

Also by Shadia B. Drury

THE POLITICAL IDEAS OF LEO STRAUSS

ALEXANDRE KOJÈVE

THE ROOTS OF
POSTMODERN POLITICS



SHADIA B. DRURY

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*To my parents
Nazli and Anwar Basilio*

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Hyppolite, he is responsible for having introduced French intellectuals to Hegel. The overwhelming interest in Hegel and Marx during the 1930's was connected to the Russian Revolution and to the success of the Red Armies under Lenin and Trotsky after the end of the First World War. In the 1940's, interest in Hegel continued to intensify in France because of the active role of the French Communist Party in the French Resistance, as well as their subsequent participation in De Gaulle's government at the end of the Second World War. Socialism and its intellectual heritage were of utmost significance to the political life of the time. French intellectuals did not see themselves as transcending politics or philosophizing in a domain beyond the political. To take the intellectual high ground, to proclaim one's detachment, to declare oneself above the political fray, were all pretenses. Worse, they were the routes of cowards who would stand by in the face of unspeakable atrocities. All claims to impartiality were suspect; they were tantamount to collusion with the powers that be. In short, neutrality was not an option. The question was not so much whether or not to be *engagé*, but which side to take and why.

Kojève shared this sense of political engagement. And it was in this highly politicized atmosphere that he embarked on his interpretation of Hegel. For him, interpreting Hegel was not just an academic matter; on the contrary, he considered it a work of "political propaganda" intended to influence action and determine the shape of the future.⁵

Even though it was Hyppolite who ended up holding a full-time academic position, and who was the teacher of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Louis Althusser, and Jacques Derrida, Kojève was by far the brighter star, and his influence on his generation, including his influence on Hyppolite, was unmistakable.⁶

Before embarking on an analysis of Kojève's Hegelianism, it behooves us to outline a few of the basic elements of Hegel's philosophy of history. The point is not to give an exhaustive interpretation of Hegel's philosophy, but merely to sketch those aspects of his work that shed light on the idiosyncratic nature of Kojève's interpretation. That Kojève's interpretation of Hegel is singularly flawed is a fact that is already well-known to Hegelian scholars—even if the magnitude of the difference has not yet been fully grasped.⁷ Although Hegel is at times a very fanciful thinker, his thought contains a certain sobriety that is altogether lacking in Kojève's work. My intention is not to criticize Kojève for being untrue to Hegel. But since I am sympathetic to Hegel, I will occasionally use Hegel's ideas to criticize Kojève.

HEGEL'S PROJECT

There are several aspects of Hegel's philosophy of history that are relevant for our purposes. First, Hegel's philosophy is dialectical; second, it is optimistic without necessarily being progressive or deterministic; third, it is preoccupied with the moral life of the spirit; and fourth, it has a sober view of the role of philosophy in the history of the world. As we shall see, all of these elements of Hegel's philosophy are overturned by Kojève.

Hegel does not believe that history is simply about isolated individuals and their actions. He thinks that it is also a manifestation of the forms that the historical consciousness or Spirit assumes in the lives of a people or *Volk*. Individuals are heirs to this world spirit and do not "grow out of the earth like a mushroom."⁸ Hegel did not think that this universal mind or spirit was an alien God in a distant heaven. It is not a "motionless statue" but a "mighty river" to which we are heir—not as passive recipients, but as active participants.⁹ Our inheritance of principles, beliefs, prejudices, and possessions is something that we act upon and transform. To describe the transformations of this inheritance is not simply to describe change, but development. And unlike simple change, development builds on what has gone before. It "enriches and preserves at the same time."¹⁰ Of course, Hegel is famous for preserving that which he transcends. *Aufheben*, the hallmark of the Hegelian dialectical movement, means both to cancel and preserve. It is therefore not surprising to find all sorts of philosophies in Hegel—philosophies that he enriches only to transcend.

Hegel's project is nothing less than an attempt to grasp the various historical shapes that the world spirit assumes in its quest of self-discovery and fulfillment. The *Phenomenology* is a study of phenomena understood as the diversity and multiplicity of shapes and forms which Spirit assumes in the course of its development from rudimentary to more sophisticated levels of self-understanding. Hegel has a clear idea of what a deep self-understanding would entail, but nowhere does he find this manifested in historical life. Nevertheless, he does clearly indicate higher and lower levels of such actualizations. But Hegel's general optimism leads him to think that Spirit is constantly struggling toward completion, self-fulfillment, and self-understanding. At the intellectual level, this elevated self-understanding would transcend the usual dualism of subject and object, the mind and the world.

Hegel's unique brand of idealism dissolves the rift between consciousness and the world, between Being-for-itself and Being-in-itself.¹¹

However, this reconciliation of consciousness and the world of sense experience is not to be accomplished by making the actual world, the world of sense experience, a mere figment of the mind; nor is it to be accomplished by reducing the mind to an epiphenomenon of the world. Hegel insists on a unity of both in a relation of mutual dependence and independence. Hegel describes a consciousness for whom the world is not alien—for it finds the other in itself and itself in the other. Consciousness can achieve this level of self-understanding only when it is genuinely dialectical—which is to say when it involves a dynamic unity of opposites each completing the other, being completed by the other, and finding itself in the other.

At the practical level, the exalted Hegelian conception of self-understanding refers to a genuinely fulfilling moral life that combines freedom and oneness, individuality and community, transcendence and immanence, God and man, in a moral life that is as deep as it is wide, and as all-inclusive as it is intimate. All this may sound too incredible to be believed. Yet there are so many simple levels on which it makes perfect sense. At the moral level, Hegel is talking about a life in which individuals live according to the moral law, not out of fear, or habit, or unquestioning obedience, but with a glad heart because the recognized law is the same law that springs out of their own hearts and that conforms to their own conscience. Hegel believed that such a rich moral life was the gift of Christianity. He had a definite antipathy toward the Catholic Church because he thought that it subverted the unique dignity of Christianity. According to Hegel, the Christian legacy was connected to the emergence of conscience, and with it, the free ethical personality that follows the moral law not as an external and alien thing, but recognizes itself, its identity and its very being, in that law. Hegel describes a moral life in which the spirit is at home. In contrast, the Church was autocratic, hypocritical, and Pharisaic. Cynics may dismiss Hegel's project as fiction, but even they cannot deny the beauty of his moral vision. And even if it is unattainable, Hegel may be right in thinking that it is the sort of homecoming that every spirit longs for.

Even though Hegel holds out the hope of this self-actualization of the spirit, he does not find such fulfillment in the historical world. Nor does he give us any reason for thinking that the history of the world is progressive in any simple meaning of the term. Hegel's use of ancient Rome and eighteenth-century Europe as examples of the estrangement and alienation of the spirit trapped in a soulless community devoid of

warmth, depth, or intimacy indicates that the *Phenomenology* is not a reconstruction of history.¹²

There is no doubt that Hegel's view of history is optimistic. But this does not mean that every historical development that comes after is necessarily superior to the one that came before. And as Judith Shklar has noted, Hegel's account of history can be quite regressive.¹³ In her view, Hegel's conception of history begins with the golden age of the Greeks and their moral community and degenerates into the alienation of the eighteenth-century European civilization and its supposed Age of Enlightenment that finally culminates in the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution. The Greeks were at home in their world; they lived a truly communal life and did not suffer from the modern sickness of alienation and its corresponding unhappy consciousness. The rise of individualism put an end to this primal happiness. In Shklar's view, Hegel regarded history as a long tale of woe—the result of the experiments of individualistic consciousness from Socrates to the present. The rise of this individualistic consciousness has been the ruin of mankind and has precluded the possibility of any future happiness or of the return to the blessedness of Greek life. Shklar's argument is brilliant but incomplete. What makes it seem plausible is that Hegel is deeply disturbed by the conditions of his own time. He thinks of the Terror as the logical outcome of the demand for absolute freedom of alienated individualities. Shklar's work is a good antidote to so many interpreters, including Kojève, who portray Hegel's view of history as radically progressive and rigidly deterministic. For Kojève, history is a series of regimes that pass away only to be followed by better ones, with the whole process culminating in a definitive world order that is destined to last for all eternity. The value of Shklar's work is that it alerts us to the fact that these interpretations are quite misleading.

Even if we abandon the idea that Hegel's view of history is progressive, it is impossible to deny that his view is optimistic. Hegel's optimism consists in his ability to find the rose in every cross. Even if Shklar is right that in the whole history of the world Hegel could not find a human condition that compares to the blessedness of the Greeks in its beauty, happiness, and homeliness, it is nevertheless the case that he not only thinks a return to that happy time is impossible, but undesirable. No matter how wretched adult life may get, Hegel does not think anyone would choose to return to the puerility of youth.¹⁴ And much of what Hegel says about the Greeks clearly indicates that he thought of them as a manifestation of moral consciousness in its infancy. Despite the

beauty and homeliness of their moral life, Hegel thought it consisted of little more than blind obedience to conventional morality—a *Sittlichkeit* as distinct from a *Moralität*.¹⁵ The difference is critical.

Sittlichkeit is intimate and cozy, but unconscious and uncritical. It is a simple, almost instinctive obedience to established law and custom. In this sort of moral community people live unreflectively by tradition and not by their own lights. But there always comes a time when the traditions are questioned; this is an age of enlightenment or *Aufklärung*, as a result of which *Sittlichkeit* gives way to *Moralität*.¹⁶ The latter is an individualistic morality that has its source in individual conscience. And even though Hegel regards this morality of conscience to be far more sophisticated and enriching than a merely conventional morality, he also thinks that this enlightened morality has its dangers, as the case of Socrates illustrates. Liberated from the shackles of conventional morality, individuals may wreak havoc on their communities as Critias and Alcibiades did. The latter was an Athenian general and a traitor who contributed to the defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian wars, while the former was one of the thirty tyrants who ruled Athens after the Peloponnesian wars. Both were students of Socrates. In Hegel's view, Socrates did not encourage their treacheries, but he is responsible for having opened the Athenians up to the dangers of a subjective or reflective morality. Yet in doing so, Hegel is certain that Socrates discovered a higher morality. The latter is the fruit of knowledge of good and evil; and even though this knowledge is linked to the Fall, Hegel reminds us that it also "contains the principle of redemption."¹⁷

Hegel's profound analysis of Socrates as both the "ruin" of Athens as well as the "great historic turning point" of the West sheds light on the project of the Spirit that he believed was seeking actualization in history. In the Hegelian view, the Greek world was animated by a collective "we" that personified a spontaneous harmony of ideas and feelings. Those who were part of this collectivity were at home in the world because their personal feelings and inclinations were in complete concord with the social order. They did not suffer from the alienation, isolation, and estrangement so characteristic of men in modern society. The Greeks created a world in which order and liberty existed side by side in perfect harmony. Hegel envied them this harmony, but by the same token, he thought that they were morally infantile. Their freedom and harmony was the product of thoughtless conformity to conventional morality. It was Socrates who broke the spell of this happy coincidence of freedom and order. Socrates represented a new sensibility that was richer, deeper,

and more introspective. He taught his fellow citizens to listen to the voice of conscience that had for so long been silenced by their collective mania. Socrates did not destroy the public morality in the name of private caprice or will to power. Socrates discovered an "I" deep in his soul that was not just a private or personal voice.¹⁸ It was the voice of the universal, the transcendent, the beyond that is higher than the collective concord of the Athenian "we." By introducing this universal and transcendent standard, Socrates created a rift between heaven and earth, nature and convention, the political and the good. When consciousness wrenches itself from the public morality and gains an awareness of its own independence, then it no longer acknowledges unquestioningly and immediately what is put before it. The result is that law is no longer the "unbroken continuity" of a collective consciousness. A rift occurs between the subjective and the objective, the reflective consciousness and the community, the individual and the state, the truth of society and the truth of the soul. As a result, the state loses its power and the positive morality is shaken.¹⁹ There is no doubt that Socrates is guilty of having destroyed the Greek world. But he did not accomplish this single-handedly. The Greek sensibility was already in decline and a new consciousness was already emerging, which Socrates merely articulated. The fact that the Athenians repented the condemnation of Socrates is not an indication that he was guiltless, but that he personified what Hegel called the tragic "innocence which is guilty and atones for its guilt."²⁰

Socrates is a tragic figure (and not just an unfortunate one) because he is both innocent and guilty.²¹ He is innocent because the principles he represented are valid and good, yet he is guilty because what he stood for was destructive of Greek life. Tragedy consists of a clash of two principles that have legitimacy, validity, and value, but that are mutually exclusive. The Socratic "I" came into conflict with the collective "we" of the Athenians. Because their coexistence was impossible, one had to destroy the other. Yet, it was through this tragic sacrifice of Socrates that the West got its glimpse of the "universal Idea" or the "true good."²²

According to Hegel, Socrates discovered a superior morality that springs from the heart—a morality that is rooted in the universal and is therefore inclusive—unlike the Athenian morality, which excluded slaves and non-Athenians from its collective "we." The trouble is that Socratic consciousness has a way of getting mired in subjectivity, and a terrible subjectivity at that; for it is a subjectivity that tends to absolutize itself and to make demands in the name of the universal. This is the sort of subjectivity that can be the ruin of all collective life, order, and

happiness. It is the same subjectivity that was responsible for the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution. So, while Socratic consciousness represents a higher level of development, it is also a very dangerous thing. It would be easy to say that the emergence of this new subjectivity is a watershed after which all happiness was irretrievably lost, but Hegel does not say so. Even though he is painfully aware of the hazardous road that Socratic consciousness has traveled, he never doubts that it is a definite advance. And if it ever reaches maturity, Hegel thinks that it will achieve a harmony of the moral law with passion, desire, and inclination—which have been categorically excluded from all accounts of the ethical life from Socrates to Kant. The Romantics of Hegel's time certainly affirmed the passions, but they did so in a revolt against reason and in opposition to all its claims. The postmoderns of our time have also succumbed to the same romantic aversion to reason. In contrast, Hegel's project consisted in discovering a harmony between reason and the passions, duty and desire, discipline and freedom.

What Hegel means is not as mystical as is often believed. I once heard Canadian prima ballerina Karen Kain describe the development of her dancing in perfectly Hegelian terms. Even though Karen Kain has probably not read Hegel, her description of the three phases in the development of her art is a testimony to the richness as well as the reality of the Hegelian synthesis. When Karen Kain was young, she danced with complete abandon; her body was at one with the music, her limbs were indistinguishable from the notes, and her spirit was the melody itself. But as she matured, she became more self-conscious, more reflective, and more preoccupied with technique. In this period of her development she acquired a proficiency and virtuosity that made her a technically flawless dancer, but she was also less natural, less spontaneous, more mechanical and more deliberate. One could say, as Hegel says of Socrates, that something rare and beautiful was shattered by the emergence of self-consciousness. But one must add, with Hegel, that the new awareness had the potential of giving birth to something that far surpasses the primal oneness from which it originated. Karen Kain would agree. In the third and final stage of her development she returns to her earlier abandon and spontaneity; but she preserves the technique she acquired while transcending its mechanical, deliberate, and artificial dimension. As a result, her dancing reaches a new height in which it combines the self-consciousness of flawless technique with youthful exuberance, self-abandon, and spontaneity. This is the highest stage of her development, which is a genuinely dialectical movement beginning with a simple unity and pro-

ceeding through self-consciousness and alienation toward a synthesis of opposites that is superior to the original and unconscious unity from which it began. Karen Kain is a microcosm of the Hegelian dialectic, and a testimony to both the actuality and the richness of life that it describes.

What is significant about the Hegelian project is that it is dialectical in the sense of being a genuine synthesis of opposites. In the case of Karen Kain, the opposites combined in the highest stage of her development were spontaneity and deliberation, self-abandon and self-consciousness. In the case of the moral life, the synthesis is between duty and inclination, reason and desire, the objective and the subjective, the universal and the individual. There is no denying that at its deepest level, the moral life does not consist of blind obedience to unquestioned traditions and conventions; nor is it compliance with law out of fear of punishment either here and now or in the beyond. There is good reason for thinking that the man who is motivated to be just out of fear, or who is righteous by convention and unthinkingly, like Cephalus in Plato's *Republic*, is one whose righteousness has no depth and is easily swept away when put to the test. And this is precisely what led Plato to believe that any genuine virtue requires knowledge and love of the good. Hegel goes even further by insisting that the good one loves should not be a distant and alien thing, but should spring from one's own heart. For Hegel, the deep ethical life belongs to one who knows "that the law of his own heart is the law of all hearts."²³ One need not believe that such a life can be realized on a mass scale or that it is the goal of the historical process, in order to endorse the beauty and richness of the Hegelian vision.

In contrast to the depth and intimacy of this Hegelian vision, we will find Kojève's inexorable march of history to be cold, soulless, and altogether indifferent to the moral life of the spirit. And even though Hegel's view of history is optimistic, it is far from being radically progressive and rigidly deterministic. Moreover, Hegel's view of history is dialectical in the sense of providing a dynamic unity of opposites that is not as mysterious as is often believed. In comparison, we will find that there is absolutely nothing dialectical about Kojève's vision. Indeed, I will show how Kojève replaces the Hegelian dialectic with a rigid dualism.

One more aspect of Hegel's philosophy is important for our purposes: Hegel's understanding of the role of philosophy itself in the world. Hegel does not believe that ideas make history; nor does he think that philosophers shape the world. On the contrary, philosophy always arrives too late:

When philosophy paints grey in grey, then has a shape of life grown old. By philosophy's grey in grey it cannot be rejuvenated but only understood. The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling dusk.²⁴

Philosophy can only describe the shapes that Spirit assumes in its quest for greater self-understanding, but it cannot lead or direct its course. In contrast, we will find Kojève giving the philosopher a most exalted role in the history of mankind.

The attraction of Hegel is undeniable. His philosophy is rich, bountiful, and robust. It combines what appear to be conflicting elements—idealism with realism, communitarianism with individualism, conservatism with radicalism. His attempt to reconcile these apparently conflicting elements into a coherent whole is the reason for both his greatness and his mystery. My simple account of his thought is meant to highlight aspects of his philosophy that are altogether missing in Kojève's interpretation.

Unfaithfulness to Hegel is not the sort of criticism that would disturb Kojève. In contrast to Hyppolite, Kojève had a certain disdain for scholarship. He was interested in Hegel because he believed that the problems addressed by Hegel were the most pressing problems of the time. Although he is generally regarded as the most influential interpreter of Hegel, Kojève certainly did not consider himself to be a mere commentator on Hegel's work. Instead, he saw Hegel as the source of his own philosophical reflections. And for the most part, I will regard Kojève as he regarded himself—namely as a thinker in his own right.

THROUGH THE LENSES OF MARX AND HEIDEGGER

The clue to understanding Kojève's Hegelianism is to recognize the fact that he reads Hegel through the lenses of Marx and Heidegger simultaneously. Like Marx, he believes that man is the moving force of history. And like Heidegger, he understands man in terms of Being-toward-death. The result is a wild, if not hypnotic, *mélange* of ideas.

Like Marx, Kojève's reading of Hegel is secular, humanistic, and anti-theological. In the conflict between the anthropocentric and the theological interpretations of Hegel, Kojève comes down decidedly on the secular, humanistic side. Kojève follows Marx in thinking that history is made by man and not by *Geist* or Spirit. The theological interpretation of Hegel, often called the Right or Old Hegelian interpretation, regards

man's unhappiness and alienation to have their foundation in his separation from God after the Fall of Adam and Eve. In this view, the historical dialectic is a process of reconciliation between man and God. The history of man's sin, division, alienation, separation, loneliness, and torment ends in harmony and beatitude. History is the story of the relationship between man and God. The moving force of the historical process is Hegel's Spirit understood as God or the Holy Spirit. Hegel's Universal represents the Church, the earthly mediator between man and God. Hegel's Absolute represents the final reconciliation of man and God in beatitude. In this view, Spirit is the moving force of history. Man's salvation depends on God; man must be resigned to his lot and wait patiently for his savior. And even though man believes or knows that salvation comes at the end of the process, the ways of God remain inscrutable. This is what Hegel must have meant by the "cunning of Reason."²⁵

In contrast to the Right Hegelian interpretation, Kojève followed Feuerbach and Marx in considering God a mere projection of man's own idealized conception of himself. In this view, the dualism between man and himself (projected as God) is transcended in the course of the historical process. At the "end of history," man recognizes God as his own creation, and is no longer alienated from himself because he has become one with himself, or his own idealized view of himself. So understood, history is man's own self-making project. This is the reason that Kojève's interpretation is often characterized as a "Marxist humanism."

Having replaced *Geist* with man, Kojève follows Marx in thinking that man makes history, and pays less attention to the other half of Marx's proclamation—namely, that history makes man. Kojève encounters familiar difficulties. Who is this abstraction called *man* who makes history? Is it or is it not the ghost of the banished God? If by *man*, Kojève means real live individuals, then if they are to make history according to a plan, they must all agree on the same plan. If they disagree, then history will be nothing more than a struggle between competing visions of the good society. And if these visions are not satisfied with small local manifestations, but insist on being globally realized, then a grand struggle will ensue. The triumphant one will then rule the world. On the other hand, *man* could refer to a given human nature with universal needs and desires that operates mysteriously behind the activities of individuals who, in pursuing different ends, eventually converge on a single outcome. In this way, Hegel's "cunning of Reason" is replaced by Engels's "cunning of History." Kojève writes as if the latter is the case. He writes as if there is a single set of human needs, desires, hopes, and aspirations

that are eventually realized in the course of the historical process. But I suspect that this latter view necessarily collapses into the former view. In other words, in the absence of common hopes, purposes, and aspirations, history remains a conflict between individuals who are bent on mutually exclusive ends. If history comes to an end in a single universal and homogeneous state, that state must be a tyranny achieved by force. In this way, the abstraction, *man*, necessarily becomes the basis of a tyranny of some men over others—a tyranny justified in the name of a common and universal humanity. This explains why the radical political projects inspired by Marx in our century have been mired in irrationalism and tyranny. Kojève anticipates this sort of criticism and tailors his philosophy accordingly. And as we shall see, this admirer of Stalin did not shrink from the prospects of a global tyranny.

Kojève has a fixed conception of human nature. Unlike Marx, he does not think that human nature is shaped by the social and material conditions of life. For Marx, human nature under the conditions of capitalism is aggressive, materialistic, and competitive; but with the conquest of scarcity and the advent of communism, the aggressive and competitive inclinations are bound to give way to social and cooperative ones. But for Kojève, human nature is given—it has fixed desires and inclinations, even if some of these desires are regarded as more genuinely human than others. History is the project of transforming the world so that it can satisfy man's given nature and its desires. Once the world is so transformed as to furnish the complete satisfaction of human desires and aspirations, then the historical project is complete.

The whole question of *man* is further complicated by the fact that Kojève's conception of man, the protagonist of history, is inspired primarily by Heideggerian existentialism. According to the latter, man is radically distinct from the rest of the world. He alone is conscious, he alone is free, he alone is aware of his existence and of his impending death. Human freedom and authenticity can be achieved only by living in the face of one's death and finitude. Indeed, the whole of Kojève's philosophical project can be understood as an effort to historicize Heideggerian existentialism. Kojève defines man as a being who flirts with death. Only by risking his life and by facing his death, understood as complete annihilation, can man attain his freedom. The quest for freedom is intimately linked to the transcendence of the fear of death, and is believed by Kojève to be the goal of the historical process. The end of history is reached when man shuffles off his comforting religions and other childish illusions and faces his mortality without fear and trembling.

Kojève attempts to blend a Marxist view of history with an existential view of man that emphasizes his radical freedom. This may leave Kojève tangled in an irreconcilable clash of ideas. But he insists that the historical consciousness of Hegel and Marx must be supplemented by the existentialism of Heidegger and vice versa.

By reading Hegel through the lenses of Heidegger as well as Marx, Kojève gave birth to that curious phenomenon known as existential Marxism, which is epitomized by the works of Jean-Paul Sartre.²⁶ Starting from the same premises, Sartre arrived at different conclusions. It may be argued that Sartre's rejection of any end to history is more commensurate with Kojève's premises and that Kojève's conclusions are ultimately defeated by his existentialism. However, I will argue that Kojève managed to reconcile his conception of man with his end of history thesis in surprising ways.

In conclusion, I have highlighted certain aspects of Hegel's philosophy that are not found in Kojève's interpretation. It is necessary to belabor the simple point that the Hegelian dialectic always involves a dynamic unity of opposites. I have tried to illustrate how Karen Kain exemplifies the unity of spontaneity and discipline and how the moral life combines freedom and reason, inclination and duty. As a result of this dialectical union, Hegel's philosophy is rationalistic without being cold, soulless, and indifferent. Hegel's rationalism has an emotional or passionate dimension. In contrast, Kojève's thinking is not only materialistic and anthropocentric but also dualistic, romantic, and irrational. In what follows, I will argue that Kojève replaces the dialectic with an extreme dualism between reason and passion, femininity and masculinity, necessity and freedom, discipline and spontaneity. And while he follows Hegel in thinking that reason is bound to triumph in history, it is a cold, soulless, instrumental, and heartless rationalism that conquers the world. Kojève's despotic portrait of reason has become the cornerstone of postmodern thought. Indeed, the postmodern repudiation of reason can be fully appreciated only in light of Kojève's depiction of the modern world in terms of the tyrannical embrace of a cold rationalism that has completely and mercilessly banished all its enemies. I will argue that Kojève's philosophy gives birth to a deep nostalgia for what has been banished—unreason, disorder, spontaneity, passion, instinct, and masculinity. It is my contention that the same dreary nostalgia accounts for the dark romanticism of postmodernity.

In telling the story of man, Kojève identifies three significant historical eras: the age of mastery, the age of slavery, and the end of history. I will examine each in turn.