

“But when the fulness of time had come God sent his Son”. G.W.F. Hegel on Time.  
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## 1. Introduction: Corrections to an Earlier Study

“Cone of personhood”: distinction between the subject which is on boundary of the world (tip of cone) and soul in depths of the world (base of cone).

Understanding of time in Kant and Schopenhauer raises three possible problems:

(i) Subjective nature of time. For Kant time is an “a priori intuition.” (Kemp Smith, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 74-82 (A30-41/B46-58)). For Schopenhauer time (together with space and causality) “reside a priori in our consciousness” (Schopenhauer, *World as Will and Representation*, 1:5).

(ii) Time portrayed as abstract and insufficiently theological.

(iii) View of self which emerges is highly individualistic and fails to do justice to the idea of community.

Correction using Hegel: manages to say something about what time actually is; may even answer Augustine: “If nobody asks me [concerning time], I know: but if I were desirous to explain it to one that would ask me, I know not” (*Confessiones* 11.14: *si nemo ex me quaerat, scio; si quaerenti explicare velim, nescio*).

Hegel rightly stresses the nature of flux (compare Heraclitus); Spirit is not a “thing” but rather an activity (biblical metaphors of (running) water, fire, and wind).

## 2. Time in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*

Preface

Introduction

### Part I (A) CONSCIOUSNESS

Chapter 1 Sense-certainty

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### Part III (C) REASON, SPIRIT, RELIGION, ABSOLUTE KNOWING

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**Preface:** mathematical view of time (and space) has severe limitations since it fails to grasp that time is “the existent concept itself” (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 27; §46; *HHW* 2:34) and fails to grasp “the spiritual-historical Time of Spirit” (Murray, “Time,” 685).

**My excursus:** At time  $t$  the wavefront forms a sphere having a radius of  $ct$  and we can write  $x^2 + y^2 + z^2 = c^2t^2$  and hence  $x^2 + y^2 + z^2 - c^2t^2 = 0$ . But what is time? Problem of spatialization of time.

Kant: “By means of outer sense, a property of our mind, we represent (vorstellen) to ourselves objects as outside us, and all without exception in space. [...] Inner sense, by means of which the mind (Gemüt) intuits itself or its inner state, yields indeed no intuition of the soul (Seele) itself as an object; but there is nevertheless a determinate form [namely, time] in which alone the intuition (Anschauung) of inner states is possible, and everything which belongs to inner determination is therefore represented (vorgestellt) in relations of time” (*Critique of Pure Reason*, 67-68; A22-23/B37; Weischedel, *Kant*, 3:71).

Hegel is doing “Phenomeno-logy”, “a logic of appearing” of Spirit (Phenomenon – appearance from the Greek “phainō”, I appear; and “logos” meaning word/reason).

**Chapter 1 Sense-certainty** (Sinnliche Gewissheit): this “appears to be the *truest* knowledge; for it has not as yet omitted anything from the object (von dem Gegenstande), but has the object before it in its perfect entirety” (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 58; §91; *HHW* 2:63).

In self-certainty “pure being at once splits into what we have called the two ‘Theses’, one ‘This’ as ‘I’, and the other ‘This’ as object” (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 59; §92; *HHW* 2:64).

Question: “What is Now?” “Now is Night.” Write this down but then later if “Now” is noon, that earlier truth becomes “stale” (“schaal”) (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 60; §95; *HHW* 2:64).

Problem that the object of self-certainty proves to be the universal, not the particular and unique. Feuerbach: Hegel is playing with words!

In self-certainty, one moment in time leads to the another and “the Now does indeed preserve itself” (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 60; §96; *HHW* 2:65). “Sense-experience has thus itself demonstrated that its real content is not the particular but the universal” (Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution*, 106, quoted in Stern, *Phenomenology*, 50).

**Chapter 3 Force and Understanding: Appearance and the Supersensible World.** Here we are in the world of mathematical time found in the preface; “Verstand” (“understanding”) “is best instanced in the thinking proper to mathematics and the physical sciences” (Lauer, *Phenomenology*, 75). Hegel portrays the laws of motion in physics “wherein consciousness tries to grasp the essence of bodies relationally, yet exhibiting a certain conceptual indifference” and “while motion gets defined relationally as a function of space and time, distance and velocity, the relata are thought to exist without essential dependence on each other, each as a separate difference, so that their unity might be typed ‘indifference’” (Murray, “Time,” 687).

Hegel: “these parts, time and space, or distance and velocity, do not in themselves express this origin in a One; they are indifferent to one another, space is thought of as able to be without time, time without space, and distance at least without velocity” (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 93; §153; *HHW* 2:94).

**Chapter 4: “Self-Consciousness”.** “[A] new sense of time gets insinuated into the world, an historical time that prescribes not the motion of physical objects in space, but the movement of Spirit ‘in’ time.” We now see “the necessary connection between Concept and Time. [...] Hegel’s conception of the Concept is both ontological and temporal, so that the Concept is not a mere name but a mode of existence (viz., that of Spirit’s life) and not an eternal eidos but a temporal process of self-shapings” (Murray, “Time,” 688).

“Concept” (“Begriff”) for Hegel is a “formal-final” cause of a thing. The formal cause is the essence or nature of a thing and the final cause is the purpose a thing attempts to realise.

The “idea” is the “concept” that has realised itself in and through objectivity. “The Idea is the *adequate Concept*, that which is objectively *true*, or the *true as such*” (Miller, *Science of Logic*, 755; *HHW* 4:173).

“Unhappy consciousness”: “The hope of becoming one with [the divine] must remain a hope, i.e. without fulfilment [...] By the nature of the *immediately present unit* (die Natur des *seyenden Eins*) [...] it necessarily follows that in the world of time it has vanished, and that in space it had a remote existence and remains utterly remote” (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 129; §212; *HHW* 2:124).

**Chapter 6 Spirit.** “Reason is Spirit when its certainty of being all reality has been raised to truth, and it is conscious of itself as its own world, and of the world as itself” (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 263; §438; *HHW* 2:238). Switch from the *subjective* idealism of Kant and Schopenhauer (“The world is *my* representation” (*World as Will and Representation*, 1:3, my emphasis) to the *objective* idealism of Hegel. “Spirit is [...] self-supporting, absolute, real being. All previous shapes of consciousness are abstract forms of it” (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 264; §440; *HHW* 2:239).

**Chapter 7 Religion.** “The course traversed by these moments is [...] in relation to religion, not to be represented as occurring in Time. Only the totality of Spirit is in Time (Der ganze Geist nur ist in der Zeit), and the ‘shapes’, which are ‘shapes’ of the totality of *Spirit*, display themselves in a temporal succession; for only the whole has true actuality and therefore the form of pure freedom in face of an ‘other’, a form which expresses itself as Time (die sich als Zeit ausdrückt).” The shapes of consciousness, self-consciousness, and reason “exhibit Spirit in its individuality or *actuality*, and are distinguished from one another in Time, though in such a way that the later moment retains within it the preceding one” (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 413; §679; *HHW* 2:365). Murray suggests that “there is something radically unsatisfactory about the *in der Zeit* formulation” (“Der ganze Geist nur ist in der Zeit”) (Murray, “Time,” 692). One could say a world-moment is in time “[b]ut the text [...] expressly declares the whole of Spirit is in time, which strictly makes no sense if nothing in principle could ever precede or succeed that whole”. Since Hegel wishes to affirm that both “the stages and the totality of the stages are temporal” Murray suggests that Hegel wishes to say “the whole must be expressed *as* Time” (Murray, “Time,” 692). Cf. final paragraph of the *Phenomenology*: “Spirit emptied out into Time” (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 492; §808; *HHW* 2:433).

Revealed religion advances insight of the temporality of Spirit: centrality of incarnation.

“That absolute Spirit has given itself *implicitly* the shape of self-consciousness, and therefore has also given it for its *consciousness* – this now appears as the *belief of the world* that Spirit is *immediately present* as a self-conscious Being, i.e. as an *actual man*, that the believer is immediately certain of Spirit, *sees, feels, and hears* this divinity” (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 458; §758; *HHW* 2:404).

“This incarnation of the divine Being, or the fact that it essentially and directly has the shape of self-consciousness, is the simple content of the absolute religion” (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 459; §759; *HHW* 2:405).

**Transition from Chapter 7 to Chapter 8:** from “religion” to “philosophy”, consciousness turns into “absolute knowing.” Philosophy not only “understands that being becomes self-conscious in human beings” but goes a stage further in seeing that this “being” is “*absolute being*” “and so encompasses more than mere human life and consciousness” (Houlgate, *Introduction*, 100).

Hegel: “in this self-like *form* in which existence is immediately thought, the content is the *Concept*” (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 491; §805; *HHW* 2:432). Houlgate: “Philosophical

consciousness thus understands the course of the world not just to be ‘the deed of an *alien* satisfaction [die Handlung einer *fremden* Genugthuung]’, but to be the work of the very rationality that it knows to be at work within itself. In this sense, philosophy sees in the world ‘its own action as such’ (Houlgate, *Introduction*, 100, quoting Miller, *Phenomenology*, 477-78; §787; *HHW* 2:420).

**Chapter 8 Absolute Knowing** “Time is the Concept itself that *is there* and which presents itself to consciousness as empty intuition; for this reason, Spirit necessarily appears in Time, and it appears in time just so long as it has not *grasped* its pure Concept, i.e., has not annulled Time (Die *Zeit* ist der *Begriff* selbst, der da *ist*, und als leere Anschauung sich dem Bewußtsein vorstellt; deßwegen erscheint der Geist nothwendig in der *Zeit*, und er erscheint solange in der *Zeit* als er nicht seinen reinen Begriff *erfaßt*, das heißt, nicht die *Zeit* tilgt). It [time] is the *outer*, intuited pure Self which is *not grasped* by the Self, the merely intuited Concept (angeschaute Begriff); when this latter grasps itself it sets aside its Time-form, comprehends this intuiting, and is a comprehended and comprehending intuiting (und ist begriffnes und begreifendes Anschauen). Time, therefore, appears as the destiny and necessity of Spirit that is not yet complete within itself, the necessity to enrich the share which self-consciousness has in consciousness, to set in motion the *immediacy of the in-itself*, which is the form in which substance is present in consciousness ...” (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 487; §801; *HHW* 2:429).

Cf (i) Kant writes: “Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (Kemp Smith, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 93; Weischedel, *Kant*, 3:98; A51/B75).

(ii) For Kant time is not the outer but the inner sense. Contrast Hegel’s presentation of time as the “*outer*, intuited pure Self,” something to be corrected.

“Problem” with revealed religion is that the self is represented in terms of an external, serialized Time. The temporal self is not strictly grasped; when it is, then the deficient being-in-time view of Time is annulled. “Spirit is no longer thought as intuited out there ‘in’ Time, but rather gets conceptually grasped as identical with Time ‘as’ Time. [...] The overcoming and supercession of the notion of Spirit *in* Time in favour of Spirit *as* Time, is expressed in the formulation ‘a comprehended and comprehending intuiting’ [‘begriffnes und begreifendes Anschauen’]” (Murray, “Time,” 702, quoting Miller, *Phenomenology*, 487; §801; cf. *HHW* 2:429).

At close of *Phenomenology* Spirit comes to know itself as nothing but time which completely understood would be “comprehended History” (“begriffene Geschichte”) (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 493; §808; *HHW* 2:434). Murray: “It knows itself as Time because Spirit recognizes that the Concept, which is the medium of its life, is Time.” Hegel: “this revelation is [...] the Concept’s Time, in that this externalization is in its own self externalized (daß diese Entäusserung sich an ihr selbst entäussert), and just as it is in its extension (Ausdehnung), so it is equally in its depth, in the Self” (Miller, *Phenomenology*, 493; §808; *HHW* 2:433).

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