

Hegelianism in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*
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As Partial Fulfillment of the University's Requirements for Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, This
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To Be Defended on the 26th Day of October, 2017

“The Owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the falling of dusk.”
- Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*

“My worthy friend, grey are all theories
And green alone life's golden tree.”
- Goethe, *Faust I*

Introduction

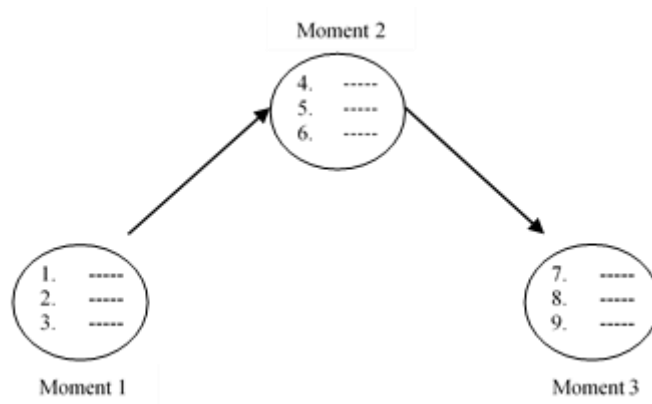
G.W.F Hegel (1770 – 1831) and J.W. Goethe (1749 – 1832) were two monumental figures in the history of German thought. Although both thinkers were admirers of the other and corresponded a handful of times, a closer analysis of the two allows a modern student to see commonalities and recurrent themes that resonate between both. The connection between the two has been made in various aspects of their thought, and I will continue this tradition by exploring the relationship between two of their works.

In this paper, I argue that Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1796) can be read as a novel of self-discovery that develops the individual through a method of dialectical movements as demonstrated in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). I will do this by analyzing the idea of "Negation" as it is developed in both works as well as the tension that is developed in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* between Fate and Chance and how this tension operates within the novel. Studying these works in tandem will allow a student to enrich their understanding of the two works in two ways. First, Goethe's novel will allow a more concrete example of how the movements of an individual's thought, as demonstrated through the *Phenomenology's* dialectic, take place within that individual's experiences. Second, a close reading of the *Phenomenology* will utilize Hegel's concepts and conceptual framework as apparatuses to develop a critical view to evaluate *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* and perhaps use this style of analysis to further investigate intersections of Hegel and other works of Goethe. This paper will demonstrate that the narrative and philosophical methods of exposition in the authors' works push towards a concept of "thoughts" and "experiences" to be understood not as separate viz. a hard separation between internal and external phenomena. They will be instead understood as methods of cognition

emphasizing the role of the individual's formative experience, indicative of the intellectual climate in the German Idealist movement. This method will allow a reader to be able to draw further conclusions on the works as a whole by first examining their constituent sections or themes.

The exposition of this argument will be split into three parts that will each act as Moments, or levels of complexity to understand the argument. Each subsequent Moment expands on what was determined in the Moment preceding it. These Moments will work to develop my thesis statement above, stating that the novel can be read in a Hegelian vein. I am choosing this approach to expound my findings primarily for two reasons. First, I struggled with the composition of this paper because I could not find a method to develop the two works in a manner that didn't emphasize one work over the other. I did not wish to introduce one or the other as prior or more essential than the other. This also will allow for the argument that I present to use the worry of over-repeating in a constructive sense, where the concept will be developed at progressively higher levels. In order for this argument to hold, there needs to be a strong conceptual bond that allows their connection to not merely be contingent on the findings/feelings of one ambitious undergraduate student. Second, I believe this manner of exposition mirrors that of the two works, where the paper will develop as a *dialectic*. This is especially useful here since the manner in which each work moves forward, as I will demonstrate, is that of a dialectic. This will allow the reader to trace the movements of the arguments just as the author traced a progressive understanding of the material in finding this connection. This style of analysis allows several different conceptual understandings of source material based on the level of complexity or development of the analysis itself. As the exploration of the two works becomes more in-depth, deeper and more complex analyses are possible. In this method of composition, I hope to mirror the idea that this connection

between to the two thinkers is one that has always existed and did not necessarily need to be “made” so much as it needed to be “uncovered” or “revealed”.



Structure

The first Moment will be a very topical understanding of the material in simply introducing the reader to the works themselves. This is necessary in order to inform the reader who may not be familiar with one or both of the works but also serves as a tool to introduce the reader to elements that will be emphasized as the paper moves forward. Both the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* are incredible works of which an analysis can take a seemingly infinite number of paths. It is through this Moment that the stage will be set, narrowing my area of focus, for the more in-depth analyses to develop upon. This section will analyze the connection of structure and examine the concept of *Bildungsroman*. It will also introduce the narrative mechanism that is shared by each work.

The second Moment will entail the findings of the first and develop the idea of Negation as determinacy and movement. While the Hegelian concept of Negation has been studied at length,

I will be applying this concept in a novel sense with the notion of “Narrative Negation” as it takes place in Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*. It will be shown that the idea of Negation is the mechanism by which a progression forward can be made systematically in both works.

The third and final Moment will be the most abstract of all, looking at the works beyond their particular determinations and instead expand on what is happening conceptually and thematically within the story of *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*. It is this section that will focus on the Goethean tension between Fate and Chance and how it can be understood from a Hegelian perspective. This section will be mostly devoted to textual analysis of the novel as it can be understood through the concepts developed in the Moments preceding it. It is this last section that will solidify the journey of development being instrumental in the understanding of the books and the philosophical reflection of necessity that can take place after the fact.

The references to the text will follow the structure of the editions used. *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* (Princeton University Press ISBN: 9780691043449) is partitioned into eight Books that are further segmented into Chapters. Citations will follow the format: [Book, Chapter, Page Number]. The Oxford University Press’s edition of the Miller translation of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (ISBN: 9780198245971) has each paragraph numbered for easy reference which will be followed for citation in this paper. Other sources will be referenced to page number unless otherwise noted. Emphases used in quotes are those used by that edition’s editor/author. Diagrams are my own.

First Moment

Bildungsromanen

The most immediate similarity between the two works is that they can both be read as *Bildungsromanen*. Merriam-Webster defines this term as a novel about the moral and psychological growth of the main character. Both works, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, are centered upon the experiences of an “individual” and to what effect those experiences have on that individual. The story of *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* centers around Wilhelm and the experiences that he has throughout the novel. The many characters and events are almost entirely presented to the reader as they relate to Wilhelm. With one exception, all of the Books, or parts of the novel, develop a narrative that is solely devoted to the changes that Wilhelm undergoes as a result of his “education”, which will be explored here in this paper. He is not merely the protagonist but instead the lens through which all of the events of the story can be understood, although the novel itself is not narrated by him. *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (hereafter *WMA*) can therefore be called a *Bildungsroman* with little controversy. The *Phenomenology* can also be read as a *Bildungsroman*. The “individual” of the *Phenomenology* is to be understood as the concept or the universal idea of an individual. This conception of “individual” stands opposed to a single concrete person that we can point to and identify, as is the common use of the term “individual”. However, the movements of the book still adhere to a progressing narrative that develops around an abstract individual as the book moves forward. This abstract individual, or the concept of an individual, is used here to demonstrate the attainment of what is considered by Hegel to be higher levels of thought that eventually leads the reader to reach

the standpoint of Hegel's Science. This attainment is itself a journey that takes place without being hindered by the limitations of temporality or space.

- "The task of guiding the individual from his uncultured standpoint to Knowing had to be taken in its universal sense; that is, we had to consider the universal individual – self-conscious spirit – in its cultural education [*Bildung*]. (Hegel's Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Translated: Yovel, 2005, page 119)"

Bildungsroman is a combination of two German terms: *Bildung* meaning education and *Roman* meaning novel. This is very explicitly demonstrated by *WMA*, even culminating in a ceremony commemorating Wilhelm's apprenticeship. We read about the actions and motivations that Wilhelm has in the events that take place, at once describing how he is perceived as well as the psyche of the character. The reader's conception of "Wilhelm" develops along with the story as Wilhelm develops his own conception of self. The movements of the *Phenomenology* center around the individual coming to know themselves by learning about what they are not and how they are related to this "other-than-themselves". Seen in this light, as the abstract universal individual develops their own self-conception as well, the *Phenomenology* has at least *prima facie* justification being read as a *Bildungsroman*.

Having laid the foundations for which an understanding of the works can be built upon, we will now explore the particularities of *WMA* and the *Phenomenology*.

Enter Wilhelm

WMA is a complex story centered around one individual's journey as he travels with various theater companies. A lover of the theater, Wilhelm romanticizes early in the novel about his formative experiences as well as the role that storytelling and acting served for him. His seemingly happy existence with his lover, Mariane, and their local theater allows him to feel eager

and desirous of the future that seems destined for him at this point. It seems that most of his needs are well-attended, and solidifying his relationship with Mariane seems to be the only driving force that affects Wilhelm. However, at the conclusion of the first Book, Wilhelm discovers that Mariane has been living a double-life of sorts with another man, even though her heart is truly with Wilhelm. This throws Wilhelm into a fit of despair that not only destroys his relationship with Mariane but also causes him to doubt his vocation in life. Wilhelm calls into doubt his abilities as a member of the theater and even questions his involvement because of the lost confidence in his abilities. He eventually embarks on a journey to see to his father's business affairs, but not before this telling exchange with his friend Werner. This scene takes place by a fireplace as Wilhelm cathartically burns his possessions that remind him of his past. Wilhelm then states:

- "What troubles most people is that they are unable to reconcile their ideas with reality, pleasure evades them, wishes are fulfilled too late, and what they do achieve does not give them the pleasure they had expected in anticipation. (WMA, Book Two, Chapter Two, page 45)"

The first part of the quotation states the problem of reconciling one's individuality with what is external, what is objective. This presupposes that there is a separation between an individual's ideas and what corresponds to objectivity. This kind of objectivity, if accessible by the individual, is not something that is merely apparent to an infant or something that is immediately self-explained. If we were willing to accept that, then there would never be the need for a personal development in regards to the reconciliation of self and reality, not only in the stories that we read but in our own lives. Instead, if we are willing to accept that there is value in developing oneself to one's potential, to understand one's position in the world as an individual and as a part of something larger, we can then accept that the education of the individual should be the primary

goal in reconciling their individuality with what is external to them. This is one of the many motivations for Hegel's production of the *Phenomenology*.

Consciousness and Pedagogy

The structural similarities between the two works being examined here has been discussed in the past. It is worth reviewing one of these accounts in order to develop the argument presented in this paper.

Jean Hyppolite (1907-1968) was an influential French philosopher who motivated thinkers, such as Foucault and Deleuze, to study Hegel and revisit German philosophy in the aftermath of World War II. Hyppolite also remarked upon the *Phenomenology's* character development in his monumental commentary, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (1947):

- "The *Phenomenology*, then, is the itinerary of the *soul* which rises to spirit through the intermediary of *consciousness*... the influence of the *Bildungsromanen* of the time seems to have been just as important [as philosophic works mentioned previously]... The preface to the *Phenomenology* emphasizes the pedagogical nature of Hegel's book, as well as the relation between the evolution of the individual and that of the species. (Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, 1947, page 11)"

We can see from the above that the earlier claims regarding the nature of the individual, as developed in the *Phenomenology*, are pertaining to the universal instead of a particular, historical figure. However, the *Phenomenology*, as a work that emphasizes the *Bildungsroman*, should be examined in the context in which Hegel was writing. The fact that the *Phenomenology* was published only eleven years after *WMA* should be indicative of the trends that pervaded the culture of Continental thought. The importance of the individual's formative experiences motivated a sort of pedagogy that required the truth to be discovered through a process of development.

- “Royce, in his study of German idealism, emphasizes Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister, which the Romantic circles of Jena considered one of the essential events of the time (referencing Royce, *Lectures on Modern Idealism*, 1919). (Hyppolite, page 11)”

Hegel believed that individuals can have an understanding of what exists objectively instead of what merely appears and it is only by examining consciousness in development that we can trace the movements to gain higher forms of knowledge. It is only through this “pathway of despair” that an individual can realize truth in phenomenal experience after “losing its truth” along the way:

- “Natural consciousness will show itself to be only the Notion (Concept) of knowledge or in other words, not to be real knowledge. But since it directly takes itself to be real knowledge, this path has a negative significance for it, and what is in fact the realization of the Notion, counts for it rather as the loss of its own self; for it does lose its truth on this path. The road can therefore be regarded as the pathway of *doubt*, or more precisely as the way of despair. For what happens on it is not what is ordinarily understood when the word ‘doubt’ is used: shilly-shallying about this or that presumed truth, followed by a return to that truth again, after the doubt has been appropriately dispelled – so that at the end of the process the matter is taken to be what it was in the first place. On the contrary, this path is the conscious insight into the untruth of phenomenal knowledge, for which the supreme reality is what is in truth only the unrealized Notion. (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, paragraph 78)”

The above quoted paragraph is the element of the *Phenomenology* being focused on here, so it is worth unpacking so as to set the stage for the Hegelianism that is discussed below.

The first term that Hegel uses here is “natural consciousness”, which immediately implies that consciousness is not to be understood as a catch-all term that implies all forms of cognition. Instead, we must look at the different types of consciousness. We can understand “natural consciousness” as an appeal to common sense, where we take for granted that the perceptions we have allow us to have an unchallenged connection to knowledge of the external world. Instead, Hegel is appealing to a sort of knowledge that can only be perceived or achieved through

speculative thought: philosophy. So, in this sense, “natural consciousness” only allows us to be aware of the concept or idea of knowledge instead of actually achieving it by knowing it. It is through the erroneous attribution of knowledge to what merely appears to be the case that moves the individual forward to discover what they can know. In this regard, Hegel is greatly influenced by the colossal thinker, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and his work on transcendental idealism. This journey is the “pathway of despair”, and it is precisely this journey that Wilhelm takes in *WMA*: Wilhelm discovers himself while the abstract universal individual discovers itself in knowledge through the *Phenomenology*.

This journey is to be contrasted with the traditional forms of skepticism. One kind of skepticism begins with the desire to construct a proof showing that an individual’s experiences and knowledge correspond/reference correctly to the external/objective reality of the world. This process then proceeds to introduce some form of doubt with varying levels of severity. The idea here is that the more doubt that can be dispelled, the stronger the proof for correspondence between subjective and objective realities, allowing more faith to be placed on subjective experience. The philosopher then goes on to use a sequence of arguments to dispel that doubt and to prove the correspondence and thus reconcile what is internal with what is external. Eventually, once this skepticism is resolved, what was originally called into doubt proves itself to be true. The classic example of this form is attributed to René Descartes’s (1596-1650) antecedent skepticism that is explored in his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641). Instead, this journey that Hegel describes takes place to disprove what is immediate in the undeveloped concept of truth that is held by the individual in the beginning and develops what was merely being referred to so as to get closer and eventually attain the truth that is there to be observed in phenomenal experience.

We can now see the connection between the narrative arcs of *WMA* and the *Phenomenology*. The nature of Hegel's abstract universal individual's consciousness and the character of Wilhelm Meister proceed in this journey to discover truth or to realize the concept that they originally could only grasp with an impoverished understanding. This journey is one of self-realization, to become what one truly is. Now that the first connection has been drawn between *WMA* and the *Phenomenology*, we must now move on to the second Moment to develop this connection at a higher level of abstraction. Next, we must expand upon the mechanism shared between the progressive movements of the individuals' journeys: Negation.

Second Moment

Initial Problem of Interpretation

As noted in Eric Blackall's post-face for *WMA*, interpreting the novel as a whole is a difficult task (page 381). What did Goethe intend to do with this work? On the surface, one could read the novel as being a story about the theatrical life as it existed in 18th century Germany and the struggles that one must go through in order to survive in the pursuit of their art. This critical approach would also motivate an interpretation that emphasizes the autobiographical nature of the work itself. Blackall's approach showed preference for the development of themes as opposed to a reading that would emphasize historical or biographical approaches. Focusing on the timelessness of the book allows a reading that is much more conceptually rich for our purposes that will not be inhibited by the real-world context in which it was written. We will follow in Blackall's critical approach.

Wilhelm's journey through the events of *WMA* should be read in a manner that emphasizes an episodic understanding of the events and settings of the story. Doing so relies less on conceptualizing or "making sense" of the work as a whole as some unified message or expression of one idea. If we are to rely on a literary analysis that focuses on the work as a homogenized whole, we are now presented with the problem as to what part of the novel is most essential for interpretation, which could return us to the earlier problem of understanding this work as a historical event or inseparable from the time it was written. Following this problem to its logical conclusion would reduce this critical analysis to authorial intent, which would likely require access to all of his correspondences of his time and potentially the question of the author's mental state during composition. As noted above, studying the work thematically is the route we are choosing here in order to develop an understanding of the novel for our purposes, one that is not necessarily temporal or indexed to any particular time. Reading the novel as a cohesive whole also suffers from the problem of the work itself not being very cohesive. While there are recurrences and characters that continue from Book to Book, the only thread that is maintained throughout the entire work is Wilhelm and his experiences of apprenticeship. Characters seem to enter and leave as inconsequential temporary actors of the novel.

Instead, an episodic reading which emphasizes the Books as moments that have their own conceptual value, standing separated but still connected to the main development of the story, will show that this work progresses in a Hegelian fashion. Although seemingly paradoxical, choosing to focus on the episodic nature of the book will allow us to have a better understanding of the work as a whole without having to reduce all disparate elements of the novel to a relationship with the thesis argued here.

There has been extensive literature on interpretation for *WMA*. Lukács, while also presenting similar themes explored in this paper, sought to stratify the work as a cultural critique of the tumultuous transition from the 18th to 19th centuries, criticizing the relationship between the individual and arts in the context of capitalist division of labor (Lukács, 1968). While it would be impossible for a comment to be made for all modes of interpretation, this paper is written in a context recognizing the richness of literary criticism pertaining to the subject.

The Journey as Concept

In the earlier parts of Book Five, we are presented with Wilhelm's feelings of the theater and what role it is to play in his own development. In Chapter Two, Wilhelm's friend and associate Werner writes a letter explaining that Wilhelm's father had passed away, that Werner was marrying Wilhelm's sister, and that they planned to sell the land of the family's house. The letter comes to Wilhelm while he is away from home, attending to his theatrical affairs. It is here that we see a direct conflict between the lives of the businessman and the artist, their conflict expressed not only in how one is to carry about their own development but also what is valued and actually gained from this development. Werner here represents the worldly interests of the businessman while Wilhelm the idealistic nature of the artist. In Chapter Three, Wilhelm responds to this letter, and even makes explicit reference to his journey that he is experiencing:

- "Let me put it quite succinctly: even as a youth I had the vague desire and intention to develop myself fully, myself as I am. I still have the same intention, but the means to fulfill it are now somewhat clearer. I have seen more of the world than you think, and made better use of it than you can imagine. Please devote some attention to what I am going to say, even though it may not correspond to your notions. (*WMA*, Book Five, Chapter Three, page 174)"

This passage appears near the middle of the novel so it is worth unpacking to understand this in the context of the story. In the opening chapters of the first Book, Wilhelm described his childhood and his involvement with the puppet theater that he used to nourish his young, artistic desires and develop his imaginative faculties. This is what he refers to above as the development of himself as a young child. He goes on to say that now the path is “somewhat clearer”. It is worth emphasizing that his use of “somewhat clearer” as opposed to “clear” is an important detail elucidating Wilhelm’s own understanding of himself as well as how Goethe viewed his character’s development up to this point in the novel. Although the path to his development has been made clearer, he is not fully aware of himself as he exists in his present state in regards to his development as a whole. That sort of reflection can only come from one that is retrospective, as we will see in the next Moment of this paper, looking back on what had come to pass. Wilhelm is becoming progressively more aware of how this development of himself is taking place through the experiences that he is having with his theatrical companies and the conversations with other characters. This development is being moved by forces that are not entirely his own. They are similar to forces that Hegel writes of in the *Phenomenology*.

Narrative Negation

The development that Wilhelm is experiencing unfolds itself through a “pathway of despair”. This “pathway” is expressed early in the *Phenomenology*, as cited above. There, we see the mechanisms in which this development of the individual takes place. This concept of a journey is the structure of the *Phenomenology*, where the individual goes through movements that progress forward through a dialectical logic. The connection that I am drawing upon is the idea of *determinate negation*.

- "... When on the other hand, the result is conceived as it is in truth, namely, as a *determinate* negation, a new form has thereby immediately arisen, and in the negation the transition is made through which the progress through the complete series of forms comes about of itself. (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, paragraph 79)"

The above is commenting on the forms of skepticism that are merely negative in the most colloquial usages which refuse to posit anything in the place of what is being negated. The problem with this style of negation is that nothing comes about in the process of negation. Instead, the skeptic must wait patiently for the next thing to be posited which will likely see the same negative treatment. Instead, using negation in a constructive sense allows "forms" or different moments of a concept to present themselves. It is precisely this determinate negation that drives the narrative development of *WMA*. This movement is not merely the positing of what is and the denial of what is not, but instead the confrontation of these opposing ideas in a way that moves the conflict forward while also entailing the previous, incomplete forms of those ideas. This kind of movement is an expansion of the Socratic dialogues of antiquity, where two or more people are engaged in a conversation as a means of reaching the truth *together*, as opposed to one overcoming the other. The movement of this conceptual *Dialectic* necessitates a negative counterpart to what is being posited. This negation, in our analysis, serves two purposes: first it acts as a *determination* and then acts as a vehicle for movement forward. Determination, in this sense, acts as a means of discerning: to say what some thing is, one must be able to distinguish it from what it is not. They are two separate sides of the same coin.

- "The living Substance is being which is in truth *Subject*, or, what is the same, is in truth actual only in so far as it is the movement of positing itself, or is the mediation of its self-othering with itself. This Substance is, as Subject, pure, *simple negativity*, and is for this very reason the bifurcation of the simple; it is the doubling which sets up opposition, and then again the negation of this indifferent diversity and its anti-thesis [the immediate simplicity]. (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, paragraph 18)"

It is in this sense that a Negation becomes constructive, as it demonstrates what something is in virtue of what it is not. This progressively leads to a more developed understanding of something as it is posited through successive, or ordered, negations which continue to determine, simultaneously positing what is while negating what is not, as the dialectic progresses forward. Movement is essential in order for an observer to see the necessary developments of a concept. In hindsight, after one has gone through this dialectical process, one can say with certainty that these various stages in development were existent from the “start”, but this can only be said if one has progressed Scientifically, or adhering to this systematic method of progression. The concept revealing itself from itself assures the validity of our findings making determinations which are not merely the importing of ideas from the ambitious philosopher. The reconciliation of the previous forms of a concept is the hallmark of the Hegelian dialectic.

This concept of Scientific progression is available for us to study in Wilhelm Meister’s experiences. While there are several ways to subdivide the novel, understanding this as a work that emphasizes the episodic nature of the novel would lead us to focus on the different theater companies in which Wilhelm participates. It must be noted, however, that the stages of the theatrical developments serve only ‘landmarks’ or ‘signposts’ that indicate where the most essential development is taking place: within Wilhelm. The urge for the novel, as collection of episodes, to move forward and develop is indicated by the narrative forces that lead Wilhelm from one theatrical moment to another, having learned from his past experiences. While Wilhelm moves from place to place, there are also conscious agents in the intentional development of his character. This movement of episodes, and subsequent intentional movements of Wilhelm’s experiences, constructively implement the structure of Hegelian Negation, albeit in a different sense. “Narrative

Negation” is the unique element here that allows this story to move forward progressively and is demonstrated throughout the novel. Narrative Negation can be understood as a method of story progression that emphasizes the sublation or dialectic movement as it is demonstrated in Hegel’s works: a counterpart to the Constructive or Determinate Negation of Hegelianism.

This relationship between “negations” is contingent upon the first Moment of this paper, which argued that the relationship between the narrative arcs of both the *Phenomenology* and *WMA* center, initially, on the development of the individual soul or consciousness. This initial movement, this journey, is made possible by the kind of initial conflict or doubt that is confronted by the individual. In Wilhelm, we see doubt in his own abilities and direction as he is led by other characters and events. In the abstract universal individual of the *Phenomenology*, it is the doubt in one’s senses and understanding of external things that drives them forward.

Near the middle of the novel, Wilhelm and his theater company are working to produce an adaptation of Shakespeare’s Hamlet. While there are disagreements as to which way is best to shorten and present the play, the actors eventually reach a resolution. At the conclusion of this chapter, Goethe remarks through the voice of an omniscient narrator:

- “One can see how human beings like to reach their ends only by their own means, how much trouble it takes to make them understand what is self-evident, and how difficult it is to implant in someone who has real ambitions the first condition that will make his efforts likely to succeed. (*WMA*, Book Five, Chapter Nine, page 189)”

The interpretation of this sentence depends on the conceptual framework of the interpreter. A casual reader would believe that this is merely remarking upon the disagreements between individuals and the importance of cooperation in the context of theatrical productions. However, if understood in the context of Hegel’s project, developing the individual, we can see here that this

sentence entails more meaning in understanding what Goethe was trying to accomplish here. The reference to “ends”, “self-evident”, and “efforts” can all be understood as an individual’s journey towards self-realization. For Goethe it is the education of the individual. For Hegel, it is the individual understanding themselves:

- “But the *goal* is as necessarily fixed for knowledge as the serial progression; it is the point where knowledge finds itself, where Notion corresponds to object and object to Notion. Hence the progress towards this goal is also unhalting, and short of it no satisfaction is to be found at any of the stations on the way. Whatever is confined within the limits of a natural life cannot by its own efforts go beyond its immediate existence; but it is driven beyond it by something else, and this uprooting entails its death. (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, paragraph 80)”

Here, we can see that Hegel’s project is one of reconciliation. Making the Notion or Concept correspond to the object, the “other” or what is external to the subject, is the process that the individual undertakes in this movement. The progress itself is “unhalting” because the negations that are encountered along the way must be moved past and not merely ignored. These negations, understood as determinate or constructive, thus lead us forward, positing from what is within the concept itself until a resolution can be made. The unrest of the Dialectic necessitates the movement forward. The logic of Hegel is its own concept that should not be misunderstood as the colloquial use of “logic”. Contradiction is not a halt in the process or evidence of an invalid and unsound argument. On the contrary, these contradictions are necessary in order for the progression of the dialectic to take place. The upheaval or uprooting of certain “truths” as they are encountered in the journey of the individual is the negation of these “truths” taking place.

The presentation of this form of narrative progression can take place in different forms. The movements of the novel and the motivators that direct the developments can be entirely happenstance and the result of coincidental actions. In this novel, we also see the use of narrative

agents that direct Wilhelm in purposeful ways to lead him through his apprenticeship. While this style of narrative development can be loosely implemented in different works by other authors, it is the interactions between the characters and the narrative arcs of *WMA* that express this unique connection with Hegel's determinate negation that allows the reader to make see the conceptual relationship for the reconciliation of the individual and their external world, in both the *Phenomenology* and *WMA*.

Now that we have developed the concept of Narrative Negation, we can return to the novel to see a concrete example before going on to apply this concept to a higher level of abstraction. The launching of Wilhelm's journey near the beginning of the Book Two presents an example of this impelling force that comes from a negation within the narrative. As stated above, this took place because Wilhelm had renounced his love affair for the theater because he believed that he had no vocation or natural talent as an actor or producer in drama. His failed love affair with Mariane threw all of his own beliefs into question regarding his vocation and his Fate. He surrendered himself to the life of a businessman, which is presented here as being the negation of the artistic pursuit that he had originally intended for himself. This produced a literal movement in him, having to travel the countryside to attend to debts and credits of other parties. The movement arose from a constructive negation: if he was not to be involved with the theater, his next best option was to involve himself with the businesses available to him. The events and characters move Wilhelm in a retrogressive fashion, returning him to his earlier passions and becoming more and more immersed in the life of theater that he had previously abandoned.

The serial progression of the character as a concept that is itself becoming more outwardly displayed follows the Hegelian development of Consciousness. In *WMA*, we come to see the relationship of a particular individual (Wilhelm) and his relationship with the external world. This

relationship is not meant, at least initially, to exist as a peaceful relationship but instead one of a necessary tension in the determination of either. To understand Wilhelm as a character, we must understand his relationship to his world. The Narrative Negation that takes place from the transitions of theatrical moments act as a vehicle to eventually deliver us Wilhelm, fully realized in the book. The particular events of the book and the theatrical determinacies act as the vehicle of the apprenticeship (Lukács, *Goethe and His Age*, 1968, page 51). As we see in the ending of the novel, this process eventually culminates in the reconciliation of Wilhelm and his environment, a return to his understanding of himself as related to the external world.

This progress necessitates a tension that must not be static but instead dynamic. A static relationship would produce a story that, in literary terms, goes nowhere. It is here that we understand the centrality of “tension” in this argument for the connection between Goethe and Hegel in these works. This tension will now be explored in the Third Moment of the paper as the concept of Narrative Negation explores the development of the character Wilhelm as he experiences the episodes of his apprenticeship. This expression of tension itself moves in the Determinate/Narrative Negation fashion.

Third Moment

The complexity of this novel has been remarked upon above and the various ways of interpreting or making sense of the work have, until this point, emphasized the episodic nature that allows a reader to focus on the development of the character. This work, as a *Bildungsroman*, seems to take an atypical approach in solidifying this idea of the development of the individual.

The work not only ‘shows’ that it is operating as such, but even goes on to explicitly demonstrate that the story is meant to develop a particular individual: it ‘tells’ us that it is a *Bildungsroman*.

While there are several narrative arcs that emphasize different aspects of cultural life in the time that Goethe was portraying in this novel, there seems to be one that is much more germane for a Hegelian analysis. This is of course the recurring tension that is presented between Fate and Chance and how this eventually leads to the culmination of Wilhelm’s apprenticeship ceremony. There are four excerpts of the novel, spread fairly evenly throughout, that I will examine here and demonstrate Goethe’s concepts of Fate and Chance. The use of narrative devices, such as characters and events, allows Goethe to explicate his views regarding this tension between Fate and Chance from within the story. This is most obvious when he refers to a group coming to a consensus of a matter but this also takes place when it is presented from the perspective of an authority figure or character that has a higher opinion than Wilhelm on a matter. Up until the final parts of the book, we see that Wilhelm Meister’s views are attacked by other characters, so we should take his voice/ consciousness in the development of the book to be what is being constructed as *Bildung* through the movements.

First Dialogue

In the first Book, Wilhelm meets a stranger at night and shows him to a hotel. After arriving they continue their conversations and it is revealed that the stranger remembers Wilhelm as a child. After Wilhelm’s grandfather died, Wilhelm’s father sold the estate’s art collection and this stranger was sent to evaluate the collection for a potential buyer. Wilhelm then remarks:

- “I always regretted the sale of the pictures and missed them often even when I was older. But when I consider that it was necessary, so to speak, in order that I myself could develop a passion, and talent, of my own which will affect my life more than all those dead pictures

ever did, then I accept the fact and respect it as a stroke of fate which opened up the best in me, as it does in others. (WMA, Book One, Chapter Seventeen, page 38)”

Wilhelm is here referencing the earlier story that he told Mariane and her caretaker Barbara. His earlier experiences with puppeteering and the small puppet show productions Wilhelm would put on were in part motivated by Wilhelm’s early exposure to the arts. The paintings being sold and taken away are seen by Wilhelm to have been a necessary move for him to discover that which had a greater effect on him and that would eventually lead him to this point in the story. He had to have something taken away in order for him to make something for himself, which demonstrates a negation of artistic pursuits. Fate here is the main operator that moves him forward, according to Wilhelm. The stranger then replies:

- “I am sorry to hear the word ‘fate’ used once again by a young man at a time in his life when passionate inclinations are all too often interpreted as the workings of higher forces. (WMA, Book One, Chapter Seventeen, page 38)”

This exchange here works as a dialogue that demonstrates a dialectical exchange between two characters. The stranger immediately responds to Wilhelm’s attribution of Fate as the cause for the events that eventually took place and the stranger resists this. Instead, he calls this reliance on Fate into question. Wilhelm then pushes back against the stranger’s resistance and then is met with a powerful conception of Fate. Wilhelm asks:

- “But don’t you believe in fate, some power which rules over us and guides everything to our advantage?”
- “It is not a matter of believing, or trying to make sense out of what is otherwise incomprehensible, but simply of deciding which way of looking at things suits us best. The texture of the world is made up of necessity and chance. Human reason holds the balance between them, treating necessity as the basis of existence, but manipulating and directing chance, and using it... Woe to him who, from youth on, is prone to find arbitrariness in necessity and ascribes a certain reasonableness to Chance and accepts this religiously. For that amounts to denying one’s rational self and giving free play to one’s feelings. We think we are god-fearing people if we saunter through life without much thought, we let ourselves

be carried along by happy chance, and then finally declare that our wavering existence was a life governed by divine guidance. (*WMA*, Book One, Chapter Seventeen, page 38)”

The first part of the stranger’s response seems to entail the intellectual humility of the 18th and 19th centuries, where the problem of causation for events was being challenged by philosophers and scientists alike. Then comes his pragmatic appeal to viewing things as they are best suited for the purposes on hand. He then goes on to say that the role of human rationality is to hold the balance between necessity and chance. This is an allusion to the problem of agency that necessarily counters these conceptions of Fate. Fate is being used here in the fatalist sense, where a predetermined outcome is the inevitable ending for characters that have no control or agency in the movements that will come to pass. Instead, the stranger is motivating a reconciliation of what must necessarily take place and what it is the realm of human control. On the other hand, there must be an adherence to what is necessary in a state of affairs. Human agency and control can only go so far, so there is no infinite regress into the unlimited possibilities that comes from unvetted Chance. We should not blindly accept what occurs as a force from the outside when more attention could be paid to our own relationship with what is external and understanding our involvement with what takes place resulting from this relationship. The stranger then goes on to conclude:

- “... Everyone holds his fortune in his own hands, like a sculptor the raw material he will fashion into a figure. But it’s the same artistic activity as with all others. Only the ability to do it, only the capability, inborn in us, it must be learned and attentively cultivated. (*WMA*, Book One, Chapter Seventeen, page 39)”

The stranger here is appealing to the innate ability every person to develop through their experiences. This process is purposive and does not happen merely by accident or simply bestowed upon us from above. While it would be incorrect to say that this process of individual development

comes entirely from within, it is the interaction between the internal and external forces of an individual that leads to a growth. The artistic emphasis here gives an easy illustration. The artist must hone their craft in order to progress forward but we should not make the mistake in believing that this kind of development can only develop in the arts. The capability itself is universal to the rational mind. One must only consciously choose to begin this journey.

Second Dialogue

Eventually, Wilhelm's journeys lead him to join a theater company and much of the novel takes place while Wilhelm works with his associates. This company decides one day to take a trip down a river and begin improvising characters in a sort of impromptu performance for themselves since there was no audience to speak for. They eventually spot another stranger waiting on the bank of the river and figure he should come along for their fun. Wilhelm and this stranger go for a walk after making landfall and discuss the ideas of natural talent and genius. Up until this point, Wilhelm had believed that natural talent was the sole determinant in whether or not an artist would be successful in the sense of producing a masterwork. This was demonstrated earlier in the fallout that followed the end of Wilhelm and Mariane's relationship, where Wilhelm believed he had no natural talent for theater and thus gave up his love for it. This stranger pushes back on him, similarly to the previous dialogue. The stranger says:

- "[Natural Talent] should certainly be, and continue to be, the alpha and omega, beginning and end; but in between he will be deficient if he does not somehow cultivate what he has, and what he is to be, and that quite early on. It could be that those considered geniuses are worse off than those with ordinary abilities, for a genius can more easily than ordinary men be distorted and go astray. (WMA, Book Two, Chapter Nine, page 68)"

While not an outright rejection of Wilhelm's thoughts regarding genius, this response from the stranger demonstrates that pure, inborn talent is not enough to make someone successful in their endeavors. The purposive activity of the individual that cultivates themselves is the necessary component that leads to success. The stranger here seems to believe that the genius is actually at a disadvantage, potentially resulting from the comparative ease and lack of effort that would lead a more typical individual to stay the course in development. It is because of the lower position that an individual may have an advantage over someone who is seemingly worthier or otherwise more privileged with regards to access to intellectual or artistic powers. If we were to imagine a conflict between the ordinary individual who experiences the drive for progression and a genius, we would have a similar state of affairs as described in the *Phenomenology* regarding the dialectic of Master and Slave or, alternatively, the Lord and Bondsman.

- "Self-Consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged. (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, paragraph 178)"
- "Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come *out of itself*... it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an *other* being; secondly in doing so it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being. ((*Phenomenology of Spirit*, paragraph 179))"

These ideas should be explored before moving forward with the rest of this exchange between Wilhelm and the stranger from the river bank. Consciousness can only exist as a Self-Consciousness if it is aware of itself as it exists in two separate senses: as it exists for itself and as it exists for an other. This can be possible only if there is an "other" in which the Consciousness interacts with, namely, another Consciousness or individual. If we are not willing to accept that we are solipsists, we must come to the understanding that there are other people, other than ourselves. The interaction between these two individual Consciousnesses is one of mutual

recognition and being recognized. This in turn leads to a struggle where one must posit themselves as essential in recognition of the other: they try to demonstrate that their respective being-for-self is more essential than their respective being-for-other, showing that their individuality conquers that of the other's will. This is a life or death struggle, ending with one becoming the Lord, the conqueror, and one becoming the Bondsman, the conquered. This unequal recognition actually leads to the advantage of the Bondsman, however:

- "Through this rediscover of himself by himself, the bondsman realizes that it is precisely in his work wherein he seemed to have only an alienated existence that he acquires a mind of his own... Without the formative activity, fear remains inward and mute, and consciousness does not become explicitly *for itself*. (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, paragraph 196)"

It is the unequal and subservient condition of the Bondsman that leads to their own development because of the formative "work" that goes into one's conception of self that is only possible in this position of subservience. The connection can now be drawn to Wilhelm and the river-bound stranger's discussion regarding the ordinary and the extraordinary, commoner and genius. Considering commoner in comparison or "in a struggle" with the other, represented as the genius, we see that it is the disadvantaged that is more inclined to go along the path of personal development because of the work that must go into their own self-recognition as a result of their disadvantaged position. This notion of the genius being disadvantaged in the comparison to the ordinary artist is absolutely a Hegelian concept.

The stranger concludes his talk with Wilhelm in a way that disparages Fate and shows the favoring of Chance:

- "Fate is a distinguished but costly tutor. I would rather entrust myself to the reason of a human tutor. Fate, for whose wisdom I have indeed the greatest respect, may well have in

Chance a very clumsy means through which to operate. For Chance rarely seems to bring about exactly what Fate has decided. (WMA, Book Two, Chapter Nine, page 68)”

The stranger, through the subversion of the idea that the fatalist is slave to their inherited capabilities, demonstrates the negative relationship that Chance and Fate share. This is presented to us here with the statement that Chance acts as a sort of vehicle for Fate to be acted out. This sentiment is immediately relatable even to our everyday lives. We take experiences in the context of our own lives and not as isolated incidents, at least initially. Then, in the reflection of what has come to pass, the question is asked: was that a mere coincidence or was there meaning behind it? Here, we consider the possibility of the metaphysical existence of these concepts, Fate and Chance. The two concepts themselves exist in a tension that develops here between the dialogues that Wilhelm hold with other characters, showing that the relationship between Chance and Fate are dialectical as well as being essential for the development of the character Wilhelm.

Third Dialogue

While the preceding two exchanges with Wilhelm have been presented as incidental or less crucial to the main story, the exchange that will be now examined marks a shift towards the self-referential: the novel goes on to discuss how the relationship of Fate and Chance interacts within the realm of drama and novels. Wilhelm discusses this with Serlo, a theatrical manager, and they eventually reach a conclusion that is presented to the readers as the consensus between the characters. This acts as a literary device to show that it is again Goethe expressing his personal views in the matter since we are presented with a unilateral expression of the characters with no dissent. The processes of dialectical development and constructive negation through interpersonal

dialogue are here presupposed to have taken place and we instead presented with the results. The characters eventually find:

- “The hero of the novel must be passive, or at least not active to a high degree. (*WMA*, Book Five, Chapter Seven, page 186)”

This is an accurate portrayal of Goethe’s view of the novel as demonstrated by his treatment of Wilhelm in the events that take place. Although he is not merely a mannequin, most of the events that have been examined up until this point demonstrate that Wilhelm is largely a product of his environment and the events that take place in that environment. His formative experiences in his father’s house were attributed to be the cause for his early interests in the arts. His failed love affair with Mariane sent him upon the journey that he took, exploring the countryside with his theatrical companies. As demonstrated above, these events have progressed in the Narrative Negation that led to these movements as responses to conflicts. Even now, his views of the relationship between Fate and Chance are largely motivated by his interactions and conversations with other characters throughout the story, specifically strangers which seem to be leading him to a certain conclusion. While we should emphasize this element of external determinism, it is important to remember that we are not entirely emptying the agency of individual. The earlier discussions with the first stranger posed the question of Fate as antithetical to the autonomy of the individual. The subsequent conversations have shown that this should not be the way that Wilhelm or the reader conceptualizes this relationship. Thus, we are left to develop the more nuanced concept of Chance.

- “They agreed that in the novel Chance might well be given free play, but that it must always be guided and controlled by the sentiments of the personages; whereas Fate, which without any action by human beings on their part, drives them through circumstances unrelated to themselves toward an unforeseen catastrophe, can have its function only in drama. Chance may indeed produce pathetic, but never tragic situations; whereas Fate must always be terrible and becomes tragic in the highest sense if it brings guilty and innocent deeds that

are not connected with each other into some dire connection. (*WMA*, Book Five, Chapter Seven, page 186)”

This is further evidence that Chance is not nearly as powerful of a determinant as Fate within the realm of the novel. Although we do not have to accept this portrayal of novels and drama in such a strict formalism as Goethe does here, where Fate is restricted to drama, we can appreciate the elucidating remarks if regarded in relation to *WMA*. Fate is to be understood as the cruel invisible hand that leads to the downfall of all. Chance is to be seen as an interlocuter between the internal and external forces and as a form of guidance for the characters centered around their will and feelings. As the final dialogue will show, the intentionality of the movements of Chance will finally be realized.

Fourth Dialogue

While the previous dialogue strengthened the emphasis on Chance superseding that of Fate in the realm of a novel, the concept of control via the sentiments of the characters is brought into full light with the Apprenticeship ceremony. It is here that we see the previous dialogues have not been mere coincidences but instead were orchestrated to operate as a way of developing the character of Wilhelm. Jarno, the character that first introduced Wilhelm to Shakespeare, presents this to Wilhelm as such:

- “When a man makes his first entry into the world, it is good that he have a high opinion of himself, believes he can acquire many excellent qualities, and therefore endeavors to do everything; but when his development has reached a certain stage, it is advantageous for him to lose himself in a larger whole, learn to live for others, and forget himself in dutiful activity for others. Only then will he come to know himself, for activity makes us compare ourselves with others. You will soon come to know the small world that exists right here, and how well known you are in it. (*WMA*, Book Seven, Chapter Nine, page 301)”

The above is clearly an explication that can be interpreted as an Hegelian individual reaching Self-Consciousness. It is precisely the shift of one merely living for oneself to living for others that is demonstrated in the negative relationship between being-for-self and being-for-other. This is understood as the tension that is resolved in the Lord/Bondsman or Master/Slave dialectic that then leads to a further development of the individual in knowing themselves. The idea of determinacy as a negative relationship between deriving what something is from what it is not is the same idea presented above: the act of discernment that arises from the inescapable comparison of one individual to an “other” and the necessary conflict that is produced and must thus be resolved. This Apprenticeship and development of Wilhelm as an individual has demonstrated the movement of thought within the dialectic and was carried out through the various movements of the story. The parallel development of the relationship of Fate and Chance is also resolved here in the Induction Ceremony of Wilhelm.

As the ceremony moves forward, the strangers that Wilhelm had discussed the matter of Fate and Chance emerge, showing that their views were intentionally delivered to Wilhelm in that manner and that Chance was indeed guided by the sentiments of characters instead of a removed and abstract Fate that predetermined what would eventually come to pass. As this realization passes over Wilhelm and he sees the level of orchestration that led to his development, through the conscious efforts of others, he remarks:

- “How strange! Can there be some pattern in chance events? Is what we call ‘fate’, really only chance? (*WMA*, Book Seven, Chapter Nine, page 302)”

Indeed, we can conclude that Fate has no play within this story and within the novel. We instead see that there is some kind of inherent relationship between the two concepts that is negatively

correlated or inversely related. Fate itself empties into Chance, showing that what was initially believed to be Fate was indeed only Chance all along.

Fate and Morality

We can see from the preceding dialogues that Fate is eventually discarded by Goethe and the characters of the novel. Although we have not focused on the moral implications of the story, it is important to spend some time reflecting on the tension between Fate and Chance to understand their influence on the individual as they proceed through their developments in *WMA*. Lukács saw the tension resolved here as a rejection of moral imperatives championed by Kant:

- “Thus hatred of “fate”, of any fatalistic resignation is constantly preached in the novel. Thus the educators in the novel constantly stress contempt for moral “imperatives”. Human beings should not slavishly obey a moral code imposed upon them; they should become sociable by virtue of free, organic spontaneity and bring the manifold development of their individuality into agreement with the happiness and interests of their fellow-men. The moral of Wilhelm Meister is a great polemic – implicit, it is true – against Kant’s moral theory. (Lukács, *Goethe and His Age*, 1968, page 57)”

In his *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, Kant systematically presented several forms of the Categorical Imperative, a deontological morality meant to guide the action of individuals. One form of this imperative states that actions are justified if the moral agent would will that the action be universalized (Kant, 1988, page 49). The moral agent should only act in the manner in which they would desire every other person to act: telling truths, repaying debts, etc. Lukács is using a strict interpretation of Kant’s imperatives that result from the fatalistic adherence to the rationality of morality. If taken seriously, the strict adherence to Kant’s morality diminishes the free-play that the individual exercises whilst developing themselves. The agency of the individual, in Goethe’s novel, is elevated to allow the reconciliation between self and other, particular and universal, to take place in a rational method without strict adherence to rules and

imperatives. The supremacy of Fate, being bound to one's bestowed vocations and initial feelings, would not allow a Narrative Negation to develop in the story. The characters themselves exercise their agency in rejections of Fate which allows for the progression of the individual and the story to take place.

I remain unconvinced that Kant's Categorical Imperative implies a fatalistic determinism of the rational individual, favoring instead a more charitable reading that allows more flexibility in the establishment of imperatives. Lukács here is emphasizing the historical approach and stratifying the text in a manner that emphasizes the political and socio-economic conditions of continental Europe during this tumultuous period in which the novel was composed. The tension that existed between the bourgeoisie and the plebian played an influential role in the expression of Goethe's views of art and how public life inhibits it. However, this exploration in morality is important to show that the developments within the story reflect the developments of the culture of the times, indicating the social mechanisms that are demonstrated in *WMA* are also present in the real world, thus giving Goethe a reliable base to make these claims and evaluations in his own novel's world. This analysis of morality shows that the freedom of the individual need not end in a conflict with the external world but instead can be reconciled after progressing through a process of Negation, as we have seen in the journey of Wilhelm.

Resolution

The negative relationship between Fate and Chance, understood as two sides of the same coin, eventually displayed the conceptual weight of Fate emptied itself into Chance: the illusion of Fate was indeed only the play of Chance. Although this element of the Apprenticeship was orchestrated and conducted by the conscious actions of individuals, we must not forget that there

was still the play of uncertainty in the movements that came to pass. For example, Mariane was not a conscious actor nor can we assume that the fallout of her relationship with Wilhelm was in any way consciously related to the other characters that contributed to Wilhelm's Apprenticeship. The early sale of Wilhelm's grandfather's paintings, the various struggles that the traveling theater company encounters, and other important events need not necessarily be the result of some conscious actor delivering these events as education for Wilhelm. At that point, one would conclude that Wilhelm was a solipsist. We instead must find ourselves in a sort of mediation between internal and external, the intentional and the unintentional. In retrospect, the dissolution of Wilhelm and Mariane can only be understood as necessary in hindsight, as can all of the other events that moved Wilhelm in this direction. The philosophical legwork that makes sense of the relationship between Fate and Chance can only take place after the fact, after the events motivating such an analysis have come to pass. Hegel, in his mature writings, would be quite comfortable with this:

- "As the thought of the world, [philosophy] always appears only in the time after actuality has completed its process of cultivation, after it has finished. This is taught by the concept and shown with equal necessity by history: only in the ripeness of actuality does the ideal appear over against the real, only then does it construct the same world, grasped in its essence, in the shape of an intellectual realm. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, then has a shape of life grown old, and with grey in grey it cannot be rejuvenated, it can only be known. (Hegel, Preface to *The Philosophy of Right*, Translated: White, page 10)"

In the reflection of the events that took place with Wilhelm and the other characters, it can only be seen as necessary in hindsight as those events relate to other events that came after. Thus, we can only make these kinds of judgement from a position that is removed from the immediacy of the events as they take place. A different kind of immediacy, of what merely appears to be the case, must be foregone in order to better understand the rational aspects of the developments that took

place. The *Phenomenology* is powerful conceptual apparatus to be used in this sense. At the same time, *WMA* has shown that it can serve as an elucidatory exercise for a reader that wishes to see these Hegelian concepts in action or served by picture-thoughts. No matter which approach is decided to be taken as prior or more essential, we see that the journey itself must be experienced to see the process unfold itself and make itself be known, as it did for Wilhelm.

We come to the conclusion that Wilhelm understood his vocation for theater very early in the novel. However, his understanding was undeveloped and indicative of a youthful naivete that had to be confronted with the external world. The eventual reconciliation, as demonstrated with Hegelian dialectic and the events of the novel, is found and could only be such from the tension that arose from undeveloped conceptions of self and the subsequent journey that took place because of this initial misconception. This expression of his individuality did not fall victim to the fatalistic roadblocks that inhibit or stop the individual from progressing forward. Instead, the positing of his individuality allowed Wilhelm to meet the challenges presented to him to be overtaken by his own will, albeit with external influences helping him along the way.

Conclusion

In the preceding, I have made the argument for a reading of the two works, *WMA* and the *Phenomenology*, to be read in a conceptual marriage that would allow a reader to grasp a better understanding of each together, and by extension, each in isolation. This exploration should motivate further study into the literary analyses and criticism that Hegelianism affords us to be used on other works from this time period as well as any worthwhile work of literature/drama. This exploration of *WMA* also allows the reader to see the novel in a way that may not have been

immediately apparent in the past. This analysis could potentially reignite the critical interest in the work and introduce it to a modern audience that may have missed the opportunity to experience it otherwise. These two works also could serve as introductions to the authors themselves. This is most obviously the case with Hegel, as he himself described the *Phenomenology* as the ladder to reach the standpoint of Science so as to be in the correct position to engage in real speculative thought. With Goethe, the exploration of the individual's psyche and relationship to the external world would allow a newcomer to his works to engage with his writings and eventually be able to see the progressions that Goethe had made to reach his later works. Most notoriously, *Faust* is a monumental work and could be better understood if the author himself was better understood.

However, a natural question arises from this paper: why would such an analysis be worthwhile by anyone outside of the academic world? Although the exercise of one's own intellectual capabilities is worthwhile in itself, there is much to be gained from this kind of analysis for those that are not well-versed in Goethe and Hegel, or even in the case of an individual with a limited understanding of literature and philosophy in general. This paper shows that the conceptual development that takes place upon the individual in these two books is by no means isolated or unrepeatable. In fact, this notion of a *Bildungsroman* is eminently relatable to the human experience today and should be a process undergone by any individual that wishes to gain a better understanding of themselves, and by extension the world. If an individual finds a certain level of complacency in their lives, no further movement would theoretically be necessary, as everything that there is to be would be present. I think we all eventually reach this stage in our lives. Unfortunately, it is commonly referred to by another term: Death. Instead, the ambitions that we seek should be never-ending, and in that way, we can all become *Meisters* through our own formative experiences. The reconciliation of ourselves with the external world at once determines

ourselves as well as relationship to the external world. This is a foundational exercise that leads to a more nuanced understanding to the social sciences, understanding ourselves as relate to each other. Through the conscious effort towards development, we can realize Truth in ourselves, no matter what that would entail for us.

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