

## DIALECTICAL CRITIQUE OF THE HEGELIAN SYSTEM

DIALECTICAL CRITIQUE  
OF  
THE HEGELIAN SYSTEM:  
ABSOLUTE SPIRIT AND THE RELATION OF RELIGION,  
THE STATE AND PHILOSOPHY

By  
CHARLES P. RODGER, B.A.

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AUTHOR:        Charles P. Rodger, B.A. (University of Alberta)

SUPERVISOR:    Professor Samuel Ajzenstat

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## Abstract

Starting from the presupposition, common in some circles of Continental philosophy, that Hegel's system is unsurpassed and yet to be overcome, this thesis attempts to formulate an immanent dialectical critique of that system. As such, the thesis is not an attempt to simply disprove Hegel, but rather show how, on its own ground, Hegel's system is forced to transcend itself in a movement that, at least in principle, is also capable of comprehending Hegel's philosophical system, as well as subsequent history and philosophy. The first three chapters of the thesis lay out Hegel's philosophical position by means of a detailed examination and exposition of the final sections of Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit and the central category of Hegel's entire system, absolute spirit. Using this as its background and presupposition, the final chapter shows how Hegel's entire philosophical system and the concept of absolute spirit presupposes a stable, concrete relation between religion, the state and philosophy and yet how, due to the very manner in which these three and their relationship is conceived by Hegel, that this relationship is ultimately self-destructive. Consequently this relationship is undermined, but thus so is Hegel's philosophical system and his very concept of absolute spirit. Insofar as this thesis only offers a negative result, it remains merely prefatory. The conclusion thus offers hints at how the final result of the dialectical movement can be seen as also positive by pointing out the similarities of this conclusion to the philosophical position of Emmanuel Levinas, arguing that both he and Hegel need to be overcome in a comprehensive dialectical movement.

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## Table of Contents

<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	viii
Hegel's Works.....	viii
Secondary Sources.....	viii
<b>Editorial Note</b> .....	ix
Method of Citation.....	ix
Translation & Capitalization.....	x
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
Hegel's System of Reconciliation.....	1
Hegel in Our Time.....	3
Knowledge & Truth.....	5
Interpreting Hegel.....	6
The Moments of Absolute Spirit.....	7
Left, Right & Center Hegelianism.....	8
Of Death and Endings.....	10
<b>Organization of the Thesis</b> .....	12
The Exposition of Absolute Spirit.....	12
Critique of Absolute Spirit.....	15
Problems of Exposition, Interpretation & Refutation.....	17
Exposition & Introductions.....	18
Interpretation.....	20
Refutation.....	22

<b>Chapter 1: The Concept of Absolute Spirit</b> .....	26
Truth & the Absolute.....	26
<i>Exposition of §554 of the Philosophy of Spirit</i> .....	29
Substance & Subject.....	29
<b>Chapter II: The Concept of Philosophy as Science</b> .....	37
<i>Exposition of §572-574 of the Philosophy of Spirit</i> .....	38
Art, Religion, Philosophy.....	38
Philosophy & the Sublation of Finite Consciousness.....	43
Phenomenology & Science.....	51
<b>Chapter III: Philosophical Science &amp; Absolute Spirit</b> .....	55
<i>Exposition of §575-577 of the Philosophy of Spirit</i> .....	58
First Syllogism of the System.....	58
Second Syllogism of the System.....	61
Third Syllogism of the System.....	63
<b>Chapter IV: The Relation of Absolute Spirit &amp; Philosophical Science</b> .....	69
Summary.....	69
A.....	74
a.....	74
b.....	76
c.....	78
B.....	80
a.....	80

b.....	83
c.....	86
C.....	95
a.....	97
b.....	102
c.....	114
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>121</b>
The Age of Fragmentation.....	122
The New Hegelians.....	125
Philosophy & the Future.....	128
Religion & Horizontal Transcendence.....	129
Hegel & Levinas.....	130
Beyond Philosophical Science, Beyond Truth.....	131
<b>Selected Bibliography.....</b>	<b>133</b>
Hegel's Works.....	133
Secondary Sources.....	134



## List of Abbreviations

### Hegel's Works

- EL = The Encyclopaedia Logic, with the Züsat: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences with the Züsat
- EN = Hegel's Philosophy of Nature
- ES = The Philosophy of Mind
- HL= Hegel: The Letters
- ILP = Hegel's Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy
- ILH = Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction
- LA = Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art
- LP = Lectures on the History of Philosophy
- LR = Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion
- PR = Elements of the Philosophy of Right
- PS = Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit
- PW = Hegel: Political Writings
- SL = Hegel's Science of Logic

### Secondary Sources

- CCH = The Cambridge Companion to Hegel
- HC = Hegel and His Critics
- HTMS = Hegel's Theory of the Modern State
- RDHT = The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought

## **Editorial Note**

### Method of Citation

Following standard scholarly practice, whenever applicable, all citations of Hegel's works refer to the section number preceded by the symbol '§'. In editions of Hegel's later works, including the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Science as well as the Philosophy of Right, the main sections of the text are often supplemented with *Anmerken* (remarks) and *Zusätze* (lecture notes). For the sake of clarity and convenience, citations of sections are thus followed when applicable either by an 'r.' in the case of remarks or by a 'z.' in the case of the *Zusätze*.

The distinction between these three elements of Hegel's texts is important due to their different functions and origins. The main sections themselves constitute the central arguments in Hegel's philosophical works. On the other hand, the remarks are supplementary material written and added by Hegel himself. Hegel states that he provided these remarks of "a generally more accessible kind to bring abstract concepts closer to the ordinary understanding and the more concrete notions of them."<sup>1</sup> The *Zusätze* are also supplementary material, but these were culled from the written notes of students who had attended Hegel's lectures and were neither written

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<sup>1</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, The Encyclopaedia Logic, with the Zusätze: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze. (trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting and H.S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1991) second preface, p.4.

nor authorized by Hegel himself. Rather, the *Zusätze* were compiled by the editors of Hegel's complete works, published shortly after Hegel's death.<sup>2</sup>

Generally the distinction between the main sections, the remarks and the *Zusätze* has been maintained in English translations of Hegel's works. The one notable exception is William Wallace's translation of Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit.<sup>3</sup> In this particular translation, Hegel's remarks follow directly after the main sections, separated only by a paragraph break. Those wishing to check the citations of this thesis should keep this in mind in order to avoid confusion. I have also felt it necessary to sometimes rework this particular translation when quoting from it. For the most part this was done to maintain terminological consistency with the more recent translations of Hegel's works.

#### Translation & Capitalization

After over a century, many of the problems of translating Hegel's writings into English have been solved, so that by now there is more or less a consensus on

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<sup>2</sup> This is particularly important to keep in mind when reading Hegel's works, since the procedure of Hegel's early editors were, especially by today's standards, often quite dubious. The *Zusätze*, as well as the early editions of Hegel's lectures on religion, art, history and the history of philosophy were patched together from multiple manuscripts, sometimes from entirely different lecture series delivered decades apart, and were published with no indication of the source. Until recently, however, a historical-critical edition of Hegel's complete works in any language was lacking. This difficulty is slowly being overcome through the publication of the Gesammelte Werke being prepared by the Hegel Archiv in Bochum. To the best of my knowledge, however, this project is still ongoing, and in any case an English translation will not be available for some time, if ever. Whenever possible, however, I have tried to utilize a translation that distinguishes between the different lecture series.

<sup>3</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, The Philosophy of Mind. (trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

how to translate Hegel's various terms, and hence a fairly consistent terminology used in English translations of his works. On the other hand, no such consistency has developed in regards to the capitalization of these terms. The reader will find ample evidence of this simply by looking over the various quotations found in this thesis.

Given the character of the German language, where every noun is capitalized, there is a natural tendency on the part of translators to capitalize the English translation of those terms. This tendency, however, not only leads to quite torturous prose where even normal German words are treated as technical terms, but also adds emphasis to words in contexts that the original author never intended. This is all the more tempting when translating Hegel's works, in that his writing can be extraordinarily rigorous. Hegel's system builds on itself, so that the concepts and categories he develops, particularly in his Science of Logic, are then frequently used in the course of his other writings where familiarity with the significance of these terms and concepts is simply presupposed. As a result, there is a tendency on the part of Hegel's translators to capitalize at least some of Hegel's terms. However, since this procedure, if applied with absolute consistency, would be utterly confusing and unseemly in English, translators have tended to be quite arbitrary, choosing to capitalize those terms which are taken by a translator to be of particular significance, while ignoring others.

In the present thesis, on the other hand, I have decided to take the opposite approach, and have avoided capitalizing Hegel's terms altogether, with one very notable exception that I shall discuss momentarily. This was not done merely for the

sake of convenience, however. As was already stated, the tendency of translators to capitalize terms used in German philosophy has the undesirable effect both of adding an emphasis to certain words which was never intended by the author, as well as of creating rather cumbersome prose by treating every word as though it had some special technical significance not conveyed in everyday language. In the case of most authors this would be a minor inconvenience, but given everything that was said about Hegel's strict and technical vocabulary, would this not be an advantage? Rather, I would argue, this tendency is not only a distortion of Hegel's texts, but amounts to a betrayal and condemnation of Hegel's philosophical system.

Given the notorious difficulty of Hegel's works, his declaration that he wanted "to teach philosophy to speak German"<sup>4</sup> has often been treated rather ironically. At the very least, it is taken as obvious that Hegel simply failed in this task. This is, however, to ignore Hegel's own statements in the preface to his Phenomenology of Spirit concerning the difficulties inherent in reading philosophical texts.<sup>5</sup> Hegel's point was not that philosophy can or should be easy to read, nor that it should even *try* to speak in the manner of everyday speech,<sup>6</sup> but only that this difficulty should be due to the peculiar method of presentation appropriate to philosophy, rather than from

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<sup>4</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, Hegel: The Letters, trans. C. Butler, Christiane Seiler. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p.107

<sup>5</sup> See G.W.F. Hegel, Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, (trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), §63, 64 and 66.

<sup>6</sup> Indeed, mixing the normal manner speech of the 'understanding', what he calls the ratiocinative method, with the manner of exposition proper to philosophy, which he calls the speculative method, is a particularly dangerous error in philosophy.

unnecessary confusion due to the use of a specialized vocabulary whose sense is foreign to the language of ordinary consciousness.

Hegel's assertion that philosophy can and should be expressed in the language of everyday consciousness is integrally related to his philosophical position. Since, according to Hegel, reason or the logos penetrates everything including language, these same logical categories cannot be something simply alien to everyday consciousness, but rather should already for the most part be present and manifest in everyday life and language.<sup>7</sup> Thus the tendency to capitalize terms in Hegel as though they were supposed to portray some kind of peculiar and alien meaning is not merely a minor inconvenience or distortion, but amounts to a betrayal and condemnation of Hegel's philosophical position insofar as it suggests that these terms have some special significance that could only properly be conveyed in German. This might have been Heidegger's position, but it was certainly not Hegel's.

Consequently, the following thesis avoids capitalization of philosophical terminology altogether, with the single exception of the word 'Truth'. This exception

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<sup>7</sup> This interpretation is confirmed by Rosenkranz. See G.W.F. Hegel, System of Ethical Life and First Philosophy of Spirit. (Trans. H.S. Harris and T.M. Knox. New York: State University of New York Press, Albany, 1979), p.256-259. This is not to say that every term in Hegel's philosophy can be translated with a perfect one-to-one correspondence, or that we will never have to resort to foreign terms or neologisms, but only suggests that philosophy deals with universal concepts which for the most part come to expression in all languages, and that whenever possible we should resort to those terms already found in our native tongue so as to avoid unnecessary confusion by treating these terms as alien abstractions.

is justified by the fact that the distinction between 'truth' and 'Truth' is already common in English.

## Introduction

This thesis attempts to offer an immanent dialectical critique of the Hegelian system, particularly through a consideration of Hegel's concept<sup>1</sup> of absolute spirit. More specifically, this thesis develops its critique through the consideration and analysis of the relation of religion, the state and philosophy (or philosophical science) in the context of Hegel's system and his conception of absolute spirit. If, however, the attempt of this thesis is to offer a refutation of the Hegelian system, it also attempts to do this in a very Hegelian manner and in a way that hopes to both show the problems and limitations of Hegel's system as well as to open up at least the possibility of ultimately vindicating Hegel by including Hegel's system in a still greater movement. This critique is thus a dialectical critique. Before proceeding on this line of inquiry, however, it might be best to address certain external considerations which may also serve to throw into relief the questions and problems to be considered here.

### Hegel's System of Reconciliation

Hegel's philosophical system can perhaps best be characterized as a heroic attempt to reconcile the absolute, the unconditional, or the Truth in the grand sense of the word with the finite and (merely) human. He attempts to achieve this not by ignoring or denying the finitude of human existence and the world. Hegel is no pre-modern. But neither does he deny the absolute. The Truth is for him no

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<sup>1</sup> Or perhaps, more appropriately idea.



plurality of language games, no endless play of masks and perspectives. Hegel is no postmodernist either.

If Hegel rejects perspectivalism and relativism, he, therefore does not do this by simply ignoring different perspectives, or by reducing the absolute to the finite. Instead, he understands the Truth as a self-manifesting process, a development in which the various finite perspectives of consciousness constitute a series of steps in which the Truth manifests itself and by which the Truth comprehends itself more and more adequately. The *finitude* of consciousness rests on the fact that it still sees the Truth as something simply outside of itself and beyond subjectivity. But so long as consciousness fails to recognize itself as partaking in the process by which the Truth is realized, the Truth itself is not yet fully realized.

According to Hegel, Truth is fully realized and the finitude of consciousness is overcome in his own philosophical system. This is achieved first in his Phenomenology of Spirit as the raising of consciousness to the level of philosophical science by demonstrating that the various perspectives constitute a chain up to the point where consciousness knows its own perspective to be that of the absolute, or of the Truth itself. Second, Truth, from this final overarching perspective is realized by showing how the immanent movement of thought and Truth is not indifferent to the world and finitude but is rather realized in and through it. Hegel's system is thus comprised of the philosophy of logic as the presentation of that pure thought, of the philosophy of nature, a sphere roughly

coinciding with the materials of the natural sciences, and the philosophy of spirit, which treats of the human beings in their psychological, social, political and cultural development. The whole system ends with philosophy, which has comprehended itself in and as the self-cognition of the Truth. This Truth, this grand reconciliation, is what Hegel calls absolute spirit.

### Hegel in our Time

It must be admitted that our time is hardly congenial to Hegel's philosophy of reconciliation. Whether it be valorized or criticized, our age "is characterized by a fragmentation that is all-pervasive."<sup>2</sup> It has thus been remarked more than once that, given his sensitivity to history and his insistence that finitude was not indifferent to Truth, Hegel himself could not today be a Hegelian.<sup>3</sup> When not dismissed as the work of a charlatan, Hegel's system of philosophy has thus been taken as the highpoint of modernism, as the last great metaphysical system and as marking the end of modernism and metaphysics. Indeed, Hegel has not infrequently been taken as the epitome of all that needs to be overcome and criticized in modernism and western thought. His system with its comprehensive circle has made him a prime target for the charges of logocentrism, anthropocentrism, phallogocentrism, in other words, of centrism in its many forms.

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<sup>2</sup> Emil Fackenheim, Religious Dimensions in Hegel's Thought. (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1967), p. 235. Hereafter RDHT.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ibid*, p.224.

But yet Hegel has proved himself remarkably resilient in the face of criticism. Many of the most significant philosophers in the past hundred years, at least in the Continental tradition, have felt it necessary to confront Hegel and his system. Of the Analytic tradition, on the other hand, it may at least be said that its founders, Russell and Moore, founded that tradition precisely on a rejection of the then current 'Hegelianism' of the British Idealists.

The fact that philosophers still consider it necessary to refute Hegel is by far the best demonstration that Hegel's system remains, if not a live possibility, at least a constant challenge to philosophy. Indeed, as William Desmond writes "[t]he fact that Hegel *needs* to be *repeatedly* 'refuted' makes one suspect that he is not being 'refuted' at all... It is not so easy to put Hegel in his place."<sup>4</sup> This same sentiment has indeed been expressed by two of Hegel's more recent and prominent critics, Foucault and Derrida, both of whom worry that perhaps Hegel's system is ultimately inescapable.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> William Desmond, ed. Hegel and His Critics. (New York: State University of New York, Albany, 1989), p.viii. Hereafter HC.

<sup>5</sup> Foucault: "But truly to escape Hegel involves an exact appreciation of the price we have to pay to detach ourselves from him. It assumes that we are aware of the extent to which Hegel, insidiously perhaps, is close to us; it implies a knowledge, in that which permits us to think against Hegel, of that which remains Hegelian. We have to determine the extent to which our anti-Hegelianism is possibly one of his tricks directed against us, at the end of which he stands, motionless, waiting for us." (Michel Foucault, The Archeology of Knowledge. (trans. Rupert Sawyer. New York: Pantheon Books, 1971), p. 234 ) Derrida: "We will never be finished with the reading or rereading of Hegel and, in a certain way, I do nothing other than to explain myself on this point."(Jacques Derrida, Positions. (trans. Allen Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p.77).

### Knowledge & Truth

The problem with either ignoring or refuting Hegel's system can be seen as issuing from the characterization of Hegel's system given above. The reconciliation of the absolute and finitude presupposes that the Truth or the absolute is not something merely above or outside the finite, but rather realized within it. This is, as Hegel readily admits, a strange and indeed the *inverse* view of everyday or finite consciousness. Every form of finite consciousness presupposes a gap or difference between subject and object; Truth and knowledge.

Hegel's charge is that any position other than his own, which is to say any 'finite' position or shape of consciousness that distinguishes its own consciousness and knowledge from the Truth as an object over and against it, has already transcended that position. In other words, in positing a limit, we already overstep that limit. I cannot delimit my knowledge except by stating that which lies outside my knowledge, but *in* stating that which supposedly belongs beyond the limits of my knowledge I have already transcended this limit and shown that it does *not* in fact lie beyond my knowledge.

Hegel therefore attempts in his Phenomenology of Spirit to demonstrate how all the different form of finite consciousness actually constitute a chain and

an immanently successive progression by which his own position is attained.<sup>6</sup> The fear of the likes of Foucault is thus that any attempt to formulate a position other than Hegel's will find itself, in the course of its development and elaboration, simply subsumed as a moment of Hegel's system. The claim that our time, as one of fragmentation, disproves Hegel does nothing to allay this fear. Hegel's system is comprehensive enough to accommodate contingency, so that slipping back into some subordinate form of consciousness is hardly a demonstration of the system's failure.

So long as the demonstration of Hegel's failure remains at the level of a contingent historical event, Hegel cannot be said to have been overcome. To offer a complete and genuine critique of Hegel's system requires that the failure of Hegel's system be demonstrated in its *necessity*, as an immanent critique of Hegel's system and its reconciliation.

#### Interpreting Hegel

And yet it is difficult to offer such a critique, if only because there is such controversy surrounding the interpretation of Hegel's work including and indeed especially regarding Hegel's conception of absolute spirit. There seems to be a certain ambiguity in Hegel's conception of absolute spirit or of Truth.

Truth as conceived by Hegel is not simply a static essence lying beyond human consciousness. As stated, human beings, our existence and our knowledge

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that in this way Hegel discharges his initial presupposition, i.e. that the absolute and finitude are reconciled.

are not something distinct from and outside of the Truth, but rather precisely a part of the Truth, and indeed the very way in which and the site at which the Truth reveals, unveils and fulfills itself. Nevertheless, this Truth can be considered from two sides; as the fulfillment of a 'divine' logos, or as the achievement of a human community in its self-knowledge.

This seeming ambiguity in Hegel's position is not so simply resolved, as it seems to involve two distinct, and it has been argued *incompatible* concepts of spirit.<sup>7</sup> On the one hand we have what may be called an onto-theological or emanationist, neo-platonic concept of absolute spirit, while on the other hand we have an anthropological and anthropocentric, inter-subjective concept of absolute spirit. In theological terms we might put the dispute in terms of the question as to whether God created humanity, or humanity created God. It is not difficult to see, then, that these two distinct interpretations of absolute spirit echo the break into the left and right Hegelian schools of thought.<sup>8</sup>

#### The Moments of Absolute Spirit

But are these two distinct concepts of absolute spirit really incompatible, unresolved and irresolvable within the confines of the Hegelian system? Robert R. Williams, for example, suggests in his excellent essay, "Hegel's Concept of

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Robert R. Williams enlightening article "Hegel's Concept of *Geist*" in G.W.F. Hegel: Critical Assessments, particularly p.547-8 where he considers the criticisms of Habermas and Michael Theunissen.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Geist", that each of the moments, 'God and humanity', must be understood as independent and yet related through the process of reciprocal recognition.

To draw on the characterization of Hegel's system given above, if Hegel's system attempts to reconcile the absolute and the finite, then the left Hegelian interpretation sees this as achieved by reducing the absolute to the level of the finite, while the right Hegelian interpretation sees this achieved by absorbing the finite in the absolute. What shall be argued in the course of the first three chapters of this thesis, in the line of Williams, is that Hegel's conception of absolute spirit requires that neither term simply be reduced to the other, but that instead both terms must remain in their independence and difference while at the same time also overcoming that difference.

#### Left, Right & Center Hegelianism

Superficially viewed, then, the argument between left and right Hegelians is resolved by recognizing, following what might be typically viewed as a center or middle Hegelian line of thought, that both positions are essentially one sided or partial. The truth of the matter is that absolute spirit in Hegel's system simply comprehends both extremes within itself.

This is, however, a superficial conception of the issues and disputes between the left and right wing Hegelians, for, as the terms themselves suggest,

the dispute was "over social and political as well as theological issues."<sup>9</sup> Left wing Hegelians were politically radical, atheistic and rejected the claim of the right wing that history has reached its real end and actualization, particularly as embodied in the Prussian state. Hegel's system, at least by logical extension so the argument goes, demands the overcoming of religion and the political state of the day. In contrast, the right wing saw Hegel's system as a justification and certification of the finality and Truth of the Protestant religion and the political institutions of the day. All that remained was for this Truth to be recognized as such self-consciously, which "simply required a translation of the existing language of Protestant religious culture... into the language of self-conscious knowledge..."<sup>10</sup>

In opposition to both of these extremes (and thus in terms that sound much more 'Hegelian') center or middle Hegelianism argues that Hegel had grasped the concept of the rational state as to some degree actualized in society, but that much that was still irrational and contingent was to be found in present society, so that this philosophical system actually provided the tools for the criticism and reformation of the state.

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<sup>9</sup> Frederick C. Beiser, ed. The Cambridge Companion to Hegel. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 415. Hereafter CCH. Cf. also Karl Löwith, From Hegel to Nietzsche (trans. David E. Green. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 53: "this division did not result from purely philosophical differences but political and religious ones [also]."

<sup>10</sup> CCH, p.338.



### Of Death & Endings

These are, of course, only brief characterizations of the main lines of interpretation of Hegel's philosophical position as they arose following his death. The central point or problem, if the initial presupposition of this thesis is granted, i.e. that Hegel's system of philosophy is as yet unsurpassed, involves the way in which Hegel's philosophical system is related to and tied to the political and religious culture of Hegel's day. As Hegel himself repeatedly affirms, philosophy is its own time comprehended in thought and a child of its time. Indeed, as we shall see, Hegel affirms a deep and intimate relationship between the religious and political cultural development of an age and its level of philosophical sophistication. Thus, while there is no question that Hegel and his concept of Truth pays due attention and honor to the problem of history, a fact that is evidenced by his claim that philosophy is its own time comprehended in thought, it is also true that Hegel claims for his particular system of philosophy a certain priority or privileged position. While all philosophy is its *own* time comprehended in thought, Hegel's system is the system that itself grasps this Truth and shows how it comprehends the entire development of history. Thus Hegel's philosophy is not simply *a* philosophy or philosophical system, but rather it is philosophy *as science*: not the love of knowing but *actual* knowing.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See G.W.F. Hegel, Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit. (trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), §5 Hereafter PS: "To help bring philosophy closer to the form of Science, to the goal where it can lay aside the

Of course, the finality of the Hegelian system does not preclude the possibility that Hegel's system is open 'in some sense', i.e. open to its augmentation in terms of detail. Indeed, Hegel admits this much in the introduction to his Science of Logic.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, just as the fact that "we may well hope that art will always rise higher and come to perfection"<sup>13</sup> in no way guarantees anything like a real future or significance for art, so neither does the ability to augment Hegel's system of philosophy or develop it in terms of detail guarantee anything genuinely new. Rather, it would seem to exclude it. To use a metaphor Hegel utilizes for the description of his system, one is confined within the circumference of the circle.<sup>14</sup> Hence Foucault's fear that we will find ourselves ever returning to Hegel who awaits us.

In this light, the essence of the dispute over the interpretation between left, right and middle Hegelians involves the question as to whether Hegel's system allows of future historical development. Superficially at least, Hegel's own answer

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title 'love of knowing' and be *actual* knowing - that is what I have set myself to do." We could perhaps point out that Hegel here only claims in the above passage to try to bring us closer to this goal in the above passage, but that is to ignore the title of his 'mature' system, the system of the philosophical sciences, of which the Phenomenology of Spirit constitutes but one part.

<sup>12</sup> "I could not pretend that the method which I follow in this system of logic - or rather which this system in its own self follows - is not capable of greater completeness, of much elaboration in detail..." G.W.F. Hegel, Hegel's Science of Logic. (trans. A.V. Miller. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976), p.54. Hereafter SL.

<sup>13</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art (trans. T.M. Knox. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 103. Hereafter LA.

<sup>14</sup> Hegel famously characterizes his system as "*a circle of circles...*" in SL, p.842.

to this question is ambiguous. On the one hand, we can cite Hegel's famous statement that history has come to an end from his Lectures on the Philosophy of History, while on the other hand we can point out that in that same text Hegel speaks of America as the land of the future. Likewise, Hegel's equally famous statement that philosophy only comes when an age has reached completion, his famous and apparently defeatist saying that "the owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the onset of dusk"<sup>15</sup> have been read as saying that philosophy ushers in a new age. It appears that here, at least, there is no simple, clear-cut exit from the dispute over the interpretation of Hegel, nor any simple way to formulate a refutation of his system.

### **Organization of the Thesis**

#### **The Exposition of Absolute Spirit**

The central problem now to be considered is the question of how to formulate an adequate critique of Hegel's system. This rather long preamble has been given in part to outline the difficulties inherent in such a project. First of all, the point of attack, as already stated, is to be Hegel's concept of absolute spirit. Once again, this is not merely one concept amongst many in Hegel's system, but rather the locus of that system itself; it is the Truth as Hegel conceives it. An explanation of Hegel's concept of absolute spirit and Truth, however, is no simple

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<sup>15</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, Elements of the Philosophy of Right, (trans. H.B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), preface, p.23. Hereafter PR.

matter for, as already indicated, Truth is by no means conceived of by Hegel as some abstract beyond or an external object. In Chapter One, then, by means of an explication of §554 of Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit, Hegel's basic concept of absolute spirit and Truth is drawn out by contrasting Hegel's concept of the Truth with our ordinary usage of the term and then by contrasting Spinoza's concept of the absolute, conceived of as substance, with Hegel's concept of the absolute as spirit. The basic point here is that the Truth is not realized independently of human or finite consciousness, but rather that the absolute is realized in and through that relationship to finite consciousness and through finite consciousness' knowledge of it. In other words, this relationship is reciprocal. Consequently, the sphere of absolute spirit is constituted by the manner in which finite consciousness knows and expresses its knowledge of absolute spirit. This knowledge of the absolute is found in art, religion and philosophy.

The exposition of chapters Two and Three covers the final portion of the chapter 'absolute spirit' covering philosophy.<sup>16</sup> Chapter Two offers an explication of §572-574. In these passages Hegel tries to show how philosophy is the unity of art and religion, which is to say that it corrects the defects and shortcomings of the other modes of the cognition of the absolute while maintaining their insight. Briefly, this defect consists of the fact that the Truth is taken by them as

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<sup>16</sup> These are themselves the final sections of Hegel's philosophical system, at least in so far as one could speak of finality in a system that we shall see constitutes a circle of circles or syllogism of syllogisms.

something simply outside of finite consciousness. As already stated, however, for Hegel the Truth is realized in and through finite consciousness and the Truth is thus not something merely taken up by consciousness or presupposed. Hegel thus argues that philosophy in its very form implicitly overcomes the opposition of consciousness to its object.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, he claims that philosophy also *explicitly* overcomes its opposition to its object and grasps its unity with the absolute by grasping the various modes of finite consciousness and the development of history as the way in which the absolute produces its own knowledge of itself.

Chapter Three continues on with the exposition of §575-577 of the Philosophy of Spirit. In these sections Hegel considers the various parts of his so called "mature system" and their relation, i.e. the relation of logic, nature and spirit. But since philosophy is not merely external to the absolute, but also the absolute's own self-explication, the analysis of the relation of these three parts of the system is also an examination of the way in which absolute spirit is to be understood. §575 can thus be seen as the sort of pan-logist, emanationist concept of absolute spirit spoken of earlier. §576, on the other hand, offers the anthropomorphic and anthropocentric vision of absolute spirit. Both conceptions, however, are deficient and are comprehended in §577 as but one side of the reciprocal recognition wherein, on the one hand, the logos or idea produces the world and determines itself into finitude in order to produce and know itself,

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<sup>17</sup> Insofar as philosophy has as its mode of cognition pure thought which takes thoughts themselves as its object.

while on the other hand finite consciousness raises itself beyond its finitude to comprehend itself in the absolute. These two moments are brought together in the achievement of philosophical science which is at once the self-knowledge and enjoyment of absolute spirit.

### Critique of Absolute Spirit

As stated from the beginning, the central concern of this thesis is to offer an immanent dialectical critique of Hegel's philosophical system and his concept of absolute spirit. The function of the first three chapters is thus to offer the basis and background for this critique through the explication of Hegel's concept of absolute spirit. Chapter Four, on the other hand, attempts to offer the critique of that concept and Hegel's system. It thus begins where Hegel's system of philosophy apparently leaves off, with the unity of absolute spirit and the system of philosophical sciences.

The central claim or argument of this thesis is thus that the unity of absolute spirit and philosophical science cannot be maintained. This is because, as this thesis attempts to demonstrate, the standpoint of philosophy, taken as philosophical science, both requires the continuation of the religious and political culture of which it is a product, while demonstrating the necessity of their destruction. This would seem to beg for a Hegelian sounding solution, by claiming that philosophy can *mediate* between religion and the state. It will thus be necessary to demonstrate how, on Hegel's own grounds, his very conception of religion, the state and philosophy preclude this last possibility as well. But if

philosophical science is unable to maintain its own standpoint, then absolute spirit, or at least Hegel's conception of it, must fall as well.

Because this thesis attempts an immanent critique of Hegel's philosophical system, the material from which the critique is drawn has been taken from Hegel's own writings. However, the critique further attempts to remain immanent by proceeding according to the manner and structure of Hegel's own dialectical method.

Accordingly, the first section of Chapter Four considers the abstract relation of the concepts of religion, the state and philosophy.

The second section considers the relation of religion, the state and philosophy, but in the form of 'determinate self-reflection'. The precise meaning of this last phrase need not be developed here, except to say that religion in this context refers to the Christian religion and its development, the state to the development of the European secular state and that these two taken together culminate in philosophy that raises itself to the level of philosophical science.

The third and final section of this thesis deals with the concrete relation of Hegel's philosophical system to the Protestant religion and the concrete state of Hegel's own time. Just as Hegel's system ends with the threefold syllogisms of logic, nature and spirit, as shall be explained in greater detail in Chapter Three, so here religion, the state and philosophy form a series of syllogisms so that each of the three terms is the middle or mediating term of the other two. The three syllogisms or relations to be considered are that (a) philosophy is related to the

state through religion, but that (b) religion is opposed to the state and its secular consciousness on which side stands philosophy, and how (c) religion and the state are supposed to mediated through and protected from each others pretensions by philosophy. In this last section, however, the attempt shall be made to demonstrate that Hegel's very conception of religion, the state and philosophy, even in their most concrete and developed form, are incapable of sustaining this relationship. As a consequence philosophical science is undermined, but then so is Hegel's conception of absolute spirit, insofar as philosophical science is supposed to be the self-cognition of absolute spirit.

#### Problems of Exposition, Interpretation & Refutation

There are a few problems that would appear to be attached to this plan for the explication, interpretation and finally refutation of Hegel's system.

First of all, in terms of exposition, a substantial portion of the material used in the course of this thesis, particularly in the final section of Chapter Four, is drawn from Hegel's introductions rather than the main texts themselves. This might seem a slightly dubious procedure to follow with some philosophers, but given Hegel's rather famous criticism of introductions and prefaces in his Philosophy of Spirit, it seems downright scandalous.

Second, as noted above, the interpretation of Hegel is a rather contentious issue, so that the question must arise as to how one can claim to formulate a critique of Hegel's system rather than just of one *interpretation* of that system, particularly when that criticism strikes so close to the very divisive and



contentious issues that led to the split of the Hegelian school into left, right and middle Hegelians.

Third, this thesis is said to offer a 'dialectical critique' of Hegel's system of philosophy. This, however, appears to be an oxymoron, since Hegel always insisted that the crux of his method or procedure turned on the fact that the result must not be seen as merely negative but also as positive.<sup>18</sup> Since this thesis can neither provide nor indeed claims to provide such a positive result, this criticism must at least be faced.

#### Exposition & Introductions

First, then, in regards to the manner of the exposition, a good portion of the material in this thesis is, as stated above, drawn from introductions, and what is more introductions to Hegel's lecture series. The latter fact can be justified, at least in part, by the fact that Hegel insisted that his Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences and Philosophy of Right were compendium that were "to receive the necessary commentary only in [his] lectures."<sup>19</sup> The former fact however, requires greater consideration.

Hegel's preface to his Phenomenology of Spirit famously offers a strong criticism of prefatory remarks and introductions in philosophy. This has certainly

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. PS, §79 and G.W.F. Hegel, The Encyclopaedia Logic, with the Zusätze: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze. (trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting and H.S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1991), §79-82. Hereafter EL.

<sup>19</sup> EL, third preface, p.18, see also PR, preface, p.9.

not stopped many from noting with a touch of irony that this same preface has "become one of the most admired and splendid essays in western philosophical literature."<sup>20</sup> Hegel's argument against prefatory and introductory comments, however, stems from the fact philosophy is supposed to demonstrate its content and the necessity of that content. Consequently a preface or introduction can only serve to initially orient a reader and give them an idea of what is to come. The preface does not actually *supply* the conclusions that it intimates, and whose proper place belongs to the exposition itself. Indeed, insofar as the preface or introduction to a philosophical work presents content that it actually fails to demonstrate, it misleads the reader by presupposing that which it should demonstrate. Thus Hegel's argument against prefatory and introductory comments does not deny their usefulness, but only warns against the possibility of their deceptiveness.

The aim of this thesis is to provide an immanent critique of Hegel's system. Consequently, the fact that it brings in evidence from Hegel's introductory comments, far from counting as a defect in its procedure, supports its assertion. If Hegel's system fails to account for this material, and indeed is incapable of doing so, then this points to a defect immanent to the system itself.

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<sup>20</sup> Mitchell Aboulafia, The Self-Winding Circle: A Study of Hegel's System. (St.Louis: W.H. Green, 1982), p. vii.

### Interpretation

The second problem, the question of the legitimacy of the interpretation of Hegel's system is, to some extent, insuperable. The extent of the literature surrounding Hegel and the interpretation of his system is such that few if any could be said to have an exhaustive knowledge of it in its entirety. At any rate, the confines of this thesis would hardly be sufficient space in which to give the full breadth of Hegelian scholarship its due. In the course of the exposition of Chapters One through Three, I have limited my own treatment of Hegelian scholarship to those points where I was conscious of my own interpretation as diverging from the commonly accepted view, or at least as constituting a point of contention. In such places I have merely sought to provide textual evidence that I take to either support my own interpretation or refute the other.

This same procedure, however, is unacceptable in regards to the central argument of this thesis. Insofar as this thesis claims to offer a critique of Hegel's system *as such*, to simply ignore or merely pass over briefly the main currents of the interpretation of Hegel's system would not only be a dramatic scholarly failure, but would also open the entire thesis to the charge that it offers a critique of only a particular, and perhaps distorted, vision of Hegel's system.

And yet the terms, 'left', 'right' and 'middle' Hegelianism are themselves far from definite. Useful though these designations might be, these positions quickly became after Hegel's death not just a matter of interpretation, but rather an "appropriation, reproduction and transformation of the philosophical position

articulated in Hegel's lectures and published texts."<sup>21</sup> Left wing Hegelianism in particular, far from simply interpreting Hegel's texts, sought to extend them beyond, and often in contrary directions to Hegel's own philosophical positions. The fact that the most famous of the left wing Hegelians, Karl Marx, considered himself a pupil of Hegel in no way stopped him from asserting that he had also overcome Hegel by turning the topsy-turvy world of idealism back on its feet.<sup>22</sup> One might even go so far as to claim that this is itself a thoroughly Hegelian position, insofar as Hegel himself asserts that

The latest, the most modern, philosophy must therefore contain in itself the principles of all the previous philosophies and consequently it is the highest one.<sup>23</sup>

But this does not square with the presupposition with which this thesis began, that Hegel's philosophical position is unsurpassed. At the very least it is possible, from Hegel's standpoint, to either deny that there has been any genuine philosophical work done since Hegel or to charge that all philosophy since Hegel has merely repeated one of the partial positions that Hegel includes in his system. Hegel still requires refutation.

On the other hand, left, right and middle Hegelianism need not be seen as something merely external to his system. Insofar as they constitute interpretations

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<sup>21</sup> CCH, p.379.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. HC, p.73.

<sup>23</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, Hegel's Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy. (trans. T.M. Knox, A.V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p.94. Hereafter ILP.

of Hegel's philosophical system in relation to absolute spirit as well as philosophy's relation to religion and the state, these interpretations of Hegel constitute an ambiguity in Hegel's system. In left wing Hegelianism, philosophy is the simple, immediate negation of religion and the state. In the case of the right wing, on the other hand, religion and the state are simply affirmed, while in the final case of middle Hegelianism, religion and the state are mediated through philosophy. These interpretations are thus the very moments of the dialectical explication of Chapter Four, they coincide with the three sections of that chapter, and their refutation is, at least implicitly, contained in the transition from one section to the next.

#### Refutation

This thesis attempts to offer an immanent dialectical critique of Hegel's system. And yet, as stated above, the crux of Hegel's dialectical method is that the result is never merely negative or critical, but rather that it is also a positive result. Given the constraints of this thesis, it must sadly be limited to demonstrating the negative and hence merely critical side of this dialectical movement. Furthermore, as a consequence one of its most important and most basic presuppositions remains only externally justified, namely the importance and continuing relevance of Hegel today. This thesis does not and cannot claim to have demonstrated that all philosophy since Hegel has failed to surpass him, nor that Hegel's system is even legitimate, that it does not stand in ruins.

Indeed, the apparent subject of this thesis would seem to assert that, as a matter of fact, Hegel's system does fail. But it can be seen otherwise, as an attempt to open up the possibility of a dialectic beyond Hegel, but in such a way that it would ultimately vindicate Hegel by including his system in a movement beyond it. The aim of this thesis is thus to open up the possibility of a dialectical appropriation of history and philosophy since Hegel's own time. And yet this all seems quite self-contradictory, for if the presupposition of this thesis is that Hegel's system is unsurpassed, then how can this same thesis open up the possibility of a dialectic beyond Hegel without admitting that this system has already been surpassed?

The answer to this question lies in the manner in which philosophy is conceived. For Hegel, the aim of philosophy is the Truth, designated as absolute spirit. Since this thesis challenges Hegel's attempt to assert that philosophy as science achieves its identity with absolute spirit, this can be read as saying that Hegel's system fails and that its conception of the Truth is only partial. But then again, it can be taken as saying that the Truth itself is only partial. In this way it can be stated with equal legitimacy that all philosophy since Hegel fails to overcome Hegel insofar as it falls within and is subordinated to the total movement of Hegel's conception of Truth. But then again, it can also be claimed that philosophy is here only conceived in a partial manner, for it is limited to the Truth.

The crux of the matter falls on the fact that Truth is regarded as identity, adequation or presence. This is not to say that Hegel fails to include non-identity, non-presence or indeed falsity in the movement of Truth, but it is to say that this non-identity, non-presence or falsity is subordinated to the movement of Truth. Non-self-presence is either understood as the failure of finitude, mere contingency and untruth, or else as that which has already become True and hence is already subordinated to and circumscribed within the limits of the Truth. Non-self-presence as the directedness towards Truth is thus not articulated and characterized in its positive significance in Hegel's system.

My project, broadly conceived, and for which this thesis essentially constitutes the basis and groundwork, is to understand the movement of philosophy and society following Hegel's time in dialectical terms. This dialectic, however, would have to reveal a movement beyond Truth and self-presence as immanent to philosophy and Truth itself. The problem of course arises as to the status or Truth value of such a movement as well as the question as to how this is to be conceived dialectically. The answer, as I roughly conceive it, is to say that the form of this non-self-presence or the directedness towards Truth is itself comprehensible within the limits of Truth, but only insofar as Truth is recognized as equally comprehended in a movement beyond itself. This concept of absolute spirit, if we still wish to designate it as such, does not find itself in philosophy as knowledge, but rather in the concrete society of wisdom, or in the attempts to

found such a community, and in the thinking, acting and self-directing movement that holds itself in the Truth and also presses beyond it.

As a final note, this thesis may be interpreted as suggesting that Hegel failed to completely comprehend the implications of his own project, so that this thesis attempts to show these implications. This is correct, but only if it is also understood that this failure on Hegel's part is neither a failure of nerve or a simple mistake. Instead, the dialectical intentions of this thesis imply that Hegel could not but fail to grasp the implications of his project, that the ambiguity and ultimate contradictions present in Hegel's system had to be played out in the subsequent movement of history and philosophy, and that only now at the conclusion of this development could these implications be grasped. It presupposes at least the possibility that Hegel's reconciliation of the absolute and the finite can be attained once more.



## Chapter I

### The Concept of Absolute Spirit

#### Truth & The Absolute

For Hegel, the goal of philosophy is knowledge of the truth, and indeed Truth in the most emphatic sense as the unconditional, absolute Truth. In our everyday speech we call a statement true if it agrees with the facts. For example, the statement 'the sky is blue' is true if and only if the sky is indeed blue. Hegel, however, regards this sort of truth as mere 'correctness' and rigorously distinguishes this mere correctness from Truth as such. A correct statement is to be regarded as "the agreement of an object with our representation of it."<sup>24</sup> Hegel, on the other hand, defines Truth as "the agreement of a content with itself"<sup>25</sup>, and also as the unity, identity or "agreement between Concept and reality."<sup>26</sup>

This conception of Truth might seem quite mysterious, or at least alien to our everyday conception of what constitutes the Truth, but as Hegel himself points out, this other conception of truth is also found in everyday speech:

We speak, for instance, of a 'true' friend, and by that we understand one whose way of acting conforms with the concept of friendship<sup>27</sup>.

The problem is that, according to Hegel, everything short of the absolute fails to be adequate to its own concept.

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<sup>24</sup> EL. §24, z. 2.

<sup>25</sup> EL, §24, z. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., see also §213.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. §24, z. 2.

It is not just that reality is inadequate to ideas or concepts, but also that concepts are inadequate to themselves. Concepts themselves can be said to be finite insofar as they refer to other concepts that supposedly lie outside it for their sense.<sup>28</sup>

Everything finite is incomplete and relies on something else, or is in Hegel's terms self-contradictory. Thus, according to Hegel, "[t]he True is the whole"<sup>29</sup> and "the Absolute alone is true, or the truth alone is absolute."<sup>30</sup> So far, then, this seems not so different from the monism of Spinoza, where the one substance as the *causa sui* is the infinite or absolute, conceived only through itself, whereas everything else is an attribute of this one substance or God, and must be conceived through *it*.<sup>31</sup> To equate the position of Hegel with that of

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<sup>28</sup> This is a good part of the reason why Hegel's language often strikes one as so strange. Because a concept is compared not to another, external criterion, but rather to itself, the contradictions implicit in those concepts are expressed by Hegel as the concept's own activity. While everyday consciousness might see this as the anthropomorphization of concepts, Hegel would say that it is the movement of concepts themselves that animates life and nature. Hegel's so-called dialectical 'method' can thus be seen simply as a sustained immanent critique, with the proviso that this critique is never simply negative but rather leads to more comprehensive concepts.

<sup>29</sup> PS, §20. Of course as Hegel goes on to explain and as we shall see in the following exposition, this does not amount to a simple radical monism as might seem suggested by Rosenzweig's use of the term 'all'.

<sup>30</sup> PS, §75.

<sup>31</sup> In regards to the charge of pantheism, it can be noted that Hegel offers much the same defense of Spinoza in the Lectures on the History of Philosophy as of himself in the 'exoteric' comments on §573 of the Philosophy of Spirit. In the course of the present explication, however, I will be skipping over these comments, mostly because I find them singularly unenlightening. Hegel ultimately makes these charges into such straw men that he claims that *no*

Spinoza, however, would be to fail to take note of Hegel's insistence that the Truth is not only substance, but also subject.<sup>32</sup> The Truth is the absolute, but "*The Absolute is Spirit* - this is the supreme definition of the Absolute."<sup>33</sup> According to Hegel then, the Truth is the absolute. If, however, the absolute is spirit, then the Truth, and indeed the absolute Truth, is absolute spirit.

Drawing out the precise meaning and implications of these last statements will require the effort of the next three chapters, or rather the entire thesis. This chapter will thus only offer a preliminary conception of absolute spirit through the explication of §554 of Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit. In the course of this explication it should become clear how absolute spirit differs from mere substance insofar as the Truth is not realized independently of human or finite

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*philosopher* ever held them. To be fair, the charges against Spinoza and Hegel's own philosophical system may well have taken this absurd and unjust form, but the inability of religious consciousness to pinpoint the distinction between its own understanding of God and that of philosophy or even its utter inability to understand the position of philosophy in no way undermines the issue of real interest, namely the question as to whether the position of religion is not substantially distinct from that of philosophy. Indeed, in the course of the present thesis I hope to show that it is precisely the fact that it is impossible for religious consciousness *as such* to grasp the position of philosophy which demonstrably undermines Hegel's claim that religion and philosophy are only distinct in form while identical in content. This claim would seem to support the sort of left wing, atheistic interpretation of Hegel's philosophy, according to which Hegel's religious language and his repeated proclamation that he was a Lutheran was only so-much subterfuge and an attempt on Hegel's part to hide his atheistic commitments from the prying eyes of Prussian censors. I hope to demonstrate, however, that this view is also untenable.

<sup>32</sup> See PS, §17.

<sup>33</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, The Philosophy of Mind. (trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), §384, r. Hereafter ES.

consciousness, but rather in and through that relationship to finite consciousness and through finite consciousness' knowledge of it.

Exposition of §554 of the Philosophy of Spirit

Substance & Subject

[§ 554] Absolute spirit, while it subsists in its self-*identity*, is always also *identity* returning and ever returned into itself: if it is the one and universal substance it is so as a spirit, discerning itself into a *self* and its *knowledge of itself, for which it is* as substance. *Religion*, as this supreme sphere may be in general designated, if it has on one hand to be studied as issuing from the subject and having its home in the subject, must no less be regarded as objectively issuing from the absolute spirit which as spirit is in its community.<sup>34</sup>

In this section Hegel refers to the absolute spirit as "the one and universal substance"<sup>35</sup>, and yet, as already alluded to above, he also writes elsewhere that "everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *substance*, but equally as *subject*."<sup>36</sup> The question then is, what does substance lack, why is it itself not sufficient to be the supreme definition of the absolute?

As explained previously, Hegel's conception of Truth requires that a concept be adequate to itself. All we need to do to understand the inadequacies of the concept of substance, or at least Hegel's concept of substance, is to analyze that concept itself. Now, according to Hegel, substance, taken in itself, is an

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<sup>34</sup> ES, §554.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> PS, §17.

abstract essence that is only indifferently related to its manifold determinations.<sup>37</sup>

In other words, substance at first appears to be a void, for although it contains all determinations and predicates in itself, their otherness is only illusory and unreal.

The absolute grasped as substance is this simple self-identity.

But according to Hegel,<sup>38</sup> substance is *not* simply self-identical and indifferent to the plurality of determinations. Substance *is* substance only by virtue of the fact that these determinations are *its* determinations. Substance and its relation to its determinations must therefore be thought of in three separate moments: (a) as an initial self-identity that merely subsumes all distinctions, (b) as related to those determinations, but merely negatively as what it is not, and (c) as the unity that is restored through the elimination of the distinction of its determinations. Thus this absolute substance is both identical to itself as well as identical in its ever-restored return to its self, for this *activity* is the movement of substance. In order to illustrate the point, we can imagine the entire flux of the universe as a totality that exists in the interplay of forces through which the universe simply manifests its inner unity of laws. These forces are therefore nothing more than the manifestation of natural laws.

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<sup>37</sup> It might perhaps be suggested that Rosenzweig and Levinas have mistaken Hegel's position in claiming that he tries to reduce everything to the All or the Other to the same. This is not without some justice, although their conception of time may ultimately free them from this charge insofar as this is conceived as non-self-presence.

<sup>38</sup> Hegel considers the concept of substance as the absolute in his Science of Logic as well as the Encyclopaedia Logic. Here I am only presenting Hegel's argument in its most basic form.

It might, therefore, appear as though we need not appeal to some subject or some mysterious 'spirit', for substance has already shown itself to be the "*identity* returning and ever returned into itself"<sup>39</sup> spoken of in §554. Hegel, however, as already stated, denies that substance alone is adequate to express the Truth. The defect of substance consists of the fact that substance *is* only in the separation and isolation of its moments. But while substance *is* these moments as the immediate unity that passes over into its determinations and returns to itself, it does not have these moments *for* itself. To return to the previous analogy of the movement of law that manifests itself in appearance as the play of forces, this may be a true representation of the way the universe works, but it is only *there* in this manner for a consciousness to which it appears. Taken in its isolation, this substance is only the flux or process of these moments. In other words, it is the simple endless repetition of the same self-contradiction, what Hegel calls the 'bad infinite'.

As we see in the above example, subjectivity or consciousness overcomes the difficulty of substance. It can do this because it is, in Hegel's terms, negatively self-related. According to Hegel consciousness consists of three moments: first of all consciousness is an inner self-identity; second, consciousness distinguishes itself from itself and posits an object; third, consciousness is the return to unity by

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<sup>39</sup> ES, §554.

overcoming the otherness of the object.<sup>40</sup> Like substance, subjectivity also unfolds and restores its unity, but in doing so, it is also transformed. The reflexivity of consciousness means that my knowledge of the world is also related to my knowledge of myself insofar as I, too, am part of that world. Consciousness is thus not only there in-itself, but also for-itself, or it is self-consciousness.

The absolute must also thus be conceived of as subject, for the externality of the moments of substance must also be comprehended as its own moments or as its being-for-itself. This brings with it, however, its own problems. According to Hegel's conception of consciousness, consciousness presupposes self-consciousness but self-consciousness is only possible as inter-subjectivity.

As pointed out above, consciousness has the moments of (a) a simple inner unity that (b) determines itself, and (c) overcomes that distinction and returns to its unity. Now, insofar as consciousness of an object requires the negative self-relation of consciousness to its object, i.e. insofar as consciousness must distinguish itself from the object in order for there to be an object, then "consciousness of an 'other', of an object in general, is itself necessarily self-consciousness, a reflectedness of itself, consciousness of itself in its otherness."<sup>41</sup> This *immediate* self-consciousness, however, is only immediate self-identity, an I=I, and it is still burdened by the externality and plurality of a content. Indeed,

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. PS, §164: "I, the selfsame being, repel myself from myself; but what is posited as distinct from me, or as unlike me, is immediately, in being so distinguished, not a distinction from me."

<sup>41</sup> PS, §164.

this merely negative relation of self-consciousness to its other is not yet truly a self-consciousness insofar as consciousness, in this negativity, fails to find itself in its object and, because this attempt is only the negation of the object, the loss of the object is also the loss of self-consciousness.

In order for self-consciousness to know itself and return to itself it must find itself in its object and therefore negate the otherness of the object. But if the self-consciousness also requires the object to be sustained, then the object must not simply be negated but rather must "carry out this negation of itself in itself."<sup>42</sup>

While this sounds complex and abstract, it is essentially mundane, for the only object that is negatively self-related is a *self-consciousness*. Thus, according to Hegel, self-consciousness is necessarily inter-subjective: "A self-consciousness exists *for a self-consciousness*. Only so is it in fact self-consciousness."<sup>43</sup> In order for self-consciousness to know what it is, it must recognize itself in its other, but then this relationship must be entirely reciprocal so that

Each sees the *other* do the same as it does; each does itself what it demands of the other, and therefore also does what it does insofar as the other does the same.<sup>44</sup>

This *reciprocal recognition* is the realization of the Truth.

To review, the absolute cannot be simply substance, but must also be subject. However, in order that the absolute be subject and know itself it must find

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<sup>42</sup> PS, §175.

<sup>43</sup> PS, §177.

<sup>44</sup> PS, §182.



itself in its other, or it must posit itself and know itself in an other, in finite subjectivity. Furthermore, since self-consciousness is found only in reciprocal recognition, the self-knowledge of absolute spirit is finite consciousness' knowledge of it. Thus Hegel can claim that

God is only God so far as he knows himself: his self-knowledge is, further, a self-consciousness in man and man's knowledge *of* God, which proceeds to man's self-knowledge *in* God.<sup>45</sup>

Now we can see why in §554 above Hegel designates the whole sphere of absolute spirit as religion. The sphere of absolute spirit, which Hegel divides into art, religion and philosophy, are the ways in which finite human beings express their knowledge of God or the absolute. If the absolute can generally be designated as God, as Hegel sometimes does, then this whole sphere can be understood as the knowledge of God. What distinguishes this position from that of the usual conception of God, however, is that if reciprocal recognition is required for self-consciousness, then the self-consciousness of God is not indifferent to human or finite self-consciousness, for the knowledge of God is also God's knowledge of himself. To follow this line, God creates the world, nature, and must also overcome this difference in order to be not just substance but also subject. Nature thus passes over into or creates finite self-consciousness for whom God exists.

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<sup>45</sup> ES, §564, r.

But now there is a new difficulty. If self-conscious knowledge is reciprocal recognition, so that each must do what the other does, then how can the absolute gain its own absolute self-consciousness? Quite evidently, finite human beings do not create the world of nature. They do, however, create their own substantial existence, a 'second nature' as Hegel calls it,<sup>46</sup> in the world as the ethical life of the community or the state. A community, of course, involves the relation of finite self-conscious individuals to one another, but according to Hegel this relation itself has to be grounded in a shared conception of the highest good, the Truth or the absolute. This shared subjective certainty constitutes the goal that a nation struggles to make objective in its constitution and institutions. But it is *in* this shared inter-subjective drive that consciousness both participates in concert with others and finds itself fulfilled, recognized and manifest. This community is spirit.

And yet, the ground of this activity is precisely the shared conception of the highest good, of the absolute or God, so that the realization of the community is also the manifestation of God in that community. Thus, this relation is so far reciprocal that "[a] nation conceives of God in the same way as it conceives of

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. PR, §4, 151 and 268.

itself and of its relationship to God, so that its religion is also its conception of itself."<sup>47</sup>

At this point, given the use of religious language with its attendant associations, the relation of finite and absolute self-consciousness is not altogether clear, i.e. it is not yet understood *what* finite and absolute self-consciousness know in their reciprocal recognition. For now it can only be stated that the distinction between finite and absolute self-consciousness is only implicitly overcome. The movement of absolute spirit thus consists in the overcoming, or rather sublation, of this distinction, and that it is the process whereby each come to know themselves in the other. This process is carried out in art and religion, but finds its completion in the culmination of philosophy where "[i]n scientific knowledge alone it [i.e. spirit] knows itself as absolute spirit; and this knowledge, or spirit, is its only true existence."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Introduction. (trans. H.B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p.105. Hereafter ILH.

<sup>48</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, vol. 3, (trans. F.C. Beiser. London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p.552. Hereafter LP.

## Chapter II

### The Concept of Philosophy as Science

As Chapter One attempted to explain, the Truth or absolute spirit is attained through reciprocal recognition. This means that absolute spirit only knows itself insofar as it is known by an *other*, i.e. by finite consciousness. But it therefore follows that if the absolute is truly to know itself as absolute spirit, then finite consciousness must also grasp the fact that its knowledge of the absolute is also the absolute's knowledge of itself, as well as the fact that in knowing the absolute it knows itself. In other words, finite human self-consciousness must "proceed to man's self-knowledge *in God*."<sup>49</sup> Finite consciousness must overcome its own finitude.

Now, even in the sphere of absolute spirit, in art and religion where the object of consciousness is the absolute, consciousness is still finite, for they both still understand their object as something that is external to and independent of consciousness and this defect is present in their very form or way of knowing. On the other hand, philosophy, Hegel declares, overcomes this difficulty.

Through an explication of sections 572-574 this chapter will explore the various defects of the other modes of cognition of the absolute, as well as how philosophy overcomes not only these particular forms of finite consciousness, but

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<sup>49</sup> ES, §564, r.

indeed all forms of finite consciousness, grasps its own concept, and raises itself to the point of philosophical science.

Exposition of §572-574 of the Philosophy of Spirit

Art, Religion, Philosophy

[§ 572] This science [philosophy] is the unity of Art and Religion. Whereas the intuitive vantage of Art, external in point of form, is but subjective production and shatters the substantial content into many separate shapes, and whereas Religion, with its separation into parts, opens it out in representation, and mediates what is thus opened out; Philosophy not merely keeps them together to make a totality, but even unifies them into the simple spiritual vision, and then in that raises them to self-knowing thought. This knowing is thus the thinking cognition of the concept of art and religion, in which the diverse elements in the content are recognized as necessary, and this necessity is recognized as free.<sup>50</sup>

Art, religion and philosophy all belong to the sphere of absolute spirit insofar as they are all manners in which the absolute is known by human consciousness. Consequently, it may appear as though the distinction between these three realms is entirely formal, which to a certain degree it is:<sup>51</sup> art, then, presents the absolute in the immediate form of sensuous intuition, religion presents the absolute in the form of representation, and philosophy presents the absolute in the form of thought.

Art presents the absolute as a sensuous object, that is, as an object that appears to our senses. This sensuous object is not an immediate, natural object.

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<sup>50</sup> ES, §572.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. LA, p.101: "Owing to the sameness of content the three realms of absolute spirit differ only in the *forms* in which they bring home to consciousness their object, the Absolute."

Rather, the art object is mediated in the productive and creative activity of the artist. Because it is a mediated object, it can express the absolute. Art thus unites the absolute with finite consciousness in the subject's activity of producing its work. The defect of art, however, consists in its merely sensuous form. Thus art is present as an object, more or less externally taken up, but transformed. Likewise, in the contemplation of art, the object is externally related to the spectator in its contemplation. Moreover, in its attempts to express the absolute, art achieves this only by producing a plurality of works.

Religion knows the absolute in the form of representation or, as *Vorstellung* is sometimes translated in English, 'picture-thinking'. A representation on the one hand presents its object in a sensuous form, but on the other hand the object is supposed to be grasped as presenting a universal content that is *more* than an immediate sensuous existence. The sensuous content of representation is thus to be taken as having a symbolic or allegorical significance.<sup>52</sup> Hegel gives the example of Jesus who is said to be the son of God. As he points out, we clearly recognize that the relationship between God and Christ is not supposed to be taken in its common biological sense, "but is supposed to signify a different relationship, which is something like this one."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, vol. 1, (ed. Peter D. Hodgson. Los Angeles:University of California Press, 1995) p.396-8. Hereafter LR.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.398.

The form of representation also affects the conception of the absolute's relation to finite consciousness. Since religion grasps the absolute in representation, the content once again falls apart into the plurality of sensuous existence, but this plurality is also supposed to be brought together in the unity of the absolute itself. On the one hand, then, the relationship of the content of the absolute is given as "a series of events according to finite reflective categories."<sup>54</sup> Thus God is said to have acted in certain ways at certain times. But on the other hand, in representation the absolute as object is explicitly over and against the subject and counts as something other: the infinite in opposition to its own finitude. God is thus conceived as eternal and unchanging.

And yet, although the subject and the absolute are here explicitly divided insofar as the absolute or God counts as something distinct, the sensuous content as the appearance of the absolute, forms a unity as the *knowledge* by the community of the absolute as the Truth.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, religion contains the further non-sensuous element of ethical demands which, although premised on the division of the subject and the absolute, also demands its overcoming. For example, in Christianity human beings are seen as sinful, and this divides them from God, but they are also supposed to overcome their sinfulness. Religion therefore also manifests this union with God. This is achieved "in the devotion of

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<sup>54</sup> ES, §565.

<sup>55</sup> For example, in the Greek Religion, the plurality of works form themselves into a pantheon of Gods.

worship"<sup>56</sup> of the religious community or the *cultus*. Here consciousness feels itself at home in the absolute.

Thus, while art expresses the absolute as a plurality of shapes, religion expresses this plurality of shapes as brought together and reconciled with the absolute. The defect of religion comes from the fact that the content is not seen in its necessity, so that it arises as something more or less externally given or imposed and other than (merely human) subjectivity.<sup>57</sup> In other words, doctrine is something accepted and immediately taken up, unlike art where consciousness recognizes its own part in the creation and expression of the object. Likewise, the ethical demands and the unity with the absolute are only ever partially and approximately reached. The kingdom of God still stands somewhere in the indefinite future.<sup>58</sup>

Now, according to Hegel, philosophy unites art and religion and overcomes their defects in the form of thought that is both necessary and free. In order to understand this statement properly a short explanation of Hegel's conception of freedom is necessary. Hegel, like Kant, takes freedom to consist not in arbitrariness or the ability to do whatsoever one wishes. Rather, freedom consists in not being externally determined, so that, once again like Kant,

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<sup>56</sup> ES, §565.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. LR, vol. 1, p.247.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. PS, §787.



Freedom consists in rational self-determination. Where Kant and Hegel differ distinctly, however, is in their concept of reason.

Whereas for Kant reason is more or less beyond or at least transcends (mere) appearance, for Hegel the rational is actual. Granted, Hegel rigorously distinguishes between actuality and just *any* mere appearance or existence. Nevertheless, for Hegel the Truth the idea or reason "becomes actual by entering into external existence"<sup>59</sup> and manifesting itself. In other words, whereas for Kant morality is an 'ought' and an infinite task, for Hegel reason or the idea "is not so impotent that it merely ought to be".<sup>60</sup> This does not mean that freedom does not involve laboring on the world or that everything is already brought to perfection, for indeed this is a necessary moment. What it does mean is that, in tarrying with the world, one comes to realize the *limitations* and what was mere fancy and simply false in one's ideals. By recognizing what is *rational* in that world which we had immediately opposed, we recognize that the world is not simply opposed to us and thus recognize ourselves in that world. Thus once again, like Kant, but transposed into the sphere of the political, our freedom under the law is realized by recognizing that our will accords with the law and that the law is rational and necessary.

In the case of art, the content lacks the moment of necessity insofar as it seems to arise from the subject's negation or transformation of the immediate

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<sup>59</sup> PR, preface, p.20.

<sup>60</sup> EL, §6, r.

object. In religion, on the other hand, subjectivity recognizes its own finitude, but does not see how that content has come about or how finite subjectivity participated in its unfolding. Philosophy, on the other hand, overcomes the externality of this content and recognizes that contents rational necessity, finding its freedom thereby. How philosophy achieves this will be explained in the explication of §573 below.

### Philosophy & the Sublation of Finite Consciousness

[§ 573] Philosophy thus characterizes itself as a cognition of the necessity in the *content* of the absolute representation, as also of the necessity in the two *forms - on one hand*, immediate intuition and its *poetry*, and the objective and *external* revelation presupposed by representation - on the other hand, first the subjective retreat inwards, then the subjective movement of *faith* and its final identification with the presupposed object. This cognition is thus the *recognition* of this content and its form; it is the *liberation* from the one-sidedness of these forms, elevation of them into the absolute form, which determines itself to content, remains identical with it, and is in that the cognition of that essential and actual necessity. This movement, which philosophy is, finds itself already accomplished, when at the close it seizes its own concept - i.e. only *looks back* on its knowledge.<sup>61</sup>

In the former section, it might have appeared as though form were simply indifferent to content, so that art, religion and philosophy were essentially the same thing presented in a different manner, but this is not correct. Thus art, says Hegel, "has its future in true religion."<sup>62</sup> Art is so sublated by religion that "for the

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<sup>61</sup> ES, §573.

<sup>62</sup> ES §563. cf. also LA, Vol. 1, p.102: "art has still a limit in itself and therefore passes over into higher forms of consciousness."

religious consciousness art is only one aspect"<sup>63</sup> or moment of religion itself.

Indeed, according to Hegel's 'end of art' thesis, art "is and remains for us a thing of the past."<sup>64</sup> As we shall see in the concluding portion of this thesis, the movement from religion to philosophy is not so clear. Unlike art, which simply passes away into the higher form of religion, religion cannot simply pass away into philosophy. This is because, as knowledge of the absolute, religion is "the form that it must have and retain for the majority of men."<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, philosophy is supposed to remove a defect or opposition which is still present in religion.

In order to understand how art and religion are united in philosophy, it is therefore necessary to understand how their limitation in regards to form is reflected in its presentation of the absolute content and how this leads to and is rectified in the following form.

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<sup>63</sup> LA, vol. 1, p.103. See also LR, vol. 1, p.233-240.

<sup>64</sup> LA, vol. 1, p.11. cf. also p.102-3. As always, Hegel's 'end of' thesis, whether in the case of art or history, should not be understood as meaning that no new art works are ever produced or that nothing ever happens again. What it does mean, at least in the case of art (the question of history is more ambiguous) is that the progress of art from that point on was only a matter of degree rather than essential change. Although this thesis might at first strike us as highly questionable if not downright perverse to us today, Carl Rapp, in his essay "Hegel's Concept of the Dissolution of Art" has argued, I think quite convincingly (if not definitively), that Hegel's concept of art and end of art thesis has "remained in force precisely because it had predicted and accounted for, in advance, all the gestures [that not only Art but also the post-modernist defenders of Art] were capable" (William Marker, ed. Hegel and Aesthetics. New York, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2000), p.28.

<sup>65</sup> LP, vol. 3, p.23.

As explained above, art is present as an immediate sensuous existence. Art, however, overcomes this defect through the progression of the various art-forms culminating in poetry. In poetry, the material of its objective existence is no longer just the sonorous material of music for example. It expresses itself in "sound indeed, but only as a sign in itself without value or content."<sup>66</sup> In this way "art now transcends itself, in that it forsakes the element of a reconciled embodiment of the spirit in sensuous form and passes over from the poetry of the imagination to the prose of thought."<sup>67</sup>

On the other hand, according to Hegel this transition is also achieved in the content of poetry itself, in the German Romantics of his age, the self-conceit of irony and the 'beautiful soul'. The artistic genius no longer takes the objective immediate existence to have any Truth but rather takes itself to be the absolute ego and self-consciousness that takes everything else outside its mere self-identity to be contingent and a nullity so that everything outside of it counts as untrue, for the artistic genius in its creative activity is master of it all. But on the other hand, this negativity is also reflected back into subjectivity itself, for its own actions and situation is likewise null and declared untrue. If this consciousness were to act it would ruin its purity by entering into the world, which it despises. This self-consciousness is therefore ironic about everything, for it stands and judges everything as false, but it is also impotent to change anything. If it recognizes its

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<sup>66</sup> LA, p.89.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

own vanity and vacuity, however, and "feels a craving for the solid and the substantial"<sup>68</sup> then it has become the 'beautiful soul' that yearns to overcome its isolation but, because it refuses to let go of its isolated purity, is incapable of transcending its isolation.

As above, in the discussion of freedom, this endless isolation and yearning is overcome by the subject admitting its own inadequacy and realizing that the Truth is already present in the substantial existence of the community.<sup>69</sup> But the

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p.66.

<sup>69</sup> Hegel's discussion of art in the Lectures on Aesthetics culminates with the discussion of Romantic drama and the breaking of its hard heart in tragedy (see LA, p.1233: "The heart can break and its disposition alter.") This all fits well with the discussion of conscience in the *Phenomenology* (see particularly PS, §668-9). But as a matter of fact, art ends for Hegel not in tragedy but rather comedy. Hegel's comments on this subject are exceedingly brief, particularly in regards to what he takes to be the superior realization of comedy as objective humor. Nevertheless, the characterization that Stephen C. Law is able to draw together is interesting enough to justify its inclusion here: "This resolution is less a product of aesthetic artifice than it is a sheer triumph of the human spirit. Here, we find no gratification of wishes; rather, the comic hero transcends the circumstances. 'Failure' is no catastrophe for this type of hero, merely a mild disappointment, and one easily laughed away. Such a hero is able to take anything in stride, says Hegel, because he is conscious that either his aims or abilities are 'self-contradictory' (*das an sich selber Nichtige*). Thus, the hero never really expects things to turn out the way he wishes, and when they do, he is genuinely surprised. Throughout all this, he maintains a cheerful disposition and refuses to indulge himself in the pessimistic attitudes of a cynic. The Hegelian comic hero is self-autonomous and self-assured; he himself decides what is important and what is not. Indeed, he and he alone is the measure of all things. He is able to do this, not through some supra-human stoic ability, declares Hegel, but precisely because he is granted a spirit that takes nothing too seriously - especially not himself." (Hegel and Aesthetics, p.118) It is interesting to compare this with Hegel's discussion in the preface of the *Phenomenology*, particularly his talk of the negativity of skepticism, the Bacchanalian revel (PS, §47) and the claim that today we must realize that "the share of the total work of Spirit which falls to the

substantial existence of the community that is objective for itself as Truth is *religion*. This can be said because, as stated in Chapter One, "[a] nation conceives of God in the same way as it conceives of itself and of its relationship to God, so that its religion is also its conception of itself."<sup>70</sup>

In religion, and particularly in what Hegel takes to be the highest realization of religion as Lutheran Protestant Christianity, the absolute or God reveals itself, and not only in the creation of the world and as an abstract beyond as God the father, but even more reveals itself as a particular sensuous human being, i.e. as Christ. As a particular sensuous existence, this individual passes away,<sup>71</sup> is sacrificed on the cross, but is resurrected. Moreover, God is resurrected as spirit in the community of believers and in such a manner that this community in its finite activity is no longer external and other to the absolute, for finitude has explicitly become realized as a *moment* of the absolute itself.

To make this last point more tangible; Luther, for example, declared contrary to the Catholic Church that not celibacy and poverty but rather maintaining one's "independence in the face of others"<sup>72</sup> and "supporting life and

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individual can only be very small."(PS, §45). At any rate, as others have already pointed out (cf. William Desmond, Beyond Hegel and Dialectic: Speculation, Cult and Comedy. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992) Chapter 5) Hegel may already have answered the laughter of Bataille and Derrida, and with a laughter perhaps more robust than theirs, which may after all only be irony.

<sup>70</sup> ILH, p.105.

<sup>71</sup> This is why art constitutes a moments, but only a moment of religion, for the immediate and sensuous is only a *moment*.

<sup>72</sup> PS, §644.

the possibility of being useful to others"<sup>73</sup> is the actual duty. In other words, self-interest and particularity are not inherently opposed to moral activity, but rather are a *necessary* moment of morality itself. The important fact to remember, however, is that the end of this activity is not pure self-interest, but rather the Truth and the community and that, on the other hand, as shall be explained in more detail later, the ends of that community is also the individual and freedom.

Now, however, it becomes once again important to see how religion, and even the revealed religion of Christianity, still suffers from an essential defect, for although the Christian (Lutheran) community is aware that the opposition of the finite and infinite or human and divine is overcome, and although this is present in the community as faith and a subjective certainty, it does not yet know this in its Truth. In other words, the reconciliation of the divine and human is only "*implicitly* achieved"<sup>74</sup> in the form of representation so that this peculiar mode of cognition stands out beside the rest of consciousness as the opposition of a contemplative Sunday to the rest of life and the workaday world.<sup>75</sup> In the form of representation, then, this reconciliation is "something in the distant *future*"<sup>76</sup>, a kingdom not yet come.

But how does philosophy bring together religion and art? Hegel states that philosophy is the "cognition of the necessity in the *content* of the absolute

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> PS, §787.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. LR, vol.1, p.92-3.

<sup>76</sup> PS, §787.

representation, as also of the necessity in the two *forms*".<sup>77</sup> The content is the content of religion.<sup>78</sup> The two forms, on the other hand, belong to both art and religion. The first form consists of the fact that in art consciousness knows the absolute through the transformation of the immediate object, while in religion the absolute reveals itself in the world. The second form consists of the inner submersion of the beautiful soul that takes itself to be the absolute, as well as the religious consciousness that finds itself at home in faith or its knowledge of God in the cultus.<sup>79</sup> Philosophy aims to bring these two sides together, so that the activity of consciousness is at once the revelation or self-externalization of the absolute and the knowledge of the self is at once the self-knowledge of the absolute.

Philosophy, however, can only achieve this standpoint at its conclusion. First of all, as Hegel repeatedly insists, philosophy is a "*thinking consideration of objects*."<sup>80</sup> But Hegel also asserts that the content of art and religion, and indeed all human cognition, is neither impervious to nor simply other than thought. The distinction between philosophy and other forms of cognition consists in the fact that, whereas in the other modes of cognition the object is always taken up more or less externally so that it is already demarcated and presupposed, philosophy

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<sup>77</sup> ES, §573.

<sup>78</sup> Compare Hegel's statement here to his assertion in the Phenomenology of Spirit, §796: "in religion it won for consciousness the absolute content *as content*."

<sup>79</sup> Compare PS, §795.

<sup>80</sup> EL, §2.



must produce and demonstrate its object from out of itself, i.e. from out of thought.

At first, however, the assertion that thought penetrates everything and indeed comprehends the absolute itself is merely a dogmatic presupposition. Its claim to know the Truth or the absolute is nothing more than an assertion, and philosophy is therefore confronted with equal right by all the other modes of cognition or shapes of consciousness that equally claim to grasp the Truth in their own specific manner and form. Philosophy actually achieves the standpoint of science, and *only* actually achieves it, when it demonstrates the necessity of its own standpoint by showing that its own standpoint both results from and comprehends the entire sphere of finite consciousness.<sup>81</sup> Philosophy does this by showing how every other shape of consciousness, as a conception of knowledge, is finite, limited and, on its own basis and in the course of its own experience, transcends itself. On the one hand, then, philosophy presupposes the entire progress of history and culture, but on the other hand it already implicitly contains these insofar as "[t]he series of configurations which consciousness goes through along this road is, in reality, the detailed history of the *education* of consciousness

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<sup>81</sup> "The necessary progression and interconnection of the forms of the unreal consciousness will by itself bring to pass the *completion* of the series." (PS, §79).

itself to the standpoint of Science."<sup>82</sup> Thus philosophy only 'looks back on its knowledge.' This is the project of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit.

### Phenomenology & Science

[§ 574] This concept of philosophy is the *self-thinking Idea*, the self-knowing truth (§ 236) - the logical system, but with the signification that it is universality *approved and certified* in concrete content as in its actuality. In this way the science has gone back to its beginning: its *result* is the logical system but as a *spiritual* principle: out of the presupposing judgment, in which the Concept was only *in-itself* and the beginning an immediate - and thus out of the *appearance* which it had there - it has risen into its pure principle and thus also into its proper medium.<sup>83</sup>

The previous assertion, that Hegel is here speaking of the Phenomenology of Spirit, will no doubt appear contentious to some, particularly given the controversies surrounding the relation of the Phenomenology of Spirit to the system of philosophical sciences.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, this interpretation is further confirmed when we compare the above section to certain other passages from the Phenomenology of Spirit itself and the introduction to the Science of Logic.

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<sup>82</sup> PS, §78.

<sup>83</sup> ES, §574.

<sup>84</sup> There is an ongoing controversy surrounding the relation of the Phenomenology of Spirit to the so-called mature system of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences. The issue is yet to be satisfactorily resolved, and I shall not attempt to enter into that debate here except to argue that Hegel's ringing endorsement of the Phenomenology of Spirit, *in its entirety*, in the introduction to the 1831 edition of the Science of Logic makes untenable the argument that the Phenomenology of Spirit was ultimately rejected by its author. As Forester has adequately shown, the textual evidence given in support of this position is so extremely weak and based on a very tendentious reading of some rather ambiguous material. See Michael N. Forester, Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) chapters 18 & 19.

In the preface to the Phenomenology of Spirit, Hegel remarks that the 'method' of the Phenomenology of Spirit "is logic. For the method is nothing but the structure set forth in its pure essentiality."<sup>85</sup> Likewise in the Science of Logic, where Hegel speaks of the method which logic *is*, he states that "In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* I have expounded an example of this method in application to a more concrete object, namely to consciousness."<sup>86</sup>

Now, the question of the *precise* way in which the categories of the Science of Logic relate to the Phenomenology of Spirit is no doubt an extremely difficult and complex matter,<sup>87</sup> the explanation of which need not be dealt with here. The more important issue in this context is, first of all, that the Phenomenology of Spirit does go back to its own beginning insofar as it grounds

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<sup>85</sup> PS, §48.

<sup>86</sup> SL, p.55. See also p.28: "...I have tried to expound consciousness in the Phenomenology of Spirit. Consciousness is spirit as a concrete knowing, a knowing too, in which externality is involved; but the development of this object, like the development of all natural and spiritual life, rests on the nature of the pure essentialities which constitute the content of logic."

<sup>87</sup> As Hegel himself seems to acknowledge when he states that in regards to the Phenomenology of Spirit that "that development has to take place behind the back of consciousness so to speak, inasmuch as the content is related to consciousness as what is *in-itself*. This makes the presentation more complicated, and what belongs to the concrete parts [of the system] already falls partially within that introduction."(EL, §25 r.) Presumably these concrete parts are the sciences of nature and spirit, given that Hegel will occasionally refer to them in this manner. Although this cannot be demonstrated in the present context, I would argue that there is a manner in which the Phenomenology of Spirit can be squared with the sciences. For now, as a hint, I will simply mention that by the time we reach the end of "The Truth of Self-Certainty" the phenomenological observer is already given the category of life and implicitly of spirit, although the complete knowledge of this is only achieved in the absolute knowing.

its own presupposition. But what is this presupposition or presupposing judgment? Science begins, or philosophy reaches its culmination, as Hegel argues in his Lectures on the History of Philosophy, with Schelling's "I=I, or with the Absolute Intuition."<sup>88</sup> This absolute intuition of the I=I is not, however, simply a starting-place, a static identity, or an infinite task. Thus, unlike Fichte, for whom the unity of subject and object is only a presupposition, never actually attained,<sup>89</sup> for Schelling this unity is really achieved in the intuition of art.<sup>90</sup> On the other hand, according to Hegel, this intuition still stands externally related to all the other shapes of consciousness, including the representation of religion which is the truth in its highest form and as it is present for the majority of people.

All these finite shapes of consciousness, however, presuppose the opposition and separation of consciousness and its object.<sup>91</sup> By beginning with the simple concept of consciousness and knowledge which already presupposes both (a) the immediate self-identity of consciousness insofar as the concepts of knowledge and Truth are both immanent to consciousness as well as (b) the knowledge and Truth as the difference of subject and object. This difference is

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<sup>88</sup> LP, vol. 3, p.529.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. *ibid*, p.499.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. *ibid*, p.542.

<sup>91</sup> Even art, which for Schelling is the intuition of the unity of subject and object, presupposes this distinction insofar as this mode of cognition is still indifferently related to the other forms of consciousness.

overcome in (c) the absolute self-consciousness that comprehends itself and its other in the process of its own self-positing and self-knowing activity.

Because the Phenomenology of Spirit overcomes the opposition of consciousness and objects it has raised itself beyond the mere *appearance* of the Truth to the knowledge of the Truth. This pure knowing is the concept of science insofar as this it is pure thought which has only itself for object, for the concept here is thought and its object is only itself, i.e. it is the science of logic,<sup>92</sup> the first part of Hegel's system of the philosophical sciences. Hegel, however, calls this "the logical system, but with the signification that it is universality approved and certified in concrete content as in its actuality."<sup>93</sup> This will be considered in the following chapter through the explication of §575-577 of the Philosophy of Spirit.

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<sup>92</sup> See SL p.49 and 68.

<sup>93</sup> ES, §574.

### Chapter III

#### **Philosophical Science & Absolute Spirit**

The aim of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit is to raise consciousness to the point where it knows its own knowledge to be the Truth. This Truth is first expressed in the science or philosophy of logic. The content of logic for Hegel consists of various purely conceptual categories such as being, essence, existence, etc. These categories are not simply presupposed or ordered, but rather form a necessary progression, from the simplest, namely being, up to the most complex and determinate, the absolute idea. However, Hegel's philosophical system does not simply end with logic.

A precise account of the transitions between the parts of the system of philosophical science need not be dealt with here, at least not explicitly.<sup>94</sup> What is important in the current context is that the conclusion of Hegel's science of logic is supposed to demonstrate the necessity of a further realm of philosophical science, namely the philosophy of nature, and that this realm in turn demonstrates the necessity of a further realm, namely the philosophy of spirit. The philosophy of nature treats of material that more or less falls within the sphere of the natural

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<sup>94</sup> Although the various interpretations and controversies regarding the transition between the various moments of philosophical science need not be dealt with here explicitly, it is nevertheless my belief that §575-577 hold the key to understanding Hegel's rather cryptic explanations of these transitions in his Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences and Science of Logic. It is particularly interesting to compare these sections and their wording with that of the final paragraph of the Science of Logic. If I am correct, then these transitions should be read in a three-fold manner.

sciences, beginning with the abstract concepts of space and time and culminating in the animal organism, which is thus the transition point to the treatment of human beings in the philosophy of spirit. The philosophy of spirit thus considers the realm of human beings, their cultural and political institutions, and culminates in the sphere of absolute spirit, concluding with the sections considered below.

This simple, linear account of Hegel's system of philosophical science is, however, somewhat of a distortion, even if it is partially correct and thus accords with the account given in §575. As Chapter One explained, the Truth is the whole, but not as a stable result. Consequently, the Truth cannot be expressed, according to Hegel, in the simple form of a proposition or judgment. According to Hegel, all statements of the form 'x is y' can be countered with equal justice by the assertion that 'x is not y'. Consequently, the relation of the various moments or parts of the system of philosophical science must be expressed in a more adequate form than that of the judgment, namely the syllogism.

For Hegel, "[t]he syllogism is what is *rational*, and it is *everything* that is rational"<sup>95</sup> because it expresses the moments of the concept, but in such a way that they are a unity (as the totality of the syllogism) that contains the distinction of its moments, but is also self-related in the mediation of its moments. In the current context there is no need to give an exhaustive treatment of Hegel's account of the various syllogistic forms and their relationship which is both highly nuanced and

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<sup>95</sup> EL, §181.

in many respects differs from the way in which the syllogism is usually conceived. All that needs to be understood in the current context can be outlined in the following points: (1) For Hegel, just as in our ordinary conception of a syllogistic argument, so too in Hegel's understanding of the syllogism, the syllogistic argument has (a) an immediate presupposition, (b) a mediating term, and (c) a result.<sup>96</sup> (2) The problem or defect of the syllogism consists in the fact that its immediate term as a presupposition itself requires demonstration, which would seem to lead to an infinite regress. (3) Hegel, however, always rejects the idea of an endless or bad infinite as a failure. The system is to be understood as self-grounding or self-mediating. Consequently Hegel's system forms a circle, or rather a circle of circles.<sup>97</sup> This could more accurately be expressed as saying that Hegel's system of philosophical science constitutes a syllogism of syllogisms in which the moments of the syllogism "are the individual sciences [of logic, nature and spirit], each of which has an *antecedent* and a *successor*"<sup>98</sup>.

In the concluding sections of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences, philosophy comprehends itself and the moments of philosophical science, as well as grasping absolute spirit and its union or relationship with it. Consequently, these final sections present the moments of philosophical science

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<sup>96</sup> Thus, for example, in the syllogism "All men are mortal, Gaius is a man, therefore he [Gaius] is mortal"(SL, p.669) the immediate term or presupposition is 'All men are mortal', the middle or mediating term is 'Gaius is a man' and the result is 'Gaius is mortal'.

<sup>97</sup> See SL, p.842.

<sup>98</sup> SL, p.842, editor's interpolation.



as a series of syllogisms which express the relation of the various sciences. In the succession of syllogisms, each of the sciences plays the part of being the mediating or middle term as well as being mediated through the others. The first syllogism, the succession already presented above, begins with logic moving through nature to spirit (L-N-S). The second syllogism, beings with nature, moves through spirit to logic (N-S-L). The third and last syllogism mediates nature and spirit, but here the middle term is no longer simply logic and the two extremes are taken as the previous two syllogisms, so that this last syllogism comprehends them. Consequently, the mediating term is the idea of philosophy, the philosophical sciences and their movement. But this whole movement is also to be understood as the self-comprehension of the idea as absolute spirit.

These syllogisms are thus not to be taken as merely formal. Rather, they are the moments of philosophical sciences' own self-comprehension, so that they each present ways in which philosophical science is to be understood as well as expressing how philosophical science is related to the absolute and knows it as spirit. This chapter will thus attempt to understand the significance of these syllogisms through an explication of the final three sections of Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit.

#### Exposition of §575-577 of the Philosophy of Spirit

##### First Syllogism of the System

[§ 575] It is this appearing which originally gives the motive of the further development. The first appearance is formed by the *syllogism*, which is based on the *Logic* as starting-point, with *Nature* for the middle term

which couples *Spirit* with it. Logic passes over to Nature and Nature to Spirit. Nature, standing between Spirit and its essence, sunders itself, not indeed to extremes of finite abstraction, nor itself to something away from them and independent - which, as other than they, only serves as a link between them: for the syllogism is *in the Idea* and Nature is essentially defined as a transition-point and negative factor, and as *in-itself* the Idea. Still the mediation of the concept has the external form of *transition*, and the science of Nature presents itself as the course of necessity, so that it is only in the one extreme that the liberty of the concept is explicit as a self-amalgamation.<sup>99</sup>

The first syllogism of the system (L-N-S) is the immediate presentation of the system. As alluded to in the Introduction to this thesis, this syllogism presents the Hegelian system from the point of view of the right Hegelian or panlogist and emanationist interpretation of his system. Logic is the immediate presupposition and starting point, while nature is negative. The negativity of nature consists in the fact that it is here viewed only as a fall from the idea.

Hegel defines nature as the idea that is external to itself,<sup>100</sup> and this is here taken to mean that nature does indeed present the idea, but only in an inferior manner by being covered in a false and merely sensuous outer form. Nature appears merely as a *transition* because spirit appears to destroy and purify itself of this finitude and sensuous material. This, therefore, appears as the path of necessity (rather than of freedom), because finitude is grasped as inessential. The absolute returns to itself through spirit, but only by negating this finitude.

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<sup>99</sup> ES, §575.

<sup>100</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, Hegel's Philosophy of Nature. (trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), §247. Hereafter EN.

In terms of the objective revelation of the absolute, the discussion of Chapter One has already considered how the absolute only overcomes its substantiality or its external relation to nature by positing a subjectivity that recognizes it. In this simple manner, however, only the idea is free, for only it is for-itself and the other moments of nature and spirit lack the determination of independence and otherness.

Regarded from the side of the subjective method, we can see the system as made up of the science of logic, the abstract categories or method of science, which is then applied to the concrete sciences of nature and spirit. This is indeed the way in which Hegel sometimes spoke of the system of sciences, especially early on.<sup>101</sup> This conception of methodology, however, has the defect of treating logic as an abstract essence that is only externally related to the other sciences or to appearance in general. Moreover, it appears as an a priori procedure, indifferent, for example, to the progression of the natural sciences. It is by sticking to this one side of Hegel's system that his system can be mistaken for panlogism or idealism in the simple sense.<sup>102</sup> Interpreted in this manner alone, the system is taken to constitute a merely a priori science.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Cf. SL, p.29. I suspect that Hegel's later injunction that the designation 'first part' be stricken from the title page of the Phenomenology of Spirit is connected with Hegel's realization that the system form a series of syllogisms.

<sup>102</sup> As opposed to absolute idealism.

<sup>103</sup> Although Emil Fackenheim, in his work The Religious Dimensions in Hegel's Thought does not explicitly offer an interpretation of the final three sections of Hegel's Philosophy of Spirit but rather draws his account from a

### Second Syllogism of the System

[§ 576] In the *second syllogism* this appearance is so far superseded, that that syllogism is the standpoint of Spirit itself, which - as the mediating term in the process - *presupposes* Nature and couples it with the Logic. It is the syllogism where Spirit *reflects* on itself in the Idea: philosophy appears as a subjective *cognition*, of which liberty is the aim, and which is itself the way to produce it.<sup>104</sup>

The second syllogism<sup>105</sup>, nature-spirit-logic, is the standpoint of finite spirit, of human subjectivity. On the one hand, this subjectivity presupposes nature insofar as it, too, is a natural existence, but one who tries to raise itself above mere nature. This labor is the struggle to recognize what is rational in nature and in its own existence; in other words, it is the struggle for freedom and the overcoming of subjectivity's own finitude.

Thus subjectivity strives to overcome the finitude of external nature by comprehending it rationally, as well as by developing and working the objective world and upon itself producing a 'second nature'. This is the work of history and

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comment in the Encyclopaedia Logic (EL, §187, z.) his account of the relation between the moments of logic, nature and spirit deserves some consideration here. Fackenheim wishes to interpret the first syllogism as the "realist mediation" where nature is taken as "a self-existent Whole in its own right." (RDHT, p.85) The interpretation given above, however, asserts precisely the opposite. Fackenheim's account of these syllogisms, irrespective of its other peculiarities, definitely errs here by failing to take into account Hegel's explicit statement (ES, §575) that nature is *not* here to be taken as "something away from [idea and spirit] and independent".

<sup>104</sup> ES, §576.

<sup>105</sup> Thankfully, because this syllogism is the standpoint of spirit itself, Hegel's own introduction to the ES can be used to explicate this section. See particularly ES, §381-384.

culture and the struggle of the state and civilization. And yet, even then finite spirit does not overcome this otherness absolutely, for "at the same time, this Other still remains independent of spirit, as something, therefore, the positing of which is antecedent to reflective thought."<sup>106</sup>

Philosophy thus appears as a flight from the world into the purity of the idea. But according to Hegel, although philosophy essentially considers thought in its purity, it also, albeit only implicitly, explicates its own age in the form of pure thoughts. Hence, according to Hegel, even Plato's Republic is not to be taken as a utopic vision, but rather as an expression of the Greek world. The defect of philosophy as it first appears is that philosophy does not recognize that the idea is manifest in nature and spirit as its Truth, so that the opposition of subjectivity and objectivity, nature and spirit, remains. As explained above, the defect of philosophy and "this limitation is removed by absolute knowledge"<sup>107</sup> and this is the achievement of the Phenomenology of Spirit where philosophy raises itself to science.

To once again consider this syllogism from the side of the objective relation of absolute spirit to its manifestation, this is the situation in which finite subjectivity's knowledge of the absolute is not yet that of reciprocal recognition, so that finite subjectivity and the absolute are only implicitly reconciled. In terms of the subjective method, on the other hand, the application of the categories of

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<sup>106</sup> ES, §384, z.

<sup>107</sup> ES, §384, z.

logic to nature and spirit appears to be subjectively conditioned, i.e. to suffer from the limitations of human, finite knowledge, the limits of the present culture and the level of sophistication of the natural sciences. Just as the previous syllogism, taken one-sidedly, results in the panlogist distortion of Hegel's system, so this syllogism, if taken as the final word on Hegel's system results in its own distortion. The activity of finite consciousness by which it raises itself to the absolute or infinite can be taken to mean that the absolute is thus nothing more than human and finite. This anthropocentric and atheistic conception that reduces the absolute to the human is however, no less a distortion of Hegel's position than the panlogist attempt to annihilate the finite in the absolute.

### Third Syllogism of the System

[§ 577] The third syllogism is the Idea of philosophy, which has *self-knowing reason*, the absolutely universal, for its *middle term*: a middle, which divides itself into *Spirit and Nature*, making the former its presupposition, as process of the Idea's *subjective* activity, and the latter its universal extreme, as process of the objectively and the Idea existing in-itself. The *self-judging* of the Idea into its two appearances (§§ 575, 576) characterizes both as its (the self-knowing reason's) manifestations: and in it there is a unification of the two aspects: - it is the nature of the fact, the concept, which causes the movement and development, yet this same movement is equally the action of cognition. The eternal Idea, in-and-for-itself, eternally sets itself to work, engenders and enjoys itself as absolute Spirit.<sup>108</sup>

The third syllogism mediates spirit and nature, so that the syllogism here can generally be understood as spirit-logic-nature. This syllogism is itself designated as the idea of philosophy. It can be designated as the *idea* of

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<sup>108</sup> ES, §577.

philosophy, rather than, as in §574, as the concept of philosophy because, while the previous position achieved by the Phenomenology of Spirit was the concept of science that unfolds into the realms of logic, nature and spirit, here philosophy has explicitly become object to itself and comprehended the entire movement of science as its own activity. At the same time, however, the mediating term is the idea or self-knowing reason and the extremes of the syllogism count not simply as spirit and nature, but rather as the whole of the two previous syllogisms of §575 and §576. Lastly, the final result of this syllogism is not just philosophy, but absolute spirit.

In order to explain what Hegel means here it is useful to once again consider Hegel's explanation of the relation of finite consciousness to the absolute as he expresses this in the language of representation, not only because it clarifies Hegel's position, but also because it serves to illustrate the distance between his position and that of orthodox Christianity:

God is only God so far as he knows himself: his self-knowledge is, further, a self-consciousness in man and man's knowledge *of* God, which proceeds to man's self-knowledge *in* God.<sup>109</sup>

In general we tend to picture God as perfect, sufficient unto himself and fully realized before creation, while creation appears as an act of grace. This roughly coincides with the presentation of the first syllogism, where the idea was related to nature and consequently to spirit only negatively. But the absolute,

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<sup>109</sup> ES, §564, r.

conceived in this manner, is only substance. For Hegel, on the other hand, the absolute is spirit, not only substance but also subject. However, the requirement of subjectivity is inter-subjectivity and reciprocal recognition as explained in Chapter One, it must come to be for an other.

This is achieved in the second syllogism where finite spirit was negatively related both to nature and itself in order that it raise itself to the idea. At this level, however, finite spirit does not comprehend itself in the idea, or it is still the knowledge of a God who remains external.

Philosophical science, on the other hand, comprehends the idea as well as its manifestations, including philosophical science itself, as the way in which the absolute produces itself and knows itself in its Truth. The two syllogisms thus constitute the two sides of the idea's own self-manifestation, one as its subjective or cognitive action, the other as its objective external manifestation.<sup>110</sup> Absolute spirit is the unity of the subjective moment of its self-knowledge in philosophy or

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<sup>110</sup> Here it seems as though the previous criticism of Fackenheim was incorrect, for if the first syllogism really is to be taken as the objective manifestation of the idea, then how does this differ from Fackenheim's statement that nature is in the first syllogism to be conceived as nature itself, and not just the thought of nature, taken as a real independent totality. The answer is somewhat difficult to give without delving into too many details. In essence, however, the point is that the first syllogism, *taken in isolation from the others*, results in idealism not because nature does not exist, but rather because from this limited point of view, nature and existence or externality is taken to be simply untrue. Only in the complete syllogism of the idea of philosophy does this externality appear as itself a moment of the idea and its appearance. Consequently, while I reject Fackenheim's account as an account of the various syllogisms *taken in their isolation*, I regard Fackenheim's account as a more or less accurate presentation of those moments as they are to be understood in the final syllogism.



philosophical science, as well as the objective activity of its own self-development. Both the subjective and objective sides coincide and terminate in philosophical science insofar as philosophical science is an actual objective existence as well as the comprehension of the movement and development of absolute spirit. Hence Hegel says that "[i]n scientific knowledge alone it knows itself as Absolute Spirit; and this knowledge or Spirit is its only true existence."<sup>111</sup> Absolute spirit thus exists as the reciprocal relation in which the idea comprehends itself as absolute spirit and that this is achieved in and through human cognition which knows the absolute as spirit in philosophical science.

But if human cognition is both the means and ends by which absolute spirit achieves its truth and self-knowledge, then how is it eternal? An explanation of this must be sought in Hegel's philosophy of time.

The entirety of philosophical science, as the self-consciousness of absolute spirit, comprehends the eternal Truth, nature, finite spirit and history. If the term 'eternity', the 'eternal', etc. is understood in the common sense of being beyond time, of not entering into time, or of unchanging duration, then of course the above claim is incomprehensible.<sup>112</sup> Hegel, however, argues that the true concept of Time is not simply an endless repetition of 'nows', nor even the dimensions of time spread out into past, present and future. In the latter case, Hegel argues, the 'present' is just as much a disappearing moment as was the 'now'. The true present,

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<sup>111</sup> LP, vol. 3, p.552.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. EN, §247 z., §258, z.

Hegel says, is the eternal present that is not outside, prior to, or above time, but rather is present to itself, identical to itself in its return to self. Hegel writes that

Whatever is true exists eternally in and for itself - not yesterday or tomorrow, but entirely in the present, 'now', in the sense of an absolute present.<sup>113</sup>

If we take this to mean that nothing new ever happens, then this is entirely out of keeping with Hegel's thought and it is completely misunderstood, for the True is not a simple stable unity. Thus Hegel also says that

what spirit is now, it has always been implicitly, and the difference is merely the degree to which this implicit character has been developed.<sup>114</sup>

The idea is eternal because it produced itself and has come to know itself as absolute spirit in its own self-identical self-presence.

Now might be the time to add a further comment on the 'subjective' or methodological consideration of the philosophical sciences. It might be asked how, if the standpoint of absolute knowing has indeed been reached, there can be anything like progress in the natural sciences and whether the quite evident progress and development in this department is not in fact concrete proof of the failure of Hegel's system. The response to this is that, on the one hand, the philosophical sciences do not pretend to give an exhaustive account of any sphere of existence in all its contingency but only an account of those spheres insofar as they unfold according to and express the idea. On the other hand, it can be

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<sup>113</sup> *ILH*, p.150.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

responded that the recurrent change and development in the natural sciences is not a strike against but rather evidence of Hegel's assertion that spirit is the eternal self-activity of differentiating itself and coming to know itself more determinately. Whether the same could be said of transformations in that 'second nature', of the state and the knowledge of spirit in religion and philosophy; these are matters which shall be considered in the next chapter.

## Chapter IV

### The Relation of Absolute Spirit & Philosophical Science

#### Summary

The explication of the past three chapters has attempted to show how absolute spirit is achieved in the knowledge of itself in philosophical science. Absolute spirit is the unity of the subjective moment of its self-knowledge in philosophy or philosophical science, as well as the objective activity of its own self-development. Both the subjective and objective sides coincide and terminate in philosophical science insofar as philosophical science is an actual objective existence as well as the comprehension of the movement and development of absolute spirit.

However, although philosophical science may comprehend absolute spirit and thus also the objective movement of absolute spirit, it still only remains a *part* of that objective movement. Hegel attests to this very fact when he declares, in the final paragraph of the manuscript of his Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, that philosophy is itself only partial, that it constitutes the consciousness of a few isolated individuals, and that the world is not its (at least immediate) concern.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> See LR 3, p.162. The reason that the comment “at least immediate” is bracketed is that there still remains some ambiguity in Hegel's text, insofar as an alternate version of the text, as the editors of this lecture series points out, "adds the qualifier 'immediate'... suggesting that in the long run, the practical affairs of the world may indeed be the concern of philosophy."(ibid.).

But if philosophical science comprehends absolute spirit and is its self-knowledge, then it must also show how this, its own partial nature, is overcome. This is already achieved in principle in the Phenomenology of Spirit, where philosophy comprehends the Truth as actually present in the concrete community of the state and in the universal consciousness of that community in the revealed religion.<sup>116</sup> But there, it is philosophy that comprehends this unity of religion and the state, and its knowledge appears only as the *result*. That result or knowledge, on the other hand, unfolds as the entire sphere of the system of philosophical sciences. Hence, although Hegel shows philosophical science as comprehending its world in thought, he does not systematically develop the philosophical sciences in concrete relation to that world.

The remainder of this thesis is an attempt to explicate the concrete relation of philosophy to the world as the relation of religion, the state and philosophy.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Fackenheim's interpretation of Hegel is here quite in line with my own. Fackenheim writes: "Such protests can be met only if the dualism between nonphilosophical life and philosophical thought is the last of all false dualisms; that is, if the having-grown-into-identity of an overreaching Spirit and an overreaching Idea is not a philosophic assertion against a nonphilosophic life, itself wholly devoid of such identity, but rather a reality already *present in life* before philosophy comes upon the scene to *convert it into thought*." (RDHT, p.110-111).

<sup>117</sup> This thesis does not really address the question "is Hegel a Christian?" or alternately, "is Hegel an Atheist?" At first this might seem strange, considering the topic of this thesis, but the point can be explained briefly:

Quentin Lauer, as a notable example, in his book Hegel's Concept of God, offers an extensive interpretation of Hegel and Christianity, arguing that Hegel's philosophy *is* consistent with a well thought out concept of Christianity. Does he succeed? Well, he does, but only insofar as he transforms the form of Christianity

In accordance with Hegel's dialectical method,<sup>118</sup> this relation is explicated as follows:

(A) The first moment is the relation of the *concepts* of religion, the state and philosophy. Here the dialectical movement merely demonstrates how each of these moments passes over into the next. Philosophy thus appears as the result and negation of its own age, i.e. the dissolution of the faith of a community and its concrete existence. But philosophy which is the result here is only the *concept* of philosophy, not philosophy which has grasped its own concept, or not yet philosophical science.

(B) Next, religion, the state and philosophy are once again considered in their relation, rather than as a simple external progression of their immediate

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into thought. Does this change the content? Well, if not it certainly changes our perception of the content. And there lies the crux of the issue: what do we mean by Christianity? Put otherwise, what kind of Christian is Hegel? The answer could be quite atheistic, at least by at least by the standard of everyday Christian consciousness - or as Hegel points out, religious consciousness as such cannot understand the philosophical mode of thinking (whereas philosophy comprehends them both). What I came to realize, at least for my own purposes, is that the question of whether Hegel was a Christian or an atheist was not a point that mattered, for the question is not one of personal commitment, biography, etc. The question that mattered was whether the relationship that Hegel wanted to forge between religion, the state and philosophy would work. The point then, in forging a dialectic of this relationship is to show how it does not and cannot work, and how this reflects upon Hegel's philosophical project as a whole and his conception of absolute spirit. The debates surrounding the sense of Hegel's system and this or that element of it I take, at least for the most part, to be real ambiguities and inconsistencies inherent in that system. What is important is to push those ambiguities to the point of contradiction.

<sup>118</sup> These moments are the concept, judgment or division and difference, and syllogism (for a fairly simple and clear presentation of this see LR, vol. 1, p.177 fn.66 & 68).

concepts. Religion is here expressed as the revealed religion and the state is the modern secular state. Each of these two are implicitly identical to one another but do not recognize that fact. Philosophy on the other hand does recognize it and brings about their reconciliation in thought by grasping their identity. In doing so, however, it also grasps itself and its own concept in the Phenomenology of Spirit and raises itself to the standpoint of philosophical science where it comprehends itself in and through absolute spirit.

(C) Last, the relation of philosophy to religion and the state is explicated as the relation of philosophical science to the religion and state of the world and age in which it arises. In itself philosophical science has here recognized and brought about the reconciliation of religion and the state, but as Hegel himself acknowledges from time to time in his writings and lectures, he saw his age as suffering from a number of contradictions.<sup>119</sup> This may seem to present no great difficulty, but given the close relation that Hegel has drawn between religion, the state and philosophy these contradictions are exceedingly problematic, for they are reflected into the heart of philosophical science, and consequently also absolute spirit. The challenge, then, is to show how the contradictions Hegel saw as present in his age are not only unresolved, but also irresolvable within his system. The dialectical movement consists of the explication of this difference between philosophical science's conception of *itself* as the reconciliation of

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<sup>119</sup> Cf. LR, vol. 1, p. 460.

religion and the state and philosophical science's conception of the *relation* of religion, the state and philosophy.

This exposition of this relationship of philosophical science, religion and the state falls into three syllogisms expressing (a) how philosophical science is related through religion to the secular state, (b) how on the other hand, religion is opposed to the state and its secular consciousness on which side stands philosophical science, and (c) how philosophy must mediate the relation of religion and the state, and yet how it is incapable of doing so.

To anticipate the final result here, the point is that philosophical science not only presupposes the implicit reconciliation of religion and the state, but also requires that this reconciliation be made explicit and be actually realized. But this reconciliation is impossible, at least from the point of view of philosophical science, for the opposition of religion and the state, which philosophical science only implicitly overcomes, is grounded in their very form. The mutual antagonism of religion and the state thus necessitates the dissolution of Hegel's age.

But the standpoint of philosophical science presupposes that at least the implicit (but actual) reconciliation of religion and state is present. For this to disappear would undermine its own claim to *be* philosophical science. There might appear to be a way out of this difficulty here, by claiming that this disappearance was a mere contingency and hence that this reconciliation is still implicit. But the point here is to demonstrate precisely the necessity of the passing away of this implicit reconciliation, and hence of the explicit reconciliation or



philosophical science as well.<sup>120</sup> The impossibility of this reconciliation thereby also demonstrates the *untruth* of philosophical science and thus the untruth of absolute spirit.

A.

1

The Truth, the absolute Truth is absolute spirit that is present to itself and knows itself in its Truth as philosophical science. This Truth is the unity of absolute spirit and philosophical science.

(a)

2

But philosophy, even as philosophical science, is itself only partial,<sup>121</sup> for although it presents the Truth in its sole True form it is not itself the outwardly universal manner in which the Truth is present for the majority of people. This outwardly universal manner in which the Truth is present is religion.

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<sup>120</sup> This is where I take my own procedure and critique of Hegel to differ importantly and essentially from that of Fackenheim. Like Fackenheim before me, I assert that the dissolution "either of modern secular freedom, or of modern Protestant faith, or of the inner bond between them... would fragment the middle of Hegel's thought." (RDHT, p.224) Fackenheim, however, only proceeds with his criticism in an external and empirical manner. His criticism rests on the fact of the historical dissolution of what Fackenheim calls the "modern bourgeois, Protestant world" (ibid, p.233) Such a criticism, however, is hardly definitive, for it still leaves open the possibility that this dissolution is only a contingent event and that, as Foucault feared, this is only a detour on the return to Hegel.

<sup>121</sup> "But philosophy, [as we have said, is also] partial" (LR, vol. 3, p.162).

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Religion is the cognition of the absolute as the Truth in the form of representation. This form, however, as we have already seen, causes a bifurcation in the concept and content of religion. On the one hand, the concept of religion is the three moments of (a) the concept of God as an immediate unity, (b) the self-differentiation of God, i.e. the relation of God to the world and to finite consciousness and (c) the overcoming of this separation and distinction. In other words "[t]he concept of God, then, is the concept of the idea."<sup>122</sup>

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However, insofar as religion is essentially the *knowledge* of the absolute as it exists for consciousness, and insofar as this consciousness is distinguished from its object as is required by the form of representation, the first two moments are to begin with identical, for the knowledge of God is already a relationship to God. The first two moments thus constitute the *theoretical* knowledge of God, while the third moment, now the second, is the *practical* relation by which finite consciousness reconciles itself with the absolute in the devotion and worship of the community, i.e. as the cultus.<sup>123</sup>

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Religion is thus implicitly the self-consciousness of the community, for its conception of God involves its conception of God's relation to finite

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, p.325.

<sup>123</sup> See *ibid.*, p.328, n.135.

consciousness and the community, and thus also its conception of itself.<sup>124</sup> But this self-consciousness is only implicit, and religion at first suffers from this as a contradiction. On one hand consciousness is supposed to count as merely finite consciousness in opposition to the absolute, but on the other hand consciousness is supposed to erase this finitude in the enjoyment of the cultus. However, this cultus itself suffers from finitude insofar as this community constitutes an actual and objective existence, i.e. a people or nation.

(b)

6

At first religion is thus the inner subjective and universal disposition of a people which is opposed to its immediate objective existence, and the nation struggles to make "itself in reality what it already is in-itself, and is therefore its own deed or creation."<sup>125</sup> But in this struggle to actualize itself, subjectivity finds its satisfaction and overcomes its alienation, for its own ends and the ends of the community coincide in the objective actualization of its inner concept, present to it as religion, in the state and its enjoyment is its freedom.

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<sup>124</sup> Hence Hegel can say "A nation conceives of God in the same way as it conceives of itself and its relationship to God, so that religion is also its conception of itself." We should also remember in relation to this statement that self-consciousness is according to Hegel a reciprocal recognition, which is why this knowledge is *identical*.

<sup>125</sup> ILH, p.58.

7

The state is thus (a) immediately identical with religion or with the religious consciousness of the community. However, (b) the state is also distinct from religion insofar as "the real spirit in which it is represented has, in its religious capacity, rid itself of all external contingency."<sup>126</sup> On the other hand, the state is "also occupied with determinate interests and particular matters"<sup>127</sup>. But insofar as the constitution and ends of the state are directed to the actualization of the concept present in religion, there is a mutual assurance of disposition, for both the state power and the inner consciousness of the people are directed towards the same ends so that each finds their satisfaction and freedom in the development of this actuality.

8

But then (c) the dissolution of the state and of the unity of religion and state occur precisely when the object of its struggle has been actualized. At that point "[i]ts actions are now only remotely connected with its highest interests."<sup>128</sup> Relieved of its struggle, subjectivity is free to enjoy itself, but precisely itself in its particularity. Thus, on the one hand, "it still has movement; but this movement is only occasioned by the interests of individuals, and no longer by the interest of

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid, p.107.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p.105.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p.58.

the nation itself."<sup>129</sup> But, on the other hand, subjectivity thus alienated from its world and turned in upon itself, reflection enters and "attacks and weakens simple morals, simple religion etc., and this ushers in a period of corruption."<sup>130</sup> Moreover, reflection has the further significance that it creates "a break in the real world."<sup>131</sup> Then subjective consciousness, alienated from the world which surrounds it, takes flight from the world into the realm of thought; to philosophy.

(c)

9

Thus philosophy arises at the end of an age, as the consummation of the spirit of an age. In pure thought, in its escape from its alienation, philosophy "produces an ideal world in opposition to this real one."<sup>132</sup> Thus (A) philosophy in its immediacy appears indifferent to its world, as a group of "idlers."<sup>133</sup> It is first (a) the escape from immediate existence and its purification to thought. But then (b) turned against this immediate existence, it is the reflective negation of this immediate existence. Lastly, however, (c) philosophy brings about the "reconciliation of the corruption brought about by thought"<sup>134</sup>, although only in an ideal world.

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p.59.

<sup>130</sup> ILP, p.113.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p.114.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

Thus philosophy is indifferent to its world. But then again (B) philosophy is also a product of its time, so that it first appears only when the ends of the state have lost their satisfaction and "[i]ts greatest and highest interests have vanished out of its life."<sup>135</sup> Philosophy is therefore (a) simply one, and indeed the last, manifestation of the spirit of an age.<sup>136</sup> It is thus identical to the religion and state of its age and it does not transcend its age. But (b) it does transcend its age insofar as philosophy "makes it an object set over against it."<sup>137</sup> But this "is only formal, for in fact philosophy has no content but that of its time."<sup>138</sup> Lastly, however, (c) "the difference of form is also a real and actual difference."<sup>139</sup> Religion was the immediate way in which universal, finite consciousness represented the absolute and the relation of the absolute to the finite. But the relation of finite consciousness to the absolute is dictated precisely by the knowledge that consciousness has of the absolute and of itself in relation to the absolute, i.e. of its own self-consciousness.<sup>140</sup> This new way of knowing itself "entails a new difference between what it is implicitly and what it is actually, and in this way a

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<sup>135</sup> ILH, p.59.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. ILP, p.111.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid, p.112.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Thus Hegel states, "Developments in this sphere are merely ways of knowing." (ibid.).

new formation of spirit arises."<sup>141</sup> Philosophy thus brings forth a new age and a new form of spirit.

11

But in order that this new form of spirit arise, it must become the universal consciousness of a people and be actualized; the Truth must become accessible not only in the form of "thinking, philosophic and cultured consciousness, but for the sensuous consciousness which still adheres to uncultured methods of regarding things."<sup>142</sup> This new Truth and spirit must therefore once again take on the form of religion.

**B.**

12

The absolute therefore returns to itself in philosophy. But as yet philosophy has not grasped its own concept. In its immediacy, philosophy is indeed the comprehension of its own time in thought, but only implicitly so, for it has not yet grasped its *own* self-consciousness in relation to the absolute and as a moment of it; it has comprehended the absolute as the concrete *idea*, but not yet as spirit.

(a)

13

In the transition from philosophy to religion we return to religion, but no longer religion as it was in its immediacy. Now, to begin with religion was already the

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<sup>141</sup> ILP, p. 112.

<sup>142</sup> LP, vol. 3, p.8, see also ILP, p.112.

concept of the idea insofar as the totality of the moments of the idea were implicit in the concept of religion itself. Nevertheless, these moments were still separated so that, on the one hand, the immediate concept of God did not yet include the moments of its self-differentiation and its self-reconciliation. Now, however, religion is mediated through philosophy, and since philosophy makes its world, founded in religion and actualized in the state, into an object over against itself, this is "the religion in which religion has become objective to itself."<sup>143</sup>

14

The idea is thus taken up by religion into the form of representation. First of all, then, God is grasped as the trinity of father, son and spirit. Second, God is grasped as positing and entering into finitude in the creation of the world and humanity who, although finite or sinful are directed towards God. Third, God brings about the reconciliation of himself in the finite by positing himself as a finite human being in the life, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, and in the Holy Spirit that descends on and lives in the community of believers. Philosophy here appears not only as the implicit presupposition of this religion, but also to its explication.<sup>144</sup> Nevertheless, philosophy does not as yet grasp itself in religion and its content. The content of religion has the form of a real sensuous existence, of a historical fact.<sup>145</sup> Though the idea is "not yet, as such, separated from history"<sup>146</sup> so that this

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<sup>143</sup> LR, vol. 3, p.163. cf. also p.61 and 249.

<sup>144</sup> See LR, vol. 3, p.153-154.

<sup>145</sup> See LP, vol. 3, p.16.



history can be explicated in terms of the idea, philosophy takes this history up as an external presupposition. The Truth which philosophy presupposes is "the teaching of the church... [and] [b]oth must and do agree, since Thought has to prove from itself what the Church has already verified."<sup>147</sup>

15

Now, although the reconciliation of the absolute or God with the finite is thus implicitly achieved from the side of God, the form of representation still holds sway insofar as subjectivity still distinguishes itself from the absolute and recognizes itself in its finitude, as sinful, but with the subjective certainty or faith that this finitude can be overcome, for it has already seen this achieved in the person of Christ.

16

Because this negativity or sinfulness is finitude *as such*, this religion explicitly turns against finitude in its immediate existence as the secular power of the state and in the individual. In doing this it erects itself as the universal power of the Church and takes itself as the final authority. Thereby, however, the Church enters into relation with secular matters and itself becomes such a secular power so that it is inevitably opened to the charge of corruption, for it has itself participated in this finitude.

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> LP, vol. 1, p.92.

(b)

17

The corruption of the church and the consequent "denial of the Authority of the Church"<sup>148</sup> leads, on the one hand, to the rupture of the Church and the Reformation. Thereby subjectivity "makes the objective content - i.e. the doctrine of the Church - its own."<sup>149</sup> This inner, subjective movement finds its realization in feeling and faith as well as in the certainty that the spirit is present in the community of its worship. The subjective freedom of the Protestant community is thus achieved insofar as it finds its conscience confirmed in the religious community. Thus the "reconciliation of Church and state has arisen immediately and of its own accord."<sup>150</sup> Subjectivity is assured on the one hand that "the secular is capable of embodying the truth"<sup>151</sup> and on the other hand of the disposition of the rulers insofar as they belong to that religious community.<sup>152</sup> Protestantism therefore forms a state of its own, overthrowing the "most pernicious"<sup>153</sup> institutions of the previous state. "The reconciliation of Church and state has

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<sup>148</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, The Philosophy of History. (trans.J. Silbree. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956), p.418.

<sup>149</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, Hegel: Political Writings. (trans. H.B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p.201-2. Hereafter PW.

<sup>150</sup> PW, p.204.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, p.203.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p.212. The subjective disposition takes the community to be the ends of the individual.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, p.213.

arisen immediately"<sup>154</sup> but this immediacy means that this religious consciousness and its world are only implicitly reconciled. This manifests itself in the idea that the kingdom of God is still remote and in the morbid fascination of consciousness with its volition and "the tormenting uncertainty as to whether the good spirit did reside in human beings."<sup>155</sup>

18

What is still lacking is the objective reconciliation of God with the world which has "not yet developed into a system of the ethical world."<sup>156</sup> The secular world still has the character of authority and subjectivity and does not yet have the knowledge of itself as absolute freedom and the ends of the objective realm itself. In order that the state become a rational self-consciousness, it must separate itself from religion. This can only occur

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p.204.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., p.205. According to Hegel the Protestant is both supposed to know that men are not immediately and initially what they ought to be, that they are evil, as well as that in knowing this and overcoming it, the individual is supposed to be conscious of the holy spirit dwelling in them. The problem here is, according to Hegel, that "This in fact took no account of the great difference between knowing what has being in itself, and what is [present] in existence. The torment of uncertainty arose as to whether the good spirit did reside in human beings, and the whole process was supposed to be known within the subject itself"(ibid, editor's interpolation). This can best be explained by reference to the chapter "Morality" in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit. There Hegel argues that even the best actions can be seen as both evil or good when considered in their abstraction, which is to say independent of their result. The universal concept of duty is abstract, so that in acting I have to fill it with a particular content. The act can thus be judged from either side.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p.204.

in so far as the church becomes divided within itself. Only then, [when it stands] above the *particular* Churches can the state attain *universality* of thought as its formal principle and bring it into existence.<sup>157</sup>

The certainty of subjectivity that it will find itself in the objective world develops itself as the certainty in reason or the Enlightenment. In the German Protestant realm, however, subjectivity is already implicitly reconciled with the secular realm and the world and the "most pernicious"<sup>158</sup> institutions of the state tied up with the Church were already overthrown with the Reformation. Thus "[i]n Germany, the Enlightenment was on the side of theology; in France it was at once directed against the church."<sup>159</sup> Protestantism has already implicitly realized the reconciliation with the world and "does not permit of two kinds of conscience but in the Catholic world, there is the sacred on one side, and on the other, abstraction opposed to religion".<sup>160</sup>

19

The reason of the enlightenment attacks religion and its superstition. At first it may appear as though these two can subsist side by side, for the interests of finite, secular consciousness appear to be limited to the finite and subordinated to the infinite content and interests of religion. However, this separation of finite cognition from religion deprives religion itself of its content, for the form of religion, representation, takes that content from finite sensation. Although this

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<sup>157</sup> PR, §270 r.

<sup>158</sup> PW, p.213.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p.212.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p.213.

representation is supposed to have a different meaning from that of the immediate sensuousness content through which religion presents the absolute, religion as such has not grasped that content in its necessity so that this content appears on the one hand as entirely contingent and arbitrary while on the other hand this content is supposed to present God. But of all things, God is not supposed to be or act in a merely contingent manner, "[f]or this much is implicit in the representation of God generally - that he or his way of acting are universal and necessary."<sup>161</sup> In this way reason reduces God to an unknown 'x'.<sup>162</sup> Against what it thus takes as superstition and external authority, reason explicitly posits its own principle, "the principle of certainty, which is identity with my self-consciousness".<sup>163</sup> The individual demands that they find themselves present in their world and in the institutions of the state. It is the demand for absolute and universal freedom. Philosophy here passes over directly to the state, but "this philosophy is at first only abstract thought"<sup>164</sup> and its result is just as abstract.

(c)

20

This principle of freedom as immediate self-certainty is still abstract, however, insofar as it takes the immediate will of the individual to be absolute. This universal secular consciousness, the consciousness of a whole people, demands to

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<sup>161</sup> LR, vol. 1, p.100.

<sup>162</sup> Cf. LP, vol. 3, p.382, 386-7.

<sup>163</sup> PW, p.213.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p.215.

find its will actualized in the political state as absolute freedom. This absolute freedom is, however, only realized in the overturning of the previous realm. The abstract immediacy of this concept of freedom, wholly formal and empty, is incapable of dictating any particular organization and content. The later attempt to institute a positive constitution or direction to the nation is thus inevitably seen as the tyranny of a partial group or individual. The resultant destruction and Terror finally gives way and "[a]n organized government emerged once more".<sup>165</sup>

21

But this is not simply a return to the previous way of things. On the one hand consciousness flees into thought, but on the other hand the organization of the state does not contravene the principle of the state itself, or freedom, which has been retained, but is rather its actualization. In place of the privileges of feudal society reside the rights of the individual to freedom of property and person, trade and profession and "free access to offices of state"<sup>166</sup> (granting first, of course, the requisite ability and education). Here the state is not the immediate will of the individual but rather the medium of the individual's existence, the means by which the individual realizes itself and is educated to the level of universality, and

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid, p.218. See also PS, § 593, "the organization of spiritual 'masses' or spheres to which the plurality of individual consciousnesses are assigned thus take shape once more."

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, p.215.

the state *is* that universal end itself, the object and realization of the individuals will.<sup>167</sup> This is first achieved with Napoleon, the individual who

placed himself as an individual will at the head of the state... subjugated the whole of Europe and spread his liberal institutions everywhere.<sup>168</sup>

22

The state and secular consciousness appear here to enter into the most extreme opposition to religion. Philosophy therefore once again arises in order to heal the fragmentation of its world. And yet, philosophy here is no longer philosophy in its immediate form; it does not just flee from the world into the freedom of the idea. Instead, philosophy finds itself in its world and reconciles itself with the world. It therefore achieves its reconciliation by grasping this reconciliation as already implicitly present in the world.

23

The realization of the secular state is the recognition of its basis in the principle of self-certainty. This principle is both the starting point of philosophical science as well as its external demand, for philosophy knows that

the individual has the right to demand that Science should at least provide him with the ladder to this standpoint, should show him this standpoint within himself. His right is based on his absolute independence... the individual is the absolute form, i.e. he is the *immediate certainty* of himself<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Cf. PR, §258 z.

<sup>168</sup> PW, p.218.

<sup>169</sup> PS, §26.

This immediate self-certainty, however, stops short of Truth. In other words, consciousness is certain of itself as free in thought, but its object still confronts it as externally given so that Truth is something outside of it.<sup>170</sup>

24

Philosophy therefore demonstrates how consciousness itself overcomes the opposition of knowledge and Truth. The immanent development or critique of consciousness forms a progression up to the point where consciousness apprehends the Truth "the absolute content *as content* or, in the form of *picture-thinking*, the form of otherness for consciousness".<sup>171</sup> This absolute content is present in the Protestant religion and the community of spirit, but it still only exists there as content, for the form of representation "and the actual duality of this thinking still attaches to the *actual spirituality* of the community".<sup>172</sup>

25

By showing how the Truth of the Protestant religion develops out of consciousness and its own concept, philosophy demonstrates the Truth of its content. But philosophy also overcomes the form of religion, so that "what in religion was *content* or a form for the presentation of an *other*, is here the Self's

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<sup>170</sup> Compare PW, p.207-8, 213 and PS, §82.

<sup>171</sup> PS, §796.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., §787.



own *act*."<sup>173</sup> The significance of the content is thus transformed in philosophy, so that the death of Christ is understood as

at the same time the death of the *abstraction of the divine Being* which is not posited as Self. That death is the painful feeling of the Unhappy Consciousness that *God Himself is dead*. This hard saying is the expression of innermost simple self-knowledge, the return of consciousness into the depths of the night of the 'I=I', a night which no longer knows anything outside of it.<sup>174</sup>

26

This death, however, is also followed by a resurrection, albeit a philosophical one.

The progression of the shapes of consciousness no longer have a merely negative significance, but also a positive one. Just as religion and the state no longer appear

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., §797.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., §785. This passage and its interpretation is particularly controversial as it has been used to justify the atheistic interpretation of Hegel and his system. Used in this context, it thus seems as though this thesis, the previous statement to the contrary notwithstanding, (see fn. 117) *has* actually taken the side of the atheistic interpretation of Hegel's system. In defense it helps to compare Nietzsche's statement of the death of God to Hegel's. Like Nietzsche, Hegel's declaration of the death of God is to be understood as the loss of an absolute, transcendent Truth independent of the human consciousness *of* it. (cf. Hannah Arendt, The Life of the Mind. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), p.9-11 for a similar interpretation of Nietzsche.) At the same time, however, the death of God for Hegel, unlike Nietzsche, does not amount to the abolition of Truth for a play of masks or a mere plurality of truths. Nor does it require the end of religion. These two points are deeply related as shall be seen. All that need be intimated here is that Hegel's statement 'God himself is dead' is actually taken from a Lutheran hymn. Just as the death of Christ is followed by a historical resurrection, so too the collapse of God as a transcendent being in philosophical consciousness is followed by a philosophical resurrection in absolute spirit. The Truth of the revealed religion is thus once more the Truth of philosophical science, albeit taken as comprehended by and taken up into the form of philosophy. What the relationship between the two might be and whether they are capable of peaceful coexistence shall be considered in the final portion of this thesis.

in their immediacy, so too philosophy is no longer content to posit its ideal realm as simply beyond the rest of consciousness. In other words, the Truth is no longer to be grasped as *only* the idea or as substance but rather as spirit or subject. Likewise, philosophy is no longer to be grasped as having its object in a beyond but rather as actually present in its knowledge; "to lay aside the title 'love of knowing' and be *actual* knowing".<sup>175</sup> At first, however, this claim to be science is only a dogmatic presupposition so that its peculiar manner of cognition and claim to knowledge of the Truth appear to be just one more bare assertion amongst others. Philosophy must therefore raise itself to the level of science by demonstrating how it comprehends the entire realm of finite consciousness. This is not only the process by which finite consciousness overcomes mere appearances, but also the process by which the position of philosophy itself, as the final *result* of this movement, produces itself and comprehends itself out of this movement and activity. This movement is thus the appearance, the *phenomenology*, of spirit.<sup>176</sup> In this comprehensive or absolute knowing,

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<sup>175</sup> PS, §5.

<sup>176</sup> Some further light here can be shed on the relation of the Phenomenology of Spirit to the rest of Hegel's system, at least in terms of its method. As explained in Chapter One, Hegel's dialectical method consists of an immanent movement and the comparison of concept and object. This dialectical movement, however, presupposes precisely what philosophical science has to prove, namely the identity of concept and object or Truth and knowledge. It is only in this way that we can be assured that the immanent development of concepts belongs to the things themselves. The Phenomenology of Spirit overcomes this difficulty by taking knowledge itself as the object of investigation. (see PS, §84) At least in this case it must be admitted both concept and object are

Truth is not only *in itself* completely identical with certainty, but it also has the shape of self-certainty, or it is in its existence in the form of self-knowledge.<sup>177</sup>

This existence in which self-consciousness in the form of thought grasps its world and recognizes itself in its world is philosophical science.

27

Philosophical science is implicitly or in-itself reconciled with its world, not only because it is itself the implicit reconciliation of that world, of religious consciousness as the absolute content and the secular state's principle of self-certainty, but also because in philosophical science itself it grasps the rationality of the Protestant religion and the secular state. For philosophical science, religion as the Protestant religion and the state as the modern secular state,

both as forms in which the principle exists - each contain the absolute truth: so that the truth, in its philosophical phase, is after all only in one of its forms.<sup>178</sup>

This principle is that "[s]elf-realizing subjectivity is... absolutely identical with substantial universality."<sup>179</sup> This principle is nothing more than freedom and it is present not only in the content of religion and the state but also in the relation of these forms of consciousness to that content.

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immanent to consciousness itself. For this reason the Phenomenology of Spirit can appear both as an introduction to that system, as well as a moment or particular concrete sphere of it.

<sup>177</sup> PS, §797, cf. *ibid.*, §26: "Science on its part requires that self-consciousness should have raised itself into this Aether in order to be able to live - and [actually] to live - with Science and in Science."

<sup>178</sup> ES, §552, r.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

For philosophy, the content of the Protestant religion is the idea that reveals itself as spirit. In philosophy this content is present in the self-development of thought so that this content is explicitly not other for it. Protestantism, however, also acknowledges the subject's part in this content, "for Protestantism requires that human beings should believe only what they know [...and] their conscience, being something sacred, ought to be inviolable."<sup>180</sup> Even though this content is externally given as doctrine, it is transformed in feeling or faith. The Truth of this doctrine is certified by the conscience of the individual. Moreover, there are not supposed to be two kinds of conscience or two kinds of laws, and thus nor two kinds of reason, one belonging to the sacred and one to the worldly or profane. But this reconciliation of consciousness and the world, this principle of freedom is still only partial, for representation "and the duality in this thinking still attaches even to the *actual spirituality* of the community."<sup>181</sup> This reconciliation is thus only known by consciousness "as something in the distant future."<sup>182</sup>

Philosophical science also comprehends the state by grasping the concept of the state itself and developing it from out of the concept of the will and the idea itself. The state is thus grasped as a self-grounding rational totality, as a series of

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<sup>180</sup> LR, vol. 1, p.456.

<sup>181</sup> PS, §787.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

sylogisms in which each member both supports the others and contains those others in themselves as moments.<sup>183</sup> The state is not to be grasped as the immediate embodiment of the individual will. Individual rights and freedoms are to be recognized in their own limited sphere, but the individuals are also to find in the state "their own *substantial spirit*, and *actively pursue it* as their *ultimate end*."<sup>184</sup> This is achieved not only for philosophical science but also for secular consciousness, insofar as the secular state has made freedom as the principle of self-certainty into the foundation of the state. However, the determinations of the state appear to this consciousness in the form of external necessity. The constitution of the state<sup>185</sup> is seen to arrive partly out of the subject's own terror, and partly out of the overwhelming force and will of an individual. For philosophical science, on the other hand, the last and highest moment of the state is the actual individual as personality that both embodies the state as a particular personality and cuts short the endless vacillation of particular opinions "and resolves them by its 'I will', thereby initiating all activity and actuality."<sup>186</sup> This individual personality, with its fixity, permanence and the finality of its decision, overcomes the endless divisiveness of the modern state. Consequently, the "personality of the state has actuality only as a *person*, as *the monarch*."<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Cf. PR, §272.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., §260.

<sup>185</sup> As seen in section 20 and 21 above.

<sup>186</sup> PR, §279, r.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

Philosophical science not only comprehends its other but also itself in the form of thought. Hence,

Philosophy alone is free, unrestricted, and pure thinking; in the other productions of the human spirit it is necessary for thought to be tied to a specific object and material, so that it appears as a demarcated thought.<sup>188</sup>

Philosophical science comprehends its world and itself in thought. Turning inwards, thought produces its own world from out of itself and comprehends that world as both the subjective action of consciousness and the objective realization of the idea. This knowledge is the realization and attainment of absolute spirit.

C.

Philosophy, as science, grasps itself and knows itself; but its knowledge of itself is its knowledge of absolute spirit and is present and actual as the system of the philosophical sciences. On the one hand absolute spirit is the idea that posits itself and returns to itself from out of finitude, while on the other hand finite spirit raises itself to the level of the infinite as its absolute self-consciousness. Absolute spirit is present and actual in the reciprocal recognition and relation of these two sides which it has as its moments. In this sense, then, absolute spirit is known and attains its reality in philosophical science and the two are identical insofar as absolute spirit is identical to itself and present to itself *in* philosophical science.

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<sup>188</sup> ILP, p.55.

However, absolute spirit is not merely identical to itself, nor just identical in its return to itself, but also as ever returning to itself. Likewise, the standpoint of philosophical science is knowledge of the Truth not simply because it grasps the absolute as it is in-itself, that is as the *idea*, nor merely in its return to itself, i.e. as absolute spirit and the system of philosophical science, but rather because philosophical science itself grasps that Truth as the actual and hence existent *present*. In absolute spirit

the absolute possibility and necessity exist for the political power, religion, and the principles of philosophy coinciding in one, and for accomplishing the reconciliation of actuality in general with Spirit, of the state with the religious conscience as well as with the philosophical consciousness.<sup>189</sup>

Philosophical science must therefore be reconciled with religion and the state not only in-itself but also for-itself, or it must show how and that philosophical science is reconciled with the protestant religion and the secular state as well as that these two are reconciled with one another.

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<sup>189</sup> ES, §552, r.

(a)

33

Philosophical science knows that itself, the protestant religion and the secular state must coincide. This it finds immediately realized not only in its own consciousness but also in the actual world.<sup>190</sup>

34

In itself, then, philosophical science knows itself to be reconciled with this world, for it has grasped both the Protestant religion and the secular state in their

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<sup>190</sup> The coincidence of philosophical science, the Protestant religion and the secular state was realized with Napoleon's entry into Germany. Indeed the final portions of the manuscript of the Phenomenology of Spirit were sent on the very eve of the battle of Jena to Hegel's publisher. (see G.W.F. Hegel, Hegel: The Letters, trans. C. Butler, Christiane Seiler. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p.112-114. Hereafter HL). The ensuing French occupation was welcomed by Hegel, who characterized Napoleon as the world spirit riding out on horse-back. Hegel's difficulty dealing with the fall of Napoleon and the subsequent German Restoration is well documented and has justifiably been called a crisis (cf. *ibid*, p.295). Yet Hegel neither abandoned his admiration of the French Revolution and Napoleon, nor his philosophical system. That Hegel did not himself become politically conservative even in his old age can be amply shown by reference to external matters such as his continued celebration of the fall of the Bastille and his hairstyle. Philosophically, however, Hegel was hardly defenseless, and although he looked on world events with some trepidation, he also went so far as to congratulate himself on having predicted the fall of Napoleon in his Phenomenology of Spirit. (*Ibid*, p.307, 233) Whether this statement should be taken wholly at face value or as a creative self-reinterpretation is at least open to debate, particularly given Hegel's skepticism regarding philosophy making predictions of any sort. (cf. H.S. Harris Hegel's Ladder: a Commentary on Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit, vol. 2 (Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1997), p.405.) Regardless, Hegel later on repeatedly made the argument that it is an error to have "a revolution without a Reformation." (PW, p.220, cf. also ES, §552 r.) How and whether these two, i.e. a secular state with a rational constitution and the Protestant community, can be brought together is the question to be considered here.



essential rationality. Insofar as the empirical presentation of the protestant religion and the secular state differs from its philosophical presentation, this difference is only an external difference. In the Protestant religion this is superstition, while in the state this is merely the play of "arbitrariness, contingency, and error".<sup>191</sup> Such contingency is as nothing to philosophical science. Hegel declares that "the sole aim of philosophical enquiry is to eliminate the contingent."<sup>192</sup> By this he does not mean that philosophy simply denies the contingent, but only that on the one hand contingency is not only a nothing for philosophical science, but that it is also a nothingness in itself, a merely transient disappearing moment. Consequently, philosophical science, "[i]n considering the Idea of the state must not have any particular states or particular institutions in mind"<sup>193</sup> but instead considers that idea in its own right. This is not to say that it is *merely* an idea or that it lacks actuality, but only to say that philosophical science comprehends the necessary and rational core of the state.<sup>194</sup>

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However, the contingent is not only or always merely nothing. Contingency is not merely a deformation of the idea and the truth, for "contingency is itself

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<sup>191</sup> PR, §258 z.

<sup>192</sup> ILH, p.28.

<sup>193</sup> PR, §258, z.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

necessary."<sup>195</sup> This is true because the idea must be actualized so that philosophical science must grant that certain matters of the state fall "into the realm of externality, in which no absolute determination is at any rate possible."<sup>196</sup> Although philosophical science cannot assign a definite determination but only a general limit, it is entirely necessary that a *definite limit* within those determinations be decided. As such, the decision is contingent and arbitrary.<sup>197</sup> Because philosophical science comprehends the necessity both of these general limits and that a final decision be made, it also comprehends this contingency in itself. But insofar as philosophical science is externally related to just this particular state, the state and its particular character remain for it just as external. Philosophical science thus appears alienated from its world, where

Philosophy alone is free, unrestricted, and pure thinking; in the other productions of the human spirit it is necessary for thought to be tied to a specific object and material, so that it appears as a demarcated thought.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> PR, §214, z. Hegel's conception of necessity, contingency and their relation is highly complex and difficult to expound. In brief, contingency is itself external necessity. Taken in the highest and most definite sense, this means that the contingent is the externalization of necessity itself. It is only through the complete externalization of this contingency that its necessity is revealed. As such, this necessity is only revealed after the fact. "The *blind* transition of necessity is rather the absolute's *own exposition*, the movement of the absolute within itself which, in its alienation, rather reveals itself."(SL, p.553) This gives us a way of understanding both the concept of the cunning of reason as well as his assertion that philosophy cannot transcend its own time.

<sup>196</sup> PR, §101, r.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. PR, §214.

<sup>198</sup> ILP, p.55.

Any concrete action here is impossible, for it appears as the entry into partiality and contingency.

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Yet insofar as philosophical science must find itself in the world it must also be connected with this world and find itself present in its world. The Protestant religion, on the other hand, not only explicitly has the absolute or the Truth as its object and content, but also has "in its religious capacity, rid itself of all external contingency."<sup>199</sup> But although religion in general and the revealed religion in particular differs in terms of form from philosophy as philosophical science, philosophical science is not only an outgrowth of religion, but also knows itself to express the Truth of the revealed religion in thought, or it self-consciously recognizes its identity with the revealed religion. Moreover, philosophical science knows that the state is the outgrowth of religion and that religion is thus the basis of the constitution of the state.

37

Philosophical science is thus related through the Protestant religion to the secular state. Here, however, religion does not merely pass over into the state as its other. In themselves, or for philosophical science, the revealed religion and the secular state complete and realize themselves in their other. It might be said, in a manner that at least seems paradoxical, that from the standpoint of philosophical science,

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<sup>199</sup> ILH, p.107. Compare section 7 of this thesis above.

the secular state *is* the realization of the Protestant religion while the Protestant religion is the *basis and guarantee* of the secular state. This is because the principle of Protestantism demands the separation of religion and the state insofar as the conscience of the individual is sacred, inviolable and not subject to the demands of external authority. Likewise, the secular state from its own side requires its separation from religion if it is to grasp its own concept. It was also seen that the secular state, in forming itself into a determinate organization had to subordinate the immediate will of the individual to the universal ends of the state. Protestantism carries this out from its own side, in the movement of conscience, so that its concrete activity and participation in the secular world and interests is not here opposed to the freedom of the individual, but rather the works by which it achieves salvation. Its knowledge of this salvation, on the other hand, is the actual existing community. Consequently, "[t]he laws of the state have both a rational and divine validity due to this presupposed original harmony".<sup>200</sup>

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In principle then, or for philosophical science, the opposition of the Protestant religion and the secular state is resolved in this mutual disposition, on the part of the secular state to make the individual's freedom the principle of the state, and on the part of the Protestant religion to make the community itself the end and actualization of the freedom of the individual. Thus, "since the constitution of the

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<sup>200</sup> LR, vol. 1, p.453.

state is connected with religion, philosophy too is connected, through religion, with the state."<sup>201</sup> Hence philosophical science is not alienated from its world insofar as it recognizes itself in religion and the state and recognizes the state as the manifestation of the divine principle of the Protestant religion and hence also of itself.

(b)  
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In itself, or for philosophical science, the Protestant religion and the secular state are a mutually supporting totality and it is identical with them through religion, for religion is identical to philosophical science and has the same content, differing only in form, and thus so does the state, for it is born out of and supported by religion. But for itself, philosophical science is also different from the world and from religion. In itself, philosophical science is the consciousness of the Truth in its absolute and universal form. For philosophical science, on the other hand, it is itself only an isolated consciousness of a small group that is distinct from, if not opposed to, the Truth as it is present in its externally universal form, i.e. the consciousness of religion. Furthermore, although philosophical science comprehends both religion and itself, religion cannot comprehend philosophy.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> ILP, p.148.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. ILP, p.141 "philosophy has this advantage over the pictorial thinking of religion, that it understands both, for it understands religion and can

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Even the Protestant religion only perceives this truth in the form of representation, "and the actual duality of this thinking still attaches to the *actual spirituality* of the community".<sup>203</sup> On the one hand, this religion is taken to be the self-consciousness of the community and counts as its highest Truth and knowledge, but in such a way that this knowledge and the reconciliation with the absolute in the cultus only counts as a moment of human existence, the Sunday of life. On the other hand, consciousness has its finite, workaday world and interests. If this religious consciousness does not immediately take the finite as something opposed to it, it nevertheless takes it as something different, as a mundane realm and the wisdom of the world as mundane wisdom. Thus, for religion, the state is something that falls outside of it, for its concerns and content are the finite and contingent. Likewise, for this religion, philosophy science is also something outside of it as philosophy "has the mundane world as its content and this is why it is called mundane wisdom."<sup>204</sup>

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As such, philosophical science stands apart from the community. Although it comprehends the Truth and actuality of that community in itself, for itself it only belongs to that community and is connected to that community externally, not in

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do justice to it; it also understands 'rationalism' and an above-nature view; and it understands itself too. But the reverse is not true."

<sup>203</sup> PS, §787.

<sup>204</sup> ILP, p.147.

the form of its externally universal self-consciousness, but rather in and through the external actuality of the community, as citizens of the state. Thus philosophical science stands on the side of the state not only in opposition to religious consciousness, but is also mediated through it. Philosophical science thus knows itself in and through the community, but is isolated from that community. In itself it knows the Protestant religion and the secular state and its consciousness to be reconciled, but this is not something that philosophical science can or should bring about, as "the empirical present day is to find its own way out of its discord, and how things are to turn out for it, are questions that must be left up to it."<sup>205</sup>

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The reconciliation of the Protestant religion and the secular state is as yet something only brought about externally, that is from the side of philosophical science and as an external subjugation. The secular state does not immediately emerge from out of the Protestant religion and state, but rather has its origin in another land and the Catholic religion. In order to be reconciled with its world, the Protestant people must therefore cast off the externality of the secular state in order to produce it from themselves and know it as their own.

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<sup>205</sup> LR, vol. 3, p.162, fn.259.

This realm, led by Napoleon, which "subjugated the whole of Europe and spread his liberal institutions everywhere"<sup>206</sup> collapses for "[t]he disposition of the peoples - i.e. their religious disposition and that of their nationality - finally overthrew this colossus."<sup>207</sup> This occurred not only externally so that the nations once subjugated threw off the yoke of external oppression, but also internally. The principle of the Catholic religion stands fundamentally opposed to the principle of the secular state, for while the secular state makes subjective freedom its end, this religion demands the renunciation of the will.<sup>208</sup>

When those religious principles are implemented, the only possible outcome is for the government to suppress the opposing religion, or to treat those who belong to it as sectarians.<sup>209</sup>

The constitution of this secular state is thus taken to be self-sustaining so that the state and secular consciousness are adequate unto themselves. Religion is thus on the one hand simply brushed aside and treated as an indifferent personal matter, but on the other hand, insofar as this personal conviction contradicts the secular state, it is subordinated to the state. But then, "the French, who adhere to the principle of worldly freedom, have thus in fact ceased to belong to the Catholic religion."<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> PW, p.218.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid. 218-219.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. LR, vol. 1, p.456.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid, p.467.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid, p.457-458.



For this secular consciousness, the monarchy is nothing more than the arbitrary will of a particular person at the head of government. "[L]iberalism counters all this with the atomistic principle of individual wills".<sup>211</sup> Yet the terror has shown the necessity of a decision being made, of not merely holding on to the universal abstract principle of freedom, but of also entering into determinations and particularity. This contradiction between the claim of universal abstract freedom and the necessity of particularity and decision is overcome by making this contradiction itself into the principle of government. Here "the universal will is supposed to be the *empirically* universal will."<sup>212</sup> By making the empirical universal will into the determining factor, the individual expects to find itself reflected in the actual rule of the state. A party is voted to rule, but

[p]articular rulings of the government are at once opposed by [appeals to] freedom, on the grounds that they are [expressions of] a particular will and consequently arbitrary. The will of the many overthrows the administration, and the erstwhile opposition now takes office; but inasmuch as this opposition is now the government, it is in turn opposed by the many. So the movement and unrest continues.<sup>213</sup>

This endless vacillation cannot but fail to provide a stable identity in which the people find themselves reflected. Here the ends of the state appear explicitly as embodying the interests of the particular individual, i.e. self-interest.<sup>214</sup> But even

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<sup>211</sup> PW, p.219.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Compare section 8 above.

then the individual does not find itself embodied in the state. By making the empirical universal will into the determining factor, the individual expects to find itself reflected in the actual rule of the state. But as a simple particular individual amongst others, its own will counts only as one indifferent moment amongst many, an indifferent part of an aggregate, a quantum. In such a case disillusionment is bound to set in insofar as the individual finds its own will opposed by that of the majority, so that

the electorate inevitably becomes *indifferent* in view of the fact that a single vote has little effect when numbers are so large; and however highly they are urged to value the right to vote, those who enjoy this right will simply fail to use it.<sup>215</sup>

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Protestantism, however, is not in principle or in itself opposed to the secular state in its fully developed and rational form.<sup>216</sup> Thus when Germany casts off the

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<sup>215</sup> PR, §311 r. For Hegel, 'liberalism' is essentially equivalent to majority rule democracy or rule by the mob. The above characterization of the liberal state, since it is drawn from Hegel's own writings, is no doubt quite shallow not only because he did not treat of it in anything like an exhaustive manner, but also because it had not reached anything like a fully developed and stable form in Hegel's own time and as Hegel himself stated, "[t]his collision, this crux, this problem is what history now faces, and it must solve it at some time in the future." (PW, p.219) On the other hand, Hegel's central charges against democracy as given above are arguably still quite valid in reference even to the more advanced modern liberal democratic states, as seems apparent given the difficulties faced with the questions of minority rights, voter turnouts and cynicism regarding our political leaders and institutions. These problems and their relation to Hegel and his philosophical system shall be considered in the conclusion to this thesis.

<sup>216</sup> Although Hegel rejected democracy, he can hardly be characterized as a reactionary, let alone as a proto-Fascist. For him, the highest achievement of the

French reign it need not destroy the institutions that have been installed, but only appropriate those institutions to itself and recognize them as its own.<sup>217</sup> This is possible because, as stated before, although Protestantism does not explicitly *know* that secular consciousness is identical to it, it knows that they ought to coincide, that "[t]he laws of the state have both a rational and as divine validity due to this presupposed original harmony"<sup>218</sup> and that the religious consciousness itself partakes in its world, that it has a Sunday and a workaday world so that this consciousness itself is *also* a secular consciousness.<sup>219</sup>

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modern world and the realization of the secular state in its most rational form was a constitutional monarchy. (cf. PR, §273 r.) Hence, although the monarch is to be considered the head of the state, his power and function is also to be supremely limited, so that "In a fully organized state... all that is required in a monarch is someone to say 'yes' and to dot the 'i'". (ibid, §280, z.) On the other hand, Hegel also rejects majority rule as the ultimate power and basis of choice in the state and was critical of this impulse as it entered into England for example. He does, however, find a place for elections and assemblies, although their function is more or less advisory to the central body. It could thus be said that according to Hegel the real power of the state was held by a central bureaucracy run by educated civil servants. To a certain degree this is true, although it ignores the fact that the entire state is to be seen as an organic and integrated whole, so that, for example, the assembly was not only to provide feedback from the people, but also to educate the people and give them insight into the function and rationality of the state's institutions. Consequently, Kenneth Westphal argues that while "Hegel may have opposed standard democratic procedures... he was a staunch republican, and he took the vital issue of an informed body politic and universal participation in political life much more seriously, and at a much deeper institutional level, than any modern democracy." (CCH, p.262).

<sup>217</sup> Cf. PW, p.222-223 and HL, p.324-325.

<sup>218</sup> LR, vol. 1, p.453.

<sup>219</sup> In PS, "The Struggle of Enlightenment with Superstition", §538-573, Hegel considers the opposition of reason and religion, but Hegel claimed that the Enlightenment in the Protestant world took place on the *side* of Protestant theology while in the Catholic world it attacked the Church. (See section 19

The Protestant religion is reconciled with the secular state insofar as it recognizes the laws of the state as divinely given and authorized. This is directly present insofar as the monarch as a member of the Protestant religion is the head of state and the thought that "the right of the monarch is based on divine authority".<sup>220</sup> Insofar as the community recognizes itself in the person of the monarch both as a secular power and as a member of the Protestant religion, there is a mutual assurance of disposition.

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above) If we consider the actual *substance* of the attacks of the Enlightenment as Hegel gives them it is easy enough to see how these attacks fall on the side of Protestantism against Catholicism, for both Protestantism and the Enlightenment reject the asceticism and self-renunciation of the Catholic church. (compare PS, §556 and §644 as well as PW, p.203) But the justification and right of the Enlightenment's attack is just as valid in the case of Protestantism as of Catholicism, (see PS, §564) for it follows from the *form* of representation as such that the moments of the content of religion are only externally related to one another. (See Chapter Two) The basis of this right is not, however, something that is *explicit* for either the Enlightenment consciousness or faith at this stage. (See PS, §562) Thus the Protestant world could turn away from this attack as something that did not effect *its* faith. Protestant consciousness already takes the opposition of faith and reason to be reconciled in it, but this reconciliation is only in itself, or in the form of representation. Philosophy likewise brings about the reconciliation of reason and faith by pushing this finite secular consciousness beyond itself and its finitude in order to produce the content of religious from out of its own consciousness. Here, however, the secular consciousness with its principle of freedom and Protestant consciousness enter into an explicit relation. Thus all that needs to be shown is how the Protestant religion and the secular consciousness explicitly enter into conflict with one another.

<sup>220</sup> PR, §279 r. cf. also LR, vol. 1, p.453.

But on the other hand, secular consciousness here demands satisfaction also, and yet for it the justification of the monarch is at best derivative.<sup>221</sup> Moreover, from the side of this secular consciousness, religion should and indeed must be separated from the state, for

[o]nly then, [when it stands] above the *particular* Churches can the state attain *universality* of thought as its formal principle and bring it into existence.<sup>222</sup>

Insofar as religion holds the reigns of the government exclusively, "all laws are swept aside and it is subjective feeling which legislates."<sup>223</sup> Protestantism too experiences and expresses this because "the distinction between priests and laity is not present among the Protestants"<sup>224</sup> so that there is no privileged access to the divine. Consequently, the state's claim to divine rule is equally open to opposing claims and "against the principle of divine authorization of the sovereign, therefore, the principle of the same authorization accruing to the laity in general was posited."<sup>225</sup> Liberalism or majoritarian democracy and monarchical absolutism<sup>226</sup> appear as the two extremes into which the state now falls. Rather

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<sup>221</sup> PR, §279 r.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., §270 r.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., §270, z.

<sup>224</sup> LR, vol. 1, p.454.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> These terms are drawn from Schlomo Avineri, Hegel's Theory of the Modern State. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p.190. Hereafter HTMS

than realizing freedom, the state becomes tyranny or despotism, "whether of a monarch or of the people".<sup>227</sup>

48

The mutual disposition of the people and the state is also undermined from another direction. The reason why the state must rise above particular churches in order to become conscious of its own principle is that it must recognize the principle of freedom as such, or universal freedom and human rights as *human beings* rather than as members of a particular religion, state or culture.<sup>228</sup> The state must therefore not only tolerate these other groups whose disposition may not accord with it, but even to grant these same groups, as human beings the same rights and freedoms as any other citizen, and hence also guarantee "every citizen the possibility of joining the universal estate"<sup>229</sup> presupposing only the requisite education and ability.

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<sup>227</sup> PR, §278 r. Hegel's Philosophy of Right is perhaps best read as an attempt to formulate a conception of the state that avoids these two extremes into which his age collapses. Hegel certainly still maintained hope at least in 1820 when the Philosophy of Right was first published that his conception of the state could be realized, particularly through the reforms of von Altenstein and von Hardenberg. (see HL, p.458-459 and HTMS, p.117). Needless to say, however, these reforms were never to be actualized, and von Hardenberg "was denounced as a Jacobin by reactionary forces in Prussia."(HL, p.457) Needless to say, the Prussian King was far from impressed with Hegel's suggestion that the monarch's function was to dot the 'i's (ibid, p.441) and shortly after Hegel's death his old friend turned adversary Schelling was brought in to combat Hegelianism.

<sup>228</sup> For a similar reading see Robert R. Williams, Hegel's Ethics of Recognition. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p.327-333, esp. p.332.

<sup>229</sup> PR, §291.

But the administration of laws requires the creation of determinate and positive laws and the juridical application of these laws in particular cases where "the existence of the whole is posited quite generally in this juridical form."<sup>230</sup> But in these cases "the subject's intelligence must frequently make the decision because, although the civil laws determine what is required in great detail, they still cannot touch upon each particular case."<sup>231</sup> Consequently, individual choice and conviction once again enter into the concrete determination of the state. But insofar as the religious consciousness and disposition of this individual differs from that of the Protestant community at large, the community is bound to find itself alienated from these decisions.

In a dispute of religions as such, due to their very form, they are incapable of providing a mediating ground, for the ground of belief and knowledge here is faith and feeling. In the Protestant religion, however, belief or faith and human reason are supposed to be at least implicitly reconciled, so that the finite understanding of secular consciousness should not contradict but rather reinforce and support it. But the state and its secular consciousness are incapable of mediating between the competing values and truth claims of two religions, and this is due to *its* form. On the one hand, if the state enters into the dispute from the

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<sup>230</sup> LR, vol 1, p.458.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., p.459.

ground of religious conviction, it violates its own principle.<sup>232</sup> On the other hand, however, the finite understanding of secular consciousness is equally incapable of mediating between such disputes insofar as, if it takes the content of religion to belong to the realm of the infinite, then it declares this to be something beyond itself, but if it takes this content to be finite then it destroys that content and understands it as a set of dogmatic assertions and superstition. But since the Protestant religion is supposed to be reconciled with this secular consciousness so that this secular consciousness is indeed a part of it, this conflict and contradiction strikes at the heart of Protestantism.

Religion, therefore, shrivels up into feeling, into a contentless elevation of spirit into the eternal, etc., of which, however, it knows nothing and has nothing to say, since any cognition would be a dragging down of the eternal into the sphere of finite connections.<sup>233</sup>

Since each religious consciousness "makes his appeal to feeling, to an oracle within his breast, he is finished and done with anyone who does not agree".<sup>234</sup> But then the Protestant religion, and indeed religion as such,<sup>235</sup> has explicitly entered into opposition to secular consciousness. This opposition cannot be solved from

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<sup>232</sup> See section 48 above.

<sup>233</sup> LR, vol. 1, p.103.

<sup>234</sup> PS, §69. It continues: "he only has to explain that he has nothing more to say to anyone who does not find and feel the same in himself. In other words, he tramples underfoot the roots of humanity." Hegel makes this statement regarding the 'man of common sense', although it seems to me to apply with equal justice here.

<sup>235</sup> It can be called religion as such (or at least Hegel's conception of religion) not only insofar as the Protestant religion is the realization of the concept of religion, but also because the opposition of religion and the state has its basis in the very form of religion.



the point of view of secular consciousness and religion, but rather requires either a subordination of religion to this secular consciousness so that it finds its "satisfaction in finitude, subjectivity, and precisely thereby in vanity"<sup>236</sup> or else a rejection of the world and secular consciousness and its own self-consciousness.<sup>237</sup>

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In itself philosophical science knows itself as present in and through its community and the reconciliation of religion and the state, for it is indeed that reconciliation itself. For itself, however, this reconciliation is something that does not and cannot exist. The necessity of this failure follows not from the inadequacy of the content, for philosophical science knows the content of religion and the state to be identical, but rather is due to their very form so that they themselves cannot recognize their identity. Philosophical science is thus alienated from its world.

(c)

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Philosophical science is alienated from the world, for while on the one hand it knows the reconciliation of the world as already present in it, it also sees that

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<sup>236</sup> LR, vol. 3, p.161.

<sup>237</sup> The former position is certainly exemplified by the 'beautiful soul' of Romanticism, but also the bourgeois Christianity that Kierkegaard found so distasteful. On the other hand, the conversion to Catholicism by Romantics such as Schlegel and Kierkegaard's irrational, or at least trans-rational conception of the Christian faith certainly seem to be forms of an 'unhappy consciousness.'

world pass away. Thus of Hegel's age as well it must be said that "the owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the onset of dusk."<sup>238</sup> But if philosophical science is True, and what is the same thing, if it is to be certain of itself and know itself in that Truth, then it must also find itself and know itself in its world. The distinction between what it is in itself and what it is for itself must be overcome. Consequently it must produce that world or enter into the world and become that reconciliation or mediating point itself. And yet Hegel's conception of philosophical science and its relation to the world preclude this possibility. This is already implicit in the previous dialectical movement, so that all that needs to be achieved here is to make it explicit.

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Philosophical science must produce itself in the world so that it may find itself there. However, philosophical science is not the way in which Truth is present to the majority of people, so it must pass over into another religion and another state.<sup>239</sup> But the Protestant religion is supposed to be the very realization of the

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<sup>238</sup> PR, preface p.23. Hegel's statement in this preface could be read as ambiguous, insofar as he argues that philosophy "appears only at a time when actuality has gone through its formative process and attained its completed state. This lesson of the concept is necessarily also apparent from history" (ibid). It is, however, at least superficially questionable if Hegel's own age is supposed by his own standards to pass away as well. The argument of section (c) above was meant to demonstrate that on the basis of Hegel's own concepts, his age was one of dissolution, whether he knew it and admitted it to himself or not. The consequences of this fact for Hegel's Philosophy shall be drawn out in this final section.

<sup>239</sup> See A, sections 1-11 above.

concept of religion, the secular state the realization of the concept of the state and philosophy here is to grasped as science; not the love of knowing, but knowledge itself<sup>240</sup> that comprehends the Truth and knows itself in it. Previously philosophy was the foundation for a new age because its new way of knowing "entails a new difference between what it is implicitly and what it is actually, and in this way a new formation of spirit arises."<sup>241</sup> But the Phenomenology of Spirit was to have comprehended this whole path and overcome the difference between what is implicitly and what is actually. To fail to recognize this is to fail to recognize the necessity of the content of religion, the state and philosophy.

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But philosophical science is itself present in actuality and "philosophers are not monks, for we find them generally in connection with the world, participating with others in some common work or calling."<sup>242</sup> Philosophers may therefore literally mediate between religion and the state. It comprehends both, so that it knows what is rational in each. Philosophical science comprehends the rationality and necessity of the finite, so that it

is indeed mundane wisdom, and to that extent it appears on the side of the state against the pretensions of a religious domination in the world. On the other hand, however, it is no less opposed to the caprice and contingency of secular domination.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> See PS, §5.

<sup>241</sup> ILP, p.112.

<sup>242</sup> LP, vol. 3, p.167.

<sup>243</sup> ILP, p.148.

Hegel thus claims that "Religion [must] take refuge in Philosophy."<sup>244</sup> However, neither religion nor the secular state and its consciousness, in their immediacy, comprehend philosophical science. It is for them, if not antagonistic to their own views, at least as "an inverted posture".<sup>245</sup> To merely accept the authority of philosophical science without knowing and demonstrating it from out of itself would be as absurd as walking on one's own head. Both of these have as their principle and inner content the concept of freedom.<sup>246</sup> To subject themselves to an external authority while maintaining the separateness of their position is a self-contradiction. But likewise, for philosophical science *as* philosophical science to act would violate its own concept of freedom, for

Philosophy alone is free, unrestricted, and pure thinking; in the other productions of the human spirit it is necessary for thought to be tied to a specific object and material, so that it appears as a demarcated thought.<sup>247</sup>

Philosophical science cannot simply enter into or determine itself to action, for then it would be concerned with an alien contingency.<sup>248</sup> Thus philosophical science can neither tell its age how it ought to be, nor can it create from out of itself that new age. The difference of the forms of religion, the state and philosophical science necessitates their downfall insofar as neither religion nor the state can either comprehend or understand philosophical science. Philosophical

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<sup>244</sup> LR, vol. 3, p.162.

<sup>245</sup> PS, §26.

<sup>246</sup> This was the whole point of the movement of B, sections 12-30.

<sup>247</sup> ILP, p.55.

<sup>248</sup> See sections 34 and 35.

science or the philosopher thus appears in the state and its institutions as just another particular consciousness and who are, for themselves, merely "an isolated order of priests, who need not mix with the world, and whose work is to preserve this possession of Truth"<sup>249</sup>

55

Philosophical science must therefore either externalize itself, or itself become the externally universal consciousness of the Truth. But insofar as the world from out of which philosophical science emerged has passed away, and must pass away just as philosophical science arises, this reconciliation has also passed away. To hope or expect that philosophical science can or will become the externally universal form of consciousness is an error, for just as it is no longer possible for consciousness to find satisfaction in the philosophy of Plato or Aristotle,<sup>250</sup> so it is no longer possible to find satisfaction in philosophical science. This philosophical system is thus only maintained by grasping its principles in a one-sided manner.

(1) Philosophical science can be grasped according to its *form*, so that it is indifferent to the content which it has and explicates as well as to the world. This formalism thus ignores the historical change and finite consciousness' claim to independence and right, over which it posits a transcendent force or authority.

Absolute spirit is given up for the sake of an absolute which dissolves the finite.

(2) Philosophical science can be grasped according to its *content*, so that the

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<sup>249</sup> LR, vol. 3, p.162 fn. 259.

<sup>250</sup> See LP, vol. 1, p. 46

distinction of form is only an indifferent moment. Thus, insofar as the state and religion fail to grasp philosophical science, they are themselves simply a distortion to be swept away. Philosophy here directly determines itself to action, but for that very reason falls into and grasps itself as finite and historically conditioned knowledge. Absolute spirit is here given up for the sake of the finite, so that the absolute is itself reduced to finitude. (3) Lastly, philosophical science can turn against these one-sided conceptions of itself and insist upon philosophical science as the unity of form and content. It can achieve this by turning one side against the other, so that the limitations of these two positions are demonstrated, but insofar as this is all it achieves, its procedure and method is also one-sided. Philosophical science here realizes absolute spirit, but stops at the identity of philosophical science and absolute spirit. The relation of philosophical science to the age in which it now arises is passed over and the distinction between philosophical science and that age is regarded as mere contingency. Philosophical science must therefore grasp its concrete relation to the world. But insofar as it has here grasped the necessity of the dissolution of that world, it has also grasped the necessity of its own dissolution. The recognition of the necessity of this passing away is the refutation of the Hegelian system of philosophical science.

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But insofar as Hegel's philosophical position is refuted, so is his conception of absolute spirit. For absolute spirit, comprehended as the actual and present Truth,

knows itself and comprehends itself in its own self-presence. This presence of the absolute to itself is philosophical science. This reciprocal recognition is the Truth of absolute spirit. Yet insofar as philosophical science is not present to itself, insofar as this reciprocal recognition of philosophical science in the actuality of its present is not achieved, philosophical science does not know itself or comprehend itself in its Truth so that, likewise, *absolute spirit* does not know itself or comprehend itself in its Truth *for it is no longer present to itself*.

"There's nothing but Truth in it, and so it's unjust."<sup>251</sup>

Justice without Truth is empty,  
Truth without justice is blind.

### **Conclusion**

The claim of this thesis is to provide an immanent critique of Hegel's system of philosophical science and his conception of absolute spirit. At the same time, as argued in the Introduction, the aim of the thesis is also to open up the possibility of vindicating Hegel, of opening a dialectical movement that goes beyond him, his system and his time, in order to appropriate both Hegel's system and time as well as our own, and move beyond them both. While this thesis can hardly claim to achieve this task, it may at least be taken as a starting point, as groundwork for such a dialectic. In the Introduction the basic conception of this project was given, albeit only in the most simple and abstract terms. This conclusion will thus attempt to further draw out the conception and ramifications of this project by referring back to the contents of the thesis, particularly the final chapter, as well as to our contemporary situation.

The Introduction to this thesis put forward the seemingly contradictory presupposition that Hegel's philosophical system was as yet unsurpassed, while on the other hand arguing for a dialectical appropriation of both history and

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<sup>251</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, The Idiot. (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1996), p.400.



philosophy since Hegel and his time. This was justified by arguing that Hegel had appropriated all the finite forms of consciousness under the movement of Truth. If all philosophy since Hegel is finite, then it follows that they all fall within Hegel's system and his reconciliation. But since this thesis challenges that reconciliation itself, how can it be claimed that Hegel really has appropriated all the forms of finite consciousness? In other words, doesn't this thesis actually show that Hegel and his dialectical project have simply failed? In that case, even supposing that no new shapes of consciousness have arisen, everything that happens after Hegel would be a necessarily unsatisfactory vacillation between alternative shapes of consciousness that were already achieved, perhaps in no particular 'dialectical' order. In other words, perhaps there simply *is* no possible reconciliation of the absolute and the finite.

This must at least be admitted as a possibility, and nothing in this thesis could claim to refute that position. On the other hand, I have tried to suggest that this thesis at least opens the possibility of understanding both Hegel and our own age in a much more fruitful way.

#### The Age of Fragmentation

Ours, it may be repeated, is a time of fragmentation. Whether or not we accept the claim of Hegel's system that the reconciliation of the absolute and the finite is achieved, his vision of that reconciliation is at least of interest. Indeed, Hegel's vision is perhaps even more interesting in light of that failure insofar as it offers our own age a way of understanding itself and its fragmentation.

Liberal democracy has become the dominant political form of our era. To a certain degree, Hegel's criticisms of 'liberalism' have themselves been overcome insofar as the state is not simply majority rule, but is rather based in rule by the majority with respect for the minority. To this extent, Hegel himself would have to admit that the contemporary liberal democratic state has reached a more rational form than it had, or at least as Hegel perceived it as having, in his own age. On the other hand, many of Hegel's other concerns and criticisms regarding democracy and secularism have only become more apparent and contradictory. The controversy surrounding minority rights, low voter turnouts and cynicism regarding our political leaders and institutions all point to the alienation of modern citizens. At the same time the membership in organized religions, which is to say in a community of worshipers, declines. Many may still profess a belief in God or some higher power, but that belief is often as not a vague 'spiritual' feeling and personal matter. At the very least, no particular religion in the western world could readily claim to be the externally universal form of consciousness.

This is where Hegel's concept of the relation of religion, the state and philosophy seems quite pertinent. As seen in Chapter Four section A, according to Hegel religion and the state are intimately tied together, so that religion constitutes the universal consciousness and drives forth into the actualization of the community. On the other hand, the loss of this universal consciousness is both the dissolution of religion and the state so that consciousness forsakes the

community and occupies itself with its own particular and trivial needs and desires. Philosophy then arises and brings about the reconciliation of the world.

As a way of viewing our own age, this seems to fit, and Hegel's reasons for insisting on the necessity of religious consciousness as the basis of the state, as well as his criticisms of liberalism, explain why the belief in the right of universal freedom is itself simply not a sufficient grounds for a community. In this light, attempts to ground the community simply in a discourse where we are somehow to reach agreement without reference to Truth appear as restatements of the problem.

The same might also be said of the strain of postmodern philosophy that revels in fragmentation and difference. Levinas, for example, makes this very difference, trace or non-self-presence into the basis of ethics politics and the subject. The infinite claim of the Other which can never be satisfied here appears as the height of the good. But does this ethics offer us anything other than the formalism, and hence undecidability, of Kantian ethics, coupled with a perhaps morbidly extreme unhappy consciousness?<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Kant makes ethics into an infinite task. Hegel, on the other hand, rejects this because an infinite task is just one that can never be completed and is hence impossible. Levinas, on the other hand, seems to take both of these claims to heart and internalize them so that every moment is a failure. Moreover, if for Kant the end and basis of ethics is human freedom, for Levinas responsibility is prior both to freedom and the ego itself.

### The New Hegelians

For some, far from the joyful celebration of Dionysian energy, masks and pluralism, our contemporary situation amounts to an absolute crisis and consummate nihilism. In this situation, where a cohesion and community is lacking it has thus been natural for philosophers of our age to turn to Hegel. His conception of the community and the inter-subjectivity of ethics and social self-constitution<sup>253</sup> thus appear as a rich resource and stimulus for consideration of our social being and an antidote to the atomistic and fragmented conception of selfhood and freedom. At the same time, such thinkers roundly reject what they take to be Hegel's central thesis.<sup>254</sup> As was explained in the Introduction, the interpretation of what Hegel's 'central thesis' precisely was has varied widely, but what is rejected in Hegel is clear enough, namely the reconciliation of the absolute and the finite. In other words, there is no Truth but only a plurality of historically situated and contingent truths. We may come to an agreement, or it may pass for True, but this is only one of many interpretations that are and will be. The question remains, however, whether this is enough and whether, as indicated above, this conception of coming to an agreement without reference to Truth is itself merely restating the problem.

The 'new Hegelians', amongst whom I unabashedly include myself, thus turn to Hegel "not simply as a rich source of insights about the nature of social

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<sup>253</sup> In a word, *Sittlichkeit*

<sup>254</sup> Examples include Charles Taylor, Habermas and Gadamer

life but also as providing an actual option for philosophy more broadly considered."<sup>255</sup> For the most part, however, this new Hegelianism has been concerned on the one hand with addressing the previous misinterpretations and misconceptions surrounding Hegel's thought while, on the other hand, pointing out the inadequacies and failures of contemporary philosophy while trying to show how Hegel can address in a more adequate manner those very issues with which contemporary philosophy is struggling. "What remains to be seen is what a real attempt at a 'thoughtful mediation' of Hegelian philosophy into the present world might look like and what its results might be."<sup>256</sup>

This thesis is an attempt to begin that process of a mediation of Hegelian philosophy into the present. How this is to be achieved, however, is a difficult matter. One possibility is to claim that Hegel's philosophical system can just be brought into the present more or less 'as is', with some small addition of material to bring it up to date with the advances in the natural sciences, mathematics and formal logic. The question then, however, is how to understand the historical changes and various anti-Hegelian philosophical positions that have arisen since Hegel's time. One solution is to relegate all this to contingency, so that the loss of

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<sup>255</sup> Paul Redding, Hegel's Hermeneutics. (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1996), p.xi. Paul Redding and William Maker in his work Philosophy Without Foundations are two good contemporary examples of this attitude, even if they offer somewhat idiosyncratic readings of Hegel. We might also include H.S. Harris amongst this group, although Harris' commitment to the Hegelian system seems to end with the Phenomenology of Spirit.

<sup>256</sup> Redding, Hegel's Hermeneutics. p.246.

the coherence of the community and the unity of traditional faith, particularly in its Protestant form, is simply an accident. As I have attempted to demonstrate in the course of this thesis, this answer is simply unacceptable.

Another, perhaps more interesting, solution follows from interpreting Hegel's statement in the Phenomenology of Spirit that "*God Himself is dead*"<sup>257</sup> in line with Nietzsche, according to whom the death of God announces the death of transcendent values, and the result of this is the cultural nihilism of the present age. Accordingly, just as the philosophical observer must experience the death of God as an infinite loss in the Phenomenology of Spirit in order to then undergo an individual transformation by which they come to comprehend the Truth as immanent in their own consciousness, so the community and the contemporary situation of nihilism is understood as a negative moment or transition by which the human community is raised to the position of absolute knowing or philosophical science.<sup>258</sup> This view, however, is also untenable as this thesis attempts to show, for philosophical science, according to its own concept, cannot determine itself to action. Moreover, this view leads to a distortion of Hegel's philosophical position according to which the absolute is simply reduced to the finite.

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<sup>257</sup> PS, §785.

<sup>258</sup> I myself formulated this basic position in my B.A. thesis, although I have come to reject it. Recently I have found that Ken Foldes advocates the same basic view. (see K.S.R. Foldes, Hegel and the Solution to Our Postmodern World Crisis. (Xlibris Corporation, 2003), chapters 1-5.

Philosophy & the Future

The question remains as to why philosophy cannot act, as well as why it requires religion to mediate between itself and the state. Hegel's own answer as to the continued necessity of religion and religious consciousness is itself entirely unsatisfactory, for the claim that philosophy is simply not the way in which most people come to see and understand the Truth or the absolute is itself at best a contingent fact of an historical age or at best the limitation of the intelligence of the masses. In this light, H.S. Harris offers a much more interesting reason, although one that does not, and indeed cannot, have its basis in Hegel's own writings and system. Harris claims that

Religion is a permanent "shape" of Spirit... [that] *cannot* be abolished. The Christian definition of God as "love" expresses the rational attitude towards the openness of the future.<sup>259</sup>

Although I think Harris is quite correct in his assessment, that religion remains open to the future and that this is itself necessary for a rational community, it is important to understand why Hegel himself could not hold this position.

For Hegel, philosophical science cannot enter into the future or say how things ought to be. This is both the power and the limitation of Hegel's philosophical system and his conception of Truth. Since philosophical science is knowledge of the Truth, and the Truth is that which is present to itself, philosophical science cannot go beyond the limitations of the present. The

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<sup>259</sup> H.S. Harris, Hegel's Ladder, vol. 2, p.697.

reconciliation of the finite and the absolute comes about through this identity. Religion, on the other hand, retains an openness to the future where it expects to find that reconciliation. This openness to the future, from the standpoint of philosophical science, is not considered as itself a positive phenomenon, but rather an announcement of failure on the part of religious consciousness to grasp the Truth. This follows from the fact that, since the absolute is itself comprehended as the Truth, to claim that there is something positive beyond it is to claim either that the absolute is not True or the True is not absolute. This is why Hyppolite can say that Hegel's "entire phenomenology appears as a heroic effort to reduce 'vertical transcendence' to a 'horizontal transcendence.'"<sup>260</sup>

#### Religion & Horizontal Transcendence

The question thus arises whether philosophy, and not only Hegel's philosophical science, can comprehend this element of religion. A student of Hyppolite, Emmanuel Levinas, took it upon himself to attempt to comprehend religion in its horizontal transcendence. Levinas declares that non-self-presence, higher than the Truth, is the revelation of God. To put this in Hegelian language, and in a language that Levinas would reject, the absolute *is* non-self-presence.

Levinas would and must reject such a formulation because it would, in his mind, already be to subordinate non-self-presence to the circle of Truth, that

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<sup>260</sup> Jean Hyppolite, Genesis and Structure of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. trans. Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman. (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1974), p.544.



which is, or presence. The endless locutions and torturous turns of style evident in the works of both Derrida and Levinas are not simply due to perversity, playfulness, or love of obscuritanism. The need is inherent to the subject itself, for the subject is the unsayable, only intimated and said under erasure. But it is at least questionable whether such a procedure, this apophansis,<sup>261</sup> does not sink either into self-contradiction or aphasia. Indeed, how could it appear otherwise, for if it claims to be 'beyond' Truth, then what is the Truth status of this claim?

#### Hegel & Levinas

Despite what I take to be the failure of both Hegel and Levinas, the two taken together pose an interesting question, particularly in the light of the result of this thesis. Both Hegel and Levinas can be seen as proposing essentially the same ontology, although from different directions, and so that they end up falling into the same trap, indeed to such an extent that Levinas himself has precious little to say of the future. Both Hegel and Levinas are essentially committed to the traditional ontological distinction between real and ideal being, so that the identity of these two is knowledge of the Truth. On the other hand, both thinkers try to comprehend the dynamic of the movement towards that identity, non-self-presence, and indeed both count that movement as untrue. The difference between these two thus amounts to the assertion on Hegel's side, that the absolute is True and self-presence, and on the side of Levinas that the absolute is untrue

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<sup>261</sup> See Emmanuel Levinas, Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence, trans. Alphonso Lingis. (Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1998), p.5-9.

and non-self-presence. But then again, the dialectical result of this thesis from the side of Hegel was that the absolute was indeed not present to itself.

Beyond Philosophical Science, Beyond Truth

The question here arises whether a reconciliation between these two standpoints is indeed possible. I believe it is, but that this reconciliation will require a change in our conception both philosophy so that they may be brought into a new reciprocal relationship. First, philosophy will have to formulate an ontology capable of conceiving of knowing and the absolute not only as presence and self-presence, but also as a directedness beyond itself.<sup>262</sup> It will have to be able to conceive of non-presence as a moment of the Truth so that the directedness towards presence is comprehended as a positive phenomenon in which philosophy participates. On the other hand, philosophy could no longer be limited to science or knowledge, but rather would have to be comprehended as

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<sup>262</sup>. Jeff Mitscherling's tripartite ontology of real, ideal and intentional being has been a major source of inspiration here. Although I suspect he would object to the use I wish to make of this distinction, I could not agree more with his statement that "we must acknowledge all three modes of being as not merely conceptually but also *ontologically* distinct and independent, while at the same time interacting with one another in such a way as to make possible 'the existence of the world' we experience."(Jeff Mitscherling, Roman Ingarden's Ontology and Aesthetics. (Ottawa: Ottawa University Press, 1997), p.208.)

*wisdom*; knowledge that holds itself in Truth while going beyond what is. The reciprocity of this relation would be the reconciliation of the finite and the absolute.

To achieve this, however, would require a great deal. It would need to be demonstrated both that philosophy since Hegel has failed to surpass him in its conception of Truth, but also that it *has* surpassed him insofar as it has articulated the fact that Truth, understood as self-presence, is not all there is. But this conclusion must come to an end, for conclusions, too, are only promises of work to be done.

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