Heart

From its inception Western philosophy has produced, sustained, and reproduced a fierce antagonism between rationality and emotionality. To expel emotion from the sphere of reason must be considered one of the foundational gestures of philosophy as a discipline. In the eighteenth century, this antagonism is attenuated somewhat as sentimentalism and philosophical mysticism give matters of the heart a philosophical value. Hegel derides this new celebration of feeling. He describes feeling as an inefficient way of relating to the world, one that indulges in nebulous notions and edifying idealizations because it lacks the strength to take a clear stance and to do the work of the concept. Reading Hegel on the feeling heart, one wonders to what extent Hegel really recognizes the epistemic significance of emotion.

Yet I argue in this chapter that Hegel does not disparage emotionality per se. Rather, he targets the specific conception of emotionality that is encapsulated in the sentimental and mystic trope of the feeling heart. His critique of this trope brings into view two important concerns of his philosophy: the reconciliation of rationality and emotionality, and the dismantlement of interiority. In regard to the first concern, Hegel critiques the sentimentalists and philosophical mystics for valuing feeling over analysis without resolving the dichotomy between rationality and emotionality. In regard to the second, he denounces the figure of the heart for relegating feeling to interiority. Rather than locate emotions inside, Hegel offers a performative account of emotionality as moving one outside and beyond oneself; that is to say, he considers emotions as transports. In sum, this first chapter introduces two demands of Hegel’s philosophy of emotion: that reason and emotion be mutually implicated, and that thoughtful transports (that is, emotional thoughts) call into question the construction of interiority.

Hegel spends a good part of the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* defending what he calls a scientific philosophy against the philosophy of feeling (*Gefühlsphilosophie*) advanced by many of his contemporaries. He chiefly attacks Schleiermacher—who claims that “the essence of religion lies neither in thought nor in practice, but in intuition and feeling”—but also Jacobi, Görres, and Eschenmayer, who all in some way or another argue for an extrasensory or inner intuition as the faculty that distin-
guishes reason (Vernunft—derived from vernehmen, “to hear”) from the understanding (Verstand). ² Hegel charges this kind of philosophy of feeling with (a) excluding rational approaches in favor of pure feeling, and (b) withdrawing from the outside world into inwardness. According to Hegel, these limitations are the result of a misguided insistence on the sacred and metaphysical quality of the absolute and thus of a failure to understand that spirit is manifest in physical reality.³

As if anticipating Nietzsche—who of course included Hegel in the list of German veil-makers (Schleiermacher)—Hegel seems to pun on Schleiermacher’s name when he underscores how the philosophers of feeling revel in obscurantism and nebulous ideas.⁴ Even though he is critical of what he calls “abstract” rationality or Reflexionsphilosophie—because he associates it with fixity rather than fluidity—Hegel does not endorse the move to the other extreme, that is, to a philosophy that renounces rationality altogether.⁵ In the preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit, he instead famously praises the work of analysis as the power of the understanding. Clearly, a philosophy to his taste must combine a unifying perspective with analytic acumen. The latter is quite familiar to the discipline of philosophy; we know that “the activity of parting [Scheiden] is the force and labor of the understanding” (§ 32, trans. modified). But do we properly understand philosophy’s emotional capacities when we relegate the unifying perspective to feeling, and when we oppose intuitive feeling to the understanding by conceiving of feeling as an immediate sense for the whole or as an overwhelming sense for the immediate? Hegel does not think so.

While recognizing the politically progressive aims of the philosophy of feeling, he also worries about the dangers of its being co-opted by established political powers.⁶ He charges the philosophers of feeling with retreating into interiority all the while promoting change and transformation. He chides them for having abandoned the reality principle, as it were, and for having instead indulged in fantasy and wish-fulfillment dreams:

> When the proponents of that view abandon themselves to the unbounded fermentation of the substance, they suppose that, by throwing a blanket over self-consciousness and by surrendering all understanding, they are God’s very own, that they are those to whom God imparts wisdom in their sleep. What they in fact receive and what they give birth to in their sleep are also for that reason merely dreams. (§ 10)

Hegel combines his denunciation of religious experience (especially of the pietistic flavor, because of pietism’s testimonies to the inef-
fability of the sacred) with an attack against aesthetic experience when he ridicules both as “the shapeless roar of the pealing of bells, or that of a warm vapor filling a space [eine warme Nebelerfüllung], or that of a musical thought which does not get to the concept [das nicht zum Begriffe . . . kommt]” (§ 217, trans. modified). Attacking the “powerless beauty” of the beautiful soul’s moral sentiment because it “detests the understanding,” he also critiques Kant’s aesthetic experience for its self-centeredness (§ 32). While the “beautiful soul” is by definition naive, that is, unaffected by rational judgment, aesthetic pleasure lies in suspending the judgment of knowledge about the object, in not forming a concept of the intuition (nicht zum Begriffe . . . kommt), but in reflecting on the subjective state of the subject instead. Likewise, the inner intuition of the sacred might be uplifting—so Hegel—but the pleasure it affords remains a private sensation: “Instead of grabbing hold of the essence [statt das Wesen zu ergreifen], consciousness merely feels and has thus fallen back into itself” (§ 217, trans. modified). In all these observations, Hegel’s point of contention is that the feeling heart feels only itself and does not reach the other.

When Hegel disparages his contemporaries because, according to them, “the absolute is not supposed to be conceptually grasped [begriffen] but rather to be felt and intuited [, and] it is not the concept but the feeling and intuition of the absolute which are supposed to govern what is said of it [das Wort führen],” he is concerned not only with a relation to the absolute that is different from theirs, but also with a way to articulate this relation (§ 6). Whenever intuitive feeling has the say (das Wort führen), it has literally a (i.e., one) word; that is to say, it doesn’t use discursive language but puts forward single words that are supposed to be fraught with significance: “The beautiful, the holy, religion, and love are the bait demanded to awaken the craving to bite,” Hegel mocks (§ 7, trans. modified). It is Hegel’s position that these words do not signify anything unless they unfold or divide into predicative propositions. That is to say, Hegel considers propositional statements as the self-analyses of words or the self-diremptions of the concept. He generally holds that spirit manifests itself physically, and he thinks of language as one mode of this physical manifestation. Because any physical manifestation is necessarily finite it must call forth a multiplicity of manifestations in view of giving existence to the whole of infinite spirit. For the realm of propositional language, this means that each word generates many sentences, that each subject can be predicated in various ways, and that spirit tends to manifest itself therefore in discursive language. We discuss Hegel’s critique of predicative propositions in chapter 4, when we take a closer look at his idea of the “speculative proposition,” but in this context it is important to note that Hegel welcomes the analysis of the name into
propositions before he can dance with them to the rhythm of speculative logic. While this dance—Hegel’s “bacchanalian revel”—might remind one of the “ferment of enthusiasm” (gährende Begeisterung) with which he charges the philosophers of feeling, Hegel nevertheless claims that his revel embraces “the cold forward march of the necessity of the subject matter [die kalt fortschreitende Nothwendigkeit der Sache]” and its discursive analysis (§ 7, trans. modified). Hegelian Bacchantes reel and wobble because they understand and grasp themselves.

This is not to say that Hegel ignores the significance of emotion. On the contrary, we will see throughout this book what an important role—both thematically and syntactically—emotionality plays in his thought. Nevertheless, because much of his philosophy hinges on transports that not only function as mediating but also emerge as mediated, Hegel does argue against a philosophy that considers feeling to be immediate and uncomplex. For fear of killing the feeling with words, the feeling heart might try to preserve the integrity of its intuition in single-word expressions, but Hegel believes such simplicity to be illusory. His philosophy brings to the fore the analytic, self-differentiating, self-disrupting—even self-lacerating—and self-reflecting quality of emotion.

Heartthrob of Law

The Phenomenology’s section on the “law of the heart” explores some of the philosophical tenets of eighteenth-century sentimentalism, in particular Rousseau’s culte du coeur and its reliance on the idea of natural law. With his culte du coeur, Rousseau celebrates feeling as free from being corrupted by the vicissitudes of reflection. Since he cannot completely deny the self-reflective aspect of feeling, Rousseau tends to construct binary differences within the field of emotion: between natural feeling and decadent passion or between amour de soi and amour propre. He then idealizes the side that is less mediated by culture, reflection, or imagination, and condemns the other. Rousseau thus establishes the dichotomy between nature and culture as the most fundamental difference, with good, virtuous, pure—in short, authentic—feeling falling on the side of nature, while culture opens the realm of reflection and therefore alienation. Rousseau naturalizes feeling and vigilantly protects the authenticity of “natural feeling” against the elements of simulation and theatricality that inevitably come with reflection, mediation, or representation.

From today’s point of view, two reasons might justify Rousseau’s relentless worry about the possible insincerity of emotions. The first is
the emancipatory role that emotion plays for the emerging bourgeoisie. In the eighteenth century, countering birthright with emotional alliances and defining the emerging bourgeoisie via a culture of emotionality against the calculated esprit of the nobility were driving forces in the emancipation from the Old Regime. The propagation of love, care, and natural virtue as characteristics of the new, bourgeois family, set against the economic and political self-interests (or amours propres to use Rousseau’s term) of the first estate, made the early members of the bourgeoisie feel morally superior to the aristocracy (see Kontje 1998, 4). As one of the most important assets of this new class, emotions had to be protected against inflation. In this light, the modern concern with authenticity in matters of the heart makes good sense. But this concern does not apply to today’s context anymore, since the once emerging class has established itself quite thoroughly at this point, and the emancipatory thrust of emotion is largely lost. Unfortunately, we have now an all too thorough knowledge of the suppressive character of the bourgeois ideology of emotion. Emotionality was only briefly embraced by the paterfamilias and then quickly relegated again to the private and passive sphere of women and children where it served patriarchal control rather than emancipation. Today, the more we move beyond the public-private, active-passive, and male-female or masculine-feminine divide, the more reactionary and manipulative the gesture of celebrating immediate, pure, and genuine feeling must appear. Therefore the opposition of true versus false emotion will lose its appeal to contemporary theories of emotion. This chapter will show that Hegel was one of the earliest critics of authenticity and its inherent violence.

The second reason for Rousseau’s urge to protect sentiment from the intrusion of reflection lies in the disorienting skepticism introduced by enlightened rationality. This reason still persists today or has been renewed by deconstruction’s assaults on what has passed for too long as “common sense.” The current investment of cognitive philosophy in emotions as providers of salience in decision-making processes is surely a reaction to such assaults.9 With the confession by the Savoyard vicar in *Emile* and later in *Les reveries du promeneur solitaire*, Rousseau portrays “the frightening inner life of the doubter” and shows how an individual could become engulfed by a personal skeptical crisis (Popkin 1992, 290). The emotional charge of this crisis of rationality is indisputable, and yet Rousseau proposes that feeling offers protection from such fright. Rousseau and a host of followers seek remedy against the analytic frenzy that preys on their mind by “listening to the Voice of Nature in the most hidden part . . . of [their] intimacy” (Olaso 1988, 56). Olaso’s phrasing here bespeaks an important new requirement. In order to provide a reliable
reference point in this disorientation created by the pervasive skepticism of rationality, feeling has to be thought of as interior. It has to be constructed as hidden away in the deepest intimacy of the heart so as to protect it from analytic negation and from the indifference of objective universality. In this light, the preoccupation with interiority, which is still widespread today, appears as a protection mechanism. While such desire for protection deserves attention, I think that the harm done by a strong investment in the interiority of emotion outweighs its benefits. Hegel helps us see some of the important benefits of exposure and of thinking emotionality as an experience of exposure.

With the section on the “law of the heart,” Hegel offers a critique of the Rousseauian dichotomy of natural and naive feeling versus pretentious and self-reflective feeling by staging the internal tensions of Rousseau’s position and by placing the entire discussion within the chapter on “Reason.” He thereby suggests that the sensibility of the figure of the “law of the heart” might be cultivated as a counterweight to rationality, but it is fundamentally part of and in line with reason. “Reason” in Hegel refers not to a mental faculty or a psychological process, but to a particular worldview. From the abstract “I” to objective reality extends the sphere and age of reason. The subjective and the objective dimension of the concept mutually penetrate and embrace one another in reason—but it is abstraction that buys the universality here. The relation of the pure “I” to the world is animated by two interrelated yet contradicting premises, that of rational reality and that of interiority. It is by definition reasonable to consider the real to be rational and the rational to be real. The rational “I” therefore seeks to find its mental and moral organization (the categories that determine its thoughts and its actions) in all other minds, all social institutions, and all of nature—that is to say, in objective reality in general. Short of being able to mirror itself in everything and everyone out there, it takes comfort in the idea that reason surely is behind it all, that the inner essence of everything and everyone is rational, and that reason is at the heart of all external reality. It thus comes dangerously close to saying that rational reality is a merely inner ideal rather than a fact. In an attempt to bind interiority to exteriority, the sphere of reason therefore “creates the law that says that the outer is the expression of the inner” (§ 262).

With the figure of the “law of the heart,” Hegel shows how the culture of sensibility and the philosophy of natural law build on each other. In his description, the promoters of sensibility strive to lift the pressure placed on the individual by the laws of convention and the decrees of the powerful, which together form a “violent order of the world” (§ 369). They worry about people being subject to laws they don’t iden-
ify with and to laws that the inner nature of their heart doesn’t resonate with. That is why they develop the idea of natural law or of the “law of the heart.”

The phrase “law of the heart” couples universality with individuality: on the one hand, laws are by definition binding for everyone subject to them, a principle which in this case applies without restriction, since natural law claims universal validity; on the other hand, the heart functions as the figure for the inner nature and personal self-feeling of the individual. Sentimentalism believes in the inalienable right of all people to follow the voice of their heart to their fullest potential and to live in harmony with their own nature. It views alienation as cruelty, and self-realization as a normative value. This self-realization is obviously not to be taken in the frivolous sense of looking to satisfy every whim—that was the subject of the previous section, “Pleasure and Necessity”—but in the grand sense and “seriousness [Ernsthaftigkeit] of a high purpose, which seeks its pleasure in the exhibition of its own admirably excellent essence [Darstellung ihres vortrefflichen eigenen Wesens] and in bringing about the welfare of mankind [Hervorbringung des Wohls der Menschheit]” (§ 370).

The tension between universality and individuality at work in the phrase “law of the heart” could generate speculative transports. The incongruity at the center of this figure of reason could make the heart throb across difference; it could open the heart for transport and trans-subjective figuration and for the transformation of worlds. But the peculiar seriousness of the sentimentalist resists such emotionality. Instead, sentimentalism tries to regulate the fraught link between the universal and the singular via the normative ideal of organic self-expression. It thus naturalizes feeling instead of spiritualizing it or rendering it speculative.

Hegel agrees with one part of the normative thrust of the “law of the heart,” namely, that it is not enough that the welfare of mankind and the excellence of the individual’s own nature exist as ideals somewhere in the imagination. They need to be brought about (Hervorbringung) and exhibited (Darstellung). Only the real is indeed rational. But he doesn’t agree with sentimentalism’s condemnation of alienation. Instead, he conceptualizes realization—or what he calls “actualization”—as a form of alienation, of ironic reversal and of self-emptying rather than fulfillment. He critiques the naturalizing conception of feeling and its expression because—as we will see in a moment—this naturalizing conception actually makes the realization of feeling impossible. When the advocates of the “law of the heart” link the universal purpose of promoting the welfare of mankind with the particular purpose of displaying the excellence of their own nature, they claim organicity: the promotion of
the welfare of mankind is supposed to naturally grow out of one’s character just as the achievements of such promotion are supposed to reflect back on that character, evincing its excellence. One is the expression of the other. The ideal of expression demands the organic unfolding of the singular inner core or heart into a universally recognizable external reality. It follows a logic of integrity, in the double sense of uninterrupt edness or wholeness, and of moral incorruptibility or honesty. Expression as an ideal leaves no room for the irony, the alienation, or even the indirectness of spirit’s model of self-realization.

In addition to not endorsing this organicism of the “law of the heart,” Hegel demonstrates that sentimentalism, itself, is not as sincere as it claims in its valuing of organic expression. Despite supporting reason’s claim that the inner mental world and the outer material world fundamentally cohere, sentimentalism establishes and upholds a firm opposition between the public sphere of external reality and the privacy of the heart. Across this firm opposition the values of singularity and universality switch sides, but they never actually come together. The all-too-admirably sensible individual starts out by claiming the heart’s universality against the particularity of the positive laws, but then—once it has established its law—feels frustrated to have lost its singularity and self-feeling to the alienating objectivity and heartlessness of the public sphere. As soon as the values of the heart are exhibited and put forth as statutes, the individual can’t feel its own heart beating in them anymore.

It is the paradox of self-realization “that the individual in putting forward [aufstellt] his own order no longer finds it to be his own” (§ 372). While Hegel embraces this kind of self-alienation, the sentimental individual resists it and insists that his heart be his possession. This resistance to alienation evinces for Hegel that the sentimentalist neither feels much nor actually thinks, since Hegel regards acknowledging the alien within the self as a constitutive part of emotional and conceptual transport. Thus, for Hegel, the sentimentalist doesn’t so much conceive (denkt), but rather conceits (dünkelt). “The heart-throb for the welfare of mankind” (das Herzklopfen für das Wohl der Menschheit) has turned into Eigendünkel or self-conceit, a cold arrogance that dehumanizes large parts of humanity: “the individual . . . now . . . finds that the hearts of people are opposed to his admirable intentions, and that they are thus . . . to be loathed” (§ 377; § 373). The naturalizing efforts of the theory of natural law end up denaturalizing all those who do not have the face of the excellent (vortrefflich) individual. Hegel offers here an important critique of sentimentalism, exposing its (more or less inadvertent) backing of social and political injustice. He shows that sentimentalism’s universalist rhetoric of recognition based on true feeling proves rather limited in scope.
Only the cultivated soul that has achieved a certain degree of emotional self-mastery enjoys this recognition—everyone else gets dehumanized as heartless rebel. The section on the “law of the heart” has been read as an allusion to the Karl Moor character in Schiller’s *The Robbers.* Schiller depicts Karl Moor as the avenger of the disappointed and maltreated and the judge of tyrants and exploiters, but his conversion back into normative society at the end of the play is largely driven by his newfound conviction that the people he led in his sentimentalist battle fall short of sentimental excellence: that they are nothing but robbers and murderers. From the perspective of the subaltern, this change of heart from compassion to disdain effectively reinforces the violence against humanity that the sentimentalist originally condemned.

Overly protective of his precious possession (his heart), the well-meaning sentimentalist is clearly not ready to “entrust” (*anvertraut*) his inner life to the alienating forces of mean reality (§ 374). Having just been on the verge of losing its beat, the sentimentalist’s heart now pounds in a fury for self-preservation: “The heart-throb for the welfare of mankind . . . passes over into the bluster of a mad self-conceit [*verrückten Eigendünkels*]. It passes over into the rage of a consciousness which preserves itself from destruction” (§ 377). Hegel helps us understand why the sentimentalist turns on his initial goal to fight for human welfare, why he begins to shun the political in favor of what Berlant calls the “juxtapolitical”—that is to say, why, rather than act in the pursuit of political transformation, the sentimentalist now prefers to share his critique with a public that feels intimate (thus pitching his critique in the register of complaint). The sentimentalist has found that his heart stops beating once he begins to enact the law of his heart. It is therefore self-preservation—the desire of the heartthrob to continue the heartthrob—that motivates his withdrawal from the pursuit of actual change. The heartthrob for the welfare of mankind turns from a motivation for action into a goal in itself: the cultivation of feelings for the sake of feeling, be it that of self-pity. The result is a psychic paralysis that Hegel calls mad.

Pitting the private interior against the public exterior, the culture of sensibility has created a double and mutually exclusive imperative. On the one hand, the values of the heart must be realized. On the other, their private or “originary” character must be preserved and their peculiarity must not be abandoned (*preisgeben*) to the alienating forces of the public (§ 311). Despite or rather because of the idealized demand for expression, the heart remains the inner and private locus of the self. And the treasure of the self’s innermost nature remains locked in the heart when the sentimentalists—ventriloquized by Hegel—claim that, “through its actualization, the law of the heart precisely ceases to be a law
of the heart” (das Gesetz des Herzens hört eben durch seine Verwirklichung auf, Gesetz des Herzens zu sein, § 372).

This verdict echoes the second line of Schiller’s distich on “Language,” “When the soul speaks, alas, it is no longer the soul that speaks” (Spricht die Seele, so spricht ach! schon die Seele nicht mehr). Both statements suggest that language defiles the beauty of inner life—to use language for self-expression is like getting embroiled with a band of robbers. Stylistically, the two propositions are very similar. Both repeat the same phrase (Hegel: “Gesetz des Herzens,” Schiller: “spricht die Seele”) but shift the stress from the first to the last word of the phrase in order to make their point. Their arguments thus rely on nonverbal elements of speech, such as intonation and emphasis. And the more or less discursive style both use requires that prosodic elements be signaled by typographic styling—both use italics to emphasize Seele or Herz in the second iteration. Hegel, I wish to argue, parodies the literature and philosophy of sensibility epitomized in Schiller’s line—in particular its demonstrative use of paralinguistic elements to communicate the subjective intensity of inner life that is supposedly lost in language. His mimicry shows that while the nonverbal elements make the argument (that language defiles inner beauty and gets it embroiled in a band of robbers), they also undercut that very argument (since language actually acts rather successfully here). Both Schiller’s and Hegel’s lines are concerned with the appearance of spirit in the so-called real world. According to the model that we find epitomized in Schiller’s distich, matters of the heart, the soul, or the living spirit cannot, or rather must not, take shape in time and space. But while Schiller asks—or, indeed, declares and prescribes—why the living spirit fails to appear (“Warum kann der lebendige Geist dem Geist nicht erscheinen?”), one of the main interventions of Hegel’s philosophy is to argue that spirit does indeed appear, that is to say, that it does take shape in space and time.

**Text versus Expression**

Hegel argues that spirit takes shape in space and time, but he does not think of this actualization or manifestation along the lines of expression. The law of expression or self-expression that many recent readers of Hegel take to be the heartland of Hegelian philosophy in general is in fact the particular province of reason. Spirit, on the other hand, puts itself in a textual relation to itself. Expression is supposed to refer back to an inner truth. It makes
manifest for myself and others an inner nature, voice, or impulse that was previously hidden or latent. Two models of expression concern us here: the outward display of an inner character, state, or agitation through facial, vocal, gestural, linguistic, or artistic means; and the organic unfolding of an inner core, understood along the lines of Aristotelian entelechy. Hegel’s “reason” vaguely combines both notions of expression, that of ostensibly immediate communication and that of inner teleology. A figural organicism—idealizing organic development in the cultural sphere of representation—drives the conception of linguistic, artistic, and physical expression at work in the realm of reason. For example, the “rational” ideal of a life path feels organic because such a life follows an inner logic that rules out contingency and disaster. The organicism of the sphere of reason is strongly invested in continuity, coherence, and integrity.

But spirit welcomes alienation (Entfremdung),
externalization or self-emptying (Entäußerung),
and—as I will argue throughout this book—disruption. Hegel sees language use and active conduct not as expressions but as utterances (Äußerungen) or exposures.

Speech and labor are utterances in which the individual in himself no longer retains and possesses himself; rather, he lets the inner move wholly outside of him and he thus abandons it to the other. For that reason, we can just as well say that these utterances express the inner too much as we can say that they express it too little. Too much—because the inner itself breaks out in these expressions, no opposition remains between them and the inner; they do not merely provide an expression of the inner, they immediately provide the inner itself. Too little—because in speech and action the inner makes itself into an other and thereby abandons itself to the mercy of the element of transformation, which twists the spoken word and the accomplished deed and makes something else out of them than what they, as the actions of this determinate individual, are in and for themselves. (§ 312, trans. modified)
external marks are supposed to be expressions “in which the individual . . . retains and possesses himself [worin das Individuum . . . sich behält und besitzt].” Yet, by the same token, he just as often ends up feeling restrained and possessed by his own inwardness. If they are measured against the expressive ideal of continuity between inner and outer, utterances always “express too little,” in the sense that the individual can’t recognize itself in them. It cannot find in external reality what it meant to express and, thus, it remains locked in the heart.

Hegel’s alternative to the model of expression consists in a textual notion of utterances (in the broadest sense, which includes actions) that serve as escape routes from the prison of interiority.\(^{36}\) Across the vast interval between Bataille’s sovereign destruction and Hegel’s dogged labor of the negative, Hegel’s utterances, where “the inner itself breaks out [ausbricht],” resonate with Nancy’s version of Bataille’s “unleashing of passions” (Nancy 1991, 32).\(^{37}\) Nancy de-dramatizes Bataille’s “passion,” and Nancy’s version of “unleashing” is related to Hegel’s unusual celebration of alienation as the double of self-realization. Nancy’s version understands “unleashing” or ausbrechen (lit.: “to break out”) as “not the free doing of a subjectivity” (be it Bataille’s sovereign individual or the rational expressionists who actively, even though in the latter case with considerable agony, press through the walls of their cages), but as the uncontainable effect of communication understood as contagion (ibid.). Passion, then, is never mine to begin with, nothing inside me to be expressed, but “always already” out there, unleashed, passing through.

The slight shift in the terminology of Hegel’s passage, from Ausdruck (expression) to Äußerung (utterance), makes all the difference. While Ausdruck refers back to an inner authority and remains solipsistic in scope, Äußerung exposes to others. It is thus synonymous with Entäußerung—and I am indeed tempted to translate both words as “exposure.” Such utterances or exposures “do not merely provide an expression of the inner, they immediately provide the inner itself [sie geben nicht nur einen Ausdruck des Innern, sondern es unmittelbar].” Nothing is held back for future excuses. Hegel abandons the idea that the essential is left inside while the outside manifestation is simply a representation, a portrait so to speak, that more or less resembles the original. Nancy’s reading of Hegel crystallizes for us that there is no agent or knowing subject beyond, behind, or before the utterance for Hegel: “Manifestation surges up out of nothing, into nothing. The manifested is something, and every thing is manifested. But there is no ‘manifester’ that would be yet another thing than manifestation itself. Nor is there a spectator to manifestation” who would be exempt from manifestation (Nancy 2002, 33). While manifestation surges up out of nothing, it is always in the plural since the acts
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of witnessing and reading the manifested themselves manifest what is manifest. “Manifestation is therefore of itself”—and thus divided within or plural—“it is of itself as much as it is of nothing” (ibid.). It is not that an individual’s deed gives an indication of her real internal character, but “the deed is this, and its being is not merely a sign, it is the thing itself [die Sache selbst]. The deed is this, and the individual person is what the deed is” (§ 322). Hegel’s almost obsessive repetition of the verb “is” hammers home the point that, instead of a hierarchical opposition between material existence and ideal meaning, he proposes the unranked and interwoven multiplication of reflexive instances of being. As in the speculative proposition, where the subject is dragged into the predicate, here the inside is drawn to the outside. In that sense, what used to be called “inner” has already become other; it is alienated in a good sense.

Expression is beholden to subjective intention—or to put it slightly differently, in the model of expression the individual is beholden to itself. But in Hegel’s textual model of self-realization, the subject relinquishes, exposes, even carries to the market and puts a price on (sich preisgibt) its insides, without therefore being caught in an economy of possession or sacrifice. “Manifestation makes a return and is nothing but this return. But, because this return does not come to a presupposed substance, it is return to nothing—or it is not a return, and it only comes back in throwing itself forth . . .—being thrown out of self as self, being this throw itself, and thereby its own passage into the other” (Nancy 2002, 39). The text—made of words or acts—sends forth and carries on. Rather than being the result of my intention (mein Meinen), its being (Sein) is its own (sein): the text is a self-reflective subject in its own right. The self-reflection of the text’s materiality or being (Sein) in its possessive pronoun (sein) introduces a slight discrepancy between the mirror images (here in the form of an upper- and a lowercase s) that makes the text restless. This restlessness is its capacity for transport or self-transformation, for “its own passage into the other.” Through exposures, exertions, utterances, the individual “abandons itself to the mercy of the element of transformation, which twists [verkehrt] the spoken word and the accomplished deed.” While such negativity—the capacity for self-affectation, emotional self-reflection, and transport—would have been locked into interiority in the model of expression, in Hegel’s textual model of emotionality, this inner difference manifests as outer difference. “Unrepresentable by any individual sign, emotion is represented by traces in a differential network. Textuality offers an alternative to expression and indication” (Terada 2001, 45). The Phenomenology of Spirit, as textual manifestation of spirit’s textual relation to itself across its various shapes, puts to work what Terada describes as “a concept of emotion
as the phenomenology of the textual difference between ideality and substance” (ibid.). According to Terada, emotion registers textual difference. In Hegel, we see that the textual difference within spirit (between ideality and substance or, as Hegel would say, between for-itself and in-itself) transports spirit from one manifestation of itself to another. That which exists transforms—“continues on his own to grow [es wächst für sich fort]” (§ 372)—that is to say, it enjoys its own spirituality, emotionality, and subjectivity.  

An utterance made is always duplicitous: “The act as an accomplished piece of work has the double and opposite significance of being either the inner individuality and not its expression; or, as external, to be an actuality free-standing from the inner [vom Innern freie Wirklichkeit], which is something entirely different from the inner” (§ 312). The individual is beside itself with manifestation, and, as such, it has become another. Any such “being-of-itself-outside-itself-in-the-other” is already double if not triple (Nancy 2002, 35). The singular exists only in the plural. No spectator of manifestation or reader of text can be outside of manifestation and textuality; therefore every view will itself be another manifestation and every reading another text. These texts will reflect one another and get embroiled in one another without therefore being the same. The text model of self-realization interrupts the focus on the individual. It unbinds or dislocates the self, and unleashes “the passion of singularity as such” (Nancy 1991, 32). Every utterance passes. Passes into an other. We can describe this with Nancy as “the sharing of singularities in movement” (Nancy 2002, 78) or with Hegel as the entangling of one in the other: “through the actualization . . . he gets himself entangled [sich zu verwickeln]” (§ 372).

When Hegel argues that “the force of spirit is only as great as its exertion [Äußerung], and its depth goes only as deep as it trusts itself to disperse and lose itself in its display and interpretation [in seiner Auslegung sich auszubreiten und sich zu verlieren getraut] of itself” (§ 10, trans. modified), he doesn’t refer to an organic unfolding of an inner core, but describes a self-loss and discontinuity—an Auslegung, like the display of unrelated goods in a discount store or like the hermeneutic process that adds one interpretation to the other without necessarily digesting all previous interpretations. “The self is what does not possess itself” (Nancy 2002, 36). Hegel suggests not that the subject gets to realize its own integrity, but that it gets entangled in others.

Manifestation is necessarily finite, and “finite being always presents itself ‘together,’ hence severally” (Nancy 1991, 28). Hegel describes spirit therefore as “the I that is we and the we that is I” (§ 177).  

The sphere of reason, on the other hand, does not yet have a sense for plural and
palpable difference. It has in a rather rash and undifferentiated way sublated singularity into universality and therefore doesn’t have much of a conception of community. Its notion of self-realization as self-expression is tortuously focused on the individual. This focus leaves its heart frustratingly empty—“an empty depth” (§ 10).

Why does the sphere of reason produce solipsistic individuals? So far we have shown that this is so because of its peculiar notion of emotionality. The sphere of reason is more concerned with the true expression of somehow preexisting feelings than with transports (which are textual and performative generations of and identifications across radically different worlds and life forms of spirit). Therefore it produces abstract individuals and abstract universals. But how was it possible for this abstract notion of emotionality to gain traction? How is it possible for reason to completely elide the plural? In order to address this question we need to examine the birth of reason. While, so far, we have analyzed a particular figure of reason (the sentimentalist and his law of the heart) and compared the worldview of reason in general with the worldview of spirit in general, I will now go back in the phenomenological narrative to offer a genealogy of reason.

Hegel’s chapter on reason in the *Phenomenology* opens once the “unhappy consciousness” has abandoned all agency, self-knowledge, and satisfaction, that is, once it has effectively renounced personal freedom and has turned itself into a thing. Through what is easily identified as the customs and rituals of the Catholic Church—the centrality of the priest, the purchasing of sin-forgiveness with the abdication of the will, and the blind following of uncomprehended rites, in particular the liturgy performed in the foreign language of Latin—self-consciousness has, after a long process of halfhearted attempts, eventually succeeded in “having in truth emptied itself of its I [seines Ich sich entäußert], and . . . having made its immediate self-consciousness into a thing, into an objective being” (§ 229). At this point, the unhappy consciousness truly bows to its lord, that is, to its own conception of an unchanging truth.

The pleasure gained from this masochistic performance comes in the form of the “certainty for this consciousness that, in its individuality, it . . . is all reality [Gewißheit des Bewußtseins, in seiner Einzelheit . . . alle Realität zu sein]” (§ 230, trans. modified). By making itself into an object of knowledge, the “unhappy consciousness” has posited that consciousness is not the agent of the ongoing epistemological endeavor, but rather is subjected to the phenomenological drive of a bigger subject—what Hegel calls spirit. In the transition to reason, consciousness learns to be an object, not for itself but for others—a “being for an other,” as Hegel puts it (*Sein für anderes*, § 351). To be precise, since others in the
plural (*andere*) have at this point not yet entered consciousness’s horizon of experience, all that the protagonist has learned (advancing in baby steps throughout) is to subject itself to a singular and neutral other (*anderes*)—its lord or its conception of truth as unchanging. By thus rendering itself the object of a knowledge that operates with the truth criterion of inalterability, this consciousness refuses to get a sense for the self-humbling, self-emptying, and self-transforming of spirit. It misses its chance to recognize that absolute knowledge is not a positive knowledge, but a regulative principle, as it were, that gives individual manifestations of spirit the freedom to break away from their certainty or “naturalness,” as Hegel would put it, and thus generate a multiplicity of different manifestations. Instead, consciousness is quick to identify with its lord. In the blink of a transition, it has already installed itself in the position of certainty again and has reduced all difference to its own identity: it is a “certainty for this consciousness that, in its individuality, it . . . is all reality” (§ 230). But certainty of course differs from truth; it is truth only “for consciousness,” not “in and for itself.” Since certainty as such is thus insufficiently mediated, consciousness in the position of certainty has something abstract, immediate, or “merely natural” to it.

The sphere of reason immediately unites universality (“all reality”) and individuality in the abstract “I,” without attending to the differences among the many. From a later, more mediated perspective we can see that this kind of abstraction is enabled by the textuality of spirit. Hegel’s retrospective description of the transition from self-consciousness to reason reads: “The unhappy self-consciousness emptied itself of its self-sufficiency [entäußerte sich seiner Selbstständigkeit] and agonizingly rendered its being-for-itself into a thing [und rang sein Fürsichsein zum Dinge heraus]. As a result, it returned from self-consciousness into consciousness” (§ 344, trans. modified). Textual difference is legibly at work here. The passage offers a typical example of Hegel’s easy shifts in perspective—part and parcel of his use, as I argue, of free indirect discourse throughout the *Phenomenology*. The extra-linguistic referent for the personal pronoun “it” in the second sentence is not the same as the referent for the subject of the first sentence (the unhappy consciousness). Rather, “it” refers to the new figure of consciousness—“observing reason”—which indeed behaves as consciousness relating to the world. The unhappy consciousness does not relate to the world since it has (that was the point) renounced its subject status. Nevertheless, according to syntactic conventions, “it” refers to the subject of the previous sentence. This passage thus shows beautifully how Hegel treats the different shapes of the protagonist as figuring one another—that is, as able to stand in for each
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other and therefore as both different and identical. Thematic reference and syntactic reference differ but imperceptibly slide into one another. Hegel continues, “However, this, which is thing, is self-consciousness . . . the immediate unity of being [des Seins] and what is its own [des Seinen]” (§ 344, trans. modified). Here he synthesizes both references, reminding us that what is now the object of “observing reason” used to be the subject of the first sentence—a self-consciousness unhappily trying to escape from its self. As the result of an itinerary that is, in good Hegelian fashion, preserved in the outcome, the world being observed, which presents itself as thinghood in its sheer material being (Sein), thus carries with it its prehistory as a subject and thus retains the power to reflect on itself and to possess itself (Seinen). The slippages in reference, drawing the memory of one into the other, transform the dejected self not just into a physical thing, but into a physical thing with self-awareness: “Self-consciousness found the thing as itself and itself as a thing; i.e., it is for self-consciousness that it is in itself objective actuality” (§ 347). Despite the finitude of its embodiment, despite its individuality, this self-conscious thing enjoys the pleasure of knowing that it is “in itself objective actuality” or “all reality.” Its happiness comes courtesy of the easy shifts in reference. These shifts have allowed consciousness to identify or confuse itself with the supreme other (anderes)—the position of objectivity and stable truth—and, in doing so, they have elided the existence of others in the plural, of other rational things, with whom this rational thing might have had to share reality and to whom it might have had to expose itself. This is to say that the felicity of the sphere of reason (which, as we know, will soon give way to a feeling of emptiness that will battle with heart-throb madness) is sponsored by the textuality of spirit. Textual difference underlies expressivity.

Force of Interiority

We will now explore the textual emotionality of spirit from a different angle by focusing on how Hegel’s work dismantles the construction of interiority and entangles rationality with emotionality. Once again, we will pursue a genealogical approach: this time we will trace the emergence of interiority in the Phenomenology.

Interiority makes its first appearance in the Phenomenology of Spirit in the chapter on “Force and the Understanding”—not as the inner life of human subjects, but as “the inner of things [Innres der Dinge]” (§ 136). I’d
like to take seriously the fact that Hegel presents inwardness as primarily not human. It is the first step in dismantling the sentimental construction of interiority as the touchstone of true humanity.

The focus on “the inner of things” also allows us to take a closer look at the understanding’s analytic mode of thinking, which I have bracketed with the worldview of reason under the category of rationality. To those who like to follow the linear development of the *Phenomenology* chronologically, I have to send out a warning. It may seem strange to relate the much earlier and (within the chapter on “Consciousness”) relatively small configuration of the understanding to the later chapter and much larger sphere of reason. But there is a Hegelian reason for this: reason unites consciousness and self-consciousness, and the understanding is the figure of transition from consciousness to self-consciousness. Once the temporal distinction between consciousness and self-consciousness is “relieved” in reason, the understanding actually functions as the mode of thought internal to the worldview of reason that bridges the moments of consciousness and self-consciousness. I will, however, also make a further leap and draw on Hegel’s extra-narratival remarks in the preface while analyzing the specific figure of consciousness that is the understanding. In the preface, Hegel describes the understanding as a specifically analytic mode of thought that not only severs the inseparable, but fixes, stabilizes, or reifies what it has thus severed.

The figure of consciousness that Hegel calls “the understanding” has lost faith in perception and sense-certainty. It considers what nature presents to the senses as mere appearance—an appearance that lies and deceives—and imagines that there must be “a supersensible world as the true world” behind the veil of appearance (§ 144). The understanding imagines that truth must be hidden in the “inner of things.” Why does it come up with this strange idea that vacillates between the politically progressive (finding agency and interiority in non-human beings and thus challenging the modern apotheosis of human being) and the paranoidally metaphysical (suspecting that things lie when they present themselves)? Because the object has dissolved in front of its eyes, as it were, into a play of forces. Rather than offering up for perception more or less substantial things, the objective world presents itself to the suspicious understanding as an anchorless and unpoised (*haltungslos*) web of forces that disappear as soon as they appear: “The force as actual exists purely and simply in the exertion [*Äußerung*], which at the same time is nothing but a self-negation [*ein sich selbst Aufheben*]” (§ 141, trans. modified). While the understanding can isolate and identify particular forces, it quickly realizes that a force doesn’t exist as isolated, but only in a precarious and dynamic dependence on its opposite force: “These
two forces exist as essences existing for themselves; but their existence lies in the kind of movement of each against the other so that their being is even more a pure being-posed through an other, which is to say, that the pure meaning of their being is even more that of vanishing” (§ 141). Upon close consideration, the object has thus revealed itself as a dynamic interplay of transient forces.

With the discovery of this interplay, the understanding has found infinity within the realm of finite physical existence. This infinity—which Hegel defines as the trembling “sameness of the non-same as the non-same [Gleichsein des Ungleichen als Ungleichen]” (§ 160) and at the same time as the tension-producing “repulsion of the homonymous, as the homonymous, from itself [Abstoßen des Gleichnamigen als Gleichnamigen von sich selbst]” (ibid., trans. modified)—brings with it a great deal of restlessness, especially since the movements of self-division and self-unification have themselves ceased to function as stable opposites (“the distinctions [within and between] estrangement [Entzweiung] and coming-to-be-in-parity-with-itself [Sichselbstgleichwerden] are likewise only this movement of self-sublation [diese Bewegung des sich Aufhebens]” (§ 162). Hegel indeed describes infinity as the “absolute restlessness [absolute Unruhe] of pure self-movement” (ibid.).

Now, one could say that the understanding projects an inner space of truth and calm because it doesn’t like all this agitation. That would be a relatively familiar critical move—exposing the affect (in this case irritation, suspicion, paranoia) that motivates the ostensibly rational stance. One could add that the understanding remains too “natural” or dense a shape of consciousness to be comfortable with this kind of transient self-overcoming of the spirited world. Yet Hegel proposes something slightly different and much more unsettling. According to his account, the understanding manages to dissociate emotionality from rationality by splitting the “inner of things” off from the interplay of forces. It posits the interplay of forces as the restless, moody, and self-negating outer appearance of things that is opposed to the perfectly rational and stable inner truth of those things. In doing so, the understanding simply does what it is supposed to do as understanding: it separates the inseparable. Yet in this rather matter-of-fact pursuit of its business, the understanding is one dimension of restless infinity—the activity of “dividing . . . what is undivided” [Unterscheiden des Ununterschiedenen]”—and therein lies its contribution to the emotionality of spirit (§164, trans. modified).

Rationality has emotional qualities in Hegel’s account, while the emotionality at work in his philosophy has rational qualities. In the world of spirit, emotionality and rationality are entangled. As I have proposed earlier, emotionality is analytic and self-reflective in that it registers and
thus reinforces self-incongruity. At the same time, rational analysis generates tears (Zerrissenheit) that are emotional. It is therefore no accident that, when Hegel enlists the analytic capacities of the understanding in the service of spirit, he turns up with something very much akin to psychic work:

Spirit is this power not as the positive that avoids looking at the negative, as is the case when we say of something that it is nothing or that it is false, and then, being done with it, go off on our own way on to something else. No, spirit is this power only when it looks the negative in the face and lingers with it. (§ 32, trans. modified)

The understanding performs a kind of “working-through,” where the rational and the emotional cannot be separated from one another.

It is true that the understanding, by itself, is unable to supply the unity of estrangement and self-sameness, which is the other dimension of restless infinity. It is the restless “dividing of what is undivided,” but it cannot register what it is doing as emotional—both because it doesn’t hold together what it severs (it is the figure that will bring us self-consciousness, but it isn’t quite self-conscious yet), and because the activity of separating the inseparable is precisely what defines the understanding and in this activity the understanding is thus actually not incongruous with itself (§ 164). This self-consistency is the reason why the understanding identifies with the calm rationality of the supersensible world—“raised above perception, consciousness exhibits itself as merged with the supersensible world by virtue of the middle term of appearance [durch die Mitte der Erscheinung] through which it gazes into this background”—and thus transitions to self-consciousness (§ 165).

I sense an irony in Hegel’s predication of self-consciousness as “raised above perception [erhoben über die Wahrnehmung].” The protagonist’s identification with calm rationality here in effect solidifies infinity; it thus produces not so much a consciousness that has attained higher wisdom as a consciousness that proves unspirited and aloof. While Hegel has a fluid notion of infinity—which he describes as the “absolute restlessness of pure self-movement”—and while the understanding deserves credit for being the first figure of consciousness to discover the spiritual notion of infinity, this fluidity gets lost in the Platonic ideas of the understanding (§ 163). The understanding is the power of fixation; it turns even infinity into a fixed idea by isolating it from finite existence and assigning it the virtual space of interiority. This kind of stable infinity is surely just as bad an infinity (schlechte Unendlichkeit) as the one that is posited by the Romantics as unattainable, which Hegel disparages. It doesn’t register spirit’s emotionality.
While the understanding hopes in this way to have anchored the play of vanishing forces, we will see shortly that it has dropped its anchor into nothingness. At the end of the chapter on the understanding, during the transition to self-consciousness, it becomes clear that the inner is indeed empty, that the veil of appearance hides nothing: “It turns out that behind the so-called curtain, which is supposed to hide what is inner, there is nothing to be seen unless we ourselves go behind it, just as much so that there be somebody who does the seeing as so that there be something behind the curtain that can be seen” (§ 165, trans. modified). The phenomenality of the vanishing forces is indeed infinitely richer than this virginal space of interiority that the understanding has cracked open—and yet consciousness is drawn to this empty space.

Even when consciousness fills the room behind the veil to look at itself, there is nothing to see. Consciousness has no content other than the objective world at this point. After having gone through the dialectics of sense-certainty, perception, and the understanding, consciousness knows nothing about itself as such. The textual itinerary has not given us any information about what consciousness might be, apart from its perspective on the world out there. Now that consciousness wants to be exclusively “for-itself,” it has nothing to show for itself but empty ideality. Nancy reminds us that “the self reveals itself to be nothing other than negativity for itself. But negativity for itself is not a thing . . . ‘Self’ is nothing that preexists ‘for itself’” (Nancy 2002, 36–37). In the subsequent struggle for life and death, self-consciousness will become embodied and gain a sense for its precarious life. Then it will slowly create more and more threads of attachment and thus shape a more and more concrete identity. But at this point, we encounter the unreal (perhaps awesome) self-reflection of pure interiority without any exteriority: “the gazing of the inner into the inner” (§ 165)—the gazing of nothing into nothingness. Out of nothing, the magic of the understanding, we know, will create something. But in this moment—when the “inner of the thing” and the inner self stare at each other and into each other’s void—a sense “surges up,” as Nancy would say, that “‘being for itself’ is to be ‘for’ this absolute non-preexistence” (Nancy 2002, 37).

The transition from the understanding to self-consciousness demonstrates in an exemplary fashion how the phenomenologist/s are affected by the mindset of the protagonist/s they observe. Or rather—since this formulation still presumes the independent preexistence of sophisticated phenomenologist/s who might or might not fall for the naïveté of their subject—I should say that this passage shows how the phenomenologist/s develop together with the protagonist/s. The pronoun “we,” in the phrase “there is nothing to be seen unless we ourselves go behind it,” includes the protagonist/s as much as the phenomenologist/s.
The evidence for this identification lies in the specific meaning of two terms used in this passage: “free” and “concept.” When the phenomenologist/s claim that “this infinity is, to be sure, already the soul of all that came before, but it was in the inner that it itself first freely emerged [frei hervorgetreten],” they don’t use “free” in the full-fledged Hegelian sense of being able to act in full acknowledgment of the self-alienating dynamic of action and of one’s interdependence with others in a sociality, but in the simple sense of free from, meaning in this case that infinity is isolated and no longer obscured by finitude (§ 163). Similarly, when the phenomenologist/s state that “what is an object in sensuous covering [in sinnlicher Hülle] for the understanding is now there for us in its essential shape as pure concept,” they don’t use “concept” in the full-fledged Hegelian sense of the self-differentiating unity of self-reflecting materiality and self-actualizing ideality, but in the more common sense of an intellectual notion, a mental entity that is fundamentally different from and supposedly superior to its material instantiation or sensuous covering (§ 164, trans. modified). Clearly, the narrator of the *Phenomenology*, or the phenomenologist/s, use the terms “free” and “concept” here in the sense in which the understanding uses them.

The fact that the protagonist and the phenomenologist co-develop their terminology and thus their interpretations of the world says something important about Hegel’s notion of “absolute knowing.” While it is the common reception of Hegel that the phenomenologist has “absolute knowledge” from the beginning, it takes perhaps a literary reading—one that eschews the typically philosophical (even though not Hegelian) habit of abstracting from the temporal dimension of the argument and instead attends to strategies of narrative development—to bring into view that this is indeed not the case. On the verge of becoming self-conscious, the protagonist identifies with those who observe it—that is, the phenomenologist/s—not because they know more, but because this shift in perspective opens the gap that allows “natural consciousness” to negate its naturalness and to construct a second nature. The identification between protagonist and phenomenologist/s is mutual: the phenomenologist/s (readers and narrator) identify with the protagonist in order to gain experiential insight into one of the life forms of spirit, and the protagonist identifies with the phenomenologist/s in order to gain self-consciousness. In this mutual identification, the phenomenologist/s have precisely nothing to offer. There is no hidden treasure of superior knowledge that lies at the heart of inwardness. The immaterial, supersensible “inner of things” is an empty abstraction, and neither the protagonist/s nor the phenomenologist/s can fill it with given knowledge about the future of spirit. Hegel does not think of spirit as some kind of sack,
inside which one might find something positive—a knowledge, a feeling, or “all sorts of faculties, inclinations, and passions.” If it is anything, interiority is the space of negativity; it can perhaps best be described as the reified gap within the subject. A fully saturated phenomenality would be a world without transport—but the understanding’s rational analysis has cracked phenomenality and has therefore introduced emotionality. The space of interiority, which is opened by the understanding, gives us the sense of self-incongruence that transports the subject beyond any “natural” or given figuration.

The fact that interiority has made its first entrance on the scene of phenomenology as the interiority of the thing shows that it is an abstraction from, and a derivative of, exteriority. The “inner” is not to be taken as something positive, neither at the beginning of the protagonist’s path nor at the end. The “inner” cannot be felt, nor rationally determined, nor “unfolded,” nor attained—as if it were some thing. Its role is to unbind the rich web of attachments and determinations characteristic of the empirical world. With its abstract analysis, the understanding cracked open the phenomenal world. This crack both allows for self-reflection and prevents the mirror images from coinciding. It is the negativity or incongruity that sets thought into motion and unsets (or makes emotional) nature and mind at every stage of their passage.

The expression model of self-realization is of no use for Hegel because it treats spirit as a sack—it presupposes that there is something positive inside the individual that can or should subsequently be expressed. In Hegel’s text model, outside and inside leap simultaneously “out of nothing, into nothing” (Nancy 2002, 33). Negativity is at work in the outside world; “the ‘phenomenon’ is not appearance: it is the lively transport of self and the leap into manifest existence” (ibid.). But the understanding isolates this work, abstracts it from the phenomenal world, reifies it and arranges the space of interiority for it. It internalizes the sense of nothingness and tends thereby to lose it. Instead of allowing all determinations to pass, the understanding holds on to a representation of negativity, to the image of an interior space—like a pit, as we will see in the next section—carved into a stony body.

The Pit

In the “Psychology” chapter of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, Hegel describes human intelligence as a pit, shaft, or mine (Schacht). This pit is obviously another figure for interiority, and this time we have
to take it at face value, since the *Encyclopedia* is a fairly straightforward philosophical text with no protagonist or narrator who could allow the author to assume an ironic distance from the thought figures under discussion.\(^{48}\) Hegel’s discussion of this figure of interiority is again bound up with a discussion of language. We will see once more that Hegel’s conception of language is quite different from the expressive language that the sphere of reason is so fond of. Also, the vector of his discussion here is different. While the proponent of the “law of the heart” was concerned with expression, with giving an external reality to what is harbored inside the heart, Hegel here analyzes the inverse movement: how do external things get inside, into our minds.

He conducts this analysis under the heading of *Erinnerung*. The word usually means recollection, but Hegel uses the term in the literal sense of “inwardizing.” In Hegel’s account, perceived objects are inwardized (*erinnert*), or their images are transferred from outer intuition into the pit of intelligence, where—quite surprisingly—they are not deposited but disappear. It is grossly naive, according to Hegel, to think of this pit of intelligence as a physical space, where ideas are deposited in “special fibres and areas [besonderen Fibern und Plätzen].”\(^{49}\) The space of the inner pit is not divided like empirical space, but has its own indivisible spatiality. In the process of inwardizing (*Erinnerung*), the intuitions thus lose the spatiotemporal coordinates that are a given in the outside world. Hegel uses another metaphor to hint at this utter lack of empirical coordinates, describing the pit of interiority as “nocturnal” (*nächtlicher*; Hegel 1971a, § 453, Zusatz). Across and beyond these imperfect metaphors, the “inner” has to be thought of as rigorously immaterial, ideational, and indeterminate. But in Hegel’s philosophical world indeterminacy means lack of reality. It is in this sense that the images disappear in the pit of intelligence like in a black hole or an abyss.

One particular kind of image is the written word. (Hegel actually prefers the term “name” rather than “word.”) In addition to, let’s say, the dagger as object, we can look at the script *dagger* and we can transfer this image into the nocturnal pit of our intelligence. Nevertheless, Hegel insists that the image of the script is special. Unlike other sensual images, the script image is for him the result of a history and an archive of layers of mediation.\(^{50}\) The written name or word is, strictly speaking, a sign for a sign for the recollection of an inwardized intuition or, rather, for repeated recollections of repeated intuitions. Therefore the script is not simply internalized the way immediate sensory images are. In this case, Hegel does not speak of inwardizing (*Erinnerung*) but of memory (*Gedächtnis*). The script is an external interiority: the material memory of previous acts of inwardizing and externalizing.
Here is the kind of history that is archived in the external memory that is the script: after the original literal “inwardizing” (Er-innternerung) of the intuition of a dagger and its disappearance in the interiority of the nocturnal pit, repeated vanishing acts of the same kind have slowly built up the affective and cognitive energy that then surged up again as a recollection (now Erinnerung in the common sense—“sogenannte Erinnerung”—as opposed to literal inwardizing) out of the nothingness of the immaterial pit (Hegel 1971a, § 454). The immateriality or negativity of the black hole of interiority has received further density from the recurring countervectored movements of recollecting and inwardizing. This proto-linguistic texture has generated a somewhat external internal space—the “inner workshop [innere Werkstätte],” where the “imagination which creates signs [Zeichen machende Phantasie]” then has produced a sign for this complex event: the name dagger (Hegel 1971a, § 457, Zusatz, trans. modified). The name was produced first in the form of a spoken word. The written word, dagger, Hegel insists, is a sign of the second order. It stands not for the meaning of the word dagger but for the spoken signifier “dagger.” This relative distance of the script from the dagger facilitates the dislocation of signifier and signified that Hegel generally postulates when he insists on the arbitrary character of signs.

We know, especially since Derrida’s analysis of Hegel’s semiology, that Hegel differentiates between sign and symbol and that this distinction is based on the arbitrary character of the sign as opposed to the motivated character of the symbol. The symbol illustrates its meaning. Signs, on the other hand, are apt to transport meaning without bringing it into view.\(^{31}\)

As a matter of principle for Hegel, Western languages consist of signs. That is also why he prefers to speak of “names” rather than of words—names are “externalities which of themselves have no sense, and only get meaning as signs” (Hegel 1971a, § 459, Zusatz, trans. modified). Yet he calls attention to the fact—and draws considerable capital from it—that, as proficient readers, we tend to treat written words like hieroglyphs.\(^{32}\) We forget that they are written signs for spoken signs. Without having to vocalize the words while reading we know immediately what is meant, or rather—and this is taking it one step further—we don’t even bring to mind the meaning of the word, but mechanically string together words that we know inside out. Reading is like thinking in this: both reach their characteristic speed precisely because they do not have to take a detour via the pronunciation of the words, or the representation of their meaning in the mind, let alone the visualization of the objects in the imagination. Hegel refers to this economy of thought when he claims that “we think in names” (Hegel 1971a, § 462, Zusatz).
Proficiency in reading and thinking not only undoes Hegel’s distinction between sign and symbol, it also undermines the proper working of both. While he had originally defined names as signs and hieroglyphs as symbols, reading and thinking now turn out to operate by way of symbols, but of symbols that do not symbolize: they don’t bring meaning into view. This absence of meaning in turn shows that signs have also ceased to properly signify. The mechanical stringing together of words that we know inside out, as it were, brings to the fore the more than radical arbitrariness of signs: their fundamental insignificance and impropriety. Signs gain a peculiar kind of literality or materiality in this display of their catachrestic character. The written word now becomes the thing itself, without referring back to a putatively antecedent reality: “The name is thus the thing as it . . . counts in the realm of representation [die Sache, wie sie im Reiche der Vorstellung Gültigkeit hat]” (Hegel 1971a, § 462). The mechanical “memory which retains names [Namen behaltende Gedächtniß]” thus not only establishes a strangely externalized space within interiority, but it completely turns the pit of intelligence inside out, it magically creates being out of nothingness: “This supreme inwardizing [höchste Erinnerung] of representation is the supreme self-emptying of intelligence [höchste Entäußerung], in which it renders itself the mere being, the universal space of names as such, i.e. of meaningless words” (Hegel 1971a, § 461/ § 463, trans. modified). Signs are in view without meaning. Such is their monstrosity. It overlaps with the monstrosity of Hegel calling intelligence an “unconscious pit” (bewußtloser Schacht; Hegel 1971a, § 453, Zusatz; trans. modified).

With his semiology Hegel “relieves” the clean-cut divisions between inside and outside, subjectivity and objectivity, ideality and materiality and turns them into textual (i.e., self-differential) differences. He even tackles the distinction between signification and insignificance: “Memory [Gedächtniß] is in this manner the passage into the activity of thought, which no longer has a meaning [Bedeutung], i.e. the subjective is no longer severed from its objectivity, and its inwardness is existing in itself [an ihr selbst seyend]” (Hegel 1971a, § 464, trans. modified). Thought doesn’t mean; it is. That is to say, the activity of thinking creates reality, and it does so without any return to meaning, which, in fact, has no effective reality (Wirksamkeit). A meaning (Bedeutung) beyond this reality of thinking and reading would be a Meinung (opinion) or a mere Gemeintes (intention), that is to say a mere subjectivity without objectivity, an inner without an outer, or a narcissism that expires without making a change: “The inwardness, which is supposed to be the true, is the ‘ownness’ [Eigenheit] of the intention and the individuality of being-for-itself. Both are the spirit which is aimed at [der gemeinte Geist],” or my (mein) spirit, but not actual
spirit (§ 320). Only the insignificance of thought—the fact that it “no longer has a meaning”—makes thought real.\textsuperscript{53} Real thought is, thus, impersonal thought: it is a thinking that exists and develops independently of the individual mind. It is the thing itself, which, for Hegel—unlike the noumenon for Kant—is available for (broken) experience.\textsuperscript{54}

By literalizing \textit{Erinnerung} Hegel specularizes it, as it were. The inwardizing he describes results in a more radical exteriorizing than that of recollection, which dredges things up from the recesses of the mind into the strangely reified space of interiority, but not into actual exteriority. Hegel thus uses \textit{Erinnerung} as a speculative word, that is, a word that means one thing and its opposite. In Hegel, it denotes both the inward and the outward movement.\textsuperscript{55} In speculative \textit{Erinnerung} or in the meaningless thoughtness of \textit{Gedächtnis}, objects vanish repeatedly: layering traces that reflect each other and thus building the affective and cognitive textuality of the interior, they immaterialize into names, which are things in themselves, that can be perceived, and inwardized, and so turn into other names, which in turn reflect on and thereby enhance the emotional and mental textuality of the pit. Language thus functions not as expression, but as a self-constructing texture that traverses materiality and immateriality, entangles exteriority and interiority and reflexively enhances impersonally emotional and rational life.

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Hard Heart

The last version of the figure of the heart in the \textit{Phenomenology} is not a figure of interiority anymore. It presents the limit case of the conception and practice of feeling. I am referring to the “hard heart” and its double, the “beautiful soul.” The epithet of “beautiful soul” usually—and most explicitly in Schiller’s taxonomy—stands and falls with the naïveté of the person. Her or his purity depends on ignorance, on not knowing how beautiful, true, and good s/he really is.\textsuperscript{56} Hegel offers a different account of naïveté. The hyper-conscientious beautiful soul enjoys an extreme purity not because its feelings are pre-reflective, but because they are completely transparent to it and others. It harbors no secret; it claims no \textit{Meinung} that differs from outer display; it has abandoned all inwardness. This excessively self-conscious purity spells the death of natural feeling, and, as I will discuss in more detail in chapter 7, it is the beginning of an emotionality without drama: a lighthearted transport.

The beautiful soul speaks beautifully. What it says is crystal clear, its language is “completely transparent” (\textit{das vollkommen Durchsichtige},
Its speech is an immaculate expression of its spirituality. “The absolute self-certainty of itself is immediately converted into a . . . sound” (schlägt ihr unmittelbar in ein Austönen um, § 658). The beautiful soul thus consummates the ideal of expression developed in the sphere of reason: its speech “is the pure form of translating” from the interior to the exterior, without distortion (§ 396). It is perfectly satisfied when it hears itself: everything it says represents it properly.

In this flawless self-expression the outer is bound to the inner and the inner bound to the outer to the point that the two collapse into the extensionless point of the “I” with its voiceless voice and shapeless shape. What the beautiful soul puts forth it retains as its own: the echo of its voice returns only to itself. Nobody else hears it. Its words are “a dying sound” (Austönen, § 658). It is as if they never made a sound. When the beautiful soul speaks, it is a “quiet coalescence of the pithless essentialities of [its] evaporated life” (stille Zusammenfließen der marklosen Wesenheiten des verflüchtigten Lebens, § 659, trans. modified). It might just as well say nothing. Its “activity alters nothing and opposes nothing” (§ 396). It “has the appearance of the movement of a circle, which within itself set itself into motion and moves freely in the void, and which, as unimpeded now enlarges now contracts and is fully satisfied in playing such a game within itself and with its self” (§ 396, trans. modified). The heart of the beautiful soul expands and contracts in a rhythm that is regular and undisturbed because the beautiful soul speaks only to its kind. It has surrounded itself ad infinitum with equally beautiful souls and thus knows no other who would resist it. But the satisfaction it gains from being recognized by the likes of it leaves a flat aftertaste: “The spirit and the substance of their bond is thus the reciprocal assurance of both their mutual conscientiousness and their good intentions; it is the rejoicing over this reciprocal purity, the refreshment received from the glory of knowing, articulating, fostering and cherishing such excellence” (§ 656). The communion is perfect and the recognition is vapid. The beautiful soul finds no other to thrust its heart against. It goes against no one and doesn’t touch anybody. Thus floating alone in infinite space (even though it is surrounded by like-minded souls), the beautiful soul longs for real friends. “Its activity is a yearning” (§ 658). Like the “unhappy consciousness,” who in its attempt to rise to God has “fallen back into itself” (§ 217), the beautiful soul, in its gesture to communicate with friends, merely “falls back on itself, [and] merely finds itself as lost” (zurück zu sich fallend sich nur als Verlornes findet; § 658). Together with its words, “its own fire consumes it and dies out, and the beautiful soul vanishes like a shapeless vapor dissolving into thin air” (§ 658, trans. modified).

The (self-)transparency of the beautiful soul comes at the expense
of difference; it really amounts to a refusal of emotionality. In its ethereal existence, the beautiful soul has lost its voice before it begins to speak. It understands language as the universal and transparent medium of the universal self, and it sees universality and singularity, like the pure and the stained, as mutually exclusive. By embracing universality, it opts against “the natural consciousness, i.e. impulses and inclinations [Triebe und Neigungen]” and turns into the hard heart (§ 643). Its untainted self-expression remains empty: “the hollow object which it generates to itself thus now fills it with the consciousness of emptiness” (§ 658). For its language to gain significance it would have to be saturated with “the so-called sensuousness” (sogenannte Sinnlichkeit) that the beautiful soul despises—with “the caprice [Willkür] of the individual, and the contingency of his unconscious natural being” (§ 643, trans. modified). Such “sensuousness” is only “so-called”; it cannot be named appropriately because, according to the idea of language harbored by the beautiful soul, the sensual is supposed to exist only prior to language, before it is subjected to the universality of a generic concept.

With the notion of an absolutely transparent and therefore empty language, the beautiful soul is at odds with Hegel’s own conception of language. For Hegel, language has its own “sense-nature” in the materiality of the signifier. It has its own “impulses and inclinations” and emotionality in the self-incongruity of “the self-moving permeation [sich bewegende Durchdringung] of the universal . . . and individuality” (§ 394). With the Phenomenology, Hegel famously constructs the concept (Begriff) as at the same time reaching through (durchgreift) and embracing (umgreift) both universality and individuality. The last figure of consciousness in the Phenomenology has driven to the extreme the abstract notion of language as universal that was the insight of the first figure of consciousness. While “sense certainty,” the first figure of consciousness, loses its sensuous self in the universal dimension of language, the hard heart loses the sensuous dimension of language in its universal self. The materiality and inner life of language, the impulses and inclinations of words, the self-reflexive density and subjectivity of the medium are lost on the hard heart, whose ethereal transparency has congealed into an unexpectedly unnatural solid—a heart of glass.

At the extreme of perfect self-expression, feeling is exhausted. In order to explain what I mean by this, I need to expound a little bit upon the Kantian background of the figure of the beautiful soul. The beautiful soul avoids impulses and inclinations (Triebe and Neigungen). Operating on minimal affectivity, it only allows for two pure kinds of feeling: on the one hand, the pure self-feeling of the transcendental synthesis of apperception (the extensionless “I”) and, on the other hand, the feeling of dis-
interested pleasure in the aesthetic experience of beauty. The first kind of feeling is posited as a universal or natural ground of all cognition, and the second kind is naturalized through the procedure of taste. The postulate of universal communicability (*allgemeine Mitteilbarkeit*), which motivates the individual to impute (*ansinnen*) its aesthetic judgment to virtually everyone, naturalizes feeling along the lines of: “you would all feel this pleasure if only you had taste.” Both kinds of feeling evince the non-propositional status of “feeling,” and support the Romantic idea that feelings are not appropriately expressed in discursive form. The “I think” that must be able to accompany all of my thoughts and representations is a unified and unifying feeling that needs no articulation. Aesthetic pleasure is a feeling voiced for others, but voiced without voice because those “others” have no resistance to offer: they are themselves but extensionless extensions of the self. If the source of aesthetic pleasure lies in the harmony of the faculties within the mind (*Gemüt*), this concord perpetuates, strengthens, and reproduces itself in the conformity of judgment among “all” minds.\(^6\)

At the same time, this idea of natural, authentic, substantive, and self-harmonizing “feeling” brings us to the verge of the conception of “emotionality”—as the negative, supplemental, and hollow feeling of self-discord.\(^65\) Kant’s other aesthetic experience, the sublime, indicates and performatively reinforces the ineffability and unrepresentability of the most precious and infinite faculty of the mind—reason—and thus offers the theoretical groundwork for the hard heart’s refusal to externalize its inner beauty—its refusal to expose it to real difference, that is, and not just to a community of taste. The sublime also presents the traumatic destruction of the integrity of feeling—the breaking of the hard heart.

Thomas Pfau argues that, with his aesthetics of the sublime, Kant profoundly alters the essential bond between interiority and expression. Pfau describes the sublime as the shock of the absence of the feeling of pleasure and the fabrication of the quasi-feeling of “respect” (for the supersensible quality of reason) to fill in the void. This procedure “transforms the entire conception of ‘feeling’ from an inward authentic event into something essentially notional and figural in kind”—something fabricated or fictional—and “throws into relief the strictly ‘virtual’ character of all feeling, including that of the beautiful, to begin with” (Pfau 2005, 42/43).\(^64\) The (non-)experience of the sublime means the death of natural feeling. From hence on, the duplicity of the hard heart will undo the naive simplicity of the beautiful soul, and self-reflexive emotionality will not ground cognition, as “feeling” did, but transport concepts from one figuration to the next.

With the hard heart, the beauty of naturalized or “organic” feel-
ing is exhausted and the trope of interiority breaks. Even though spirit is spirit only when it actualizes or realizes itself (its values and beliefs), we have traced in this chapter how “we”—or spirit through us—come to discover that the trope of the heart (figuring interiority) actually makes this self-realization impossible. We have seen that the sentimentalist prefers feeling the mad throbbing of his heart to losing heart in the alienating endeavor to bring about actual political change. It has become clear that the logic of expression leads to a frustrating double imperative to withhold what is to be communicated (epitomized in Schiller’s sigh of the soul). We have followed this double imperative to the figure of the beautiful soul, who carries the logic of interiority to extremes by downright refusing to expose any part of its precious interiority to an alienating exteriority, so that not only the expression but even the experience of feeling becomes impossible.

In between, we have explored Hegel’s alternatives to the logics of expression, purity of feeling, and interiority. We have seen that spirit has a textual rather than an expressive relation to itself. We have discussed one of Hegel’s strategies to imbricate rationality and emotionality. Rather than dismiss intellectual analysis for interfering with, perhaps even threatening, the holistic intuition of feeling—as the philosophers of feeling do—Hegel proposes that the analytic activity of the understanding actually produces and furthers emotionality. As a strategy to dismantle the construction of interiority, we have analyzed how Hegel twists together the counter-vectored movements of internalizing and recollecting by literalizing Erinnerung, and thereby undoes the inner-outer opposition.

In the end, the beautiful soul has led us to the verge of a radically new conception of emotionality, where authenticity depends on fabrication. The beautiful soul’s duplicity (be it within the hard heart or between the figures of the hard heart and the ironist into which the beautiful soul splits) will in a later chapter (chapter 7) provide a prime example for the broken syntax of emotional thought and thoughtful emotionality in the Phenomenology. But before we address the syntax of emotionality in more detail in the second part of this book, we will turn to another important thematic account of emotionality in Hegel, that of “pathos.” Pathos is less severely criticized by Hegel, because—even though it tends to come across as another naturalizing figure of emotionality—it is less unambiguously stuck in that naturalizing register than feeling is. In fact, we will see that the Phenomenology offers a naturalizing and a theatrical account of pathos. It thus builds on the lesson of the sublime that, in the absence of feeling inside, pathos must be fabricated and exhibited on stage—including the stage that is the world.