

# Hegel's Theology or Revelation Thematised



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By

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## PROLOGUE: HEGEL'S THEOLOGY

Some say one should speak of Hegel's philosophy of religion rather than of his theology. After all, he gave a set of lectures, repeatedly, with that title. But I believe that was an institutional concession. His own thought suggests a different outlook, a more unitary conclusion. Theology, we know, was one of Aristotle's names, though reached at the end of his investigations, for what he otherwise called "first philosophy", that of being *qua* being, namely (his phrase), all else, logic, nature, ethics, being secondary to this. Hegel echoes this view of things when he says that philosophy is concerned with "religion and nothing but religion"; and yet we know it is concerned with being, with thought as a whole. Being is thought, thinking, Hegel concludes. But then religion is no longer religion inasmuch as this would name, mark, a special department of study or contemplation.

The inexhaustible wealth of everything in the universe is contained and understood in the religious standpoint, and this standpoint itself has the sense that it is the absolute truth of this wealth, that the latter as it is in and for itself exists only from this standpoint, and that all other modes of its existence are past, external, ephemeral, untrue, miserable, self-contradictory, self-destructive. As a result, spirit is unable to remain or sustain itself at any of these stages. Its true satisfaction is that it exists in this expression for the sake of its satisfaction, its subjective position. The presupposition is that spirit is the truth. The assertion that the religious standpoint is the truth of the world contains on the objective side the true, which has being-in-and-for-itself, and which we call God; and on the subjective side, the fact that religiousness is the true actuality of self-consciousness (its true life, its experienced, conscious truth). The objective proof, the objective necessity of the religious standpoint consists therefore in the cognition of truth. This cognition is not such that we presuppose a concept of God and religion, (A) the correctness of which we would have to demonstrate, and (B) then seek the subjective cognitive grounds for this content, cognitive grounds without which we would not be convinced. Primarily, therefore, it is not a question of proving some such propositions as: "God is thus and so", "Religion is this and that". Such propositions contain as a presupposition the representational images "God", "religion".

It is a question of the necessity of the content in and for itself, or of discovering in the cognition what it is that is the true. The only presupposition that we need to make is that we do not wish to halt and remain in any subjective standpoint other than what we discover corresponding to its concept.<sup>1</sup>

This last, though, is none other than the presupposition of philosophy. Hegel is concerned here, context shows, with religion as Christianity, which he calls, accordingly, the absolute religion. Yet by his own schema anything absolute is, in terms of its own perfection, philosophy as subsuming, though without destroying, both religion and art. It would follow that for his own thought there is no presumption that Christianity is either a religion or even "religion itself", in Henri de Lubac's phrase<sup>2</sup>. Theology, as in Aristotle, will be the science of the ultimate as such, identified by Aristotle as being *qua* being. To this identification Hegel answers both yes and no, but without contradiction. Being, namely, is itself the Idea as the Idea is being. To understand this is to have worked through Hegel's system of logic in one's mind. This system, however, as distinct from the mere Hegelian text, material leavings of a dead man, of a man dead to this world and to all appearances (phenomena), is not only Hegel's, since it is the system and method which is mind itself. This is his own claim, as it was Aristotle's of his own metaphysics. At the same time Hegel was not so foolish as to imagine that his text, through which we know mind in this way, would stand forever as mind's unique representation, in real contradiction of that account of phenomena, of categories, as moments of the Idea, which we have just touched upon. There is a paradox here, paradox being what we encounter on a first look at things, a seeming contradiction to be overturned, namely. The solution lies in the simple realisation that to speak, to write something down, is to enter, to be thus far part of, the phenomenal world, which, as finite, Hegel declares, is purely ideal. That is, it has no being or existence outside of or as not being but a moment of absolute mind, with which, however, each such moment is, by the nature of the absolute as infinite, identical in its difference.

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<sup>1</sup> Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. I. Cf. p.222.

<sup>2</sup> See Henri de Lubac's *The Drama of Atheistic Humanism*, Meridian Books: New York 1963. See also his *Catholicism*, Burns & Oates, London 1950 (French original, 1937). A 65 page Appendix to the latter, classic work contains fifty-five Patristic extracts on the topic of the believing community or communion, of which each member is also the whole, it is claimed, as containing it.



This is to say that it is Spirit itself, the Idea itself, which thus flows and hence is free, is freedom, precisely as absolute, whereas being is as such determinate. In the older terminology the same thing was said by postulating being as itself “analogueing”. Being, that is, “is said in many ways”, wrote Aristotle, adding that there is no class or genus of “the things that are”. As Hegel will put it, being is no mere finite universal but, rather, in what could surely itself be called analogous speech, the universal of universals and, further, as such identical with the subject, with subjectivity as named by the first personal pronoun *in its singular form*, as must be added with emphasis. This, I do not doubt, is Hegel's version of the Johannine “In the beginning was the word”. Word, after all, is what flows between mind and mind, humanly speaking, and hence is never still. Word just is movement and this is why, Hegel claims, speech is fundamental to writing as hearing is superior to sight. In the identification of word with the beginning, therefore, the concept of spirit, which Hegel disentangles, was reached, though surely, even so, by no means for the first time. “The spirit of God moved upon the waters”, we read on the Bible's first page, and prolonged acquaintance with Hegel's writing has convinced me that we have in his philosophy a continuation, in a form suited to our age, of the Patristic commentary on such Scripture, not so much as an authoritative text, though appeal to it in this way is by no means foreign to Hegel, as many examples from his writings can testify, as rather a fount of wisdom. Implied, though, is that Scripture can only come to be recognised as such where it is first imbibed in the obedience of faith or religion. “Religion must come first”: for the individual as for society. There is an analogy here with Aristotle's remark upon ethics as a science, that knowledge of it cannot even begin for one not “well brought up”. The view can cause despair and is indeed part of that finitude Hegel finds in Aristotle as belonging to his being cast in history as a pagan Greek, lacking the conception of a universal humanity. Anyone, we now would rather say, can supplement and correct his upbringing and should indeed do so, since we are all responsible for the opinions we hold. To say that, however, is in no way to give an opening for judging either another person or oneself. “Judge not”. This is a command, a counsel, which in Hegel is underpinned by the apparently but not essentially self-contradictory maxim that “All judgments are false”. Thus also our above assertion is too simple if it is not added that upbringing must always leave its mark as, even genetically, pre-determinative, in a measure at least, and so it will be in religion also. We do not and cannot read the Gospels as contemporaries read them and should not, therefore, wish to do so. This was Bultmann's

point, as Hegel also counsels against confusing beginnings, in a manner "soulless", with the Concept.

Hegel's notion of spirit is thus equivalent to the Pauline view of the absolute, of God, as "all in all", with the difference that Paul writes, exoterically, for an audience immersed in phenomena, in "realist" thinking, whatever was his own mind on that. He thus has to posit this God, this absolute, the Idea (of being "all in all"), as future, which Hegel declares to be impossible or indeed self-contradictory, although typical of specifically religious representation, just as, equally, is the cult of a "figure", *Gestalt*, having existence exclusively in the or a past. The notion of spirit, coinciding indeed with Christianity's own Pentecostal vision, transcends such representation.<sup>3</sup>

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So, in Hegel, the Idea, in which logic terminates and within which logic proceeds to this its inherent apotheosis, is revealed, self-outed, externalised as nature, as revelation, word as we said, as *thus* having become "a living spirit" or spirit simply. The Idea *has been* revealed as flesh, as nature, in order to be spirit. The philosophic mind, looking at and through this, is "oned" or at-oned with Spirit just thereby. "This is eternal life, to know...". To know, it need hardly be added, is to know God, is to know one's self as a knowing, to know, finally, knowing. Self vanishes at this acme of self-consciousness, since this itself is conscious of nothing else.

Spirit, that is, is the first reality, not merely reversing "time's arrow" but therein and thereby annihilating time "from the first", so to say (in temporal metaphor). In logical analysis reflection is at work in the uncovering of this, but only because reflection is a moment of the Idea, of spirit itself. This belongs to the ontology of logic and of its forms.

This instantaneous process (of reflection) is what the doctrine of divine Trinity *represents*, as Hegel identifies it. He is at once therefore accused of himself *misrepresenting* that just in transcending its representational character. This, however, is Hegel's whole project, to take up and thereby supersede religion in philosophy. I am claiming that this is, identically, the project of religion and the achievement of the absolute religion itself. Hegel's thought looks back to that as eternally achieved and therefore present, as much in his thought as everywhere else. As absolute religion,

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<sup>3</sup> On the whole question of the relation of Representation and Concept in Hegel, as of "speculative rewriting", cf. Cyril O'Regan: *The Heterodox Hegel*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1994, especially the final Part Three, pp. 327-370. Cf. also *The Phenomenology of Mind* (Baillie), New York 1967, p.765.

therefore, religion supersedes itself, rips the veil from its own temple, thus witnessing, as was primordially declared, that God does not dwell in any finite temple except as he, the Idea, dwells in, as identified with, each and all, from human souls to a burning bush or that piece of music you heard when you were very young, that face you adored and have not ceased adoring.

This linking up with the Trinity is Hegel's tribute to, his identification with, orthodoxy. Here, just here, we encounter his characteristic doctrine of reflection, again, with which the section on Essence in the Logic begins. For his thought is so constituted, and not merely "set up", so that one cannot pose as a dilemma that such thought is either derived positively from the Trinity as "revealed", thus producing that contradiction in terms, a "dogmatic philosophy", or that it itself posits a or the Trinity as if for the first time, bypassing religion and its teaching.

The same applies to his thought's relation to that other main doctrine of faith, though Hegel's thought in itself and for these very reasons quite liberates faith from this distorted rendering of it as a repeating of formulae on authority which, by definition, one does not oneself understand. Such faith brings its adherents no knowledge of God or Christ whatever. I refer here, anyhow, to the doctrine of creation of a world. This is in general posited or proposed for belief in complete separation from the doctrine of the Trinity, overlooking the credal statement, concerning the Trinitarian Word or Son, "through (*per*) whom all things were made". This echoes John's Gospel: "All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made". The "him" stands as much for "the word" as for "God" in this text, since "the word was God" as being "in the beginning" with God. This "being with" is a strict identity. God is process and method of *logic*, the latter's Idea going forth as Nature<sup>4</sup>, as Spirit moving. So Hegel would be Biblically orthodox, by chance or design, in thus closely relating Trinity, creation and, later, incarnation.

The creation, that is, is necessary as Spirit's being-in-process. It is thus, so to say, there before it is there and this is, again, reflection. It is presupposed to itself. Freedom is our name for this necessity, of God as

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Hegel, *Enc.* 244: "Enjoying, however, an absolute liberty, the Idea does not merely pass over into life, or as finite cognition allow life to show in it: in its own absolute truth [it] resolves to let the 'moment' of its particularity, or of the first characterisation and other-being, the immediate idea, as its reflected image, go forth freely as Nature." In fact "the percipient Idea (*als Anschauen*) is Nature" (*und die anschauende Idee Natur*), an assertion balanced by the (in the original) double-spaced, for emphasis, final declaration, *sich als Natur frei aus sich zu entlassen*, thus avoiding all taint of an essentially "finite" pantheism.

self-emptying without being emptied, since what goes out from him just thereby returns to him. The supreme or exemplary emptying is what faith has called and fixed as *incarnation*, thereby accepting the common assumption of men regarding the independent reality of flesh, the carnal, seen and touched, which indeed Hegel confirms without letting go of his absolute idealism whereby such matter, although the place of immediate knowledge, is ideal only, as is required by the Idea's infinity as Spirit. That this appears as *one* human being, Hegel says, in a certain agreement with Plato (one "over against" many), is or was necessary. It is "what was to be", Aristotle's definition of essence. Once there, it is then normative or known absolutely as thus *bound* to be there, to "appear". "The factual is normative", all the way along, and each or any person is thus urged, by natural law, to "become what you are", a phrase annihilating all becoming when merely literally or temporally viewed. We can only become what we are as having, by our being, already become it.

So the first creation passes into the second, as faith and theology express it; the face of Adam is the face of Christ. The next doctrine to be thus spiritually interpreted, "understanding spiritual things spiritually", is the Fall of Man. Before this, however, more should be said on this notion of necessity in its relation, of identity, to freedom. "What can happen at some time does happen", Thomas Aquinas claimed, given that time is viewed as an infinite and necessary series. By this if God's non-being could happen then God would not now be. In the true infinity of the Concept, however, Hegel adds to this, every possibility is actual and so the idea of a contingent happening is simply obliterated, contingency itself being no more than a dialectical moment of the Idea. This resolves itself ultimately into the identity of the non-identical, a notion Hegel admits that people find difficult!

The difficulty people find in these conceptions is due solely to sticking to the term "is", and forgetting the character of thought, where the moments as much *are* as they *are not*, - are only the process which is Spirit (*Phenomenology of Mind*, Baillie, p.777: the whole paragraph and following, concerning "this spiritual unity", should be consulted.

Yet the Absolute transits continually into its otherness. But how "on earth" is thought to get hold of such a notion, of the denial of the very possibility, even or especially logically, of getting a hold as such, by anything upon anything? Answer: only by grasping all at once, in the Concept or as the Idea (of freedom). Freedom thus conceived is absolute reconciliation, marriage of heaven and hell or of what are posited as essentially divorced. These images, however, fall short of the *philosophic* notion whereby the

supposed opposites, whether married or divorced, are in truth the same. Thus also in religion, an instrument of torture and shame can be “wondrous”, the power and glory, the *foolishness* of the absolute wisdom of God. The philosopher Hegel is at home with these apparent contradictions, this harmonic dissonance from which arises, out of scepticism namely, the phoenix-like Idea as “its own result”, though this may seem but another “contradiction in terms”. It is rather a “contradiction in performance”, alive and walking, so to say. If this is “only” analogously a contradiction yet, by the same movement of thought, specifically logical contradiction could be made out, in reverse, as merely analogous to this, in which case, however, all judgment must indeed cease as false, as Hegel declares and judges, though this too is but a “one-sided” moment of thought’s process. One-sidedness itself, that is, can only be one-sidedly identified.

These results might recall to us, as one application of it, the Scriptural saying: “My thoughts are not your thoughts”. Thus logic has ever been regarded as “God’s thought” (J. Lukasiewicz<sup>5</sup>). That’s the point of it. Yet it was also or just thereby our or any mind. Nothing has changed. This is still the case. Logic takes us beyond, transcends even, “our” thoughts. Simultaneously, however, it confirms not abstractive, two-dimensional reasoning, with which logic is frequently confounded, but what Hegel calls the “true reason-world”, common to every stage and variant of human life, in all its different styles and paradigms, to child and the aged, to the cultured or trained and the amateur, since it is just such persons, any person as such, who is able to come up, as one did, with a saying such as that God’s thoughts are not as ours or that thought must, as it there does, go beyond itself as *resulting from itself*. “Man proposes, God disposes”: this saying shows the proverbial awareness of this. *Der Mensch denkt, aber Gott lenkt*. Or there is the common saying: “It is and it isn’t”, “Yes-No” for short. These insights were awaiting formalisation, have from time to time received it and are continuing to do so. In Hegel they are formalised in the sense of systematised, by way of natural language. This is the only possibility, since “technical” formalisation has as its very nature and function to separate identity and difference, which we find here joined, in all possible worlds.

Is Hegel perverse? No, I answer, but his system rather expresses truth as such in its simplicity, namely the Absolute Idea, in his words, which is itself the absolute (*Enc.* 213) and *vice versa*. What then is an idea, for Hegel? That question must be asked at some point and answered, as is

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<sup>5</sup> Cited in Coope, Geach, Potts & White (Department of Philosophy, University of Leeds): *A Wittgenstein Workbook*, Oxford 1971, no.7: Logic as Mirror of the World”, p.22.

done in either version of his logic (cf. *Enc.* 45 and the addition, comparing Hegel's with Kant's account). Regarding the Absolute Idea specifically, Hegel's view emerges as that God is spirit (*Geist*, mind), a thesis he identifies as "the lesson of Christianity" (my stress). In this respect, however, Christianity concurs with or absorbs, rather, the Aristotelian metaphysics of *nous*, though Hegel will say Aristotle did not grasp in its fullness the universality of mind, since this is not fully understood unless identified with human nature as such and not just with Greeks or males or adults, say. This might raise the unresolvable question, as it might seem, as to "when" first the biological substance becomes bearer of spirit. Was it at conception, birth, as *homunculus* or when? One counters with the reminder that in Hegel's thought time and beginning, a notion inseparable from time, which just therefore cannot itself begin, are not after all themselves notional but, rather, representations used by spirit for as long as it needs it, the "long" here denoting a logical rather than a temporal length. "Spirit necessarily appears in time... so long as it does not grasp its pure notion, i.e. so long as it does not annul time".<sup>6</sup> This, however, applies to the whole of biology in the first place, as studying an idea, life namely, that is not yet mediated. The criticism of Aristotle, therefore, must go deeper and Hegel does not shrink from it. Nonetheless he regards Aristotle's book on the soul, to which he stays close, as perhaps the only worthwhile text, still, on that subject. The fact is that Greeks, males and adults are all equally phenomenal and hence, in Hegel's deflationary sense, *ideal* only, notionally fleeting moments of the Idea in its freedom.<sup>7</sup>

Hegel's system, therefore, is the systematisation of the "simple" truth, as he himself confirms, that God, the Idea, is all truth so that we are on the right road when we view all creation and everything in it as evil or, a variant, as nothing ("sham-being" he can also say). That indeed looks like "heresy" but simple consideration of his meaning in context shows that it is not, any more than are identical statements to this made by the Christian (and other) mystics. "Remember o man that you are but dust", the newly elected Pope is told, dust here standing not for ordered corporeality but for nothing simply. "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return". This again is not a physiological or anthropological presumption (as such it would be incorrect) but a statement of the nothingness of the finite, of man taken as man, of time. The spirit within him belongs rather to God and that is why Aristotle can describe thinking/or philosophy as "death-practising". By the

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<sup>6</sup> *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p.800. The whole paragraph merits careful study.

<sup>7</sup> Consult here Axel Randrup's (International Centre for Interdisciplinary Psychiatric Research, CIRIP) Internet paper: "Cognition and Biological Evolution: An Idealist Approach resolves a Fundamental Paradox" (2004).

same token Hegel denominates death as the actual “entry into spirit”. Man may be dust, yet I am not. “What is man, that though art mindful of him?” Man, we might answer, is that being (no longer thus a phenomenon) that is not himself, that transcends his phenomenality. Man, as mind, is not man. The individual is “ruined” and that in inception, so to speak. He has to “become what he is”. Hegel envisages this as a task, a duty, which is yet in essence accomplished, though it is “our affair” (Hegel), all the same, phenomenally. McTaggart adds that no man is better or worse than he should be, an observation he claims is in no way destructive of ethics or the virtues. It is *the* adult attitude, Hegel had said. Thus it was God, we are told, who hardened Pharaoh’s heart and vessels of destruction are just that, though (or hence?) Judas is declared a saint in the Ethiopian church. Still, anyone who hopes is not such a vessel, given that hope is a virtue. But who knows if he hopes, a Hegelian might ask, while replying: *Dum spiro spero*. This though seems to make hope as phenomenal as breathing, a passion more than a virtue, needing still to be raised to a rational habit. Hegel here confirms the Kantian critique of virtue ethics, not however so as to fall for the sheer ideality of Kantian legalism. For Hegel, as for Sartre or De Beauvoir, ethics just do not belong to the final count, Objective Spirit, in Hegel’s terminology, remaining outside the doors of Absolute Spirit as, like the Baptist, less than the least in that self-standing kingdom. In this philosophic or mystical sense Thérèse of Lisieux declared she had no virtues and meant it literally. By the same token though, one might add, she was not she. “You are she who is not: I am he who is”, declared God in sexist vein to the Dominican tertiary of Siena, she who said she felt she carried the whole weight of the then Church upon her back. Dialectically, as not being herself, she becomes self-conscious universal cognition. Thus Hegelianism can appear as natural as the first great commandment to which the second is “like”. These considerations should help to resolve that appearance of heterodoxy in Hegel’s account, especially in relation to its historical antecedents, to which Cyril O’Regan would draw attention in his *The Heterodox Hegel*, not however, he stresses, in a mood of “heresy-hunting”.

So one may laud, with Mark D. Jordan (“The *Summa*’s Reform of Moral Teaching – and its Failures” in *Contemplating Aquinas*, ed. Fergus Kerr OP, SCM Press London 2003, UND Press 2006), Aquinas’s incorporation of “virtue ethics” into Christian moral theology. It remains, though, as MacIntyre ambiguous title, *After Virtue*, might seem to indicate, a particular and hence phenomenal exercise in so far as a “table” of the virtues is set up. The reality is love, which Hegel equates with thinking, and without which, says St. Paul, I, and hence virtue, am nothing. Hence

also eternal life, spirit, is “to know God”, is thought, whether in Hegel's philosophy or in John's Gospel. Yet, it follows, knowing too, without love, is nothing, is not knowing, while love too is also described on occasion as “unknowing”, “and night shall be my day”. Whatever anyone does is, so to say, redeemable (an image from pawnbrokery), except, that is, the denial of just this. Hegel's account of *pardon* is germane here, while to deny it is to deny freedom, power and infinity, actuality even. Ultimately, by “the necessity in the content of the absolute picture-idea” (*Enc.* 573), the good, the one redeeming, is “made sin for us”, a curse hung on a tree.

Here we can see how this language, this reality and the account of it, in the realm, pictured or not, essentially of thought, such that *it* cannot “have happened” without overthrowing the whole idea of a happening (which is in fact what happens!), this, I say, is not tied to finitely defective theories of “atonement” on a legal model, for sin, for “our” very finitude, for finitude itself. It is rather exactly what is done in Hegel's logic itself, again, is the abrogation, namely, of the finite as never having been, the progress from shadows to reality of what was thus never such a shadow merely, its beginning contained in its end. Hence one does not find it, this particular theory of atonement, in Hegel's own account of the Christian Gospel or Good News. “Behold, I go to the Father”. That's all, “and where I am there you will be”, again by a purely Hegelian principle, which, again, one may or may not think of as derived from the record of that utterance, or from that text simply. Such derivation in no way spoils or invalidates the later seeing in logic, resulting therefrom or not, of the truth of this saying, “where I am there will you be also”. It could in fact be said by anyone to or of anyone. It declares the all-embracing unity of the concept. *Seid umschlungen millionen*, not forgetting though that, since we are dealing with identity, “it is useless to count”. *Numeri non ponuntur in divinis*, writes Aquinas on the Trinity. “Be embraced, ye millions” does not merely mean we should be embraced by one another. And yet, in what else does it consist as realised? Loving the brother is embodiment and not merely moralistic sign of divine love.

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The idea of a creation “in time” is, taken literally, a contradiction. It posits time as something beside or alongside God, who is thus made finite for thought, whether or not one adds that God has no “need” thus to create. Necessity and freedom, Hegel has shown, are, at their highest, one. Similarly, the necessity of my being places no limit upon God. If I were



not then God would not be, *just as* if God were not then I would not be, Eckhart had already declared. This is Hegelian “self-consciousness”. In Merleau-Ponty’s phrase, “I am the absolute source”. This was no mere Frenchman’s hubris but simply the latest version of those tribesmen’s aboriginal belief, in Australia, that their own ancestors had created the world.<sup>8</sup>

Nearer to the truth than any seeing of the world as an *object* left by God as sign of his inviolable invisibility, so to say, is that frankly pictorial account by the Psalmist (*Psalms*, number 104, Vulgate 103) of the world as like a series of garments whereby God at once reveals and conceals himself but as expression of his essential fecundity, something, that is to say, essential to his being a spirit and not some need from outside thus to complete himself, as if the object, object as such, were not a moment merely of mind, of logical process, of the Idea which itself is the absolute (EL212).

Similarly, for Augustine the divine or Trinitarian footprints (Lat. *vestigia*) are left hidden in creation as mere vestiges of God it is the business of thought upon experience to uncover, as in the familiar proof, from the self-contradiction of contingency taken absolutely, of an indwelling or inherent necessity “which all call God”. Inasmuch as this proof is a progress from a false to a true position, starting from a world known purely *quoad nos* or from the human perspective and not anything as “known in itself”, the later Ontological Argument, reasoning from within logic itself, was in Hegel’s view more cogent. What examination of this argument, in modern times typically, made plain, however, was that the disclosure, the effect, of its truth is not separable from the system of thought as a whole. Here the truth of God emerges as the crown and “end”, in either sense, the true “design”, of thought as such, as truly reflected in the system of logic. The truth of this system, as that “Golgotha of the Spirit”, i.e. the true one, which *The Phenomenology of Mind* ends by proclaiming as what Hegel next intends to chart (in and with *The Science of Logic*), is shown precisely in its conclusion to the absolutely necessary, the Idea which alone or absolutely is or is real. It is both form of the infinite and itself infinite form, in identity of Content and Form. As such content it is no sense abstract, is “the concrete universal” that is itself individual. Hence, Hegel adds, developing Spinoza, it is “the absolute person”, to which, namely, all other personality is relatively identical. Here he simultaneously develops Kant’s “Kingdom of Ends” as giving its rationale.

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<sup>8</sup> Cited in Randrup (see previous note).

This conclusion of itself answers the criticisms by Kant or Aquinas of this, in effect, “ontological argument” by showing that this argument, thought through, was all along shorthand for the whole system of logic or of thought, of mind, *nous*. In this system existence, along with objectivity, the object, are no more than moments within the Idea. The Idea is identical with precisely in its difference from any such finite and hence “ideal” notions, the first of which, though it will also be the last, is being simply, *auch erfülltes Sein* (GL, final section, Suhrkamp 6, Frankfurt 1969, p.572). Reality, to use Kant's term, is shown to be precisely Idea. Therefore reality cannot be contrasted against the ideal as is done precisely by Aquinas or Kant, though Aquinas will still defend that ordered assembly of *a posteriori* proofs, which Kant claimed to have refuted precisely in refuting the ontological argument (at the cost of a hundred dollars!) but which Hegel, unmoved, after examining them, by Kant's claims, later continued to defend in his *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God*. In Hegel, anyhow, the “ideal” is rather contrasted against the Idea, positing this latter as “the true being”, infinite over against as including, as “moment”, the finite.<sup>9</sup>

In the system of logic, therefore, as analysed by Hegel and upon which Mill in no way improved, what is “merely” ideal becomes precisely the mark of the finite. Hence true infinity is not *a* notion at all, simply because it is *the* notion, *the* concept, mind itself or spirit as act, to which the finite adds nothing. Thus infinity cannot be anything other than mind, such as some huge beast or material thing or a quantitative mathematical series. It cannot even be being as immediately conceived, yet it *is* what is finally conceived as self-conceiving, “thought thinking itself” as Hegel ends his *Encyclopaedia* by citing, in the original, from Aristotle. Nor is there warrant for asserting, as do many, a separate sense to the “is” of the *copula* from that of the “is” of being, since it is just the word's sense that accounts also for its copulative function to the point of identity of subject and predicate, basic to Hegel's discussion throughout. The Idea is the reality, the absolute or the Kantian *ens realissimum*, should we admit such a notion. Immaterial being just *is* mind. On this scheme of ontology, call it negative, call it spiritual and/or positive, thought is prior to reality. Essence, in the Hegelian formulation, is prior to *erfülltes* being as the Idea though this succeeds as reflection upon immediate being, essence mediating. The two of them, being and essence, thus necessarily merge in the Concept, in the Idea as the true reality and absolute, as *erfülltes Sein*.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Enc.*95: “This ideality of the finite is the chief maxim of philosophy”. See also, again, GL, the two final paragraphs.

This is indeed what Aquinas considered true but not self-evident and he was thus far right. The self-evidence of the “ontological argument” for God’s truth, put as existence, is not separable from the self-declaration of logic, of its method (Gk. *meta hodon*, according to the Way) as the Idea’s, the absolute’s, “own result”, whether as self-caused or as self-warranting or both, as necessity in and as freedom, not put there by anything other but self-positing just in its idea, in itself inclusive of the whole of creation, of nature, as the latter’s own self-manifestation, indifferently or as, just thereby adding nothing, *plura entia sed non plus entis* as the Scholastics said. In Hegel’s words, God is his manifestation, is revelation as such, *diffusivum sui* and not diffusive of something else. To look is to look through, to *perceive*, but no longer *per speculum in aenigmate*, the length here however being a length of logical thought rather than of sheer time. For Hegel indeed there is no difference, spirit ultimately annulling time.

Creation, thus viewed, is precisely not anything separate from God himself, though we may still picture it as “in” God. So God becomes in his very concept a man just as being that with which “we” are each and all identified, *in* that man. That man, in turn, is not to be abstractly identified with the supposed (*gemeinten*) figure of historical or sacral narrative. That would be to have confused “getting at” the concept with getting at the supposed historical beginnings of the Christian or indeed philosophical movement as an historical phenomenon. The idea of faith emerges here as one with that of a progressively spiritual interpretation and account of things, such as the logic and finally the philosophy of spirit, mediated from ideal logic by creation, by nature, supplies. So Hegel identifies “universal self-consciousness” with “that atoning reconciliation” (*Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 777).

True logic, that is, is not that system of written signs we encounter on the written page and to which only we give whatever “intentionality” they may have. It is rather the *schlechthin intensive Totalität* (Hegel italicises *intensive*) while, as it were conversely, the very “method” is “the true concept, only self-related, which is *Being*”. Nor, *a fortiori*, is philosophy as a whole anything of this composite kind, nor even is it some body of doctrine taught in a classroom. It is rather a process of mind itself, identical in both student and teacher, who thus become one, as the doctor is one with nature as healing. Hence the teaching of logic is without meaning as an idea except as the assisted process of the student’s coming to see for himself the conditions for validity of thought and/or speech.

If, however, the proof of God is declared one with the system and method of logic then can one not claim that God is here abrogated, as having been a false extrapolation of the warp and woof of the actual, the

real? This objection overlooks precisely what it sees, that immediate experience has itself been found to take real form as and only as a system of thought or logic, system here being one with a unique Absolute Idea. It is this Idea alone which then, of necessity in its freedom, “goes forth as Nature” so as to return in and as Spirit, finally as Absolute Spirit. That and that alone is what God is and this alone, therefore, is the true situating of that moment of thought that calls itself atheism as overturning the representations of religion or even of art. Such atheism forgets that theology and Scriptural commentary did and do exactly the same thing, Aristotle’s metaphysics being the prime example (of the former), unless pride of place be given to that later movement, called by Hegel the absolute religion, where a man says that whoever sees him has seen God, that he and God are one, a claim repeated in other traditions by such as al Hallaj and others, down, *mutatis mutandis*, to Nietzsche and beyond. This is what Hegel calls self-consciousness, which is indeed a sense of standing out from the crowd. It is thus esoteric, as Hegel puts it. Christianity claims, however, that the aspiration to the esoteric is or should be exoteric, the striving to enter on “the narrow way”., This, anyhow, rather than virtue as such, is the truly honourable good, Aquinas teaches<sup>10</sup>, and thus “power is the morality of those who stand out from the rest”, to quote Hegel’s deaf musical contemporary. Or “I have that within which passes seeming” as Shakespeare’s creation says to his mother, recalling that other “What have I to do with thee, woman?” of the Gospel narrative. Yet the woman, herself self-conscious, philosophy even (in Boethius), obliges him to act.

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If we turn now to the doctrine of the Fall of Man, whereby he rises to knowledge, we find Hegel treating original and actual *sin* under one notion, that of an habituation to knowledge as a necessary and yet free disturbing of an original harmony of nature, this “evil” being in fact the essence of immanent spirit (*Geist*). For this reason if for no other there is no specific ethics or abstracted moral theology in Hegel’s systematic writings, nothing either corresponding to a separate critique of “practical reason”. A metaphysic of morals, of which Kant gave us little more than the title, Hegel in truth provides, in the sense, that is to say, of a complete absorption, *Aufhebung*, of any kind of objectified moral realm into an ontology of knowledge and being under the one (and only) concept.

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<sup>10</sup> On this, see our “The *bonum honestum* and the Lack of Moral Motive in Aquinas’s Ethical theory”, *The Downside Review*, April 2000., pp. 85-110.

Knowledge is in fact absolute being, the necessary intellectuality of the immaterial, the spiritual, as such. This is precisely the ontology of Thomas Aquinas taken to its explicit philosophical conclusion, eclipsing all dualism. In that respect it is a step backward from Kant, who had made of specific practical reason a separate faculty from reason pure or as such, as the tradition had not done. For Aquinas praxis of any kind is simply reason itself as *ordinata ad opus*, directed to a work, to action, while contrariwise, with Aristotle, thinking, contemplation, is declared, under ethics, as “the highest praxis”. It is, that is to say, not merely a “metaphysic of morals” but the incorporating, by thought, of morality, the category, into metaphysics as the Idea. Thus sin becomes equated with knowledge, this being Hegel's interpretation of the words of the serpent, wisest of beasts, in the story. Here, above all, what is a story cannot as such be a doctrine, a truth realised long before Hegel but which he treated systematically and therefore theologically. As such the doctrine throws great light upon psychology and human studies generally, as historical motor of their development. This is the background against which we may understand Hegel's words about the wickedness of conscience, instead of affecting an unintelligent attitude of being scandalised, after the manner of J.N. Findlay. That statement depends upon Hegel's more radical affirmation that “good and evil are the same”, which in reverse turn, so to say, help toward understanding this so-called dark affirmation, already made in Chapter VII of his earliest major work as, he says, first part of his system. It is offered just here in the science of logic (supremely at the addition to paragraph 24 of the *Encyclopaedia*) as part, almost the climax, of his getting and presenting a “Preliminary Notion of Logic”, just before his insertion of the earlier manuscript (from the *Propädeutik*), slightly adapted, concerning the “three attitudes to objectivity”, between that and the proper account of the definition and three divisions of logic as science of the Idea. For Hegel spiritual life as such consists in knowledge (“This is eternal life, to know God...” he will have read in the Fourth Gospel). To this “cognition” all conscious practical living and willing is assumed, thus freed of their usual abstractedness. What is hypostatised as will is the inseparable inclination or passion, even, of mind itself to or for itself, as we can also read, *mutatis mutandis*, in Thomas Aquinas, but not in the later more “decadent scholasticism” of which Kant might be seen as the last representative, in this respect at least. (cp. A. de Muralt, “Kant, le dernier occamien” in *Revue de métaphysique et morale*, No. 1, 1975). In fact, however, the tradition continues on from Kant into Hegel, Nietzsche and beyond. Attempts, Scottish (MacIntyre), American (Deely) or French (Gilson, Maritain), to discern a break between the modern era and all

preceding it are therefore in need of a revision by scholars. Descartes was not a mere anomaly. The medieval vitality itself prepared the modern revolution, continuing in parallel with Renaissance scholasticism (Poinsot, Leibniz) up to and into the post-modern free-for.all, thus exhibiting the relative "ideality", the finitude, of revolution as itself a finite concept, a moment, that is, of the one Idea, as Hegel treats it in his first great work and first part, he declares, of his system, *The Phenomenology of Mind*.

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It is not by chance that Hegel's analysis of the *Genesis* story, closely bound up with the Christian doctrine of original and subsequent "sin", is given at the close of his preparatory analysis, in his *Encyclopaedia* (24 add.), of thought as "the heart and soul of the world" such that logic, "the form of thought", "is the perfect form", this being "the general dogma of all philosophy". "Dogma" is used here figuratively as thus suggesting, by analogy with religion, the absolute. Philosophy, that is, is a kind of "new testament" of knowledge, involving "necessary" *rupture* with the older, aboriginal and immediate knowledge abiding within innocent nature, human or other. It is thus of itself, he claims to show, in close association with our notions of evil and disunion or rebellion against an established order. To this its necessary role corresponds the part of Satan or, in the story, the deceiving and yet, it seems conceded, truth-speaking serpent. All this belongs to what Hegel calls the "preliminary notion", to, namely, the "doctrine of the notion" or to logic and the science thereof. Knowledge, indeed, is "the wonderful division of the spirit against itself", breaking with natural innocence as Satan disturbs the harmony of the angels in heaven and is therefore cast out. This though cannot be the last word and so, to "redeem" the situation, Hegel will declare the unity in identity of good and evil, which, he adds, must be maintained without losing sight of their absolute difference. There is no shirking this movement of thought, religion's own best kept secret perhaps. Once disclosed by Hegel it was Nietzsche who carried it forward, as in continuity with developing tradition, rather than reactionaries such as G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis or Etienne Gilson, whom, however, we may prefer to read and who even themselves may attain to the fuller truth, thus "casting out" this Satan who yet must be admitted into the scheme of things. I know of no better expression of this two-sided verdict than the speech of Puddleglum in Lewis's *The Silver Chair* in his Narnia series. Puddleglum thus defeats the witch-serpent with these words:

But four babies playing a game can make a play-world that licks your real world hollow. That's why I'm going to stand by the play-world. I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn't any Narnia.

After this Puddlegum painfully extinguishes, with his bare "marshwiggles" foot, the smoking enchantment the witch, in her assumed loveliness (she is really a serpent), has set going. One might say, though, that this too, such words, corresponds to Hegel's setting of the Idea over Being as itself the final being. The fact remains, however, that philosophy can appear essentially as a "lifting of the hand against God", in Heidegger's word. This, however, Hegel had attempted to show, is mere first appearance, which is the same as to say that it is indeed a moment, but only a moment, to be overcome, in the scheme of things where the Idea is necessarily, or by logic, "its own result". Hegel indeed had earlier cast Satan as a fourth Trinitarian person, thus recognising the moment of truth, but only a moment, in the ancient Persian religion from which the figure of Satan historically derives. Thus he immediately suggests a fifth such person, while remarking: "it is useless to count". *Numeri non ponuntur in divinis* (Aquinas).

This Satanic moment, which was always implicit, is also identifiable, as in the Adam and Eve story, with an abstractly rampant sexuality as a moment, again, that is only fulfilled in the boundlessly delightful love of all and each for all and each as lamb and lion lie down together in a "world without end *amen*", enduring through all the ages past, present or future, the final calm of ecstasy which flesh cannot endure, since thought is its watchword and emblem. Hence death is the entry into spirit, Hegel affirms.

The Mosaic legend of the Fall of Man has preserved an ancient picture representing the origin and consequences of this disunion. The incidents of the legend form the basis of an essential article of the creed, the doctrine of original sin in man and his consequent need of succour. It may be well at the commencement of logic to examine the story which treats of the origin and the bearings of the very knowledge which logic has to discuss.

Note the twofold reference to logic! Philosophy "cannot afford to neglect these popular conceptions", while not allowing herself to "be overawed by religion", as if existing "on sufferance", a situation implicit in the notion, for example, of "Catholic philosophy". In this sense if the absolute religion is perfected in philosophy it does in some sense disappear as having become philosophy. This is the logical outcome of the ecumenical

principle explicitly recognised in Catholicism since the 1964 conciliar "Decree on Ecumenism". As of old, God has a name and yet you cannot name him. As the Idea, in limitless freedom, as spirit, he "will be what he will be", which, that comes down to saying, is nothing because it is everything and yet is only everything because it is nothing or "smaller than small" (as suggested, in effect, by Nicholas of Cusa,).

The Fall-story "exemplifies the universal bearings of knowledge upon the spiritual life". This first wears "the garb of innocence and confiding simplicity" although "the very essence of spirit implies the absorption of this immediate condition in something higher". Who has not discovered this perpetual *Aufhebung*? Yet the spiritual is more revolutionary than developmental in essence, thus opposed frontally to nature in that. It is opposed, that is, as opposing itself constitutively, since it "sunders itself to self-realisation", is in fact this sundering and self-realisation in one, strength of mind as we say. So "the hand that inflicts the wound is also the hand which heals it".

Adam and Eve are "the types of humanity". The tree of knowledge, paired with the tree of life, is itself or as such the tree of knowledge of good and evil specifically, as if there were no other knowledge. As such one shall not eat of it. Yet it is there, as it were waiting, and so, Hegel insists, the eating of its fruit will be no mere tragic mischance. With this Hegel does not deny that it is, so to say, forbidden. Rather, that "is to a certain extent correct" since the "disunion that appears throughout humanity is not a condition to rest in", but quite the reverse. Yet this does not mean that "the natural and immediate harmony" is or ever was "the right state". Childlike innocence only "reminds us of what the spirit must *win for itself*" eventually (my stress), as "the second harmony". Hegel might here be thinking of the Pauline "second Adam". This, though, in line with this whole discourse, would telescope together, as image and far-off object, the first and originating sin with him who was "made sin for us", in words of the earliest Christian and Pauline speculative theology. So, anyhow, he stresses the *becoming* as little children, in Christ's famous words, here. It has nothing or very little to do with a putative remaining always children. A spirit-constituting rupture of harmony must be gone through, whether as sin in particular or some other interim morbidity, under which Hegel might perhaps class the threefold temptation of Christ as imagined in the Gospel or even the three day separation, at the age of twelve, from his anxious parents in Jerusalem, while taking the heaven-sent chance, as we say, to interrogate the nation's "spiritual" and/or political leaders



So Hegel sets the stage. The eating of the fruit, the arch-sin as it is put as being, is the birth of properly spiritual life, typically the birth in shame of the finally godlike or infinite self-consciousness partaken of fully by each one in the new kingdom, as such or in sacrament. "Where each receives a thousand receive". This later transfiguration, necessarily, in Hegel's scheme, as is not mentioned here but which he alludes to elsewhere, takes place through one man's mediation, dying for or in place of each person individually and wholly, this being the treading down of the serpent's head, as it is here "foretold", the promise in the curse, so that he must henceforth creep on the ground, as if that were not already the descriptive force of his name (in all our translations at least, making of this a "just so" or Kiplingesque story, as to how the serpent became *serpens*). This mediator, called the *woman's* "seed", which is thus, in the text, she herself (*Gen. 3, 15: semen illius: ipsa*), a second Eve to match the second Adam, as the later Mariology will begin its as yet unfinished development. This, again, is the blessing pairing the curse here mentioned of expulsion from paradise into our world of labour and sweat and painful child-bearing, this though even in itself a reverse face of joy that a new vessel of spirit is born (cf. *John 16, 21*). We have later to investigate this further and how Hegel's thinking derives it from consideration of spiritual exigency. I think too that it is because of such necessity, obscurely recognised, that what can otherwise seem like magical prophecies are found in our most hallowed books, as indeed nature's own movements, from which likenesses are regularly taken by spiritual doctors or great thinkers generally. Such a necessity was expressed in a belief that one individual must come to right wrongs, thus losing his individuality as abstractly considered, and, after that, that he will, therefore, "come again" and so on, a belief that slowly removes the temporal element from such be-coming, "new every morning". The solution is near to hand, rather. Only "harden not your hearts... today... if you shall hear his voice".

Regarding this shame we mentioned that the story highlights, Hegel remarks that the sense of it is evidence of "the separation of man from his natural and sensuous life", placing him above the beasts rather than illustrating a sense of sin in the more Augustinian sense. Culturally, under the weight of this consideration, the passion of shame modulates into the virtue of modesty, though this evokes in turn, maybe, a joyous exhibitionism or letting down of hair on occasion, as we say. Scripture shows this openness to such play in the tale it tells of King David's wife Michal, who lost the chance of motherhood through her prissiness about this, poor girl. David had cavorted publicly and shamelessly before the "ark of the Lord", thus embarrassing her.

The serpent, however, as tempter, gives the outward solicitation, Hegel notes, though it remains true that “the step into opposition, the awakening of consciousness, follows from the very nature of man” or woman in the first place here. Her being seduced, that is, both comes and does not come from without, and it is rather simplistic of Sartre to call this “bad faith” simply. As “Mrs. Hughes” says in the *Downton Abbey* television series, “I thought you would never ask”: i.e. she was waiting for it, the marriage proposal, and quite naturally. Thus too the doctor solicits nature's own self-healing, the teacher the pupil's self-tuition. So we are tempted by our surroundings, our colleagues, as already having “fallen”.

The serpent, Hegel says, “represents likeness to God as consisting in the knowledge of good and evil”. This likeness, that is, and not evil, is his first concern. Yet “it is just this knowledge in which man participates when he breaks with the unity of his instinctive being”, understanding now, or beginning to, where babies come from, as you might say. For the attempts of religious apologists to avoid an easy but depressing misreading of the first sin as sexual often go too far in the opposite direction. What other form could the new self-consciousness take than awareness of one's physical involvement thus in humanity as such, in an essentially reproducing form? “Stand back”, Adam shouts at his wife, in one comical retelling of this scene of disharmony: “I don't know how big this thing gets”. It is the intimacy of it, of the knowing as such, that is overwhelming, though Hegel does not dwell much upon that here. That indeed is the first figuring of the spirit as essentially love, which is the truth, I in you and you in me or, universally taken, I in them and they in me, I being itself (myself) the “universal of universals”, says Hegel. There is no escaping “the mixing of amorousness with religion” (Newman) and therefore with philosophy, as Plato abundantly illustrates but which celibates such as Newman easily tend to deprecate.

Finally, after the curse, God says: “Behold, Adam has become as one of us, to know good and evil.” So knowledge “is now spoken of as divine, and not, as before, as something wrong and forbidden”. One might think that this implies that such knowledge of evil is itself good but Hegel does not draw this conclusion directly. His deeper view is that of an eventual identity of good and evil, which he can accordingly speak of elsewhere as having to be understood as being found even in God, though he apologises for a saying seemingly so “un-spiritual” and hard to grasp (*Phenomenology of Mind*, VII). So what he says here is that these words (of God)

contain a confutation of the idle talk that philosophy pertains only to the finitude of the mind. Philosophy is knowledge, and it is through knowledge that man first realises his original vocation, to be the image of God.

The expulsion from the Garden with its tree of life, accordingly, “only means that on his natural side certainly man is finite and mortal, but in knowledge infinite”. One is expelled from what one never had. In that very expulsion, however, lies a promise, whether of story or of reason, for which, as for science, “the world” (McTaggart), must be object as of right, such that the rational subject or consciousness must know it “as itself”. This is the world’s rationality, which belongs with it as does water with washing the fur (Frege). One may object that Frege, as a nineteenth century intelligence merely, had never heard of “dry cleaning”, yet his philosophical intention here clearly lies beyond both his century and his choice of metaphors, as it does beyond any unknowable “thing in itself”. In saying “only”, above, Hegel would exorcise the irrational spectre of a total depravity extending even to that rational nature which is indeed “ours”, all the same. “I have said you are gods, but you shall die like men”, as one *Psalm of David* puts it. So, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him?” Thus God, in the story, will reason with Job, as he would not with one totally depraved in his nature. So Bede, commenting, will speak of the “wounds” only of original sin, wounds being, albeit incidentally to Bede’s main purpose perhaps, a limiting concept. What is but wounded yet lives. That Hegel speaks here of man’s “natural *side*” (my stress), contrary to his more usual holism, can be taken to imply a conceptual dominance or “raising” of spirit in which the dualistically natural is quite absorbed. Thus “spirit necessarily appears in time so long as it does not grasp its pure notion”. It, as Paul puts it, “is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body”, implying, in view of time’s conceptual annulment, the warrior-king’s “I shall not die but live”. Thus religion and philosophy have indeed the same content. This is matter for faith in that it cannot be represented, which is precisely the *conceptual* link between religion and philosophy, while, if we would reflect, we would see that this is the mark of art too, that the presented object, of painting or music, to be art, must be simultaneously a presenting of what cannot be re-presented merely, of a *spiritual* element, as of rational system, manifesting what is in nature essentially concealed.

We must anyhow “give up”, Hegel declares, the representing of original sin as “consequent upon an accidental act of the first man”:

Adam lay ibounden,  
 Bounden in a bond.  
 Four thousand winter,  
 Thought he not too long.  
 And all was for an apple,  
 An apple that he took,

As clerkes finden  
 Written in a book.  
 Blessed be the time  
 That apple taken was.  
 Therefore we mun singen  
*Deo gratias!*

The blessedness of the time is the denial of its contingency. “For the very notion of spirit shows that man is evil by nature, and it is an error to imagine that he could ever be otherwise”, unless, possibly by some “preternatural” gift or gifts, lost by “the Fall” (freedom from death, ignorance, concupiscence, etc.). Hegel does not refer to this tradition, however, except as perhaps included under this erroneous imagining he speaks of. Or, one must say, the poetic presentations of Chesterton or C.S. Lewis merely re-present the original presentation as pictured, while to say “a new species sinned itself into existence” is but to tarry with pictured or “realist” history while falling short of its dialectical character as finite object contained within the Concept whose only true or proportionate object is itself in self-consciousness, the object, that is, as subject or, hence, conversely. Thus to “tarry with the concept” means, for Hegel, to tarry with nothing else. Thus, one may say, if one likes, that religion is raised, raises itself, he rather means, to its own conceptual self-transcendence by its own indwelling spirit. Nor does anything else impel the artist to ever-new production, transcending the old. “Behold I make all things new.” Thus time is the very *representation* of spirit.

The evil, Hegel surely means, all the same, consists in man's finitude, ultimately a non-being, an “ideality” of (our) mind, as is worked out in Hegel's logic. It is due to this ideality that evil can be identified with good in his thought, since the finite is merely a moment (ideal) of the infinite, without which, in logic, the latter would itself be finite too. Thus, in only seeming contradiction, he elsewhere denominates evil as “a sham existence”, existence being anyhow a finite category (of Essence), however. Thus it is that being and nothing as together identified yield becoming as of development as a whole, thought's own very method.

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“To such extent as man is and acts like a creature of nature, his whole behaviour is what it ought not to be. For the spirit it is a duty to be free, and to realise itself by its own act”. Such thoughts must have been in the air then and there. “Give me the strength to conquer myself”, writes Beethoven in his diaries, adding “Nothing must bind me to life”, that

comedy soon to be finished, for him, for all. Yet Hegel hovers between “is” and “acts like”, between the phenomenon of being and the being of the phenomenon, in Sartre’s apt characterisation of the contingent as such, which “ought not to be” except as this vanishing or temporal seeming or “shining”. This is all in some at least phenomenal contrast with the Christian figure of a certain making solid and permanent of what thus becomes a spiritual body, in a heavenly light, and so on. For Hegel light is “nature’s first ideality”, a pregnant phrase indeed, pulling together what we have drawn apart, logic and nature, namely. Thus Blake drew his resurrected bodies as lacking the organs of generation, this though being a positive theological point about eternity or, equally, about generation, as integral to what becomes a whole body of delight, fecundity itself, restricted to no special organ. Thus for Milton love among the angels was a total passing into one another in place of merely local penetration. Meanwhile, Hegel says, our *whole* behaviour is “what it ought not to be”. That would seem to be characterising behaviour as such, however, inasmuch as behaviour is a limited concept. There is, therefore, no contrasting good behaviour. Contemplation is not behaviour, but “letting being be” (Heidegger). It is a finitude in the philosopher that he writes books, or speaks. Spirit must rise above all this, must “use the world as though it (we) used it not” meanwhile, in St. Paul’s apt words. Meanwhile? “What is this little while?” – the disciples ask themselves this on that last evening with the one shortly to be removed from sight, who yet says, “a little while and you shall see me” again. The phrase could refer to time itself. Seeing here though is assimilated to knowing. Literal seeing is phenomenal, ideal, belongs to the finite, like light, though in calling it “ideal” Hegel had seemed to indicate a gleam of spirit from the beginning, a union in disunion of nature and “the Word”. Here we have the backwards and forwards of reflection, the bending into circular return of what only seems to be an arrow, time itself not returning but self-cancelling in this return. Nature is thus for man “only the starting-point” as itself that “which he has to transform”.

So, Hegel concludes, “the theological doctrine of original sin is a profound truth”, transcending the ideal of “modern enlightenment”. It means that man is not “naturally good”. Yet this evil, this leaving of “the path of mere natural being” is itself a transcending of nature. This “schism” though “is not the final goal of men”, though “the whole finite action of thought and will” brings him to it, while he “pursues ends of his own”. Under this, as evil, Hegel therefore includes that natural end of infinite happiness which Aquinas and others argue determines every action, whether good or bad, but from which they conclude that there is no

absolute evil, as even Milton's Satan later exclaimed: "Evil, be thou my good". This though is a *moment* of the Hegelian identification, for sure. In every sin a good is sought, but in disorder, irrationally, ran the traditional teaching. Sin was thus disorder, while for Hegel it is the emerging from merely natural being, itself a mere shadow, in that sense in which nature is opposed to reason or self-movement. More fundamentally, "sin" in fact must denote a *natural evil*, as the ascent to knowledge is presented in the Eden story. By this though, Hegel reasons, evil becomes "the same as good". Yet no murderer has eternal life dwelling within him, we read, but, like Cain, must go through long purification, while marked, however, with divine and hence absolute condemnation. This mark is his as it may be mine. It, he, having "grown up", is no longer nature's. He had rather not been born. Yet as a living spirit he was not born, is "before Abraham", known to God or absolutely, not contingent. Hence Hegel stresses the distinctive Christian doctrine of (mutual) pardon, forgiveness as leading into "revealed religion". In the spirit the spiritual being is divine, is God, "partaker(s) of the divine nature", as the liturgy has it. In this sense "if I were not then God would not be" and conversely (Eckhart, a major Hegelian source). In religious terms, "I have loved thee from before the foundations of the world". This is "deep calling to deep", *cor ad cor loquitur*, philosophy's first intuition, the "know thyself" of Socrates one with the latter-day *cogito*.

Man's natural evil, Hegel sums up, "is to be subjective". Self-consciousness, as completing human development in Hegel's eyes, is no longer a consciousness in the subjective sense but, rather, subjectivity itself or as such. In this sense the absolute is the absolute idea (*Enc.* 212) and conversely. Thus the delaying amongst abstract objectivities is man's finite or naturally evil subjectivity, to which therefore the anti-philosophy called "realism", in the "materialist" but not the Platonic sense, belongs. We are, so to say, responsible for our opinions, as can be seen once the divorce between theory and praxis is conceptually overcome.

This "natural wickedness of man", Hegel goes on, is contrary to his own spirit within him, which the animals lack<sup>11</sup>. As natural it is what he wills, what he does, therefore. In itself it is his "judgment", here and now, as preferring darkness to light. By it, also, "the natural man as such is an individual". This means we are *all* involved in this disharmony. Man, of himself, seems to be a kind of monster, though only from the point of view of nature, in that "he wills to be an individual simply", something not usually seen as monstrous. Against this there "steps in the law or general

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. note 7, above.