

Hermann Hesse's Hegelianism: The Progress of Consciousness Towards Freedom in *The Glass Bead Game*

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It is a commonplace in criticism of Hermann Hesse's fiction that the novels' major characters expend considerable intellectual, emotional, and spiritual energy to bring into balance a variety of ideological oppositions that otherwise cause the characters equally considerable anxiety. Hesse's tendency to incorporate a dynamic of ideological conflict and resolution into his novels is frequently explained as a natural product of his extensive knowledge of Eastern religion and philosophy, which he learned as the child of missionaries to India and continued to develop during the course of his life. This account of the way Hesse represents ideological conflict and resolution in his literary characters seems sound enough to me. But I do not think that Hesse's lifelong study of things Eastern must be taken as the *exclusive* determinant of themes represented in his fiction. Hesse's predilection for elaborating the ideological crises and resolutions of his characters may also be interpreted as representing the Western, Hegelian concept of an Absolute Spirit that proceeds through exhaustive dialectical permutations before it becomes conscious of its status as the identical subject-object of history.

This essay seeks to demonstrate the presence of Hegelian ideas in Hesse's literary enterprise, a presence heretofore largely ignored in criticism of Hesse's novels. I find the prospect of such a demonstration valuable for at least three reasons. First, ideological affinity between Hesse and Hegel could certainly be profit-

ably used to reconstruct an important sequence of modern German intellectual history. Second, it would more elaborately locate Hegel in the context of Hesse's noted interest in, and knowledge of, European Romanticism. Third, and perhaps most obviously, it would afford a new point of theoretical entry into future interpretation of Hesse's *corpus*. Although considerations of space have prompted me to restrict my discussion of Hegelian imprints in Hesse's fiction to his final novel, *The Glass Bead Game*, the choice of text is not arbitrary. Arguably the most formally and thematically complex of Hesse's novels, *The Glass Bead Game* resists the kind of forthright allegorical interpretation of ideological conflict to which his earlier novels are particularly susceptible; rather, it encourages the reader to a consideration of overdetermined ideological material that does not fit too comfortably into the neat paradigm of the Hegelian dialectic. I am thus more confident than not that whatever conclusions might be drawn regarding Hegelian imprints in *The Glass Bead Game* will be applicable to Hesse's earlier novels, whereas I could not make the same claim for *The Glass Bead Game* based on an analysis of these earlier novels.

Critical Judgment on Hesse's Hegelianism

When Hesse's critics invoke examples of Hegelian ideology in Hesse's corpus, it is nearly always in connection with *The Glass Bead Game*. *The Glass Bead Game* is Hesse's only major work in which Hegel's name actually appears, so it is neither surprising nor improper that exegetical studies should attempt to measure the putative imprint of Hegelianism on the ideas that inform *The Glass Bead Game*. A brief survey of the critics' estimations on this subject is distinguished by a fair amount of disagreement and open debate.

On November 14, 1931, the *Stuttgarter Neues Tageblatt* published an article, written by Otto Engel, commemorating Hegel. A copy of the article was found years later in Hesse's *Nachlass* for *The Glass Bead Game*. One may reasonably assume that Hesse was responsible for its being saved there. Engel went on in 1947 to refer to Hegel as a precursor and brother to Hesse: "Heraclitus

and Hegel are born again in literary adaptation in Hermann Hesse" (81). A similar observation was recorded two years later to the effect that *The Glass Bead Game* is a blending of Hegel, Goethe, and Burckhardt (Levander, n.p.). A dissenting voice insisted that Hesse's belief in oneness beyond polarities is in contrast to Hegel's philosophy of history (Gnefkow 108-09). Mark Boulby, one of Hesse's foremost interpreters, wrote with some impatience of the "puzzling quasi-Hegelian perspectives of the book"; then, after considering Hesse's references to Hegel in the novel, and the "absolute contrast" of the Hegelian and Chinese views, concluded: "these considerations serve principally to show the relative uselessness of the dialectical process as a philosophical key to the novel; to understand Knecht's breakout as essentially a flight from the unhistorical and in a sense a return to Hegel is not even to take the surface meaning of the book at its face value" (265-305).

In 1968, G.W. Field called attention to the commemorative essay found in the *Nachlass*. Not sure whether Hesse ever really devoted time to a study of Hegel, Field speculated that perhaps the Hegelian flavor of *The Glass Bead Game* was a product of Hesse's interest in Engel's article (*Materialien*, vol 2, 182-203). A bolder assertion was made by Hans Mayer, who linked the Hegelian structure of *The Glass Bead Game* to Hesse's careful study and intensive knowledge of Hegel's philosophy (*Materialien*, vol 2, 163, 168). Ursula Chi has more recently reiterated the opinion that *The Glass Bead Game* is more properly informed by Chinese mysticism than by Hegelian idealism. In connection with Hesse's final novel and the "mystery of Mind that is always and already there," Eugene Stelzig comments on "the undeniably Hegelian side of Hesse's vision" (272). And writing of Hesse's corroboration of Jacob Burckhardt's hostility toward Hegel's "interpretation of history as the grand process of the rational Spirit," Stelzig mentions that Hesse's "scripting of Knecht's lives from the Rainmaker to the Magister Ludi is quite compatible with Hegelian thinking" (272). He concludes that, "where Hesse parts ways with the progressive and dialectical interpretation of history . . . is in his refusal to envision a final stage or end point (the Absolute Knowledge of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* as the spirit having

achieved full philosophical self-realization)" (272). Joseph Mileck, Hesse's most comprehensive biographer, mentions that Hegel was one of the many philosophers as familiar to Hesse as to the nameless chronicler of Joseph Knecht's life (276). Mileck qualifies the statement no further.

Hesse did little to clarify matters in his correspondence related to the novel. During the writing of *The Glass Bead Game*, Hesse wrote to Rolf Schott: "Of all things suspicious, philosophy of history is the most suspicious" (*Materialien*, vol. 1, 213). It is not unreasonable to think that Hegel is the target of this critique; further, the statement foreshadows the concluding remark of the novel's fifth chapter: "Father Jacobus made no bones about his profound mistrust of all philosophies of history."¹ But what are we to infer from Hesse's asseveration? Does it suggest that Hesse had indeed read at least enough Hegel to have formed an opinion about him and then to have rejected his ideas? When his eyesight cooperated, Hesse was an avid reader, and it is not likely that, considering his familiarity with the major German philosophers from Leibniz to Nietzsche, he should have singled out Hegel for exclusion from study. Then there is Hesse's letter of July 1961, written in response to the aforementioned Mayer article, in which Hesse pointedly refuted Mayer's contention: "I have never much liked most of the philosophers of the Western World, with the exception of the Greeks, and of Hegel I have read so little that I am ashamed" (*Materialien*, vol. 1, 302).

Notwithstanding the inconclusive prognostications of Hesse's critics, the facts remain that Hegel is mentioned several times in *The Glass Bead Game*, and that frequent allusions are made to Hegelian ideas and terminology. In order to bring these instances of reference into uncluttered perspective, a fuller understanding of the ideological affinities between Hesse and Hegel is necessary. Thereafter, it will be possible to examine the novel's representation of the Hegelian metaphysic of Spirit. This investigation will be followed by an account of the novel's treatment of the philosophy of history, a site where Hegel's influence on Hesse may also be recorded. In conclusion, Knecht's gradually evolving commitment to service, which provides the novel's figurative

markers for his Hegelian progress towards epistemological independence from exterior attachment, will be discussed.

Ideological Affinity

In Hesse's fiction, the essence of Spirit shows itself in the eternal principle that forms and governs the universe (Ziolkowski 39). Human consciousness, once aware of Spirit's status as the identical subject-object of history, would ideally extinguish itself in a state beyond involvement with the corporeal world. But, by the time an individual is able to perceive the basic identity of self and world, of subject and object, consciousness has already become dulled and distracted by fear, desire, and the obsession with individuation; it is no longer receptive to the ubiquitous essence of Spirit. It considers the objective world as something exterior to it. Paradoxically, this period of disparity is a necessary prerequisite to any hope of returning to the knowledge of a unified self and world under the totalizing aegis of Spirit. The movement from the first stage, through the second, to the third, is a clearly patterned dialectic in the tradition of Hegelian logic, and it is re-described by Hesse as the process of "humanization" in his essay "A Bit of Theology":

The path of human development begins with innocence. From there it leads to guilt, to the knowledge of good and evil, to the demand for culture, for morality, for religions, for human ideals. For everyone who passes through this stage seriously and as a differentiated individual it ends unflinchingly in disillusionment, that is, with the insight that no perfect virtue, no complete obedience, no adequate service exists, that righteousness is unreasonable, that consistent goodness is unattainable. Now this despair leads either to defeat or to a third realm of the spirit, to the experience of a condition beyond morality and law, an advance into grace and release to a new, higher kind of irresponsibility, or to put it briefly: to faith. (*My Belief*189)²

When Hesse permits his protagonists to dwell in the first stage of humanization, they do so without knowing its magical prelapsarian quality until they have lost it. Consciousness at the second stage of humanization must strive to re-member its identity with the undifferentiated unity of the Spiritual world, and to

realize that perfected self-realization is tantamount to Absolute self-consciousness. The goal is elusive. Many obstacles prevent consciousness from returning to itself. Among them are: the lure of individuation; the fear of death; the attachment to the illusory physical boundaries characteristic of the objective world; and the manifold polarities that immediately present themselves to perception once the prelapsarian state is lost and that generate the false consciousness of a reality exterior to immanent Spirit.

The purposeful, active struggle for individuation is the key labor of consciousness at the second stage of humanization. According to Hegel, individual consciousness perceives itself as clear and distinct from the objective world, against which it battles constantly for definition; yet it is terrified of separation from this world that is the sole source of its self-realization. Consciousness is thus dependent on a world that it wants to renounce. *It must actively involve itself in the world in order to free itself from it.* Hegel's philosophy demands a commitment to the dialectic, for only by exhausting the dialectic can Absolute Knowledge be attained: "Consciousness must go through a long process of first enriching its object, poor and abstract in its first appearance, and then appropriating and conceptually reabsorbing all that it has thus enriched. The pure notion presupposes all these stages that lead up to it, but consciousness embraces them all in implicit non-notional form" (Hegel 590-601). Commensurably, Hesse's novels demand a commitment to life. The objective world itself has a dialectical function in the novels. First it must be exhausted. Then it must be abandoned. Finally, it may be recreated, interfused from within by perfected Spirit.

Symptomatic of the fear of separation from the objective world is dependence upon time. When life is viewed sequentially, time presents itself as a precious commodity of which one must be ever mindful at every instant. It must not be squandered. Death, the final separation from the objective world, can at any time cut short individuation. Ironically, in the early portion of stage two, it is necessary for consciousness *to create for itself* a sequential order of time.³ Anything that serves to facilitate the progress of consciousness towards self-realization has provisional value.

Spirit is eternal. Everything else is perpetually involved in its own dialectic of *werden* and *entwerden*, becoming and unbecoming. That is why time can at one moment be helpful, and at the next be "unquestionably the most dangerous enemy of joy" (Hesse, "On Little Joys," *My Belief* 7).

When consciousness finally realizes itself to be identical to the Absolute Spirit that contains and creates all things, everything is perceived simultaneously and in totality, and historical time is obviated. Again, the comparison with Hegel is significant: "Time is the Notion itself when presented to consciousness as an empty intuition, and Spirit appears to itself in time till it achieves full notional grasp and thereby abolishes time. Time is the destiny and the necessity of the as yet not perfected Spirit, i.e. until it has overcome the externality of objective Substance" (Hegel 591).

Long before consciousness can participate in the simultaneity of self-realized Spirit, it must reconcile innumerable polarities that impede the way to the third stage of humanization. Polarities left unresolved limit the movement of consciousness because they create unsurpassable ideological boundaries in which consciousness becomes entangled. Individuation can thus be further qualified as a dissolution of the boundaries effectuated by polarity. An inventory of all the polarities evident in Hesse's fiction would be virtually impossible to record, but first among them is the opposition of *Geist* and *Natur*. How an individual could be in the world but not of it was a problem that never lost its fascination for Hesse; Spirit, seeking to attain to self-realization and perfection, has to stride willingly and fully through the physical world before its transcendent goal can be reached. His fiction suggests that, in Hesse's understanding, true polarities must be "opposites held in dynamic, productive tension or opposites bridged or unified in a higher synthesis," and must be "themselves part of an evolving process" (Freedman 189). The full weight of the word "becoming," with all its imposing, German philosophical connotations, underlies this understanding.⁴ Without process, there can be no progress towards the third stage of humanization. When polarities are finally drawn together and reconciled, and the boundaries between them are suspended, a syn-

thesis of opposites is ideally produced. Synthesis, in the service of self-fulfillment, is the “compelling and directive urge” in all of Hesse’s protagonists; everything revolves about life’s polarities and is directed toward it (Mileck 287). The phenomenon of opposites unified in synthesis neatly fits the Hegelian triadic paradigm of the dialectic.

This is an appropriate place to discuss some terminology, common in Hesse criticism, that has provoked a fair amount of controversy regarding the import of Hesse’s metaphysics. It is generally allowed that Hesse’s attraction to and knowledge of Far Eastern philosophies contributed to his ceaseless engagement with the problem of polarity. In an essay of 1931, Hesse wrote that “the hidden wisdom of Lao-tse with its mystic dynamism influenced me greatly” (“My Belief,” *My Belief* 179). Chi has taken this and other similar avowals to be proof that polarity in Hesse’s novels is to be interpreted in an exclusively Chinese context, and not from a Hegelian perspective. Chi argues that Hesse rejects the notion of progress in history and society and allows for progress only in spiritual development. On her account, an Hegelian interpretation of *The Glass Bead Game* ignores Hesse’s above admission and merely does the book violence (144-206).

Such an attitude might be reasonable if one were making the naive attempt to verify the philosophies that influence and shape a writer’s thought based on the writer’s own assertions, especially since Hesse had few kind things to say about Hegel in an essay on Karl Marx: “Even his model and teacher Hegel is someone I do not much love; his dazzling garrulity does not greatly entertain me, nor does his professorial assumption of superior wisdom” (“Karl Marx: Das Kapital,” *My Belief* 363). But a writer’s statements about his or her works and the ideas that formed them are not to be taken uncritically. A line of demarcation must be drawn between Hesse’s theoretical idea of polarity, and the way the idea is manifested in his literary *corpus*. In his autobiographical writings, Hesse may in all faith present himself as a Chinese; but his characters must confront additional conflicts that are a step beyond the Chinese idea of polarity, and they are irrefutably implicated in a progress of consciousness towards self-knowledge. If

polarities can for a moment be understood as thesis and antithesis, and if it can be allowed that "in a dialectical movement of ideas . . . [the two elements of a polarity] are constantly contrasted and resolved" (Freedman 114), then it should at once become clear that the Chinese and Hegelian perspectives are ideologically compatible with one another. Neither has to be valid to the exclusion of the other.

Dialectic also seems a more accurate word than "dichotomy" to qualify the characteristic movement between polarities. Dichotomy suggests two neatly divided qualities that sit in static opposition before they are re-unified. This image is, at bottom, correct, for a dialectical relationship is ideally structured on a dichotomy. However, dialectic seems to go beyond the narrow implications of dichotomy. A dialectic is predicated upon movement, interplay, between antipodal ideological elements. Often the interplay is explosive, hostile towards the idea of unification or synthesis; it forces an individual to expend tremendous amounts of psychic energy to effect a reconciliation between the poles. The term "dialectic" captures this movement and tension.

The dialectic of individuation exposes a great paradox in Hesse's fiction. During individuation, as the ego is developed and defined, gaps widen between the self and the world. When individuation is completed, the gaps miraculously dissolve. The last stage of individuation is a dissolution of the self into unity. When Hesse wrote of the faith granted by the third stage of humanization, he was referring to a faith in the suprapersonal; once the ego has attained a mastery over polarity and opposition, it too must surrender to the totality of Spirit, which Hesse, following the German and English Romantic poets, often referred to as the One. On the progress of ego towards Oneness, Hesse commented:

I believe in nothing in the world so deeply, no conception is so holy to me, as unity, the conviction that everything in the world forms a divine whole, that the "I" takes itself too seriously. I had suffered much pain in my life, had done much that was stupid and unpleasant, but again and again I had managed to free myself, to forget my "I" and yield to the feeling of oneness, to recognize that the division between inner and outer, between "I" and

the world, is an illusion and to enter willingly with closed eyes into unity. ("A Guest at the Spa," *Autobiographical Writings* 121)

The perfection of ego is a provisional goal. It is a means to an end. It must never be understood as an end in itself. The goal of individuation is "the realization that beneath the division in race, color, language, and culture there lies a unity, that there are not various peoples and minds but only One Humanity, only One Spirit" ("A Bit of Theology," *My Belief* 191). In the One Spirit, ego is no longer desperately attached to a physical world from which it once imagined itself separate and distinct; all fear and desire have been overcome, and the outer world is connected and in harmony with the inner in a way that can only be called magical ("Life Story Briefly Told," *Autobiographical Writings* 57). The *unio mystica* shines forth at this stage, allowing for a vision tantamount to Hegel's Absolute Self-knowledge, in which

Spirit is all the phases of content in which it externalizes itself, and the process of leading these phases back to a full consciousness of self. It unfolds its existence and develops its processes in the pure ether of its life and is Systematic Science. In Systematic Science the distinction between subjective knowledge and objective truth is eliminated: each phase always has both aspects. (Hegel 591)

Totality, unity, reconciliation of polarity are all figures used to re-present the original synthesis lost in the movement from the first to the second stage of humanization. And although Hesse's concept of progress is spiral and not linear, it must be understood that the ultimate synthesis is immanent, not transcendent. Hesse's vision of the ideal is not to be sought in another world; it is a self-contained, inner synthesis that can only be attained after life has been lived and exhausted. It is the product of committing to the world, not of prematurely quitting it and, in fear and desire, of looking beyond one's self toward something higher.

In Hegelian terminology, Spirit conscious of itself as the Absolute Source of reality attains freedom; it is epistemologically autonomous, independent of the idea of an external world

from which it once imagined itself separate. Hesse's protagonists can follow one of four courses to freedom, and the value of each course is distinctly implied by the degree to which it fulfills self-realization. By this standard, suicide, which is a premature physical departure from the objective world, is the least effective way to freedom; suicide forces separation from the world before individuation can be fulfilled. Alongside suicide is spiritual negation of the world; in withdrawing from activity, the ascetic also prevents the self from realizing its essential unity with the Absolute. Both suicide and negation cut short the movement through polarity toward synthesis. They remove Spirit from the only arena in which freedom may be gained. Art is the third possible conduit to epistemological autonomy from what is perceived as materially real. The process of creation freezes in time a synthesis of opposites by bringing together a moment of nature re-presented by Spirit. But as long as Spirit feels compelled to verify synthesis in a *physical* image, it remains attached to the external world. Hesse's characterization of artistic activity is coterminous with Hegel's understanding, and subsequent dismissal, of religion as one possible goal of consciousness: "In religion . . . the identification of Ego with Ego is still only achieved in the medium of picture-thought" (Hegel 590).

True freedom from epistemological exteriority can only be attained at the third stage of humanization in an *inner* image of perfected synthesis with, and within, the One Spirit; it is won by actively reconciling life's manifold polarities through dialectical progress. At the third stage of individuation, Spirit reflects back upon itself and contemplates its reunification with totality. Having dissolved itself, the ego places no particular premium on its own identity; it is absorbed, almost fluidly, into totality. Thus the insistence upon individuality, emphasized at the second stage of humanization, is replaced in the third stage by an obligation to serve fully and selflessly the Absolute whose status as identical subject-object of consciousness is finally perceived. At least two kinds of service are delineated in Hesse's fiction. A character struggling to overcome the conflicts of the second stage of humanization must either serve the requisite process of individua-

tion or forfeit the possibility of self-realization. The demands attending individuation are inexorable and severe, and service is experienced as a painful existential burden producing confusion and anxiety. When all conflict is finally eradicated, and ego no longer requires attention, service is re-directed towards the community. The characters who are successful in attaining to self-realization are able to enjoy their freedom in the act of service to others. This latter expression of service is not properly Hegelian. It is Hesse's figural indication that the third stage of humanization has been reached; it verifies diegetically the culmination of Hegelian metaphysics.

Perfected Spirit and the Game

If viewed as the utopia it purports to be, Castalia represents the World Spirit returned to itself (Seidlin 72). In the Province, all is ancillary to the spiritual hierarchy whose apotheosized symbol is the Glass Bead Game. The Game, partially a product of the overarching Castalian impulse for synthesis, is qualified throughout the novel in language intimating the *unio mystica* of Spirit conscious of itself. In the introduction, where Hegel is mentioned along with Abelard and Leibniz as one of the intellectual forebears of the Game, the dialectical essence of one school's playing technique is described:

The goal was to develop both themes or theses with complete equality and impartiality, to evolve out of thesis and antithesis the purest possible synthesis . . . This followed directly from the meaning the Game had acquired at its height for the players. It represented an elite, symbolic form of seeking for perfection . . . an approach to that Mind which beyond all images and multiplicities is one within itself—in other words, to God. (GBG 30)

Knecht, while still a pupil at Waldzell and a student of the Game, discloses to the Music Master his revelation that “the dark interior, the esoterics of the Game, points down into the One and All . . . One who had experienced the ultimate meaning of the Game . . . would no longer dwell in the world of multiplicity . . . he would know altogether different joys and raptures” (GBG 107).

A second letter to the Music Master, written by Knecht several years after the first, elaborates upon the young man's initial insight into the intricacies of the Game: "The Game as I conceive it . . . encompasses the player after the completion of meditation as the surface of a sphere encompasses its center, and leaves him with the feeling that he has extracted from the universe of accident and confusion a totally symmetrical and harmonious cosmos, and absorbed it into himself" (GBG 178). The Music Master, who late in his life attains to a numinous state beyond multiplicity, forever epitomizes for Knecht perfected Spirit aware of its synthetic, restorative powers. It is the Music Master's rôle in the novel to lead his young friend and protégé away from conflict toward unity: "our mission is to recognize contraries for what they are: first of all as contraries, but then as opposite poles of a unity" (GBG 68). If properly suited to his calling, a Castalian confronts few obstacles on his way to spiritual balance. There is no raging dialectic of passion and perception in the Pedagogic Province; opposition and polarity are distilled through meditation and disciplined service of Spirit and are filtered out of the Order. For Knecht, mastering the Game and ascending to Magistracy should ideally symbolize his reconciling the elements composing his self with the One Spirit. Of all the members of the Order, the Master of the Glass Bead Game should exemplify the grace of an exalted, self-realized spiritual totality.

But Knecht doubts the ideal of unquestioning service to the Game. His "conservative tendency toward loyalty, toward unstinting service of the hierarchy on the one hand," is balanced by a "tendency toward 'awakening,' toward advancing, toward apprehending reality" (GBG 250). His antipodal proclivities are fueled when, as a young pupil in Waldzell, he is assigned the task of "defending" Castalia from the verbal detraction directed against the Province by Plinio Designori, a young student with patrician ancestry. The relationship between the two is described as "a dialectical interplay between two minds" (GBG 80). In preparation for their frequent debates, Knecht reads a great deal, "especially the German philosophers . . . among whom Hegel exerted by far the strongest attraction upon him" (GBG 78).

His many hours of study and research into the history and fundamental precepts of the Order and the Game appear to mould Knecht into the perfect Castalian. But the realm of *Natur* exemplified by Plinio infects Knecht's nature and redefines his commitment to *Geist*: he wonders why the two worlds cannot both be united within himself. The closer he looks at Castalia, the more closely he perceives the warning signs thrown up by a stagnant World Spirit; Tegularius, Knecht's close friend and brilliant Glass Bead Game player, is a sterling representative of the hopelessly sterile elite tutor whose spiritual shortcomings are glossed over with a coating of vain, self-indulgent aestheticism. Tegularius is a prototype and harbinger of spiritual, and by extension cultural, decline because he is satisfied with the state of affairs in Castalia. Knecht, who inclines towards "integration, synthesis, and universality" (96), has traveled the way inward and is not satisfied; he is deeply conscious and sharply critical of the unnecessary narrowness of his spiritual development. His Spirit is aware of its imperfection, the effect of being starved of *Natur*.

In the figure of Father Jacobus, the celebrated scholar of the Mariafels monastery, Knecht witnesses the possibility of *Natur*'s being integrated into a spiritual Order with progressive results: "the spirit and mentality of this place had long ago achieved a harmony with nature" (GBG 140). Knecht's subsequent petition to the Castalian Board of Directors, urging them to reevaluate the malignant provincialism of the elite schools' approach to spiritual perfection, is unsuccessful. His defection from the Order, which on a personal level must be interpreted as continued service in the name of Spirit, is a bold attempt to interfuse a Spirit realized to its heretofore restricted limit with the experience it requires to lift it to Absolute totality. His death may preclude the goal's being achieved, but it in no way invalidates the rightness of his intention.

Historical Undercurrents

Hegel's philosophy of history has for its goal the same condition as his philosophy of Spirit. Whereas the philosophy of Spirit traces

subjective consciousness through conflict to self-consciousness, autonomy, and Absolute Knowledge, the philosophy of history records the development of Spirit through dependence and slavery to self-governance in a rationally organized state. In the philosophy of history, the quest for Spirit's freedom is elevated from the microcosm of the subjective individual to the macrocosm of the objective world.

Hegel has been accused by his detractors of forcing history where it will not comfortably go, and he has been treated most harshly when his critics believe he has manipulated historical facts to accommodate his philosophical contentions.⁵ Hesse numbered among these critics, and Father Jacobus, his spokesman on this issue in *The Glass Bead Game*, "ma[kes] no bones" (184) about Hesse's estimation of the type of historical study practiced by men such as Hegel. According to Jacob Burckhardt, the historian whose methodology captured Hesse's attention during the poet's years in Basel, and to whom the character of Father Jacobus became a tribute, the study of history was to be a coordination of facts, not a subordination of evidence to a previously structured system (Ziolkowski 315). Father Jacobus reiterates this sentiment during his tutorial sessions with Knecht, then proceeds to insist that, despite the inauthenticity of the Hegelian historical enterprise, Castalia cannot afford to continue to ignore the import of historical study proper. Knowledge of a lived history is crucial to the survival of even the most exclusively spiritual Order. Castalia, "no longer changing, no longer growing" (370), already in decline, must follow the example of the Catholic Church and practice the careful integration of the *vita attiva* and the *vita contemplativa*. Their conversations also bring to light a common affinity for the Swabian theologian, Johann Albrecht Bengel, whose concept of history powerfully impressed Hegel. Knecht tells Jacobus that Bengel might be considered a forerunner of the Game, thus connecting him with Hegel, to whom the narrator has awarded an identical distinction in the introduction. This suggests that Hesse's opinion of Hegel's philosophy of Spirit was in no way commensurable with his opinion of Hegelian historical philosophy. The former might be considered kinder than the latter.

In his circular letter to the Board of Directors, Knecht vindicates one of Castalia's rationales for its hostile predisposition toward history:

The second reason we fight shy of history is our traditional and I would say valid distrust of a certain kind of history writing which was very popular in the age of decadence before the founding of our Order. A priori we have not the slightest confidence in that so-called philosophy of history of which Hegel is the most brilliant and also most dangerous representative. In the following century it led to the most repulsive distortion of history and destruction of all feeling for truth. To us, a bias for this sham philosophy of history is one of the principal features of that era of intellectual debasement and vast political power struggles which we occasionally call the Century of Wars, but more often the Age of the Feuilleton. (GBG 324)

In the same breath, he charges the Board to consider more alertly its inexorable historicity: "we are ourselves history and share the responsibility for world history and our position in it. But we gravely lack awareness of this responsibility" (GBG 325). The Board's response, "everything Castalian is related to reason . . . which certainly could not be said of world history, or said only by someone willing to revert to the theological and poetic sentimentalities of romantic historical philosophy" (GBG 337), completely disregards the thrust of Knecht's argument and accuses him of foolishly advocating precisely that Hegelian attitude that Knecht and Jacobus unequivocally reject.

Ironically, Castalia is guilty of the very historical manipulation with which it charges its Magister Ludi. In weeding history out of the elite schools' curriculum and projecting the image of a utopian spiritual kingdom realized to perfection, Castalia relegates the past to a propitiously sequenced series of events patterned in such a way as to make possible the emergence of its Pedagogic Province which, held up as the apotheosis of civilization, is evidence enough that history has served its sole purpose and now no longer merits attention. Even Hegel is not so bold; he merely depicts the Prussian state as the farthest Spirit has progressed up to the moment that he completed the *Phenomenology*.

Although this anti-Hegelian bias contributes to its proscription of history, the Province nevertheless seeks a his-

torical goal nearly identical to the one set by Hegel for his philosophy. How free is Castalia? It is certainly rationally ordered. Meditation and rigorous service dilute any passions that might undermine the meticulously calibrated machinery of the elite school system. The question of self-governance is an entirely different matter. Castalia does select its directors and Magisters from the very finest of its elite, and it manages all of its affairs from within. Yet the Order is still dependent on history, regardless of its willingness to acknowledge the relationship. The bourgeois world, whose history Castalia disparages and scorns, is the hierarchy's sole source of financial sustenance. Every Castalian is a slave to the generosity of a government other than its own. The Order ostensibly understands this; it uses Knecht to facilitate a rapprochement with the Church of Rome, and it entertains the country's political dignitaries in periodic political forums. But all this is just a demonstration of form. Castalia will never be able to produce the food it needs to survive. Knecht's plea to the Board for an expanded historical consciousness is an effort to prevent Castalians from someday learning just how historically vulnerable they really are.

Castalian censorship does not end with history. Individual creativity of any kind is also prohibited in the Province. The exception is the "Lives," the often mocked writing exercises required annually by every student during his years of freedom. It is no surprise that "while writing these Lives some of the authors took their first steps into the land of self-knowledge" (GBG 100). The Lives are a medium for enhancing spiritual development in a historical context. They vicariously integrate the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*. Knecht's defection has already been described in part as a personal attempt to synthesize these two realms more fully. On another level it can be interpreted as a catalyst for the advancement of the Province's freedom. That Knecht's biographer was permitted by the Castalian authorities to tell his tale, to create a historical chronicle, evidences a more balanced synthesis of life and Spirit in the Province. Perhaps one can also see in it adumbrations of a deeper commitment to historical thinking in general.

The Call to Service

Up until *The Journey to the East*, Hesse's ideal of service retains an almost exclusively subjective emphasis. Service is understood as commitment to the difficult *principium individuationis* that perforce precedes self-consciousness of spiritual totality. Only after self-realization is attained is service directed outward, in a gesture of *communitas*. *The Journey to the East* re-directs the modality of service and preaches the doctrine of individuation through service to the spiritual kingdom of humanity. This modified ideal receives its most glorified expression in *The Glass Bead Game*, where the cadences of the call to service resound in every aspect of Castalian life, and in the "Lives" of Joseph Knecht, where "service to an office is in each case also a continuation of service to the self, and the beginning of service to the community" (Mileck 319).

The spiritual hierarchy of Castalia first impresses Knecht when he is a young boy at the little Latin school at Berolfingen. During his session with the visiting Music Master, Knecht senses "the world of Mind, the joy-giving harmony of law and freedom, of service and rule," and he surrenders himself "to serve that world and this Master" (GBG 43). Knecht's reverent naiveté wins him admission to the elite school system, where the Music Master serves the familiar rôle of Spirit-guide through the dialectic. Knecht's critical capacities are keen, and in the moments when the young pupil wonders whether the hierarchy deserves his absolute devotion, the Music Master is always there to intercede with his insight to the essence of the Castalian system and the service it compels: "Our Castalia . . . ought above all to be a hierarchy, a structure in which every brick derives its meaning only from its place in the whole. There is no place leading out of this whole, and one who climbs higher and is assigned to greater and greater tasks does not acquire more freedom, only more and more responsibilities" (GBG 71).

When Knecht is initiated into the Order, he is given the following meditation exercise: "If the High Authority appoints you to an office, know this: every step upward on the ladder of offices

is not a step into freedom but into bondage. . . . The greater the power of the office, the stricter the service" (GBG 126). Service to the spiritual community is a refined manifestation of the process of individuation and shares the latter's goal of a dissolved ego: "piety, which is to say faithful service and loyalty up to the point of sacrificing one's life, was part and parcel of every creed and every stage of individual development; such service and loyalty were the only valid measures of devoutness" (GBG 156). In the early fiction, a de-limited ego is the conduit to a state of self-conscious Spiritual totality foreshadowed by nodal epiphanic flashes of the Absolute. The epiphany is unnecessary in *The Glass Bead Game*; the Province and its sublime Game are the epiphanic moment transfigured and protracted in a geophysical plane. Self-realization in Castalia, through service of the hierarchy, is purported by the Castalian officials to be tantamount to assimilation into the One Spirit.

Knecht's chronic misgivings about the Order's shortsighted estimation of nature and history never wane, and when the Music Master dies, they grow malignant. In Petrus, the Music Master's ardent disciple, Knecht sees a tragic example of the danger of serving something no longer alive. Defection thus becomes a matter of urgency; the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita attiva* must be brought together to revivify the moribund Province, and it is clear that the Order will allow no such thing to occur within its walls. Knecht tries to explain to Master Alexander, the President of the Order, that his desire to surrender his office as Magister Ludi is "in reality service and obedience . . . toward new, strange, and hitherto unknown ties," and that he is "not a fugitive, but a man responding to a summons; not headstrong, but obedient; not master, but sacrifice!" (GBG 351). Departure is painful, but necessary. If Castalia will not try to enhance its consciousness and confront the exigencies threatening to destroy it, then Knecht can still serve the greater spiritual totality of which Castalia is a dying part, and, in so doing, can perhaps indirectly ensure the perpetuity of the Province.

In the service of Tito Designori, Plinio's restless young son, Knecht finds an ideal opportunity to synthesize *Geist* and *Natur*

in a pedagogic relationship. Tito proves receptive to the former Magister's encouragement: "in the proud and fiery boy's heart there stirred an inkling that to belong to this kind of nobility, and to serve it, might be a duty and honor for him" (GBG 387), and he is eager to establish a reciprocity of ideas with his much admired preceptor; but, as his spontaneous celebratory dance to the morning sun indicates, Tito will bring to his task a vital animating force completely unexampled in the arid, brutally imbalanced Castalian Spirit-world.

Knecht dies only three days after his defection. The synthesis he seeks to effect in his own life goes nearly wholly unrealized. Tito's reaction to Knecht's drowning ostensibly implies that the boy will devote himself to a continuation of the same spiritual service exemplified by the Master, but that he will interfuse the lofty Castalian ideal with an equally powerful sensual instinct unrealized in Knecht, thus preserving in a life committed to action what the Game symbolized merely on an abstract plane; but such an interpretation is merely optimistic conjecture based on the novel's tendentious concluding paragraphs. Speculation notwithstanding, Knecht's death does catalyze one clear gain, appropriately in Castalia itself, in whose service Knecht's defection was originally intended. The narrator's biographical enterprise evidences a reconsidered Castalian attitude towards history that has obviously been inspired by the former Magister's legendary end; it signifies a promising new interplay between *Geist* and *Natur* within the Order's purview; and it leads the Province closer to the freedom that is the goal of all Spirit-life.

One of Hesse's most concise, recapitulative statements on his understanding of Spirit appears in "The Rainmaker," the first of the appended "Lives" of Joseph Knecht: "if we were to go several thousands of years further back into the past, wherever we found man we would still find—this is our firm belief—the mind of man, that Mind which has no beginning and always has contained everything that it later produces" (GBG 435). If this sentiment were lifted from its context and placed into one of Hegel's massive expositions of Absolute Spirit, it is doubtful whether its authorship would be questioned. Hesse and Hegel share a re-

markedly similar ideology of Spirit. If it has been persuasive, this essay will have made further comparison of these ideologies more tenable.

Notes

1. Hesse, *The Glass Bead Game* 184. Hereafter, this text will be cited parenthetically as GBG.
2. Hesse was not alone among German poets in his proposal of a triadic sequence of humanization. He shared the concept with Lessing, Schiller, Hölderlin, and Kleist.
3. See Hegel 591: "Until Spirit reaches the end of the requisite temporal process it cannot achieve complete self-consciousness."
4. Nietzsche, who knew (and rejected) most of the writings of his German philosophical predecessors, asserted: "We Germans are Hegelians even if there had never been any Hegel, insofar as we . . . instinctively attribute a deeper meaning and greater value to becoming and development than to what 'is'; we hardly believe in the justification of the concept of 'being'" (306).
5. For an egregious example, see Bertrand Russell 730-46.

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