightenment thinkers, is that there were no normative statuses of subordination and superiority, no authority and responsibility, until people started practically *taking* or *treating* each other *as* subordinates and superiors, authoritative and responsible. (“When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?”) It is the idea of the *attitude-dependence* of *normative statuses*. This idea takes a particularly clear and explicit form in social contract theories of political obligation. For there, *attitudes* of consent by the governed are treated as essential to the legitimate *authority*, the normative *status*, of those who govern, epitomized in the model of instituting normative statuses

of reciprocal obligation by attitudes of intending to be bound, manifested practically by entering into an explicit contract or compact. On this model, norms are not found, but made. Normative statuses are instituted by social normative practical attitudes such as promising, agreeing, or contracting.

Hegel both sees the replacement of traditional thought, institutions, and selves by modern ones as a decisive, irrevocable advance, and diagnoses it as a disruption that inevitably incurs substantial costs. The cover-term he coins to characterize that unavoidable loss is “alienation,” *Entfremdung*. Although it has psychological consequences, alienation is not at base a psychological phenomenon. It is a distinctive metaphysical structure of normativity itself. It is a structure characterized by the absence of the *bindingness* of norms, a structure in which attitudes are no longer answerable or responsible to norms. The largest philosophical lesson Hegel thinks we can learn from thinking about the great structural shift of *Geist* from its premodern to its modern form is the result of the detailed interplay of gain and loss, advance and retreat, that characterizes that transition. The right understanding of how these interwoven strands are related points the way, he thinks, towards the *third* stage in the development of *Geist*.

Such a third structure of *Geist* must retain the irreversible progress in self-consciousness of ourselves as free that consists in realizing the attitude-dependence of normative statuses, while re-achieving practical *sittlich* appreciation of the status-dependence of normative attitudes: the way in which normative attitudes are obliged to respect and reflect norms that serve as standards of assessment for the correctness of those attitudes. *Sittlichkeit* is practically appreciating and responding to the obligation to conform our attitudes to the actual normative statuses those attitudes acknowledge and attribute. This is to aim at acknowledging and attributing what we

and others are *really* committed and entitled to, our actual responsibilities and authority. It is the loss of this *sittlich* practical appreciation of the status-dependence of normative attitudes that Hegel denominates “alienation,” and takes to be a hallmark of modernity. What we are alienated *from* is the norms that we have made, and that make us what we are.

So there is a tension between the claim (central to modernity) that normative statuses are instituted by normative attitudes and the claim (central to premodern understanding) that normative statuses provide the standards for assessment of the correctness of attitudes. How can we both make the norms and be genuinely governed by them? (Here one might think of Wittgenstein’s observation that if “whatever is going to seem right to me is right...that only means that here we can’t talk about ‘right.’”<sup>2</sup>) The third, postmodern stage of *Geist* is defined by its reconciliation of these opposed insights. How does Hegel propose that these two criteria of adequacy on an account of the relation between normative attitudes and normative statuses can both be satisfied? The short answer, I think, is that our *past* attitudes institute norms that provide the normative standards of assessment for our *current* attitudes. Such a slogan conceals the rich fine-structure of his account, however.

He thinks that we institute norms that govern our attitudes by engaging in a special kind of process: *recollection* [*Erinnerung*]. Recollection retrospectively rationally reconstructs the prior applications of a concept, picking out an expressively progressive trajectory through them. To say that the rationally reconstructed tradition is “expressively progressive” is to say that it takes the form of the gradual emergence into explicitness of a determinate conceptual content,

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<sup>2</sup> *PI* §258.

which provides a norm governing applications of that concept. That content is exhibited as having been all along implicit in actual applications of the concept. Each application reveals some contour of the concept. Recollection is a distinctive form of concept-constitutive practical rationality. It is a semantogenic doing: a kind of *making* that is the *finding* of determinate conceptual content. (It is, *inter alia*, the form of rationality Hegel himself practiced in inventing/discovering the concept of *Geist*.)

The process of recollection adopts an essentially *retrospective* perspective: “The owl of Minerva flies only at dusk....” It is this process that turns a mere *past* into a *history*, something with the edifying narrative structure of a *tradition*: a past as *comprehended*.<sup>3</sup> It is “Reason’s march through history.” The idea of recollective rationality is one of Hegel’s orienting Big Ideas.

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<sup>3</sup> Hegel concludes the *Phenomenology* by emphasizing the constitutive significance of recollection for the higher sort of self-consciousness working through the book is supposed to make accessible to us [PG §808] :  
As its fulfilment consists in perfectly knowing what it is, in knowing its substance, this knowing is its withdrawal into itself in which it abandons its outer existence and gives its existential shape over to **recollection**. Thus absorbed in itself, it is sunk in the night of its self-consciousness; but in that night its vanished outer existence is preserved, and this transformed existence—the former one, but now reborn of the Spirit's knowledge—is the new existence, a new world and a new shape of Spirit. In the immediacy of this new existence the Spirit has to start afresh to bring itself to maturity as if, for it, all that preceded were lost and it had learned nothing from the experience of the earlier Spirits. But **recollection**, the inwardizing, of that experience, has preserved it and is the inner being, and in fact the higher form of the substance.

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The goal, Absolute Knowing, or Spirit that knows itself as Spirit, has for its path the **recollection** of the Spirits as they are in themselves and as they accomplish the organization of their realm. Their preservation, regarded from the side of their free existence appearing in the form of contingency, is History; but regarded from the side of their [philosophically] comprehended organization, it is the Science of Knowing in the sphere of appearance: the two together, comprehended History, form alike the inwardizing and the Calvary of absolute Spirit, the actuality, truth, and certainty of his throne, without which he would be lifeless and alone.

## II. Traditional and Modern Practical Conceptions of Agency

In the rest of this talk I want to drill down by looking at a special case of that recollective reconciliation of traditional and modern structures of norm-governed and norm-instituting practices, and at the sort of understanding of them that is enabled by the metaconcepts of Hegelian *Vernunft*. The particular dimension of our *geistig* activities I will address is *intentional agency* and the self-conscious understanding of it, both theoretical and practical, that is an essential aspect of it.

Hegel calls the traditional *sittlich* practical understanding of intentional agency “heroic.” By this he means that agents take responsibility for their doings under *all* the descriptions true of those doings. No normative distinction is made between what was done intentionally, or what the agent knew he was doing, and what he did unintentionally and without realizing that that is what he was doing. Thus Oedipus is held responsible for killing his father and marrying his mother, even though he did not intend to do those things and was not aware that that is what he was doing. For those are still things he *did*, not just things that *happened*. (Anscombe: “I do what happens.”) Oedipus did intend to, and did, kill *that man* and marry *that woman*. On the traditional, heroic conception it is the normative statuses that matter, not the agent’s attitudes. Parricide and incest *ought not to be*. One should not act so as to incur the normative status of father-killer and mother-fucker. The “ought-to-do”s governing attitudes are just to be read off of the “ought-to-be”s that articulate statuses. Attitudes of knowing and intending matter only in determining *that* one is responsible for a deed, not for determining *what* one thereby did and is responsible for doing. The *status* one acquires by doing something is not itself construed as

mitigated by or otherwise relativized in any way to the *attitudes* of intending and knowing in virtue of which it counts as one's doing in the first place. That one did not mean to do what one did under some descriptions of it can engender *sympathy*, but it cannot diminish *responsibility*.

It is for this reason, Hegel thinks, that the traditional *heroic* practical conception of agency is inevitably always also a *tragic* conception. The tragedy does not consist in the transcendent awfulness of the outcome (which is pretty much what current usage has whittled the concept of tragedy down to). It consists in the fact that in acting at all one puts oneself at the mercy of forces outside of one's knowledge and control. Those alien forces determine the content of one's actual deed, what one turns out to have done and to be responsible for having done. Tragedy is the submission of the heroic agent to *fate*. The idea of fate does not invoke some sort of determinism or antecedent necessitation of outcome, but just those dark (because unknowable and uncontrollable) forces that engulf and overwhelm what is launched by one's limited knowledge and intention, transforming it into deeds that reach far beyond those attitudes into an unforeseeable status of culpability. (Hegel quotes in this connection the proverb "When a flung stone leaves the hand, it belongs to the devil.") Shouldering the responsibility that fate in this sense brings down upon one who acts is tragic heroism. This is the intimate, mutually presupposing relation between *tragedy*, *fate*, and *heroism* that articulates the structure of ancient Greek normativity and *Geist*.

By contrast to this tragic practical conception of agency in terms of heroic identification with and submission to one's fate, the modern conception of agency is distinguished precisely by the idea that agents are genuinely responsible for, and so should be held responsible for, only

what they *intended* to do and *knew* they were doing. Davidson well articulates the distinction at the core of the modern conception when he distinguishes, among the specifications of things one has genuinely *done*, between descriptions under which what one did is *intentional* (turning on the light) and descriptions of what one did that are merely *consequential* (alerting the burglar, of whom one was unaware). What makes an event a doing at all, something that is imputable to an agent, is that it is intentional under *some* description. But that event then counts as one's *doing* under *all* its specifications, including those that pick it out by consequences that were not intended or foreseen by the agent. It is of the essence of the modern idea of practical responsibility that acknowledgments and attributions of the normative *status* of responsibility are conditioned by and proportional to the agent's *attitudes* of intending and believing. It is now seen to be unjust to condemn or blame someone for what they did because it satisfies consequential descriptions under which the agent did not intend it and could not foresee it. Those *attitudes* of agents, what they intend and believe, are taken to play constitutive roles in determining their normative *status* as culpable or admirable. This conception of responsibility as proportioned to intention and knowledge is the application to the practical understanding of intentional agency of the distinctively modern appreciation of the attitude-dependence of normative statuses.

The core of distinctively modern practical self-consciousness is for Hegel a special way of understanding what he calls “the “distinction that action implies”: “that between what is purposed and what is accomplished in the realm of existence.”<sup>4</sup> It is to distinguish two senses in

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<sup>4</sup> RP§114Z.



which agents do things, a narrower and a wider one, and to restrict responsibility to what is done in the narrow sense.

It is the right of the of the will to recognize as its *action* [Handlung], and to accept *responsibility* for, only those aspects of its *deed* [Tat] which it knew to be presupposed within its end, and which were present in its *purpose* [Vorsatz]—I can be made *accountable* for a deed only if *my will was responsible* for it—the *right of knowledge*.<sup>5</sup>

There are “two aspects possessed by the practical consciousness, intention and deed (what is 'meant' or intended by the deed and the deed itself).<sup>6</sup>

[T]hough any alteration as such, which is set on foot by the subjects' action, is its deed [Tat], still the subject does not for that reason recognize it as its action [Handlung], but only admits as its own that existence in the deed which lay in its knowledge and will, which was its purpose. Only for that does it hold itself responsible.<sup>7</sup>

Hegel does not consider the possibility of intention and knowledge coming apart from one another. It is interesting to note in this connection (particularly in the light of the aegis under which the present work is being presented) that Thomas Aquinas sees an important difference in their significance for attributions of moral responsibility between characterizations of an action which the agent endorsed as intentional and consequential characterizations the agent merely foresaw. His famous “doctrine of double effect” asserts that some characterizations of doings in

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<sup>5</sup> *RP*§117.

<sup>6</sup> *PG*§319.

<sup>7</sup> *Encyclopedia* §504.

virtue of which one would be maximally morally culpable if they were specifications of what one intended (either as an end or as a means) need not entail the same degree of moral culpability if they specify instead only consequences one *knew* would ensue in virtue of what one *did* intend.<sup>8</sup> This subtle distinction both presupposes and further articulates and elaborates the fine structure of the conceptual and moral progress Hegel sees as an essential component of the practically self-conscious modern form of agency: the advance represented by acknowledging the normative significance of the distinction between intentional and consequential specifications of actions.

Hegel explicitly appeals to this distinction as marking the decisive difference between modern and traditional practical conceptions of agency;

The *heroic* self-consciousness (as in ancient tragedies like that of Oedipus) has not yet progressed from its unalloyed simplicity to reflect on the distinction between *deed* [Tat] and *action* [Handlung], between the external event and the purpose and knowledge of the circumstances, or to analyse the consequences minutely, but accepts responsibility for the deed in its entirety. [RP§118Z]

Hegel takes it that making this distinction between *Tat* and *Handlung* is a decisive advance in our understanding of ourselves as agents. But this new level of practical self-consciousness courts the danger of a distinctive kind of alienation from its deeds.

Consciousness, therefore, through its experience in which it should have found its truth, has really become a riddle to itself: the consequences of its deed are for it

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<sup>8</sup> *St. Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologica* [Thomas More Publishing, 1981], II-II, Qu. 64, Art.7.

not the deeds themselves. What befalls it is, for it, not the experience of what it is in itself, the transition is not a mere alteration of the form of the same content and essence, presented now as the content and essence, and again as the object or [outwardly] beheld essence of itself.

### III. Postmodern Heroism: Recognition as Recollection

I have been using a particular regimented normative metavocabulary to render the terms Hegel uses to set out the contrast between the categories of *Verstand* and those of *Vernunft* (what Hegel makes of Kant's technical terms "understanding" and "reason"). My idiom translates Hegel's talk of what subjects are *in* themselves and what they are *for* themselves and for others into talk of normative *statuses* and normative *attitudes*, respectively. Under the heading of normative *statuses*, Hegel's talk of *independence* and *dependence* is translated into talk about *authority* and *responsibility*. Under the heading of normative *attitudes*, his talk of what subjects are for *themselves* and for *others* is translated into talk about *acknowledging* responsibility or *claiming* authority oneself, and *attributing* those statuses to others.

In these terms, the metaconception of *Vernunft* Hegel develops and recommends is what explains the reciprocity of the normative *statuses* of authority and responsibility (the sense in which they are always two sides of one coin), the reciprocity of normative recognitive *attitudes* of acknowledging and attributing authority and responsibility, and the reciprocal dependences *between* these reciprocal relations among statuses and among attitudes. In doing so, it reconciles the distinctively *modern* insight into the attitude-dependence of normative statuses—the sense in which statuses of authority and responsibility are instituted by reciprocal recognitive attitudes—with the *traditional* appreciation of the status-dependence of normative attitudes: the dimension along which attributions and acknowledgments of commitments (responsibilities undertaken by exercising one's authority to do so) answer for their correctness to what agents are *really*

committed to and responsible for. The alienation that is the worm in the shining apple of modernity is the practical incapacity to see how normative statuses can *both* be instituted by normative attitudes *and* transcend those attitudes so as genuinely to govern and constrain them.

Kant's *autonomy* version of the Enlightenment idea that normative statuses are instituted by normative attitudes takes it that knowing and acting subjects are distinguished from merely natural creatures by a distinctive sort of *authority* they have. That is the authority to *commit* themselves—the normative capacity of *making* themselves responsible by *taking* themselves to be responsible. Hegel applauds both the idea that the basic normative status is the authority to adopt normative attitudes (for Kant, to acknowledge commitments), and the idea that normative statuses (commitments, that is, responsibilities) are instituted by normative attitudes. Hegel objects to the idea that any individual's attitudes can *immediately constitute* normative statuses. That sort of authority he sees as an instance of the practical conception of normativity in terms of *pure* independence (authority without commensurate responsibility) characteristic of the Master, whose commands unilaterally institute obligations (responsibilities) for the Slave. As such, it is an instance of the traditional practical understanding of normativity in terms of a structure of subordination and obedience. And from Hegel's point of view it is a flaw in the Kantian autonomy account that *this* foundational normative status—the distinctive kind of authority to commit oneself, in virtue of which one is a discursive subject of cognitive commitments as to how things are and practical commitments as to how things shall be—is *not* construed by Kant as itself instituted by normative attitudes. It is treated as just a brute metaphysical fact.

Hegel's idea is that we should understand the commitments of normative subjects as instituted not by their own attitudes of acknowledgement alone (as Kant's autonomy model has it), but only by those attitudes when suitably complemented by attributions of those commitments to them by *others*, who attribute to them the authority so to commit themselves, and so *hold* them responsible. That is, the authority to commit *oneself* is itself instituted in part also by the attitudes of *others*, who attribute it. Hegel's term for the attitude of attributing the basic Kantian normative status that is the authority to adopt a status by adopting an attitude—making oneself responsible by taking oneself to be responsible—is “recognition” [Anerkennung]. In place of Kant's *individualistic autonomy* model of the institution of normative statuses by normative attitudes he proposes a *social recognition* model.

According to that model, normative statuses are instituted by *reciprocal recognition*. To *be* responsible one must, as Kant already insisted, in the first instance *acknowledge* that responsibility—have bound oneself by a norm.<sup>9</sup> But one must also be *held* responsible by others, who *attribute* it, to whom one attributes the authority to adopt such authoritative recognitive attitudes. To attribute to someone the authority to hold one responsible, that is, to attribute commitments in a partly constitutive way, is to *recognize* that other subject. Hegelian recognitive attitudes, like Kantian autonomous attitudes, institute normative statuses. But they do so only when suitably socially complemented. The recognitive authority of individual

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<sup>9</sup> I say “in the first instance” because in addition to the ground-level cognitive and practical commitments that are Kantian judgments and endorsements of practical maxims, Kant also is concerned with *categorical* commitments. These are commitments that are implicit in and explicative of judging and acting intentionally. These categorical responsibilities are not attitude-dependent in the same way the ground-level cognitive and practical commitments are. They are implicit in adopting normative attitudes at all. The discovery of this sort of background commitment, and the concepts that articulate this kind of discursive commitment, is hugely important to Kant, and, following him, to Hegel. But I suppress consideration of it here. (I discuss the subsequent development of this idea in a preliminary way in the first chapter of *From Empiricism to Expressivism*.)

normative subjects and of their recognitive communities are complementary and reciprocally dependent, that is, they are *responsible to* each other as well as *authoritative over* each other.

On the recognitive picture, normative statuses are all instituted by normative attitudes, but only when those attitudes exhibit a particular *social* structure: the structure of reciprocal recognition. Normative attitudes of acknowledging oneself and attributing responsibilities to others, and of claiming or exercising authority for oneself and acknowledging the authority of or attributing authority to others, must be complementary to be efficacious. And in such a structure the normative statuses of authority and responsibility those recognitive attitudes institute are also always reciprocal and co-ordinate.

One might (I think one clearly ought) to grant that there is at least *a* sense of “normative status,” paradigmatically of “responsibility” and “authority,” that is sensibly construed as socially instituted by reciprocal recognitive attitudes. Even so, one might want to object that there are normative statuses that are more objective than these intersubjectively constituted ones. What is left out of the picture of normative statuses as instituted by reciprocal recognitive attitudes, one wants to say, is the fact that some normative statuses are objective in a sense that lets them serve as normative standards for assessment of the correctness of attitudes of attributing or claiming them.

Just so. The attitude-dependence of normative statuses, which motivates the models both of the basic Kantian normative meta-status of *autonomy* and of the basic Hegelian normative meta-status of *reciprocal recognition*, must somehow be balanced by acknowledgment of the status-dependence of normative attitudes: the sense in which those attitudes of acknowledging

and attributing normative statuses are themselves responsible to the statuses that subjects actually have—the sense in which those attitudes are themselves norm-governed. Understanding that aspect of the relations between normative attitudes and normative statuses, and incorporating that understanding in our practices and institutions, is what is required to move *Geist* from its modern to its postmodern phase. Hegel tells us that we are to do that by moving from practically construing ourselves and our discursive activities according to metaconcepts exhibiting the structure of *Verstand* to construing ourselves and our discursive activities according to metaconcepts exhibiting the structure of *Vernunft*.

The key to understanding the way Hegel moves beyond the *basic* Hegelian normative statuses socially instituted by *synchronic* reciprocal *relations* of recognitive attitudes consists in appreciating the orthogonal but complementary *diachronic historical* dimension of recognitive *processes*. It is in particular the *recollective* phase of diachronic recognitive processes that explains the attitude-transcendence of normative statuses, which provide standards for normative assessment of the correctness of attitudes. That includes the special cognitive representational norms according to which representing attitudes are responsible for their correctness to standards set by what counts as represented by those representings just in virtue of exercising that distinctive kind of authority over them. Reason understands discursive norms, both practical and cognitive, according to the categories of *Vernunft* as features of essentially social and historical recognitive processes, developing in tandem with the attitudes that articulate them. Understanding operating according to the categories of *Verstand* is blind to both the social and the historical dimensions of conceptual norms.



#### IV. Ushering in the Third Age of Spirit by the Breaking of the Hard Heart:

##### From Niederträchtig Blaming to Edelmütig Confession and Forgiveness

Let us look more closely at how Hegel describes and motivates the transition to the third age of *Geist*. The *Spirit* chapter of the *Phenomenology* rehearses the progressive development from the traditional to the modern structure of *Geist*, so as to prepare us readers for the epiphany in which that development culminates: the envisaged transition to the third, *postmodern* stage, the age of *trust*. Hegel introduces this newly self-conscious form of normativity (and hence subjectivity) in the rhetorical form of a pair of allegories: the allegory of the hero and his valet, and the allegory of the penitent confessing his transgression to the hard-hearted, unforgiving judge.

Hegel introduces the first with a well-known slogan of his day:

“No man is a hero to his valet;

followed by his own twist on it:

not, however, because the man is not a hero, but because the valet—is a valet....”<sup>10</sup>

The hero is allegorical for one who acts out of appreciation of his duty, one who fulfills his responsibilities, one who acts as he ought, as he is committed to act, one who in his practical attitudes and actions acknowledges the bindingness or authority of norms. “Valet” is the English translation of the German “Kammerdiener,” literally, room-servant. The valet in the allegory

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<sup>10</sup> *PG* [665].

sees the attitudes of the hero not as governed by and expressive of his acknowledgment of norms, but as the product of his immediate sensuous desires and contingent particular inclinations. The valet views what the hero does genealogically, in resolutely naturalistic, nonnormative, reductive terms, and so

...explains [the action] as resulting...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].... If the action is accompanied by fame, then it knows this inner aspect to be a desire for fame.....[T]he 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.

The *Kammerdiener* stands for a view that explains all attitudes in terms of other attitudes, without needing to appeal to governing norms or statuses that they are attitudes towards and acknowledgments of. Hegel does not deny that this sort of explanation in terms of attitudes alone can be done. He thinks that the norm-blind reductive naturalistic genealogical perspective is an always available, albeit one-sided way to look at exercises of intentional agency.

But we can ask: what sort of disagreement is it that divides the *Kammerdiener* and the “friend of the norms” for whom some heroes really are heroes? Is it a cognitive, matter-of-factual disagreement about what there is in the objective world? After all, for Hegel, modernity

was right that normative statuses are attitude-dependent. Hegel diagnoses the issue instead as a difference in meta-attitude. He denominates the norm-blind reductive naturalism of attitudes, for which the *Kammerdiener* stands, *debasing*: “niederträchtig” (literally, something like “pulling down or under”). The contrasting, norm-sensitive, status-responsive, hero-acknowledging meta-attitude that takes some attitudes to be themselves genuinely norm-sensitive and norm-acknowledging he calls *magnanimous*: “edelmütig” (literally: noble spirited). So perhaps there is just a subjective practical choice to be made, depending on one’s preference for tough-minded, skeptical *Niederträchtigkeit* or tender-minded, generous *Edelmütigkeit*? That is not Hegel’s view either. Those two possibilities—matter of objective fact or subjective preference—exhaust the possibilities that modern *Verstand* admits. He thinks rather that in being discursive beings at all, in believing and acting, we have already implicitly committed ourselves to an *edelmütig* meta-attitude. This is a possibility afforded by *Vernunft*, which, when it comes to explicit self-consciousness, ushers in *Geist* in its fully self-conscious, postmodern form.

The issue addressed by the allegory of the *Kammerdiener* concerns the intelligibility of the traditional idea of the status-dependence of normative attitudes in the face of the modern insight into the attitude-dependence of normative statuses. The *Kammerdiener* stands for the self-sufficiency, the explanatory sovereignty, of attitudes. But then one must ask: what room is left for the authority and efficacy of norms—for the idea that normative statuses of authority and responsibility, what one is really entitled or committed to, make a real difference to attitudes that accordingly deserve to be thought of as *acknowledgments* of those norms?

Normative governance of attitudes by norms has two dimensions, deontic and alethic. First, the norms (normative statuses) serve as *standards for assessment of the correctness of*

*attitudes*. My attitudes of acknowledging a commitment myself, or attributing a commitment to others, are correct just in case we really are committed—in case those attitudes properly reflect the statuses they are attitudes towards. This is what it is for the attitudes in question to be *normative* attitudes: attitudes towards norms, attitudes of acknowledging or attributing normative statuses. Second, the norms they are attitudes towards should make a difference to the adoption of those attitudes. The attitudes must be *subjunctively sensitive* to the normative statuses they acknowledge and attribute. This is to say that the norms are efficacious, in that *if* the content of the norm being acknowledged or attributed *were* (or *had been*) different, the attitude *would be* different.

The heroism of the hero is allegorical for the norm-governedness of his attitudes in this dual sense. The correctness of his attitudes is to be assessed according to the standard provided by the norms he acknowledges. And his practical attitudes are sensitive to the contents of those norms, in the sense that if the norms were different, the hero's attitudes would be different. The challenge allegorically represented by the *Kammerdiener* is to make the possibility of the status-dependence of normative attitudes so much as intelligible in the face of the standing possibility (which Hegel admits) of purely naturalistic genealogical alternative accounts of the advent of normative attitudes, accounts that appeal *only* to other attitudes. If invocation of normative governance of attitudes by normative statuses is not *necessary* to account for the attitudes, how can it be *legitimate*? Insofar as this reductive naturalist theoretical challenge to the intelligibility of the normativity of agency cannot be met convincingly, the result is *alienation* from the norms: the loss of traditional *sittlich* practical appreciation of the status-dependence of normative attitudes, of the authority or bindingness of norms on attitudes.

The second allegory, of the confessing miscreant and the hard-hearted judge, presents a different sort of challenge to the intelligibility of the governance of practical attitudes by norms. It stems from Kantian rigorism about what is required for genuine responsiveness to norms, rather than from reductive naturalism. What the miscreant confesses is the admixture of non-normative attitudes in the causes of his action. He did not act *just* out of acknowledgment of “pure duty for duty’s sake.” *Other* attitudes *also* provided motives to which the action was subjunctively sensitive, in the sense that if they had been different, and the norm not, what was done would have been different. Subjunctive sensitivity was not limited to the content of the norm being acknowledged. The doing was in this regard both more than and less than a pure acknowledgment of the norm. Here the challenge is not that treating the performance as the acknowledgment of a norm is not *necessary* to explain the practical attitude, but rather that it is not *sufficient*. The question is: If invocation of normative governance is not by itself *sufficient* to account for attitudes (because an admixture of contingent, particular motives and circumstances—what the penitent confesses—is also always in play), then how can it be *legitimate*?

The challenge to the intelligibility of normative governance comes from the idea that the authority of norms over attitudes must be *total* in order to be *genuine*. It is a manifestation of the deformed conception of *pure independence*: the idea that authority (normative independence) is undercut by any sort of correlative responsibility to (dependence on) anything else. This is the practical normative conception Hegel criticizes allegorically under the rubric of “Mastery.” Hegel sees Kant as perfectly distilling the essence of the modern form of this conception, as part of his otherwise progressive understanding of normativity in terms of autonomy. As a result,

Kant adopts a *contraction* strategy, in which genuine doings shrink down to mere willings, since every more robust sense of action involves responsibility to other factors, subjective and objective, which are not themselves in the same dual sense governed by the norm that rationalizes the willing. In the allegory, the hard-hearted judge is the Kantian rigorist, who takes it that the penitent's confession of an admixture of non-normative motives shows that the action does not (also) express the acknowledgment of a norm, and so must be judged lawless. The affinity to the reductive naturalism of the *Kammerdiener* should be clear. For there, too, the mere possibility of a non-normative, reductive naturalistic explanation of attitudes is taken to pre-empt the normative governance explanation, and in that sense to deny the authority of the norm. If the normative governance account of an attitude has a rival, it is taken to have no authority at all. Independence is seen as incompatible with any sort of dependence. Any correlative responsibility undermines claims of authority.

Unlike the *Kammerdiener* allegory, the allegory of the hard-hearted judge is extended to provide a path forward to a proper understanding of the status-dependence of normative attitudes. Hegel presents the structural transition from modern to post-modern conceptions of agency in the form of a parable, a narrative recounting sequential stages in the relationship between an "evil consciousness" and a "hard-hearted judge": evil, judgment, confession, refusal of reciprocal confession, the breaking of the hard heart and confession by the judge, forgiveness, 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.") This is the final, *vernünftig*, post-modern form of reciprocal recognition, and so, of normativity and *Geist*, structured by the normativity instituted by that newly self-conscious form of recognition.

What the contrite agent confesses is everything in its deed that is not norm-governed—in Hegel’s idiom, every manifestation of *particularity* (the agent’s circumstances and collateral attitudes in the form of intentions or beliefs, and of contingent unintended consequences) rather than *universality* (norm, governing normative status). It confesses every failure of the status-dependence of the practical attitudes whose content is revealed in the deed as actually done. Confession [Geständnis] in this sense is at once a performance partly constitutive of a special form of self-consciousness, and a petition for recognition. (The connection is forged by Hegel’s understanding of self-consciousness as a normative status that is the social product of attitudes of mutual recognition.) In Hegel’s allegory, that confession is met not with an *edelmütig* reciprocating recognition, but with a *niederträchtig*, merely critical assessment of failure to fulfill responsibilities (failure of attitudes to be normatively governed by statuses). The blaming, hard-hearted, Kantian rigorist judge plays the “role of the moral valet” to the penitent agent.

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

Further, it is hypocrisy, because it passes off such judging, not as another manner of being wicked, but as the correct consciousness of the action, setting itself up in this unreality and conceit of knowing well and better above the deeds it discredits, and wanting its words without deeds to be taken for a superior kind of reality.<sup>11</sup>

The judge’s attitudes are exclusively adopted from the perspective of normative *assessment*.

The judge as assessor does not identify with the perspective of the deliberating agent, or even acknowledge the essential complementary roles in constituting normative statuses played by

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<sup>11</sup> PG 666.

attitudes of assessment and deliberation—that is, the crucial social-perspectival distinction of attitudes of *attribution to another* and *acknowledgment oneself* of practical commitments.

The point of this episode in the allegory is to enforce the contrast with the next step. The “breaking of the hard heart” describes the adoption by the assessing consciousness of the appropriate magnanimous *edelmütig* recognitive response to the petition for recognition that is the penitent’s confession. That response Hegel denominates “forgiveness” [Verzeihung]. To understand the structure of normativity that gives *Geist* its characteristic postmodern shape, we must understand the constellation of reciprocal recognitive attitudes that institutes that structure. This is recognition in the form of mutual confession and forgiveness: the structure I am calling “trust.” As I read the allegory, the shift to forgiveness that is the breaking of the judge’s hard heart is a move from the judge merely *attributing* to the agent responsibility for the deed to the judge practically *acknowledging* his *own* responsibility for that same deed. As such, it is an act of *identification with the doer*, by making himself co-responsible for what was done. The appropriate response to confession of an incapacity to produce deeds that are simply and purely governed by norms is for the judge to make a corresponding confession, to acknowledge “I am as you are.” This is an admission that the judge, like the agent, is *also* doomed to act and assess from a mixture of attitudes that *are* acknowledgments of governing norms and attitudes that are *not* such acknowledgements. (It’s slogan is: “We’re all bozos on this bus.”)

The responsibility the *assessing* consciousness undertakes for what is done is socially complementary to the responsibility the *deliberating* consciousness undertakes for its act, rather than identical with it. It has two dimensions: *reparative* and *recollective*. The reparative



responsibility is practically to intervene in the still-unfolding consequences of the doing, which provide an ever-increasing stock of consequential specifications of it. The deed is never done, and part of the generous *edelmütig* way of holding someone responsible for what they do is to acknowledge responsibility for helping to make it turn out well. One can do that by practically contributing new consequences, thereby making-true new consequential specifications of the deed. When everyone does acknowledges a responsibility to do that, *each* doing by a member of a community whose constitutive recognitive attitudes to one another take the form of confession and forgiveness is a doing by *all*. The deed of each is the deed of all. (Think here of Dumas's Musketeers' slogan "All for one and one for all!")

But what counts as "*better*" consequences? The standard for such normative assessments of consequences is set by the other, *recollective* dimension of forgiveness. The *reparative* responsibility to ameliorate the consequences of the doing being forgiven must be understood in terms of recollection. The aim is to make the whole that results from one's current action, thought of as a contribution to a tradition, *more fully and successfully recollectable* than that tradition would otherwise be. It is the norms of recollection that both determine what count as "*better*" consequences, and to which contributing to such consequences must be subjunctively sensitive.

*Recognition* in the form of *recollective forgiveness* is the key to understanding norm-governedness in general. Taking recollective responsibility for another's doing is practically acknowledging the obligation to tell and endorse a certain kind of retrospective story about that doing. That is the responsibility to rationally reconstruct it *as* norm-governed. The forgiving

recollector must discern an implicit norm that governs the development of the deed. This is the intention in the sense of *Absicht*, which stands to the consequentially extended *Tat* as the agent's initial *Vorsatz* stands to the *Handlung*, which is the narrower action specified only under the descriptions explicitly licensed by the attitude of endorsing that (deontically) licensed and (alethically) initiated the performance. The imputed intention in the sense of *Absicht* must be exhibited as normatively governing the doing in the dual sense both of serving as a normative standard for assessment of the practical attitudes it governs (each specification of the doing being thought of as an acknowledgment of that norm), and as being the norm that those attitudes can be seen to have been subjunctively sensitive to, in the sense that had the norm been different, so would the attitudes.

The meta-norm that governs recollective performances (and the practical attitudes they express) is that the norm one reconstructively discerns or imputes must normatively govern *all* the consequential specifications of attitudes downstream of the *Handlung*. That includes the practical-reparative and hermeneutic-recollective attitudes the assessing judge adopts. So the forgiving agent must endorse the norm being attributed as governing the deed—must acknowledge its authority. That is part of taking co-responsibility for it. In forgiving, one makes oneself responsible for the emerging norm one attributes as the implicit *Absicht* of the deed. This is *identifying with* the agent, in the sense of risking and if need be sacrificing one's own attitudes, by subjecting them to normative assessment according to the norm one both attributes and acknowledges, and being subjunctively sensitive to that norm in one's own attitudes. In this specific sense, the forgiving agent acknowledges the doing as its own, as the doing not *only* of the agent who initiated it, but *also* of the forgiving recollector.

Forgiving recollection can be understood on the model of institutional common or case-law jurisprudential practices. In that setting the current judge rationally reconstructs the tradition by selecting a trajectory of prior precedential decisions that are expressively progressive, in that they reveal the gradual emergence into explicitness of a norm (the content of a law) that can be seen to have implicitly governed (in the dual sense of serving as a standard and having the precedential attitudes be revealed as subjunctively sensitive to it) all the decisions (attitudes) in the reconstructed tradition. The current judge's decision in the present case is then justified by appeal to that norm. The norm that is seen as emerging from the rationally reconstructed tradition of decisions sets the standard for normative assessment by future judges of the current decision, which claims to be subjunctively sensitive to that very norm. So the recollecting judge subjects herself to (acknowledges the authority of) the norm she retrospectively discerns. The more of the prior decisions the recollection rationalizes and exhibits as expressive of the norm, the better the recollective warrant that norm provides for the current decision. Whatever residue there is of decisions that *cannot* be fit into the retrospectively rationally reconstructed tradition, as precedentially rationalizing and expressive of the norm, increases the scope for criticism of the current decision by future judges, who may or may not acknowledge it as correct and itself precedential. For the only *authority* the decision has for *future* decisions derives from its *responsibility* to the tradition of *prior* decisions.

Forgiving (recollectively recognizing), on this account, is hard work. It cannot be brought off with a single, sweeping, abstractly general gesture: "I forgive you for what you did." One could always *say* that, but saying it would not make it so. Besides commitment to practically affect the consequences of the doing one is forgiving, one must also produce a

concrete recollective reconstruction of the deed, under all of its intentional and consequential specifications. Recollection is a *making*—the crafting of a distinctive kind of narrative—that is successful only insofar as it ends up being recognizable as having the form of a *finding* of a norm as always-already having been implicit. Doing that, Hegel says, is giving *contingency* the normative form of *necessity*: showing how what *is* is as it *ought* to be. Recollection is the narrative genre in which the rationalization of decisions appealing to common or case law also belongs. One must recruit and assemble the raw materials one inherits so as to exhibit a norm one can endorse oneself as always having governed the tradition to which one oneself belongs, with which one oneself identifies—a tradition that shows up as progressively revealing a governing norm, making ever more explicit what was all along implicit. The expressively progressive tradition discerned culminates (for now) in the consequential specification of the doing that is the recollection itself.

## V. Failures of Forgiveness

What if what one is given to work with is *too* hard to forgive? What if the subject of the attitude that is being forgiven as part of the larger enterprise of forgiving something upstream of it is in fact dispositionally unresponsive to the verdict of the norm? What if (as the *Kammerdiener* alleges) it in fact is sensitive only to other concerns particular to, attitudes of, its subject? It seems that the criteria of adequacy for *successful* forgiveness, both reparative and recollective, are in many cases *impossible* to satisfy. Some things people have done (both ourselves and others), we want to say, are simply *unforgivable*. (The last century or so provides a host of notorious, alarmingly large-scale candidates.) In some cases, though we might try to mitigate the consequences of evil doings, we just have no idea at all how to go about discerning the emergence of a governing norm we could endorse ourselves. And this situation does not just

arise in extraordinary or exceptional cases. *Any* actual recollective story will involve strains: elements, aspects, or descriptions of what is actually done, at *every* stage in the developing process, that *cannot* be smoothly, successfully, or convincingly given such a norm-responsive explanation.

Indeed. But now we must ask: whose fault is it that the doing is unforgiveable—the doer or the forgiver? Is the failure that of the bad agent or of the bad recollector? Is it a matter of how things anyway just are, given what was done, considered as a settled fact? Or is it because the recollector couldn't come up with a more norm-responsive narrative? The first is the attitude of the *unsittlich valet*, for whom no-one is a practically norm-acknowledging *hero*, in the sense of being genuinely responsive and sensitive to norms. To treat the recollective failure as *wholly* the fault of the doer, to take it as simply an objective fact that there is no norm we could endorse that governs the deed as the assessor inherits it, is to adopt exactly the blaming practical attitude of the hard-hearted judge—an attitude Hegel criticizes as *niederträchtig*. The contrasting magnanimous *edelmütig* attitude he recollectively recommends as implicit in the idea of norm-governedness as such is rather to identify with the doer, to take (co-)responsibility for the doing. That is to acknowledge at least equal responsibility on the part of the unsuccessful forgiver. For the issue is not properly posed in alethic modal terms of the *possibility* or *impossibility* of forgiving what was done. It is rather a deontic normative matter. Paying one's dues as a member of a recognitive community structured by trust is acknowledging that one is always already implicitly *committed* to forgiving, *responsible for* forgiving what one's fellows do or have done. We have here a Hegelian version of a Kantian regulative ideal. That governing regulative ideal is “Tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner.” One can be *committed* to that ideal

(normatively governed by it in the dual deontic and alethic sense) even if one must confess that in many cases one *cannot* understand—and so forgive—all.

It might well be that one is in fact incapable of fulfilling that commitment, of carrying out that responsibility. If and insofar as that is so, it is a normative failure that the unsuccessful would-be forgiver should *confess*. To take proper recognitive recollective responsibility requires the forgiving agent to confess her own inadequacy to the recollective task. Your confession of a failure of your practical attitudes appropriately to acknowledge a norm is a petition for my recognition in the form of my forgiving taking of (co-)responsibility for your doing. My subsequent failure to adopt adequately forgiving recollective recognitive attitudes is something I am in turn responsible for confessing. That confession is itself an act of identification with you: “I am as you are.” My attitudes, like yours, fail adequately to satisfy the norms that they nonetheless acknowledge *as* binding, *as* governing those attitudes. For one acknowledges an obligation (the bindingness of a governing norm) insofar as one confesses the extent to which one has been unresponsive to the demands of the recollective norm, unable properly to fulfill a responsibility one acknowledges. And one is genuinely sensitive to that normative demand in making such a confession. Confessing is what one must do to *make* it the case that one is in fact sensitive to the norm recollected as governing the attitudes that make up the tradition one has discerned (including one’s own attitudes), even though one is incapable of fulfilling the reparative and recollective responsibility one thereby acknowledges.

As an *edelmütig*, forgiving assessor of another’s doing, one *confesses* that it is (also) one’s *own* fault, that one is not good enough at forgiving. And one must *trust* that this failure,

too—like the failure of the original, inadequately forgiven doer—will be more successfully forgiven by future assessors (who might know more or be better at it). That one *cannot* successfully tell a recollective story is not what matters. That is a deontic failure, relative to one’s commitments. It is something to be *confessed*, in *trust* that that failure, too, can be *forgiven*. The well-meaning but incompetent forgiving recollector’s confession, like that of the contrite agent, is a petition for recognition in the form of forgiveness. The trusting confession of recollective failure completes the identification of the one playing the role of assessor with the one playing the role of agent. The recognitive attitudes of forgiveness and confession emerge as two sides of one coin, two aspects of the symmetric recognitive structure: the norm-instituting structure of *trust*. Its slogan is: “Attribute responsibility forgivingly, acknowledge responsibility contritely.” Or as William Blake puts it: “Down through all eternity,/ I forgive you and you forgive me.” In a normative community with this recognitive structure, everyone forgives to the limits of their ability, and everyone confesses those limits, and trusts that they, too, will be forgiven for them. (Compare: “From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.”) But the most telling formulation of the content of the shared recognitive attitudes with which all parties identify is “*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass before us.*”

## VI. Conclusion

It is of the essence of both the reparative ameliorating dimension and the hermeneutic recollecting dimension of the recognitive attitude of forgiveness that they address a performance that expresses a *prior* practical attitude. The doing being forgiven must already be underway. For this reason, the final, *vernünftig* form of reciprocal recognition as confession and forgiveness is essentially *historical*. The attitude-governing norms it

institutes and acknowledges have the rich diachronic recognitive form of *traditions*. Hegel practices forgiving recollection, retrospectively rationally reconstructing expressively progressive traditions, in his own accounts of intellectual and cultural history, and in the way he reads the history of art, religion, and especially, philosophy. It is what I mean to be practicing in telling this story.

The claim that is crucial for understanding the third age of *Geist* as retaining the progress made by modernity while overcoming its structural alienation is that recognition understood as including the recollective institution of traditions acknowledges both the attitude-dependence of normative statuses and the status-dependence of normative attitudes. On the one hand, it incorporates the insight that norms (normative statuses) are *socially* instituted by reciprocal recognition—that is, by recognitive attitudes that are symmetric in the sense of being suitably complemented. On the other hand, each recollective rational reconstruction is obliged to display the normative attitudes it addresses as *historically* governed by norms (normative statuses) in the dual sense of being subject to assessment according to those norms and of being subjunctively sensitive to them. In this way, the post-modern recognitive practices re-achieve a *sittlich* appreciation of the authority of norms over attitudes: the sense in which attitudes are responsible to (governed by) norms they acknowledge and attribute as genuinely binding.

It is true that acknowledgement of the authority of governing norms is always within the scope of a recollective rational reconstructive *story* about what is going on. The normative *status* on which attitudes are understood as dependent (to which they are responsible) is itself always the virtual object of a recollective *attitude*. In this sense, the overall account invokes nothing but attitudes. But *that* attitudes are status-dependent (norm-governed) is an essential, necessary, and characteristic structural feature of *every* recollective attitude, as such. In that sense, the status-dependence of normative attitudes is not merely a contingent product of some attitudes people happen to adopt. It is in the end what makes normative attitudes *normative* attitudes—acknowledgments and attributions (distinguished by their social perspectives) of normative *statuses* of responsibility and authority.

Agency in the age of trust re-achieves the heroic character—so striking in the original ancient form of agency—that was pushed out by the ironic distancing and alienation from norms



essential to the achievement of individual self-consciousness that is the triumph of modern over traditional forms of normative life. Central to heroism was what Hegel calls “character”: the decisive *sittlich* identification of an individual agent with the norms: practically treating the norms as authoritative over and binding on one’s attitudes. This is acknowledgment of the status-dependence of normative attitudes, of one’s attitudes as norm-governed. The “ought-to-do”s governing normative attitudes (acknowledged or attributed responsibilities) are understood as wholly determined by the “ought-to-be”s that articulate normative statuses (what someone is really responsible for or committed to: their duty). As a result, the heroic agent takes responsibility for every aspect of his act. If some feature of it is not as it ought to be, that is confessed to be the agent’s responsibility, whether or not it was intended or foreseen. Compared to the contracted modern conception, the heroic conception makes the agent primarily responsible for a much-expanded deed, stretching out to include distant, unanticipated consequences. For this reason, traditional heroism is essentially tragic: it requires subjecting oneself to the dark, unknowable power of fate, identifying with what one is made by forces beyond one’s knowledge and control. Shouldering the responsibility that fate in this sense brings down upon one who acts is tragic heroism.

Heroism in the age of trust is like heroism in the age of tragedy in its *sittlich* acknowledgement of the bindingness of norms, in the sense of their governing authority over normative attitudes, the status-dependence of those attitudes. There are norms that set standards for assessment of the correctness of our attitudes of acknowledging and attributing responsibility and authority, and it is the responsibility of each agent to be sensitive to those norms, shaping her attitudes accordingly. Each forgiving retrospective recollective rational reconstruction of an

expressively progressive tradition of attitudes is responsible for discerning just such governing norms. And where the cramped and contracted modern practical conception of agency drew a bright line between normatively attributable and assessable aspects of each doing and non-normative ones—between what the agent can properly be held responsible for, because done knowingly or intentionally and what is done only in the sense of happening because of such doings in the narrow sense—the trusting conception is heroic, like the tragic conception, in that responsibility is total. Responsibility is taken for the whole deed. There is no aspect of intentional doings that overflows and falls outside the normative realm of responsibility—no specification of the deed for which no-one takes responsibility. In *Geist* with the recognitive structure of trust, responsibility for the deed is shared between the agent whose practical attitudes initiated the doing and the members of her recognitive community, who take it as their own by committing themselves to forgiving it.

Agency as understood and practiced within the magnanimous recognitive structure of confession and forgiveness combines these two heroic aspects of the premodern conception: *sittlich* appreciation of the status-dependence of normative attitudes and acknowledging total responsibility for the deed as consequentially extended beyond the knowledge and control of the agent. It can maintain a heroic expanded conception of the deed for which responsibility is taken because it has an expanded conception of who is responsible for each doing. Complementary recognitive attitudes both institute the governing norms and acknowledge the authority of the norms so instituted. The essentially *historical* fine structure of those reciprocally related recognitive attitudes and normative statuses articulates a *social* division of normative labor between the agent whose practical attitudes initiate a self-conscious intentional doing, who takes

responsibility for it in *one* sense, and members of the agent's recognitive community, who take responsibility for it in *another* sense. In this way the two essentially modern insights into the attitude-dependence of normative statuses and the distinction of responsibility marked by the individual agent's "rights of intention and knowledge" (the distinction between action and deed, *Handlung* and *Tat*) are respected, and synthesized with the two principal features of pre-modern heroic agency.

But the *vernünftig* trusting conception of agency as heroic does away with the element of tragic subjection to fate. Fate showed up as an alien, inhuman force in the tragic form of agency because it was a *non-normative* force, one that, though not itself governed by norms, nonetheless substantially shapes our normative responsibilities. What was left to us was bearing up and carrying on in the face of the results of the incursions by alien fate into the properly normative realm in which we dwell. The neo-heroic postmodern form of practical normativity replaces fate with something we *do*. What *happens* is given the form of something *done*. Immediacy, contingency, particularity and their recalcitrance to conceptualization are not done away with. But they now take their proper place. For we appreciate the necessary role they play in the process of determining the contents of the norms we both institute by our recognitive attitudes and acknowledge as governing that experiential process. The burdens of tragic subjection to fate are replaced by the tasks of concrete magnanimous forgiveness. Where our normative conceptual digestion and domestication of immediacy, contingency, and particularity shows its limitations, when (as in each case, as the *Kammerdiener* reminds us, at some point they must) they outrun our recollective capacity to incorporate them into the mediated, normative conceptual form of governing universals, that failure of ours is properly acknowledged by

confession, and trust in the forgiveness of that failure to fulfill our responsibilities, by more knowledgeable and capable future recollectors. Hegel says

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. The self that carries out the action, the form of its act, is only a moment of the whole, and so likewise is the knowledge, that by its judgement determines and establishes the distinction between the individual and universal aspects of the action.<sup>12</sup>

The responsibility the individual tragic heroic agent takes on himself is accordingly spread out and shared. The doing of *each* (in one sense) is now in a real sense the doing of *all* (in another, essential, recognitively complementary sense). For all share responsibility for and authority over each action. The distinctive, essential role played by individual agents is not obliterated, for the responsibility and authority acknowledged by and attributed to the initiating agent is different from the reparative and recollective responsibility and authority acknowledged by those who take up the burden of forgiving the agent. Every deed now shows up both as a practical contribution to the content of all that came before it, and as acknowledging a recollective responsibility with respect to all those deeds. The temporally extended, historically structured cognitive community of those who are alike in all confessing the extent of their failure to be norm-governed, acknowledging their responsibility to forgive those failures in others, confessing the extent of their efforts at recollective and reparative forgiveness, and

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<sup>12</sup> PG 669.

trusting that a way will be found to forgive their own failures, is one in which each member identifies with all the others, taking co-responsibility for their practical attitudes. It is the “‘I’ that is ‘we’, the ‘we’ that is ‘I’.”<sup>13</sup>

End

[10,119 words in large type (10,467 words total).]

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<sup>13</sup> *PG* 177.