

The Proofs of God in Hegel's System

by

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Abstract

In 1831, on the same day that Hegel at last committed himself to providing a revised edition of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, he signed a contract to write what he must have suspected would be his final book, entitled *Über das Dasein Gottes*. Unfortunately, Hegel died only a few days later, leaving us with an incomplete manuscript of a lecture series on the topic of the proofs from 1929, in addition to his remarks on the issue (albeit not insubstantial) scattered throughout the rest of his works and lectures. The aim of the present dissertation is to provide a reconstructive account of Hegel's conception of the proofs and their relation to his system as a whole. Heretofore, the majority of the literature on this topic has distorted Hegel's account by focusing solely on the ontological proof and understanding Hegel's objections to Kant's critique of this proof as signaling his own endorsement of some variation of the ontological argument in its traditional sense (i.e., as a proof *that God is* or exists). Now, on the one hand, to approach Hegel's treatment of the proofs in this way is effectively to regard Hegel's standpoint as amounting to some sort of return to the standpoint of pre-Kantian dogmatic metaphysics. On the other hand, insofar as contemporary Hegel scholarship has sought to understand Hegel as a post-Kantian philosopher (rather than as a pre-critical dogmatic metaphysician), Hegel's treatment of the proofs has largely been ignored as a matter that Kant had already put to rest. Both approaches are contrary to the letter of Hegel: the one misrepresents him as returning to a dogmatic a priori rationalism; the other ignores the centrality of the proofs to which, *pace* Kant's criticisms, Hegel was clearly committed. In contrast to both of these approaches, I attempt to demonstrate that and how the proofs are both central to Hegel's system and yet that precisely in and through his treatment and appropriation not just of the ontological, but also of the cosmological and teleological proofs, Hegel is a thoroughly post-Kantian philosopher. This involves providing a detailed account of the correlation between the cosmological, teleological and ontological proofs and (a) Hegel's *Logic*, (b) Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*, and (c) Hegel's system as a whole as the syllogisms of *Logic*, *Nature* and *Spirit*. The aim in providing this account is to demonstrate that and how Hegel's system as a whole not only escapes the charge of devolving into pre-Kantian dogmatic metaphysics, but also to show that as a thoroughly post-Kantian project it completes the project of philosophy itself as that has been traditionally conceived.

Dedication

In loving memory of my Mother-In-Law,
Sherry MacIntosh

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I should like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who have aided and supported me over the course of completing this dissertation.

To begin with, I wish to express my gratitude to the members of my committee, John Burbidge, Philip Merklinger, Jeffrey Dudiak and Marie-Eve Morin. In particular, I must thank my supervisor Robert Burch. It is common in the acknowledgments to a dissertation to state that it could not have been completed without the dedication, support and encouragement of one's supervisor. All of this is certainly true, but does not begin to express the extent of my debt and depth of my gratitude. Robert Burch was the first to introduce me to philosophy and the first to teach me the importance and challenge of Hegel system. There is no question that I would never have began this project, much less brought it to completion, without his inspiration and aid. It is my hope that in completing this dissertation, I have payed part of the debt one owes to their teacher (as articulated by Nietzsche's Zarathustra.)

I also wish to express my gratitude to the community of instructors and philosophy students at the University of Alberta. I am especially grateful to Christopher Lepock and Daniel Erin, both of whom patiently listened to copious ponderings and diatribes while I was working on this dissertation.

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A NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND CITATIONS

Throughout this dissertation, the translations of passages from Hegel's works, manuscripts and lectures are provided in English and taken from cited translations of these works. Any modifications of these translations have been noted by brackets, except for a few noteworthy exceptions. Following the contemporary standard English translation of Hegel's works, *Geist* and related words are always rendered as 'spirit,' not mind. *Begriff* and related words are always rendered as 'concept,' not notion or self-concept. For reasons that will become clear in the course of the dissertation, I have also chosen not to follow the lead of George Di Giovanni who, in his recent translation of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, renders *Dasein* as existence and *Existenz* as concrete existence. Instead, I have reserved the term existence as the translation of *Existenz* and have left *Dasein* untranslated throughout.

Passages from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* are cited as ¶ with the relevant paragraph number. In addition to citation from available English translations, citations of Hegel's *Science of Logic*, the Manuscript to the 1829 *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God*, Hegel's "Review *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's Werke, Volume III*," and Hegel's "Review of Göschel's Aphorisms," are followed by reference to the relevant volume and page numbers of Hegel's *Gesammelte Werke*. Citations of Hegel's recently published lectures are likewise followed with the page number of the corresponding German texts.

Following the convention of Hegel scholarship, passages from Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and *Encyclopedia* are cited as § and the relevant number, and when necessary, by an 'r' to indicate if the text is one of Hegel's own published remarks or a

‘z’ to indicate when the cited text is from the *Züsätze* or student notes appended to the text by the editors of the *Werke*. All other citations are followed by the relevant volume and page number of Hegel’s *Werke: Theorie-Werkausgabe*.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the present dissertation is to provide a detailed account of the role of the proofs of God in Hegel's system. This will be achieved by drawing on heretofore unavailable or neglected sources, including the new critical editions and subsequent English translations of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, the 1831 *Lectures on Logic* and especially Hegel's 1829 *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God*. As such, the present work may be understood as contributing to the ongoing renaissance in Hegel scholarship.¹ At the same time, however, due to its subject matter, orientation and original impetus, the present work stands opposed to certain recent trends in Hegel scholarship, including not only so-called 'non-metaphysical' and 'metaphysical' readings of Hegel's system, but also the historiological approaches that treat Hegel's system either as something that simply belongs to the past and as such as nothing more than an

¹ The Hegel renaissance is usually taken to have begun in 1975 with the publication of Charles Taylor's *Hegel*. (Cf. Frederick Beiser, "Introduction: The Puzzling Hegel Renaissance," in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*. Ed. Frederick Beiser. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 2.) Prior to this, the rejection of Hegel by early analytic philosophers in reaction to British Hegelians such as MacTaggart was such that, even after relations between analytic and continental philosophy began to thaw after Strawson, in *The Bounds of Sense*, reintroduced Kant to the analytic tradition via his account of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Hegel still remained largely ignored and "[n]o established analytic philosopher wrote on his philosophy or tried to bring him into the analytic fold." (Jon Stewart, Introduction to *The Hegel Myths and Legends*. (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1996) 6-7.) Today, matters have certainly changed, although as Redding has suggested, in certain ways the title of 'renaissance' is misleading insofar as "the recent re-evaluation of Hegel has had little to do with any reanimation of earlier Hegelian verities and more to do with a reinterpretation of what Hegel's philosophy was all about." (Paul Redding, *Hegel's Hermeneutics*. (London: Cornell University Press, 1996), xi.) It is highly ironic, as Beiser points out, that Charles Taylor's overtly metaphysical reading of Hegel should serve as the beginning of the Hegel renaissance insofar as the interpretive path pursued by Hegel interpreters since has consisted largely in deemphasizing and downplaying the metaphysical aspects of Hegel's thought.

historical curiosity, or at best as a reservoir of rich insights that can and should be detached from Hegel's systematic pretensions.

By contrast, I understand Hegel's system as constituting a challenge to the very question of the project of philosophy and its future, as I shall make clear in the course of the dissertation. In the same vein, my decision to focus on the proofs of God was not due to any particular interest in these arguments *per se* in their various historical formulations, but because and insofar as these proofs open upon a number of broader ontological and philosophical issues, including the nature of reason, freedom and time.

Given both the character in general of the previous literature on Hegel's account of the proofs and the present state of Hegel scholarship, the current project is liable to provoke both skepticism and confusion. In order to forestall misunderstandings, the aim of this introduction is to provide not only a general account of the content and structure of this dissertation, but also a preliminary account and justification for its orientation.

The Inadequacy of the Previous Literature

It has long been known, even if in recent years less frequently acknowledged, that Hegel had an ongoing fascination with the proofs of God and that he even sought to defend these proofs against Kant's supposed refutation of them. Nonetheless, the majority of the surprisingly sparse literature on Hegel's account of the proofs has focused solely on the ontological argument² and thus has fundamentally misrepresented the nature

² See Peter C. Hodgson, "Hegel's Proofs of the Existence of God." In *A Companion to Hegel*, eds. Stephen Houlgate and Michael Bauer. (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2011) fn.26, 428.

of Hegel's account of the proofs, the sense in which he sought to defend these proofs against Kant, and the relation of these proofs to Hegel's system as a whole.

On the face of it, Hegel's account of the proofs seems rife with contradictions. He did at one point assert that among the three traditional proofs, the ontological proof is "the only genuine [*wahrhafte*] one."³ Nonetheless, and despite the persistence of rumors and assertions to the contrary,⁴ Hegel does not claim that the ontological proof in its traditional formulation is sound. To the contrary, as we shall see, he argues at length that *all* of the proofs in their traditional formulation, *including* the ontological argument, are "clearly defective."⁵ It is also correct that Hegel argues (e.g., in the *Science of Logic*) that Kant's central objection to the ontological argument was ultimately insufficient and

³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Ed. Peter C. Hodgson. 3 Vols. (London: University of California Press, 1984ff.), 3:352 [272].

⁴ The first instance of this error of which I am aware is Schopenhauer's assertion that "so thoroughly contemptible a creature as Hegel, whose whole pseudo-philosophy is one monstrous amplification of the ontological proof, tried to defend this proof against Kant's *Critique*." (Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, trans. E.F.J. Payne. (Illinois: Open Court Press, 1974), 16.) Later, this rumor appears to have been propped up by the fact that, in the heyday of 'British Hegelianism', so-called Hegelian ontological arguments were defended by, for example, Caird, McTaggart and later Collingwood. (Cf. John Hick and Arthur C. McGill, *The Many-Faced Argument* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), 216.) It is in this context that Russell, who himself claimed to have become an Hegelian for two or three years under the spell of McTaggart, recounts the experience of his conversion to Hegelianism: "I remember the exact moment in my fourth year when I became one. I had gone out to buy a tin of tobacco, and was coming back with it along Trinity Lane, when suddenly I threw it up in the air and exclaimed: 'Great God in boots! – the ontological argument is sound!'" (Russell, *Autobiography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 53.) Like much that came to be attributed to Hegel by the British Hegelians, not to mention by Russell and other early analytic philosophers who arose precisely in opposition to them, the arguments provided in Hegel's name had little to do with Hegel himself. For an account of the relation between British Hegelianism and Hegel, see Tom Rockmore, *Hegel, Idealism, and Analytic Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), pp.34-42.

⁵ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on Logic: Berlin, 1831*, trans. Clark Butler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 45 [54].

question begging.⁶ Yet, as we shall see, and notwithstanding this assertion, Hegel also argues that Kant's objection to the ontological proof has a substantial foundation and that the ontological proof in its traditional formulation is also itself question-begging; for it is incumbent on the proof for God not merely to presuppose but rather to demonstrate that and how finite human beings can be raised to the infinite, i.e. to the consciousness and knowledge of God.⁷ Thus, while Hegel does give pride of place to the ontological proof, he was far from endorsing the ontological proof in its traditional sense and far from calling for a return to pre-Kantian dogmatic metaphysics.

As strange as it may sound at the moment, it is *because* Hegel was committed to articulating an explicitly post-Kantian system that he does not consider the ontological proof as an isolated argument. To the contrary, he insists on the necessity of *all three* proofs of God,⁸ i.e., the cosmological, teleological and ontological proofs, arguing that none of them is superfluous to the genuine formulation of the proof of God. This follows from the fact that Hegel conceives of these proofs as connected in such a manner that all three proofs *taken together* and comprehended in their truth as a series constitute (the) One proof.⁹

To comprehend the meaning and sense in which Hegel defends the proofs and takes them to be united in the One proof, it is necessary to comprehend how these proofs

⁶ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic* trans. George Di Giovanni (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 63-66 [21:74-7.]

⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:181 [116] and 3:355 [274.]

⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God*, trans. Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 88 [18:270.]

⁹ See esp. Hegel, *Lectures on the Proof*, 84 [18:267] and pp. 99-100 [18:279.] Cf. also Peter C. Hodgson, introduction to *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God* by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, trans. Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 16 and Mark C. Taylor, "Itinerarium Mentis in Deum: Hegel's Proofs of God's Existence." *The Journal of Religion*. Vol. 57, No. 3 (Jul., 1977), 214.

correlate to his system as well as to articulate the significance of these correlations. Only then is it possible to comprehend that and how Hegel at once negates these three proofs in their individual traditional formulations, defends and preserves them, and yet in doing so transforms them in such a way as to complete the project of metaphysics without falling prey to dogmatism.

The task of articulating the correlation between the proofs and Hegel's system is, as we shall see, a lengthy and difficult one. Moreover, this task must be undertaken with little help from the extant secondary literature. This is because previous Hegel scholarship, as already noted, has largely ignored Hegel's *Lectures on the Proofs*, has tended to focus solely on Hegel's account of the ontological proof alone, and has read Hegel as attempting either to defend or to provide again a more or less traditional version of that proof. As they serve to address the issue of the correlation between the proofs and Hegel's system, such previous accounts have not only been incomplete, but also have fundamentally distorted Hegel's view. To my knowledge, only Mark Taylor in his essay "*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*" has explicitly recognized both that Hegel's account and defense of the proofs involves all three proofs taken as a whole and that the correlation of the proofs to the system must be comprehended as taking place at three distinct levels. As Taylor claims, and as I will argue in more detail, the proofs correlate to Hegel's system at the level of (a) Hegel's *logic*,¹⁰ (b) the philosophy of religion, and (c) the system as a whole.¹¹ Taylor's essay, however, is far too brief and sketchy regarding the details of

¹⁰ In speaking of 'the *Logic*' I refer generically to Hegel's account of this topic as developed in his *Science of Logic*, his *Encyclopaedia Logic* and appended *Züsätze*, and his 1831 *Lectures on Logic*.

¹¹ Mark C. Taylor, "*Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*," pp.215-16.

these correlations and their significance. Furthermore, his account of the religious correlation is problematic insofar as, when composing this essay, he had to rely on the older editions of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.

The old editions of Hegel's lectures, published by the early editors of Hegel's complete works shortly after Hegel's death, were cobbled together from both Hegel's manuscripts and student notes of lectures given years and sometimes decades apart without any indication of either the source of particular passages and if or how Hegel's account changed over the years.¹² This was particularly problematic in the case of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*; for as the newly released German historical critical editions and subsequent English translations show, the manner in which Hegel structured his account and treatment of religion changed in a number of important ways over the course of the four lecture series he delivered on this topic between 1821 and 1831.

The question of the changes of structure of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* is particularly relevant given the topic of the present dissertation insofar as Hegel always takes the cosmological, teleological and ontological proofs to be correlated to distinct historical phases of his account of the philosophy of religion. Although he always associates the ontological proof with the Christian religion alone, the manner in

¹² Thus, for example, whereas Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history and philosophy of religion span only a decade, Hegel lectured on the history of philosophy in Jena as early as 1805-6 and was preparing to lecture further on this topic in 1831 when he died. Michelet constructed the text of the first edition of Hegel's lectures on the history of philosophy from a variety of manuscripts including, at least in some places, the Jena manuscript. (See Robert F. Brown, introduction to *Lectures on the History of Philosophy: 1825-6 Volume III* by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), pp.1-3.)

which Hegel articulates the relation between the cosmological and teleological proofs on the one hand, and his grouping of the non-Christian religions on the other, changes over the years, and indeed changes most dramatically in 1831.

Naturally, the publication of the historical critical editions of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* gave rise to a surge of interest and outpouring of new scholarship on the subject of the changing structure of Hegel's account. The consensus, however, following the lead of Walter Jaeschke, is that these changes in Hegel's organization of the lectures demonstrate that Hegel was simply experimenting with using various loose and apparently incompatible and equally unjustified principles by which to organize his account of religion and that the attempt to formulate a unified and logically grounded account ends in failure.¹³ One of the advantages of the present study, as I will attempt to demonstrate, is that a detailed analysis of the relation of the *logic* and Hegel's proofs allows us to comprehend the impetus behind the changes in Hegel's organization of determinate religion, as well as the significance of the manner in which Hegel restructures his account of religion in 1831. I argue, indeed, that the structure that Hegel adopts in his 1831 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* is definitive and that it allows Hegel to unify in a single account compatible with all the fundamental principles that Hegel considered and brought to the fore in previous years of presentation.

¹³ Cf. Walter Jaeschke, *Reason in Religion: The Foundations of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, trans. J. Michael Stewart and Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) 272-84., Dale M. Schlitt, *Divine Subjectivity: Understanding Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 1990), 84-9 and Peter C Hodgson, Introduction to *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Volume II* by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (London: University of California Press, 1987), pp.86-7.

This unification of these principles ultimately, as I will attempt to show, occurs at the level of the third correlation, i.e., the correlation of the proofs to the system as such, and involves Hegel's re-conceptions of reason, freedom and time. This correlation, furthermore, involves the recognition of the way in which Hegel understood his system to evade both what have come to be known as 'right' and 'left' Hegelian (mis)interpretations of that system¹⁴ and *thereby* to provide a post-Kantian completion of the project of metaphysics.

Contemporary 'Metaphysical' and 'Non-Metaphysical' Readings of Hegel

Given the current state of Anglo-American Hegel scholarship, and in the context of recent debates between so-called 'metaphysical' and 'non-metaphysical readings of Hegel', it is necessary to situate the approach of this dissertation more carefully.

¹⁴ The terms 'right' and 'left' Hegelianism are frequently used to refer to two interpretive strands or tendencies. On the one hand, Right Hegelianism is associated with religious orthodoxy, political conservatism and the tendency to read Hegel's system through the *Logic* as an a priori, eternal, and historically closed account. On the other hand, Left Hegelianism is associated with atheism and revolutionary politics, as well as the tendency to read Hegel's work through the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in purely anthropological terms. While this crude dichotomy certainly does not do justice to the subtlety and variety of readings of Hegel's system, this distinction between left and right Hegelianism is useful insofar as it serves to highlight some of the central controversies surrounding the interpretation of the Hegelian system and the seeming tension in Hegel's own texts between various claims. These, naturally, only constitute *mis*interpretations insofar as they presume to be faithful to Hegel while ignoring a fundamental dimension of his system. Frequently however, as shall be mentioned in Chapter Seven, the figures most closely identified with these two strands were well aware that they were departing from Hegel's own explicit position. Furthermore, insofar as Hegel scholars are naturally liable to be rather more circumspect regarding the attribution to Hegel of one or other of these extreme positions and instead to admit at least an ambiguity, it might be thought that all Hegel scholars are essentially 'middle' Hegelians, but this is merely to leave the problem unanswered. Like Fackenheim, I insist that the proper Hegelian middle consists in the explanation of that and how Hegel at least attempts to mediate between and unify these extremes. (See Emil Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), 76 ff.)

According to so-called ‘metaphysical’ or what are sometimes referred to as ‘traditionalist’ interpretation of Hegel’s system, Hegel is to be understood as attempting “to revive and modify a form of pre-Kantian metaphysics – namely, Spinoza’s monism.”¹⁵ This interpretation was recently been explicitly defended by Kevin J. Harrelson, who asserts that “Hegel is first and foremost the heir of a metaphysical tradition that stretches from the neo-Platonists to Descartes and Spinoza.”¹⁶

In *The Ontological Argument from Descartes to Kant*, Harrelson attempts to defend this claim by showing that and how Hegel’s articulation and defense of the ontological proof places him within the metaphysical tradition in general, and in particular within a tradition of formulations of the ontological proof that, so Harrelson argues, is not susceptible to Kant’s objection. According to Harrelson, Kant does not “demonstrate the impossibility of *any* ontological proof; [rather] his objections in fact apply only to the markedly inferior versions of the proof that appear in eighteenth-century textbooks.”¹⁷

In articulating this account, Harrelson aims to undercut the dominant non-metaphysical readings of Hegel with what he calls their “unjust emphasis on Hegel’s relationship to Kant.”¹⁸ As such, as he well knows, he calls into question the dominant trend in Anglo-American interpretations of Hegel’s system, namely the so-called ‘non-

¹⁵ James Kreines, “Hegel’s Metaphysics: Changing the Debate,” *Philosophical Compass*. Vol1, issue 5, (Sept. 2006), 467.

¹⁶ Kevin J. Harrelson *Hegel’s Defense of the Ontological Argument for the Existence of God* (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 2004), 2.

¹⁷ Kevin J Harrelson, *The Ontological Argument from Descartes to Hegel*. (Amherst, New York: Humanity Books, 2009),19.

¹⁸ Harrelson, *Hegel’s Defense of the Ontological Argument*, 2.

metaphysical' or 'non-traditionalist' readings of the sort most notably proposed by Robert B. Pippin.

In *Hegel's Idealism*, Pippin attempts to defend Hegel against the charge of being a metaphysician in the pre-Kantian sense by showing how Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Logic* can be read as a legitimate extension of Kant's transcendental project. For Pippin, "'metaphysics' is understood traditionally as a priori knowledge of substances."¹⁹ Accordingly, he wishes to defend Hegel by reading the *Logic* as an account of "the conceptual conditions required for there to be possible determinate objects of cognition in the first place, prior to empirical specification."²⁰ Now, as Pippin himself concedes, his interpretation is open to the charge that it

seems not to take into account the ontological dimension of the *Logic*... On the face of it, there are several places where Hegel, in discussing the limitations of a Notion or its development, slips frequently from a "logical" mode, going far beyond claims about thought or thinkability, and making a *direct* claim about the necessary nature of things, direct in the sense that no reference is made to a "deduced" relation between thought and thing.²¹

To such a charge, Pippin responds, on the one hand, by attempting to show that Hegel can be read in such a way that he, for the most part at least, does not make this 'mistake'. On the other hand, however, Pippin admits that he is not attempting to defend Hegel's system in its entirety.²² For Pippin, then, Hegel is a non-metaphysical thinker insofar as his system may be read as limited to matters of epistemology and logic, and does not enter into the realm of ontology.

¹⁹ Robert Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 5.

²⁰ Ibid. 176.

²¹ Ibid. 187.

²² Cf. Ibid. 40 and pp. 257-260.

In the face of the dominance of this latter non-metaphysical approach to Hegel, my own project of articulating the role and significance of the proofs in Hegel's system to a metaphysical end is liable to seem a retrogressive distortion. After all, Kant's critique of the proofs is hardly a minor issue. The proofs of God in general and the ontological proof in particular seem to constitute a paradigm of dogmatic metaphysics, insofar as these proofs are understood as attempts to provide knowledge of an object that transcends the bounds of all possible experience. It is hardly surprising, then, that Patricia M. Calton's recent attempt to articulate the connection between Hegel's account of the Christian religion and the ontological argument was dismissed as passé insofar as this work was "understood, in contrast to the most important scholarship of the last twenty-five years, as essentially presenting Hegel as a pre-Kantian metaphysician."²³

Despite their dominance, it must be admitted that non-metaphysical interpretations of Hegel remain controversial and have been criticized, since (as the above passages from Pippin make clear) they require "a selective reconstruction of his views."²⁴ At the same time, however, readings of Hegel that see him as a metaphysician of the old stamp are equally problematic. We must remember that, although Hegel does

²³ See Simon Lumsden, Review of *Hegel's Metaphysics of God: The Ontological Proof as the Development of a Trinitarian Divine Ontology* by Patricia Marie Calton, Vol. 57, (2005), 608.: "In recent years the dominant interpretation has seen Hegel as essentially continuing Kant's critical project. There has been a concerted effort to shift the debate from understanding Hegel as essentially concerned with a grand metaphysical project in which Spirit, conceived as a monistic god, comes to knowledge of itself through the reflective practices of self-conscious subjects. At the core of this revised reading of Hegel, which is inadequately described as nonmetaphysical, is the rejection of the idea of any notion of the given. While this book makes no effort at all to situate itself in relation to these central debates in German idealism, it can be understood, in contrast to the most important scholarship of the last twenty-five years, as essentially presenting Hegel as a pre-Kantian metaphysician."

²⁴ Kreines, "Changing the Debate," 472.

use the term ‘metaphysics’ to characterize what he is doing, particularly in his *Science of Logic*, in applying the title of metaphysics to his own works, Hegel cannot, at least according to Hegel’s own explicit intentions, suggest a retrogressive “return to the old metaphysics,”²⁵ i.e., to the sort of pre-Kantian metaphysics that, free from the bounds of experience, built “castles in the air.”²⁶ Hegel was certainly, at least according to his own intentions, a post-Kantian thinker who took seriously Kant’s critique of dogmatic metaphysics and criticized his contemporaries, claiming that

[o]ften philosophical systems that are chronologically later than Kant contain nothing more than the Kantian philosophy itself, and what they contain that goes ‘further’ [than Kant] is still for the most part a return to the old metaphysics.²⁷

If Hegel’s defense of the proofs did indeed commit him to a form of pre-Kantian metaphysics, then by his own criterion, his system would be a failure. At the very least, it should be admitted that Harrelson’s attempt to use Hegel’s account of the proof as the means by which to undercut the supposedly “unjust emphasis on Hegel’s relationship to Kant”²⁸ characteristic of non-metaphysical readings of Hegel is peculiar if not misguided. Nowhere does Hegel address Kant with greater frequency or at greater length than in the context of discussing the proofs. Admittedly, none of this proves that Hegel is in fact a

²⁵ In Full: “Often philosophical systems that are chronologically later than Kant contain nothing more than the Kantian philosophy itself, and what they contain that goes ‘further’ [than Kant] is still for the most part a return to the old metaphysics.”(Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 31, editor’s interpolation.) The implication, of course, is that Hegel certainly did not advocate a return to pre-Kantian metaphysics.

²⁶ “We know quite well, of course, that one can build castles in the air, but that does not bring them into existence. Thus the argument has a popular appeal, which is why Kant has, in general judgment, produced a refutation [of the ontological argument].”(Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:179 [114.]

²⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 31 [38.]

²⁸ Harrelson, *Descartes to Hegel*, 2.

post-Kantian philosopher, but to emphasize the relation to Kant in the context of Hegel's discussion of the proofs is hardly unjust.

Due to the inadequacies of both metaphysical and non-metaphysical readings of Hegel's system, scholars like James Kreines have suggested that

we should be wary of the idea that a fault-line between metaphysical and non-metaphysical claims is an intrinsic feature of Hegel's own Philosophy, rather than an artifact created by viewing Hegel through the lens of commitments or ambitions in the contemporary debate.²⁹

As Kreines points out, "anti-metaphysical views – such as positivism, ordinary language philosophy, and their descendants – are currently *controversial*, and do not enjoy anything like the status of philosophical orthodoxy."³⁰

While I agree with this assessment in principle, there is still a central problem that must be resolved. Hegel's relation to Kant is not an external issue that can be shunted aside insofar as he explicitly understands himself as a post-Kantian thinker. It is thus necessary to indicate, if only in a preliminary manner, how and why Hegel can be considered a post-Kantian philosopher despite his insistence on continuing to do metaphysics and ontology.

According to a reading of Kant's philosophy that is popular amongst both analytic philosophers and neo-Kantians, the significance of Kant's Copernican turn is that philosophy must be limited to epistemology and abandon metaphysics and ontology. Given this reading of Kant, to claim that one can still pursue metaphysics and ontology after Kant without falling prey to dogmatism is bound to appear like a contradiction. This reading of Kant, however, is dubious and is indeed itself an artifact of interpretive bias.

²⁹ Kreines, "Changing the Debate," 469.

³⁰ Ibid.

While Kant certainly rejects *dogmatic* metaphysics, he himself explicitly identifies metaphysics with the comprehensive systematic project of philosophy as such, his own project included.³¹ Similarly, far from eschewing ontology, he explicitly claims ontology to be a fundamental part of his own metaphysical project.³² What then is at stake for Kant, as well as for his German Idealist successors like Hegel, is not the rejection, but the transformation of the meaning of metaphysics and ontology. What is at stake, in other words, is the sense and radicality of the Copernican turn.

Kant's Copernican Turn and Metaphysics

In a certain way, it is peculiar that Kant has come to be seen as the paradigm of the anti-metaphysical or non-metaphysical view given that he certainly did not even shy away from using the word 'metaphysics' in the titles of his own works. Far from regarding metaphysics as *nonsense*, he claims that it was the very fate of reason to pursue metaphysics,³³ asserting, "[t]hat the human mind would someday entirely give up metaphysical investigations is just as little to be expected, as that we would someday gladly stop all breathing as never to take in impure air."³⁴ Indeed, the aim of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and his transcendental system in general is to establish the possibility of

³¹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer, and Allen W. Wood. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999) A 841/B 869.

³² See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A 845-6 /B 873-5 and Immanuel Kant, "What Real Progress has Metaphysics Made?" in *Theoretical Writings after 1781*, trans. Gary Hatfield, Michael Friedman, Henry Allison and Peter Heath. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 20:261.

³³ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A vii.

³⁴ Immanuel Kant, "Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics that will be Able to Come Forward as a Science." In *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, trans. Gary Hatfield, Michael Friedman, Henry Allison and Peter Heath (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4:367.

metaphysics³⁵ and place it at last on a secure foundation such that it can “enter upon the secure path of science.”³⁶

According to Kant, “[m]etaphysics must be a science [*Wissenschaft*],”³⁷ i.e., a comprehensive body of knowledge that is systematically organized under a single idea.³⁸ What Kant rejected was not metaphysics, but the old dogmatic metaphysics on the one hand and empiricism on the other, insofar as *both*, according to Kant, led to skepticism and thus undermined metaphysics and its progress, bringing it to naught.

On the one hand, the old dogmatic metaphysics claimed possession of *a priori* principles and categories, i.e., ontology or *metaphysica generalis* and “presume[d] to offer synthetic *a priori* cognitions of things in general in a systematic doctrine.”³⁹ It then sought to apply these categories beyond the bounds of experience to the highest ideas of reason, i.e., the objects of *metaphysica specialis*, i.e., psychology, cosmology and theology (or man, world and God) and presumed thereby to gain knowledge of freedom, the immortality of the soul and God. Yet, in making claims regarding objects that transcend all possible experience for finite rational agents, metaphysics found itself inevitably trapped in metaphysical illusions and prey to antinomies, i.e., different metaphysical systems found themselves making contradictory claims that follow from seemingly equally legitimate arguments and basic principles. Insofar as metaphysics was concerned with objects that are beyond the bounds of all possible experience, however, these conflicting claims admitted of no empirical or experiential adjudication. Such

³⁵ See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A xii.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, B xiv.

³⁷ Kant, *Prolegomena*, 4:365.

³⁸ See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 832/B 860.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, A 247 / B 303.

antinomies lead, then, to skepticism regarding the sphere of metaphysics and indeed the whole of human knowledge.

Empiricism, by contrast, claimed that all of our knowledge is either merely analytic or else *a posteriori*, i.e., comes from experience, and thus claims that the supposed *a priori* principles and concepts of *metaphysica generalis* are

...really nothing but a bastard of the imagination, which, impregnated by experience, and having brought certain representations under the law of association, passes off the resulting subjective necessity (i.e., habit) for an objective necessity.⁴⁰

If carried through consistently, however, this would result in a *thorough-going* skepticism; for all synthetic *a priori* cognition would be deprived of objective validity, such that the empirical sciences and even the propositions of mathematics would succumb to skeptical doubts. Indeed, experience itself would be impossible; for without universal and necessary principles, nothing would remain to order and connect impressions and no objects would be given for cognition.⁴¹

Given the untenability of such skepticism, particularly in light of the success of the modern empirical sciences, the following questions arise: What are the conditions of the possibility of the empirical sciences? What are the conditions of the possibility of mathematics? How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible? The last question is, of course, directly tied to the question of the possibility, scope and limits of metaphysics. Kant's attempt to answer these questions leads to his Copernican turn.

⁴⁰ Kant, *Prolegomena*, 4:258.

⁴¹ Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 5.

Kant enacts this turn by suggesting that we follow the example of the methodology of the modern empirical sciences. What the scientific method demonstrates is not the impossibility or dispensability of a priori concepts, but to the contrary, that

[r]eason has insight only into what it itself produces according to its own design; that it must take the lead with principles for its judgments according to constant laws and compel nature to answer its questions, rather than letting nature guide its movement... for otherwise accidental observations, made according to no previously designed plan, can never connect up into a necessary law, which is yet what reason seeks and requires.⁴²

We can thus make sense of why the epigraph that opens the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* comes from Francis Bacon. The substance of Kant's Copernican turn, the experiment whereby we overcome both dogmatism and skepticism, consists in rejecting the claim that our concepts must simply conform to objects and assuming instead that it is the objects which must first conform to our concepts.

The lesson which Kant draws from his Copernican turn is that we can only have theoretical knowledge of objects as *appearances*, i.e., as given to us as structured by the forms of intuition (space and time) and the categories of the understanding (causality, necessity, substance, etc.) These forms of intuition and categories of the understanding can be discovered insofar as they constitute the condition of the possibility of experience for all finite subjects. The forms of intuition and categories of the understanding have objective validity and give us objective knowledge insofar as they do not depend on the peculiar empirical constitution of our faculties but are the universal and necessary ground upon which any object could be given to a finite rational agent in the first place.

Now, the precise meaning and status of Kant's distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves remains highly controversial, and it is far from my intention to

⁴² Ibid., B xiii.

either resolve this debate here or to advocate a particular reading as the correct one. Indeed, I am convinced that Kant's conception of the thing-in-itself is inherently ambiguous and in tension with itself. Nonetheless, this tension and ambiguity are productive. This tension has been, if not resolved, at least developed and deepened by reading Kant's account of the appearance/thing-in-itself distinction as, on the one hand, a 'two-worlds' distinction, and on the other hand as a 'two-aspects' distinction.

On the one hand, Kant's appearance/thing-in-itself distinction has been understood along traditional metaphysical lines according to which there is the world of appearances on the one hand and the true world, the world of the thing-in-itself or things-in-themselves on the other. Such an interpretation, however, leaves Kant open to a number of fundamental difficulties that may be summed up by Jacobi's famous statement that "without that presupposition [of the thing-in-itself] I could not enter into the system, with it I could not stay within it."⁴³ The problem is not only that the thing-in-itself must be ascribed some kind of causal role in relation to our sensations, but that the very idea of distinguishing between our knowledge and things in themselves is problematic insofar as the thing in itself is granted the status of *truth*. The problem, of course, is precisely that the *Critique of Pure Reason* claims to give an account of knowledge in distinction from the truth, and yet at the same time claims to give a *true* account of knowledge. In other words, read in this manner, the distinction between appearances and things in themselves would result in self-contradiction and skepticism.

⁴³ Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel Allwill*, trans George Di Giovanni Montreal (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 335 [223.]

On the other hand, however, Kant's nominal definition of truth seems to contradict this reading and allow for a far more radical interpretation of the Copernican turn. According to Kant, truth is nominally defined as "the agreement of cognition with its object."⁴⁴ Truth is here *not* defined as the object in distinction from cognition, but is understood as a matter of the cognitive relation itself. According to Allison, then, this entails that "that *cognition* of any kind requires that an object somehow be given."⁴⁵ Truth is thus conceived as radically context-dependent and as always taking place between (at least potential) 'subjects' and 'objects'. The notion of a 'God's eye view' of things, according to which the only options are "x really has property y (may be judged from a God's eye view to have it) or x only seems to us to have it,"⁴⁶ is thus given up as illegitimate and no longer taken as "the norm in terms of which human cognition is measured."⁴⁷ Kant's distinction between appearances and things in themselves, according to this reading, is to "be understood as two ways of *considering things*," namely as the object is given to finite rational agents and as it could be given to a purely creative intuitive intellect (i.e. God). What is radical about this account is that the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves is itself formulated and understood as a distinction that arises in, for and to rational finite agents in and through the course of experience rather than understood as something imposed on us from outside. Granted, according to Kant we necessarily think of things in both of these ways, but we only know

⁴⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A58/B82.

⁴⁵ Henry E. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 77.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, .xvi.

them as appearances, i.e., in the manner of finite rational agents. Moreover, both ways of thinking of things are equally legitimate and yet distinct.

These two opposed ways of understanding Kant's thing-in-itself / appearance distinction are significant both with respect to Kant's claims regarding metaphysics and the question of the radicality of the Copernican turn. Taken according to the two-world reading, Kant's system does indeed, as Hegel seems to imply, appear to devolve into a kind of empiricism and skepticism. As Kant himself claims, however,

if empiricism itself becomes dogmatic in regard to the ideas (as frequently happens), and boldly denies whatever lies beyond the sphere of its intuitive cognitions, then it itself makes the same mistake of immodesty, which is all the more blamable here, because it causes irreparable disadvantage to the practical interest of reason.⁴⁸

It is not sufficient, on Kant's grounds, to simply *negatively* delimit the scope of reason, for experience itself show the need of reason to exceed such negative limits (*Schranken*), i.e., the need of metaphysics remains. Instead, this limit must be an enabling limit (*Grenze*).⁴⁹

Although Kant does not think that we can gain *theoretical* knowledge of the subjects of *metaphysica specialis*, he does claim that we can not only make regulative use of the three transcendental ideas (i.e., the psychological, cosmological and theological ideas)⁵⁰ but that we are even rationally justified in holding certain *beliefs* (*Glauben*) regarding such regulative objects for practical purposes insofar as these beliefs are claimed to be necessary in order to rationally and self-consistently make sense of our moral experience. In this way, indeed, Kant attempts to justify (albeit only for practical

⁴⁸ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 471 / B 499.

⁴⁹ Kant, *Prolegomena*, 4:351-7.

⁵⁰ See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A671/B699.

purposes and in regulative terms) what essentially amounts to the orthodox Leibnizian-Wolfian metaphysical picture of his youth regarding, for example, the eternal existence of God, Gods transcendence over the causally determined world, and the personal immortality of the soul.

Likewise, Kant arguably does not dispense with *metaphysica generalis*, i.e., with ontology, but maintains it, albeit by transforming it. Granted, the two-aspect reading of Kant's appearance / thing-in-itself distinction is often favored by contemporary Kant scholars insofar as this account is taken to lead to "an epistemologically based understanding of transcendental idealism"⁵¹ that is non-metaphysical⁵² "in the sense of eschewing ontological commitment to any supernatural entity, and perhaps in the additional sense of eschewing any ontological commitment whatsoever."⁵³ Yet a double-aspect interpretation of Kant can also be used to provide a *thoroughly* ontological account of Kant's thought, as Heidegger's *Kantbuch* amply demonstrates.⁵⁴ Admittedly, when taken in this way the very terms in which 'ontology' is understood in the first place are transformed. The question of ontology is no longer the question of what 'is' independent of its being given in some way or other, but rather the question of what *kinds* of beings there are and how they must be related such that experience could arise for us in the first place and in the manner in which it does. Read in this way, the 'modesty' that Kant urges

⁵¹ Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 16.

⁵² Stephen Priest, "Subjectivity and Objectivity." *Hegel's Critique of Kant*. Ed. Stephen Priest (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 110.

⁵³ Paul W. Franks, *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 16.

⁵⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 11.: "The *Critique of Pure Reason* has nothing to do with a 'theory of knowledge.'" Ibid, 10.: "It is ontological knowledge, i.e., the a priori synthesis, 'for the sake of which the whole critique is undertaken.'"

in replacing the old ontology with the transcendental analytic should not be understood as negative, i.e., as entailing the denial of ontology, but as thoroughly transformative such that the *transscendentalis* of the analytic replaces the old *metaphysica generalis* and allows for the fulfillment of the needs of *metaphysica specialis*.⁵⁵ What is radical here is not that philosophy eschews metaphysics, but that ‘ontology’ and ‘epistemology’ cease to be two distinct ‘disciplines’ or ‘topics’ in philosophy and are instead joined together and are mediated immanently by and as experience itself.⁵⁶ It is experience that provides the drive for and supplies the satisfaction of *metaphysica specialis*, not some outside source or standard.

Hegel and Metaphysics after Kant

It must be admitted that Hegel, like Fichte and Schelling, often provides a less than charitable interpretation of Kant’s system, and in particular tends to attribute to Kant the kind of two-world conception of the appearance / thing-in-itself distinction, the sort that contemporary scholars are liable to reject as being “wholly at variance with the anti-metaphysical project of CPR.”⁵⁷ Nonetheless, these readings must be understood as emerging in response to Kant’s *Open Letter* of 1799, which, due to a number of contingent factors, was interpreted by the German Idealists as showing that Kant himself actually endorsed the traditional ‘two-world’ interpretation of his system. In large part, it

⁵⁵ Compare Immanuel Kant, *Notes and Fragments*, trans., Curtis Bowman, Paul Guyer and Frederick Rauscher (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 18:11.

⁵⁶ Cf. Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1956), 3.: “Modern thought has realized considerable progress by reducing the existent to the series of appearances which manifest it.”

⁵⁷ Priest, “Subjectivity and Objectivity in Kant and Hegel,” 110.

was *because* “the German idealists adopt[ed] what is in effect a Two Aspect view”⁵⁸ and sought to preserve what they took to be the significance of the Copernican turn and its radicality as their own view in contrast to what they took to be the ‘letter’ of Kant that they criticized Kant and rejected the notion of the thing-in-itself as they judged him to have endorsed it.⁵⁹ After all, if one understands truth as happening precisely *in the relation* of subject and object, then the very notion of a thing, i.e., an object, in itself is strictly unintelligible. Likewise, and in the service of seeking to fulfill Kant’s claim to scientific systematicity, they rejected Kant’s overtly traditional theological commitments as incompatible with the radicality of Kant’s Copernican. According to their interpretation, Kant’s Copernican turn, when understood in terms of its original

⁵⁸ Franks, *All or Nothing*, 145.

⁵⁹ While Fichte had always been critical of certain readings and understandings of Kant’s system, and in particular of the concept of the ‘thing-in-itself’ these criticisms were aimed precisely at what he took to be an illegitimate metaphysical two-worlds reading of the Kantian system. (See Johann Gottlieb, *Science of Knowledge (Wissenschaftslehre): With the First and Second Introductions*, trans. Peter L. Heath, and John Lachs (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), 58.) In 1799, however, Kant released his *Open Letter* publically claiming that Fichte’s system was guilty of “passing over into metaphysics” (Immanuel Kant, *Correspondence*, trans. Arnulf Zweig. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 12:370.) Kant’s judgment in the *Open Letter*, however, is highly problematic. First, the judgment of this letter was not based on a careful reading and engagement with Fichte’s writings, but on uncharitable and hostile second-hand reports (Cf. Franks, *All or Nothing*, 15.) Second, Kant’s letter actually involved a misrepresentation of his own standpoint regarding his system and its completeness. (For a detailed account of the peculiarities of the letter, see also Eckart Förster, “Fichte, Beck and Schelling in Kant’s ‘Opus Postumum,’” *Kant and His Influence*. (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005), 146-169, particularly 159-160.) On the basis of this letter, however, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel concluded that the position that Fichte had previously attributed to a shallow misinterpretation of the Kantian system was in fact Kant’s own considered position. (Cf. Franks, *All or Nothing*, 161.) Since their commitment to Kant was always a commitment to what they understood as the revolutionary *spirit* of the Kantian project rather than its *letter*, they simply concluded that Kant *ought* to have taken the position that they had originally attempted to attribute to him and continued on.

possibility, consisted in the claim that metaphysics need not and ought not posit supersensible entities *at all*, i.e., not even in a practical sense.⁶⁰

Now, the danger in taking up this position is that, in eschewing reference to an absolute beyond the limits of possible human experience, the individual themselves might themselves simply and immediately be identified with the absolute. This leads to a number of absurd consequences that Kant avoids by appealing to the distinction between the world as it is given and known by finite rational agents on the one hand, and the world as it could conceivably be given to and known by a infinite creative intuitive intellect on the other. Since we are finite and do not immediately create the world and ourselves, we can extend our knowledge and know objects only insofar as they are in part passively and receptively given to us in sensible intuition and only then cognized by means of the categories of the understanding.⁶¹ An infinite, purely creative intuitive intellect, by contrast, would have no need for such categories, for its intuitive understanding “would not represent given objects.” Instead, this divine understanding would be that “through whose representation the objects would themselves at the same time be given, or produced.”⁶²

It is clear that human beings cannot immediately and unproblematically claim such an intuitive creative intellect for their own particular finite selves.⁶³ Human beings

⁶⁰ See Franks, *All or Nothing*, 391.

⁶¹ Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 150.

⁶² *Ibid.*, B 145

⁶³ Admittedly, both Fichte and Schelling do claim that we have access to intellectual intuition and make this the foundation of their systems. Nonetheless, this claim must be understood as tempered by the fact that, although both took the absolute I of an intuitive intellect to be foundational, they also both insist on the distinction between the finite I of natural human beings and the absolute I and thereby attempt to avoid the following sorts of absurdities. (Cf. Franks, *All or Nothing*, 161 and 358.) Hegel, by

obviously do not immediately create the world, and to suppose that nothing but introspection is necessary in order to know something of the world is to ascribe to human beings the kind of *a priori* knowledge of nature and history that, as Hegel himself remarks, “everyone rightly regards as folly.”⁶⁴ As Emil Fackenheim claims,

[i]t is a widespread view that such thinkers as Fichte and Hegel tried to deduce the world by means of pure reason. This is, of all the misunderstandings of their thought, the most disastrous.⁶⁵

As Franks has argued, an essential aspect of Kant’s Copernican turn was not only that Kant barred access to knowledge of objects transcending the bounds of all possible experience, but also that his attack on dogmatism allowed him to affirm the autonomy and legitimacy of modern science and the necessity that human beings appeal to the *a posteriori*, to experience, in order to advance our knowledge.⁶⁶ The success of the modern empirical sciences in particular is due to the fact that we have given up attempts to provide a purely *a priori* account of nature and instead proceed by means of experimentation and empirical investigation. Kant is thus, as he insists, an empirical

contrast, reject the appeal to this sort of immediate intuition as an untenable presupposition that furthermore blocks the way to the realization of philosophy as science [*Wissenschaft*]. See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Terry Pinkard (2013) <http://terrypinkard.weebly.com/phenomenology-of-spirit-page.html>, §13-16 [9:15-18] and §27 [9:24.] Whether or not these comments were originally aimed at Schelling, or merely Schelling’s would-be-followers as Hegel himself claimed (See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel: the Letters*, trans. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) 80 [95.]), both the substance of Schelling’s reply (see *ibid.*, 80 [107.]) and the fact that Hegel thereafter broke off correspondence with Schelling suggest that Hegel became aware that his criticisms did in fact, even if initially unintentionally, constitute an indictment of Schelling’s position.

⁶⁴ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*, trans. Robert R Williams (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 177 [154.] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, 177 [155.]

⁶⁵ Fackenheim, *Religious Dimension In Hegel’s Thought*, 226.

⁶⁶ See Paul W. Franks, *All or Nothing*, 20.

realist, i.e., he claims that human beings as finite rational knowers and agents are genuinely receptive to things of outer sense, that we do not *simply* create the world, and that there are objects ‘outside’ us in space and time. Philosophy cannot thus pretend to provide complete insight into the empirical realm on the basis of purely *a priori* concepts, much less dictate to the sciences the results of its investigations.

At least according to his own explicit proclamations, and despite rejecting the thing-in-itself and claiming the attainment of absolute knowing, Hegel also rejects as absurd the claim that his idealism entails that “whatever I have before me depends on my will”⁶⁷ Likewise, despite the persistence of rumors to the contrary, his *Philosophy of Nature* was *not* intended to provide a purely *a priori* account of nature independent of the empirical sciences. Indeed, Hegel insists that

[n]ot only must philosophy be in agreement with our empirical knowledge of Nature, but the *origin* and *formation* of the Philosophy of Nature presupposes and is conditioned by the empirical sciences.⁶⁸

That and how Hegel can claim the attainment of absolute knowing and yet not avoid such absurdities will be explained in the body of the dissertation itself. The fundamental point of Hegel’s appropriation of the proofs, as we shall see, is that in claiming absolute knowing, human beings are not therefore God. For the moment the essential point is that, at least on a certain interpretation of Kant and the Copernican turn, despite pursuing metaphysics and ontology, Hegel need not be understood as a pre-Kantian *dogmatic* metaphysician, but may be comprehended as a thoroughly post-

⁶⁷ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8*, trans. Robert R Williams (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 177 [154.]

⁶⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature; Being Part Two of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), §246 r.

Kantian philosopher. Indeed, insofar as one entertains the standpoint from which ontology and epistemology are not two separate disciplines but essentially united, the attainment of an absolute standpoint comes to appear not just possible, but necessary and even unassailable.

Hegel and Contemporary Continental Philosophy

With some justice, and in accordance with the self-characterization of many of its leading figures,⁶⁹ the history of continental philosophy may be understood as the history of attempts to think against or past or beyond Hegel. As Foucault once wrote:

our age, whether through logic or epistemology, whether through Marx or through Nietzsche, is attempting to flee Hegel... 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.⁷⁰

This antagonism to Hegel is not accidental, but follows from the fact that he is commonly understood within this tradition as marking the consummation or completion of what is called 'the history of metaphysics,' i.e., of a particular way of understanding the project

⁶⁹ Cf. Jurgen Habermas, *Postmetaphysical Thinking*, trans. William Mark Hohengarten (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 29.: "I suspect that our situation is not essentially different from that of the first generation of Hegel's disciples." or see Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Allen Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 77.: "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." or Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), ix.: "All these signs may be attributed to a generalized anti-Hegelianism."

⁷⁰ Michel Foucault, "Discourse on Language," in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A.M.S. Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 235.

of philosophy.⁷¹ The title ‘anti-Hegelianism’ thus announces a commitment on the part of thinkers within the continental tradition both to challenge and to reformulate the project of philosophy and its traditional concepts and categories in a manner that escapes the confines of Hegel’s system.

As Hegel explains in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the task or project of philosophy is to bring itself to the point when it “can lay aside the title ‘love of knowing’ [*Liebe zum Wissen*] and be *actual knowing* [*wirkliches Wissen*].”⁷² This is no merely personal or peculiar mistranslation of the Greek word φιλοσοφία, but follows from a tradition dating back to the Greeks themselves and at least as far as Plato and Aristotle, both of whom claim that the love of wisdom and love of knowledge are equivalent.⁷³ Insofar as the *philia* or *eros* of philosophy is understood as the love or passion for knowledge, the end is not just any sort of knowledge (i.e., not the sort of thing that simply passes as knowledge, mere *doxa*) but essential, unconditional or absolute

⁷¹ Consider, for example, John Sallis, *Delimitations: Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 4.: “It is especially important to call attention to the way in which metaphysics, the nature of metaphysics, is to be understood here, a way which is rooted in Continental philosophy since Hegel... metaphysics is taken to have a history that is not simply extrinsic to it – that is, it is taken as something which was founded, which has run a certain course, and which since Hegel has come to a kind of end.”

⁷² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶5 [9:11.]

⁷³ In the *Phaedo*, Plato takes the term *philo-sophia*, love of wisdom, and *philo-mathesis*, the love of knowledge, as equivalent.(see Plato, “Phaedo” in *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, trans. Harold North Fowler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), 82d, ff.) Of course Plato still questions whether the origin and basic principle of reality – the Good – is teachable or even knowable, suggesting via his allegory of the cave that the good is beyond truth, knowledge and being. Aristotle, on the other hand, seems to have had no such reservations insofar as he made the first principle into the proper object of philosophy, claiming that it is both what is most knowable and identical to the good. It is not surprising, then, that the second book of his *Metaphysics* openly declared that “philosophy is rightly called a knowledge of truth [*philosophia epistemne tes aletheias*].”(Aristotle *Metaphysics: Books 1-9*, tran. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933), I:1 993b 20.)

knowledge. This absolute knowing is likewise not the knowledge of just any ‘truth’ (e.g., particular mathematical theorems, the color and number of tiles on my ceiling), but the essential, absolute or unconditional *Truth*. What is distinctive about Hegel is not this aim, but that he appears to have *actually* achieved this goal and achieved it in such a way that his position precludes any possible *philosophical* rejoinder. As Franz Rosenzweig remarks,

The philosophical task... reaches its goal in the precise moment where knowledge of the All comes to a conclusion in itself. For it must indeed be called a conclusion when this knowledge no longer includes merely its object, the All, but also includes itself with no remainder, with no remainder at least according to its own claims and its own particular modalities. This happened when Hegel enclosed the history of philosophy in the system.⁷⁴

The question thus arises as to whether and how philosophy is even possible after Hegel if, like Rosenzweig and Foucault, one rejects Hegel’s purported completion of the project of philosophy. Thus Foucault asks,

can one still philosophize where Hegel is no longer possible? Can any philosophy continue to exist that is no longer Hegelian? Are the non-Hegelian elements in our thought necessarily non-philosophical? Is that which is antiphilosophical necessarily non-Hegelian?⁷⁵

This is not to say that Hegel’s importance and legacy is due to his popularity or acceptance – there are, after all, few who would call themselves ‘Hegelians’ today – but quite the contrary; the importance of Hegel in the continental tradition is demonstrated precisely by the fact that one philosopher after another finds him- or herself faced with the task of refuting Hegel. But then, as William Desmond writes, “[t]he fact that Hegel

⁷⁴ Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans., Barbara E. Galli (Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 2005), 12.

⁷⁵ Foucault, “Discourse on Language,” pp. 235-6.

*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.”*⁷⁶

Why is it so difficult to refute Hegel? While providing an answer to this question is, in a certain sense, the work of this entire dissertation, it is possible to give an initial indication of an answer by way of an account of the project and method of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

Hegel’s Phenomenology and its Method

The aim of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is to provide “[t]he concept of pure science and its deduction”⁷⁷ in and through the attainment of the standpoint of absolute knowing. Insofar as “[p]ure science... presupposes the liberation from the opposition of consciousness,”⁷⁸ the *Phenomenology of Spirit* remains the necessary presupposition of Hegel’s system of philosophical science. Admittedly, Hegel’s claim to have attained the standpoint of absolute knowing necessarily sounds peculiar insofar as the standpoint of absolute knowing is, as Hegel himself suggests, almost an inversion of the standpoint of everyday consciousness;⁷⁹ for natural consciousness lives in the form or shape [*Gestalt*] of finite consciousness.

All shapes of finite consciousness are finite insofar as such shapes of consciousness, whether implicitly or explicitly, posit and presuppose as absolute the

⁷⁶ William Desmond, ed., *Introduction to Hegel and His Critics*. (New York: State University of New York, Albany, 1989), viii.

⁷⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 29 [21:33.]

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶26 [9:23.]

distinction between the (absolute) truth on the one hand and knowledge on the other.⁸⁰ A finite shape of consciousness, in other words, distinguishes the truth, the in-itself, the *object* of knowledge, from the *concept* of that object, the object as it is ‘for-us’, or our knowledge itself. Hegel’s goal is thus set from the beginning. This goal is the attainment of a point where knowledge does not need to go beyond itself insofar as “concept corresponds to the object, and object to the concept.”⁸¹ Yet according to Hegel, this goal ought not, and indeed cannot, be reached by presupposing the nullity and falsity of all shapes of finite consciousness and merely insisting on starting out directly from absolute knowing.⁸² To the contrary, Hegel insists that it is necessary to provide a systematically organized and demonstrated immanent critique of all of the essential shapes of finite consciousness in order to demonstrate both how and that, by starting from the simplest shape of finite consciousness, consciousness is lead by its own immanent necessity to the attainment of the standpoint of absolute knowing.⁸³

On the surface, it might seem that in insisting that he provide an immanent critique of the shapes of finite consciousness, Hegel sets himself an impossible task. Precisely because shapes of finite consciousness by definition insist that knowledge and truth are absolutely distinct, i.e., that our knowledge lies on one side and the truth lies on the other, to claim to provide an *immanent* critique, and thus to claim to demonstrate the *untruth* of a shape of finite consciousness, would appear to be question-begging. It would appear, in other words, to require that one compare our knowledge on the one hand to the truth in-itself on the other in order to evaluate whether the shape of consciousness was

⁸⁰ See Ibid., ¶¶74-5 [9:54-5.]

⁸¹ Ibid., ¶80 [9:57.]

⁸² Cf. Ibid., ¶6 [9:12] , 10 [9:14] , and 69-70 [9:47-48.]

⁸³ Cf. Ibid ¶12 [9:15], 16 [9:17], 26 [9:22-3], 79-80 [9:57-8] and 89 [9:61-2.]

adequate to the truth in-itself. The finitude of a shape of consciousness, however, consists in the fact that it is constitutive of that shape of consciousness that according to it such a comparison is impossible. For this reason, it would appear that the claim of absolute knowing would always be faced with skeptical doubts.⁸⁴

Hegel's resolution to this problem is the 'method' of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and this method consists precisely in turning the skepticism back upon itself.⁸⁵ Every shape of finite consciousness claims to offer a true account of knowledge. Now, since Hegel asserts that the *Phenomenology* must demonstrate the truth of the identity of knowing and truth or concept and object, it seems impossible to establish with respect to anything whatsoever that the object of knowledge is itself identical with its concept. Yet, there is at least one object that does lie, by finite consciousness's own admission, on the side of consciousness, namely knowledge itself. The *Sache selbst*⁸⁶ of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is "the truth of knowledge"⁸⁷ and this object is not something given to us over and against appearances, but rather is given in and through appearances or experience as the very manner of our own self-conscious conception of knowing. In this way, each finite shape of consciousness provides the criterion by which it may be judged. The *Phenomenology* itself, then, merely displays how each shape of finite

⁸⁴ See Ibid., ¶81 [9:58] and 83 [9:58-9.]

⁸⁵ Indeed, according to Hegel, "in directing itself to the entire range of phenomenal consciousness, skepticism makes spirit for the first time competent to investigate what is the truth." (Ibid., ¶78 [9:56]) The skepticism that Hegel has in mind here is the extreme skepticism of the post-Kantians. While skepticism remains for Kant a merely academic or scholastic problem (cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B xxxii.), for those who follow Jacobi, skepticism is also a practical, lived problem, i.e., nihilism (See Franks, *All or Nothing*, 194.)

⁸⁶ I.e., that which is neither merely subject nor merely object, but the subject-object relation.

⁸⁷ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶83 [9:58.]

knowing shows itself to be inadequate insofar as the knowledge which is actually present in each shape of consciousness actually exceeds its own limitations.

Any supposedly true and yet finite account of knowledge, insofar as it is a shape of finite consciousness, posits a distinction between its knowledge on the one hand and the truth on the other.⁸⁸ In and through making this distinction, however, every shape of finite consciousness necessarily contradicts itself. Understood as a shape of consciousness, the very act of the positing the distinction between knowledge and truth is inherent to that shape's definition of knowledge and its claim to offer a true account of knowledge. In order to make this distinction between knowledge and truth so as to claim that its account of knowledge is a *true* account of knowledge, every finite shape of consciousness must thus illicitly claim knowledge of that which it at once insists is beyond and outside the limits of knowledge. The very act of positing a limitation between knowledge, i.e., what is merely 'for us', in distinction from the truth, i.e., the *object* of knowledge or the 'in-itself', is only possible insofar as this limitation has already been implicitly transcended.⁸⁹⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Ibid., ¶82 [9:58.]

⁸⁹ Ibid., ¶84 [9:59.]

⁹⁰ Hegel's method in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* may be understood as a generalization of Jacobi's criticism of Kant. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, however, Hegel does not proceed directly to this criticism, but instead writes: "The absolute alone is true, that is, it is the true which is alone the absolute. One can reject this conclusion if one distinguishes between a cognition which does not cognize the absolute as science wants to do but is nonetheless true, and cognition itself, which although it may be incapable of grasping the absolute, may still be capable of grasping some other truths. However, we gradually come to see that this kind of back and forth blather merely leads to an very murky distinction between an absolute truth and a truth of some other kind."(Ibid., ¶75 [9:54.]) This suggests that in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel is willing to at least entertain the possibility of interpreting Kant in terms of a double-aspect account. Admittedly, Hegel rejects the talk of two kinds of truth, but as we shall see he manages to reinstall something like a double-aspect approach by means of the distinction

Furthermore then, according to Hegel, the critique of shapes of consciousness is not merely something that ‘we’ externally apply to a shape of consciousness, but the very act of consciousness itself in its experience. Consciousness itself, insofar as it knows something, both distinguishes itself from something and relates itself to something. In distinguishing itself from something, however, consciousness is reflected back into itself precisely by distinguishing itself from its object. In other words, every shape of finite consciousness involves self-consciousness in its very act of distinguishing itself from and relating itself to the object of its knowledge.⁹¹ Moreover, consciousness not only posits the distinction between itself and its object, between knowing and truth, but also overcomes this distinction, i.e., it comes to know something, namely its object. In and through the experience of knowing, however, a shape of finite consciousness is itself transformed.⁹²

As H.S. Harris points out,⁹³ the process by means of which a shape of consciousness may be understood as having passed from one shape of consciousness to another is fairly easy to grasp, at least in the negative sense, when we think of it, as Hegel himself implies, on the model of the process of our ‘education’ understood in the broadest sense of the word. In the course of our experience we take up and (at least implicitly) construct particular conceptual frameworks by means of which we understand

between truth and correctness. Given this, it is unfair to suggest that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* simply proceeds from a misunderstanding of the Kantian project. In the end, admittedly, he will conclude that Kant’s account does fall into the contradiction of a two-worlds account. This takes place not at the beginning, but at the height of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in “Conscience, Evil and Its Forgiveness” and at the conclusion of Kant’s system in the idea of the Good.

⁹¹ See *ibid.*, ¶85 [9:59-60.]

⁹² *Ibid.*, ¶86 [9:60.]

⁹³ See H.S. Harris, *Hegel: Phenomenology and System* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1995), pp.16-20.

the world. Occasionally, however, our experience throws this conceptual framework out of whack; the world does not turn out as we would expect given the framework within which we are operating. In that case, what we previously thought to be the truth turns out to be merely our own conception of the world and not the world itself. In this way, we come to alter our framework for understanding the world.

The difference between experience in this ordinary sense and in the *Phenomenology* is that ordinarily we are focused on the *object* of knowledge, rather than the relation of experience in which the object arises, i.e., rather than having knowledge itself as our object. Accordingly, the transition from one shape of consciousness to another in what we ordinarily understand by experience is taken as arising by means of a more or less contingent and external encounter with some new object. By contrast, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* we comprehend the movement from one standpoint as arising according to the necessity of a standpoint's own immanent development and self-critique.⁹⁴ This necessity is not just the immanent unfolding of the self-contradiction that is implicitly contained in every finite shape of consciousness, but is the necessity of the movement from one shape of consciousness to the next.

From the standpoint of the phenomenological observer, its own object is the relation of knowledge. That which is initially the in-itself as the object of the observed shape of consciousness is, for the phenomenological observer, the immanent standard and

⁹⁴ See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶¶87-88 [9:60-61.] The recognition of the necessity of this movement, a factor which is not present to natural consciousness, in part follows from the fact that natural consciousness in its everyday activity is not explicitly focused on the relation between knowledge and truth, i.e., its experience, but on the truth or *object* of knowledge. Accordingly, when the object turns out to be something different than consciousness first supposed, this appears to be a discovery that comes to consciousness from outside it.

criterion of that shape of consciousness. The movement of that shape of consciousness by means of which it passes over to the object is for the phenomenological observer, the transition by means of which that which to begin with is only for-us, thus comes to be known by or is *for* the observed consciousness itself. Because the observed consciousness does not observe *this movement* as its own immanent self-contradiction, the contradiction of the shape of consciousness appears to come by way of an external object, while that what this consciousness initially took to be the truth or the in-itself is now downgraded to the status of merely being the for-itself or its knowledge of the truth. For the phenomenological observer, however, the new object, the new in-itself, arises as the result of the movement that is the experience that the observed consciousness undergoes. This new object, this new in-itself, is that which has become of the relation of the object of the observed consciousness in the movement that is the experience of the observed consciousness.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Ibid., ¶¶86-7 [9:60-61.] The question of how the ‘new object’ arises in the *Phenomenology* is one of the most vexing and yet central problems; for what is at stake is precisely Hegel’s claim regarding the *necessity* of the movement of the *Phenomenology* and thus its status as a science. Insofar as one limits oneself to the mere formal characterization of stage of consciousness, it is often difficult to see how and why the obvious historically informed wealth of content that is characteristic of Hegel’s account of each stage of consciousness arises from this formal account, much less how the next shape of consciousness and its distinctive object appears as a result. Part of the problem, as Hegel himself acknowledges, is that “the development of the *content*, or of the subject matter of special parts of philosophical science, falls directly within the development of consciousness which seems at first to be restricted to what is formal; 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*.” (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic, with the Zusätze: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, trans., T. F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), §25 r.) For this reason, the *Phenomenology* is, at least from a pedagogical point of view, hardly a useful introduction to Hegel’s system, for the explication of its movements is in fact more complicated than the development of this content in the system itself. Part of the problem, however, consists in the fact that it is

The various shapes of finite consciousness accordingly appear as a necessary serial progression that can only end with absolute knowing as the point at which the distinction between the in-itself and for-itself is overcome. Of course it appears in principle that this serial progression could be infinite. Indeed, given how astounding it sounds to claim that one has reached the standpoint of absolute knowing, one is liable to suspect that the goal of absolute knowing *could only be* an infinite – that is to say endless – project. This reaction, however, is at least partially based on a failure to comprehend that the unfolding of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as the development of the shapes of finite consciousness is fundamentally a matter of *Gestalt* shifts and these shifts involve reconceiving at each step *both* the nature of the subject *and* the nature of absolute truth.

This re-conception of the nature of the subject and absolute truth furthermore involves, implicitly in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* but explicitly in the system of

assumed that Hegel's *Phenomenology* ought to be understood as a purely a priori account, so that insofar as Hegel employs historical content, his account fails to be rigorously necessary and collapses into historical contingency. Hegel himself, however, insists that the *Phenomenology* itself presupposes that all of the shapes of consciousness have already not only historically appeared, but are already known to the reader of the *Phenomenology*, albeit as something that is recollected in the form of representation, not comprehended in the concept. The phenomenological observer thus already has these shapes of consciousness ready to hand, but they appear as a disorganized, contingent and disconnected mass. (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶¶28-31 [9:24-27.]) In passing from one shape of consciousness to the next, then, it is not necessary to invent the shape of consciousness *a priori*, but only to comprehend that and how the thought form which is necessary according to the progression from the previous stage that has *appeared* historically and was to begin with recollected by the phenomenological observer is now comprehended conceptually, i.e., as the embodiment of the necessary conceptual shape demanded as the result of the previous shape. Because these shapes of consciousness are to begin with immediate and abstract, however, it is only in religion and at the end of the *Phenomenology* that these successive stages are bound together in such a way that they are comprehended as a historical progression. (See *ibid.*, ¶¶679-682 [9:365-368] and ¶803 [9:430-1.]) The contingency of history is not thereby simply denied or negated, but it is comprehended and overcome. (*Ibid.*, ¶808 [9:433-4.])

philosophical-science, the transformation of fundamental conceptual and philosophical categories, including most centrally, the concepts of reason, freedom, and time.

Hegel, Reason and the Project of Philosophy

We are now in a position where it is possible to begin to glimpse how and why Hegel may be seen as so difficult to overcome. Most obviously, negatively speaking, it appears that Hegel's method in the *Phenomenology* guarantees beforehand that any attempt to formulate a philosophical position that is not that of absolute knowing will necessarily be self-defeating. This, however, is hardly enough of an explanation. To the contrary, insofar as Hegel's system is seen as depending on the claim that his *Phenomenology* provides a complete⁹⁶ and comprehensive⁹⁷ account of all the possible *essential* shapes of consciousness one might think that refuting Hegel's system would in practice be quite simple. It would seem trivially easy to just point to some shape of consciousness not covered in the *Phenomenology* in order to demonstrate that Hegel's position is not in fact absolute. But of course, matters are far from being so simple.

Hegel's system is certainly rationalistic through and through insofar as he takes reason itself to be 'ground'. Reason moreover, as this ground, is supposed to be a *self-grounding*, rationally comprehensive system. Yet, despite the fact that Hegel is understood as realizing the consummation of metaphysics, his position is thoroughly post-Kantian. Far from denying the irrational, Hegel insists (like those who came after

⁹⁶ See Ibid., ¶79 [9:56.]: "The necessary progression and interconnection of the forms of unreal consciousness will by itself bring to pass the *completion* of the series."

⁹⁷ See Ibid., ¶89 [9:61.]: "The experience of itself which consciousness goes through can, in accordance with its concept, comprehend nothing less than the entire system of consciousness, or the entire real of the truth of Spirit."

him) that finitude and contingency be faced head on. As Merleau-Ponty suggests, in this sense Hegel is actually the progenitor of later philosophical attempts to acknowledge contingency.⁹⁸ This is not to suggest that Hegel takes the contingent, finite, and irrational to be the ground or starting-point or the absolute end, only that contingency and finitude themselves become moments that are subsumed under Hegel's rational system.

Now, because Hegel's system both allows for and claims to comprehend contingency as a necessary moment of reason itself, to refute Hegel it is necessary to demonstrate that there is an *essential* difference between some supposedly novel shape of consciousness and those shapes of consciousness covered in the *Phenomenology*. Short of this, it is always possible in principle for a Hegelian to assert that some supposedly novel shape of consciousness, say the standpoint of Marxism, is just a variant of a shape of consciousness that Hegel discussed, such as, say, the master-slave relation. To demonstrate that a difference is *essential* rather than contingent, however, it is necessary to rationally ground that claim. It is not enough then to show that Hegel's system missed something or other, since any distinction between some one or other shape of consciousness that Hegel covers in the *Phenomenology* and some supposedly 'novel' shape of consciousness may be dismissed as an inessential and contingent difference. Instead, one would have to provide a rationally comprehensive account that even includes Hegel's system itself as a moment. But what rational framework could be more comprehensive than reason itself? We can thus make sense of Foucault's fear that, in thinking against Hegel and working out a position that stands against him, "our anti-Hegelianism is possibly one of his tricks directed against us, at the end of which he

⁹⁸ See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Hegel's Existentialism," in *Sense and Non-sense*, trans. H. L & P.A. Dreyfus. (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1948), 63.

stands, motionless, waiting for us.”⁹⁹ To work out a position is already to provide an account, i.e., to seek grounds. The alternative seems to be that one denies that there is any ground and starts with some contingency. But at that point, Foucault asks, can we even call this philosophy anymore?

The Centrality of the Proofs of God

As was mentioned above, the choice to discuss the proofs, like the choice to discuss Hegel, stems not from antiquarianism, but from the conviction that these proofs, like Hegel’s system, have important ramifications for the very conception of philosophy and its project. This follows even if, and indeed especially if, one is skeptical regarding the validity of the traditional proofs; that is to say, inasmuch as they are read as attempts to demonstrate the existence of something that lies beyond the bounds of any possible humanly comprehensible experience. Even if someone, say Hegel, rejects Kant’s critique of the ontological proof as insufficient, to affirm the soundness of the traditional proofs *in this traditional sense* would still be to embrace dogmatic metaphysics.

Yet as also was mentioned, and as we shall see in detail, Hegel does not even think that the traditional proofs are valid.¹⁰⁰ Hegel’s affirmation of these proofs is, as I shall attempt to demonstrate, consistent with his post-Kantianism. The explanation and justification of this claim is nothing short of the work of the entire dissertation.

⁹⁹ Foucault, “Discourse on Language,” 235.

¹⁰⁰ The distinction between validity and soundness is purposely used here. As we shall see, soundness (and thus in a certain sense truth, or at least *philosophical truth* inasmuch as this entails argumentation) is usually taken to depend upon validity. Hegel argues that the traditional proofs of philosophy are invalid insofar as these are formulated as what he calls syllogisms of the understanding. Nonetheless, he argues that these syllogisms can also be taken to express a speculative truth that the understanding does not grasp. These points will be made clearer later.

Nonetheless, it is at least possible to offer a preliminary indication of how and why they might be conceived, precisely when understood in post-Kantian terms, as central to the very issue of the project of philosophy itself by means of a consideration of the ontological proof.

The ontological proof retains and even extends its significance in a post-Kantian context insofar as it may be understood as “a route to matters concerning ontology more generally.”¹⁰¹ Shorn of its theological and ‘pre-critical’ overtones, the ontological proof is *ontological* through and through; it gives voice to a particular way of understanding what *kinds* of beings there are and how they are related such that experience could arise for us in the manner which it does. Considered precisely in its *ontological* sense, this proof is a statement or assertion regarding the relation between such fundamental ontological categories as existence and essence, necessary and contingent being, and human thought and reason as such.

The broader significance of this proof can be illustrated by considering the significance of rejecting this argument as invalid without adopting Kant’s distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves. Kant himself is arguably able to avoid these consequences, for he limits the scope of the principle of sufficient reason to appearances and denies that this principle can legitimately be conceived as the link between the world of experience and a first cause that is before or beyond the world.¹⁰² Without such a provision, however, the consequences of rejecting the ontological proof are far

¹⁰¹ Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European philosophy*, (London: Routledge, 1994), 147.

¹⁰² Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 200-201/B 246, A452-60 /B 480-88 and A 672/B 700.

greater than is usually recognized.¹⁰³

In brief, the ontological proof depends on the claim that it is possible to demonstrate the existence of something on the basis of its essence. Now, a commonly held principle, almost an article of faith in philosophy, is the principle of sufficient reason according to which for everything there is a reason *why*.¹⁰⁴ Of course, when it comes to contingent things no one claims that such things absolutely *have* to exist (i.e., exist according to their own essence), but that a contingent thing, *if* it exists (as many do as a matter of empirical fact), exists due to something else which we usually conceive of as some other existent thing. In other words, brute existence¹⁰⁵ is not self-explanatory but presupposes an (at least logically, if not temporally) antecedent ground. Now, since no

¹⁰³ The following argument draws heavily on Penelhum, Terence. "Divine Necessity." *Philosophy in Review Series*. Vol. 69, No.274. (Apr. 1960), pp.395-401.

¹⁰⁴ Leibniz offers two distinct formulations of the principle of sufficient reason. The first formulation is causal: "*nothing is without reason, or there is no effect without a cause*" (See Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Primary Truths" in *Philosophical Essays*, trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989), 31. Compare also Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Principles of Nature and Grace, Based on Reason," in *Philosophical Essays*, trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989), 210.: "*nothing takes place without sufficient reason, that is, that nothing happens without it being possible for someone who knows enough things to give reason sufficient to determine why it is so and not otherwise. Assuming this principle, the first question we have to ask will be, why is there something rather than nothing?*") The second formulation is that "there is nothing without reason, that is, that there is no proposition in which there is no connection between the subject and predicate, that is, no proposition that cannot be proved a priori." (Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "On Freedom and Possibility" in *Philosophical Essays*, trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989), 19.) The first formulation is a matter of causal relations, while the second is the claim that ultimately all truth is analytical and reducible to the identity of God. Granted, human beings cannot know things analytically but must proceed causally and extrinsically, but everything, as ultimately flowing from God, could be known analytically. For Leibniz, then, these two paths must ultimately be united in God himself both as the first cause and absolutely necessary existence on the one hand and as the *ens realissimum* on the other.

¹⁰⁵ By brute existence I mean not only contingent, finite beings, but anything, God included, taken as simply existing (even if eternally) without reference to an antecedent ground.

brute existence is self-explanatory we have a regress, and an infinite regress (even assuming such a regress is possible), is itself no less a brute fact than a finite one. If the principle of sufficient reason is true, then there must ultimately be *one* thing that is self-explanatory. To be self-explanatory, however, is not, as was explained above, a matter of brute existence (we can always ask ‘why does this exist?’) If anything is self-explanatory, then its existence would have to be explained either on the basis of its essence or in terms of the inseparability and immediate identity of existence and essence in this one case. Only in this way, i.e., only insofar as there is an entity whose essence entails or is immediately identical to its existence, is it explicable why there is something rather than nothing. Yet this is *precisely* the movement made in the ontological proof.

What follows from this? To judge that the ontological proof is invalid entails that the principle of sufficient reason is false, for that is to claim there *is and can be* no ultimate account, no explanation, no possible answer to the question: ‘why is there something rather than nothing?’ To deny the ontological proof is to claim that the very notion of something being self-explanatory is a hopeless confusion. Now, it is all too easy to take this claim lightly insofar as we may well be skeptical regarding the possibility of ultimately arriving at an ultimate necessary being or first cause. The objection, however, is not merely that *we* can or might not be able to *discover* a first cause or ultimate principle, but also that the very idea is incoherent. In other words, *if* the ontological proof fails, *if* it is impossible to demonstrate and derive existence from essence and/or the idea of their immediate identity is unintelligible, then there *cannot be* such an absolute first principle, not even for God (assuming, that is, that he exists.) Kant caught sight of this in discussing the failure of the proofs:

The unconditioned necessity, which we need so indispensably as the ultimate sustainer of all things, is for human reason the true abyss [*abgrund*]. Even eternity – however awful the sublimity with which a Haller might portray it – does not make such a dizzying impression on the mind; for eternity only **measures** the duration of things, but it does not **sustain** that duration. One cannot resist the thought of it, but one also cannot bear it that a being that we represent to ourselves as the highest among all possible things might, as it were, say to itself: “I am from eternity to eternity, outside me is nothing except what is something merely through my will; **but whence** then am I?” Here everything gives way beneath us, and the greatest perfection as well as the smallest hovers without support before speculative reason, for which it would cost nothing to let the one as much as the other disappear without the least obstacle.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 613/B 641 [Kant’s emphasis.] Kant can be seen as avoiding this skeptical consequence by carefully distinguishing between Leibniz’s causal and analytic/logical formulation of the principle of sufficient reason. Accordingly, Kant actually claims the honor of first having demonstrated the principle of sufficient reason. (See *Ibid.*, A 783/B 811) Here, however, this principle is only to be understood in the sense of efficient causation. The necessity of this principle follows from the fact that every temporally intuited manifold must be understood as presupposing a cause from which it follows from necessity according to a rule in order that it be an object of experience. Kant can thus argue that he has proved the principle in question insofar as “...the principle of sufficient reason is the ground of possible experience, namely the objective cognition of appearances with regard to their relation in the successive series of time.” (*Ibid.*, A 201/B 246) Now, since every sensible object appears as conditioned, reason leads us to think that which is absolutely unconditioned not merely as the first in the series but also as the absolute sustainer of all things. We have seen the contradictions, however, that arise if one takes the unconditioned to be a part of the series of nature, for we would have to understand this object as determined according to the same principle of reason, i.e., as determined by external empirical causality, temporal order and categories of explanation and the legitimacy of these categories and principles must be acknowledged on pain of falling into skepticism. For Kant, however, since the forms of intuition and categories of the understanding apply to things as appearances, it is also possible and indeed necessary to think the unconditioned thing-in-itself. Accordingly, beside the causality of nature belonging to the sensible world, we can also think of a different kind of causality, namely freedom, understood as “...the faculty of beginning a state **from itself**, the causality of which does not in turn stand under another cause determining it in time in accordance with the law of nature.” (*Ibid.*, A 533/B 661) The contradiction is removed insofar as it is thinkable that “the **condition** of a successive series of occurrences could itself be empirically unconditioned. For here the condition is **outside** the series of appearances (in the intelligible) and hence not subject to any sensible condition or to any determination of time through any passing cause.” (*Ibid.*, A 552/B 580) Freedom is thus understood as absolute rational self-determination.

The ontological proof and its failure is thus no trivial matter and no isolated issue. From a certain perspective, indeed, the definitive refutation of this proof would amount to condemnation of the entire philosophical project as a misguided illusion. From such a perspective, the search for absolute knowing, for genuine unconditioned knowledge, is unintelligible. If the ontological proof is not valid then there cannot be an ultimate ground, for the idea of something that is absolutely self-explanatory is a contradiction in terms. But then the idea of the project of philosophy according to which the aim is a rationally comprehensive account is similarly a self-contradiction. The issue is not merely skepticism regarding whether *human beings* could attain the heights of such a comprehensive standpoint, but the *intelligibility* of the project itself.¹⁰⁷

The Background to and Structure of the Dissertation

Originally when I set out to write the present dissertation, my aim was to consider the role and significance of the proofs not only in Hegel's system, but in the thought of Schelling and Heidegger as well. My previous experience writing on Hegel had served to confirm Fackenheim's warning in *The Religious Dimensions of Hegel's Thought* that, where in the case of most other thinkers "religious thought can more or less be isolated

¹⁰⁷ Compare Kojève's claim: "Certainly one can, like Plato, deny the possibility of realizing Wisdom. But then, one of two things: either the ideal of the Wise Man is never realized anywhere; and then the Philosopher is simply a madman, who claims or wants to be what one can *not* be and (what is worse) what he *knows* to be impossible. Or else he is not a madman; and then his ideal of Wisdom is or will be realized and his definition of the Wise Man is or will be truth. But since it cannot, by definition, be realized by *man* in *time*, it is or will be realized by a being *other* than man, *outside* of time. We all know that such a being is called God. Therefore, if with Plato one denies the possibility of the human Wise Man, one must either deny Philosophy or assert the existence of God." (Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, trans. J.H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 89.)

from the rest of their philosophy; this is impossible in Hegel's case, for his philosophy exemplifies his assertion that 'the Whole is the Truth.'"¹⁰⁸ Writing on Hegel can easily unravel insofar as, in attempting to explain one point of the system, one must have recourse to another point, and then another, until the whole system and its circle of circles has one trapped without any place to begin or end, save going through the whole. Nonetheless, I had originally hoped to escape this difficulty by attempting not to articulate a point in Hegel's system, but to articulate the system in and through articulating his account of the proofs. I was indeed originally encouraged to take this path insofar as, in reading Hegel's 1829 *Lectures on the Proofs*, I became convinced that Hegel's decision to sign a contract to write a book on the proofs in 1831, was guided by similar needs to my own. In discussing and providing his account of the proofs, Hegel would have been able to provide a work that would serve both as an introduction to his system as well the opportunity to address some of the most complicated issues of interpreting his system as a whole. What I had failed to adequately consider, however, was the enormity of the difference between the work that Hegel would have been capable of writing in his own name and my own task.

Hegel death cut short his plans to write his book on the proofs. Given the polished nature of the manuscript of his 1827 *Lectures on the Proofs*, however, it is likely that Hegel intended to use this manuscript as a first draft for his projected book. Unfortunately, the lecture series does not provide us with even a draft of Hegel's whole account; for although it is clear that Hegel originally intended to provide a successive account of all three proofs, the manuscript does not get beyond introductory matters and

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. Fackenheim reverses the order of Hegel's actual claim, that "das Wahre ist das Ganze" (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶20 [9:11]).

the cosmological proof, before cutting off abruptly. Nonetheless, taken as a first draft of part of his projected work, this manuscript provides a good deal of insight into what Hegel intended to achieve and how he would have progressed. There is a remarkable economy of expression in Hegel's own presentation of his account of the proofs in his 1827 *Lectures on the Proofs* due to his ability to speak on this topic at once exoterically and esoterically. This economy of expression was possible in part because, on Hegel's account, philosophical-science expresses the same content and truth as religion, but in the form of concepts rather than representation, wherein "[r]epresentations in general... can be regarded as *metaphors* of thoughts and concepts"¹⁰⁹ In addition, in speaking as an author of a number of other books as well as addressing this lecture to students who were already interested in and engaged with his works, Hegel could allow his peculiar terminology to gain its definiteness in part in and through the course of the lectures themselves, and in part by referring his audience to his more detailed account and presentation of certain arguments and terms to his other works. At the very beginning of the *Lectures on the Proofs*, accordingly, Hegel warns his auditors that his lectures on the proofs are given as a "supplement" to his concurrent lectures on logic and that "[t]hese lectures are therefore principally intended for those of my auditors who are attending the other lectures, and to them they will be the most readily intelligible."¹¹⁰ Furthermore, in order to establish the correlation of the proofs to the system, all that Hegel had to do was follow the necessity of his own account, hint at these correlations as he progressed in a manner that would be intelligible for the initiated and announce them at the end.

¹⁰⁹ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §3 r.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Because Hegel died before writing his work on the proofs, the task of articulating the role and significance of the proofs in Hegel's system required that I *start out* by reconstructing the correlations of the proof to the system, guided by the hints of the *Lectures on the Proofs*, textual evidence scattered throughout his other works, and my knowledge of the logic of Hegel's account and way of proceeding. After having reconstructed these correlations to my own satisfaction, however, it was still necessary for me to justify this reconstruction to the reader. To do that, it was necessary to at least indicate the grounds upon which I had arrived at this reconstruction. In doing that, however, I had to explain not only the meaning of the passages within which Hegel hints at these correlations, but justify the interpretation of these passages and correlations by explaining not just the context within which these hints are provided, but providing an account of the place in Hegel's system to which I was arguing these proofs were correlated.

An additional difficulty was posed by Hegel's notorious style and terminology, a style that is so peculiar and so tortures language that some conclude that Hegel "knows neither German nor grammar."¹¹¹ Like Fackenheim, however, I am convinced that in fact "the mature Hegel is a master of philosophical style."¹¹² Hegel's torturous style is due to the depth and complexity of his thought, for while Hegel admittedly tortures language, he does this out of the necessity of the *Sache selbst*. Hegel's use of language is certainly idiosyncratic, but his words are carefully chosen and the meaning of these words is, with few exceptions, carefully defined and determined in the course of the unfolding of his

¹¹¹ Otto Pöggeler, *Hegels Idee einer Phänomenologie des Geistes*, (Alber: Freiburg/München, 1973), 136. Cited in H. S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, 1:7.

¹¹² Fackenheim, *Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, 6.

system, and in particular in his *logic*. Far from taking Hegel's language to be a dispensable accessory that obscures his meaning, I continue to be frequently both astounded and confounded by the compactness with which Hegel expresses his thought and the fact that, as Fackenheim notes, when "one tries to say differently exactly what Hegel says one often end up saying much less or reverting to his own words."¹¹³

The combination of these factors was such that, as Fackenheim warned, I had to conclude that my "original plan broke down because of Hegel."¹¹⁴ To articulate the correlation of the proofs to the system without any justification for my account was clearly unacceptable. The articulation of this account in terms of Hegel's own terminology without explaining this terminology to readers not already immersed in Hegel's system rendered my account unintelligible to all but a few scholars. As the articulation of the correlation of the proofs to the system involved touching on some of the most complicated and controversial aspects of Hegel's thought, providing an account of my reading of these sections alone, without at least acknowledging and touching on competing scholarly accounts, would be unacceptable. Thus everything that I had originally hoped to set aside or merely indicate by focusing my account of Hegel through the proofs was drawn into that account itself. All attempts to condense the present account failed, as they left me with something that would be unintelligible to the uninitiated and unacceptable to the specialist. While Hegel, admittedly, would have been able to present the core of what is articulated in this dissertation with far greater economy and simplicity of expression, the responsibilities laid upon me in explicating the relation and significance of the proofs in Hegel's system are such that, in the end, I could only

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xii.

express what I conceived of in the simplicity of these correlations by way of the entirety of this dissertation. The dissertation is structured as follows:

The majority of the literature that discusses Hegel's account of the proofs proceeds by understanding Hegel's articulation and defense of the proofs solely through the ontological proof, and sometimes even solely through Hegel's initial critique of Kant's objection to the ontological proof at the beginning of the *Science of Logic*. In Chapter One, "The Limitations of the Ontological Proof," I attempt to explain how and why proceeding in this manner results in misunderstanding the nature and status of Hegel's critique of Kant's objection to the ontological proof, the sense in which Hegel sought to defend the proofs and the significance of his account.

As shall be seen in Chapter Three, far from uncritically asserting that the ontological proof in its traditional formulation is sound, Hegel argues at length that all three proofs in their traditional formulation and sense are not valid. To comprehend the meaning and significance of Hegel's critique of these proofs, it is first necessary to provide a summary of Hegel's *logic* from the *Logic*; for his approach to and criticisms of these proofs is directly informed by his account of the categories that these proofs employ. A summary of his *logic*, focusing on the 'logical' the categories particularly relevant to the issue of the proofs, is provided in Chapter Two, "Hegel's Logic: The Categories of the Proofs."

Chapter Three will then proceed by articulating Hegel's account of the traditional formulations of the proofs as well as the criticisms of these proofs, and in particular, the criticisms of Jacobi and Kant. As we shall see, Hegel's account and defense of the proofs requires that these proofs be comprehended internally to Hegel's system itself such that

the articulation of Hegel's defense of the proofs is the articulation of the correlation of the proofs to his system and the articulation of the significance of these correlations.

The first correlation to be articulated is the correlation of the proofs to Hegel's *logic*. The articulation of this correlation is carried out in Chapter Four, "The Problem of the Correlation of the Proofs and the Logical Correlation." After articulating this correlation, however, it is also necessary to explain that and how this correlation is, taken on its own, insufficient on Hegel's own grounds and thus the necessity of articulating the second correlation of the proofs to Hegel's system, namely the correlation of the proofs to Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.

As shall be explained at the beginning of Chapter Five, "The Problem of Determining the Religious Correlation and the Lectures of 1831," any detailed articulation of this correlation requires first that it be established which, if any, of Hegel's various presentations of the philosophy of religion is definitive. I shall argue, ultimately, that Hegel's 1831 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* is definitive. This assertion, however, runs contrary to the present general consensus of Hegel scholars regarding the significance of the fact that Hegel's continued to restructure his account of 'Determinate Religion' each time he presented his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. In order to justify my assertion that the 1831 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* is definitive, I will articulate the criterion by which this claim can and will be substantiated in the subsequent chapter. Before proceeding to the next chapter, however, it will first be necessary to provide a summary account of Hegel's philosophy of religion in accordance with the structure of his presentation in 1831.

The actual substantiation of the claim that the 1831 lectures are definitive according to the criterion set out in Chapter Five will be carried out in and through the consideration of the subject-matter of Chapter Six, “The Correlation to the Philosophy of Religion and its Significance.” This will involve articulating the phenomenological function of the correlation of the proofs to the 1831 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* and the relation of Hegel’s account of the development of the proofs and historical succession of religions to Hegel’s account of history as the development and realization of freedom.

Chapter Seven is the culmination of the present study. I start by articulating the limitation not just of the correlation to the philosophy of religion, but even of the correlations of the proofs to both *logic* and the philosophy of religion in its phenomenological aspect, or even of the *logic* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* itself taken as a unity. Having articulated that limitation, I go on to articulate the third correlation of the proofs to the system itself, or more precisely to Hegel’s account of the system itself in terms of the three final syllogisms of the system presented in §§575-577 of the *Philosophy of Spirit*.

Articulation of the correlation of the proofs to the final three sections of Hegel’s system will provide a way to comprehend the significance of these sections and thereby the manner in which each leads to the next in order to constitute a circle of circles. Moreover, the articulation of the transition between these three sections will provide the occasion for a consideration of two of Hegel’s most famous and yet least understood claims regarding the relation of reason and actuality on the one hand, and the conception of freedom as reciprocal recognition on the other.

The final section of the system will serve as the basis on which to comprehend Hegel's conception of the ontological proof as the comprehensive truth of the cosmological and teleological proof such that, comprehended in its totality, the result is the One proof as well as the One, or the genuine middle and standpoint, of Hegel's system as such. Following this, by way of a critique of contemporary non-metaphysical and metaphysical interpretations of Hegel's system, we will then be led to the consideration of the central issue upon which the comprehension of this One resides, namely Hegel's concept of time and eternity. When comprehended in terms of Hegel's conception of true eternity as absolute presence, it will then be possible to articulate the genuine Hegelian middle and, or rather as, the One proof itself.

In the Conclusion, I begin by providing an account of the circumstances in which Hegel found himself when he decided, so late in his life, to sign a contract to write his book on the proofs. Insofar as my account of the correlation of the proofs to Hegel's system shows that and how the proofs address issues and concerns that occupied Hegel toward the end of his life, this discussion of Hegel's circumstances will serve to call to mind the various stages of the preceding explication of the correlations of the proofs as well as to highlight their significance. Following this, I discuss once more the challenge that Hegel poses for contemporary philosophy and the difficulty of refuting his system. In particular, I address the futility of attempting to refute this system either by means of empirical examples or by the appeal to transcendent religious experience, and in doing this, clarify the sense in which Hegel's account of the proofs and religion commits him neither to dogmatic metaphysics nor to historical relativism. At that point I consider in particular Fackenheim's attempt to challenge Hegel's system and provide an explanation

of both why I think Fackenheim's critique is not decisive, and yet the way in which this shortcoming can be corrected by means of an immanent critique. This immanent critique serves as the basis on which to comprehend both the significance of Fackenheim's claim that Hegel would not be a Hegelian today, as well as the occasion for me to explain what I take to be the significance of the present dissertation by explaining how my original plan for this dissertation, as including an account of the role and significance of the proofs in Schelling and Heidegger, was understood as part of a broader project.

CHAPTER ONE

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE ONTOLOGICAL PROOF

As I remarked in the Introduction, one of the fundamental weaknesses of the previous scholarly work on Hegel's account and defense of the proofs of God is the fact that the majority of this literature is limited to the ontological proof, while ignoring Hegel's treatment of the cosmological and teleological arguments. The problem is not merely that this has resulted in a lacuna in such a way that this previous literature could be corrected merely by supplementing it with additional discussions of Hegel's account of the cosmological and teleological arguments. The problem, rather, is that in abstracting Hegel's account of the ontological proof from his treatment of the cosmological and teleological proofs and treating the ontological proof in isolation, the very sense in which Hegel is properly to be grasped as offering a 'defence' of the proofs and the One proof becomes incomprehensible. Simply put, to suppose that it is legitimate to limit the treatment of Hegel's account and defense of the proofs to the ontological proof is to fundamentally misunderstand Hegel's account and aim. The result is that the literature on Hegel's defense of the proofs is either hopelessly vague regarding what Hegel is actually up to, or outright attributes positions and claims to Hegel that contradict his own assertions.¹

¹ The frustrating state of the literature leads Oppy to state: "No doubt some readers will think that I have been most unfair to Hegel et al. in this section. Such readers will, I hope, regard these remarks as a challenge, namely, to produce a clear and concise statement of their favourite ontological argument, complete with readily scrutinizable premises. If there is an ontological *argument* in Hegel's work, I have been unable to find it." (Graham Oppy, *Ontological Arguments and Belief in God* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 105, fn.5.) Similarly, Jaeschke states that "Hegel's polemic against Kant and his attempt to rehabilitate the ontological proof often, in fact, excite derision. We are still awaiting the promised analysis of the *Logic's* ontotheological

By limiting the discussion of Hegel's account to the ontological proof, then, the literature serves to foster further misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Three misinterpretations of Hegel's position are of note: (1) the assumption or claim that Hegel fails to understand Kant's critique of the ontological proof, (2) the assumption or claim that, insofar as Hegel wishes to defend the proofs, he fails to recognize the significance of Kant's critique of the ontological proof and argues that the ontological proof is sound, or (3) even if it is recognized that Hegel takes the proof to be defective, that his aim is to supplement this proof with additional premises in order to provide a superior proof that is sound and thus at last *does* demonstrate *that* God 'is' or exists.

Admittedly, not all commentators who assume that it is legitimate to limit Hegel's treatment of the proofs to the ontological argument are committed to any or all of these three further claims. This, however, seems to stem from a lack of clarity on their part rather than a genuine appreciation of *why* it is incorrect to interpret Hegel in this manner; for to genuinely appreciate why these claims are fundamentally mistaken is at once to recognize that limiting Hegel's discussion and account of the proofs to the ontological proof is utterly untenable.

The aim of the present chapter is thus to work through and discharge these misunderstandings so as to clarify the meaning and sense in which Hegel may properly be understood as offering a defense of the proofs. I shall begin by offering a brief summary of Hegel's critique of Kant's objection to the ontological proof, focusing particularly on the criticisms that Hegel raises toward the beginning of his *Science of*

claims. The fact that no such analysis has appeared reflects the commonly held view that Hegel's efforts to win back the problem of God for theoretical philosophy are a failure." (Jaeschke, *Reason in Religion*, 31.)

Logic. It is an unfortunate fact that these passages from the *Logic* have frequently served as the main, if not sole, touch-point when considering Hegel's response to Kant; for as we shall see, in offering this critique of Kant (as is clearer in other contexts, e.g., his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*), Hegel neither simply sweeps Kant's objection aside nor blithely and uncritically embraces the ontological proof. Nonetheless, before proceeding to consider Hegel's more robust account of and response to Kant, it is necessary to explain the sense in which Kant's objection to the ontological proof is justified, at least initially. In order to achieve this, however, it is necessary to forestall a certain misunderstanding of Hegel's critique that itself arises from a misunderstanding of the substance of Kant's objection. Kant's assertion that being is not a real predicate has mistakenly been taken as equivalent to the assertion that being is not a predicate at all. The term 'reality', however, has a different and rather specific meaning for Kant and his objection to the ontological proof is not the objection of G.E. Moore, but of Gassendi. Taken on its own, this objection is not fatal to at least a certain version of the ontological proof, namely, what I will refer to as the 'intuitive-experiential' version of the proof. If the ontological proof is read in this manner, I argue, Hegel's initial critique of Kant's objection is at least justified. Nonetheless, the story does not end there, either with respect to Kant or with respect to Hegel.

On the one hand, as Allison argues, Kant's critique of the ontological proof is founded on and "deeply rooted in some of the central tenets of his epistemology and cannot be neatly separated from this context."² Kant's critique of the ontological proof is, in other words, deeply tied to his critique of dogmatic metaphysics such that, taken in this

² Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 417.

broader manner, Kant's objection according to Hegel does have genuine purchase on the ontological proof, because it points to a fundamental weakness in the standpoint from which this argument is articulated. On the other hand, Hegel himself does not accept the intuitive-experiential version of the ontological proof and in that sense agrees that the argument and position upon which the argument is based is inadequate and flawed.

Hegel's initial critique of Kant does not entail his acceptance of the proof in its traditional formulation, nor does it entail his unconditioned agreement with Kant and acceptance of the Kantian position. Hegel claims, after all, that he wishes to defend the proofs against the misunderstandings brought upon them, even and particularly by Kant, in order to "restore the thoughts on which they are based to their worth and dignity."³ In criticizing both Kant and the ontological proof, however, Hegel does not simply side with either position, but seeks to 'sublate' them both. His 'defense' of the proofs, then, is not a pre-critical or uncritical acceptance of these proofs in their traditional form, but is based on *a critique of that very form itself*. Accordingly, his aim is not to provide some new and improved version of the ontological proof in order to establish once and for all *that* God is, but involves the recovery of the distinctive thought-content of this proof, and indeed all of the proofs. As we shall see in the successive chapters, this thought-content is recovered and the dignity of the proofs is restored in and through being taken up into the system itself.

³ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 628 [12:129.]

The Initial Appearance of Kant's Objection and Hegel's Criticism

Hegel's Initial Critique of Kant

In his own time and for a good while afterwards, Kant was reputed to have definitively refuted the ontological proof. Additionally, (as will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three) Kant argued that the cosmological and teleological proofs themselves illicitly and implicitly depend on the ontological proof. In and through his critique of the ontological proof, then, Kant was thought to have established once and for all the impossibility of *all* of the traditional proofs of God. As is well known, Kant pinpoints the fundamental error that lay behind the ontological proof as the failure to see that “**Being** is obviously not a real predicate.”⁴ It is on this basis that he rejects the other proofs as well.

Kant's argument was apparently so – or so apparently – decisive, that decades after the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Hegel opens his lectures on the proofs with the admission that, in his day, “the *proofs* of the existence of God are discredited to such an extent that they pass for something antiquated, belonging to the metaphysics of the past.”⁵ According to Hegel, the fact that Kant's objection to the ontological proof had “become universal, a refutation of the proof that all the world takes for granted”⁶ was the decisive consideration in the decline of the reputation of all of the proofs, a decline so precipitous that, in his 1829 lectures, Hegel remarks that in his day, “the proofs are barely even historically known here and there; and even to theologians... they are sometimes unknown.”⁷

⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 598/B 627

⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 38 [18:229.]

⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:178 [113.]

⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 38 [18:229.]

Insofar as Hegel had any intention of even treating the proofs as a topic of serious philosophical scrutiny, a confrontation with Kant's famous objection to the ontological proof was thus inevitable. Moreover, to call Kant into question on this point was clearly to fight against the current of Hegel's age. Given this situation, it is all the more surprising that Hegel's most prominent and prominently repeated objections⁸ to Kant's argument against the proof appear so casually dismissive and thin.

Kant's claim that 'Being is not a real predicate' amounts, according to Hegel, merely to the assertion that the 'concept' or 'thinking' is different from being.⁹ Hegel's response is seemingly just to dismiss Kant outright, going so far in his *Lectures on Logic* to suggest that "Kant's observation is quite trivial, and was doubtless already well known to all philosophers."¹⁰ Hegel then goes on to assert that the acclaim and general acceptance of Kant's objection stems simply from Kant's popular example of the hundred dollars. Everyone knows, after all, that imagining oneself to have a hundred dollars in one's pocket does not make it so.¹¹ Nonetheless, Hegel insists, the analogy upon which Kant's argument depends is fundamentally flawed. Arguably, the very point of the ontological proof is that while finite things are so constituted that their concept or essence and being or existence are separable, that in this one and *only this one* unique case, i.e., in the case of God, they cannot be separated. Accordingly, Hegel chastises Kant in the

⁸ Hegel's objection to the ontological argument at the beginning of the *Science of Logic*, pp.63-66 is often repeated in his later works and lectures. Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1: 434-439 [324-328], 3:70-72 [9-11], 178-9 [113-14], 354 [273.] and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic, with the Zusätze: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*. trans. T. F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991), §51.

⁹ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 66 [21:77.] and Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §51 r.

¹⁰ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 51 [60.]

¹¹ See *ibid.*, 51. and Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:179 [113-14.]

Science of Logic for not recognizing the relevant difference between a hundred thalers and the concept of God, arguing that

It is the *definition of finite things* that in them the concept and reality, soul and body, are separable and hence that they are perishable and mortal; the abstract definition of God, on the other hand, is precisely that his concept and his being are *unseparated and inseparable*.¹²

In short, Hegel's objection to Kant's critique of the ontological proof is to claim that Kant's entire argument is question-begging and depends upon a misleading example. In Hegel's judgment, indeed, Kant's argument against the ontological proof is basically nothing more than the repetition of an objection raised long before.¹³

Reality and the Misunderstanding of Kant's Objection

Admittedly, nowadays the Kantian system no longer enjoys the kind of universal acclaim that it did in Hegel's age. Initially, then, it might seem as though the current climate would be more open to the serious consideration and appreciation of Hegel's objections to Kant's critique of the ontological proof. Ironically perhaps, the opposite is the case. As Allison points out, even today "Kant's denial that 'existence' is a real predicate is widely accepted among philosophers, including many who find little else in the *Critique* to their tastes."¹⁴ The general acceptance of this assertion, however, is

¹² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 67 [21:77.]

¹³ Hegel states that "Even in Anselm's day the same point was made by a monk; as he put it, what I represent to myself does not yet exist simply on that account." (Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:190 [273.]) As Hodgson remarks in a footnote to the passage, Hegel evidently has Anselm and Gaunilo in mind, although Hegel's attribution of the particular argument he has in mind here to Gaunilo is at least questionable. Nonetheless, as Hodgson also points out, and as shall be explained momentarily, Kant's objection to the ontological proof was raised by Gassendi against Descartes.

¹⁴ Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, 414.

predicated on a misunderstanding of the nature and substance of Kant's critique of the ontological proof.

Kant's objection to the ontological proof is often misread as equivalent to the linguistic critique of the sort proposed by G.E. Moore. For Moore, to assert that 'being is not a *real* predicate' is equivalent to saying that being is not a genuine or "proper predicate,"¹⁵ i.e., not a predicate at all. The claim, accordingly, is that in using being as a predicate, the ontological proof is a confusion of and "play on grammatical form."¹⁶

Now, assuming that this *is* Kant's objection to the ontological proof, Hegel's critique of Kant's objection would undoubtedly miss the mark. As Stephen Ball argues, existence is certainly at least a *peculiar* predicate, so in denying that being is a predicate, "whether Kant is right or not, there is certainly nothing 'trite' or 'trivial' about *this* position, and in fact it has, of course, been heartily disputed."¹⁷ Accordingly, Ball takes Hegel's objection to be based on an elemental misunderstanding of Kant's objection. It is Ball, however, who misunderstands Kant; for Kant does not take the term 'real' to be equivalent to genuine or actual, and does not deny that existence is legitimately taken as a predicate. To the contrary, Kant claims that being *is* a predicate of some sort (namely, as shall be discussed later, a logical predicate), but not a *real* predicate.

The confusion here comes from the fact that when we hear the word 'real' (at least in English) we tend to think of it as equivalent to the term 'actual' so that to say that

¹⁵ Vara Peetz, "Is Existence a Predicate" in *Philosophy* Vol. 57, No 221 (Jul. 1982), 396.

¹⁶ W. Kneale and G.E. Moore, "Is Existence a Predicate," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes, What Can Philosophy Determine?*, Vol.15 (1936), 164.

¹⁷ Stephen W. Ball, "Hegel on Proving the Existence of God," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, Vol.10, No. 2, (1979) 96. At the end of the above cited passage, Ball cites Moore's essay "Is Existence a Predicate?"

something is real is to say that something actually exists, while to say that it is not real is to say that it is merely ideal, in the sense of merely a matter of our thoughts or concepts. For Kant, however, the word ‘reality’ has almost the opposite sense insofar reality is *not* a matter of the *existence* of something, but of the determination of the *essence* or *concept* of a thing. Kant’s objection in full thus reads: “**Being** is obviously not a real predicate, i.e., a concept of something that could add to the concept of a thing.”¹⁸

Kant, then, has no trouble claiming that the idea of God has reality. For Kant (as indeed, for Hegel after him)¹⁹ the notion of the most perfect being (an *ens perfectissimum*) is equivalent to and more precisely defined as the most real being (*ens realissimum*).²⁰ God is called the *ens realissimum*, the most real being, because he is the idea of a purely positive, unrestricted original image that contains in itself the possibility of all other things. On this account, everything that is not nothing has *some* reality, but all finite things are also burdened by negation, “[f]or all negations... are mere limitations of a greater and finally of the highest reality; hence they presuppose it, and as regards their content are merely derived from it.”²¹ Accordingly, the more positive content or determination something has, the more reality that thing has.

¹⁸ Ibid. A 598/B 627

¹⁹ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:353 [272.]

²⁰ Thus Kant writes: “All manifoldness of things is only so many different ways of limiting the concept of the highest reality, which is their common substratum, just as all figures are possible only as limiting infinite space. Hence the object of reason’s ideal, which is only to be found in reason, is also called the **original being** (*ens originarium*); because it has nothing above itself it is called the **highest being** (*ens summum*), and because everything else, as conditioned, stands under it, it is called the **being of all beings** (*ens entium*).” (Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 578/B 606) Cf. also Kant’s discussion of God’s perfections in Immanuel Kant, “Lectures on the Philosophical Doctrine of Religion,” in *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. Allen W. Wood, and George Di Giovanni (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 28:1037-41.

²¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 578/B 607.

The ‘reality’ of something is a matter of the positive content or determination of the thought, concept, or essence of the thing. To assert that the idea of God is that of the *ens realissimum* is perfectly allowable on Kant’s terms, for what he is claiming is not that such an idea is unthinkable, only that the essence or thought or concept of something does not include or entail its existence.

The Inadequacy of Kant’s Objection

Notwithstanding its fame and influence, when properly understood and taken on its own, (i.e., in abstraction from the framework of his critical system as a whole,) Kant’s objection that being is not a real predicate is far from ground breaking. To the contrary, insofar as Kant takes the idea of an *ens perfectissimum* and an *ens realissimum* to be equivalent, then as Harrelson has argued, in offering his critique of the ontological proof, Kant says nothing “that was not already clearly expressed by Gassendi.”²² Indeed, if taken on its own, Kant’s assertion that being is not a real predicate is not really an objection at all. Given what Kant means by reality, to assert that ‘being is not a real predicate’ is simply to assert that being or existence can neither be identical to nor be derived from the essence of anything at all. This is not an argument against the proof, but simply a denial of its conclusion.

Similarly, the hundred thaler example is spurious because, as Hegel rightly points out, the central claim of the ontological proof is precisely that, *whereas* finite things are so constituted that their concept or essence and being or existence are distinct and

²² Harrelson, *Descartes to Hegel*, 168. See Gassendi’s argument against Descartes in the fifth set of objections wherein he argues that “existence is not a perfection either in God or in anything else.”(Rene Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes: Volume II*, trans. J. Cottingham et al. (Cambridge University Press, 1984.) 224 [323].

separable, in one and *only one* unique case, concept and being or existence and essence cannot be separated. From the standpoint of Anselm and Descartes, however, pointing out that the concept or essence of finite things is separable from their existence, whether that thing be a golden mountain, a triangle or a pockets of coins, is simply to assert what defenders of the proof themselves already take for granted. Accordingly, if taken on its own, Kant's objection that being is not a real predicate appears susceptible to the old response that, although being or existence is not a real predicate, *necessary existence* is, so that in the case of God and in this case alone, essence and existence have this unique character and relation and the logic of the proof applies in this one and only this one case.²³

That being said, it is not fair to claim that Kant ignores this reply. Granted, by the time Kant makes his famous assertion that being is not a real predicate, he uses the term being or existence generically. Prior to providing this objection, however, Kant considers the assertion that "there is one and indeed only this one concept where the non-being or cancelling of its object is contradictory."²⁴ Nonetheless, Kant's response to the uniqueness claim does not serve to broaden the scope and reach of his objection to the ontological proof, but demonstrates instead that his understanding of the proof is restricted to the narrow formulation of the ontological proof proposed, through the intermediaries of Baumgarten and Wolff, by Leibniz.

Leibniz was willing to agree that existence is a perfection and that God is unique amongst all things insofar as "to prove that he exists it would be sufficient to prove that

²³ See Anselm, "Reply to Gaunilo" in *Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works*, eds. Brian Davies and G.R. Evans. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), Reply 3, 114-15.

²⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 596/B 624

he is possible.”²⁵ He argues, however, that the Cartesian proof is *incomplete* because it is first necessary to demonstrate that God is possible, for “nevertheless I do not yet know, for all that, whether there is a hidden contradiction in joining all that together.”²⁶

According to Leibniz, then, the ontological proof requires the demonstration of the first premise wherein, under this reading, it is asserted that God is possible. Kant’s response to the uniqueness objection proceeds by momentarily granting this first premise as established, allowing that “you are justified in assuming such a being as possible,”²⁷ (despite the fact that he claims that “a non-contradictory concept falls far short of proving the possibility of its object.”)²⁸ Having granted this premise, however, Kant claims that this very way of formulating the proof would already involve committing a contradiction.

Kant objects that, in order for this argument to be accepted, one must already have snuck existence, “under whatever disguised name, into the concept of a thing which you would think merely in terms of its possibility.”²⁹ The contradiction is that in the first premise of the ontological proof in its Leibnizian formulation, one is supposed to think of God merely in terms of his essence and possibility. The second premise and the conclusion of the syllogism, however, is supposed to establish that the essence and existence of God are absolutely inseparable, i.e., that God is an absolutely necessary being. Kant thus concludes that either the proposition that God necessarily exists is analytic and tautologous insofar as one has already presupposed the existence of God as

²⁵ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, “Letter to Countess Elizabeth On God and Formal Logic” in *Philosophical Essays*, trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989), 238.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 596/B 624

²⁸ *Ibid.*, A 596/B 624

²⁹ *Ibid.*, A 597/B 625

contained under his possibility, or it is synthetic. If the existential statement is synthetic, however, then one has already conceded that God's essence and existence are separable.

While this objection is problematic for Leibnizian formulations of the proof, as Harrelson has argued it is not fatal to *all* versions of the proof. To the contrary, in making this objection Kant is actually "in full conformity with the view of the seventeenth century proponents of the argument," such as Malebranche and Spinoza, who recognized

that the assertion of necessary existence (understood as sameness of existence and essence) in the minor premise of the ontological argument precludes any prior analysis of possibility.³⁰

Even when one takes into account all of the steps in Kant's critique of the ontological proof, Harrelson argues, one still finds that these arguments "apply only to the markedly inferior versions of the proof that appear in eighteenth-century textbooks."³¹ There is, however, another way of understanding the ontological proof such that it remains immune to Kant's criticisms as immediately posed above – an interpretation that arguably constitutes a long tradition that leads, by way of some of the most famous proponents of the ontological proof, back to Anselm himself.

³⁰ Harrelson, *Descartes to Hegel*, 185. Cf. also his discussion of Malebranche (ibid., 106-7) Spinoza (ibid., 127) and Leibniz (ibid., 146-7.) Harrelson also sometimes mentions Descartes alongside Malebranche and Spinoza as rejecting the possibility premise, yet admits that "Descartes seems to waver on the meaning of 'possibility' and whether this can rightfully be ascribed to God." (Ibid., 50.) Malebranche, by contrast, is particularly clear and emphatic on this point: "one cannot see God without His existing; one cannot see the essence of an infinite perfect being without seeing its existence; one cannot conceive it simply as a possible being; nothing limits it; nothing can represent it. Therefore, if one thinks of it, it must exist." (Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search after Truth*, trans. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olscamp (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 318.)

³¹ Harrelson, *Descartes to Hegel*, 18.

The Intuitive-Experiential Reading of the Ontological Proof

No doubt, if the proof is taken as an argument that is strictly analogous to arguments involving the essence and existence of finite objects, and if the proof is meant to follow the usual rules of inference, then it suffers from a number of major and indeed fatal difficulties. Yet it is not only admitted but presupposed by many of the main proponents of the ontological proof that God is entirely unique precisely insofar as he and he alone is absolutely necessary. Precisely what is denied thereby is the legitimacy of any assumption of analogy between finite things and God. The finite is finite because the concept and being of something, or its essence and existence, or its possibility and actuality, are separable.

The result is that Descartes' attempt to use the analogy of a triangle, or indeed any analogy with finite things must thus be acknowledged to be deeply misleading, as Descartes himself seems to admit in his more careful moments.³² Likewise, on such a reading, Leibniz' attempt to provide a more rigorous presentation of the ontological proof by considering the essence or possibility of God prior to and as a distinct premise of the ontological proof must be seen as a *grave error* insofar this premise contradicts the very meaning and conclusion of the ontological proof, i.e., that God's existence and essence are absolutely identical. Against such proposed modifications of the ontological proof, one ought to insist on the uniqueness of necessary existence and thus, like Spinoza and Malebranch, that a prior analysis in terms of possibility is impossible.

This appeal to the uniqueness of necessary existence and consequent denial of analogy, however, is a double-edged sword. The ontological proof purchases immunity to

³² Cf. Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, AT VII 66-67 and 383.

objections from analogy and the usual rules of inference at the cost that it also cannot appeal to them for the purpose of demonstration. If such modes of demonstration are ruled out, however, then in what way can the proof be said to provide or be anything like a proof at all?

Rather than reading the proof as a formal argument, the ontological proof may be thought of as a transformative *meditation* on God in and through the process of which one is elevated beyond the finite distinction between essence and existence and thought and being, and above our usual finite categories and ways of thinking, to the experience of the absolute necessity of God, wherein God's existence and essence and my thought of God and God's actuality are recognized by me in their immediate inseparability. The experience of the divine is precisely what is to be realized in the 'proof' itself. This experience is the intuition of the immediacy of the absolute necessity of God. This experience is an *immediate intuition* because the separation of existence and essence, possibility and actuality, and concept and being is precisely that which is revealed to be mediated, derivative, finite and illusory or untrue.

Hegel and the Intuitive-Experiential Argument

Given the above, it is now possible to see how and in what sense Hegel's critique of Kant's objection to the ontological proof is justified. When Hegel considers the ontological proof, the formulation of the proof that he has in mind is not primarily that of Leibniz and Wolff. Rather, he associates this proof most closely with Spinoza, Descartes

and, first and foremost, Anselm.³³ On the basis of this kind of formulation, Kant's claim that being is not a real predicate genuinely is question-begging and the example of the hundred Thalers is quite beside the point.

That Hegel was aware of what I have above called the intuitive-experiential version of the ontological proof and took this to be authoritative is clear not only from the critique of Kant that he offers, but from his characterization of the ontological proof itself. According to Hegel, the fundamental meaning of all of the proofs lies in the fact that they are to be grasped as the “*elevation of our spirit to God.*”³⁴ The necessity of the proofs lies in the purification of religious consciousness of the “contingent and arbitrary elements” that have entered into its feeling, representation and thought. That which is merely contingent and merely subjective, that which is merely a distorted external representation and is only in our own minds, is precisely recognized as *not* the truth and as inadequate to God. The purification that is the process of this elevation to and knowledge of God is on Hegel's account, at its height in and with the ontological proof, explicitly articulated as a turning-inwards in thought. In his *Lectures on the Proofs*, clearly alluding to Anselm, Hegel thus writes that

[i]n accord with the old belief that what is substantial and true can be reached only by meditative thought [*Nachdenken*], we accomplish the purification of this elevation into its essentiality and necessity by the exposition of it in thought.³⁵

³³ The only time Hegel mentions Wolff and Leibniz when discussing the ontological proof in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* occurs when, after asserting that Anselm first discovered this argument, he continues on to say that “It is then adduced in all later philosophers – Descartes, Leibniz, Wolff – but always alongside [*neben*] the other proofs, though it is the only genuine [*Wahrhafte*] one.” (Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:352 [272]) By contrast, Hegel mentions Descartes and Spinoza repeatedly (cf. *Ibid.*, 3:183 [118], 3:184 [119] and 3:355 [274].)

³⁴ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 63 [18:250.]

³⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, pp.73-4 [18:259.]

Given such allusions, in addition to the character of Hegel's critique of Kant's objection, Hegel's appreciation of the intuitive-experiential version of the proof is clear. On this basis, Hegel is justified in claiming that *from its own standpoint*, i.e., from the standpoint of this articulation of the ontological proof, Kant's objection to the ontological proof is insufficient. Nonetheless, once again it would be a mistake to conclude from this that Hegel uncritically adopts the ontological proof in any of its traditional formulations, even and indeed especially in the form of an intuitive-experiential proof. To the contrary, Hegel explicitly states that all of the proofs of God are "clearly defective."³⁶ Moreover, as we shall see, Hegel's objection to the ontological proof is in fact informed and motivated by Hegel's adherence to Kantian strictures against dogmatic metaphysics. This critique of dogmatism lies as the root of Kant's critique of the ontological proof. To comprehend how this is so, however, it is first necessary to consider Kant's objection to the proof in more detail and in its systematic context.

Beyond Dogmatism

Kant's System and Critique of the Ontological Proof

Kant's objection to the ontological proof is neither decisive nor even particularly new insofar as it is taken on its own and in isolation from the remainder of his system. Yet, as even Harrelson acknowledges, to claim that Kant says nothing more than Gassendi is to ignore the fact that Kant does not merely

blindly assert the rule that existence cannot belong to the nature of any entity, for this would beg the question of whether the case of God marks an exception to the rule, but instead derives the rule from a complete theory of human cognition.³⁷

³⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 45 [54.]

³⁷ Harrelson, *Descartes to Hegel*, 168.

Kant's objection to the ontological proof is in fact deeply rooted in the apparatus of his critical project and intimately linked with his Copernican turn.

As was explained above, while according to Kant being is not a *real* predicate, he does not claim that it is not a predicate at all. To the contrary, Kant's assertion that being is not a real predicate is preceded by the claim that the mistake of the ontological proof consists "in the confusion of a logical predicate for a real one."³⁸ Being can serve as a logical predicate, according to Kant, because "logic abstracts from every content, even the subject can be predicated of itself."³⁹ On Kant's account, then, the judgment "God is" legitimately uses being as a predicate insofar as the 'is' or 'being' predicated of God merely posits "the subject in itself with all its predicates."⁴⁰ Such a judgment, however, is merely *analytic* and adds no new content or information to that which is already thought in the subject of the judgment. A real predicate, by contrast, is an additional concept that, in serving as a predicate, does add something to the concept of the subject of a judgment (and thus such a judgment is synthetic.)

Now, on the surface Kant's assertion is liable to appear somewhat peculiar insofar as it certainly seems as though existence does add a good deal to the thought or concept of something. Here, if properly understood, Kant's famous 'hundred thaler' example serves to shed some light on what he is getting at. As he points out, there is the greatest difference between the mere thought of a hundred dollars on the one hand and an existent hundred actual dollars in one's pocket on the other. A hundred dollars that 'exist' or are 'actual' can be spent on things and their existence or non-existence is certainly of

³⁸ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 598/B 627

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., A 599/B 627

substantial importance when considering one's own financial situation, the ability to go out and buy food, etc. Kant's claim is thus not that when I posit something as actual or existing that I do not posit *more* than if I posit that thing as merely possible.⁴¹ To the contrary there certainly *is* more involved, but according to Kant this more does not involve the addition of a concept to the concept of the object. How so?

For Kant, when the thing is taken in-itself, what is at issue is the entirely immanent and self-contained characterization of the thing, i.e., the thing independent of any external relations. Accordingly, Kant asserts that the *concept* of one hundred possible dollars and the *concept* of one hundred actual dollars is *precisely* the same concept. In Kant's terms, then, the difference between something that is *possible* and something that is *actual* (i.e., something that 'is' or 'exists') has to do with external relations. In particular, Kant asserts that the modalities of possibility, actuality and necessity "have this peculiarity: as a determination of the object they do not augment the concept to which they are ascribed in the least, but rather express only the relation to the faculty of cognition."⁴² How, then, does Kant define these terms?

1. Whatever agrees with the formal conditions of experience (in accordance with intuition and concepts) is **possible**.
2. That which is connected with the material conditions of experience (of sensation) is **actual**.
3. That whose connection with the actual is determined in accordance with general conditions of experience is (exists) **necessarily**.⁴³

Now admittedly, for Kant possibility, 'actuality' (or 'being' or 'existence'), and necessity are terms that can also be used in a merely logical sense. In that case, however, because logic abstracts from all content, the determinations of possibility, actuality and necessity

⁴¹ See *Ibid.*, A 234/B 287.

⁴² *Ibid.*, A 219/B 266

⁴³ *Ibid.*, A 218/B 265-6

are entirely formal and merely “analytically express the form of **thinking**.”⁴⁴ The logical possibility of a concept is merely the non-contradiction of the subject and predicate,⁴⁵ necessity is merely the condition that *if* the subject is given, the predicate is given as well,⁴⁶ while ‘being’, ‘existence’ or ‘actuality’ in its logical use serves no function other than to “posit the subject in itself with all its predicates, and indeed posit the **object** in relation to my concept.”⁴⁷

The upshot of all of this is that Kant’s objection to the ontological proof is ultimately grounded in the most fundamental tenets of his system. His objection to the ontological proof is grounded in his conception of logic, which itself is related, through the table of judgments, to his table of categories. Thus, as Allison claims, from Kant’s “point of view, to treat ‘existence’ as a real predicate is to commit a category mistake, consisting in the conflation of a category of quality (reality) with one of modality (existence or actuality).”⁴⁸ Kant’s account of modality in its transcendental use, in comparison with and distinction from its logical use, is likewise at once tied to his assertion that all expansive, i.e., synthetic, theoretical knowledge claims, must be related to sensuous intuition, either insofar as (1) the form of intuition (along with the categories of the understanding) constitute the formal possibility of such an object, or (2) insofar as the object is actual by being given in sensation (as well as by the categories of the understanding), or (3) insofar as the forms of intuition and categories of the

⁴⁴ Ibid., A 219/B 267

⁴⁵ Cf. Ibid., A 245

⁴⁶ Cf. Ibid., A 594/B 622

⁴⁷ Ibid., A 599/B 627

⁴⁸ Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*, 416.

understanding constitute the universal and necessary conditions of any experience whatsoever.

All this being said, Kant's objection to the ontological proof, even in its entire systematic context, still does not constitute a decisive refutation of the *conclusion* of this proof. Kant's general account of human cognition itself starts out from the assumption that the conditions of the possibility of the experience of *finite sensuously given objects* are the universal and necessary conditions of the possibility of experience *simpliciter*. Kant's account, accordingly, simply rules out from the start the possibility of the kind of experience that is central to, for example, the intuitive-experiential reading of the ontological proof, for the very point of the proof is supposed to be that this experience is an exception to the general order and rules of cognition, and particularly cognition of finite objects that are (at least potentially) sensuously given.

That experience begins from that which is finite and sensuously given might well be admitted. That thought or concept and being are not immediately identical with respect to finite things, and indeed that they are not immediately identical for us and in our knowledge is not something that the proponents of the ontological proof deny, but to the contrary explicitly affirm as their own starting-point. That all knowledge is *limited to* knowledge of sensuously given objects, however, is far from clear, even and especially in light of Kant's own claim to have ascertained the pure forms of intuition and categories of the understanding. How *could* these come to be known in the course of experience on Kant's account? The deduction of the categories in the *Critique of Pure Reason* can hardly be thought to provide the answer to such a question. Does the subject, the I, only know objects, and thus only know him- or herself as a sensuously given object, or is the

experience of subjectivity and its self-knowing fundamentally more than this? Such questions, it may be noted in passing, were fundamental to the development of post-Kantian German idealism.

At any rate, the main point is that according to Hegel, Kant's objection to the ontological proof is not definitive because and insofar as, in its very beginning, Kant's system presupposes the absolute and insuperable difference between concept and being. According to Hegel, Kant's objection comes down to the claim that "[t]he two are distinguished and opposed to each other; therefore the concept cannot contain being; 'being' stands opposed to it."⁴⁹ As such, Kant's objection amounts to the denial of what the ontological proof asserts, namely the unity of concept and being. However, Hegel does not *therefore* assume that the ontological proof in its traditional formulation is adequate or successful. To the contrary, he argues that this proof is fundamentally defective, for in this proof he claims,

[t]he unity of concept and being is a presupposition and the defect consists in the fact that it is a mere presupposition, which is not proved but only adopted immediately.⁵⁰

According to Hegel, the proofs are to be conceived as the elevation of humanity to God or in other words, of the elevation of the finite to the infinite. It is thus incumbent on the ontological proof according to its very meaning (as well as in accordance with its form *as* a proof) to show that and how this elevation occurs from out of the finite and in the course of experience itself. The ontological proof in its traditional formulation, however, does not offer this explanation or provide this elevation – even, and indeed especially, in the case of the intuitive-experiential formulation.

⁴⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:178 [113.]

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:439 [328.]

While undoubtedly familiar with the intuitive-experiential version of the ontological proof, far from embracing any claim to absolute knowledge on the basis of an immediate or esoteric feeling or experience or intuition, Hegel asserts that when someone appeals

to an oracle dwelling within, he has nothing more to do with anyone who disagreed. He only has to explain that he has nothing more to say to anyone who does not find and feel the same thing within himself. –In other words, he tramples the roots of humanity underfoot. For the nature of humanity is to drive men to agreement with one another, and humanity’s existence lies only in the commonality of consciousness that has been brought about.⁵¹

For Hegel, the immediacy of the claim of the ontological proof, i.e., the mere presupposition of the unity of concept and being, is defective and the defect consists precisely in this immediacy. This position remains finite because the infinite is still just something that is abstractly posited over and against the finite. As such, however, it has the finite as its limit and thus is itself a finite position.⁵²

The intuitive-experiential version of the ontological proof can only be taken to succeed insofar as it not only denies all continuity and analogy between the finite and the infinite, but also makes the experience or perception of the necessary being or existence of God into a premise of the argument itself. In making this experience into a premise of the proof, however, “the conclusion of the argument is irrelevant to anyone who does not have the intuition or perception in question.”⁵³ For this reason, it is far from a merely external objection that such a proof does not “lead to inner and strong conviction.”⁵⁴ The ‘strength’ of the proof would appear to rest either on an antecedent faith and conviction

⁵¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶69 [9:47-8.]

⁵² See supra, pp. 119-120.

⁵³ Harrelson, *Descartes to Hegel*, 51.

⁵⁴ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:420 [313.]

or on an experience that is entirely alien to finite consciousness and the sensuous world. It thus seems that no one who did not already accept God on faith would be the slightest bit moved by such a proof. But then the question is, what does this proof ‘prove,’ if anything? It does not extend knowledge, but at most might be said to clarify that which was already implicitly known. Yet it does not explain how such a lack of clarity was possible in the first place, or explain how it is overcome, or, as a consequence, how this elevated position is related to, returns to and comprehends everyday experience. In other words, it does not provide the *steps* of an elevation, but is merely a leap into a beyond, and this leap is, from the standpoint of finite consciousness, utterly unintelligible, unmotivated, and disconnected from the rest of human experience.

Even though Hegel does not regard Kant’s direct objections to the ontological proof as decisive, he is far from being unaware of the challenge that is posed by Kant. Moreover, Hegel not only argues that Kant’s objection that being and concept are distinct and separate is ‘correct’, but also that this objection has as its basis a standpoint that itself is not just correct, but “more advanced”⁵⁵ than that of the ontological proof and the old metaphysical position upon which that proof is based. Yet Hegel also argues that the ontological proof is correct insofar as it presupposes the unity of concept and being, and that in presupposing this unity as the basis of its standpoint, this position is “superior”⁵⁶ to the Kantian standpoint.

In the light of this set of opposed claims, at this juncture Hegel’s position with respect to the ontological proof itself seems self-contradictory. To avoid this confusion it is necessary to provide a brief account of Hegel’s method and conception of ‘sublation.’

⁵⁵ Ibid., 184 [119.]

⁵⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:184 [118.]

Articulating Hegel's above claims in relation to his method will serve not only to clarify these claims so as to overcome the appearance that Hegel is simply contradicting himself, but also will have the further advantage of allowing us, on that basis, to discharge the final misunderstanding of Hegel's defense of the proofs according to which his aim is to produce a 'better' proof.

Sublation and Hegel's 'Method'

Few thinkers have been subject to such scorn as Hegel on the basis of the most basic misunderstandings and indeed outright distortions. According to Hegel, the method that he follows, and indeed the only true method, is one

that is not something distinct from its subject matter and content – for it is the content in itself *the dialectic which it possesses within itself*, which moves the subject matter forward.⁵⁷

This has not, however, stopped both critics and even would-be defenders of Hegel's system from attempting to reduce his system and its method to the most abstract formalism. There is in this regard a popular and enduring myth according to which Hegel's 'dialectics' is the bland procedure of simply repeating the formula 'thesis, antithesis, synthesis' indifferently across all subject matters and issues. Moreover, insofar as the synthesis in this triad is thought to follow from the contradiction of the thesis and the antithesis, and that logically anything and everything can follow from a contradiction, Hegel's system is then dismissed as nonsense; for on this interpretation, the 'method' is supposed to deny the decisiveness of one of the most basic principles that would allow

⁵⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 33 [21:38.]

for communication in the first place, namely the principle of non-contradiction.⁵⁸ The fact, however, is that Hegel nowhere employs the terms ‘thesis-antithesis-synthesis’ to describe his own method, and indeed does not use these three terms together except to mock the formalism of such a procedure.⁵⁹ Furthermore, far from denying the principle of non-contradiction, or indeed any of the classical laws of thought, Hegel incorporates these laws into his *Logic* and indeed his entire ‘method’ may be seen as an affirmation of these principles, properly thought through.

Much of the confusion over Hegel’s method and the notion that he denies the principles of non-contradiction and identity can be seen as arising from his occasional use of the somewhat Schelling-like turn of phrase whereby Hegel calls true identity the “identity of identity and non-identity,”⁶⁰ and his equally shocking claim that “[a]ll things are in themselves contradictory.”⁶¹ Granted, in our everyday way of speaking, such formulations sound absurd, and indeed they are misleading if one attempts to grasp Hegel’s method simply on the basis of them. Our task, however, is to understand these formulations on the basis of Hegel’s method, in which case one will also be able to appreciate the inadequacy of these formulations in themselves.

Hegel seems to deny the principles of identity and non-contradiction when he claims that identity is the identity of identity and non-identity. Assuming that we take this claim in its customary sense, it would seem that Hegel takes statements such as “this

⁵⁸ Cf. Bertrand Russell. “On Denoting” *Mind*. Vol.14, No.56 (Oct. 1905), 485. and Karl R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 328.

⁵⁹ Cf. Gustav E. Mueller, “The Legend of ‘Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis’” in *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, ed. Jon Steward (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 301-2.

⁶⁰ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 51 [21:60.]

⁶¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 381 [11:286.]

table is a table and not a table” to be true. This is certainly incorrect. Now, for Hegel, correctness is “the agreement of an object with our representation of it.”⁶² Clearly then, statements of the above sort are patently incorrect, and indeed are utter nonsense, inasmuch as something cannot be said to both be and not be in the same way at the same time. To comprehend Hegel’s claim, however, it is essential to grasp his distinction between correctness on the one hand and truth on the other; for according to Hegel, truth in the proper philosophical sense is not a matter of correctness. What, then, does Hegel mean by ‘truth’?

Hegel first of all defines truth as “the agreement of a content with itself.”⁶³ Such a use of the term ‘truth’ is perhaps unusual, but it is not unprecedented, even in everyday language. Thus it is certainly *correct* to say that there are a good many people we call friends who do not always act like friends, and so we speak of *bad* friends. A *true* friend, by contrast, would be “one whose way of acting conforms with the concept of friendship.”⁶⁴ According to Hegel, however, and this point is absolutely essential, *everything* finite ultimately fails to fully agree with itself. *Everything* finite is self-contradictory.

When Hegel claims, then, that everything is in itself contradictory, he is not concerned with the question of whether the predicate may legitimately be attributed to the subject and, despite Russell’s quip to the contrary, Hegel is not guilty of confusing the ‘is’ of identity and predication. When Hegel says that everything is in itself contradictory, what he means is the following: all finite things are, as finite, *untrue* in the properly

⁶² Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §24, z.2.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

philosophical sense of this term to the extent that “they have a concept, but their existence is not adequate to it.”⁶⁵ To put this in more familiar terms, this simply means that finite things are not self-grounding, for they presuppose something else. In this sense, the concept of a finite thing presupposes and can be said to include the concept of that which it is not. A spatial object, for example, presupposes the space which lies outside it and which it does not itself occupy. In this sense, everything finite is indeed, and by definition, self-contradictory and thus untrue.

On the basis of this understanding of Hegel’s conception of truth (as opposed to mere correctness), it is now possible to grasp Hegel’s so-called dialectical method. We may note that, while Hegel rejects the abstract formalism of the triadic ‘thesis-antithesis-synthesis’ schema, the myth has this much basis in fact: Hegel does indeed claim that there are three sides or moments to his method. Contrary to myth, however, this method is not just $A=A$, $A=\sim A$, $A=(A\&\sim A)$ which is called ‘B’, i.e., not the formal triad ‘thesis-antithesis-synthesis’ but the negation of negation, $A=\sim\sim A$, or better, as sublation. There are two points here to keep especially in mind. It is the very thinkability of the identity $A=A$ that requires the thought of $\sim A$ and of its negation, $\sim\sim A$; and thought of the identity of A in terms of the negation of negation is a result that both returns to the identity of A and yet preserves the direction of thought (from A to $\sim A$ to $\sim\sim A$) in the result.

Now, the term ‘to sublate’ (*aufheben*) has a threefold sense. On the one hand, to sublate is, per the root word ‘*heben*’ to raise or lift up as well as to remove.⁶⁶ *Auf-heben*, however, has the further double meaning, of to negate, cancel, and clear away, as well as,

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ See Michael Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 283.

on the basis of both of the previous moments, to keep or preserve.⁶⁷ All three senses are inextricably linked in Hegel's method, which again must be distinguished as having three sides or moments.

The first side is the moment of abstraction or the moment of the 'understanding' (*Verstand*). This is what we ordinarily take to be thinking, where we take up objects, grasp them according to certain universal characterizations, and consider these in isolation by means of fixed determinations.⁶⁸ Insofar as something is only considered in its abstract isolation, it is in Hegel's terms 'one-sided'. It should be noted, however, that despite the fact that Hegel frequently rails against the understanding, he insists that it constitutes a necessary moment in both theory and practice; for it is only in and through fixing determinations in the first place that any progress can be made.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, the defect of the understanding consists in taking these fixed determinations as something *absolute* rather than comprehending them *as* moments of a more concrete, complete comprehension. Ordinarily, for example, we take the meaning of the terms 'being' and 'nothing' to be something absolutely fixed and opposed as mutually exclusive terms, and so one or other of these terms can be predicated of a subject in order to render a true judgment or proposition. If we turn, for example and by contrast, to Hegel's account of these terms in his *Logic*, we find that Hegel's method consists in analyzing these concepts and categories themselves and testing their truth by their own immanent

⁶⁷ Cf. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §96 and Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 81-2 [21:94-5.]

⁶⁸ See Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §§79 and 80.

⁶⁹ Accordingly, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶32 [9:27.] Hegel claims that "[t]he act of separating is the force and labor of the *understanding*, the most astonishing and the greatest of all power or, rather, which is the absolute power."

standard and criterion.⁷⁰ What is thought at the beginning of the *Logic* is thus not this or that being; rather the beginning is simply the thought of being as it is thought “purely in the element of thinking.”⁷¹ This thought of being, however, is not the thought of an object, but the being of that thinking and the thought itself as purely self-thinking thought. Far from denying the law of identity, identity is already included as a moment of this thought itself (although only as a *moment* as we shall see). Furthermore, as mentioned above and as shall be explained momentarily in relation to Hegel’s method, identity also constitutes the standard and criterion by which the truth of something is judged.

The second side is the negatively rational (*negativ-vernünftige*) or dialectical moment. Here, the supposed fixed abstractions are shown to contain their own contradiction or negation. Hegel’s point is that finite things, because they are finite or limited,⁷² are self-contradictory and untrue in the *absolute sense*. For Hegel, insofar as something is true in the absolute sense, it must be able to account for itself without referring to something that lies outside or beyond it. We might say that if, in order to think something, we must consider (or rather already think) something beyond it, then the category is finite, or in Hegel’s terms self-contradictory and untrue. However, since the thought is itself the content and object of itself, it is the thought itself that is its own negation. Hegel thus argues, for example, that the thought that is abstract and immediate ‘being’ is in its simplicity and immediacy pure abstraction. It is itself then ‘*nothing*’ and

⁷⁰ Cf. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §24 z.2.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, §14.

⁷² Note that finitude and limit are different categories in Hegel’s *Logic*. Limit has merely been used, following Hegel’s example in Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:101 [7.]

vice-versa. This is not to be understood as a matter of external reflection, but the immanent development of the being of thought itself. The thought of being itself as pure self-thinking thought turns into the thought of nothing. That this is merely a contradiction, and indeed is utterly unthinkable is, of course, the common standpoint of the understanding. In fact this contradiction *is* thought, for the movement of being to nothing and of nothing to being is just becoming and becoming is simply the unity of these moments.

Again, this dialectical moment of Hegel's method is misunderstood if one takes him simply to be denying the principle of identity, non-contradiction and excluded middle, thereby casting out the criteria of truth and the laws of thought that make even communication possible. Indeed, it is precisely the fact that contradiction cannot stand and is not absolutely true that leads us to the next moment.

The third side is the positively rational (*positiv-vernünftige*) or speculative moment. This moment is the moment of 'sublation' in Hegel's precise sense of the term. It is imprecise to characterize sublation as mere 'unity' or 'identity' insofar as this would involve simply denying the dialectical moment of contradiction. If, for example, we say that being and nothing are a unity or are identical, all that is achieved is that we either remain at the level of negation and thus simple contradiction, or else return to a prior moment and think the unity of being and nothing as simply being. The speculative moment, however, involves both 'negation' and 'preservation' in and through a 'raising-up'. Something is fixed in its determination to begin with, and then the dialectical moment reveals the contradiction and thus negation of the fixed terms. Yet, because the terms and the dialectical moment are themselves determinate, the result is "truly not

empty, abstract nothing”; rather the immediate fixed determination has been *mediated* and as such is a result. The result is thus something determinate, i.e., it is that in and through which these determinations and their unity and contradiction or identity and difference is thought and this contradiction is superseded, such that these distinctions are abstract moments of the result. Becoming does not just pass back and forth but is its own vanishing and the result is what Hegel calls *Dasein*, a being that is there – being-there, although again, this is not to be thought as some *thing* that is an object for thought and that is *spatially* there. Being that *is* as mediated result is being as determinate, the being determinate of self-thinking thought, for which reason *Dasein* is sometimes translated as determinate being. Determinate being as the result of being and nothing and their contradiction is the sublation and truth of these abstractions, such that they have been taken up and preserved as moments. Not as moments of some or other object, but of self-thinking thought. Far from an affirmation of groundless irrationalism, the sublation of *being* and *nothing* is *Dasein* as the ground that holds together and allows for the distinction of being and nothing. This means, of course, that being and nothing are not in themselves true in the absolute sense, for these concepts overflow themselves and have their truth in the thought that is result of their contradiction and movement.

Sublating Finitude: Kant and the Ontological Proof

As we have seen, Hegel objects to Kant’s critique of the ontological proof on the grounds that Kant merely asserts that concept and being are absolutely different. This assertion is defective, according to Hegel, insofar as it is an immediate presupposition. By contrast, the ontological proof asserts the opposite, i.e., it presupposes the unity of

concept and being. At first, it appears that we have nothing more than two contradictory assertions, and so one or the other must be true. According to Hegel, however, both are merely *correct*, for concept and being are *both* identical *and* different.⁷³ In Hegel's terms, moreover, the basis on which these claims are put forward is likewise correct; yet as mentioned above, that which is correct is not therefore *true*, but is finite and one-sided. Now, Hegel asserts that the defect of these positions and of "what they have in common is the fact that they both make presuppositions."⁷⁴ Each position in its immediacy stands in opposition to the other and make contradictory assertions. This contradiction cannot stand, but must be sublated so as to overcome the defects of these positions and their finitude, while preserving their truth. Thus after declaring that all of the proofs of God, the ontological proof included, are clearly defective, Hegel immediately adds:

Yet it is easier to know that something is defective than to know what is true. However, when we recognize the defect with any definiteness we also come to recognize therein what is true.⁷⁵

The same point, it should be noted, also applies to Hegel's objection to Kant. Admittedly, Hegel does go on to argue that the standpoint of the ontological proof is ultimately "superior"⁷⁶ to that of Kant. Nonetheless, he also insists, in the same context, that Kant's standpoint is "more advanced"⁷⁷ than that of the ontological proof.

Granted, even with the advantage of having reviewed Hegel's method, these assertions are still liable to appear, if not self-contradictory, at least confusing, when placed side by side. It is thus necessary to explain the sense in which Hegel regards

⁷³ See *ibid.* 3:70-72 [9-12] and 3:182-4 [117-19.]

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:183 [118.]

⁷⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 45 [54-5.]

⁷⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:184 [118]

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 184 [119.]

Kant's position as more advanced than the ontological proof as well as the sense in which he takes the standpoint of the ontological proof to be superior to the Kantian standpoint.

Kant, according to Hegel, merely presupposes the distinction of concept and being. More specifically, the difference between concept and being is taken in understanding to be fixed and insuperable. Furthermore, the finite is defined precisely in terms of the difference of concept and being. Kant's presupposition of the difference between concept and being thus has the further meaning not only that we are finite and that our concepts or thoughts are finite, but also that we cannot reach the infinite. According to Kant, however, it is the very quest for absolute knowing that is a mistake and confusion, or rather an illusion or trick that reason plays upon itself. His claim is thus that this limitation is not merely negative but that we both can and ought to find satisfaction in the sphere of our finitude. From the standpoint of traditional dogmatic metaphysics, however, as well as from Hegel's own standpoint, such finitude cannot satisfy us. In denying us the possibility of absolute knowing and claiming that we ought to find satisfaction in the finite, Hegel thus claims that Kant "sends man to feed upon husks and chaff."⁷⁸

Now, the old metaphysics, and the ontological proof that has this metaphysics as its starting-point, begins from the unity of concept and being and takes this unity to be the truth. According to Hegel, the presupposition of this unity is in fact "present in, lies at the basis of, our representation – [that of] all of us, and of all philosophers. If it is permitted to make presuppositions, then surely this one can be made."⁷⁹ This unity is presupposed

⁷⁸ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §28 z.

⁷⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:70 [9.] Translator's interpolation.

insofar as what is asserted thereby is that “[t]hinking is the universal within itself, objective. The concept without any objectivity is an empty representation or opinion; being without the concept [is mere] evanescent externality and appearance.”⁸⁰

The highest, the truth as such, is rational and indeed is reason itself, or what Hegel calls the idea. All philosophy and religion, according to Hegel, is idealism in the sense that they “will not admit finitude as a true being, an ultimate, an absolute, or as something non-positated, uncreated, eternal.”⁸¹ On this definition of idealism, then, even Thales is an idealist, for Thales takes water not merely to be something immediately or sensibly given, but as the in-itself and essence of things. In other words, water for Thales is the universal and the ground of the finite.⁸²

That the truth is found not in the immediate, but in and through thinking things through and thus transforming them into the form of thought is thus, according to Hegel, not merely the peculiar presumption of philosophy. Rather, it is the belief (*Glaube*) of humanity that “by thinking the truth can be known.”⁸³ In opposition to the assertion of the absolute distinction between thinking and being, then “it is the natural belief [*Glaube*] of mankind that this antithesis has no truth.”⁸⁴ Modern philosophy, and particular the critical philosophy, however, has brought this belief or faith into doubt, leading to what Hegel characterizes as the sickness and despair of his age. The inner meaning of the ontological proof consists in the claim that we cannot and ought not be satisfied with the finite and the finitude of our own immediate position, and that the truth is that which is elevated

⁸⁰ Ibid., 3:70 [10.] Translator’s interpolation.

⁸¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 124 [21:142.]

⁸² See Ibid.

⁸³ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 36 [45.] Compare also *ibid.*, 22 [26.]

⁸⁴ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §22 z.

above the one-sided opposition of thinking or concept and being.⁸⁵ Nonetheless, the ontological proof is defective, and the mistrust bred by modern philosophy is not merely negative, but demonstrates the one-sidedness of this original position and of this faith in its immediacy.

The presupposition that we cannot have absolute knowledge, as well as Kant's opposition to the ontological proof is, as was explained above, rooted in Kant's starting-point. Negatively stated, i.e., in opposition to dogmatic metaphysics, this starting-point is as follows: Dogmatic metaphysics fails according to Kant because, in attempting to think the unconditional and infinite, it proceeds beyond the bounds of all possible experience and takes itself to have extended the bounds of knowledge merely in and through the application of its abstract categories. This thought is dogmatic insofar as, having lost the touchstone of experience, it lacks any inter-subjectively accessible criterion by means of which to adjudicate between competing claims and assertions and thus, Kant claims, finds itself lost in mere abstractions and falls prey to the antinomies of reason.

Now, the assertion that dogmatic metaphysics grasps *mere* thoughts and not truth and genuine being is not positively demonstrated by Kant, but remains an assumption and indeed a mere negative assertion. This negative assertion, however, is based on a presupposition that, on Hegel's account, constitutes the positive ground and content of Kant's starting-point and its advance over the old metaphysics:

⁸⁵ Hegel makes this claim in the following terms: "Anselm, on the other hand, says we must give up wanting to let the subjective concept to stand as something firm and independent; on the contrary, we must get away from this one-sidedness and [begin from] the unity of subjective and objective in general."(Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:184 [118.]) I have not used the terms subjectivity and objectivity yet, as these concepts will first need to be carefully defined.

According to this view, to say that we think is to say this: that we intuit and we will, and our willing and intuiting is accompanied by thinking. We think too, we comprehend too; a human being is a concrete [being] of sensation, and also a rational being... The concept is something imperfect inasmuch as thinking, conceiving, is only one quality, one human activity amongst others. That is to say that we measure our comprehension by the reality that we have before us, and by concrete beings.⁸⁶

Because the starting-point and the standard of the Kantian position is the concrete, the assertion of the ontological proof appears, by contrast, to move in *mere* thought, i.e., in abstractions.⁸⁷ After all, as advocates of the ontological proof themselves assert, thinking is to begin with, prior to this meditation, still just one-sided, subjective thought. That thinking and being are united in the end, however, is merely presupposed by the old metaphysics and the ontological proof in its traditional formulation. In taking the concrete as the starting-point, accordingly, it appears from Kant's standpoint that the proof itself and its assertion of the unity of thinking and being is itself something that is merely subjective. This appearance, however, is not merely the external appearance of inadequacy. The immediacy of the *mere presupposition* of the unity of concept and being is unsatisfactory insofar as, because this unity is merely presupposed, then when the path of the ontological proof is measured against the presupposed unity of concept and being itself, this *presupposition* "must of necessity be something subjective."⁸⁸ What is required, and what the ontological proof in its traditional formulation does not supply, is the demonstration of sublation of the immediacy of this starting-point, i.e., the

⁸⁶ Ibid., 3:182 [117.]

⁸⁷ This stand-point is to be distinguished from the *logic* that moves "purely in the element of thought." That latter standpoint cannot be the starting-pointing but needs a phenomenological justification.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 3:355 [274.]

demonstration that the finite itself sublates its own finitude⁸⁹ and the demonstration that the unity of concept and being is the absolute truth.⁹⁰

Hegel Does Not Provide a ‘Better’ Argument for the Claim that God Is

By this point it should be clear that and why Hegel’s defense of the ontological proof rests neither on a misunderstanding of, or lack of appreciation for, the significance of Kant’s critique of the ontological proof; nor does it rely on an uncritical acceptance of the ontological proof in its traditional formulation. Precisely at this point, however, it is all the more necessary to address the third misunderstanding of Hegel’s defense of the proof; for the fact that Hegel is critical of the traditional formulations of the ontological proof does not rule out the possibility that Hegel could argue that *some* version of this argument is sound. One might thus suppose that Hegel’s defense of the ontological proof would consist in him correcting the old argument, either by adjusting some of its premises or by supplying certain additional premises, so as to at last arrive at a sound argument that establishes the truth of the conclusion *that* God ‘is’ or ‘exists’.

To suppose that this is Hegel’s aim and goal, however, is fundamentally mistaken. According to Hegel the proposition that ‘God is’, far from being the goal and absolute truth, constitutes the starting-point that is as such the “absolutely initial, the most abstract and poorest.”⁹¹ Moreover, Hegel insists that the very form of the traditional arguments as proofs of God is defective and incapable of expressing the ‘truth’. These claims require some explanation.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 3:72 [11.]

⁹¹ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §86 r.

The Proposition, Proofs and the Understanding

Truth is often ascribed to the proposition or judgment. A proposition is true if what it states is in fact the case. What this means, in Hegel's terms, is that truth as it is usually understood is a matter of correctness, i.e., a question of the agreement between my representation and the presupposed object (*Gegenstand*).⁹² This correctness, however, is "only a matter of the formal agreement of our representation with its content, whatever kind this content may otherwise be."⁹³ Such judgments or proposition, however, are correct, but not *true* in Hegel's sense of the terms. Indeed, according to Hegel,

the form of the proposition, or more precisely that of the judgment, is incapable of expressing what is concrete (and what is true is concrete) and speculative; because of its form, the judgment is one-sided and to that extent false.⁹⁴

Propositions remain at the level of the understanding, and a judgment taken on its own appears to have a merely external logical form that is distinct from its content.

The defect and one-sidedness of this formality is most evidently problematic insofar as the subject of the judgment is supposed to be God, for God himself is taken the truth in the absolute sense. According to Hegel, the very form of the proposition contains the contradiction that it "promises a distinction between subject and predicate as well as identity."⁹⁵ The contradiction and inadequacy of the form of the proposition becomes evident in the case of propositions regarding God insofar as the predicates which are supposed to belong to God are at once taken to be finite and thus to have only a restricted

⁹² See Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §24 z.2.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, §172 z.

⁹⁴ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §31 r.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, §115 r.

content. The deficiency of the form of the proposition thus requires the indefinite multiplication of such predicates.⁹⁶

The above consideration of the inadequacy of the form of the proposition also reveals the inadequacy of the proposition with respect to its *content*. Insofar as this account led us to define the predicate of the proposition as the content or determination of the subject, it is now possible to begin to grasp Hegel's claim that proposition that 'God is' is not the absolute truth, but as already quoted, it is the "absolutely initial, the most abstract and poorest."⁹⁷

At first glance this claim is bound to sound shocking, particularly insofar as establishing God's being is often taken to be the very point and aim of the proof of God. It should be recalled, however, that for Hegel the proofs are to be grasped as the elevation of consciousness to God, which is to say the purification of consciousness from the contingency of its finite intuitions, representations and thoughts and the elevation of consciousness to the knowledge of the truth carried out *in and for thought*. At the start, however, the word 'God' itself is *only* a subjective representation, i.e., not pure thought, not something that is concretely determined and not something that is known as a determinate concept, but merely designates that which is "*meant* to be thought, a substrate that is not determined on its own account."⁹⁸ Accordingly, Hegel claims that "[i]n the proposition 'God is eternal, etc.,' we begin with the representation 'God'; but what he *is*, is not yet *known*; only the predicate states expressly what he *is*."⁹⁹ On Hegel's account, then, the propositional form and the subject of the proposition 'God is' is

⁹⁶ See *ibid.*, §29.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, §86 r.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, §85.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, §31 r.

entirely superfluous. The assertion that ‘God is’, when explicitly articulated by and for thought, is simple empty immediacy – i.e., the explicit *thought content* of this proposition is nothing more than immediate *being*.

Now, such immediacy is not the truth, but is an abstraction that is finite, partial and untrue. This itself, according to Hegel, is implicit articulated in the ontological proof, for the starting-point is precisely that which is to be overcome. More specifically, this starting-point and the subsequent movement from it has for Hegel the significance that this opposition must be sublated such that both the unity and opposition of concept and being are comprehended. It is essential to the proofs, insofar as they are an elevation, that they involve mediation and a unifying third term. According to Hegel, then,

it is not only obvious but inherent to the matter itself that, whenever we speak of knowing God, our discourse at once takes the form of a *sylllogism*. For this very reason the form of the knowledge of God occurs more specifically in the form of the *proofs of God’s Dasein*.¹⁰⁰

Yet the proofs themselves – all of them, including the ontological proof – are defective because and insofar as the “fundamental error is found in the form of connection that an ordinary *sylllogism* is.”¹⁰¹

The problem is that proofs in the usual and general sense are what Hegel calls syllogisms of the understanding.¹⁰² Such proofs are, like the proposition, not capable of articulating or comprehending the truth. The failure and finitude of such proofs lies in the fact that in them there is a distinction between form and content. The form of such a proof is taken to be the logical structure of the argument, while the content, by contrast, is more or less taken up as something indifferent to this form. The movement of these

¹⁰⁰ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:416 [309-10.]

¹⁰¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 113 [18:291.]

¹⁰² Cf. *ibid*, §182 r.

proofs, therefore, is not explicitly the immanent movement and development that is the sublation of the finite starting-point from out of itself. To the contrary, they remain mere syllogisms of the understanding, and

[s]uch a syllogism has on the whole a *permanent* immediacy in its premises. It has presuppositions that are declared not merely primary but as *existing* [*seiendes*], *enduring* with which the others are connected as a consequence, a conditioned thing, etc.¹⁰³

The form of such proofs is itself one-sided, partial, and merely subjective. Hegel argues, then, that because and insofar as the traditional proofs of God are articulated in the formal manner of proofs in the usual sense of the term and as mere syllogisms of the understanding, they are fundamentally defective. This defect leads to the immanent self-contradiction of these proofs such that what the proofs actually say due to their form contradicts what they are supposed to mean according to their content. That which the proofs ought to reach according to their content is the unconditioned truth; but in the finite procedure of the proofs as proofs of the understanding, the conclusion is posited as the conditioned result, while the premises are posited as independent and true in their independence and on their own behalf. In the proofs of God, however, the mediation that these proofs carry out is supposed to have precisely the opposite sense, for the starting-point, the finite, is supposed to be what is only conditional in relation to God as the absolute. Accordingly, one claims that this mediation belongs only to one side of the relationship, namely to *our* knowledge. Insofar as the proofs are supposed to lead to the elevation of finite spirit to God, however, this means that the elevation is inadequate, finite and one-sided and thus the proofs are inadequate and defective. The elevation and movement that these proofs are supposed to articulate, in other words, appears to be

¹⁰³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 113 [18:291.]

merely subjective, something that merely takes place in *our* thought, and hence as inadequate according to the very unity of concept and being that is supposed to be the result and conclusion of the proofs themselves.

The details of Hegel's demonstration of this claim, i.e., his critique of the proofs and demonstration of their immanent self-contradiction, will be discussed in detail in Chapter Three. For now, however, it is at least possible to elucidate the above claims by considering Hegel's critique of proofs in the ordinary sense as this applies to, for example, the Pythagorean theorem.

A theorem *is* a theorem insofar as it is not merely something immediate, not merely a definition, but includes mediation. On the one hand, then, the theorem is supposed to display the "internal differentiation of the subject matter and the connection of the differentiated determinacies to one another."¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, however, this display is supposed to be a mediation, such that the content ought not *merely* to be displayed in the theorem, but "ought to be *demonstratively displayed*."¹⁰⁵ The truth of the theorem is thus connected with the entire proof. In the case of something like the Pythagorean theorem, however, the development of that proof is not immanently determined from the object itself and its own concept. On the one hand, various definitions are taken as presupposed, while on the other hand, the movement in and through which this proof is carried out is something external to the object. There are, for example, a multitude of proofs for the Pythagorean theorem,¹⁰⁶ and these proofs involve

¹⁰⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 718 [12:220.]

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ For a remarkable display of the variety of proofs for this theorem, cf. Alexander Bogomolny, "Pythagorean Theorem," last modified 2012, <http://www.cut-the-knot.org/pythagoras/>, accessed July 11th, 2014.

adding figures and drawing lines that are only formally and externally related to the object. We are thus well aware that “the magnitude of the geometrical lines, angles, etc., has not been gone through and been brought about by the series of definitions by which we have arrived at it as a result.”¹⁰⁷ Instead, this progression and movement “goes on entirely within us; it is a process for realizing our purpose of gaining insight, not a course in which the object arrives at its intrinsic relation and their connections.”¹⁰⁸ This is not to say that Hegel takes geometrical proofs to be just flights of fancy; for he also claims that such proofs follow necessarily from the properties of their objects and that the quantitative relations ascertained by this procedure belong to the geometrical object.¹⁰⁹ Nonetheless, the *procedure* of such proofs is not the activity of the object, but is partially determined by the purpose and ends that we posit and presuppose in formulating them.¹¹⁰ Consequently, such proofs, although they give us knowledge, are finite and render only finite knowledge. According to Hegel, then, while “these methods are essential, and are brilliantly successful in their own field, they cannot be used for philosophical cognition.”¹¹¹ In short, a proof of this form, although appropriate within its finite limits and applied to finite objects that are examined according to our own particular purposes and interest, is finite and cannot comprehend the absolute.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 46 [18:236.]

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Consider, for example, Euclid’s geometrical proofs. The drawing of additional lines outside or inside the initial figures for the purpose of the proof are not determinations of those figures themselves. See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 723 [12:225.]

¹¹¹ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §231 r.

¹¹² Knowledge and object are thus here distinct, but the ‘excess,’ if you will, the superfluity of truth, lies on the side of subjectivity and its self-positing, knowing activity.

The Old Metaphysics, Kant, and the Understanding

Hegel's critique of the formalism of the proposition and the syllogism of the understanding is intimately linked to his critique of both the ontological proof as articulated by the old metaphysics and the Kantian standpoint. To recall, according to Hegel "what they have in common is the fact that both make presuppositions."¹¹³

The old metaphysics takes thought to *immediately* grasp the truth of its objects simply "through *thinking about* them."¹¹⁴ Due to the immediacy of this presupposition, these thoughts are not subjected to investigation on their own account. Instead, the thought-determinations and categories of this metaphysics are uncritically presupposed and are "taken to be valid on their own account, and capable of being *predicates of what is true*."¹¹⁵ The categories that this thinking simply *applies* are thus not considered in and for themselves.

According to Hegel, then, Kant took an important step forward insofar as he undertook an investigation of the categories that the old metaphysics merely presupposed. Nonetheless, Hegel argues, Kant's investigation likewise "suffers essentially from the defect that he did not consider them in and for themselves."¹¹⁶ The problem, Hegel asserts, is that "[t]his critique does not involve itself with the *content*... or with the determinate mutual relationship of these thought-determinations to each other."¹¹⁷

Insofar as both Kant and the old metaphysics have not subjected the categories of thought to an immanent investigation and critique, their thought remains trapped at the

¹¹³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:183 [118.]

¹¹⁴ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §26.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, §28.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, §41 z.2.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, §41.

level of the understanding. For this reason, the very thought content that is supposed to express the truth or the absolute appears as something external to the form of thought. The form of thought, accordingly, appears as something merely formal, i.e., as a formal logic that, because it is taken to be *just* the form of thought, is indifferent to and applies to an indifferent content. The determinations of this content – the movement and development that leads to the conclusion – appears as something that falls outside of and is indifferent to the conclusion, just as the conclusion is indifferent to it.

For Hegel, then, the sublation of the one-sidedness of Kant and the old metaphysics, at least as a first step, requires that the *truth of thought* be realized, recognized and demonstrated. Thought must show itself to be adequate to itself in and through showing itself to achieve the immanent self-determination of its categories and concepts. This must be achieved through the articulation of these categories in their systematic difference and relation as a *comprehensive* system of pure thought determinations. The path and determinations that unfold along the way are thus not something superfluous, but the very determination and development of thought itself. As Hegel says in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*,

The truth is the whole. However, the whole is only the essence completing itself through its own development. This much must be said of the absolute: It is essentially a result, and only at the end is it what it is in truth.¹¹⁸

The Essential Diversity of the Proofs

Given the above, it becomes evident that and why Hegel's defense of the ontological proof does not and cannot consist in the attempt to provide a modified formulation of the ontological proof in order to establish *that* God is or exists. To

¹¹⁸ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶20 [9:19]

properly grasp how and why this is so, however, is at once to recognize why treating Hegel's account of the ontological proof in isolation is fundamentally untenable.

It is true that Hegel takes the ontological proof to be in a certain sense superior to the cosmological and teleological proofs; indeed at one point he says that, while modern philosophers always adduce the ontological proof alongside the cosmological and teleological proofs, the ontological proof is "the only genuine [*Wahrhafte*] one."¹¹⁹ On the one hand, Hegel always takes the proofs to form a progression that runs from the cosmological, through the teleological to the ontological proof, and yet on the other hand, the superiority of the ontological proof does not lie in the fact that it is sound in and by itself. To the contrary, on Hegel's account the ontological proof is no less defective than the cosmological and teleological proofs with respect to its *form*. Now, it is precisely this *formalism* that Hegel claims brought about the "manifold misunderstandings"¹²⁰ of the proofs. Hegel aim, as announced in the third volume of the *Science of Logic*, is not to formulate a new proof in the old form but "to establish their true meaning and thus restore the thoughts on which they are based to their worth and dignity."¹²¹ In other words, Hegel's defense of the proofs is supposed to be a defense of their content.

This, of course, is not to suggest that form and content are absolutely distinct and separable, but to the contrary that the distinction between the form and content is the mark of the inadequacy of the proofs as they are traditionally formulated and understood. The understanding, however, is not to be ignored, but is to be *sublated*. Hegel's defense of the proofs thus does not consist in providing a new argument for the claim *that* God is

¹¹⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:352 [272.]

¹²⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 628 [12:129.]

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 628 [12:129.]

or exists, but in showing that and how the truth and *speculative content* of the proofs is sublated in and through his system. Hegel's 'defense' of the proofs, accordingly, cannot lie *outside* of his system and constitute an argument that can be abstracted from or made independent from that system, but belongs to that system itself.

Now admittedly, at first it might still seem justified to ignore the cosmological and teleological proofs insofar as all of the proofs are taken to assert one and the same thing, namely that 'God is', or more precisely in Hegel's terms, the unity of concept and being. This, however, is still to grasp the proofs merely in accordance with the form and formalism of the understanding. For Hegel, however, the movement or mediation of the proofs is not something superfluous. The proofs are essentially syllogisms and must be sublated and comprehended as speculative syllogisms. Hegel's defense of the proofs as the defense of their content thus requires the comprehension of the development and path of these proofs. Indeed, it is precisely in the development and determination of the content that the proofs show themselves to differ not only insofar as the *means* by which they reach their conclusion is distinct, but because the result itself, the conclusion, is what it is and has the sense that it has in and through this development.

Given the recognition of the diversity of the proofs and the manner in which he comprehends elevation and development not merely as result but as the consummated whole, the fact that Hegel organizes the proofs so as to place the ontological proof at the head of them does not sanction the neglect of the cosmological and teleological proofs. To the contrary, the defense of the ontological proof in its speculative significance *requires* that Hegel demonstrate that and how the ontological proof is to be comprehended *as the sublation* of these other proofs; for only in and through sublating

them is it the genuine proof. To suppose, then, that it is legitimate to consider Hegel's account of the ontological proof in abstraction from his account of the cosmological and teleological proofs is to fundamentally misunderstand the very sense in which Hegel sought to 'defend' the proofs in the first place. In short, it is to fail to recognize that for Hegel the meaning of the proofs lies precisely in the fact that they articulate an *elevation* that involves the development of a determinate content.

The articulation of the content of the proofs first of all requires the articulation of Hegel's account of the central concepts and categories of the proofs. The following chapter will thus attempt to provide a summary of the work within which Hegel articulates these concepts and categories, namely his *Logic*. On this basis, it will then be possible, in Chapter Three, to explain Hegel's preliminary critical account of the three proofs, particularly in relation to Kant's treatment of these proofs and then in Chapter Four to provide a detailed account of the correlation of the proofs, taken as speculative syllogisms, to the *Logic* itself.

CHAPTER TWO

HEGEL'S LOGIC: THE CATEGORIES OF THE PROOFS

The Proofs and the Problem of the *Logic*

Hegel's 'defense' of the proofs does not consist in the uncritical acceptance of these arguments in their traditional form such that, by demonstrating the inadequacy of the objections of critics like Kant, Hegel takes himself to be successful in simply reinstating the traditional arguments. To the contrary, as repeatedly mentioned, Hegel himself insists that in their traditional form all of the proofs are defective. His defense, then, does not consist in providing a corrected formulation of one or other of the proofs in order to demonstrate conclusively that 'God is'. Rather, according to Hegel, the defect of the proofs in part consists in the fact that they are formulated in a manner that purports to demonstrate conclusively (and provide as a mere conclusion) that 'God is'. Admittedly, Hegel asserts that "*God* and *God alone* is the truth."¹ The truth, however, is not a mere fact, proposition or thing. Rather, "[t]he true shape in which truth exists can only be the scientific system of that truth."² Hegel's defense of these proofs accordingly consists in the demonstration of the speculative truth of their content, i.e., in the demonstration of that and how this content is comprehended and preserved in his system. It is not sufficient, however, to merely claim that Hegel's defense of the proofs *is* his system as such, for the *meaning* of this defense lies in the development and realization of that conclusion: "The truth is the whole. However, the whole is only the essence completing itself through its own development."³

¹ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §1.

² Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶5 [9:11]

³ *Ibid.*, ¶20 [9:19.]

Now, to comprehend Hegel's speculative account and defense of the proofs it is first necessary to grasp his account and critique of the categories that the proofs as traditionally formulated simply *employ*. It is no coincidence that, when in 1829 he decided to lecture on the proofs of God, Hegel insisted that this class was provided as a supplement to his concurrent lectures on his *Logic* and was "intended for those of my auditors who are attending the other lectures, and to them they will be the most readily intelligible."⁴ If the *Logic*⁵ serves to make Hegel's account of the proofs more 'readily intelligible,' however, this is certainly not due to the simplicity and accessibility of Hegel's *Logic*. To the contrary, Hegel's *Logic* is often, and not without reason, regarded as the most difficult part of his system.⁶

The difficulty of Hegel's *Logic* in part stems from the fact that it is not a logic in the normal sense, i.e., not a treatise on formal reasoning, but an attempt to provide the account of the determinations or categories thought from out of thought's own self-determining activity. The *Logic* thus neither immediately appeals to nor relies upon the application of these thought-determinations to an object, but is the immanent development and examination of these categories as determinations of thought by thought itself. In the *Logic*, then, subject and object are identical and the development or movement of the content is not a movement of or for reflection, but the self-determination and development of thought in and as its own being.

⁴ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 37 [18:228.]

⁵ cf. *supra* Intro. Note #10.

⁶ Cf. James Black Baillie Baillie, *The Origin and Significance of Hegel's Logic* (New York: the Macmillan Company, 1984), vii. Compare also John Burbidge, *The Logic of Hegel's Logic: An Introduction* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2006), pp.12-13.

Admittedly, according to Hegel, the categories that are considered in the *Logic* are already in some sense familiar to us and “are first set out and stored in human language.”⁷ In one sense, then, Hegel’s says that *Logic* is “the *easiest* science, because its content is nothing but our own thinking and its ordinary determinations, and because these are both the *simplest* and what is *elementary*.”⁸ In another sense, however, due to this very familiarity, the *Logic* is the most difficult part of Hegel’s system. We ordinarily merely *presuppose* these categories or thought determinations and apply them to objects. We do not normally and it does not ordinarily occur to us to consider pure thought determinations in and of themselves and evaluate them according to their own immanent content and truth.

Because the task of the *Logic* is to display and unfold thought in the element of pure thought and this unfolding is the development of its own content, the determination and definitions of the categories of the *Logic* are not presupposed, as given from outside or arrived at in an external manner. While Hegel does claim that these categories or thought-determinations are already used by and contained in ordinary language, he also insists that

[t]here is no question of *demonstrating* for a *word* chosen from ordinary life that in ordinary life too the same concept is associated with that for which philosophy uses it; for ordinary life has no concepts, only representations of the imagination, and to recognize the concept in what is otherwise mere representation is philosophy itself. It must therefore suffice if representation, for those of its expressions that philosophy uses for its definitions, has only some rough approximation of their distinctive difference; it may also be the case that in these expressions one recognizes pictorial adumbrations which, as approximations, are close indeed to corresponding concepts.⁹

⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 12 [21:10]

⁸ Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*, §19 r.

⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 628 [12:130.]

The categories of the *Logic* are defined and determined within the movement and development of pure thought that the *Logic* itself *is*. Moreover, because these categories are themselves comprehended as the self-movement of thought, the categories that are developed in the *Logic* are not just abstract definitions, but are in each case the undergoing of this self-movement beyond the categorial immediacy.

The categories do not have their truth and content by means of appealing to our everyday way of speaking and thinking of things, but from the self-development of thought. The movement and development of the *Logic* must not be represented as the activity or external movement of an empirical object, for this can lead only to confusion. The *Logic*, as the comprehensive account of thought in its own self-developing articulation, starts accordingly from the most immediate and indeterminate thought thinking itself, namely, what Hegel calls being, while the dialectic which this thought carries out upon itself and which it *is* is the development of the *Logic*. This development finds its completion in the entire movement of the *Logic* that has as its conclusion and result the thought or concept that is true and adequate to itself, namely what Hegel refers to as the absolute idea.

The character and method of Hegel's *Logic* presents a significant challenge in the present context. Hegel's critique and account of the proofs is integrally related to and depends for its intelligibility upon his account of many of the central categories of the *Logic*. In particular, the comprehension of his account and defense of the proofs relies on his account of the categories of immediate being; *Dasein*; reality; the finite and the infinite; essence and existence; actuality, possibility and necessity; the relations of

necessity; the subjective concept; objectivity; teleology; the idea as life and cognition; and the absolute idea.

Now, as mentioned above, the meaning of these categories is itself determined by their context in and as the development of the *Logic*. Moreover, Hegel's critique of the proofs is dependent on the articulation of the dialectical unfolding of these categories, i.e., not simply on their immediate definition, but on their movement and sublation. Moreover, these categories run the entire length of Hegel's *Logic* from being to the absolute idea, while the absolute idea is itself the comprehensive self-movement of the *Logic* as a whole.

Given the task of providing an account of the role of the proofs in Hegel's system, it is impossible to avoid providing not only a summary of Hegel's articulation of the central categories of the proofs as these arise in the *Logic*, but also in doing so to articulate his account of these categories as they arise and are situated within the *Logic* as a whole. A complete and detailed explication of Hegel's *Logic*, however, would require, at the very least, a book length study unto itself, beyond the scope of what can be provided here. Instead, the present chapter offers only a limited summary of Hegel's characterization of this *logic*, focussing in the main on the movements and categories most relevant to the subsequent explication of Hegel's account of the proofs. Of necessity then, the summary provided is both highly abbreviated and abstract (in the usual sense of the term.) Moreover, the importance of these particular categories to the issue of the proofs will only become evident in the course of subsequent chapters. Proceeding in this manner is admittedly problematic for at least two reasons. First of all, the reader is liable not to recognize the significance of the present account until later. Second, proceeding in

this way appears unjustified and to violate the most basic principles of explication. The proofs of God are something familiar and well known. By contrast, Hegel's *Logic* is regarded, if not as the most 'obscure', then certainly as one of the more difficult works of philosophy. The danger is thus that the reader will assume that the familiar is here being explained by the obscure and will, given the necessary complexity of any account of Hegel's *Logic*, lose patience and either rush ahead or give up part way through.

Unfortunately, I can see no way around this dilemma that would not ultimately result either in greater confusion or the expansion of the present dissertation beyond all reasonable limits. I thus ask for the reader's patience at this juncture on the grounds that, as Hegel claims, "[w]hat is familiar and well-known as such is not really known for the very reason that it is *familiar and well-known*."¹⁰ Such patience shall be rewarded, for as we shall see, the relevance and indeed centrality of the categories outlined in the present chapter, and indeed of Hegel's *Logic* as a whole, to his account of the proofs will become evident in the subsequent chapters. Moreover, because the categories outlined and articulated in the present chapter will be connected with the issue of the proofs and the relation of these proofs to the rest of Hegel's system, the initial 'abstractness' of the present account will be subsequently remedied.

The dialectic of the categories of actuality possibility and necessity, of teleology, and of the movement from cognition and the will to the absolute idea are central to and thus will be 'illustrated' in Chapter Three in the course of discussing Hegel's account and critique of the proofs in relation to the objections of Jacobi and Kant. The relations of necessity and the idea as life and cognition are central to and thus will be 'illustrated' in

¹⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶31[9:26.]

Chapter Five in the course of discussing Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*. The distinction and relation between what Hegel designates as three distinct modes of being, namely immediate being (along with *Dasein* and reality), existence, and objectivity, is central to and thus their distinction will be 'illustrated' in the course of discussing Hegel's account of history provided in Chapter Six. Hegel's account of the syllogism will be 'illustrated' in Chapter Seven, in the course of explaining his account of the system as a whole. Moreover, the relation of the *Logic* as a whole to the rest of his system, as well as his account of necessity, freedom and the idea will be elaborated upon in Chapter Seven.

Now, it should be noted that to speak of the treatment of these concepts and categories as 'illustrations' or as 'concrete examples' is on Hegel's own terms misleading, if such treatment is meant to make the concepts and categories themselves intelligible. Rather, for Hegel the movement articulated in the *Logic* must be understood first independently on its own terms and cannot ultimately be *understood* on the basis of the 'illustration' and 'exemplification' I provide in subsequent chapters. In other words, the *Logic* must be comprehended as the very centre and soul of that which follows. The meaning of *this* assertion, however, can itself only be explained subsequently.¹¹

The necessity of beginning from the *Logic* is related to Hegel's conception of the relation and opposition between the concrete and the abstract. The abstract is that which is an isolated moment and abstraction is, in opposition to internal differentiation, the dismemberment of the concrete as a living unity. The color 'red', for example, is the abstraction of, say, the redness of a rose: "A rose that is red is a concrete redness, a unity of petals, shape, color and fragrance, something living and blossoming in which many

¹¹ See *supra*, 385.

features can be abstractly distinguished and isolated.”¹² Within these limits, Hegel’s use of the terms abstract and concrete appears fairly familiar. The familiar meaning of these terms, however, also undergoes transformation in his system. Normally, we take thought to be abstract in comparison and opposition to a particular, sensuously given object that is accordingly usually designated as concrete. For Hegel, by contrast, the terms abstract and concrete apply not only to compartments of a knowing subject, but also to objects, thoughts and categories themselves. Particular things that would constitute ‘concrete’ examples in the usual sense of the term are actually themselves abstractions insofar as they are finite, one-sided, and *merely* this or that and thus dependent on a context from which they are abstracted. For Hegel, then, the inorganic is abstract in comparison with the organic; immediate being is abstract in comparison with higher categories of the *Logic*. Likewise, for example, the standpoint that takes immediate sensation to be the truth of things is abstract in comparison with both the standpoint of the artist who transforms this immediate nature in his or her activity and the standpoint of religious consciousness, while the standpoint of philosophy as philosophical science “is at the same time inwardly the richest in basic import and the most concrete one.”¹³ The absolute idea, accordingly, is to be comprehended not as a subjective abstraction, but as itself absolutely concrete.

Outlining the Logic

The very aim of providing a summary both of Hegel’s account of the main categories of the proofs as found in the *Logic* and thus also of the movement of the *Logic*

¹² Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, 1825-6*, 1:173 [23]

¹³ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §25 r.

faces the following limitation and difficulty: as Hegel repeatedly warns, because the *Logic* has its truth only in the movement and development that is the unfolding of the *Logic* itself, any prefatory or preliminary account of the main divisions and of that work (or indeed of any of his works) is not itself properly philosophical. A preliminary account of the divisions, headings, and so forth, of these works are provided by “an external reflection which has already gone through the whole, therefore knows the sequence of its moments in advance and anticipates them before they are brought on by the matter at issue itself [*Sache selbst.*]”¹⁴ The true method and account is only to be found in and through the immanent development and determination of this *Sache selbst.* Nonetheless, as Hegel also recognizes, so long as this limitation is kept in mind, the anticipation and outline of the divisions of these works is neither impossible nor without value. Indeed, Hegel himself provides a number of preliminary, and overlapping, outlines of the main divisions of the *Logic.*

First, the *Logic* is divided into what Hegel designates as the objective Logic and the subjective Logic. The objective Logic, according to Hegel, is the true critique of the old metaphysics insofar as it supplies the immanent account, development and critique of the categories of being and essence that the old metaphysics applied in offering accounts of “the nature of *ens* in general,”¹⁵ as well as the determinations through which it sought to comprehend specific being, namely the soul, the world and God. The subjective Logic, by contrast, deals with what Hegel calls the logic of the concept and accords, at least in the first part (the subjective concept), with the subject matter that was more traditionally associated with a work on logic.

¹⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 34 [21:39.]

¹⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 42 [21:48.]

The division of objective and subjective Logic, however, is neither to be understood such that the latter deals merely with the accidental and arbitrary, nor merely with “determinations that belong to the form of *consciousness*.”¹⁶ Instead, the subjective Logic as the sphere of the concept is to be grasped as the sublation of being and essence such that the concept “is no longer external but something subjective, freely self-subsisting, self-determining, or rather the *subject* itself.”¹⁷

The divisions of the *Logic* are thus, more precisely, the ‘doctrine’ (*Lehre*) or Logic of (1) being, (2) essence, and (3) the concept.¹⁸ Moreover, because the concept is the result, the sublation and truth of being and essence, the divisions of being and essence are determinations of the concept and one-sided modes of its self-relation. According to Hegel, then, the division of the *Logic* as (1) the doctrine of being, (2) the doctrine of essence, and (3) the doctrine of the concept, is to be comprehended as the concept

- (1) In its *immediacy* – the doctrine of the concept-in-itself
- (2) In its *reflection* and *mediation* – [the doctrine of] the *being-for-itself* and the *shine* [or *semblance*] of the concept.
- (3) In its *being-returned-into-itself* and *its developed being-at-home-with-self* [*Beisichsein*] – [the doctrine of] the concept *in-and-for-itself*.¹⁹

The meaning of these terms and this double characterization of the moments of the *Logic* will be articulated in the process of my providing a summary of the *Logic*. In particular, as we shall see, being-in-itself and being-for-itself are developed in the course of the unfolding of the doctrine of being, while *reflection* is developed as a category of essence. Finally, the meaning of the *in-and-for-itself* as *being-returned-into-self* and *being-at-*

¹⁶ Ibid., 43 [21:49.]

¹⁷ Ibid., 42 [21:29.]

¹⁸ See ibid., 43 [21:49.] and Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §83.

¹⁹ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §83. Editor’s interpolations except for *Beisichsein*.

home-with-self is articulated in the movement from the doctrine of essence to the doctrine of the concept.

The following summary of the *Logic* is of necessity both partial, i.e., does not provide a complete account of the development of all of the categories of the *Logic* and is thus partially external. This lack, however, is in part remedied insofar as the moments focused on in the following will serve to explain the manner in which the *Logic* is both the movement from being, to essence to concept, as well as the movement from the concept that is in-itself, to the concept that is for-itself and appearing, to the concept that is in-and-for-itself. By way of anticipation and as a guide to this summary, the following outline of the *Logic*, which highlights in particular the central categories of the proofs, may be found useful:²⁰

²⁰ There are certain structural differences between Hegel's various presentations of his *Logic*. I have in the main followed the *Science of Logic* except with regard to the divisions of essence, where I follow the 1830 *Encyclopaedia Logic*.

HEGEL'S LOGIC

1. THE DOCTRINE OF BEING

(A) Quality

i. Being

- a. Being
- b. Nothing
- c. Becoming

ii. Determinate Being [*Dasein*]

- a. *Dasein* as Such - Reality
- b. Finitude
- c. Infinity

iii. Being-for-itself

(B) Quantity

(C) Measure

2. THE DOCTRINE OF ESSENCE

(A) Essence as the Ground of Existence

i. Pure Determinations of Reflection

- 1. Identity
- 2. Difference
- 3. Ground

ii. Existence

iii. The Thing

(B) Appearance

(C) Actuality – Possibility, Contingency, Necessity

i. Relation of substance

ii. Relation of causality

iii. Relation of reciprocity

3. THE DOCTRINE OF THE CONCEPT

(A) The Subjective Concept

i. Concept

ii. Judgement

iii. Syllogism

(B) The Objective Concept

i. Mechanism

ii. Chemism

iii. Teleology

(C) The Idea

i. Life

ii. Cognition

a. Cognition Proper

b. The Will – the Good

iii. The Absolute Idea

Once more, the above representation is valuable only so long as one keeps in mind that it is nothing more than an abridged and quite external representation of the *Logic*. If taken in accordance with the understanding, such an outline gives the mistaken impression that Hegel's *Logic* is nothing but an externally organized series of topics. The *Logic*, however, is to be grasped as the immanent development of and explication of thought and its categories purely "in the element of thought of a free, self-contained thought,"²¹ that is, as the immanent development and explication of self-thinking thought, such that what is important is to show how and why these categories are related and unfold from one-another.

The Doctrine of Being

(A) Quality

In the previous chapter, in the course of explicating Hegel's method and the meaning of the term sublation, we have already gone through Hegel's account of the first triad of the 'doctrine of being,' i.e., being, nothing, becoming, and seen how this leads to the first sublation of the *Logic* as *Dasein*.²² Accordingly, we can begin here straight from this result.

Dasein as the sublation of being and nothing is no longer the abstract immediacy of being, but is determinate as the relation of its moments and as their result. Taken immediately and in abstraction as a simple unity, *Dasein* is determinacy that *is*, i.e., it is *quality*. *Dasein*, however, contains both the moments of being and nothing, and thus quality is not this immediacy, but belongs to the moments of being and nothing as well.

²¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 46 [21:54.]

²² See *supra*, pp.83-6.

Quality as *Dasein* in the immediacy of *being is reality*, while in the moment of nothing it is not simply nothing, but the nothing that also *is* quality as *negation*.

This movement and distinction is at first liable to appear highly abstract if not confused, but the concepts of reality and negation that appear in the course of the self-development and exposition of the *Logic* are precisely those that were thought by reality when, in Chapter One, God was defined as the *ens realissimum*.²³ Reality is simple and purely positive determinacy that is abstractly opposed to negation. When the understanding employs this term, attributing reality to God and calling God the highest reality and sum total of all reality, the content of this thought is that God is and is determinate, but in such a manner that those determinations are *purely* positive and unlimited. The understanding, however, stops with this and takes reality to be a fixed distinction, but the determination of reality on its own is a one-sided abstraction and indeed a contradiction. *Dasein* as reality in abstraction from all negation is nothing but immediate being. But then “[t]he said reality in everything real, the *being* in all *Dasein* that should express the concept of God, is nothing else than abstract being, the same as nothing.”²⁴

Dasein, however, is not nothing, and its determinations are not qualities in distinction from it, but are its own determinations. Reality and negation are one-sided abstractions, and yet they are equally *Dasein* insofar as reality contains negation and negation is not nothing but is as belonging to *Dasein*. Without negation, *Dasein* would be utterly indeterminate, for the determination of something *is* its negation; “*omnis*

²³ See *supra*, 63.

²⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 87 [21:100.]

determinatio est negation as Spinoza says.”²⁵ Quality is thus unseparated from *Dasein* and *Dasein* is determinate qualitative being. The sublation of this distinction is the second negation, the negation of the negation. This negation of negation is the sublated distinction that is simple self-reference, and thus *Dasein* is now qualitatively determinate *Dasein*, something or ‘somewhat’ (*Etwas*).

Something (*Etwas*) is, first of all, as simple self-reference, i.e., it is *being-in-itself*. With something, as the negation of negation, the moment of negation is not simply nothing, for otherwise something would be just immediate being. Instead, this negation is the other and this other is also *Dasein*, also then something, but something that is the negation of something, i.e., something *other*. Something preserves itself and *is* in its non-being or other and in not-being the other. The being-in-itself of something is thus at once mediation with the being-other that it at the same time excludes the other. In other words, the something bares in itself the reference to its non-being, a relation that Hegel terms ‘*being-for-other*.’²⁶

It is tempting to represent the relation of something and other as a relation between two things, and being-for-other as the reflection of a consciousness that is itself something *outside* the first something. At this point in the *Logic*, however, the distinction of quantity has not yet arisen. The other and being-for-other is not the reflection of something or someone else *on* some being-in-itself, rather, as Burbidge points out, being-for-other is the otherness that is built into the being of something.²⁷ This point is essential, for according to Hegel, that something is finite and limited entails that it

²⁵ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §91 z.

²⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 93 [21:107.]

²⁷ Burbidge, *The Logic of Hegel's Logic*, pp.42-3.

surpasses its limit and sublates its immediacy from itself. The finite is not alterable due to something else, but is in-itself alterable, going outside itself and passing-away. This is the destiny or determination (*Bestimmung*) of the finite. Something is what it is, i.e., is something (*Et-was*) because it is in-itself external to itself. In opposition to Kant, then, Hegel claims that the thing-in-itself is a simple abstraction, for it is the abstraction of something from all being-for-other, and thus all determinations. There is no saying what such a thing is, yet not because it is something infinitely beyond thought, but because it is just immediate and utterly indeterminate being.

The understanding holds moments such as these apart and takes the finite to just *be* the finite. Finitude, however, is the setting of a limit as well as the exceeding of that limit, the something becoming other and the other becoming something again *ad infinitum*. This infinity, however, is merely what Hegel calls the bad, spurious or negative infinite. The infinite here is merely the negation of the finite, the setting of a limit, and the passing beyond that limit, and the setting of the limit again. This infinity, however, is itself relative to the finite as its negation. The *true* infinite, by contrast, is according to Hegel the movement of something and other such that in negating the other, something sublates both that other and its own immediacy by returning to itself. The true infinite thus does not have the finite as something other than it, but is this self-othering that returns to itself as the sublation of the immediacy both of itself and the other, i.e., both of the finite and the bad infinite.

Such a claim is bound to sound peculiar at first insofar as we hold to the understanding and think the finite as absolutely opposed to the infinite; but thought is itself infinite and passes beyond this opposition precisely in thinking the bad infinite. The

infinite series is *ideally* completed in its being thought and thought does not have to run through each tedious (because already comprehended) moment *ad infinitum* in order to think this bad infinite. This movement is, in general, the ideal. Ideality is usually opposed to reality and reality is often taken to be that which is true in-itself as opposed to the ideal. Reality itself, however, is the one-sided movement that passes beyond itself and is sublated as ideality and the ideal is the truth of reality.²⁸

The true infinite as self-reflection *is* and is *Dasein*, i.e., it is the sublation of the first two parts of the doctrine of being.²⁹ As negative self-relation that preserves immediacy and determination, the sublation that is the true infinite is what Hegel terms *being-for-itself*.

Again, it is essential to keep in mind that we are moving in the element of the being of pure thought and pure thought of being. Thus, the good infinite is not an object that is represented but the thought of the *Sache selbst*. Nonetheless, these categories and their movements are not, according to Hegel, mere abstractions that are completely disconnected from everyday life. To the contrary, Hegel claims that *life itself* is an example of such a true infinite. The organism, for example, breaths, reaches its own limit and appropriates the other, and it eats and makes the other into itself; thereby the organism is alive, i.e., produces itself, sustains and itself as life.³⁰

At this point, having reached the determination of being-for-itself, for the present purposes we can now pass over to the sphere of essence. In the *Logic* itself, however, being-for-itself is not yet the completion of the doctrine of being, but merely the

²⁸ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 96 z.

²⁹ See *ibid.*

³⁰ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 110 [118.]

completion of the first division of that sphere, namely *quality*. Being-for-itself that arises in the division of being is still abstract and thus is still just the immediate exclusive one that is only negatively and indifferently related an other, namely to the many. *Quality*, as the first division of the doctrine of being thus passes over to (B) *quantity*, while the opposition between quality and quantity is sublated in (C) *measure*. Measure, however, runs up against its own limitation in the measureless. It is only then that the doctrine of being reaches its completion and is sublated as the starting-point of the doctrine of essence.

The Doctrine of Essence

(A) Essence as Ground of Existence

From Being to Essence: Shining and Reflection

The division of being is the concept in its immediacy. That which is immediate is merely in-itself (*an sich*), i.e., its determinations are underdeveloped and merely implicit.³¹ That which is only in-itself is finite insofar as it is disconnected, isolated and abstract such that its determinacy is not due to its own activity or act, but is something that it has only by its relation to an other.³² A child is rational in-itself, the slave is free in-themselves, but this is only what they are in accordance with their concept, potentially and not yet something that they know or are for-themselves.

The entire sphere of being is the concept in-itself insofar as the relations and movements of this sphere simply *are*. In their distinction from each other, each category arises as the other of an other, and the dialectical relation and sublation of the moments

³¹ See Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 347 n.2.

³² See Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 134.

and determinations develop in this sphere as “*passing-over into another*.”³³ Becoming, for example, is the contradiction of being and nothing that arises as an other that these categories pass over to and which itself passes over to *Dasein*. The immediacy of the sphere of being, and that by means of which they belong together and constitute a sphere, is the determinate character that belongs to these categories not merely on account of their ‘simplicity.’ Immediacy also constitutes the determination of the mode of relation of these categories to each other and thus the manner in which the movement of this sphere unfolds.

Because the categories merely pass over from one to the other, they arise as indifferent to each other.³⁴ This indifference, however, is itself sublated by essence in such a way as to give rise to and determine the distinctive character of the determinations, movement and development of the sphere of essence. Because the immediacy of the sphere of being is sublated in the sphere of essence, being itself is at once distinguished from and related to essence as that which is *merely* immediate, inessential, or merely show or shine (*Schein*). In the sphere of essence, then, the categories are not indifferent. The shine is the shine *of* essence, shine has its being not in-itself but in an other, i.e., essence, and is at once the distinction of essence from its immediacy. Essence is thus negatively self-related and has this negation not in an other or a reference to an other, but in itself as essence’s self-reference. The movements of the sphere of essence then, are not, like those of the sphere of being, merely the passing-over of something to an other, but the setting-forth (*Heraussetzen*) to an other that is negatively determined as reflection into itself.

³³ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §84.

³⁴ Cf. Burbidge, *The Logic of Hegel’s Logic*, 59.

Reflection is negative self-relation as the negation of the negation such that the shining and relation to other is at once the determination of and relation to self. By contrast with the sphere of being, then, the sphere of essence is not the concept unfolding in its immediacy, but the concept in its reflection and mediation as being-for-itself (*fürsichsein*) and shine. This ‘and’ is essential, for as we shall see this is the limitation of this sphere which distinguishes the sphere of essence from the sphere of the concept. The for-itself of essence is still one-sided and burdened with immediacy and otherness.

Now, being-for-itself, as opposed to being-in-itself, “means what is, or rather has become, ‘posited’ (*gesetz*), or explicit.”³⁵ On the one hand, that which is for-itself is in a certain sense self-contained, but on the other hand, as *only* being-for-itself, it is opposed to its own in-itself and immediacy. Self-consciousness, for example, is *for-itself* insofar as it knows itself as an I, but this self-consciousness is, to begin with, still distinct from the in-itself *even though* this in-itself is at once also the self’s own immanent distinction. That said, the term ‘for-itself’, however, must not be understood simply or solely as a determination that belongs to human beings or as solely a matter of psychology or epistemology. The content and determination of the sphere of essence consists in the fact that essence is, on the one hand, opposed to immediate being as mere shine, but on the other hand that this being is itself the shine, the semblance or the appearing *of* essence. Similarly, it must be noted that although ‘positing’ is usually thought of as a subjective activity, Hegel speaks of concepts and categories as themselves *positing* moments and distinctions. While this sounds peculiar, such positing is indeed a determination that arises through the development of the sphere of essence itself.

³⁵ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 347 n.2.

The categories in the sphere of essence are themselves not indifferent to each other but are thus themselves *relational*. As Hegel points out, “[i]n going from being to its essence, we pass grammatically from ‘is’ [*ist*] to ‘have’ [*haben*].”³⁶ This claim can be made more intelligible by considering the fact that, while it seems at least immediately plausible to think of being without thinking nothing (at least Parmenides thought so), the categories of essence are explicitly thought relationally or along with each other by means of a little ‘and’: identity *and* difference, ground *and* grounded, existence *and* essence, thing *and* properties, inner *and* outer, cause *and* effect, etc.

Briefly stated, the sphere of essence involves, first, the demonstration of the necessity of essence’s relation to its other, a movement which Hegel entitles “Essence as the Ground of Existence”; second, the explicit development of the dualisms of essence and existence in “Appearance”; and third, the overcoming of this opposition and these dualisms in “Actuality”. The conclusion of the sphere of essence involves the sublation of the opposition of the spheres of being and essence and the movement from the sphere of necessity to freedom. This will bring us to the sphere of the concept, the categories and movements of which shall again be shown to have their own distinctive character. Before proceeding to the sphere of the concept, however, it is necessary to consider certain aspects of Hegel’s account of essence in detail.

From Essence as Ground to Existence as Thing

To begin with, essence may be thought of as mere abstract identity. Yet, as was seen previously in the discussion of Hegel’s method in Chapter One, Hegel argues that

³⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 130 [135.]

the concept of identity necessarily includes its opposite, difference.³⁷ It is at this point in the *Logic* that Hegel uses the so-called laws of thought both to illustrate his account of the development of the first determinations of essence while demonstrating that his position does not violate these so-called laws of thought but sublates them.

Part of the point of Hegel's account here is that the various laws of thought, the principles of identity, non-contradiction, difference (or the identity of indiscernibles), excluded middle, and the principle of sufficient reason (*Grund*) are the manner in which the understanding explicates essence in terms of identity and difference. As should be evident by now, for Hegel these abstract laws of thought are inadequate insofar as the understanding merely takes them up in an external manner as something given and presupposed, i.e., takes them to be true in-themselves (and thus absolute and unconditioned) and fails both to interrogate these categories as to their truth and comprehend their relation to each other. Hegel's own account rectifies these shortcomings by comprehending these laws as external manifestations of various stages in the development of the categories of identity, showing how identity requires difference that is determined as distinction and ultimately as opposition.

Once again, it must always be kept in mind that the movement of the *Logic* is not a matter of our external reflection on an object, but the immanent movement of pure thinking in its own being itself. Since opposition is developed as the immanent content of essence, essence *itself* is thus determined as this opposition, i.e., contradiction. As mentioned previously, however, far from denying the principle of non-contradiction, Hegel may be seen as its most thorough defender. Contradiction itself, for Hegel, is

³⁷ See *supra*, pp. 80-82.

certainly not the truth, but contradiction as a category revealed in and through the development of the essence has a positive content so that the negation of contradiction is not mere nothingness but a *determinate negation*. The result is that the truth of essence at this stage is determined not merely as identity, nor merely as difference and certainly not merely as contradiction, but as the sublation of the whole of this movement.

Contradiction collapses inwardly, i.e., it falls to the ground (*gehen zu Grund*).³⁸ The result of this falling to the ground of contradiction is not a return to abstract identity, but is *ground* itself, i.e., essence is determined as ground.

Ground is, first of all, essence as identity and distinction. Ground, however, is not just the unity of identity and distinction, but their difference as well; it is essence that, in its reflection into itself, is just as much reflection into another. Ground, as the totality of essence, is the totality of *conditions* that is related to that which it is the conditions for, namely the grounded. When the totality of conditions are met, an other emerges from the ground. This other, however, is the other that ground posits and precisely in positing it, ground posits itself – ground is only ground in the relation to the other which it grounds. This movement that is the grounding of the grounded is not just mediation, but mediation that sublates this mediation. This sublation of mediation is the restored immediacy of being that steps forth from ground or *exists*.³⁹

Existence, however, is not just immediate being or shine, but being that has emerged from mediation, so that it not only “falls to the ground,” but also comes from the ground and is that in which ground itself shines forth. Existence itself, then, is “the

³⁸ See Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §120

³⁹ As Hegel notes, etymologically the German word ‘*Existenz*,’ like the English word ‘existence’ is derived from *existere*. See *ibid.*, §123 z.

immediate unity of inward reflection and reflection-into-another.”⁴⁰ That which is distinguished from the ground and posited by the ground is that which the ground expels from itself, namely *existence*. Essence is the ground of existence.

That which exists is something immediate that *is*, but has a ground in an other, and yet is also itself, in turn, the ground of an other. This interrelation of ground and grounded forms a interconnected whole, a world.⁴¹ Existence, however, does not therefore pass away and is not indifferent to these relations, for the movement of grounding is the reflection of existence in itself. Existence that is reflected in itself as a ground is a *thing*.⁴² Existence, moreover, is not just a thing-in-itself, but that which shines forth or appears (*er-scheint*). Essence, as the ground of existence, appears and *must* appear,⁴³ and essence is not something that hides behind or beyond appearance, but exists, and its existence is appearance.⁴⁴

(B) Appearance

Appearance, in Hegel’s terms is accordingly not to be understood as mere semblance such that a thing that appears is taken to be something inferior to that which immediately is, but quite the reverse, for “[a]pppearance is the truth of being and a richer determination than the latter.”⁴⁵ Nonetheless, appearance may be designated as *mere* appearance for Hegel, although not because it is inferior to what is immediate or merely in-itself, but because in it essence and existence are still distinguished. The division of

⁴⁰ Ibid., §123.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., §124.

⁴³ Cf. *ibid.*, §131. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 418 [11:323.]

⁴⁴ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §131.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, §131 z.

appearance unfolds this implicit distinction and opposition of existence and essence that is explicitly *relational*. Appearance this unfolds the relation of appearances as, for example, the distinction between form and content, whole and parts, and inner and outer. The opposition of appearance is sublated as the unity of existence and essence, i.e., what Hegel calls actuality.

(C) *Actuality*

Actuality is often used interchangeably with existence. For Hegel, however, that which immediately is, exists or has only essential being is not yet actuality. Rather, “[a]ctuality is the unity, become immediate, of essence and existence, or of what is inner and outer.”⁴⁶ Because actuality is for Hegel the result of the sublation of the distinction between existence and essence and the inner and outer, these distinctions do not fall outside of actuality, but are actuality’s own *manifestation (Manifestation)*.⁴⁷ The distinctions of actuality are thus neither a passing over to an other, nor a reflection in an other. Instead, the distinctions within actuality are merely its own positedness.⁴⁸ The moments of actuality, namely the moments of possibility, contingency and necessity, are thus developed and determined as the development and determination of the actuality itself.

At first actuality appears as immediate and thus is merely (a) *formal* actuality. As formal, this actuality is one-sided as it is without content, and so the moments that develop out of it are likewise merely formal, i.e., formal possibility and formal necessity.

⁴⁶ Ibid., §142.

⁴⁷ Cf. Ibid., §142 r. and Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 477 [11:380.]

⁴⁸ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §141.

Actuality, however, is additionally determined as (b) *real* actuality, i.e., actuality that has a determinate positive content and manifests and externalizes itself or *acts*. Finally, actuality is determined as the sublation of this opposition of form and content such that it explicitly posits and unites within itself the totality of its moments as its own self-grounding activity and is (c) absolute necessity.

(a) Formal Actuality

Actuality, to begin, with is simply the immediate identity of existence and essence or the inner and outer. As such, actuality to begin with lacks the determination of content so that it is merely formal and the moments of possibility and necessity that arise from it are equally formal.

On the one hand, then, formal actuality is merely formal possibility, mere self-identity. On the other hand, however, possibility is the possibility *of* actuality, the in-itself or inner that is equally immediately outer, i.e., the contingent.

The contingent is, on the one hand, actuality that is immediate actuality as immediate, thus as *merely* possible and thus without ground. On the other hand, however, the contingent is also distinguished from the possible and has its ground in the possible; i.e., the contingent is and so must be possible and not contradict itself. As such, the contingent is the groundless immediate unity of possibility and actuality that just *is* and thus is *only* possible. Yet the contingent is also the positedness of possibility, and thus has its ground in its other. The contingent and formal possibility are each identical to and distinguished from one-another and their movement is merely contingency itself. Yet the unity that this movement *is* is formal necessity. The necessary is actual, is immediately

groundless, and yet grounds itself in its own distinction of itself from possibility in which it is identical to itself.

This account is bound to provoke confusion insofar as we attempt to picture it for ourselves as some determinate possibility and determinate contingency. Such determination or content, however, is lacking in immediate formal actuality. The moments of possibility and contingency developed here are purely formal, i.e., they have no content by which they would be distinguished from each other such that possibility or *the* possible would be something absolutely distinct from *a* possible.⁴⁹ To the contrary, formal possibility is just *a* possible as the $A=A$. Yet because the possible is not just the earlier category of identity, it is also the reflection of actuality into itself as the possibility that immediately is. The contingent is, and thus is possible, and yet it is that which is possibly-not except for its relation to its other. This relation of possibility and the contingent, however, is contingency, and yet formal contingency *as* formal is itself that which is not-possibly-not, i.e., necessity.

The formality of this movement leaves us at first with precious little, for as Burbidge claims, all that is established as yet is that “whatever is actual is necessary, since what is actual cannot be otherwise.”⁵⁰ The abstractness and formality of this is just the alternation of its moments due to the one-sidedness of immediate actuality. Yet in this movement, formal necessity is actuality as the suspension of this formal alternation and as indifference to this form. The movement and differentiation of possibility and the contingent thus relies upon the fact that actuality is not merely formal but *has* positively

⁴⁹ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 479 [11:382.]

⁵⁰ See John Burbidge, “The Necessity of Contingency,” in *Hegel on Logic and Religion: The Reasonableness of Christianity*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 44.

determined externally concrete content.⁵¹ Accordingly, Hegel asserts that “*whether something [etwas] is contingent and possible depends on the content.*”⁵² This is real actuality.

(b) Real Actuality

Actuality is not merely formal actuality, but is actuality that is there as positively determined quality. Real actuality (*reale Wirklichkeit*) is thus a *posited* actuality that has a variety of determinations and a manifold content. Real actuality is accordingly, in its immediacy, contingent. At this stage in the development of actuality, however, the immediacy of contingency has been sublated such that the contingent is no longer to be taken as isolated, but rather as destined to be sublated and as the condition for an other. This other, however, is real actuality itself, which is itself the totality of conditions.

It is possible to picture this actuality to ourselves, for a totality of conditions is no longer the abstraction of immediate actuality but is rather full of content. Thus we can say that “[r]eal actuality is *as such* at first the thing of many properties, the existent world.”⁵³ The inward side of this real actuality, possibility, is just as much something outwards, for it is both determinate, i.e., has its own content, and is implicitly present in the totality of conditions which, when they are present, must bring about the actuality of this content, i.e., must *act*. This activity, because it has a content, is real necessity. Such necessity, however, is still burdened with the immediacy of its starting-point, for it presupposes the initial contingent, immediately real actuality. Accordingly, this is only relative necessity.

⁵¹ See *ibid.*

⁵² Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §145.

⁵³ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 482 [11:385.]

(c) Absolute Necessity

The finitude of the previous conception of necessity is that it is only relative or conditioned necessity. The initial conditions thus stand as a presupposition and as something external to the result. Actuality, however, as the result of the previous movement, is now determined as in-itself not possibility, but determinate necessity. Actuality which is in-itself necessary is what Hegel calls absolute actuality, the “actuality which can no longer be otherwise.”⁵⁴ Here, the first two moments of actuality are sublated, i.e., the movement of formal actuality, possibility and necessity that in the *Science of Logic* Hegel designates ‘contingency’ and the movement of real actuality, possibility and necessity that Hegel designates ‘relative necessity.’

The first moment is designated as contingency insofar as the movement here is just the immediacy of actuality which, as immediate, is still just formal and abstract. The contingent in general, or taken on its own and in abstraction, is just that which is in such a way that it merely has the value of logical possibility attached to it such that it could just as much not-be.⁵⁵ As such, it is merely negative, is in fact as nothing, and this is precisely what the understanding makes of the contingent such that contingency just passes-away and leaves nothing behind.⁵⁶ The contingent, however, is actuality, but only in its immediacy, i.e., not genuine, absolute actuality. Necessity, likewise, is also not something outside of actuality, something that is *merely* in-itself, for actuality *acts*. The

⁵⁴ Ibid., 486 [11:389.]

⁵⁵ See Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 157 [159.]

⁵⁶ See Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 128 [18:304.]

two moments are thus identical, or the contingent is absolutely necessary, indeed is absolute necessity.⁵⁷

This proposition must sound like a contradiction to the understanding, and all the more so because the ‘is’ here is taken as the ‘is’ of identity. This proposition, however, is to be comprehended speculatively. The point is precisely that the contingent as the immediate and finite is a contradiction within itself,⁵⁸ and “has the ground of its being not within itself but elsewhere.”⁵⁹ The truth of contingency is absolute necessity, i.e., the true and positive being of contingency is not its own being, but its being as sublated in absolute necessity. Only immediately does contingency appear as the empty indifference and external profusion that may as well be as not be and which simply vanishes. Because absolute actuality is necessity in-itself, this seeming immediate content is something posited by actuality from out of its in-itself and its own possibility as its own externalization, and this externalizing movement is absolute actuality’s own *necessary* unfolding.⁶⁰ This is what Hegel calls absolute necessity, the self-grounding movement which not only *is*, but *is because it is*. On the one hand, this absolute necessity is blind,⁶¹ for the contingent as immediate actuality is isolated and not yet reflected in an other. Consequently, the movement of absolute necessity appears as the “*blind* collapse into otherness [*Untergang im Andersein*].”⁶² This is the movement of being into nothing as the becoming as the passing-away of the contingent. But because this destruction of the

⁵⁷ Cf. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 488 [11:391], Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 117 [18:294.]

⁵⁸ Ibid., 128 [18:303.]

⁵⁹ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §145 z.

⁶⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 487 [11:391.]

⁶¹ See *ibid.*, 487 [11:391] and 488 [11:382.]

⁶² Ibid., 487 [11:391.]

contingent, its passing into nothingness, is only the self-unfolding of necessity itself, this movement is equally essence that in its becoming is reflection and shine. These two moments in their identity are the self-positing and self-reflection of absolute necessity. In absolute necessity, the distinction of contingency from itself is at the same time the return to itself. Moreover, this return to itself is again at once the distinction or repulsion of itself from itself such that “[t]he *blind* transition of necessity [*Übergehen der Notwendigkeit*] is rather the absolute’s *own exposition*, its movement in itself which, in its externalization, reveals itself instead.”⁶³

The Relations of Necessity

The next moment of Hegel’s *Logic*, the final moment of the sphere of essence and thus the transition to the sphere of the concept, is ‘the relations of necessity’. While the account of actuality provides us with the Logical account of the elevation of contingency to absolute necessity, this account is still abstract insofar as absolute necessity has appeared as a result “expounded *by external reflection*.”⁶⁴ To put it another way, the *Logic* forms a *progression*, and indeed a necessary progression, insofar as the earlier categories have their truth as sublated in later categories. Actuality, for example, still has the distinction between essence and existence as its *modalities*. In itself, or essentially, actuality is immediately just self-identity or abstract possibility, so the moment of its bare existence, in opposition to or as external and independent from this essence, is contingency while their unity is necessity.

⁶³ Ibid., 488 [11:392.]

⁶⁴ Ibid., 489 [11:393.]

Despite the fact that preceding categories in the *Logic* are sublated in the succeeding ones, then, there is still as yet a distinction between the modes in which the successive categories are related to the preceding categories, namely as presupposing on the one hand, and positing on the other. On the one hand, in-itself the sphere of being has its truth in that of essence just as essence implicitly contains all of the determinations of being. On the other hand, the sphere of essence is determined as that sphere within which a category is determined as posited and for-itself. Implicitly, then, necessity, and in particular what Hegel calls *absolute necessity* as the penultimate category of *essence*, recapitulates all of the relations of the spheres of being and essence.⁶⁵ The final movement of the sphere of essence requires that the relation of immediacy and mediation itself become explicit or for-itself.

As always, and in accordance with his method or the *Sache selbst*, Hegel begins from the immediate result of the previous movement. Blind necessity was to be grasped as the absolute's own exposition. As immediately reflected into itself, absolute necessity is necessity as such, the One (*das Eine*),⁶⁶ and the moments of the unfolding of actuality have been sublated so that these determinations are in-themselves absolute necessity's own manifestation and determination. The movement of the relations of necessity involves sublating the distinction between absolute necessity and its manifestation and determinations. The three moments of the relations of necessity are the relations of: (i) substance and accidents, (ii) cause and effect, and (iii) reciprocity.

⁶⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 164 [167.]

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 165 [167.]

(i) *Substance and Accidents*

First, absolute necessity is immediately determined as the One, and its relation to its manifestation is likewise immediate. This One is substance.⁶⁷ Because it is immediately reflected back into itself from out of its relation to its manifestation, the relation of substance is merely formal, i.e. it is the *relation* of formal possibility. The manifestation, on the other hand, is merely illusory being or shining, i.e., it is just as much nothing, and as contingency passes away, although this passing away is the formal reflection of substance within itself. Since substance is actual in and through its manifestation, however, this shining or illusory being is also the content of substance, i.e., its attributes. Substance as this absolute form-unity is thus determined as, albeit still formal and blind, *absolute power*.⁶⁸

In this movement, we find a similar contradiction to that which emerged in the relation between formal possibility and contingency. On the one hand, formal possibility and contingency are supposed to be distinct from their other and merely identical to themselves, while on the other hand, they necessarily pass into one-another. Likewise, substance is what it is in and through its positing of its accidents, just as accidents only are such in and through their relation to substance. Just as the relation of formal possibility and contingency was sublated in formal necessity, which as full of content is real possibility, so the immediacy of substance is sublated insofar as substance as reflected in itself is no longer indifferent to this content, but rather the positing of this content for itself, i.e., the relation of *causality*.

⁶⁷ See *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Cf. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 491 [11:395.] and Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §151.

(ii) *Cause and Effect*

In the relation of substance and accident there is only the One such that the relation of substance to accidents is merely possibility and the accidents simply disappear into the substance. Here, by contrast, substance, as reflected within itself and full of content is determinate and the determination of this content is the positing of an effect.⁶⁹ Such a cause as reflected within itself is still a substance that manifests itself, i.e., it is absolute power and the in-itself, but as a *creative* or “originative”⁷⁰ power. The relation here, because it arises from the determination or content that the cause is in-itself, is one of necessity and what is posited is its own self-exposition.⁷¹ At the same time, however, what is posited is also immediately distinct from the cause, i.e., the effect is itself a substance or independent actuality, but as immediate actuality, i.e., something posited *as* posited or contingent⁷² that is immediately passive in relation to its cause and presupposes it. The cause, on the other hand, is what is active.⁷³

Now, insofar as cause and effect are held abstractly apart by the understanding, it appears as though cause is something that is in-itself, independent and prior to its effect. Yet cause is only a cause in the relation of effect.⁷⁴ Moreover, while effect is immediately passive, as itself an immediate actuality, it also contains the necessity of its own

⁶⁹ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 493 [11:397.] and Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 167 [169.]

⁷⁰ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 493 [11:397.] and Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §153.

⁷¹ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 493 [11:397.]

⁷² See Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §154. and Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 494 [11:398.]

⁷³ See Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §154.

⁷⁴ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 493-4 [11:397-8.]

unfolding, i.e., becomes a cause or *re-acts*. The relation of cause and effect thus becomes an infinite movement, backwards and forwards, or rather it is just this infinite contradiction.

It is here, in this relation of necessity, that we find the second relation of the finite and the infinite – namely what Hegel calls the bad infinite. As was seen above, the finite was immediately determined as that which was limited, and the passage from the finite to the infinite involved the negation of that limit. Yet, since the infinite itself requires the finite, this infinity is nothing but the same endless cycle of contradiction where a limit is posited, it is overcome, and then a new limit is posited, and so on *ad infinitum*.⁷⁵

This infinite alternation is sublated in what Hegel calls the true infinite. This occurs in the sphere of being because, as Hegel argues there, the determinacy of something also necessarily involves a relation to other, i.e., being-for-other.⁷⁶ The relation of a thing to other is a quality of the thing itself, and only thus is it a being-in-itself.⁷⁷ It is for this reason that something, taken as finite and as having a limit, necessarily passes over that limit into the other, namely the bad infinite. Since, however, this infinity is also a passing back into the finite, the whole movement is only the movement of being-for-itself. This reflexive movement is, to recall, what Hegel calls the good or true infinite.⁷⁸

A similar sublation occurs in causality: cause and effect are at first negatively related to each other and distinct such that the cause is taken to be the genuine actuality while the effect is only contingent or immediate actuality that passes away. Yet the effect

⁷⁵ See Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §94.

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, §91.

⁷⁷ See *ibid.*

⁷⁸ See *ibid.*, §95.

as such an immediate actuality, it is not merely reflected into an other, but also is reflected into itself, for the effect is itself a cause of an other. As such, “the effect is what is posited as a cause, but what is posited turns out to be an actual existent in its own right. It is an actual existent because it attains reflection within itself.”⁷⁹

(iii) Reciprocity

In cause and effect, two actualities confronted one-another, the first as active and the second as passive. The immediate, passive actuality as effect, however, equally sublates itself and becomes a cause. In this way, the effect reacts and rebounds upon the cause. Now, in-itself cause and effect are identical, but this must become explicit so that their distinction is sublated.

This occurs because cause, taken as substance independent of its effect, is also immediate; for cause only is what it is in and through the effect that it posits. Yet this effect as reaction is no less the return of the cause to itself. The movement of reciprocity is not a simple sinking into a single substance or into immediate identity. Instead, this movement is the movement of distinction and relation in which the two substances are (a) each independent and immediately passive substance that contains positedness and distinction within itself. In-itself, then, each is what the other is, each is equally effect, and there is only one cause that is their reciprocal movement. (b) Each relate themselves to each other as distinct from each other, and yet out of this distinction both are reflected into themselves, i.e., they are being-for-themselves. In this relation, moreover, each sublates their own immediacy and is converted into the other. (c) Each is what it is as

⁷⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 168 [171.]

determinate and distinct in and through this movement of immediacy, independence and reflection into itself. The truth is the sublation of the opposition of these two substances, each of which is equally in-itself and for-itself what the other is for it; each is both immediate, the presupposition (*Voraussetzen*) of the other, and the mediated, the positing (*Setzen*) of its other, and this movement is just as much the presupposing and positing of itself.⁸⁰

The Doctrine of the Concept

From Being and Essence to Concept: Being-in-and-for-itself and Freedom

In the final moment of essence, the distinction between the spheres of being and the essence itself is sublated insofar as they themselves are the reciprocal relation of being passing over into essence and essence reflecting itself in being as its truth and self-expression in being. Being in its immediate opposition to and as the result of essence was existence that had essence as its ground. Now, the sphere of essence in sublating the sphere of being grounds not only its other but also itself, i.e., it is its own self-grounding activity. This sublation of being and essence, i.e., the self-grounding activity which is not a passing-over from one determination to another as in being, nor the relation and reflection of one determination in another, but the self-determination of itself such that its movement and differentiation is its own self-expression and revelation, is precisely what Hegel defines as the *concept*.⁸¹

⁸⁰ As Burbidge points out, in reciprocity “each moment produces, yet presupposes, its counterpart, generating an intimate togetherness.”(Burbidge, *The Logic of Hegel’s Logic*, 82.)

⁸¹ Cf. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §159 z.

While the sphere of essence is the being-for-itself *and* shine of the concept, the concept is not yet, within the sphere of essence, the concept that is *for-itself*,⁸² i.e., not yet the concept that is determined as the concept itself in its self-transparency, but is still burdened with immediacy and otherness. In the sphere of the concept proper, by contrast, both the immediacy of being and the mediation of essence are sublated so that the concept is *in-and-for-itself*. That which is in-and-for-itself is the self-mediation that sublates its opposition to its other and to its own immediacy such that it is being-at-home-with-itself (*Beisichsein*). According to Hegel, freedom is just this being-at-home-with-itself, or more precisely is “being at home with oneself in one’s other, depending upon one-self and being one’s own determinant.”⁸³ Thus, at the conclusion of the sphere of essence with the fulfillment of absolute necessity in reciprocity, Hegel declares that “[t]he *truth of necessity* is thereby *freedom*.”⁸⁴

This being at home with itself is not mere immediacy, nor mediation as relation to its other, but self-positing and self-mediating self-relation. The movement of this sphere is thus not that of passing-over to an other or relation to an other in the opposition of immediacy and mediation, but self-grounding differentiation that is at home with itself and coming to itself in its other.⁸⁵ The development and determination of the movements of the sphere of the concept, then, is such that, as at the conclusion of reciprocity, “only that is posited which is already implicitly present.”⁸⁶ Accordingly, in this sphere the determinations of a category are its own self-differentiating and self-determining activity

⁸² Ibid., §112.

⁸³ Ibid., §24, z 2.

⁸⁴ Ibid., §158.

⁸⁵ See Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, 136.

⁸⁶ Ibid., §161 z.

such that a category is taken to both posit a distinction and sublata that distinction explicitly. The character of the movement of this sphere is most clearly expressed in terms of Hegel's account and conception of the syllogism. As the syllogism is the third and final moment of the subjective concept, however, to grasp Hegel's account of the syllogism it is first necessary to briefly run through the preceding moments of the subjective concept, namely (a) the concept, and (b) the judgment.

(A) The Subjective Concept

The first moment of the sphere of the concept is the *immediate* concept. While the concept is the truth of being and essence, it has yet to show itself as freely self-determining itself. Accordingly, initially the concept appears as an immediate self-relation, i.e., as something formal. The first sphere of the concept is thus what Hegel calls the subjective or merely *formal* concept.

It is here that one finds Hegel's account of the sort of material one would expect to find in traditional textbooks on Logic, and the subjective concept follows these textbooks⁸⁷ insofar as the main divisions of the subjective concept are (a) the concept, (b) the judgment, and (c) the syllogism. Unlike in these textbooks, however, the concept is not, for Hegel, an abstract universal. Moreover, the subjective concept is not, according to Hegel, subjective in the sense that it is the abstract thoughts or concept *of* subjective understanding.⁸⁸ Instead, it is the concept *itself* that, because it initially arises just as the result of being and essence, is at first formal and must sublata this formality by showing

⁸⁷ See Errol E. Harris, *An Interpretation of the Logic of Hegel*, (Lanham: University Press of America, 1983), 227.

⁸⁸ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 517 [12:20.]

itself as positing itself as its own content in and as its totality. In the subjective concept, then, far from being treated as an indifferent form, the concept is to be considered and developed in-and-for-itself in such a way that the movement from concept to judgment to syllogism is the movement by which the initial formalism of the concept sublates itself.

The concept is, first of all, *the universal*. The concept as universal, however, is not an abstract universal but inwardly concrete and determinate, i.e., it is the particular, and its particularity and determination is not the concept's passing-away into another but a reflection within itself that is being-in-and-for-itself, i.e. it is the concrete individual.

The universal is the particular and the particular is the individual; it must freely be admitted that, insofar as this is thought in accordance with the understanding this is an absurdity. We must recall once more, however, that the universal that we are dealing with here is not *a* universal, much less some abstract and formal universal. The universal that has emerged here is the universal that is in-and-for-itself, i.e., is concrete and concretely self-determined. Still, this may all sound strange and quite alien from our ordinary experience and way of speaking, and yet that which is nearest to us by the usual way of reckoning is the clearest example of this dialectic – namely the 'I' which each of us *is*.

In the *Science of Logic*, Hegel asserts that “the 'I' is the pure concept itself, the concept that has come into Dasein.”⁸⁹ The 'I' is a *concrete* universal, for it is not merely an abstract 'this' but universality that is negatively self-related that is distinguished from an other such that in this distinction it is infinite negative relation to self. To say 'I' is at once to say that which is universal, and thus common to all, but also to say that which is exclusive, for the I is infinitely negatively self-related, i.e., it is sublated particularity that

⁸⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 514 [12:17.]

abstracts and excludes itself from the other. This negative relation to the other, however, is at once self-relation and knowledge of the self as 'I'. According to Hegel, as we shall see, the I *is* this movement, *is* its self-knowing activity. This 'I' on Hegel's account is thus neither a substance, nor a thing-in-itself that hides behind and *underlies* experience and the self. Rather, the I just *is* the movement of its self-knowing activity.⁹⁰

These moments of, or rather these moments that are, the concept, are next explicitly posited in their distinction and determination, i.e., their primal division (*Teilung*), in the forms of the judgment (*Ur-teil*).⁹¹ In running through his account of the judgment, Hegel distinguishes the following four stages and divisions of the judgment:

- (1) The Judgment of *Dasein*, consisting of the:
 - (a) positive, (b) negative, and (c) infinite judgments
- (2) The Judgment of Reflection, consisting of the:
 - (a) singular, (b) particular, and (c) universal judgments
- (3) The Judgment of Necessity, consisting of the:
 - (a) categorical, (b) hypothetical, and (c) disjunctive judgments
- (4) Judgment of the Concept, consisting of:
 - (a) assertoric, (b) problematic, and (c) apodictic judgments

Finally, the syllogism makes explicit the sublation of this division and distinction by uniting the moments of the concept, or rather its own moments, in its own self-explication.

⁹⁰ Compare the account of the method of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in the "Introduction" to this dissertation (supra, 30-38.) There, it was said that consciousness itself, insofar as it knows something, both distinguishes itself from something and relates itself to something but such that precisely in distinguishing itself from something consciousness is reflected back into itself. The I is the whole of this movement itself, i.e., is this universal that in and through its distinction or particularity relates itself to itself and is the individual. Accordingly, Hegel claims there that "the 'I' is the pure concept itself, the concept that has come into *determinate existence* [*Dasein*]."Ibid., 514 [12:17]

⁹¹ For Hegel's account of judgment as primal division, see *ibid.*, 552 [12:55.]

Hegel and the Syllogism

The doctrine of the concept is the sphere in which the determinations explicitly unfold as the concept's own self-differentiating and self-determining activity such that the categories here merely posit that which is already implicit in them and which they presuppose in such a way that, in passing over and relating to these distinctions, they simply explicitly posit and sublata that distinction within themselves. Insofar as the syllogism involves both the explicit positing of distinct moment (major, minor and middle terms) and the unity of these moments (i.e. the syllogism itself), the syllogism serves as a useful example of the manner in which the movement of the sphere of the concept is constituted and differentiated from the spheres of being and essence. Moreover, Hegel's conception of the syllogism is not just exemplary of this sphere in the *Logic*, but it is central for grasping the character and structure of the *Logic* as a whole, and indeed his entire system.

As has been seen,⁹² Hegel rejects the syllogism of the understanding as inadequate insofar as it is understood as merely the external subjective *form* that is indifferent to its content.⁹³ Nonetheless, in rejecting the formalism of the syllogism of the understanding, Hegel does not embrace formlessness. To the contrary, he asserts that “*everything rational is a syllogism.*”⁹⁴ What Hegel means by this, however, is somewhat peculiar.

According to Hegel, “to regard the syllogism as merely consisting of *three judgments* is a formalistic view that ignores the relation of the determinations which

⁹² See supra, pp.95-8.

⁹³ Cf. *ibid.*, 588 [12:90.]

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 588 [12:90.]

alone is at issue in the syllogism.”⁹⁵ Unlike classical syllogistic logic, then, Hegel account and classification of syllogisms is neither determined by the subject-predicate relation nor by the mood of its terms. Instead, for Hegel the syllogism is the *concept* that after positing itself in the finitude of distinction, returns to itself and is posited as self-mediated and self-mediating. Accordingly, for Hegel the “[t]he essential element of the syllogism is the *unity* of the extremes, the *middle term* that unites them and the *ground* that supports them.”⁹⁶ The terms of the syllogism are just the moments of the concept itself, namely universality, particularity and individuality. Accordingly, for Hegel the relation of these moments through a middle term three main syllogistic figures that can be represented as follows: (a) I-P-U, (b) P-I-U, (c) I-U-P.

The above progression of these three figures of the syllogism remains consistent throughout the three stages of Hegel’s account of the development of the syllogism, namely:

- (1) The Syllogism of *Dasein*, consisting just of the abstract terms above, as well as the mathematical syllogism (U-U-U)
- (2) The Syllogism of Reflection, consisting of the syllogisms of (a) allness, (b) induction, and (c) analogy
- (3) The Syllogism of Necessity, consisting of the (a) categorical, (b) hypothetical, and (c) disjunctive syllogism

The essential point of this movement is that the immediate appearance of opposition and externality of the middle term and the extremes is sublated. The development of the stages of the syllogism is the concretization of the content of the syllogism such that the very formality, and thus the mediation that the syllogism posits externally, is sublated.

Just as the concept immediately appeared as the total unity of the universal, particular and

⁹⁵ Ibid., 592 [12:94.] The translation has been adjusted to render the first as well as the second occurrence of *Schluss* as ‘syllogism’ rather than ‘inference’.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 589 [12:91.]

individual, in the final syllogism the middle term is the concrete universal that is no longer taken to be external to the moments of individuality and particularity both implicitly (as in the explication of the concept) and explicitly (as in the formal characterization of the figures of syllogism above) and thus comprehends these other moments in itself.

Thankfully in the present context it is unnecessary to go further into the details of Hegel's account and development of the various forms of the syllogism. Indeed, so long as the *proviso* is taken seriously that the very point of the syllogism on Hegel's account is that the rational syllogism sublates the opposition between form and content, i.e., that the rational syllogism is not something merely formal but the self-development and self-explication of the concept itself, the formal characterization of the form of the syllogism as (a) I-P-U, (b) P-I-U and (c) I-U-P is extremely helpful in explicating Hegel's thought.

The reason for this is that, as was mentioned above, according to Hegel, everything rational is a syllogism. As Hegel develops the three figures of the syllogism, however, these figures are not just taken to be external to one-another, but each leads to the other and overcomes the immediacy that is contained in the premises and presuppositions of the other. For Hegel, then,

everything rational shows itself to be a threefold syllogism, and it does that in such a way that each of its members occupies the position both of an extreme and of the mediating middle.⁹⁷

In other words, for Hegel reason is this self-grounding activity and totality. Such a syllogism of syllogism may thus be represented as a circle, and indeed as a circle of circles. It is no coincidence, then, that Hegel himself characterizes his own *Logic* in these

⁹⁷ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §187 z.

terms,⁹⁸ or that the system itself is often characterized as circular. Nonetheless, a circle, it should be noted, is merely a figurative representation. Granted, given that the very point of Hegel's account of the syllogism is that the formalism of the syllogism is sublated in and through the immanent development of its content, to speak of the system as a syllogism of syllogisms is still only to offer a formal characterization of that system. Nonetheless, Hegel does not embrace formlessness and thus just as the moment of the understanding is essential to the dialectic of reason and its speculative development, so the form of the syllogism as the form of reason, although one-sided, is the most adequate formal characterization of Hegel's system and method. Accordingly, as we shall see, Hegel himself defines his own system as and concludes that system with a syllogism of syllogisms.

From the Syllogism to Objectivity

Within the sphere of the subjective concept as it is developed in the forms of the syllogism, the syllogism at first presupposes the difference between its moments such that these moments are developed as something external and “were posited differences that were present at hand.”⁹⁹ It is for this reason that the syllogism appears to be something formal that is distinct from and merely applied to an indifferent content. Yet, as explained above, according to Hegel the concept is *concrete*, inwardly self-determining and not at all indifferent to content. Rather, this content arises in and through the self-mediation of the concept itself.

⁹⁸ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, pp.751-2 [12:252.]

⁹⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 200 [198.]

Now, while the difference of content at first appeared to be something external to the subjective syllogism, in the final form of the syllogism these differences are no longer presupposed, but rather posited in the syllogism itself. For this reason, Hegel claims that in its the final moment, the syllogism “is equally no longer *a syllogism at all*,”¹⁰⁰ for the difference between the moments has been extinguished. Mediation itself is sublated insofar as the “distinction of the mediating and mediated has... fallen away,”¹⁰¹ and the concept is now the concept as itself a *posited immediacy* that is a totality, and indeed a totality of totalities, although it is this totality to begin with only implicitly or in-itself. Hegel thus states that, “[t]he distinct moments of the concept are covered over, becoming indistinguishable within the simplicity of the concept reduced to an object.”¹⁰²

(B) The Objective Concept

Objectivity: Mechanism, Chemism and the Transition to Teleology

According to Hegel, objectivity is the same totality of totalities that the subjective concept showed itself to be in the syllogism, but such that it has sublated mediation and collapsed into the immediacy of *being* that is *in and for itself*. As such, objectivity is the posited concept and indeed immediate being, but such that it is an inward totality that is indifferent both to itself and to its moments. Furthermore, it is a totality of totalities, such that it falls apart into distinct moments “each of which is itself the totality.”¹⁰³ Objectivity in Hegel’s sense is thus not “merely something that *is* abstractly, or an existing thing, or something-actual in general, but something-independent that is concrete and *complete*

¹⁰⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 623 [12:125.]

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 624 [12:125.]

¹⁰² Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 200 [198.]

¹⁰³ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §194.

within itself.”¹⁰⁴ This conception of objectivity and its independence is expressed when we speak of the objective as that which *is* true regardless and independent of our own personal opinions and thoughts, i.e., what is objective is not *merely* subjective.¹⁰⁵ Of course, as should be clear at this point, for Hegel the subjective and objective are not ultimately to merely be understood as an abstract antithesis. Indeed, Hegel claims that “the task of science, and more precisely of philosophy, is nothing but the overcoming of this antithesis through thinking.”¹⁰⁶

Insofar as objectivity is the immediate sublation of the subjective concept, objectivity is already determined as in-itself the totality of the subjective concept. (Indeed, Hegel explicitly comprehends and articulates the various moments of objectivity as constituting syllogisms of syllogisms.)¹⁰⁷ To begin with, then, objectivity is determined as a purely independent and determinate totality of totalities with no reference to subjectivity at all while “[t]he fact that *object* [Objekt] is also *ob-ject* [*Gegenstand*], and is *something-external* to an other will be established later – insofar as it sets itself up in its *antithesis* to what is *subjective*.”¹⁰⁸

Succinctly stated, the dialectical contradiction of mechanism and chemism is that objectivity is determined as the fully determined concept, but such that objectivity and objects are only posited as these totalities *in-themselves*. Now, a totality is inwardly

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., §193.

¹⁰⁵ See *ibid.* §194 z.: “God is the object, indeed he is the object pure and simple, as against which our particular (subjective) opinions and volitions have neither truth nor validity...” Likewise, in discussing the transition from the subjective to the objective in the ontological proof, Hegel states: “That it is not just *our* concept but also *is*, irrespective of our thinking, has to be demonstrated.” (Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:352 [272].)

¹⁰⁶ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §272 z.1.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, §§198, 201 and 206-209.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, §193.

differentiated. At first, however, in the sphere of mechanism, the differentiation of the object is only the diversity of its parts that “behave indifferently to each other, and their linkage is only external to them.”¹⁰⁹ In contradiction to its concept, then, the object of mechanism, which in its immediacy as a totality is supposed to be independent, shows itself to be dependent. In chemism, by contrast, the object is determined as inwardly and essentially differentiated and related to an other such that, on the one hand, the objects are a striving to overcome the distinction between themselves and their other by uniting themselves with their other, and yet their very “difference constitutes their quality.”¹¹⁰ In each of these categories of objectivity, the bringing together of the various moments that constitute the thing as objectivity is external, i.e., resides in another, a subjectivity, that grasps mechanism and chemism as spheres or processes in and through turning them into ideal moments.¹¹¹ In teleology, by contrast, subjectivity not only arises as a necessary moment of opposition to objectivity, but moreover sublates the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity. In other words, teleology is the sublation of objectivity by objectivity itself.¹¹²

Although it is not necessary to provide a detailed analysis of Hegel’s account of the movements of mechanism and chemism, it will be useful here to explain what is meant by saying that subjectivity is necessary to mechanism and chemism. This will serve not only to make the above synopsis of Hegel’s conceptions of mechanism and chemism more tangible, but shall also shed light on a number of issues, such as Hegel’s

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., §194 z.2.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Cf. Hegel, *Lecture on Logic*, 211 [207.] “Human beings [in knowledge] penetrate the far reaches of the heavens and stars with their concept, and thereby make independent celestial beings over into dependent ideal beings within themselves.”

¹¹² Cf. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 667 [12:170.]

claim that proof in the ordinary sense is still subjective, as well as provide background for later parts of the discussion when we turn to a consideration of the syllogisms of the system and consider the relation of the *Philosophy of Nature* to the rest of his system.

The Finitude of Mechanism and Chemism

It is essential to keep in mind that mechanism and chemism are *Logical* categories, i.e., pure self-determinations of thought that should not be *immediately* transferred to the empirical realm. Hegel stresses this fact by pointing out that, while the mechanical process may be understood as *applying* to a fairly obvious particular sphere of nature and natural objects, it is equally correct to speak of, for example, spiritual mechanism, so that memorizing something or learning it by rote and then regurgitating it may justly be called mechanical memory.¹¹³ Likewise, Hegel explicitly claims that the expression chemism

is not to be understood here as though the relation were only to be found in in that form of elemental nature that strictly goes by that name ...In animate things, the sex relation falls under this schema, and the schema constitutes the *formal* basis for the spiritual relations of love, friendship, and the like.¹¹⁴

Even with this in mind, however, Hegel's discussion of mechanism, chemism and teleology can be quite confusing, if only because we are used to thinking of the former as belonging to genuine objective studies of nature, such as physics and chemistry, while teleology is frequently dismissed as an external and subjective way of investigating objects that gives us no genuine knowledge.

¹¹³ See Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §195 z. and Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 631 [12.133.]

¹¹⁴ Ibid, pp.645-6 [12.148-9.]

As it turns out, Hegel himself is also quite sceptical of teleology as this is ordinarily understood, namely what Hegel calls ‘external teleology,’ and agrees that teleology in this sense is an external method of investigation that “soon fell into deserved discredit.”¹¹⁵ Hegel indeed sees himself as on the side of the natural scientist insofar as he or she “aims at a cognition of the properties of nature not as extraneous, but as immanent *determinacies*, and accepts only such cognition as a valid conceptual comprehension.”¹¹⁶ Nonetheless, Hegel clearly finds it more than a little ironic that teleology is dismissed

as an unjustified trespass into a *heterogeneous* element, whereas mechanism, for which the determinateness of an object is posited in it externally and by an other, is accepted as a more *immanent* view of things than teleology.¹¹⁷

Why Hegel regards what he calls internal teleology as the immanent determination of an object shall be explained below. For now, the question is why Hegel regards mechanism and chemism as *external*.

Ordinarily we think of mechanical and chemical interactions as purely objective processes that can and indeed have (or at least coherently may have) existed far before the entrance of any subjects and subjective ends. It is, further, not unusual to think that all subjectivity may ultimately be reduced to mechanical or chemical interactions and processes. The alternative, it seems, is the adoption of some kind of Berkeleyan idealism, or at least the presupposition of an eternal subject. By contrast, mechanism and chemism appear as the examination of objects that is not subjective and external but rather objective and the immanent determination of objects as they are in themselves.

¹¹⁵ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §205 z.

¹¹⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 652 [12:155.]

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

In order to follow Hegel's argument here, it is important, as has been repeatedly stated, to keep in mind that Hegel's *Logic* is an immanent investigation and account of pure thoughts. The question, then, is not whether mechanism and chemism or teleology is capable of providing a more adequate account of our subjective experiences or of particular empirical objects.¹¹⁸ Rather, the question is whether mechanism and chemism are true *in and for themselves*.¹¹⁹ In other words, the question is whether or not the categories of mechanism and chemism are self-consistent and self-explanatory, or if they rather require another concept to make sense of them.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ For a discussion of the inadequacy of such readings, see James Kreines, "Hegel's Critique of Pure Mechanism and the Philosophical Appeal of the *Logic* Project." *European Journal of Philosophy*. 12:1 (2004), esp. 42. As Kreines points out, Hegel explicitly rejects this sort of approach.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 651 [12:154.]: "Earlier metaphysics has dealt with these concepts as it dealt with others. It presupposed a certain picture of the world and strived to show that one or the other concept of causality was adequate to it, and the opposite defective because not *explainable* from the presupposed picture, all the while not examining the concept of mechanical cause that of purpose to see which possesses truth *in and for itself*."

¹²⁰ Kreines, in opposition to those who would read Hegel's account of mechanism and teleology as simply different *Weltanschauungen*, argues that such a reading "would seriously constrain our understanding of Hegel's complaint about mechanism: the point would be that mechanism inaccurately, incompletely or unhelpfully *describes* the world. Such a complaint would have to draw upon premises about the actual world and its contents, and it is hard to see how these could be compelling except as empirical claims." (Kreines, "Hegel's Critique of Pure Mechanism," 34.) We may note in passing that the initial premise according to which Hegel conceives of mechanism and teleology as mutually compatible *Weltanschauungen* is in fact much closer to the position of Kant. Given that Hegel, however, clearly argues for the superiority of teleology, Hegel's *Logical* account of mechanism and teleology turns into a pre-Kantian metaphysical attempt to derive an account of nature *a priori* which in fact illegitimately depends on experience while attempting to drive concepts beyond the bounds of any possible experience. Such a dialectical reversal is more than a little amusing, and it is no accident that Kreines concludes that an appropriate conception of Hegel's account of the relation between mechanism and teleology "means that we can – and indeed must – move beyond traditional interpretive approaches to Hegel's overall argument strategy. Traditional approaches tend to divide over the issue of Hegel's relationship to Kant's critical philosophy into metaphysical and non-metaphysical interpretations." (Ibid, 56.) By

Hegel's argument is, of course, that the concepts of mechanism and chemism are *not* true or absolute in his sense. This is not to say that Hegel denies that there are mechanical or chemical processes. Indeed, he even goes so far as to claim that, in the case of some *finite things*, mechanism and chemism constitute their "immanent principle."¹²¹ Such objects, however, are in Hegel's terms themselves finite and untrue (in the sense of merely partial, but still *correct*.)

The peculiarity of Hegel's conception of truth and the way in which it inverts the normal posture of consciousness becomes most apparent here. Normally, we take 'truth' to be something out there that is independent of and indifferent to knowing and subjectivity, i.e. the truth is supposed to be something objective and independent. Pushed to the extreme, an object is nothing more than an abstract an 'in-itself'. For Hegel, however, a thing-in-itself is nothing more than an abstraction and a reduction to abstract identity.¹²² A thing-in-itself is simply the abstraction of the exclusion of all determination. For Hegel, however, as we have seen before, the truth is not mere empty indeterminacy, nor is it the pure essence or inner, but rather that which is actual, manifest, self-manifesting and self-explicating.

In part, such a position is only superficially opposed to ordinary consciousness, for in our ordinary lives, and even more in the scientific investigation of the world, we

contrast, Kreines claims that "the key to all of this is Hegel's focus on a philosophical problem concerning *explanation* itself."(Ibid.) Given the previous account of Hegel's method where truth depends on the possibility of a concept being self-explanatory, it should be clear why I take Kreines to be essentially on the right track, even if his proposal is susceptible to a certain misunderstanding insofar as the word 'explanation' may be taken to be merely a subjective issue and as a question that is of concern only to limited beings such as ourselves who have to calculate means and ends.

¹²¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 652 [12:155.]

¹²² See Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §44.

are not satisfied to stop with abstractions but seek to comprehend the rationality of objects and take that to be something manifest. Thus, “[i]n the ordinary way, what we call ‘truth’ is the agreement of an object [*Gegenstand*] with our representation of it.”¹²³

When we take mechanism and chemism to exhaust the sphere of objectivity and particularly nature, we not only take natural objects to be independent and self-sufficient, but also take them as in-themselves inwardly determined and indeed inwardly *rationally* determined. Accordingly, an object is supposed to be not merely something *in-itself*, but also is determined in its connection to and relation to others; the object is *in-itself* a center of gravity that expresses and exerts forces on other objects, obeys laws, etc.

Now, in accordance with the understanding, we take these distinctions and moments to be true in-themselves. Thus it seems quite intelligible for us to abstract altogether from the knowing of objects and think of the universe as, for example, a purely mechanical system that operates prior to and without any reference to subjectivity and knowing. Hegel’s claim, in response, is not to say that these knowledge claims are *incorrect*, but only that they are un-true or partial and, contrary to what one usually thinks, subjective. How so?

According to Hegel, nature is the concept, and indeed the *idea*, that is external to itself. In other words, nature is not only the concept in-itself, but *as* externalization it is the manifestation and self-development and determination of the concept. Further, “Nature is not merely external in relation to the idea (and to its subjective existence Spirit); the truth is rather that *externality* constitutes the specific character in which

¹²³ Ibid., §24 z. 2.

Nature, as Nature, exists.”¹²⁴ According to Hegel, nature just is this self-externality so that, for example, a body that is determined merely as spatially extended *is* an indifferent external unity of differences such that it appears as an external unity of likewise mutually independent points.

Because nature is the idea in its externality, the objects of this sphere are only in themselves the fully developed concept, and the moments that they are in-themselves fall outside of themselves and are not reflected back into themselves. Such reflexivity, the gathering together and comprehending of its parts as moments, falls not to the object itself but rather to another. For Hegel then, as H.S. Harris puts it, “we are the self-consciousness of the world.”¹²⁵ According to Hegel, there is no in-itself as the intelligible *unity* of nature as a hidden or higher world that lies beyond consciousness and experience or, to put it another way, that which is merely in-itself is merely a being-for-other as external relation that is not reflected back into itself. Natural mechanical and chemical objects just *are* the externality of their relation to others. The metaphysical illusion is that there is an intelligible world in-itself hidden in the object – but the mechanical or chemical object is only an object and has this unity of being an in-itself insofar as it is for an other that sublates its immediacy and externality and makes the object something *ideal*. Thus Hegel says in the *Phenomenology* that “behind the so-called curtain which is supposed to conceal the inner world, there is nothing to be seen unless *we* go behind it ourselves.”¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §247.

¹²⁵ H.S. Harris, *Phenomenology and System*, 29.

¹²⁶ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶165 [9:102.]

To put it crudely, nature is dumb in both senses of the word, i.e. it neither thinks itself nor expresses itself. Nature, of course, poses for us an infinite (in the sense of unending) task and it can be measured, classified and categorized in a seemingly limitless number of ways. For Hegel, however, this is not a sign of the superiority and profundity of nature, but an indication of its shallowness and impotence.¹²⁷ For this reason, when proofs deal with objects such as these, the object in question is not determined immanently, but rather is transformed into a universal – a circle as such, a lion as such, etc. Likewise, the direction of the investigation is not determined by the object, but subjectively, so that the object becomes a means to an end that lies beyond and outside it, be that end theoretical knowledge or some practical concern.

Teleology is thus, according to Hegel, the truth of both mechanism and chemism. Given how teleology is usually understood, of course, this claim can be misleading, for it may appear as though Hegel is committed to a crude form of subjective idealism, pragmatism or utilitarianism. This misunderstanding can only be removed by considering his account of teleology itself.

Teleology

The claim that teleology or purposiveness is a finite and subjective way of grasping and explaining objectivity is, for Hegel, far from an external critique. His account of teleology indeed begins precisely from subjectivity that is, on his own account, one-sided and finite.¹²⁸ The aim, however, is to show how the one-sidedness of

¹²⁷ Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §§248 and 250.

¹²⁸ See Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 207 [204.]

teleology and subjectivity that belongs to what Hegel refers to as external or finite teleology and purposiveness is sublated.

In mechanism and chemism, the immediacy of objectivity was negated, for subjectivity that gathered together the external moments of objectivity was shown to be essential to objectivity itself. Subjectivity is thus now *negatively* related to objectivity. This subjectivity negates the externality of the object, i.e., the immediacy of the externality of its determinations, and gathers them together as ideal moments of the concept. Since both the objective concept in mechanism and chemism as well as the subjective concept are in-themselves the whole of the concept, the negative relation of subjectivity to objectivity, the negation of the immediacy of objectivity where it falls into indifferent externality, or in other words subjectivity's negation of objectivity, is at once a reflection into-itself, i.e., subjectivity is being-for-itself *against* externality. Here we arrive at the concept of purposiveness (*Zweckmassigkeit*), for Hegel defines purposiveness as the concept that is for-itself in its negative relation to immediate objectivity.

Now, as was explained above, for Hegel the sphere of the concept is determined as unfolding as the development where “only that is posited which is already implicitly present.”¹²⁹ In mechanism and chemism, however, this unity of the beginning and result are not explicitly united. Hegel thus states that “[i]n the product of the mechanical or chemical action or reaction... what comes out in the end differs from what was there at

¹²⁹ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §161 z.

the start.”¹³⁰ By contrast, with purposiveness as the free and self-determining concept that is for-itself, “[w]hat comes out in the end is what was there from the beginning.”¹³¹

To anticipate, the conclusion of teleology is the idea, the concept that is in-and-for-itself the truth as the *sublation* of the subjective and objective concept. To begin with, however, both subjectivity and objectivity appear as immediate and one-sided, and the movement of teleology will involve sublating the one-sidedness of both.

Now according to Hegel, when subjectivity and objectivity are only given in this one-sided manner, we have only the concept of finite, untrue, external purposiveness. Thus Hegel states that “[e]xternal purposiveness stands immediately before the idea, but what stands on the threshold like that is often precisely what is most unsatisfactory.”¹³² It is precisely this external purposiveness that must be sublating in the movement of teleology.

Hegel’s account of teleology consists of three moments. These, to be dealt with in more detail below, are (a) the subjective end (*Zweck*) – the subjective movement of positing a purpose¹³³ or the movement of decision (*entschlussen*),¹³⁴ (b) means – “purpose in the process of accomplishing itself,”¹³⁵ and (c) the realized end – “the accomplished purpose.”¹³⁶ This whole movement is first accomplished as the movement of finite purposiveness and teleology. Only in the final moment does Hegel show how this is sublating in internal purposiveness as the truth of teleology.

¹³⁰ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 208 [205.]

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 209 [205.]

¹³² Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §205 z.

¹³³ See *ibid.*, §206 z.

¹³⁴ See *ibid.*, §206 z., Hegel, *Science of Logic*, pp.658-9 [12:162.] and Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 209-10 [206.]

¹³⁵ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §206 z.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

(a) The Subjective End

Purpose is subjective insofar as it is immediately negatively related to the object. On the one hand, subjectivity distinguishes itself from objectivity. On the other hand, however, this objectivity is taken to be only an ideal moment, something “*null and void in-itself*.”¹³⁷ Here there arises a distinction between content and form that shall haunt finite teleology.

Form, according to Hegel, is “the *connection* of differences and their reciprocal determinedness,” while content is “*a unity that is reflected into itself, something that is determined in and for itself*.”¹³⁸ Now subjectivity, as absolutely negatively reflected in itself, is formally infinite and moreover has a concrete determinate content. Yet, as this reflection-into-self or subjectivity is opposed to objectivity, the content is determined as merely finite. Accordingly, objectivity still stands opposed to subjectivity “as a mechanical and chemical whole still not determined and not pervaded by the purposes.”¹³⁹ This objectivity is thus something presupposed as prior to subjectivity and which is only in-itself sublated for subjectivity. Subjectivity, as purpose, is at once the urge to sublimate the externality of the object as presupposition by making itself objective,¹⁴⁰ as well as to sublimate “its unrealized being for itself”¹⁴¹ – these, after all, are

¹³⁷ Ibid., §204.

¹³⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 653 [12:156.]

¹³⁹ Ibid, 658 [12:161.]

¹⁴⁰ See Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §204.

¹⁴¹ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 207 [204.]

the same thing, for the unrealized being-for-self of subjectivity *is* the distinction between itself and objectivity.¹⁴²

The first moment of teleology is the subjective end where the concept as purpose, in and through its inner contradiction, posits itself in making a decision and thereby at the same time relates itself to the indifferent externality of the object. The movement of the self-determination of the subjective purpose, accordingly, “turns *outwards* at once.”¹⁴³ Subjective purpose determines itself to objectivity, and objectivity immediately appears as the means by which the subjective end is to be achieved.

(b) Means

In the second moment of teleology, subjectivity turns to the objective such that it no longer merely presupposes objectivity, but instead takes up objectivity itself as something which is null for subjectivity and as merely being-for-other, i.e., as means. Subjectivity here is, in accordance with the previous moment of subjective end, finite insofar as it has shown itself in the distinction of form and content. Subjectivity is posited as limited again, but now in terms of content, and the content which subjectivity posits as its end is a finite determinate content that stands in opposition to objectivity such that the objectivity shall be submitted to the infinite self-reflective form that consciousness is in-itself.

¹⁴² Cf. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, pp.658-9 [12:162.]: “Purpose is in [itself] the impulse to its realization; the determinateness of the moments of the concept is externality; the *simplicity* of these moments within the unity of the concept is however incommensurable with what this unity is, and the concept therefore repels itself from itself.”

¹⁴³ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §207.

In the moment of means the distinction between form and content appears once more insofar as the means is only the external combination and formal relation of the concept and objectivity. The means, as such an objectivity, is the mechanical object which, as the middle term, is externally related to both subjectivity and ends. Insofar as it is the mediating term, however, this immediate objectivity “must itself be the totality of the purpose.”¹⁴⁴ This means can stand as the middle term for two reasons. First, subjectivity cannot, according to the very determination of subjective end, remain locked within itself but must rather act and so determine itself to objectivity in activity. Second, the object is susceptible to activity and use because the means is, as an object, only the concept in-itself that lacks self-subsistence or being-for-itself. Accordingly, the object has its truth in purpose and being-for-self, and thus is susceptible to being organized according to ends. An example of such means are human hands “which are the tools of the senses. Living beings have these means contained immediately in their hands, and yet they must develop the habit of using these means.”¹⁴⁵

Now, just as the subjective ends suffered from a certain bifurcation, so do means. The end, as yet unrealized, is still an objectivity that is external to the means and remains a presupposition. Insofar as the means is fulfilled as objective, however, it may now become a mediating term such that this objective means is related to another objectivity whereby the end is realized.

¹⁴⁴ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 661 [12:164.]

¹⁴⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 210 [206-7.]

(c) *The Realized End*

With the establishment of a means, the purpose now mediates itself through the means as a tool that is used against and upon another object as a material and brings about the realized end as an object. The mediating object, namely the means, which belongs to the sphere of mechanism and chemism, is subservient to the purpose and is used to in-form the material so as to realize the end which subjectivity posited in the beginning. Objects here appear over and against one-another, work against each other and show themselves in their finitude as non-self-subsistent while serving the end. The end, however, is thereby present within objectivity as the activity of realizing itself in objectivity in and through the sublation of objectivity by objectivity itself.

Hegel calls this process the cunning of reason (*List der Vernunft*.)¹⁴⁶ This cunning is “the mediating activity which, while it lets objects act upon one another according to their own nature, and wear each other out, executes only *its* purpose without mingling in the process.”¹⁴⁷ The objects as finite things wear themselves out, but the unifying content that began as a subjective purpose is realized in and through this activity and negation of the objects themselves.

The form of teleology, as the whole movement from subjective through means to realized ends, is the posited unity of subjectivity and objectivity.¹⁴⁸ Nonetheless, teleology and purposiveness are still finite and external here. The content posited by subjectivity is still a finite content, the means and material are external objects that are indifferently related to one another, and thus the form is an externally posited form that is

¹⁴⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 663 [12:166.]

¹⁴⁷ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §209.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, §210.

established in a presupposed and pre-given material. In principle, the realized end should be an infinite reflection of the end with itself as the reconciliation and union of subjectivity and objectivity. Because the content is finite, however, the form is likewise finite, i.e., an external relation, and the whole movement repeats itself ad infinitum. In attaining the ends, that ends is just another object that is externally related to subjectivity, so subjectivity again has an immediate relation to this new object that becomes a means.

Hegel takes this external teleology, where means and material fall outside the end, to be sublated as internal teleology. In internal teleology, the end is “internal to the means and material, to the idea, to the end that has within itself both the means and material adequate to itself as the end.”¹⁴⁹ The Logic of the sublation of external by internal teleology runs as follows: To begin with, subjectivity and objectivity were only externally related and one-sided, such that content and form were distinct. Subjectivity was in-itself infinite in form insofar as it was implicitly the concept and the truth of its other, i.e., objectivity. Nonetheless, because subjectivity is *only* the concept in-itself, it is finite with respect to the content of its posited end. Consequently, the posited end, mediated through means, is also finite with respect to content. Indeed Hegel goes so far as to claim that “the *means* is higher than the *finite purposes* of *external* purposiveness: the *plough* is more honorable than are immediately the enjoyments which it procures and which are the purposes.”¹⁵⁰ But then again, the end itself is realized as another object and means, and these objects wear themselves out against one-another while this process is endlessly repeated.

¹⁴⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 211 [207.]

¹⁵⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 663 [12:166.]

Now, this subjectivity appears self-contradictory. First, subjectivity appears immediately as the in-itself that is infinite being-for-self. Second, however, in activity, subjectivity itself becomes a means, becomes objective, and as objective is thrown against other objects and worn away. Now, the one-sidedness of the object showed itself as sublated in objectivity insofar as this object, the concept in its externality, is objectively realized in its truth as a *means* that which has its truth in the relation to an external ends. For this reason there is no need

for the subjective purpose to exercise any violence to make the object into a means, no need of extra reinforcement; the *resolution*, the resolve, this determination of itself, is the *only posited* externality of the object.¹⁵¹

Yet what is sublated in objectivity is not just the one-sidedness of the object, but also of subjectivity.¹⁵²

The immediate subjectivity with its finite content that is externalized in objectivity has realized itself and its ends as merely a means such that this content *too* is only the concept in its externality and that is thus also sublated, for the truth, the content that is revealed to be the truth of subjectivity, is itself the concept that is explicitly for-itself.¹⁵³ What thus began as the infinite form of subjectivity, namely the concept, has now become objective to itself in and through objectivity and through opposing externality to itself, so that this movement is at once the inner self-explication of the concept itself that is not merely for-itself and subjective, nor in-itself and objective, but rather in-and-for-itself. The concept that is concept in-and-for-itself is the idea.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 667 [12:170.]

¹⁵² Cf. *ibid.*, pp.668-9 [12:171] and Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §212.

¹⁵³ See *ibid.*

(C) *The Idea*

For Hegel, internal teleology is the transition to the idea, which he refers to as the truth, the subject-object,¹⁵⁴ and the unity of concept and reality. This final designation is liable to cause some confusion insofar as we have seen Hegel criticize the determination of reality as an inadequate determination of the idea and God. Reality, however, is not to be understood as a predicate. Rather, reality is immediate *Dasein* taken as purely positive.

Reality taken as an immediate determination of God certainly is inadequate, for it is nothing but a bad-infinity, the negation of all determination to the point of utter indeterminacy or immediate being. The concept, however, has shown itself to be self-mediating so that, in positing its distinctions, the immediacy of its other and its own contingency and finitude is sublated. For this reason, the unity of concept and reality is neither merely the subjective concept nor mere immediate being. Rather, the idea is the self-unfolding of the concept determining itself by positing its other and its ends. This end is, however, itself and returning to itself, so that through the self-negation of finitude and contingency it posits its own self. As such, the idea is purely present to itself, and everything that *is* is only in and through the idea. Thus “a reality that does not correspond to the concept is mere *appearance*, something subjective, contingent, arbitrary, something which is not the truth.”¹⁵⁵ Finitude and externality are merely sublated moments within the idea itself that only *are* insofar as they are posited as mere moments of the idea’s process, that have their truth as being merely ideal moments that are sustained in their reality, and have their life and movement only insofar as they accord

¹⁵⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, §214.

¹⁵⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 671 [12:174]. Translation adjusted to read ‘contingent’ rather than ‘accidental’ for *Zufällige*.

with the idea.¹⁵⁶ As such, the idea is free self-determining activity and *reason*. Reason is, for Hegel, none other than the idea.¹⁵⁷ The idea is not mere necessity, but rather self-grounding activity that, as the adequate concept, differentiates and determines itself in and through its positing of otherness, but such that this otherness does not remain mere otherness but is and has its truth only in and through the concept itself. This process is simply the activity of the idea – i.e., is reason.

Now, the idea as it immediately arises is still just the idea that is truth merely in-itself and has not yet returned to itself from its other such that the distinction between itself and other has been sublated. To put it another way, the idea in its immediacy is the idea that is still external to itself, i.e., nature. At the level of pure thought in the *Logic*, however, this movement is not yet the movement to another sphere, to the *Philosophy of Nature*, but to that which is determined in and from out of the idea itself as just (a) the immediate or objective idea, *life*. The objective idea, however, in its development, culminates in its sublation as (b) the subjective idea as the emergence of spirit, or cognition, but as merely the cognition of finite spirit and only as articulated within the sphere of pure thought. Third, when the distinction between the objective and subjective idea is sublated, we arrive at (c) the absolute idea.

(a) *Life*

The idea is both subjective and objective, and as such is the absolute infinite process that is not only in-itself but also for-itself such infinity.¹⁵⁸ This process is the

¹⁵⁶ Cf. *ibid.* 674 [12:176-7.]

¹⁵⁷ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §214.

¹⁵⁸ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 212 [208.]

movement of internal teleology.¹⁵⁹ As we have considered internal teleology at length, it is possible to present the moments of life fairly briefly.

The idea of life, although it is the immediate idea, is no less the idea as a total process of three processes or syllogisms. These are, first, the process of the living being inside itself as the organism that organizes itself, second, the living being as related to externality that assimilates this otherness so as to objectify itself, and third, procreation and the living individual as the genus.

First, the idea as life is the singular living being that is developed and determined in itself. It is the subjective oneness of universality, a living soul as the concept that is distinguished from the body as its particularity. This particularity, however, is just the determination of the concept, the internal organization of an *organism* and the self-distinction of the concept.

Second, this singular organism as a bodily organism is also freely related to that which lies outside itself, so that it itself presupposes this objective externality, inorganic nature, which it implicitly contains within itself. As this other is implicitly a moment of the living being itself, it is the want or urge that assimilates this other. “[T]hrough *this process against an inorganic nature, it maintains itself, develops itself, and objectifies itself.*”¹⁶⁰

Third, the living *individual* as assimilating otherness is self-differentiated and determinate as in-itself a concrete universal or genus. The determination and particularization of the single living individual is thus determined as a relation to another subject of the same genus, and the urge is the urge of sexual reproduction. Here, the idea

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 213 [209.]

¹⁶⁰ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §219.

attains to being-for-itself, for subjectivity and objectivity are posited as unified.

Nonetheless, because the idea is still immediate here, the singular living organism that is both the presupposition and the result of the movement of procreation is distinct from the living individual as genus.

While the immediate living organism mediates itself with itself and generates that which is the same as itself, and thus generates itself as the universal genus in the singular living organism, the singular living organism is only immediately negatively related to the genus, and as such is finite and passes away – body and soul are separated and separable precisely because the individual soul and the soul of the genus are not identical and the singular organism is not the living individual but only a moment of it. This contradiction within the immediate living being that lies in the kernel of its being is death. This negation, however, is the negative movement of the idea itself and so that what is negated is the initial immediacy, for it is not the immediate singular organism that is the truth of life, but rather self-mediating universality. The truth of the idea is thus the self-mediating universal that is for-itself, and this enters into existence as the free genus that is genus for-itself as the singular living being, or rather the subjectivity that is at once universal and that has the universal as its mode of existence. This subjectivity is in and through its thinking and knowing, i.e. cognizing.

(b) Cognition (Erkennen)

The idea as cognition is the idea that is for-itself and that will become the idea in-and-for-itself as the absolute idea. At this point, however, because the idea is only for-itself to begin with, subjectivity still distinguishes itself and seeks to sublimate the

immediacy both of the objective world and of itself. Accordingly, cognition is distinguished into theoretical and practical reason as (aa) cognition as such and (bb) willing, or the truth and the good.

(aa) Cognition as Such

In Life as the whole movement of its process, the objective and subjective idea, are implicitly the same, are a unity, and are identical in-themselves. Nonetheless, this identity is only a relative identity, i.e., is not explicitly for the idea itself; hence the finitude of this sphere and death. In cognition, by contrast, the idea is inwardly distinguished in itself as the subjective and objective idea. As the subjective idea, as reason that is the universal and lives in this universality, i.e., in thought, subjectivity is certain of itself as the immediate intuition of its oneness with itself as universality that is at home in itself. Such an intuition, however, is still unconscious, for consciousness lies in distinguishing itself from its object. This object is at first merely presupposed, and cognition in its certainty stands over against this object, inwardly certain that reason conforms to the objective world, i.e., what is for it the truth. This truth, this object, is implicit being, i.e. is the thing-in-itself.¹⁶¹ The urge here is the urge of cognition, the urge of subjectivity to raise its certainty to truth as the idea that is in-and-for-itself.

This urge is, first, the analytic method, i.e., the method whereby the concrete other is given the form of universality through abstraction. The object is known as genus or force and law, while the particular falls away as what is inessential. This movement

¹⁶¹ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 699 [12:202.]

simply has the form of self-identity, for the subject, the I as universal, knows the other as universal.

Second, however, this universality is not merely an abstract universal, mere self-identity, but includes distinction, i.e., is a determinate universal. As such, this universal is concrete and determined according to the moments of the concept, and these are the moments of the synthetic method. (1) The object is brought to the level of the determinate universal in the *definition*. The object is thus a genus with universal determinations. These determinations, however, are at first taken to be mere characteristics determined according to the subjective purpose of cognition and taken as external to the object. (2) The universal is determined as particular, as *divided* “according to some external aspect of other.”¹⁶² In this way, genus is determined as divided into species.¹⁶³ (3) Third, the object is now taken as concrete singularity, a determinate object that is determinate as containing distinct relations, and the object is determined as a synthetic relation of these distinct determinations, i.e., a theorem. Pythagoras’ theorem is one such determination of relations. Here, the relations are no longer immediate and contingent, but instead are given as necessary determinations. The theorem, however, demands demonstration, i.e., *must be proved*. This is first achieved by means of the mediation of *construction* that is an external configuration. The meaning and purpose of this construction only becomes intelligible in the proof itself, and through it the proof appear as necessary. This necessity of the proof, found in demonstration, is at first external, i.e., is merely for subjective

¹⁶² Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §230.

¹⁶³ Such a division may be more or less arbitrary, but according to Hegel is “genuine when it is determined by the concept.” (Ibid., §230, z.), i.e., when the determinations follow from the self-differentiation of the object itself. Compare also his account of the genuine determination of Zoological species according to teeth and claws. (Ibid.)

insight and cognition. However, in this movement cognition has abandoned the immediacy of its starting-point where the content of cognition is merely found and given to it and where the end is that reason conform to what immediately is. What passes for truth in the proof, by contrast, is that which has been proven, i.e., has been mediated by subjectivity.¹⁶⁴ This subjective idea is *willing*, as the urge to fill what immediately is with its content.

(bb) Willing

Like the account of Life, the easiest way to understand Hegel's account of willing is through the analogy of this movement with Hegel's account of the teleology. Indeed, Hegel himself claims that the syllogism of the immediate realization of the will, "is none other than the previously considered syllogism of *external purposiveness*, only the content constitutes the difference."¹⁶⁵ As in the movement from external to internal teleology, the sublation of the standpoint of the will consists in the realization that its initial standpoint and goal is finite and one-sided so that, just as this was realized in the bad infinity of the realized purpose that contracted into mere means, just so the Good also appears as this bad infinite.¹⁶⁶ Likewise, the sublation of the bad or untrue infinite is the conclusion of both movements such that, just as through this movement teleology concludes itself in the idea, so willing concludes itself in the absolute idea.

Just as Life, however, must be comprehended as carrying through the relations of internal teleology as these were applied to natural organisms at a higher and richer level,

¹⁶⁴ See *ibid.*, §232. and Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, pp. 224-5 [220.]

¹⁶⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 730 [12:232.]

¹⁶⁶ See *ibid.*, pp.730-2 [12:232-4.]

for Life is a totality of all three of its processes and is at once subjective and objective, so willing is richer than external and internal teleology as this was applied to finite human subjects or finite spirit. As noted above, according to Hegel, the essential difference between the movement of external purposiveness and willing in its immediate realization is a difference in content. Specifically, the content of willing, unlike external teleology, is no longer "an indeterminate finite content in general,"¹⁶⁷ but the *good*. The good is for subjectivity here the universal, and indeed a concrete determinate universal. Through the movement of cognition as such, however, this concrete universal is found within subjectivity itself, i.e., within its own self-certainty that its willing is the willing of the good. Whereas above cognition is the urge to truth where truth is at first what is immediately given and presupposed, in willing the idea as subject starts from the presupposition that the world is null and void in itself. Here, "[t]he idea as subject first knows reason to lie within itself, not yet outside itself in the world."¹⁶⁸ Accordingly, the standpoint of willing is the inversion of that of cognition.

Subjectivity is thus now determined as certain of itself, certain that its reason and willing is the truth and that subjectivity as willing the good is itself actuality. Consequently, subjectivity is not opposed to objectivity, for "[t]he subject has vindicated *objectivity* for itself; its inner determinateness is the objective, for it is the universal which is just as much absolutely determined."¹⁶⁹ Subjectivity is for-itself this objectivity and is thus actuality. Here consciousness as willing the good "comes on the scene with the dignity of being absolute, because it is intrinsically the totality of the concept, the

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 730 [12:232.]

¹⁶⁸ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 225 [221.]

¹⁶⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 729 [12:231.]

objective which is at the same time in the form of free unity and subjectivity.”¹⁷⁰ By contrast, the formerly objective world is taken to be a nullity as only immediately determined, not inwardly determined in accordance with reason and the concept, and thus is taken as a nullity and non-actuality. Willing as practical consciousness and as the inversion of theoretical consciousness thus has the further significance that for it the absolute content, the idea as the good, has the subjective form of being-for-self. It still lacks, however, the form of being-in-itself, for it opposes this immediate externality, i.e., being.¹⁷¹

On the one hand, then, this consciousness is conscious of itself and its willing as absolute over and against which the merely external world is a nullity, but on the other hand this consciousness also knows itself as finite, as opposed to and as presupposing the independence of the object, so that the content of its will, the good, is still “a merely *subjective* idea.”¹⁷² Willing wills the good, the universal, but such that this good is not yet external actuality, but rather the demand that this be so. On the one hand, then, subjectivity wills the good, while on the other hand, because this good is only determined as an immediate identity of subjectivity and objectivity in self-consciousness itself, the good is just this simple self-identity. Accordingly, “the good, although valid in and for itself, is thereby a certain particular end, but not one that first receives its truth by being realized; on the contrary it is for itself already the true.”¹⁷³

In order that subjectivity can realize the good it must posit some finite and determinate end. Yet precisely such a finite end as realized is only the externality that has

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 729 [12:231.]

¹⁷¹ See Ibid., 731 [12:233.]

¹⁷² Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §223.

¹⁷³ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 730 [12:232]

for subjectivity the value of a nullity. The good thus remains a mere *ought*, the bad infinite, and an infinite task that always “remains an *ought*; it is *in and for itself* but *being*, as the ultimate abstract immediacy, remains over against it *also* determined as a *not-being*.”¹⁷⁴

According to Hegel, this contradiction is sublated in the unity of the theoretical and practical idea. To begin with, the theoretical idea is just the formal subjectivity that is an abstract universality that is itself indeterminate and takes the objective truth as the world to be a mere datum which it immediately presupposes as the truth. The practical idea, by contrast, takes the moment of objectivity to be a mere nullity that must receive its worth and determination through the good. Since the practical idea acts and takes this action to be essential to and as belonging to the good, however, its immediate presupposition, the premise that serves as the basis of its action, is that it takes itself as an actuality that in-itself is both subjective and objective and their immediate unity. This becomes the premise of action, and subjectivity here still confronts the previously objective world as an immediate being that in-itself is a nullity. In acting, however, what it does is to objectify itself such that this objectivity is also being-for-another objectivity, and thus is an objectivity that is also a subjectivity. To begin with, this objectivity that practical consciousness produces appears as the ends and as its own being-for-itself. Yet, as in the relation of means and realized ends, where the posited ends turns into the means and the mean itself as the whole movement is the actual realized ends, here too it is not this objectivity that is the ends, but rather the whole of the subjective movement that is

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 731 [12:233.]

for-another as “the realization of the good in the face of another actuality confronting it.”¹⁷⁵

Now, insofar as the subjectivity of the practical idea holds fast to its one-sided presupposition of the mere nullity of immediate existence, it has simply forgotten the meaning of its own action, for it holds that “the purpose of the good is thereby still not realized”¹⁷⁶ and thus this becomes a (bad) infinite task, i.e., the endless movement of this contradiction. This contradiction, however, is due only to the limitation that belongs to its own point of view as the (merely) practical idea. Consequently, its action and the significance of its action appears to be something merely “*subjective and singular*.”¹⁷⁷ Yet what the subjectivity that belongs to the practical idea here thus *implicitly* presupposes is the standpoint of the theoretical idea, i.e., that immediate actuality is implicitly identical with the objective concept. The action of subjectivity as the practical idea is the *positing*, is the making explicit, of this implicit identity so that the Good is not merely the individual subjective being-for-itself, but is in-and-for-itself.

At the point where the self-consciousness of the practical idea recognizes that the good is in-and-for-itself, this self-consciousness is no longer the merely individual self-consciousness. Rather, “the subject now is as *free, universal self-identity* for which the objectivity of the concept is a *given*, just as immediately present to the subject as the subject immediately knows itself to be the concept determined in and for itself.”¹⁷⁸

At this point, Hegel claims, cognition or the theoretical idea is united with the practical idea in such a way that (a) its self-consciousness is the universal self-

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 732 [12:234.]

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 732 [12:234.]

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 733 [12:235.]

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., pp.733-4 [12:235.]

consciousness of the idea, of reason as self-determining and positing itself, and (b) that it not only knows the objective world as implicitly rational and determined by the idea, but (c) that the truth, inner ground and subsistence of this objective world is the concept.

With this, we arrive at the absolute idea and the conclusion of Hegel's *Science of Logic*.

CHAPTER THREE

HEGEL ON THE TRADITIONAL PROOFS AND THEIR CRITICS

It was explained in Chapter One that according to Hegel all of the proofs for God are defective insofar as they are formulated as proofs of the understanding. Furthermore, it was stated that Hegel's defense of the proofs cannot be reduced to the ontological proof and the mere assertion that 'God is'. Instead, the truth of these proofs, according to Hegel, lies in the fact that they are *syllogisms* and that they are to accordingly be comprehended in and through the movement and development of their diverse content. Insofar as the account of the ontological proof in Chapter One was only articulated in terms of the unity and distinction between concept and being, the account offered there was inadequate; for although *correct*, this manner of presenting Hegel's critique of the ontological proof was only partial, and for that reason partially misleading.

In that first chapter, the terms concept and being were used quite indeterminately such that they were more or less employed as equivalent to immediate subjective thinking on the one hand and immediate being on the other. Because the debate regarding the ontological proof was initially characterized in these terms, both Kant's insistence that concept and being are distinct, as well as the contrary assertion of the ontological proof that they are a unity, appeared to merely contradict one-another and as externally opposed. Accordingly, this initial presentation was apt to give the impression that Hegel's speculative defense of these arguments is itself only a formal and external affair, i.e., that what Hegel does is not defend the proofs so much as to *artificially read into* these proofs what he wants to get out of them, namely an affirmation of his own position.

Now, on Hegel's account the externality of form and content is in fact an essential characteristic of and inherent to finite positions or shapes of consciousness themselves precisely because and insofar as they are finite. The truth of Hegel's position, however, is not supposed to consist in the *exchange* of one (external) form for another, but the sublation of the opposition of form and content. The opposition of form and content in these other positions, then, is to be comprehended as the immanent dialectic in and through which each is shown to presuppose and pass over into the other.

Returning specifically to the issue of the initial characterization of the ontological proof, the problem is not that it is false to characterize the ontological proof as the unity of concept and being – Hegel himself does so repeatedly. The problem, rather, is that such a characterization is merely immediate. Accordingly, as was mentioned previously and as Hegel himself explicitly claims in his *Lectures on the Proofs*, all of the proofs can immediately be understood as making one and the same assertion, namely the assertion of the unity of concept and being. This immediacy, however, must be sublated, i.e., distinguished, negated and raised up, such that the proofs are grasped not merely as immediately identical, but as an internally differentiated and concretely determinate totality.

The aim of the present chapter is to overcome the immediacy and one-sidedness of the initial characterization of the ontological proof in Chapter One. Insofar as the ontological proof is taken to be merely the assertion of the unity of concept and being, all of the proofs appear indifferently the same. According to Hegel, however, the ontological proof is to be comprehended as the result of the cosmological and teleological proofs and thus these proofs must be differentiated from the ontological proof with respect to their

content. This distinction of content will be articulated in the present chapter in and through examining Hegel's critique of the cosmological and teleological proofs against the backdrop of Hegel's treatment of the criticisms of Jacobi and Kant. This will in turn serve to introduce Hegel's account of the concrete content of the ontological proof, the formal aspect of that argument having already sufficiently addressed in Chapter One. The aim is to explain that and how Hegel comprehends the reduction and denigration of all of the proofs to the ontological proof by Kant as the fulfillment of the contradiction immanent to the proofs as traditionally formulated, while also showing that and how, according to Hegel, Kant's own position is to be comprehended as implicitly presupposing the truth of the content that is articulated in the ontological proof. In seeking to provide such an account, however, it will be necessary to confront what may arguably be taken as shortcomings in Hegel's presentation of the positions of Kant and Anselm. Given the admission of these shortcomings, Hegel's claim to have provided an immanent critique of these positions such that they reciprocally circle back into one-another must likewise appear suspect. I shall attempt to demonstrate, however, that Hegel's account is both subtle and rich enough to accommodate more nuanced readings of these figures without undermining this claim.

Hegel's Critique of the Proofs: Kant and Jacobi

In the third division of the *Science of Logic*, and after once again discussing the ontological proof, Hegel writes

But I reserve for another occasion the task of elucidating in greater detail the manifold misunderstanding brought upon the ontological proof of God's existence, and also on the rest of the other so-called proofs, by logical formalism. We shall also elucidate Kant's critique of such proofs in order to establish their

true meaning and thus restore the thoughts on which they are based to their worth and dignity.¹

Now as we have seen, in claiming that the proofs were misunderstood, Hegel does not thereby assert that the proofs are sound, nor that the criticisms, and particularly those of Kant, are entirely baseless, only that these critiques are not *definitive* but one-sided. Hegel's announced plan to elucidate the proofs in terms of Kant's critique of them may thus be conceived quite literally; in other words, it is precisely in demonstrating the one-sidedness of Kant's account and critique of the proofs that their true meaning was to be revealed. In the various lectures where Hegel touches on the proofs, Hegel indeed tends to follow this plan, introducing the proofs and providing an initial explication of their content precisely via the Kantian critiques of these arguments, albeit with one essential difference. After 1817, Hegel comes to take Jacobi and Jacobi's criticism of the proofs to be in some ways of equal importance to Kant.² Indeed, in his *Lectures on the Proofs*, Hegel introduces his critique of the cosmological proof via Jacobi's critique, while not explicitly referring to Kant at all (although admittedly, there are certainly no shortage of allusions to Kant throughout these lectures.)

In the *Lectures on the Proofs*, starting from Jacobi has three advantages. First, Jacobi's general critique of the proofs most evidently and immediately applies to the

¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 628 [12:129.]

² Whereas Hegel's early account of Jacobi in *Faith and Knowledge* was sharply critical, in 1817 Hegel published a review of Jacobi's writings expressing a newfound respect for Jacobi's work, declaring, for example "[i]t is hardly deniable that Jacobi's and Kant's common achievement was to have put an end to the metaphysics of the older school and thus to have established the necessity of a complete revision of logic." (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Heidelberg Writings: Journal Publications*, eds. Brady Bowman and Allen Speight (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 26 [15.25.]) For an account of the external circumstances that led to this reconciliation see the editor's account in the Appendix to this volume.

cosmological proof, which accords with Hegel's own order of treatment. Second, Hegel's account of Jacobi's objection serves as a natural introduction to his own formal objections to the cosmological proof insofar as this proof is formulated as a proof of the understanding. Third, according to Hegel there are three essential aspects in all of the proofs (although for him they are all ultimately *One*) namely "*the determining of God's concept, attributes and being.*"³ Jacobi's criticism leads Hegel to a discussion that centers on the issue and role of being in the cosmological proof, while the issues of the attributes (which in part involves the question of God's relation to the world) and the issue of the adequacy of the concept of God articulated in the cosmological proof are more thoroughly developed in Hegel's discussion of Kant. The following exposition of Hegel's critique of the cosmological proof will thus be presented by starting from Hegel's account of Jacobi's formal objection to this proof and then move over, by means of a brief indication of Hegel's account of the content of the proof, to his discussion and critique of Kant's objections. As for the teleological proof, unlike both the ontological proof, which Hegel considers in a wide variety of contexts, and unlike the cosmological proof, which Hegel discusses at length in his *Lectures on the Proofs* as well as in the detailed manuscript fragment 'On the Cosmological Proof', Hegel's only extensive discussion of the teleological proof is found in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* and particularly in the 1831 manuscript fragment. Given Hegel's indications of the parallels between the formal structure of the cosmological and teleological proofs, however, it is possible, and I have chosen, to follow the same order in presenting the teleological as the cosmological proof.

³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 77 [18:261.]

Hegel's Critical Account of The Cosmological Proof

In his *Lectures on the Proofs*, Hegel offers the following formulation of the cosmological proof:

The contingent does not rest upon itself but upon the presupposition of something that is within itself absolutely necessary, something that is its essence, ground, cause;

But the world is contingent: the individual things of the world are contingent, and it as a whole is the aggregate of these things.

Therefore the world presupposes something that is absolutely necessary within itself.⁴

Now, on Hegel's reading, according to Jacobi all thought and discursive knowledge proceeds from one conditioned thing to another such that "to know or to comprehend means merely 'to derive a thing from its proximate causes, or to have insight into the order of its immediate conditions.'"⁵ Jacobi's claim, then, is that insofar as the proofs for God attempt to arrive at knowledge of God by means of the mediation of a deductive or inductive argument, then He is taken to be something that is conditioned. In this way, Jacobi sought to establish that God could only be known by means of an immediate intellectual intuition of God, for only thus would God be known as the unconditioned.

Jacobi's general argument constitutes an objection to the cosmological proof insofar as what the cosmological proof *says* is the proposition: "*Because* the contingent is, so is the absolutely necessary."⁶ Now admittedly, as Hegel points out, Jacobi's objection to the proof appears to turn on a sleight of hand, or at least on a

⁴ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 101 [18:280.] Compare also Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:727 [616.]

⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 112 [18:289.]

⁶ *Ibid.*, Translation altered to read 'is' rather than exists for '*ist*'.

misunderstanding, for the mediation of the proof is not supposed to have any *objective* significance, but merely the *subjective sense* such that “[i]t is only our knowledge that is conditioned by that starting-point.”⁷ By contrast, the *meaning* of the proof is precisely the opposite of this, namely that “[w]hat has to be thought of as something mediated by an other, as something dependent and contingent, cannot be the absolutely necessary, cannot be God.”⁸ Jacobi’s objection is thus, according to Hegel, a misunderstanding and far from decisive; and yet this objection does point to a fundamental limitation of this proof, namely the opposition between the *form* of the proof on the one hand and the *content* on the other. This form is at first taken to be merely subjective, i.e., a merely external formalism, but this formalism itself contradicts the content of the proof. In other words, insofar as the proofs are formulated as syllogisms of the understanding, the proofs are self-contradictory. Hegel takes this contradiction to be present in the cosmological proofs in two ways.

First, the conclusion of the cosmological proof, taken as a proposition, says: “*Therefore* the absolutely necessary *is*.”⁹ ‘*Therefore*’ expresses mediation through an other, but ‘*is*’ is nothing more than immediate being, i.e., nothing more than pure immediacy itself.”¹⁰

Second, in the cosmological proof, the middle term is ‘being’. As a syllogism of the understanding, both the starting-point, namely contingency, as well as the absolutely necessary are taken to be merely externally related terms and each is said to have being. Moreover, insofar as being is the middle term of this syllogism, what this syllogism says

⁷ Ibid., 112 [18:289-90]

⁸ Ibid., 112 [18:290.]

⁹ Ibid., 115 [18:292.] Translation adjusted to read ‘is’ instead of ‘exist’ for ‘ist’.

¹⁰ Ibid.

is: the *being* of the finite or contingent *is the being* of the infinite or absolutely necessary.¹¹ According to Hegel, however, the contingent is precisely *not* the absolutely necessary. To the contrary, the contingent is that which “only has the value of a possibility, and that it can just as well *be* as *not be*.”¹²

For Hegel, then, insofar as the cosmological proof remains a syllogism of the understanding, the form and content come apart and the proof contradicts itself. The content of this proof, however, can be *rationally comprehended* as follows: the immediate starting-point, the contingent, is not true being, not the being of God but merely an immediate being that is finite, has the same as value as nothing, and thus passes into another and passes away.¹³ This passing away, however, is the negation of negation, and absolute necessity “is being not as immediate but as reflected into self, as essence.”¹⁴ In other words, absolute necessity is the *sublation* of contingency.

Having used Jacobi’s critique of the proofs to lay out Hegel’s formal objection to the cosmological proof in relation to being, let us turn now to Hegel’s account of the Kantian objections. The substance of Kant’s objection hinges on two related points.

First, according to Kant categories of causality and necessity only have their legitimacy as a priori conditions of the possibility of experience. The concepts of causality and necessity thus only have a determinate content and legitimacy with respect to knowledge claims insofar as these categories are applied to objects of possible

¹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 113 [18:290.] Compare also Hegel’s statement in Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:263 [168.]: “The proposition runs: ‘The being of the finite is the being of the infinite.’”

¹² Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 113 [18:290.]. Translation modified to read ‘be’ instead of ‘exist’ for *ist*.

¹³ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 128 [18:303-4.]

¹⁴ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:426 [318.]

experience. While reason drives us to the *idea* of the totality and completion of the series, in doing so “one finally does away with every condition – without which, however, there can be no concept of any necessity.”¹⁵ According to Kant, then, the supposed a posteriori character of the proof is a ruse, for the cosmological proof “avails itself of this experience only to make a single step, namely to the existence of a necessary being in general.”¹⁶

Kant’s second main point is based on the first. Because he claims that the thought of an ‘absolutely necessary being’ is both vacuous and transcends our finite experience, he asserts that the cosmological proof can teach us nothing regarding the properties of God. Instead, with this proof “reason says farewell to it entirely and turns its enquiry back to mere concepts.”¹⁷ Now according to Kant, the only purely a priori concept that is sufficient to God and fully determinate is the idea of an *ens realissimum*. Kant’s argument is thus that an *ens necessarium* is not yet God so that for this proof to prove that God is or exists, it is necessary to further determine God not *just* as the *ens necessarium*, but as the *ens realissimum*.¹⁸ Kant argues, then, that the cosmological proof illicitly and implicitly depends upon the ontological proof insofar as it presupposes the a priori deduction of an *ens necessarium* from that of an *ens realissimum*. This deduction, however, is according to Kant nothing more than the ontological proof.

Hegel’s immediate response to Kant is twofold. First, as we have seen, he explicitly develops the concept of absolute necessity and thus shows that this concept is neither the vacuous concept of mere self-identity or possibility, nor is it simply unintelligible. Second, he argues that Kant’s assertion that a necessary being is different

¹⁵ Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A 610/B 638.

¹⁶ Ibid. A 606/B 634.

¹⁷ Ibid. A 605/B 633.

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, A 605/B 633-A 608/B 636.

from and not adequate to the concept of God and that God must be conceived as the *ens realissimum* is merely a *presupposition*. Insofar as this remains a presupposition,

however, this objection remains external to the proof itself and says only that

the representation of God that is limited to this category is... not as profound as we, whose concept of God includes more within itself, demand. It might be quite possible that individuals and peoples of earlier times, or peoples of our time who still live outside of Christianity and its culture, have no more profound a conception of God than this.¹⁹

This is not to say that Hegel himself thinks that the concept of absolute necessity is sufficient to the concept of God, only that Kant's objection is merely an external presupposition resting on the as yet unconceptualized content of Christianity. The genuine critique of this proof requires, then, an immanent critique of absolute necessity in order to demonstrate the finitude and necessity of moving beyond this concept and definition of the absolute.

Hegel's Critical Account of the Teleological Proof

Unlike with the cosmological and ontological proofs, Hegel nowhere provides a clear, standard syllogistic formulation of the teleological proof. However, the manner in which he does characterize this argument will be sufficient for present purposes, given the structural similarity between it and the cosmological proof.

According to Hegel, while the cosmological proof starts from contingency and moves to absolute necessity, the teleological proof both begins and ends with the category of purposiveness.²⁰ These two "purposivenesses", however are distinct. As with the cosmological proof, Hegel takes the teleological proof to start out from a particular

¹⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 151 [18:321.]

²⁰ See Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:704 [594.]

kind of finite being. In the case of the cosmological proof, the finite is merely contingent being in general. In the teleological proof, by contrast, the starting-point is “not just abstractly defined, or defined only as being, but rather as being that has within it the more substantial determination of something physically alive.”²¹

Now, such purposive beings are themselves “implicitly a manifold,”²² and thus have parts that seem externally related to one-another and require things external to or outside of themselves for the satisfaction of their needs and desires. On the one hand, the coherence of external things and circumstances with the needs and purposes of an organic ob-jects is *necessary* for their existence,²³ while on the other hand, “[t]his coherence [i.e., of the external circumstances with the need of the organic object] is not brought about by the ob-jects themselves, but is produced by something other than it.”²⁴

This other of these finite beings is the “implicit and self-positing harmony [which] is the power over these things and which determines that they shall stand in a purposive orientation to one another.”²⁵ Because the world is conceived not “as an aggregate [*Aggregat*] of contingent things but a mass [*Menge*] of purposive connections”²⁶ that is not due to the things themselves, “[t]his purposive connection must have a cause (and a cause that is full of power and wisdom.”²⁷ Consequently, the teleological proof concludes that “[t]his purposive activity and this cause is God.”²⁸

²¹ Ibid., 1:427 [319.]

²² Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, 2:705 [595.]

²³ See *ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.* My interpolation. Ob-jects has been hyphenated to distinguish *Gegenstände* (the term Hegel uses in this context) from *Objecte*.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 2:705-6 [595.]

²⁶ *Ibid.* 2:706 [595.] My interpolation.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.* 2:708 [597.]

As with the cosmological proof, in his 1831 lecture on the teleological proof Hegel turns to Jacobi's criticism, i.e., the claim that because the proof reasons from the unconditioned to the conditioned it turns God into something conditioned. Thus Hegel claims that "[t]he form of the inference gives rise to a false appearance [*Schein*], as though God had a foundation, which appeared as our starting-point; God appeared as conditioned."²⁹ As with the cosmological proof, Hegel insists that this sort of criticism is only a false appearance, for

[a]s far as the meaning is directly concerned, it will be granted that [the proof] is only the process of subjective cognizing. The mediation in the proofs does not attach to God himself. For he is, indeed, what is unconditioned, the infinite activity that determines himself according to purposes, and orders the world purposively.³⁰

Now, although Hegel does not explicitly do so, it is easy to see how his criticisms of the formalism of the cosmological proof as a proof of the understanding would equally apply to the teleological proof inasmuch as the middle term of both proofs is being.³¹ The first criticism would be based on the propositional rendering of the proof according to which the conclusion reads '*Therefore the infinite purposiveness is*' while the second would be based on the propositional rendering of the proof such that the proof says '*the being of the finite purpose is the being of the infinite purpose.*'

Given the parallel here, all that need be said is that for Hegel, the initial finite purposiveness that is the starting-point is external purposiveness, while the concluding infinite purposiveness is meant to be, and is properly speculatively comprehended as, the

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ See Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 88 [18:270.] As shall be discussed in detail later in the chapter, according to Hegel both the cosmological and teleological proofs may be characterized as moving from being to concept.

internal purposiveness or *life*, a term which he furthermore identifies with the Greek conception of *Noûς*.³² On Hegel's account, then, just as with the cosmological proof, insofar as the teleological proof remains a syllogism of the understanding, the form and content come apart and the proof contradicts itself. The content of this proof, however, can be *rationally comprehended* as follows: the immediate starting-point, finite purposes are not true being, but merely external and inessential being such that, taken on their own, they disappear and come to nought. Finite organic life and finite purposiveness *is* only by being sustained in an interconnected and reciprocally determined system of absolute organic life, a *cosmos* that is

something internally ordered in which each thing has its place, is embraced within the whole, subsists by means of the whole, and is in the same measure active and effective for the generation and life of the whole.³³

In other words, according to Hegel, internal teleology as *life* or *Nous* sublates external purposiveness.

Turning now to Hegel's account of Kant's treatment of this proof, once again Kant's objection hinges on two related points. As in the cosmological proof, Kant objects that the immediate premise of the proof and its starting-point is such that what is supposed to be derived from it seems to exceed the limits of what is actually given in experience. According to Kant, then, the teleological proof is defective insofar as this proof "could at most establish a highest **architect of the world**, who would always be limited by the suitability of the material on which he works, but **not a creator of the world**."³⁴ As Hegel remarks,³⁵ according to Kant the teleological proof only yields a

³² Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:428-9 [320.]

³³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:429 [320.]

³⁴ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 627/B 655.

Demiurge and a being that has the determinations of “**very great**, or ‘astonishing’ or ‘immeasurable power.’”³⁶ These predicates “do not give any determinate concept at all, and really say nothing about what the thing in itself is, but are rather only relative representations.”³⁷ This, however, falls far short of the concept of God as the infinitely wise and powerful creator. Instead, the only concept that could give any positive determination to the concept of God as having such infinite *perfection* is the concept of the whole of all possible perfections, i.e., the concept of *ens realissimum*. In yielding a mere Demiurge, the teleological proof thus falls short. According to Kant, then, having failed to gain what is sought on empirical grounds, the teleological proof, “stymied in its understanding, suddenly jumps over to the cosmological proof, and since this is only a concealed ontological proof, it really carries out its aim merely through pure reason.”³⁸

Although Hegel does not explicitly respond in this way, it is clear from his allusions to the Greeks and the manner in which he associates the objective idea, i.e., life, with Νοῦς, that Kant’s attempted reduction of the cosmological to the ontological proof is susceptible to a parallel response. The objection that the teleological proof gets us no further than a demiurge and a ‘very great wisdom’ but that it does not thereby establish God as sufficient to its concept is only an objection insofar as one has already externally presupposed a richer conception of God. Once again, although Hegel does think that the teleological proof gives us an inadequate concept of God, this inadequacy must be immanently demonstrated. Hegel’s treatment of the teleological proof in the 1831 lectures, however, takes a rather different path, one that is informed on the one hand by

³⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:706 [596.]

³⁶ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A628/B656.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, A 629/B 657.

Hegel's ambivalence regarding Kant's conception of teleology and on the other by Kant's own ambivalence regarding the teleological proof.

On the one hand, Kant himself distinguishes between mere external purposiveness and internal purposiveness, insisting that organisms are to be conceived in terms of the latter, not the former. On the other hand, however, Kant takes the teleology to be merely an heuristic principle, albeit indispensable, for our own external purposes when conducting the empirical investigation of certain parts of nature, and in particular organic life.

As for the teleological proof, we have seen that Kant rejects this proof insofar as he insists that it is, like the cosmological proof, ultimately based upon the same illusion as the ontological proof. At the same time, however, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant also insists that “[t]his proof always deserves to be named with respect. It is the oldest, clearest and the most appropriate to common human understanding.”³⁹ In theoretical terms and with respect to the investigation of nature, reason is naturally led from the regularity and seeming existence of internally purposively structured organisms in the world to think of nature itself as the product of an original intelligence and thereby to think of the possibility of a final purpose. Teleology does not, however, determine what that purpose and original intelligence is.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the need to think the purpose of nature as a whole in terms of the final product and height of nature without which nature would be purposeless, cannot be satisfied by theoretical reason.⁴¹ The thought of the final purpose of nature (as an *ens rationis* which is accordingly an empty concept without an

³⁹ Ibid., A 623/B 651

⁴⁰ See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), §85, 5:437.

⁴¹ See *ibid.*, §82.

object) is nonetheless justified on practical grounds insofar as human beings, in considering their own ends and purposes, are led to think of themselves practically as moral agents and thus as ends in-themselves.

Now, on Kant's account, as finite rational moral agents our final end is not *only* the unconditioned good, i.e., the good will and virtue, but the *total* good, i.e., happiness in proportion to virtue. The possibility of this harmony of virtue and happiness, however, is only intelligible through the presupposition that "a power over nature and over the world, which has for its final end good in the world is God."⁴²

Kant takes the teleological proof to be *natural*⁴³ and worthy of respect insofar as, "if we would infer **teleologically** from the things in the world to a world-cause, ends of nature must first be given, for which we have subsequently to seek a final end and then for this the principle of the causality of this supreme cause."⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the teleological proof itself, far from supplying even the determinate concept of God much less proving his existence, only makes us "more receptive to the moral proof."⁴⁵

Now, according to Hegel,

[o]ne of Kant's greatest services to philosophy was in drawing the distinction between relative or *external purposiveness* and *internal purposiveness*; in the latter he opened up the concept of *life*, the *[I]dea*, and with that he *positively* raised philosophy above the determinations of reflection and the relative world of metaphysics.⁴⁶

⁴² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, 1825-6*, trans. Robert F. Brown. 3 Vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 3:194 [171.]

⁴³ Admittedly, for Kant the term 'natural' is ambiguous insofar as it can mean what reasonably and properly ought to happen as well as what usually does happen. Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A4 / B8.

⁴⁴ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 5:436-7.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 5:478

⁴⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 654 [12:157.]

However, in that Kant takes teleology in the theoretical domain to be merely an *heuristic* principle to be externally applied and used for the sake of our ends in the investigation of nature, Hegel sees him as failing to rigorously adhere to and develop this conception of internal purposiveness. In that respect, however, Kant is to be compared with Moses as one who leads the way to the promised land but is himself barred from entering.⁴⁷

For Hegel, the rigorous logical adherence to the concept of internal teleology is, first of all, the transition from teleology to life. In the *concept* (or rather idea) of life *as such* (i.e., not this or that life or living organism), means and ends and form and matter are no longer external to one-another. Instead, “the end brings forth the means and the means brings forth the end.”⁴⁸ Second, in the *logic*, the immediate and still objective idea is sublated in the subjective idea culminating in the good and the absolute idea.

According to Hegel, then, if the principle of inner purposiveness had been rigorously developed and adhered to

the Idea would be that the universality that is determined by reason – the absolute final purpose, *the good* – is made actual in the world, and this through a third, through the might that itself posits this final purpose and realises it – i.e., it is made actual by *God*, in whom, since his is the absolute truth, those antitheses of universality and singularity, of subjectivity and objectivity, are resolved and declared to be not self-standing and untrue.⁴⁹

In this way, the final movement of the *Logic* repeats Kant’s account of the movement through which the teleological proof leads us to the moral proof, albeit such that Kant’s conception of the good is also sublated.

⁴⁷ This simile is fairly common, though I have been unable to locate the original source. For an example of its use, cf. Paul Guyer, “Thought and being: Hegel’s critique of Kant’s theoretical philosophy.” *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, 171.

⁴⁸ Hegel, *Lecture on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:429 [320.]

⁴⁹ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §59.

Hegel's critical account of the teleological proof in 1831 follows the entire path of this development such that he does not stop at critically appropriating Kant's conception of internal teleology, but further develops his own critique of the teleological proof as a critique of Kant's moral proof. This further development runs as follows:

The principle of teleology runs into the absurdity that, on the one hand, everything appears to be good insofar as it can be seen to have a ground in something else, down to the most absurd and trivial of things and in the most external and seemingly contingent ways. Since God, however, is represented as the infinite and absolute purpose, such petty purposes seem not to accord with God. In distinguishing between purposes, moreover, we see that many of them are fulfilled, and yet many are not. If we then further distinguish between higher and lower purposes, we see that the same is also true here. Even regarding the highest purposes and interests of humanity's experience, such as the state and morality, though "many of them are fulfilled, but that still more (including the greatest and noblest) are stultified and brought to grief by human passions, and vices."⁵⁰ If, however, we claim that even these, the greatest and noblest interests that we find in experience, are still "finite and subordinate, and ascribe the destruction that has befallen them to their finitude,"⁵¹ then the connection of this proof with experience is altogether lost. Rather than purposiveness being something actual and objective, the proof and its result is turned into something entirely subjective, a moral postulate according to which the good *ought* to be. In this way, God or the absolute itself is reduced to a moral postulate, a mere ought, and something merely subjective.

⁵⁰ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:717 [605.]

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Hegel's Critical Account of the Ontological Proof

Hegel's account and critique of both the ontological proof and Kant's objection to this proof was already developed in Chapter One, albeit in such a way that this proof was characterized for the most part in terms of the unity of concept and being. In that chapter, accordingly, concept and being were only articulated abstractly such that 'concept' was not immediately determined as anything more than any old abstract thought or representation, and 'being', likewise, was not determined as more than immediate being. The account provided in Chapter One thankfully does make it unnecessary to discuss Hegel's *formal* critique of the ontological proof at length. However, the character of the account offered there makes it all the more necessary to now discuss Hegel's account of the determinate *content* of the ontological proof, particularly in relation to Kant's reduction of all of the proofs to the ontological proof. This discussion, however, brings with it certain difficulties of its own.

First, in offering an account of the traditional ontological proof, Hegel attributes to Anselm a formulation of the ontological proof that arguably differs from Anselm's own argument in essential respects. Indeed, it may be reasonably claimed that Hegel's account of the content of Anselm's argument is a misrepresentation, if not outright distortion, of Anselm's position such that Hegel may fairly be suspected of attributing his own conception of the project of philosophy to Anselm and misreading Anselm's proof accordingly.

Second, in discussing the positive significance and content of Kant's objection to the ontological proof, Hegel's claim that Kant's position is immanently self-contradictory is not only obscure, but has the appearance of resting on a mischaracterization of Kant's

position. This suspicion appears confirmed by the manner in which Hegel presents and situates Kant in ‘The Positions of Thought With Respect to Objectivity’ of the *Encyclopaedia Logic*. At first glance, the account offered there is liable to either lead one to conclude that Hegel misunderstood Kant entirely, or else purposely misread him so as to avoid facing Kant’s project head-on and on its own terms.

In order to address these difficulties, I shall begin by summarizing Hegel’s explicit account of the content of ‘Anselm’s’ proof and Hegel’s claims that Kant’s objection to the proofs constitutes not merely an external critique but immanent development of the internal contradiction of this proof. I will then briefly discuss Hegel’s claims that Kant’s position both itself presupposes the content of the ontological proof and leads to its own immanent self-contradiction. Following this, I will then indicate as well as attempt to address the shortcomings of Hegel’s account of Anselm’s proof and Kant in such a manner as to show that and how Hegel can at the very least accommodate a more nuanced reading of these figures without undercutting the force of his general argument and treatment of the ontological proof.

Hegel’s Treatment of Anselm and Kant

When discussing the ontological proof, Hegel tends to speak as though he takes Anselm’s version of the proof to be authoritative. According to Hegel, this proof may be rendered as follows:

God is what is most perfect, beyond which nothing can be thought;
if God is mere representation, he is not what is perfect;
but this is to contradict the first premise, for we deem as perfect that which is not
just representation but which possesses Being as well.⁵²

⁵² Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:352-3 [272.]

Now, Hegel proceeds to argue that one of the defects of Anselm's version of this argument consists in the fact that 'perfection' is not a category of thought, but merely a representation.⁵³ Accordingly, he takes the later emendation of the ontological proof by modern philosophers, such as Descartes and Spinoza, to an important advance insofar as God is defined in terms of the category of reality rather than in terms of vague and indeterminate notion of perfection that draws its content from representation.⁵⁴ Nonetheless, Hegel insists that the perfect is already implicitly determined insofar as the perfect in its opposition to that which is imperfect, namely the mere thought of God, is already presupposed to be "the unity of the thought (or the concept) with reality."⁵⁵

The meaning of all of the proofs, Hegel repeatedly insists, lies in the fact that they are to be grasped as the "*elevation of our spirit to God*,"⁵⁶ and in particular an elevation that takes place in and for thought. According to Hegel, this is in fact the *content* of Anselm's proof. While this proof admittedly begins from the immediacy of living faith and the representation of God, this immediate faith is recognized as in a certain way inadequate and as requiring an elevation and purification to thought. Hegel thus approvingly points to Anselm's declaration that "if we are firm in faith, it is negligence, *negligentiae mihi esse videntur*, not to know [*erkennen*] what we believe."⁵⁷ This need to go beyond the immediacy of faith, according to Hegel, follows from recognition of the necessity of the purification of religious consciousness and its representations from

⁵³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* 3:184 [119.] Compare also *Ibid.*, 3: 181 [116.] and *ibid.*, 1:434-5 [324.]

⁵⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 3:181.

⁵⁶ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 63 [18:250.]

⁵⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 40 [18:230-31].

“contingent and arbitrary elements” that have entered into its feeling, representation and thought. That which is merely contingent and merely subjective, that which is merely a distorted external representation and is only in our own minds, is recognized as *not* the truth and as inadequate to God. Hegel, accordingly, claims that the integral meaning of Anselm’s proof and what it says is that “we must give up wanting to let the subjective concept stand as something firm and independent; on the contrary, we must get away from this one-sidedness and [begin from] the unity of subjective and objective in general.”⁵⁸

According to Hegel, then, the ontological proof asserts not merely the unity of thought and being, but the unity of concept and reality. This unity, however, is not to be taken simply as the assertion that God is the *ens realissimum*. Instead, ‘concept’ here is to be conceived as having the full determination and content of ‘*the concept*’ (*des Begriff*) as developed in the *Logic*. Likewise, reality here is no longer taken to be an abstract or indeterminate predicate. If taken in that way, ‘reality’ is, according to Hegel’s *Logic*, merely *Dasein* with the additional contradiction that it is taken as simply abstractly excluding all negatively and thus determination. Properly speaking, however, Hegel says that

Reality is quality, *Dasein*; it therefore contains the moment of the negative and is the determinate being that it is only through it.⁵⁹

In Hegel’s terms, the assertion of the unity of concept and reality is not to be conceived as a proposition such that reality is a predicate, and thus reality is not to be taken as the contradictory abstraction of pure positive determination without negation, but as the

⁵⁸ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:184 [118.]

⁵⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 86 [21:100.]

negation of negation of the concrete concept. The concept sublates its own mediation, posits itself and determines itself to immediacy, but in such a way that the contradiction of immediacy and the finite is at once the reflective self-positing self-relation of the concept to itself. The concept is thus not merely subjective – not merely the subjective concept – but objective. This unity of concept and reality, in other words, is what Hegel calls ‘the *idea*’ (*die Idee*).⁶⁰ As the explicit unity of the subjective and objective, moreover, it is the absolute idea. Accordingly, in the course of discussing the ontological proof, Hegel asserts that “the metaphysical, Anselmian view is based on absolute thought, the absolute idea, which is the unity of concept and reality.”⁶¹

The shortcoming of this proof, on Hegel’s account, is not that it takes the absolute idea to be true, but that it merely presupposes that which it ought to prove. The unity of concept and reality and the elevation of the subjective concept to objectivity is precisely what is at issue in the ontological proof, which “is why the proof cannot afford satisfaction for reason, since the presupposition is precisely what is at issue.”⁶² It is on this very ground, namely the *presupposition* of the unity of concept and reality, that “when measured against it the concept must of necessity be something subjective.”⁶³

In one sense, then, Hegel takes the subsequent development of the ontological proof by, for example, Descartes and Spinoza, to be an advance. At the same time, however, he claims that this subsequent elaboration and development of the ontological proof is its undoing. This is due to the fact that this proof is articulated in the limited form

⁶⁰ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:182 [117.] Compare Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 673 [12:176.]

⁶¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* 3:184 [118.] Compare also *Ibid.*, 3:181 [116.]

⁶² *Ibid.*, 3:182 [117.]

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 3:355 [274.]

of the understanding. The attempt to further develop and explicate this proof thus results not in the clarification and development of this content, but in its destruction.

As was mentioned previously, according to Hegel, Kant's objection to the ontological proof is insufficient insofar as this is based upon the presupposition of the absolute opposition between concept and being. For Hegel, however, the opposition between Kant and the ontological proof is due not simply to the fact that these positions contradict one-another, but that they contradict themselves. Kant's critique of the ontological proof is thus to be comprehended not merely as an external critique but as the development of the internal contradiction of the ontological proof.

The Denigration of the Proofs

According to Hegel, because the proofs were articulated and developed in terms of the abstract understanding, these proofs had been reduced to the level of mere 'logical formalism' and stripped of all positive content. The ontological proof in particular, through "the subsequent and more extensive elaboration of Anselm's thought by understanding"⁶⁴ led ultimately, via Kant, to the ontological proof – and though it, all of the proofs – being discredited. On Hegel's account, however, because and insofar as the proofs themselves were articulated by natural theology in terms of the finite categories of the understanding, the denigration of these proofs is not merely a matter of external criticism but the development and fulfillment of these proofs' own externality.

Natural theology begins from the faith that God is, but seeks to think this belief through. The thinking through, the consideration and explication by means of thought is,

⁶⁴ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:435 [324.]

to begin with, a matter of analysis and distinction. Accordingly, God is treated under the distinction between existence and essence, i.e., in terms of the distinction “*what* God is and *that* God is.”⁶⁵ God and his being are thus distinguished and thought separately, for the first and most important thing is to grasp the subject of the proposition, ‘God’, in-itself or on its own account. The subject is the ‘what’ that has a content, and this content is initially something presupposed, something taken from religious representation, but that is now to be thought through and given the form of thought.

The first step of natural theology is thus to consider the ‘concept’ of God apart from his actuality. In thinking the ‘concept’ of God in this manner, the expectation is that God must at least be true in-itself. That which is true in-itself in distinction from actuality, however, is taken to be what is merely logically true. The logically true is merely the self-identical or that which does not contradict itself, i.e., it is formal possibility. The second step is to show “that this concept *is* – the proof of the *Dasein* of God.”⁶⁶ However, immediate identity and mere existence “does not yet correspond to the fullness of the initial representation of God. Thus the third step is “to treat further of the *attributes* of God, of God’s relations to the world.”⁶⁷

These, according to Hegel, are the moments that are distinguished by means of the understanding when we examine the proofs. Now as we have previously seen, such proofs when taken up by and formulated by way of the understanding lead to their own self-contradiction due to the fact that the fixity of the distinctions asserted in their premises contradict their conclusions. The problem is that, on the one hand, being is

⁶⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 75 [18:259.]

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 76 [18:260.]

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

supposed to belong essentially to the concept of God such that God is absolutely necessary. On the other hand, however, this means that the initial distinction of God's 'concept' or possibility from his being contradicts the conclusion. Similar problems face the proofs when we turn to the question of the attributes of God. On the one hand, the attributes of God are supposed to be nothing more than the 'concept' of God, i.e., nothing more than the "*sum [Inbegriff] of its realities*"⁶⁸ On the other hand, however, these same attributes are supposed to express God's relation to the world. Yet, in accordance with the understanding's conception of logical truth as self-identity, relation to another is excluded from God's 'concept'.⁶⁹ Thus, if we start from the world (as in the cosmological and teleological proofs) and understand God's attributes in terms of his relation to the world, then it appears at first that we have gained some determinate content, for we have seemingly begun with particular, determinate beings. Since the world, however, is only defined as an attribute insofar as it is presupposed to be the product of God's creative power, these attributes are defined and determined *as* attributes of God only through the presupposition of that which was initially to be given determination and known through *them*, namely the determination of the 'concept' of God. Thus Hegel says, alluding to

⁶⁸ Ibid., 77 [18:260.]

⁶⁹ Thus Hegel says that in the traditional proofs: "God's *absolute self-sufficiency* does not permit God to come out of godself; and that, whatever condition might obtain in the world, which is supposed to be outside and over against God (something that ought not to be presupposed as already decided), God's attributes and activity or conduct remain only enclosed within the divine concept, find their determination in it alone, and are essentially only its relation to itself, the attributes are only the determinations of the concept itself." (Ibid.)

Kant, the detour through the world in the cosmological and teleological proofs is superfluous.⁷⁰

The proofs are thus reduced to a bare transition from the empty ‘concept’ of the understanding, i.e., mere possibility, logical self-identity, or abstract thought as such, and equally immediate and indeterminate being. “Thus we find that we are dealing only with the ultimate abstractions of *thought* in general and of *being* – with their opposition as well as their inseparability.”⁷¹ According to Hegel, then, the empty concept of God contained in the ontological proof, when it is expressed and interpreted by the understanding, is at last reduced to the ultimate abstraction. This abstraction is manifest in his own time in two, seemingly quite contrary, ways:

On the one hand, like Kant, one could claim that cognition of God is impossible since thinking and being are absolutely distinct, so that the thought of God as the *ens realissimum* would be an *ens rationis*, i.e., in Kant’s terms an empty thought without an object and having no being other than that of subjective thought. On the other hand, one could claim like Jacobi that, although discursive knowledge could never reach the Absolute, we can know God as a supreme being in immediate intuition and faith.⁷² For Hegel, however, “[i]t is all the same whether we say we cannot have cognition of God, or

⁷⁰ Ibid.. 77 [18:261.] For Kant, of course, the cosmological and teleological proofs merely give the impression that their content is taken from experience, while in fact they are implicitly based on the ontological proof.

⁷¹ Ibid. Translation adjusted to render *letzten* as ‘ultimate’ rather than ‘empty.’

⁷² Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:125 [42-3.], as well as Hegel’s discussion of ‘feeling’ in Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, pp.58-9 [18:246-7.] and his extended account of Kant and Jacobi in Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §§49-52 and 62-67.

that God is only a supreme being.”⁷³ As immediate and thus as excluding all content and determination, God is just immediate being, i.e., nothing. Both positions, in equating the understanding to discursive reason, deny the possibility of mediation between the finite and the infinite, and thus also deny any determinate knowledge of God and *elevation* of the human spirit to God. To say either that God is merely a subjective ‘concept’ or ideal or to say that God is only given immediately in feeling as the supreme being is to reduce God to an abstraction.⁷⁴ In doing this, however, Hegel claims that the modern position (i.e., the position “which derives in particular from Kant”⁷⁵) undermines and contradicts itself and its own concrete starting-point.

As we have seen, Hegel rejects Kant’s objection to the ontological proof on the grounds that Kant merely *presupposes* the absolute difference and distinction between concept and being. Similarly as explained above, according to Hegel, Kant’s reduction of the cosmological and teleological proofs to the ontological proof is based on an external presupposition. This external presupposition, however, is the *presupposition of a particular concept* or rather *representation* of God. According to Hegel, then, Kant himself presupposes a concrete conception of God as the *ens realissimum*. Additionally, Hegel claims that Kant’s starting-point is in fact not opposed to the ontological proof with respect to its content. Admittedly, Kant begins not from the idea, but the concrete

⁷³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:127 [43.] Since for Hegel immediate being is a complete abstraction to say of God only that he is the supreme being is the same as to say that he is nothing.

⁷⁴ Thus, despite the seeming stark contrast between these positions, for Hegel they are one and the same, since “[i]n that pure light, the person with sight sees as little as he sees in total darkness, and he sees exactly just as much as the blind person sees of the riches lying before him.”(Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶146 [9:89])

⁷⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:182 [117.]

human being that is not *merely* thinking. Instead, this standpoint is based on the insight that

to say that we think is to say this: that we intuit and we will, and our willing and intuiting is accompanied by thinking. We think too, we comprehend too; a human being is a concrete [being] of sensation, and also a rational being.⁷⁶

According to Hegel, then, Kant in fact “posits the concrete as the unity of the concept and reality.”⁷⁷ This unity, which is now taken as the measure of truth, is none other than “the concrete human nature, the total subjectivity of human beings.”⁷⁸ For Hegel, then, Kant’s opposition to the ontological proof and the ground of his position is a contradiction; “there is an unresolved contradiction in the modern view because both what is concrete and the one-sided subjective concept are accepted as valid.”⁷⁹

Some Challenges to Hegel’s Account of Anselm and Kant

Hegel’s characterization of the positions of Anselm and Kant is, to say the very least, debatable.

Although Hegel speaks as though he takes Anselm’s formulation of the ontological proof to be authoritative, it must be admitted that even his rendering of Anselm’s version of the proof is questionable. To recall, according to Hegel, the first premise of Anselm’s proof is that “God is what is most perfect, beyond which nothing can be thought.”⁸⁰ The attribution of this formulation of the ontological proof to Anselm is dubious for two reasons.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 3:182 [117.]

⁷⁷ Ibid., 3:184 [119.]

⁷⁸ Ibid., 3:183 [188.]

⁷⁹ Ibid., 3:184 [119.]

⁸⁰ Ibid., 3:352-3 [272.]

First, Hegel's attribution of the term 'perfection' to Anselm is dubious given that Anselm insists, in response to the objections of Gaunilo, that "'that which is greater than everything' and 'that-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought' are not equivalent for the purpose of proving the real existence of the thing spoken of."⁸¹ Second, and on a related point, according to Anselm 'that-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought' is also "something greater than can be thought."⁸²

These distinctions are important insofar as, for Anselm arguably, faith seeking understanding is not the seeking of the elevation of faith to conceptual knowledge, but the finite attempt to think the unthinkable as a reinforcement of the humility of faith. By contrast, the aim of the proofs in general and the ontological proof in particular is, on Hegel's account, the conceptual knowledge of God in and for thought that has the form of pure thought, i.e., philosophical science as the comprehension of God. For Hegel, admittedly, the meaning of the ontological proof is supposed to lie in raising consciousness beyond the immediacy of faith and the contingency and subjectivity of religious representation, but to ascribe this position to Anselm and to read faith seeking understanding as the quest for absolute knowing is a dubious proposition at best. There is thus something most questionable about Hegel's rendering of *intelligere* as *Erkennen*, i.e., as knowing or recognizing (*kennen*) what is to be known from out (*Er-*) of its own measure. While it may be negligence for the faithful to fail to seek understanding God, yet that which is to be sought by the intellect, according to Anselm, is also beyond the measure of the human intellect and is that which the human intellect always *stands under*.

⁸¹ Anselm, "Reply to Gaunilo," 116 [reply 5.]

⁸² Anselm, *Proslogion*, 96 [15.]

Hegel's rendering appears contrary even to the meaning of the opening prayer of the *Proslogion*, where Anselm declares that "I do not seek to understand so that I may believe; but I believe so that I may understand. For I believe this also, that 'unless I believe, I shall not understand' [Isa. 7: 9]."⁸³ Granted, as we shall see in the final chapter and conclusion of this dissertation, there is a sense in which Hegel himself also claims that philosophy does not supplant, but presupposes and returns to faith, so that he takes philosophy not to supplant but supplement religious faith. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that Hegel takes philosophy in some sense to stand above religion in a way that Anselm would reject, just as Anselm would reject the claim that philosophy comprehends God.

As to Kant, Hegel's claim that Kant's position involves the contradiction that it takes both the concrete and the one-sided subjective concept to be valid is liable to provoke more than a little suspicion. This suspicion is only reinforced when we turn to Hegel's account of 'The Positions of Thought with Respect to Objectivity.' As we have seen, Hegel claims that the old metaphysics, particularly as articulated in the ontological proof, is correct and even superior to the Kantian standpoint insofar as the old metaphysics takes the truth to be that which is given to and comprehended in thought as the absolute idea. In the *Encyclopaedia*, admittedly he says that "the older metaphysics was that of naïve belief [*Glaubens*] generally, namely that thinking grasps what things are *in themselves*, that things only are what they genuinely are when they are [captured] in thought."⁸⁴ Kant, however, according to Hegel, denies us such knowledge and thus

⁸³ Anselm, *Proslogion*, 87 [1.]

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, §28 z.

claims that, “[w]e can fairly say that this latter standpoint sends man to feed on husks and chaff.”⁸⁵

After providing an account of the old metaphysics as the first position of thought in relation to objectivity, Hegel then goes on to consider the second position, under which he groups both empiricism and the critical philosophy, and his first claim in moving over to Kant is that “Critical Philosophy has in common with Empiricism that it accepts experience as the *only* basis of our cognitions; but it will not let them count as truths, but only as cognitions of appearances.”⁸⁶ Hegel then proceeds to characterize Kant’s position as a form of subjective idealism. Given all this, one might well suspect that Hegel, like Jacobi and following him, misunderstood Kant as (a) a subjective idealist of the old Cartesian or Berkelian stamp, whose position is (b) to be understood in terms of the old two-world metaphysical standpoint.

To assert that Kant’s system should unequivocally be interpreted in terms of the two-world metaphysical account according to which appearances and knowledge stands on one side while things-in-themselves and the truth stands on the other is, at the very least, to make a controversial claim. To assert that Kant was a subjective idealist, however, assuming that one means by this idealism of the sort proposed by Descartes and Berkeley, is simply to admit that one has not understood Kant at all.

In agreement with Hume’s basic insight, as Hegel himself suggests, Kant claims that the forms of intuition and categories of the understanding are not something perceptible and thus are not ‘objective’ in the sense of being something subsisting on its

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., §40.

own account in perception.⁸⁷ Instead, the forms of intuition and categories of the understanding have their basis in the *spontaneity* of the transcendental ego, and thus in that sense are *subjective*, i.e., because the origin is the (transcendental) I. This, however, is not to suggest, as Kant explicitly argues in his “Refutation of Idealism”, that he endorses anything like the old idealism of Berkeley and Descartes according to which the knowledge of objects outside of us is either doubtful or a mere illusion.

Far from denying us objective knowledge, Kant’s *Critique* is precisely an attempt to establish the possibility of such knowledge, that is, to explain “how **subjective conditions of thinking** should have **objective validity**.”⁸⁸ Kant’s solution is that, although the forms of intuition and categories of the understanding are grounded in the subject, they are grounded not in the empirical but the *transcendental* subject such that “[t]he conditions of the **possibility of experience** in general are at the same time conditions of the **possibility of the objects of experience**, and on this account have objective validity in a synthetic judgment *a priori*.”⁸⁹ Admittedly, Kant claims, all judgments are to begin with judgments of perception, and as such are merely subjective judgments that “express only a relation of two sensations to the same subject, namely myself, and this only in my present state of perception.”⁹⁰ Insofar as we proceed to an objective judgment, however, the judgment is grounded in the universal and necessary conditions of experience under which an object is given. Kant thus claims that

⁸⁷ See Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §39 r, §40 r and z.

⁸⁸ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 89/B 122

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* A 158/B 197

⁹⁰ Kant, “Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics that will be Able to Come Forward as a Science.” In *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, trans. Gary Hatfield, Michael Friedman, Henry Allison and Peter Heath (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), §19, 4:299.

“[o]bjective validity and necessary universal validity (for everyone) are therefore interchangeable concepts.”⁹¹ By contrast, that which is merely subjective is not grounded in the universal and necessary conditions of the possibility of experience, but to the contrary is rooted only in immediate sensation and perception and the peculiar empirical constitution of the subject.

This transformation of the sense of objectivity is central to Kant’s whole project. It is precisely in and through this transformation that Kant places himself in opposition to the scepticism that he takes to be the result of adopting *either* the old metaphysics *or* empiricism. Appearances are not ‘untrue’ for Kant, but the truth that we have objective knowledge of in the mode of knowing that belongs to finite rational agents. Kant’s taking this stand in the arena of finitude of human experience is not, according to his intentions, the adoption of scepticism but the modesty of finite reason that nonetheless as finite can and ought to find its satisfaction in its appropriate limits. It is the attempt to bring about the transformation of metaphysics in and through the re-conception of the project of philosophy. Arguably, in other words, the point of Kant’s project lies in conceiving the *Sache selbst* of philosophy no longer as the search for the actual knowing of what is in truth in a scientific system of knowledge, but as the ‘cosmo-logical’ purpose of philosophy as a matter of our finite moral being in the world. From this standpoint, where the practical and moral has priority, the fact that we cannot know if there is a God becomes not a limitation but a boon for morality in that, if we knew that God exists, we would be prone to act not from respect for the moral law itself, but from external

⁹¹ Kant, *Prolegomena*, §19, 4:298.

incentives and fear of God. The objection that Kant's moral proof gives us nothing more than a subjective idea thus appears as nothing but an external criticism.

Granted that the above accounts of Anselm's and Kant's projects are at least plausible, the claim that Hegel's critical account of these positions is indeed the account of their immanent self-contradiction appears dubious. Hegel's way of understanding both Anselm and Kant, however, is not so rigid as to admit of no ambiguity or further possibilities.

Hegel's attitude to Medieval philosophy is itself somewhat ambiguous such that at times he speaks as though it is not properly philosophy at all because and insofar as it remained tied to the presupposition of the faith of the Christian church.⁹² This ambiguity in Hegel's assessment of Medieval philosophy, however, is rooted in what he takes to be the ambiguity of this thought *as* philosophy, for he argues that although philosophy and religion arise here such that it appears as though a peace has been made between them, he claims that the peace that religion and philosophy establishes in the theological philosophy of Medieval philosophy was in fact a false peace. According to Hegel, this peace could only be spurious because philosophy and religion have one and the same object, namely the truth as such. There is and can be only one truth and "one inwardness, and one satisfaction of this inwardness through itself."⁹³ According to Hegel, in other words, to speak of two kinds of truth, an absolute truth on the one hand and a limited truth on the other that is nonetheless true in some other sense, is to get lost in a "murky distinction"⁹⁴ whose meaning is presupposed but not yet ascertained. Insofar as truth is

⁹² Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 1825-6, 1:112 [375.]

⁹³ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 1825-6, 1:252 [303.]

⁹⁴ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §75 [9:54.]

absolute truth, some other kind of truth is, as merely relatively true, not the truth.

Similarly, Hegel insists that “there cannot be two kinds of reason.”⁹⁵ Insofar as reason is taken as “the faculty of the unconditioned,”⁹⁶ it cannot admit something as absolutely other and opposed to reason without taking itself as limited, and thus without contradicting itself as reason.

Now admittedly, thinking does distinguish the infinite from itself, but it does this insofar as it holds to the one-sided moment of the understanding and takes reason to be that which is opposed to itself. Thereby, however, the rational and the infinite as that which is meant to be the true in-itself is degraded, for as distinguished absolutely from the finite, the infinite itself is necessarily determined as merely the bad infinite that is negatively related to and distinguished from the finite, and thus as itself something relative and finite.⁹⁷

Now on Hegel’s account, the finitude of the understanding consists in the fact that its form is distinguished from its content, i.e., that the understanding has the *form* of thought, but that it is not reason as self-determining, and accordingly presupposes its content as taken up from elsewhere, namely sensation and representation. Yet the understanding is in-itself rational such that, in distinguishing itself from its other, it already passes over to the other and posits its own contradiction. The understanding attempts to hold this contradiction at bay, but it can only do this by at one moment

⁹⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:130 [46.]

⁹⁶ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §45.

⁹⁷ See Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §45 z.

distinguishing that which at the next moment it treats as a unity.⁹⁸ The distinguishing act of the understanding is thus in-itself this dialectic.⁹⁹

The fact that Anselm means something other by the ‘that-than-which-a-greater-cannot-be-thought’ than the perfect and indeed meant by this at once ‘that which is greater than can be thought’ is precisely the dialectic and contradiction of thought at once affirming and denying itself the same thing. It may well be admitted that Anselm does at times move over to and depend upon a theological and religious meaning that contradicts the equivocation between perfection, that greater than which cannot be thought, and that which is greater than can be thought. Nonetheless Anselm also commits himself to developing his account *philosophically* with

nothing whatsoever to be argued on the basis of the authority of Scripture, but the constraints of reason concisely to prove, and the clarity of truth clearly to show, in the plain style, with everyday arguments, and down-to-earth dialectic, the conclusions of distinct investigations.¹⁰⁰

While Anselm’s works are written from the starting-point of faith, then, it is far from clear that his account should be understood as so limited that they would have no effect on the fools and unbelievers who did not share the presuppositions of this faith. While there is thus something admittedly crude about Hegel’s characterization of Anselm, the operation that he performs on Anselm is the operation that Anselm himself, insofar as he is to be judged as a philosopher at all, has already taken up as legitimate.

Hegel’s interpretation of Anselm is admittedly an interpretation that is formulated by and in terms of the understanding. Philosophy cannot do without the understanding for “[p]hilosophizing requires, above all, that each thought should be grasped in its full

⁹⁸ See *ibid.*, §60 r.

⁹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, §11 r.

¹⁰⁰ Anselm, “Monologion” from *The Major Works*, 5 [prologue.]

precision and that nothing should remain vague and indeterminate.”¹⁰¹ Nothing on Hegel’s account, however, requires that thought remain limited to the abstract distinctions of the understanding or that the immanent content that is contained in past philosophy not be articulated as raised beyond the immediacy and inadequacy of its initial articulation. To the contrary, Hegel’s account of the history of philosophy requires the opposite, namely that all philosophy be comprehended as united and reconciled at a higher and more comprehensive level, for reason is only one and truth is only one.

This point is also essential to properly assessing Hegel’s engagement with Kant. Admittedly, Hegel does tend to speak as though Kant simply adopts a two-world account. This interpretation, although questionable, has its basis in the fact that, as was mentioned in the Introduction to this dissertation, Kant’s *Open Letter* of 1799 was interpreted by Fichte and Schelling as a repudiation of their two-aspect reading of Kant’s thing-in-itself / appearance distinction.¹⁰² Their subsequent criticisms of Kant and ascription to him of a two-worlds account of his system was not motivated by a failure to see the possibility of a two-aspect account. Instead, these criticisms were motivated by the fact that they thought that the two-aspect account is what Kant *should* have adopted, that this was the only position that was consistent with and adequate to the revolutionary *spirit* of Kant’s own thought and insights, and yet that Kant himself had failed to recognize this possibility. Since both Fichte and Schelling had always been independent thinkers in their own right who understood themselves as proceeding according to the *spirit* of Kant’s work and insights, they essentially carried on along this path without interruption.

¹⁰¹ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §80 z.

¹⁰² See *supra*, pp.22-3.

Hegel's account of Kant must be understood within this context. While Hegel starts out from accusing Kant of providing a two-world account, this does not entail that Hegel judges Kant's system according to this standard alone, or that he simply dismissed it at and from its beginning. To the contrary, like Fichte and Schelling, Hegel was inspired by what he took to be the profound *spirit* of Kant's thought to which they attributed the profound insights contained in his system. As we shall see, Hegel's critique of Kant does not in fact depend on the presupposition that Kant *starts out* from a two-world account. As strange as it will sound at the moment, the fact that Hegel's ultimate objection to Kant does not depend on the presupposition that Kant proposes a two-worlds account, but applies equally to a two-aspect interpretation of the Kantian system, follows from the meaning of Hegel's claim that Kant is a subjective idealist. To explain this, it is necessary to consider Hegel's account of the 'Positions of Thought with Respect to Objectivity.'

Hegel's Account of the Positions of Thought With Respect to Objectivity

According to Hegel, the old metaphysics is the naïve position wherein "the opposition between thinking and objectivity has not yet been thought."¹⁰³ Here, thinking and being are thus not yet opposed but are taken to be immediately identical such that "thinking goes straight to the objects; it reproduces the content of sense-experience and intuition out of itself, as a content of thought, and is satisfied with this as the truth."¹⁰⁴ Admittedly, according to this position the truth is not found in the immediacy of

¹⁰³ Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 19 [23.]

¹⁰⁴ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §26.

sensation and feeling and in the protean appearances of nature and heart of man,¹⁰⁵ but only in thought. Subjectivity and objectivity, however, are not yet explicitly opposed, for the truth of both consciousness and the object is found immediately in the turn to pure thought. As such, however, the subject is still thought abstractly. Likewise, this thinking is still immediate such that its thought-determinations are abstract universals that are not critically examined as to their truth, but instead are “taken to be valid on their own account, and capable of being *predicates of what is true*.”¹⁰⁶ The objects of this thought, namely the soul, the world and God, are similarly not merely sensuous or perceptible things. Nonetheless, they also are not concretely determined from within. Instead,

this metaphysics took them from *representation*, and when it applied the determinations-of-the-understanding to them, it grounded itself upon them, as *ready-made or given subjects*, and its only *criterion* of whether the predicates fitted, and were satisfactory or not, was that representation.¹⁰⁷

Accordingly, the world, the soul and God are merely defined in terms of abstract universals and the question for thought is to decide whether one or other of a set of fixed and opposed predicates (such as finite or infinite, simple or complex, etc.) applies to these objects.

On Hegel’s account, then, the old metaphysics merely presupposed the identity between subjectivity and objectivity. This presupposition is based on a two-fold immediacy insofar as (a) the objective has not yet been explicitly *distinguished* from the subjective, and (b) thought has thus not yet interrogated its own categories, but merely presupposes them as ready-made. These two aspects of the immediacy of the old

¹⁰⁵ See *Ibid.*, §28 z.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, §28.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, §30.

metaphysics are addressed in the second position of thought with respect to objectivity in two moments, namely empiricism and critical philosophy.

According to Hegel, the necessity of passing over to empiricism originates from the inability of the old metaphysics to advance from its abstract universal to the particular as well as the search “for a firm hold against the possibility of proving any claim at all in the field.”¹⁰⁸ Instead of attempting to find the true in thought itself, the firm hold is sought in experience and the immediacy of sensation and perception, the object of which is then distinguished from mere thought. In this way, thinking and the object, and thus subjectivity and objectivity, are explicitly distinguished from one-another. According to empiricism then, as well as everyday language, “to be ‘objective’ is to be present outside us and to come to us from outside through perception.”¹⁰⁹ The term ‘objectivity’ thus first of all “has the significance of what is externally present, as distinct from what is *only* subjective, meant, dreamed, etc.”¹¹⁰ The term subjective, by contrast, has the significance of that which is “‘accidental’ and ‘arbitrary’ and also of determinations that belong to the form of *consciousness*.”¹¹¹ Yet although empiricism takes experience to be its basis, “single perception is distinct from experience, and Empiricism elevates the content that belongs to perception, feeling, and intuition into the *form of universal notions, principles, and laws*, etc.”¹¹² Furthermore, while empiricism takes the truth to be immediate objectivity in opposition to the subjectivity of thought, “[o]n the subjective side,

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., §37.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., §82.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., §42.

¹¹¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 42-3 [21:49.]

¹¹² Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §38.

empirical consciousness gets a firm hold from the fact that in perception consciousness has its *own immediate presence and certainty*.”¹¹³

Proceeding in this manner, however, empiricism becomes its own contradiction, for while its objects are mundane, it finds that it shares with the old metaphysics the presumption that thought goes right away to the truth of things in-themselves.¹¹⁴ The universality and necessity of the form of thought is then distinguished from the material content. Since the form is taken to reside in thought, all universality and necessity is reduced to the subjective contingency of habit and empiricism becomes scepticism.¹¹⁵

It is at this point that Hegel considers critical philosophy, and in particular the Kantian system. Initially, admittedly, Hegel characterizes the Kantian system both in terms of the two-worlds account and as, in certain respects, continuous with empiricism. Nonetheless, he not only recognizes, but proceeds to defend Kant’s transformation of the conceptions of subjectivity and objectivity. On the one hand Hegel claims, like empiricism, Kant rejects the old metaphysics, regarding it as having lost itself in the abstractions of the antinomies and insists that we begin from concrete experience. On the other hand however, according to Hegel, Kant fundamentally rethinks the nature of subjectivity and objectivity and in this way places himself no less in opposition to modern empiricism.

For the old metaphysics, the object of its thought is merely presupposed as ready-made¹¹⁶ and thought merely immediately passes over to that object. For empiricism, by contrast, that which can be perceived by the senses is supposed to be the independent and

¹¹³ Ibid., §38.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., §38 z.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., §39.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., §31 z.

self-subsisting, while “[t]houghts, on the other hand, count for it as what is not self-standing, but rather dependent on an other.”¹¹⁷ In the case both of the old metaphysics and modern empiricism, then, objectivity is understood as the truth that is taken to be “that which subsists on its own account.”¹¹⁸ For Kant, however, the objective and subjective have quite a different sense such that, as Hegel notes, Kant appears at first to invert the usual conception of subjectivity and objectivity and thus “has been charged with linguistic confusion.”¹¹⁹ Hegel, however, far from either ignoring Kant’s transformation of subjectivity and objectivity or joining in with those who charge Kant with confusion, states that

Kant called what measured up to thought (the universal and the necessary) ‘objective’, and he was certainly right to do this. On the other hand, what is sensibly perceptible is certainly ‘subjective’ in that it does not have its footing within itself, and is as fleeting and transient as thought is enduring and stable.¹²⁰

Hegel’s objection to Kant, then, is not based on the confusion of taking him to be a subjective idealist in the old sense. What Hegel argues, however, is that Kant does not go far enough insofar as “the objectivity of thinking in Kant’s sense is itself again only subjective in its form.”¹²¹ Thus, as mentioned above, according to Hegel the contradiction inherent in both the modern standpoint in general and Kant’s position in particular is that on this position, “both what is concrete and the one-sided subjective concept are accepted as valid.”¹²² This criticism and the charge of subjective idealism does not, as we have seen, entail that Hegel fails to recognize the difference between Kant’s idealism and the

¹¹⁷ Ibid., §41 z. 2.

¹¹⁸ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §41 z. 2.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:184 [119.]

idealism of Descartes and Berkeley. Nor, it turns out, does it rely on the assumption that Kant makes a two-world account his starting-point. Hegel pursues his criticism of Kant right to the end of Kant's system, and it is the conclusion of this system, not its starting-point, that is the subject of Hegel's ultimate objection to the Kantian system.

In calling Kant a 'subjective idealist', Hegel does not identify Kant's idealism with the likes of Berkeley,¹²³ but with that of Fichte.¹²⁴ According to Hegel, Fichte's system is nothing more than a "more consistent presentation and development of Kant's philosophy."¹²⁵ In the case of Fichte, however, unlike Kant, there is no ambiguity between whether he accepts a two-world or two-aspect account; as early as his "Review of Aenesidemus," Fichte explicitly declares that the latter is the only consistent way to understand Kant's system and the only position compatible with the radicality of the Copernican turn.¹²⁶ As the opening of the *Differenzschrift* make clear, Hegel was well aware of this. To understand the significance of Hegel's claim that Kant, like Fichte, is a

¹²³ Cf. Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. Translated by Elizabeth Sanderson Haldane, and Frances H. Simson, 3 vols (New York: Humanities Press, 1968), 3: 442. Compare also Fichte, "Review of Aenesidemus," 151 [21].

¹²⁴ Cf. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §131 z.

¹²⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 1825-6, 3:178 [156.] Cf. also Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §60 z. 2.

¹²⁶ "After [Kant] therefore, the notion did indeed persist of a state of affairs which would be thinkable by some faculty of representation other than the human one, for in Kant the forms of intuition could pass for mere forms of the *human* faculty of representation. And he himself has given a certain authority to this notion through the often repeated distinction between things as they appear to us and things as they are in-themselves – a distinction, however, which was certainly intended to hold only provisionally, and for the general reader. Nobody, however, has ever thought, now matter how often one might so declaim, nor could one ever be brought to think Aenesidemus's thought of a thing which supposedly has reality and properties independently, not only of the human faculty of representation, but of each and every intelligence." Johann Gottlieb Fichte, "Review of Aenesidemus," in *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, trans. Di Giovanni, George, and H. S. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 149-50 [19].

subjective idealist, it is thus essential to recognize that and how the significance of this term derives not from the assumption of a two-world account, but from that which according to Hegel remains the identical stumbling-block of both Kant and Fichte's system.

This stumbling-block is the fact that, for both Fichte and Kant, the achievement of the goal of morality, namely the unity of the subjectivity and objectivity and the realization of the good, remains the infinite contradiction of the 'ought' and *in this sense* thus remains something that is one-sided and *merely* subjective. The abstract ought itself is precisely the contradiction that the one-sidedly subjective should be overcome, i.e., should be also objective, and yet cannot and indeed must not be. And yet this ought is also that which ought to *be* absolutely, i.e., is posited as God. God, however, is at once taken as merely a *postulate*, i.e., as something subjective. Yet even if God is to be unknowable, to be a postulate of reason he must at any rate be *thinkable* without contradiction. God, however, is precisely that which ought not to be subjective, but objective as well and have the significance of "what is there, as distinct from what is only thought by us, and hence still distinct from the *Sache selbst*, or from the *Sache in-itself*."¹²⁷

Here the ambiguity involved in speaking of two kinds of truth dissolves and the position comes to its own contradiction, for either God is the truth and, as Kant appears to suggest at points, is this truth in-itself *outside* of the world and appearances, or God is something subjective, and the final synthesis is unachieved and indeed unachievable, i.e., a postulate that is in fact an unthinkable contradiction. This contradiction is not

¹²⁷ Ibid., §42.

something that merely affects *our* conception of God, but is posited by this system as a contradiction *within* the thought of God. Otherwise, God would have to be thought as the absolute subject-object.

At this point, Hegel passes over to the third position of thought in relation to objectivity, a position that Hegel identifies with Jacobi. Here, the understanding is distinguished as conditional and thus as having only conditional and untrue knowledge and as incapable of grasping the infinite, the true or the unconditional. Because the conditioned is determined as dependent and mediated, the unconditioned is taken to be immediate knowing, and this immediate knowing is faith or intuition of the absolute as the unconditioned subject-object. According to this position, then, neither the idea as a mere subjective thought nor being on its own account is true, for “any being that is not that of the idea, is the sensible, finite being of the world.”¹²⁸ Truth is supposed to be had by holding fast to immediacy. Accordingly, any content that it finds immediately within itself, it therefore proclaims to be absolute and universal. At the same time, however, because God as absolute is taken to be absolutely immediate, the knowledge of God is in fact empty. The immediate knowing of God extends only to the knowledge that God *is*, for any cognition that would say *what* God is would involve mediation. Faith is thus reduced in fact to the minimum of subjective feeling and the ultimate abstraction of thinking in general and being in general.

The contradiction of this position consists in the fact that it denies mediation and holds to the immediate, and yet the immediate unity of the idea and being is just as much mediation, for the assertion of this unity that is immediately asserted has the significance

¹²⁸ Ibid., §70.

that “the Idea *is what is true only as mediated* by being, and conversely, that being is *what is true only as mediated by the idea.*”¹²⁹ The truth is this mediation that is not just formal thought, but the determination of the content. On the one hand, there simply *is* no immediate knowing, and on the other hand, it is “factually untrue that thinking only proceeds by way of finite and conditions that are *mediated by something else* – and untrue that this mediation does not also sublimate itself in the mediation.”¹³⁰ The example of such cognition is its demonstration; it is the *Logic* and the system of philosophical science itself.

Hegel and the Positions of Objectivity

Given that Hegel recognizes that Kant’s position involves the transformation of the conceptions of subjectivity and objectivity such that Kant’s position is no less opposed to the old dogmatic metaphysics than empiricism, why does Hegel then group empiricism and critical philosophy together under the second position of thought with respect to objectivity? The answer is not that Hegel attempts to underplay the significance of Kant’s transformation of the meaning of subjectivity and objectivity. To the contrary, this transformation is the central turning point of Hegel’s *logic*.

It is no coincidence that Hegel’s account of the relations of thought to objectivity serves as the introduction to his *Encyclopaedia Logic*. The *Logic*, as was explained in Chapter Two, is also divided by Hegel into the objective and subjective logic. The first two divisions of the *Logic* may be grasped, as Hegel suggests, as the genuine critique of the old metaphysics and its categories. Empiricism only brings about the transition to the

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., §75.

subjective logic negatively, but it does so by making thought into something particular, and finite and thus is merely negatively opposed to the old metaphysics. Kant's position, by contrast, is the sublation of this immediacy as the first sublation of the relation of subjectivity and objectivity. The subjective logic from its beginning with 'the concept' (which, to recall, is according to Hegel the 'I' itself) is a sustained attempt to provide an immanent critique of Kantian and post-Kantian thought. The importance of Kant for Hegel's subjective logic is clear from its beginning given even a cursory comparison of Hegel's and Kant's categorizations of the forms of the judgment and syllogism, while the penultimate section of the *Logic*, namely willing, or what in the *Science of Logic* is titled 'The Idea of the Good' is transparently formulated as a response to Kant. In the *Logic*, as in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and indeed in the *Logic* while directly referring to this moment in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel only takes himself to have settled accounts with the Kantian system with the conclusion of that system in morality.¹³¹

Granted, on Hegel's account the Kantian system ends with a contradiction and the next stage of the *Logic* is the absolute idea. Given Hegel's account of the third position, however, it is clear that Hegel does not adopt therein the position of Jacobi. The three positions of thought with respect to objectivity are to be sublated in the *Logic* itself insofar as its method and development is the sublation of the distinction between form and content. Nonetheless, it is useful to compare the third position with respect to objectivity to Hegel's standpoint, particularly if this third position is taken to include not only Jacobi, but the young Schelling.

¹³¹ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 731 [12:233.]

In opposition to Kant, Jacobi simply asserted and presupposed the possession of the absolute in immediate intuition and faith. By contrast, the young Schelling attempted to argue against the subjective idealism of both Kant and Fichte claiming that the positions they adopted in the moral proof for God remained one-sided. Granted, Schelling claimed, you insist that we must proceed such that you arrive at the deity through the moral law, yet there is nothing stopping one, after this point has been reached (assuming it is reached at all and is not just a self-contradiction) to think in the opposite direction.¹³² The starting-point of the young Schelling's system was thus the ontological proof,¹³³ but formulated such that the difference of the subject-object or thinking and being was denied to the immediacy of intellectual intuition. Intellectual intuition was admittedly, for Schelling, only the starting-point for the system, but the exposition of this system was intended to progress in such a way as to ultimately explain all difference as mere semblance that is ultimately cancelled in unmediated identity.¹³⁴

Like Jacobi then, Schelling's starting-point is the absolute subject-object given as immediate intellectual intuition. For Hegel, by contrast, the truth is precisely self-mediation. For this reason, according to Hegel, the absolute idea is the result that is not the simple negation of mediation that collapses back into immediacy, but the self-

¹³² Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, "Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism" in *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge*, trans., Fritz Marti (London: Associate University Press, 1980), 160 [I:1:289.] Compare also Schelling's letter to Fichte, October 3, 1801 (Jochan Schulte Sasse et al., ed., *Theory as Practice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 86.)

¹³³ Cf., Schelling, "Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism," 174 [I:1:308 fn.1.]

¹³⁴ See Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, "System of Philosophy in General and of the Philosophy of Nature in Particular," in *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory*, trans. Thomas Pfau (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp.141-194 [I:6, 137-214], esp. 148 [148-9], pp.156-7 [161-2], 170-3 [181-186.]

determination and sublation of itself and its own immediacy in and through which it shows itself to be the concrete unity and truth of all of the categories of the *Logic*. The cosmological and teleological proofs thus do not vanish in the ontological proof, and the ontological proof is not the immediacy into which they disappear and which itself excludes mediation, but the self-positing mediation that is at home with itself in its other. The *Logic*, accordingly, comprehends the content of these proofs, i.e., their various determinate categories, as moments of the absolute idea's own self-articulation.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PROBLEM OF THE CORRELATION OF THE PROOFS AND THE LOGICAL CORRELATION

According to Hegel, the defect of the proofs consists in the internal distinction and contradiction between their form and content (indeed such that the very meaning of ‘*Beweise vom Dasein Gottes*’ takes on a different meaning than simply proving *that* God is or exists.) His own critical defense and speculative account of these proofs thus requires the sublation of this defect. This, in principle, involves demonstrating that and how the proofs are comprehended in and through the self-exposition of the system, both in accordance with the diversity and the distinction of their content and form, as well as in their unity as the One proof. Accordingly, Hegel’s account of the proofs cannot be understood when these proofs are taken as isolated arguments that may be considered and evaluated outside of the context of Hegel’s system, but must be comprehended within the context of this system.

Now, to begin with, as Hegel claims, with respect to the proofs of God,

it appears that only one aspect of this topic belongs to logic, namely *the nature of proof*, while the other aspect, the content that is *God*, belongs to another sphere, that of religion and its rational consideration.¹

As we have seen, however, Hegel’s *logic* is not merely formal, but is the immanent development and determination of the content of thinking itself, or rather the concept itself in Hegel’s sense of ‘concept.’ Accordingly, although the distinction between *logic* and religion is a moment of Hegel’s account of the proofs (and thus as we shall see, with respect to the proofs, religion as “a component of the latter is to be set apart and treated

¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 37 [18:228.]

by itself,”²) eventually this one-sidedness must be sublated such that, in the end, the doctrine of religion and *logic* do not simply fall outside each other and “[t]he logical does not merely constitute the formal aspect but rather stands precisely at the middle of the content.”³ This, as we shall see, occurs in the final syllogism of Hegel’s system as a whole.

In order to comprehend Hegel’s speculative account of the proofs, then, it is necessary to grasp the manner in which these proofs correlate to (A) the *Logic*, (B) the philosophy of religion, and (C) the system as a whole. The correlation of the proofs to these three aspects of Hegel’s system, however, is not to be understood as merely an external and formal issue, but as a matter of Hegel’s own thinking, the true form of which is the scientific system of truth wherein the opposition of form and content is sublated. Likewise, the immediate multiplicity and diversity of the proofs cannot be ignored or left to one side.

The Problem of the Multiplicity of the Proofs

To begin with, the proofs appear as “an external empirical multiplicity or diversity, which offers itself initially as something that emerges from history.”⁴ The fact that there are three proofs, namely the cosmological, teleological and ontological, at first appears simply to be something contingent. Why should there be three, and just these

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 82 [18:264.] My interpolation.

three, proofs? Not only that, but this diversity of proofs is in fact problematic insofar as, at least according to Hegel, “God is alone *this One*, is God only as *this One*.”⁵

Admittedly, insofar as the proofs are all taken at the level of the understanding as attempting to establish one and the same thing, namely ‘the being of God’, this diversity appears unproblematic; for this diversity is taken to be merely the multiplicity of finite and subjective paths in and through which the same result is reached. Yet according to Hegel, the diversity of the proofs must not be understood in such a superficial manner. Because the proofs are syllogisms, the “result is determined by the determinacy of the *starting point*, for it follows only from it. As a consequence, there appears to be a diversity in the concept of God, for different determinate qualities of God result from different proofs of the *Dasein* of God.”⁶ Yet how is this diversity to be reconciled with the claim that God is *One*?

On the one hand, one attempted way of resolving this issue is to say, for example, that God as the *ens realissimum* is also good, wise, powerful, just, etc., in an *eminent* sense. These characteristics, however, are determinate, i.e., they are distinguished from each other and indeed, according to Hegel, contradict one-another if taken to be abstract universals each of which is infinite in extent. For example, there is a contradiction in abstractly asserting that God is both infinitely powerful and infinitely wise, for wisdom sets its own end and measure, but this is contrary to the infinity of power.⁷ In order to overcome this difficulty, recourse is taken to the claim that in God these characteristics are *tempered* by each other. For example, God is supposed to be infinitely merciful and

⁵ Ibid., 86 [18:268.]

⁶ Ibid., 85 [18:267.]

⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 86 [21:100.] Cf. also Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 97 [107.]

infinitely just, yet since these two would, if taken as unlimited in extent, contradict each other, it is said that God's justice is tempered by mercy. According to Hegel, however, this talk of "*tempering, a mutual restricting, or blending* [is] a superficial, nebulous connection that can only satisfy conceptless [*begriffloses*] representation."⁸

On the other hand, thought can attempt to bring "the multiple determinations of God that derive from the several proofs to the one concept that is grasped as inwardly as one."⁹ The immediate manner in which thought achieves this, however, is to take these determinations as brought together in a 'higher', or rather more abstract, unity.

On the one hand, then God may be taken as the unity that is merely in-itself, "*the neuter One* [*das Eine*], or also being."¹⁰ In this case, the concept of God is reduced to "the abstract One or being, the empty essence of the understanding."¹¹ On the other hand, God may thus be taken as the unity that is in-and-for-itself, namely as "*the personal One* [*der Eine*]."¹² In that case, however, God is still posited over and against the many. Unsurprisingly, Hegel will take both of these positions to be one-sided such that the One proof will require the sublation of their opposition. This will be achieved only at the conclusion of the system.

Hegel, Multiplicity and the One Proof

Hegel asserts that,

⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 86 [21:100.] Translating 'begriffloses' as 'conceptless' rather than 'mindless.'

⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 86 [18:269.]

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 87 [18:269.]

[t]he course of philosophy leads to the point that the final result of all this is God. This highest point is then the proof that God is, or in other words that this universal, which is in and for itself, embracing and containing everything, is that through which alone everything is and has subsistence – that this alone is the universal truth. This *One* is the result of philosophy.¹³

On his account, however, the diversity of the proofs is not a defect and stumbling-block in relation to this One. Instead, this diversity is ultimately to be comprehended in its truth as sublated in the One proof. Accordingly, for Hegel the plurality of the proofs is not merely an historical accident. Instead, he claims, it is “the inner necessity of reason that is active in the thinking spirit and produces in it this *multiplicity of determinate qualities*.”¹⁴ This multiplicity is not to be comprehended as an external plurality, then, but as an inner development and concretization of the One. To begin with, however, these proofs “still remain outside one another and mediate themselves *with one another only as independent*.”¹⁵

For Hegel’s speculative account and defense of the proofs to be successful, it is thus essential that the immediate appearance of the externality and mere multiplicity of the proofs be overcome and the determinate content of these proofs as determination of God preserved without simply negating this multiplicity or reducing it to an abstraction, i.e., they must be sublated within the system. This, as we shall see, is achieved by showing that and how the proofs are correlated in a *comprehensive manner* to the spheres of *Logic*, the *philosophy of religion* and the system as such. Likewise, it is essential to demonstrate that and how the threefold correlation of the proofs with the *Logic*, the *philosophy of religion* and the system as a whole are to be comprehended precisely as a

¹³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:367 [267.]

¹⁴ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 87 [18:269.]

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

development in and through which the opposition of form and content and the multiplicity of the proofs is sublated. Accordingly, the necessity of passing over from one correlation to the next is not and cannot be merely a matter of external reflection. Instead it does and must, as we shall see, follow from the immanent defect and determinations of these stages themselves.

The Correlation of the Proofs to the *Logic*

As we have repeatedly seen, to begin with and taken in their immediacy, the proofs may all be grasped as the assertion of the unity of concept and being. At first, when taken according to their conclusion, it thus appears as though all of the proofs have one and the same content and prove one and the same thing, namely that ‘God is’. Insofar as ‘God’ is taken to be the concept and ‘is’ here is taken as the ‘is’ of abstract identity, all of the proofs may first be represented in the proposition ‘being is concept.’ Now on the one hand, insofar as one takes ‘concept’ just to mean thought, then Hegel’s *Logic* has the unity of thinking and being as its starting-point.¹⁶ On the other hand, the *Logic* itself forms a circle so that at its conclusion in the sphere of the concept as the absolute idea, the *Logic* returns to its starting-point and announces once more the unity of concept and being.¹⁷ Insofar as all of the proofs are taken as abstractly identical with respect to their conclusion, the proofs might be correlated in this simple manner to the *Logic* taken as whole.

¹⁶ See supra, pp. 83-4.

¹⁷ On the outline of the *Logic* as moving from being to concept, see supra, 113. On the circularity of the *Logic*, see supra, pp.136-7.

As we have seen in discussing Hegel's method earlier, however, Hegel argues that immediate identity is one-sided and a mere abstraction. In characterizing the proofs in terms of the relation of being and concept, Hegel does not grasp these terms as a static identity but rather a transition. Initially, then, Hegel points out that the proofs are to be distinguished according to the order of the relation between being and concept.

The first two proofs, namely the cosmological and teleological proof, are characterized as a transition from being, or what is finite, to the concept or what is infinite. The ontological proof, by contrast, is a transition in the opposite direction, starting from the concept and moving to being.¹⁸ Given this two-fold division, another possible account of the correlation between the *Logic* and the proofs presents itself insofar as Hegel himself divides the *Logic* into the objective Logic, consisting of the divisions of being and essence, and the subjective Logic, consisting of the division of the concept.¹⁹ If, in noting this, we attempt to articulate the correlation of the proofs to the *Logic*, it seems that the first two proofs are essentially identical, moving from the beginning of the *Logic* to its conclusion, while the ontological proof moves from the conclusion of the *Logic* to its beginning. Such an interpretation would seem to make a good deal of sense, given that Hegel quite explicitly understands the *Logic* as a circle.²⁰ Hegel himself even explicitly suggests this correlation in his 1831 *Lectures on Logic*.²¹

Yet such an account of the correlation of the proofs to the *Logic* is far too simplistic and superficial, and Hegel only introduces the above-mentioned correlation after warning that at this juncture in his lecture "it is only possible to stress what is most

¹⁸ See Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 88 [18:270.]

¹⁹ See *supra*, 112 and 224.

²⁰ Cf. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 751 [12:252.]

²¹ Hegel, *Lecture on Logic*, 45-6 [55.]

important.”²² That this account of the correlation is not ultimately adequate or sufficient is immediately evident given Hegel’s insistence that there are three proofs and that these form a progression. If the above account of the correlation is taken to be correct, however, then the difference between the cosmological and teleological proofs would simply collapse (i.e., would fail to be preserved and raised-up, and thus would not be sublated.) Yet the threefold division of the *Logic* into being, essence and concept, suggests another possible manner of formulating this correlation. Hegel himself, in the *Lectures on the Proofs*, appears to confirm this insofar as he asserts

that there are three fundamental modalities of the connection between the two aspects or categories [of being and concept.] The first is the *passing over* of the one category into its other; the second is their *relativity* or the *appearing* of the one in or to the *being* of the other; the third modality, however, is that of the concept or the [I]dea, in accord with which [each] category preserves itself in the other in such a way that the resulting unity, which is *implicitly* the original essence of both, is also posited as their subjective unity.²³

Insofar as in the *Logic* the division of being is the concept in-itself that passes over to its other, that of essence is the concept in the distinction of appearing and reflection, and the third moment is the concept that is in-and-for-itself,²⁴ the riddle thus appears to be resolved.

To read the proofs as correlated to the *Logic* in this manner, however, is still too simplistic. As we have seen, according to Hegel each of these proofs have a distinct determinate content. In order to be able articulate the correlation of the proofs to Hegel’s *Logic*, it is thus necessary to look more closely at Hegel’s critical account of the proofs

²² Ibid., 45 [55.]

²³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 89 [18:270.]

²⁴ See supra, 113, pp. 121-124 and pp.140-1.

and the concepts which he uses to explicate these proofs in order to determine the manner in which they correlate to his *Logic*. This was already achieved in Chapter Three.

When Hegel's critical account of the proofs in terms of their content is taken into account, we discover that the cosmological proof is articulated by Hegel primarily in terms of the categories of *necessity* and *contingency*,²⁵ categories that belong to the sphere of essence, and indeed to the third and final division of essence, actuality.²⁶ Likewise, Hegel's explication of the teleological argument, at least primarily, and certainly most obviously, falls under and utilizes the arguments found under the heading of teleology.²⁷ This section is located under the final section of the objective concept, which is the second part of the third and final division of *Logic*.²⁸ Finally, Hegel

²⁵ See supra, pp. 183-5.

²⁶ See supra, pp. 128-134. Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, pp. 98-108 [18:278-286.] Compare also Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:426-7 [318-19] and 2:395-402 [295-302.] For Hegel's account of necessity see Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §§142-59. Compare also Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, pp.155-73 [159-175.] Here, as in Chapter Two, I am taking Hegel's organization of "Actuality" to be authoritative, which is justified by the fact that Hegel only managed to revise the first division of his *Science of Logic* prior to his death. Note that the divisions and content of "Actuality" differ substantially between the *Encyclopaedia* (in all three editions) and that found in the *Science of Logic*. While the *Encyclopaedia Logic* divides "Actuality" into three parts, consisting of (a) "The Absolute", (b) "Actuality" (which provides the basis of Hegel's account of the relation between possibility, contingency and necessity) and (c) "The Absolute Relation." By contrast, in all of the versions of the *Encyclopaedia Logic* (a) has been dropped, (b) is used as a preliminary account of 'Actuality' as such (rather than being its second division) and the main subheadings are now the three subheadings that were included under (c). In terms of the content of this section, Hegel's revision of the material makes necessity, possibility and contingency more obviously fundamental to the determinations under (c) such that, in 1831, Hegel will explicitly refer to the three determinations of (c) as "forms of necessity." (Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 164 [167].)

²⁷ See supra, pp. 187-190 and pp. 158-166. Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:428-431 [320-321.] and 2:709-719 [598-607.] Compare these to Hegel, *Science of Logic*, pp.651-69 [12:154-172.] and Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §204-12.

²⁸ See supra, 116.

explicitly links the ontological proof to the *idea* and indeed to the *absolute idea*,²⁹ which is the third and final part of the third division of the *Logic*, and so this proof too, like Teleology and the teleological argument, appears to simply fall under the division of the concept.

Taken in this manner, and in accordance to their specific determinate content, while all three proofs appear to correlate to the *Logic* in some sense, they clearly fail to relate to the *Logic* in a comprehensive fashion. The entire division of being, the supposed starting point of the cosmological and teleological and the conclusion of the ontological proof, seems to be utterly left out of account, while, the cosmological proof stops short at the end of the sphere of essence and never reaches the sphere of the concept at all.

This problem appears to be resolved, however, insofar as we recall that for Hegel the *Logic* includes as its content, amongst its various determinate concepts, various modes of being, and not just immediate being or *Dasein*, but existence and objectivity. As Hegel himself claims in the *Science of Logic*,

Inasmuch as mention may be made here of *the proofs of the existence* [*Existenz of God*], it is first to be noted that besides immediate *being*, that comes first, and *existence* (or the being that proceeds from essence) that comes second, there is still a third being, one that proceeds from the concept, and this is *objectivity*. – Proof is in general *mediated cognition*. The various kinds of being requires or contains each its own kind of mediation, and so will the nature of the proof also vary accordingly.³⁰

Now, given that Hegel always offers the proof in the order of cosmological, teleological and ontological proofs, it seems natural to assume that the cosmological proof would be correlated to immediate being, that the teleological proof would correlate to existence, and the ontological proof would correlate to objectivity. This suspicion is confirmed by

²⁹ See supra, 200..

³⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 420 [11:324.]

the fact that, if we look to Hegel's account of the cosmological proof in 1829, it is quite clear that he links the cosmological proof not only to necessity and contingency, the final categories of the division of essence, but also to determinations that explicitly belong to the division of being, most especially *Dasein* and the relation of the finite and infinite.³¹ Furthermore, in both the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopaedia Logic* Hegel states that the transition from the subjective to the objective concept correlates to the traditional ontological proof.³²

Given these two points, along with the fact that Hegel sees the proofs as a transition either from being to concept or from concept to being, the proofs may thus be seen as correlating to the *Logic* in the following two-fold manner: The cosmological proof moves from being in the mode of *immediate being* to the concept of *actuality*, the teleological proof moves from being in the mode of *existence* to the concept of *teleology*, the ontological proof, finally, moves from the *subjective concept* to being in the mode of the *objective concept* and sublates the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity in the *absolute idea*. Taken according to this twofold correlation, the proofs would appear to cover the *Logic* as follows:

³¹ Indeed, Hegel justifies his having chosen precisely necessity and contingency as the categories of essence under which to consider the cosmological proof as follows: "the category of the relation of *contingency* and *necessity* is the one in which all the relations between the finitude and infinitude of being are summed up and brought together. The most concrete determination of the finitude of being is contingency, and likewise the infinitude of being finds its complete determination in absolute necessity." (Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 99 [18.279.])

³² Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 705 [12:127.]: "Of the concept, we have now first shown that it determines itself as *objectivity*. It should be obvious that this latter transition is essentially the same as the *proof*, from the *concept*, that is to say, from the *concept of God* to his *Dasein*, that was formerly found in *Metaphysics*, or the so-called *ontological proof*." Compare Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §193.

HEGEL'S LOGIC

The Objective Logic

- 1. BEING
 - (A) Quality
 - i. Being
 - a. Being
 - b. Nothing
 - c. Becoming
 - ii. Determinate Being [*Dasein*]
 - a. Determinate Being as Such - Reality
 - b. Finitude
 - c. Infinity
 - iii. Being-for-itself
 - (B) Quantity
 - (C) Measure

- 2. ESSENCE
 - (A) Essence as the Ground of Existence
 - i. Pure Determinations of Reflection
 - 1. Identity
 - 2. Difference
 - 3. Ground
 - ii. Existence
 - iii. The Thing
 - (B) Appearance
 - (C) Actuality – Possibility, Contingency, Necessity
 - i. Relation of substance
 - ii. Relation of causality
 - iii. Relation of reciprocity

The Subjective Logic

- 3. CONCEPT
 - (A) The Subjective Concept
 - i. concept
 - ii. judgment
 - iii. syllogism
 - (B) The Objective Concept
 - i. Mechanism
 - ii. Chemism
 - iii. Teleology
 - (C) The Idea
 - i. Life
 - ii. Cognition
 - a. Cognition Proper
 - b. The Will – the Good
 - iii. The Absolute Idea

Cosmological Proof

Teleological Proof

Ontological Proof

This two-fold account of the proofs, although it does superficially correlate to the whole of the *Logic* is still incomplete. First, to grasp the proofs speculatively, these proofs must be understood not only as propositions, but comprehended as syllogisms, and indeed as a syllogism of syllogisms, such that when speculatively comprehended, each syllogism is both the totality of a movement which involves three distinct terms and moments. Accordingly, in his 1831 lecture on the teleological proof, Hegel argues that the multiplicity of proofs is due to “the diversity of their defining categories. There is in each of them a mediation, a starting point, and a point of arrival.”³³ Second, insofar as they are to constitute the One proof, each syllogism must be recognized as mediating the other, such that the cosmological proof has the concept of the teleological proof as its result, the teleological proof has the concept of the ontological proof as its result, and the ontological comprehends both in and for itself and as a totality.

First, then, the cosmological proof may be grasped as the transition from being to essence³⁴ and in particular to the determination of essence as actuality and absolute necessity.³⁵ Hegel, however, claims that the cosmological proof passes over into another proof that takes freedom as its basis, namely the teleological proof.³⁶ This transition is carried out in the movement of the relations of substance and accidents, cause and effect, and reciprocity where, in the final moment and as the sublation of being and essence, the

³³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:704 [594.]

³⁴ See supra, pp.121-4.

³⁵ See supra, pp. 128-1334.

³⁶ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, pp.99-100 [18:279.]

result of absolute necessity and substance is comprehended as freedom and the freedom of the concept.³⁷³⁸

Second, the teleological proof may, on the one hand, be understood as the (now explicit) transition from essence to concept.³⁹ In this sense, it may be said that “[t]hrough the concept of determination in accordance with an end, the teleological argument defines more concretely the absolute necessity of the cosmological proof.”⁴⁰ On the other hand, however, in the *logic*, teleology, as the final moment of the objective concept, is sublated in the idea, and particularly in the objective idea of *life* as well as the subjective idea of *cognition and the good*, the dialectic of which leads to the absolute idea.⁴¹

Third, the ontological proof is, first of all, the simply the transition from the subjective to the objective concept.⁴² Second, however, with respect to its content, the meaning of the proof lies in stripping the concept, or our conception of God, of its merely “*subjective aspect*”⁴³ such that the result of this proof is the absolute idea.⁴⁴ Now, the absolute idea developed in-and-for-itself is nothing less than the entirety of the *Logic* while the idea, reason itself, is the self-determining and self-differentiating activity that unfolds itself in the spheres of being and essence and returns to itself as the truth of this

³⁷ “The *truth* of necessity is thereby freedom, and the *truth* of *substance* is the concept.” (Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §158.) Cf. also Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 504 [11:409.]

³⁸ See supra, pp. 136-140.

³⁹ See supra pp. 140-142.

⁴⁰ Mark C. Taylor, “Itinerarium Mentis in Deum,” 215.

⁴¹ See supra, pp.166-177

⁴² See supra, pp. 137-8.

⁴³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 84 [18:266-7.]: “But in addition to this beginning that is finite in content, there is another starting point, namely, the *concept* of God. The only finitude in the concept is a *subjective aspect* of which it is to be stripped.” Cf. also Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:180-84 [115-19.] and 344-8 [274-276.]

⁴⁴ See supra, 177 and pp.226-7.

movement and development in the sphere of the concept as the absolute idea. Insofar as the ontological proof is taken to conclude with the absolute idea, the ontological proof implicitly comprehends the entirety of the *logic*, and thus it also implicitly comprehend the cosmological and teleological proofs inasmuch as these proofs correlate to the various determinations of the *logic* running from immediate being to the absolute idea.

Limitations of the Logical Correlation: Transition to Religion

Given the above, we can now see why Hegel thought of the proofs as a supplement to his *Logic*. Not only does the *Logic* provide the immanent account and critique of the central categories of the proofs, but taken together the proofs correlate to the movement of the *Logic* as a whole. Nonetheless, if the proofs are taken to correlate to the *Logic* alone, Hegel's defense and speculative account of the proofs would be a failure, and indeed would suffer from the same defect that Hegel diagnoses in the ontological proof.

In the *Logic*, being is taken from the beginning *as* the concept (albeit the concept only in-itself.) Accordingly, if the *Logic* is understood as the whole and exclusive domain of the proofs, the following problem arises: the central problem of the ontological proof is that it presupposes the identity of what it has to demonstrate, namely the identity of concept and being, and moreover the identity of *our* concept and being. But, as stated previously, the problem with the ontological proof in its traditional form, according to Hegel, is that it *merely* presupposes this identity rather than demonstrating it. Consequently, if Hegel's account of the proofs is *only* correlated to the *Logic*, then his speculative defense and account of these proofs would fail insofar as the *Logic*, taken on

its own, suffers from the same flaw that Hegel points to in the ontological proof – namely that it presupposes the identity of concept and being. More concretely stated, the whole *Logic* presupposes that human beings can obtain the standpoint of absolute knowing in which the distinction between knowledge and truth, thinking and being, or concept and object is overcome. It is in fact only given this presupposition that the *Logic* itself gets off the ground. This criticism, however, far from fatal to Hegel's account, is explicitly acknowledged as a moment of his account itself in a twofold manner.

First of all, as Hegel himself insists, the *Logic* presupposes the demonstration of the possibility and indeed necessity of attaining this standpoint of absolute knowing, and that this demonstration lies in a previous work, namely *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.⁴⁵ Second, and once again according to Hegel himself, even and precisely at the conclusion of the *Logic*,

⁴⁵ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, pp.46-7 [21:54-5.] See Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §25 r. regarding the complex relation between the *Phenomenology* and the system. As he claims here, insofar as the *Phenomenology* raises finite consciousness up to the level of philosophical knowing which is “inwardly the riches in content and the most concrete one... the development of the *content*, or of the subject matters of special parts of philosophical science, falls directly within the [*Phenomenology*.]” This passage has sometimes been read as evidence that Hegel later disowned the *Phenomenology* and placed its content in the *Philosophy of Spirit* such that the *Phenomenology* was no longer to be taken as the legitimate introduction to Hegel's system. As Forster has pointed out, however, such claims are based on a misreading of the passage in question and are contradicted by passages which remain in Hegel's second edition of the *Science of Logic*, published in 1830. (For an account of this debate, Cf. Michael N. Forster, *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), chapter 18, pp.547-55. I take Forster's argument here to be decisive.) What this passage does show, and what Hegel discovered quite early on when he attempted to use the *Phenomenology* as a text in the Gymnasium, is that the *Phenomenology*, while it may be the proper *scientific* introduction to the system, is anything but an ideal introduction to Hegel's philosophical system from a *pedagogical* standpoint. It is partially for this reason that I have chosen to analyze Hegel's system starting from the proofs rather than the *Phenomenology*.

this [I]dea is still logical; it is shut up in pure thought, the science only of the divine *concept*. Its systematic exposition is of course itself a realization, but one confined within the same sphere. Because the pure idea of cognition is to this extent shut up within subjectivity, it is the *impulse* to sublata it, and pure truth becomes as final result also the *beginning of another sphere and science*.⁴⁶

The immediate appearance of the subjectivity and formality of the *Logic*, for Hegel, is thus not an accidental characteristic of that work and attributable merely to the ineptitude of the uninitiated, but is itself a necessary moment and stage. Now, we shall consider Hegel's account of the character of transition from *Logic* to the *philosophies of nature* and *spirit* in more detail when we turn explicitly to the issue of the correlation of the proofs to Hegel's system as such. For now, however, it is enough to remark that on Hegel's account, the *Logic* initially, even at its conclusion, appears to be something formal and subjective insofar as it appears as the abstract universality of thought over and against the richness and variety of concrete experience. Second, however, in passing through the 'concrete sciences'⁴⁷ of the *philosophies of nature* and *spirit*, the thought-determinations of *Logic* show themselves to be the essence of these spheres. Accordingly, these other sciences initially (but note, only initially, for Hegel's entire method turns on overcoming this appearance, and thus the 'so to speak' (*gleichsam*) should not be ignored) "appear, in contrast, as applied logic, so to speak, for the *Logic* is their animating soul."⁴⁸ Third, in passing through these other sciences, the *Logic* displays itself as the immanent content and conclusion of the entire movement of the sciences, and thus

⁴⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 752 [12:253.]

⁴⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, 522 [12:25.]

⁴⁸ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §24 z. 2.

these other spheres appear as the verification of the idea “in the concrete content as in its actuality.”⁴⁹

Now, the same defect that Hegel attributes to the traditional formulation of the ontological proof arises with respect to the correlation between the proofs and the *Logic*. Insofar as the proofs are limited to the explication of the *Logic* alone, by his own account Hegel he is susceptible to the objection of, for example, Kant, according to whom the absolute idea appears to be mere thought and merely subjective when measured by the criterion of concrete human experience. As Hegel himself admits, “Humanity does not just exist as pure thinking; instead, thinking itself is manifested as intuiting, as representing.”⁵⁰ In this, Kant is according to Hegel entirely correct. What Hegel rejects, however, is Kant’s presupposition that human beings cannot rise above *finite* experience to gain knowledge of and have the infinite as the object of their knowledge. Now admittedly, this presupposition is at first liable to sound as sensible as its denial is to sound outrageous. At any rate, if Hegel is to defend this claim he must demonstrate that and how the ‘infinite’ or absolute can and has been given in human experience. Only then will it have been shown that his logical account returns to itself such that it is now “the logical with the meaning that it is the universality *verified* in the concrete content as in its actuality.”⁵¹ Yet how is such a thing possible?

Hegel’s answer, as we shall see, is *religion*. Admittedly, stated in such an immediate manner, the claim that the proofs as the elevation to the infinite find their verification in religion is liable to provoke confusion if not derision. After all, it is clear

⁴⁹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*, trans. M. J. Inwood. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), §574.

⁵⁰ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:357 [276.]

⁵¹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §574.

that the infinite, as Kant insists, cannot be given as an object of *mere* sensation or perception. To invoke religion thus appears as a return to pre-Kantian dogmatism. Nonetheless, as Merklinger points out, Hegel's philosophy of religion is to be grasped as post-Kantian insofar as Hegel comprehends religion "*as a complete modality of human experience in itself.*"⁵² The explanation and demonstration of the claim that religion constitutes the verification of the proofs will first require the examination of Hegel's philosophy of religion. Following this, the meaning and character of this verification will be explained in and through the explication of the correlation of the proofs to religion and the significance of these correlations.

⁵² Philip M Merklinger, *Philosophy, Theology, and Hegel's Berlin Philosophy of Religion, 1821-1827*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 4.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PROBLEM OF DETERMINING THE RELIGIOUS CORRELATION AND THE LECTURES OF 1831

The aim of the present chapter is to provide a summary of Hegel's *philosophy of religion* in order that this summary may then serve as the basis on which to explain in the following chapter both how the proofs correlate to the philosophy of religion and the significance of this correlation. In order to provide such a summary, however, it is necessary, as shall be explained below, to choose which particular presentation of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* will serve as the basis of the subsequent account. I shall, as indicated by the title above, be taking Hegel's 1831 lectures as Hegel's definitive account of the philosophy of religion. This decision, however, is bound to appear questionable, particularly given what has become the orthodox understanding of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* and the significance attributed to the changes in the structure of Hegel's account between 1821 and 1831. Accordingly, some preliminary explanation of this decision is required before proceeding.

To explain the significance of this decision, I will first begin by explaining the difficulties that face the present account in light of the recently published historical-critical edition of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. I will then attempt to explain why it is necessary to take no more than one of Hegel's lecture series on religion to be definitive. While the 1831 lecture series is admittedly Hegel's final presentation, the claim that this presentation is definitive cannot rest on this fact alone, particularly given that it directly contradicts the dominant current reading and assessment of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. This reading however, as I will explain, is based

on certain assumptions that are questionable such that, at least *in principle*, the 1831 lectures may in fact be definitive. The demonstration *that* this lecture series is definitive requires the demonstration that Hegel's account of the development and progression of the proofs, *Logic* and freedom can be comprehended as mutually compatible and unified in and by Hegel's 1831 account of the *philosophy of religion*.

This demonstration can and will only be provided in the Chapter Six, and will be provided there in and through the articulation of the significance of the correlation of the proofs to the 1831 *philosophy of religion*. Nonetheless, it may be noted that, since the correlation of the proofs to the *Logic* has already been explained in the previous chapter, the challenge of establishing the compatibility and parallel development of the proofs and *logic* has already in principle been met. As we shall see, that account of the logical correlation will allow us to comprehend both the inadequacy of Hegel's attempts to structure his account of the *philosophy of religion* prior to 1831, while Hegel's introduction to the 1831 lectures provides partial confirmation of the previous account of the logical correlation. Given this confirmation of the account of the logical correlation, it is then possible to extrapolate so as to provide a preliminary outline of the 1831 account of the *philosophy of religion* and the correlation of the proofs to this account. Following this, I will then proceed to provide a summary of Hegel's 1831 *philosophy of religion* itself.

Hegel's Lectures, the Proofs and the Problem of their Correlation

There can be no question that Hegel takes the proofs to correlate with his *philosophy of religion*. As Hegel indicates in his *Lectures on the Proofs*, if initially one

part of the treatment of the proofs belongs to the *Logic* by virtue of the form of the proofs as proofs, “the other aspect, the content that is *God*, belongs to another sphere, that of religion and its rational consideration, *philosophy of religion*.”¹ All four times that Hegel lectures on the philosophy of religion, namely in 1821, 1824, 1827 and 1831, he considers the cosmological, teleological and ontological proofs in depth. Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* themselves purport to provide a systematic organized account of the concept of religion, as well as to provide an account of determinate religions as stages leading to the fulfillment of the concept of religion in the consummate religion, namely Christianity. In all but the lectures of 1827, Hegel considers the cosmological, teleological and ontological proof at critical junctures in his account of the development of determinate religion up to the consummate religion, and even in 1827, Hegel still insists that the ontological proof belongs to and is correlated with the consummate religion alone.²

It should be noted that the above discussion of Hegel’s presentation of the philosophy of religion has only been made possible in recent years with the publication of the historical-critical edition of Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Prior to this, we had to rely on the presentation of Hegel’s *philosophy of religion* that were compiled by the early editors of Hegel’s works from manuscripts of all four lectures.

Given that we now have access to the historical-critical edition of Hegel’s lectures on the philosophy of religion, it might be thought that the task of articulating the correlation of the proofs to Hegel’s philosophy of religion and the significance of this correlation would be greatly simplified. The possibility of examining Hegel’s account of

¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 37 [18:228.]

² Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:433 [323.]

the *philosophy of religion* as presented in four separate lecture series would seem to promise not only a great elaboration with respect to detail, but the ability, through cross-comparisons of Hegel's treatment of the proofs within the context of these different presentations, to remove ambiguities that might otherwise remain had we only a single source upon which to rely. In reality, because Hegel introduces substantial changes in the structure of his account of the *philosophy of religion* in each lecture series, such cross-comparisons are more likely to lead, particularly given the present project, to despair.

This is not to suggest that there is *no* continuity in Hegel's treatment of religion, for it must be admitted that both Hegel's overall vision and many particular aspects of his treatment of the philosophy of religion remain consistent from first to last. Most obviously, as was alluded to above, the overall organization of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* is always presented as having three main divisions, namely (A) the concept of religion, (B) determinate religion, (i.e., non-Christian religions) and (C) the consummate religion (i.e., the Christian religion.) Additionally, while there are shifts in emphasis and additions of new material, Hegel only very slightly changes the order in which he presents particular religions, and the details of his account of these religions is consistent enough that it may be concluded, as the editor's of the English translation of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* assert, that "[t]he substance of Hegel's interpretation of the religions was established in 1824."³ That which does change in Hegel's account of religion over the years, however, is particularly problematic given the present project. As the editors of the English edition of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* point out,

³ Hodgson, Introduction to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:56.

For Part III (*The Consummate Religion*) he arrived at his mature conceptualization in 1824, while for Part I (*The Concept of Religion*) he achieved it in 1827. But in the case of Part II, he introduced significant structural changes in 1831, which clearly offered a quite different context for interpreting the Oriental and Near Eastern religions (including Judaism.)⁴

Now granted, Hegel was ever consistent in claiming that the ontological proof correlates to consummate religion alone, and he clearly envisioned the cosmological and teleological proofs as correlating to stages in determinate religion. The changes in the manner which Hegel structures his account of determinate religion, however, are drastic enough that one is liable to despair of ever determining the significance of the correlation of the cosmological and teleological proofs to determine religion. Indeed, one might well, for reasons that shall become clear shortly, despair of even determining precisely where to locate the cosmological and teleological proofs in Hegel's account of determinate religion and suspect that Hegel himself never had a clear or satisfactory answer.

The Contradiction Amongst Hegel's Lectures

The difficulty of ascertaining both the significance and nature of the correlation of the cosmological and teleological proofs to determinate religion is to some extent due the fact that the principle that Hegel uses to explain how he structures the stages of his account of determinate religion changes with each lecture series. According to Schlitt, for example,

Hegel's four attempts to work out a philosophical interpretation of the non-Christian religions come through loud and clear. This is the case whether it be the 1821 structuring according to the triad 'being/essence/concept,' the 1824 twofold division in line with the appropriate proofs for the existence of God, the particularly clear 1827 concern for the relative adequacy of the concept of religion

⁴ Ibid., 2:12-13.

and the various religions, or the 1831 stress on the movement of diremption and return as a dialectical history of freedom.⁵

Now, one might object that these four principles need not, and in Hegel's own terms must not, ultimately be incompatible but must at the very least overlap one another. The suggestion, accordingly, would be that the structural changes in Hegel's account are superficial and merely a matter of emphasis. Let us consider this suggestion for a moment and how and why this claim might, initially at least, seem plausible.

As we have seen, according to Hegel the movement of the *Logic*, as the progression from being to essence to concept, is the self-development and becoming adequate of the concept as the determination of the concept that is in-and-for-itself and finds its consummation in the absolute idea. Further, according to Hegel, the immanent movement and method of the *Logic* is also the immanent movement, development and unfolding of the content of other spheres of philosophical science. As to freedom, we have already seen that and how the concept of freedom arises initially in the transition of the *Logic* from being and essence to the concept, as well as how this freedom is further developed and concretized as the concept itself. Finally, the aim of the previous chapter was to establish that and how the proofs are correlated with the *Logic*. Accordingly, there is nothing initially self-contradictory in claiming that all four schemas at least overlap. Indeed, such overlap is not only possible, but necessary on Hegel's own grounds such that, if these distinct principles could not be united either under a single principle, or at the very least be comprehended as mutually reinforcing and not contradicting each other, this would indicate a failure in Hegel's account:

⁵ Dale Schlitt, *Divine Subjectivity*, 84.

First, Hegel claims that the *Logic* is the method of all philosophical science such that the simple rhythm of the dialectic that the *Logic* articulates, or rather it itself *is*, is also the method of the other philosophical sciences as their immanent movement and ‘soul’. Accordingly, his account of the development of religion cannot be absolutely other than or opposed to the *Logic* and its determinations and development. Second, not only in 1831, but in 1824 and 1827 as well, Hegel insists that the development of the concept of religion in its determinacy is at once also the history of religion itself.⁶ Now, according to Hegel, history itself just *is* the development of freedom that moves from the Oriental world where one is free, to the Greek world where some are free, up finally to the modern European world where all are known as free.⁷ Third and finally, as was mentioned above, Hegel always insists that the three proofs correlate with stages in the development of religion.

The issue, however, is not whether on Hegel’s account the development of the *logic*, freedom, and the proofs *ought* to ultimately be compatible and unified in his account of the development of religion. The issue is whether the changes in Hegel’s organization of determinate religion can be written off as a superficial matter of a change in emphasis, or if these changes are fundamental and indicate the mutual incompatibility of Hegel various presentations of determinate religion and thus a deeper failure to integrate principles that, on Hegel’s own grounds, should not contradict each other but form a unity.

⁶ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:145-6 [58-9] and 183 [91.]

⁷ Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume 1: Manuscript of the Introduction and The Lectures of 1825-6*, trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), 110 [185-6.]

Now, as was mentioned above, one of the principles that Hegel ostensibly appeals to in order to justify his organization of the lectures on religion, and particularly determinate religion, is the proofs themselves. In every lecture series except that of 1827, including, that is, both when the proofs are and are not explicitly taken as the guiding principle behind Hegel’s organization of determinate religion as they were in 1824, Hegel introduces the cosmological and teleological proofs at critical junctures in his account of determinate religion. The places where Hegel introduces these proofs, however, changes with each new lecture series. Although Hegel does still indicate that there is a correlation between the proofs and the development of religion, in 1827 he does not even attempt to indicate what the correlation of the proofs to determinate religion consists in, and instead treats all three proofs together and as continuous under the concept of religion. The placement of the proofs in the other three lecture series is as follows:

1821	1824	1831
A. Immediate Religion	A. Immediate or Natural Religion	A. Natural Religion
Cosmological Proof	Cosmological Proof	B. Internal Rupture of Consciousness
Primitive/Oriental religions	Primitive/Oriental religions	Cosmological Proof
B. Religion of Sublimity and Beauty	B. Religion of Spiritual Individuality	a. (1) Chinese Religion
Cosmological Proof	Cosmological and Teleological	(2) Hindu Religion
Jewish and Greek Religion	(1) Jewish religion	(3) Buddhism/Lamanism
C. Religion of Expediency	(2) Greek Religion	b. (1) Persian/Jewish
and Understanding	(3) Roman Religion	(2) Religion of Anguish
Teleological Proof		(3) Egyptian Religion
Roman Religion		C. a. Greek Religion
		(aa) summary
		(bb) Teleological Proof
		(cc) Greek religion
		b. Roman Religion ⁸

⁸ The outlines of the 1821 and 1824 lectures are based upon and accords with the more detailed diagram “Comparative Analysis of the Structure of ‘Determinate Religion.’” (Hodgson, Introduction to *Hegel’s Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, pp.88-9.) The outline of the 1831 lecture, however, differs in a number of essential ways. According to both the English and German editions of the texts, the main divisions of the 1831 treatment of Determinate religion is as follows:

- A. Natural Religion
- B. The Internal Rupture of Consciousness
 - 1. Chinese Religion
 - 2. Hindu Religion
 - 3. Buddhism and Lamanism
- C. The Religion of Freedom
 - 1. Transitional Forms

The mutual incompatibility of these schemas is evident not merely due the fact that Hegel places the cosmological and teleological proof at slightly different junctures in his account, but from the fact that, on the one hand, the cosmological proof appears twice in 1821 and 1824 but only once in 1831, and on the other hand, because while Hegel always associates the Roman religion with the teleological proof, the question of whether or not the Greek religion is *also* to be correlated with the teleological proof is answered to the negative in 1821, ambiguously in 1824, and affirmatively in 1831. Given the importance that Hegel grants to the Ancient Greeks in his account of history, the development of

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- (a) Persian and Jewish Religion
 - (b) Religion of Anguish
 - (c) Egyptian Religion
 - 2. Greek Religion
 - 3. Roman Religion

It is unclear whether the heading ‘The Religion of Freedom’ was supplied by Strauss or the Editors of the German edition of the text. In either case, the title is inappropriate and the promotion of the transitional forms alongside the Greek and Roman religion is highly suspect and indeed contradicted by other passages in Strauss’ summary as well as one of the preserved fragments of the 1831 manuscript. According to Strauss’ own summary of Hegel’s initial outline of the 1831 lectures, the main divisions of determinate religion are as follows: (1) Immediate religion, (2) “essence known as *power* over finite spirit”(Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:463 [353.]) where God is known as (a) substance and then later (b) as cause, and (3) the religion of beauty and purposiveness. Similarly, according to Strauss’ initial account of the main divisions of determinate religion, these divisions are: (a) religion of immediacy or natural religion, (b) religion properly speaking “introduced with the inward *rupture of consciousness* into God as absolute power, and the subject as transitory accident.”(Ibid. 2:722 [612.]), and (c) “the reconciliation effected in this sphere is the religion of beauty”(Ibid.), i.e., the Greek Religion. Finally, according to the remaining fragment of the 1831 lecture, the initial moments of determinate religion are (1) immediate natural religion, (2) the Oriental religions of substance and accident, and (3) the religions of transition to the stage of free subjectivity.(Ibid., 2:515-6, fn.5 [413-14.]). While following this the text is corrupted, from the evidence, it is clear that Hegel regarded the ‘transitional religions’ as belonging alongside the other Oriental religions and that it does *not* constitute a moment of ‘The religions of freedom’, although it does admittedly serve as the transition from one sphere to the next. Precisely the transitional character of these religions is all that is discussed under the heading ‘Religion of Freedom’, while the designation of the Roman religion here as the third moment alongside the ‘transitional forms’ and ‘Greek religion’ is an interpolation by the German editors.(Ibid., 2:737 [624.])

freedom, and indeed the birth of philosophy itself, the mutual incompatibility of the ways in which Hegel conceives of the correlation between the teleological proof and Greek religion has far reaching consequences. If all the versions of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* are taken together and at once, then, we must conclude that there is not just an ambiguity but outright contradiction in Hegel's account of the relation of the proofs to religion, history and freedom.

While I acknowledge these problems and challenges, I still argue that it is possible to provide a definitive and detailed account of the correlation of the proofs to Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* and to articulate the significance of this correlation. In making this claim, however, I thereby place myself in opposition to what has become the contemporary orthodox account of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.

The Contemporary Assessment of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion and its Presuppositions

The Historical-Critical edition of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, the publication of which for the first time allows us to examine the changes and developments in Hegel's presentation of the philosophy of religion, has certainly given Hegel scholars plenty to chew on. Admittedly, access to these texts has not enabled Hegel scholarship to resolve or reach a consensus regarding a good many of the debates and interpretive controversies that have plagued Hegel scholarship over the years; for example, the issue of whether and in what sense Hegel may be called a Christian has certainly not been settled. It may at least be said, however, that the new edition of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* has provided a new weapon with which

to combat the myth that Hegel was a rigid, formalistic thinker who merely forced his material into a presupposed a priori conceptual frameworks.⁹ The cost at which this victory has been bought, however, is not insubstantial, for the means by which this victory is secured is the suicide of the Hegelian system.

The present scholarly consensus, following Jaeschke, is that Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, and by extension Hegel's entire philosophical system, is in fact not systematic or logically grounded at all. According to Jaeschke, Hegel's account of determinate religion is "characterized by an assumption and a claim – his assumption that there is such a thing as a single history of religion, and his claim to be able to supply it with a logical grounding."¹⁰ Hegel's challenge, in other words, is to show that and how the *Logic* and the logico-genesis of the unfolding of the concept comprehends the actual historical development and progression of religions.

According to Jaeschke, having attempted and failed to explicate the stages of religion in terms of the division of being, essence and concept in 1821, Hegel in later years experimented with using other principles as the basis on which to formulate his *philosophy of religion* in the attempt to achieve the desired parallel between, on the one hand, the conceptual unfolding and development of that principle, and on the other hand, the history of religion itself. Hegel's "evident willingness to incorporate new data and experiment with new schemes" in the different series of his lectures on the philosophy of religion is taken to demonstrate that, for Hegel, "philosophy was a kind of 'conceptual play' based on imaginative variation in order to arrive at new insights."¹¹ In other words,

⁹ Jaeschke, *Reason in Religion*, 272.

¹⁰ Jaeschke, *Reason in Religion*, 263.

¹¹ Hodgson, Introduction to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:13.

Hegel's claims regarding systematicity and the necessity of his dialectical 'method' and the unfolding of the concept are dismissed as vain delusions. Accordingly, Jaeschke concludes that "Hegel's claim to found the history of religion on the concept is doomed in advance because he is mistaken in assuming that there is such a thing as single history of religion."¹²

There are a number of questionable assumptions underlying the conclusion of Jaeschke and those who accept his argument. First, as mentioned above, the fact that the principles which Hegel brings to the fore in structuring 'determinate religion' are distinct does not show that in principle they are mutually incompatible and incapable of being unified.

Second, Hegel's decision to explicitly present the organization of different versions of determinate religion in terms of one or other of these principles does not mean that these principles are just discovered through the playful experimentation of the imagination and that they are all, and equally, contingent. To the contrary, all of these principles are explicitly announced in all of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* such that if his account was sufficient on its own grounds, the organization of determinate religion would be mutually compatible with all of them, and would indeed constitute their unification.

Third, even if Hegel did not manage himself to achieve this unification, it does not follow that such a unification is impossible and simply misguided from the start except on presuppositions and the assumption of a standpoint or shape of consciousness

¹² Jaeschke, *Reason in Religion*, 283.

that is both opposed to Hegel's own professed standpoint and which itself requires justification.

Fourth, although Hegel's organization of determinate religion does change in each year of presentation, and although these four organizational schemas are incompatible with each other, it is nothing more than an assumption to claim that Hegel's final organization of determinate religion was also inadequate so that Hegel would, had he lived, changed it once more. It is at least *possible* that Hegel's 1831 version of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* is definitive and that in these lectures Hegel manages to provide an account that unifies the Logic, the proofs and the history of religion (and thus also history as the development of freedom.) It is this possibility that I wish to explore and ultimately defend.

The Possibility of Establishing that the 1831 Lectures are Definitive

To assert that Hegel's 1831 presentation of determinate religion is definitive is admittedly, to begin with, merely an assumption and indeed it might be said a necessary assumption given my goal of articulating the correlation of the proofs to Hegel's *philosophy of religion* and providing an account of the significance of that correlation. Supposing that the previous account of the correlation of the proofs to the *Logic* is correct, however, then one part of the task of demonstrating that the 1831 presentation of determinate religion could be definitive is already completed, for I have already explained that and how the proofs correlate to Hegel's *Logic* as a whole. Of course, it still remains to be shown that this account of the correlation of the proofs to the *Logic* is compatible with Hegel's account of the development not just of determinate religion in

1831, but the whole of Hegel's 1831 account of religion, as well as to explain that and how history, the history of religion and the history of the development of freedom are related and unified in this account.

In addition, the attempt to provide such an account of the correlation of the proofs to the 1831 lectures faces the challenge that the manuscript of the 1831 lecture series has been lost, so that all that remains as a record of Hegel's final presentation of the *philosophy of religion* are Strauss' excerpted summary of the lectures and a few scattered fragments.¹³ This would undoubtedly be an issue if the content of Hegel's account of particular religions changed dramatically over the years, but as was already mentioned, and as is born out by the examination both of the remaining fragments of the 1831 lectures and Strauss' summary, Hegel does not substantially alter the content of his account of particular religions after 1824. What Hegel does change is the structure of his presentation of determinate religion, but these structural changes are clearly discernable from Strauss' summary and the remaining fragments. What is lacking, of course, although one cannot guarantee that had the original manuscript of the 1831 lectures survived it would have supplied this anyway, is a clear justification for the manner in which Hegel alters the structure of his account of determinate religion. Here, however, an examination of the differences between Hegel's organization of determinate religion and his placement of the proofs in 1831 when considered in relation to the organization of determinate religion in 1821 and 1824 is, at least negatively speaking, quite enlightening.

¹³ These fragments are (a) Hegel's 1831 account of the teleological proof (Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:703-719 [593-607] and ontological proof (ibid., 3:351-58 [271-276], (b) "The Relationship of Religion to the State According to the Lectures of 1831," (ibid., 1:451-60 [339-347.] and (c) fragments that the editors of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* have appended as footnotes throughout the lectures, principally although not exclusively to the 1827 lectures.

In both 1821 and 1824, Hegel introduces the cosmological proof at two distinct junctures and offers two distinct accounts of the cosmological proof, first in terms of categories of being such as the one and the many or the finite and the infinite, and second in terms of categories of essence, namely contingency and necessity. That Hegel would think to provide a two-fold correlation of the cosmological proof to determinate religion should not surprise us at this point given the discussion in the previous chapter and the fact that, already in the *Logic* Hegel had claimed that each of the three proofs is correlated to a particular mode of being such that the cosmological proof, for example is correlated to immediate being as well as absolute necessity. Moreover, insofar as Hegel has already claimed in 1821 that the moments of determinate religion are supposed to unfold in accordance with the threefold division of being, essence and concept, it makes sense, insofar as Hegel correlates the three proofs with the stages of determinate religion, that he would also have to start out with the cosmological proof determined merely in terms of the determinations of the sphere of being and then later, when he turns to the religions that are taken up in terms of the division of essence, articulate the cosmological proof in terms of the necessity insofar as necessity is, according to the *Logic* a determination of essence, and indeed its final one. The problem that Hegel faces, however, is that insofar as the third moment of determinate religion is the concept, then while he can find a place for introducing the teleological proof, there is no second correlation of teleology, i.e., considered according to its mode of being, that has not already been appropriated to the cosmological proof. Thus there is only a one-fold correlation of the teleological proof to religion, and moreover there is only a one-fold correlation of the ontological proof to the revealed religion. In addition, if teleology is

taken as comprehending the logical moment of the concept, then there is no place for the ontological proof, and anyway if the ontological proof is considered as the movement from the subjective concept to objectivity, this movement is actually logically prior to teleology. The problems that Hegel is faced with here are in fact the problems that we faced when attempting to comprehend the manner in which the proofs could be taken to correlate to the *Logic*.

Although in 1824 Hegel removes the immediate problem by no longer attempting to conceive of the development of determinate religion strictly in terms of the three divisions of the *Logic*, the problem is still apparent in the manner in which he again attempts to articulate the correlation between determinate religion and the proofs. Indeed, this problem is all the more evident insofar as the development of the concept of religion was supposed to be carried out and structured in accordance with the three proofs. Since the ontological proof is correlated with the consummate religion alone, this means that determinate religion ought to be presented in terms of a two-fold division between the cosmological proof on the one hand and the teleological proof on the other. Due to Hegel's own two-fold account and characterization of the cosmological proof, however, the problem is not resolved but exacerbated, for while the first division of determinate religion is articulated in terms of the cosmological proof conceived in terms of the categories belonging to the sphere of being, the second is introduced by way of the explication of *both* the Cosmological proof articulated in terms of the categories of essence as well as by the Teleological proof.

Given such problems, it is perhaps unsurprising that when Hegel lectured on the philosophy of religion in 1827, he avoided attempting to articulate the correlation of the

proofs to determinate religion altogether and instead considered these proofs sequentially under his account of the concept of religion. This was not a resolution of the issue, however, but merely a temporary reprieve and a chance to think through the manner in which all of the proofs belonged together in a unified way. After all, Hegel still in 1827 insisted on the correlation of the ontological proof to the consummate religion. The question, then, is what changes between 1827 and 1831 such that Hegel once more felt confident enough to integrate his discussion of the proofs into, and thus directly indicate their correlation with his accounts of, determinate and the consummate religion?

Two points are worth mentioning. First, the gap between 1827 and 1831 was the longest that Hegel had gone without lecturing on the *philosophy of religion* since he first began lecturing on the topic in 1821. This is not to say, however, that Hegel was not considering related matters in the intervening years. To the contrary, in 1829, concurrently with his lectures on *Logic* and as a kind of supplement to them, Hegel offered a class dedicated to the proofs. It is in these lectures that Hegel first proposes a threefold, rather than two-fold, characterization of the proofs.¹⁴ It is this same threefold characterization that Hegel explicitly endorses in 1831 when he declares that

what distinguishes (differentiates) the proofs of God's *Dasein* is just the diversity of their defining categories. [Each of them] has mediation, a starting point, and a point of arrival.¹⁵

It was also this threefold characterization of the proofs that enabled us to adequately conceive of the manner in which three proofs could be taken as correlating with the *Logic*. Assuming that the previous account of the correlation of the proofs to the *Logic* is correct and that Hegel himself came, at least by 1831, to grasp the proofs as correlating

¹⁴ See Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, pp.89-92 [270-273.]

¹⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:704 [594.]

with the *Logic* in the threefold manner articulated at the end of the last chapter, then his renewed confidence in once more indicating the correlation of the proofs to the stages of religion is understandable.

There are, of course, a good many assumptions that will have to be discharged and so in the next chapter it will be necessary to explain that and how the proofs correlate with Hegel's 1831 presentation of the *philosophy of religion*. As we shall see, the previous account of the correlation of the proofs to the *Logic* will greatly assist us in articulating both the precise correlation of the proofs to the philosophy of religion, as well as the significance of this correlation. The ultimate justification for the claim that Hegel's 1831 *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion* are definitive, however, rests on the demonstration that Hegel manages to unite the logically correlated account of the proofs and the correlation of his proofs with religion, with his account of freedom and history. Before this, it is first necessary to provide a summary of Hegel's 1831 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. It may be noted, however, that right from the beginning, the examination of Hegel's introduction to the 1831 lectures already suggests that the current account is on the right path, and moreover serves as a partial verification of the previous account of the logical correlation of the proofs.

To recall, in the previous chapter, I had argued that beside the two-fold correlation of the proofs to a mode of being and their concluding category, Hegel's account requires that there is a third correlation that is the speculative moment of the proof. The cosmological proof, for example, was taken as correlated not only with being, nor only with absolute necessity, but had as its third, speculative moment the movement in and through which the cosmological proof passes over to the sphere of the concept and

freedom and thus has the teleological proof as its result. This movement in the *Logic* is developed as the relations of necessity, the three moments of which are (a) substance and accident, (b) cause and effect, and (c) reciprocity.

Now, in the 1831 lectures, Hegel introduces the cosmological proof under determinate religion, but only after providing his account of immediate or natural religion, under the discussion of the sundering of consciousness. According to the introduction to the 1831 lectures, the philosophy of religion is structured as follows:

- I. The Concept of Religion
 - (1) its abstract concept
 - (2) the form of religion
 - (3) the cultus
 - (4) human life in the world
- II. Determinate Religion
 - (1) immediate religion
 - (2) the sundering of consciousness
 - (3) God as beauty and purposiveness
- III. The Consummate religion

Now, according to the introduction to the 1831 lectures, the division of the sundering of consciousness in determinate religion is constituted as follows:

Individual consciousness and essence split apart, and essence comes to be known as *power* over the finite spirit. This power is initially (a) *substance*, in which finite things disappear. Inasmuch as there is here an ascent from the contingency of finite things to God, this is the stage corresponding to the cosmological proof. (b) However, substance acquires the determination of *causality*, in which finite things do not disappear but exist as posited by substance and as subservient to it; substance is accordingly the *Lord*. To these two forms belong the Oriental religion.¹⁶

In other words, the religions that are developed after the introduction of the cosmological proof are, in terms of the *logic* and in agreement with the account of the third speculative moment if the cosmological proof provided in Chapter Four, determined according to the

¹⁶ Ibid., 1:463 [352-3.]

first two relations of necessity, namely (a) substance and accident and (b) cause and effect.

The 1831 *Philosophy of Religion*

In order to explain both the correlation of the proofs to Hegel's *philosophy of religion* as well as to articulate their significance, it is first necessary to provide a summary of Hegel's account of religion in accordance with how this account is structured in 1831. The following outline of both Hegel's account of the proofs and the manner in which these proofs correlate to the 1831 lectures is provided, by way of anticipation, as an aid to the reader:

(I) The Concept of Religion

(II) Determinate Religion

(A) Immediate Natural Religion

(B) The Religions of Rupture: **Cosmological Proof**

a. Religions of **Substance and Accident**

i. Chinese Religion

ii. Hinduism

iii. Buddhism

b. Religions of **Cause and Effect**

i. Persian and Jewish religion

ii. Religions of Anguish [Image of the Phoenix]

iii. Egyptian Religion of

(C) Religion of Beauty and Purposiveness

a. Religion of Beauty and Freedom

Early Greek Religion **Reciprocity**

Teleological Proof

Later Greek Religion [**Objective Idea: Life**]

b. Religion of External Purposiveness [**Subjective Idea**]

(III) The Consummate Religion

The Christian Religion [**The Ontological Proof: the Absolute Idea**]

(a) Kingdom of the Father

(b) Kingdom of the Son

(c) Kingdom of the Spirit

In 1831, the initial divisions of *religion* are first articulated formally, in terms of the moments of (a) the concept that is still immediate or in-itself (b) the primal division of the concept by means of which it is posited in a still finite manner, and (c) the concept that returns to itself. This division, however, is also to be grasped as the “objective development of the content.”¹⁷ Thus the divisions of the *philosophy of religion* are, as always, (A) the Concept of Religion, (B) Determinate Religion, and (C) the Consummate Religion.

1. The Concept of Religion

(A) Abstract Concept

Hegel’s philosophy of religion is to be comprehended as being articulated as a sphere of the system of philosophical science, and in particular as belonging to the final sphere of his *Philosophy of Spirit*, namely absolute knowing, preceded by art and succeeded by philosophy itself. As such, Hegel’s account of religion as articulated at this juncture is, according to Hegel, to be comprehended as a *result* of all that precedes it and as belonging to the final sphere of the system of philosophical science.¹⁸

The content of religion, and thus the subject-matter of the *philosophy of religion*, is God as the infinite, unconditioned, or the absolute, i.e., the truth. Religion as well as the *philosophy of religion*, and indeed as well as philosophy itself, has this as the *Sache selbst*. In religion, this may be designated as the *concept* of God insofar as, first, God is the truth or the absolute, and second, because “God can only be attained by thought

¹⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:462 [352.]

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, 1:356 [265.]

and... animals have no religion because they do not think.”¹⁹ Indeed, Hegel claims that thought is the very locus and soil of religion.²⁰ The demonstration of this role of thought, however, belongs to the *philosophy of religion* itself as a whole. Nevertheless, to begin with it may be asserted that, first (in agreement with Kant) according to Hegel the human being is concrete, i.e., does not merely think but is a developed and self-distinguished unity as *also* feeling, intuiting and representing. Thus, even if religion has thought as its soil, thought to begin with appears as just the abstract universal such that it “is only the abstract soil of religion, for God is not merely the universal but the concrete.”²¹ Because this unity is *concrete*, however, the ‘also’ of thought in relation to feeling, intuiting, representing, etc., is not to be understood as external mutual indifference. Thought penetrates the whole of human being in its being so that “thinking itself is manifested as intuiting, as representing.”²²

Now, the concept of God as it arises here, as noted above, is the result of the entire movement of the system of philosophical science from *Logic*, through to *nature* and up to *spirit*. The concept of God is thus not, as at the beginning of the *Logic*, merely the empty subject whose predicate is its truth, but is determined as the absolute and comprehensive truth, including and particularly the truth of finite spirit. In the *Philosophy of Spirit*, religion appears in the final division of this work, namely absolute spirit, as the sublation of subjective spirit (finite spirit in its immediacy; anthropology, phenomenology and philosophical psychology) and objective spirit (finite spirit as positing itself; morality, the state and history). In the moment of absolute spirit, spirit is

¹⁹ Ibid., 1:465 [354.]

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 1:465 [354.]

²² Ibid., 3:357 [276.]

in-and-for-itself and grasps itself in and through the highest and most comprehensive expressions of the truth, namely, and in succession, art, religion and philosophy. Insofar as the truth of spirit is its own self-knowing, then “the concept of religion is spirit that is *for* spirit.”²³ This concept as concrete is the self-knowing of spirit, yet “self-knowing contains two elements, what knows and what is known, and these form a unity as well as split asunder.”²⁴ In opposition to the unity of being and knowing, the sundered is finite consciousness and spirit. Yet the finite is not simply opposed to the infinite but is the positing self-knowing activity of the infinite. “Thus God knows himself in humanity, and human beings, to the extent that they know themselves as spirit and in their truth, know themselves in God.”²⁵

The concept of religion as philosophically comprehended thus involves not only God, but also the knowledge of God in religion and their reconciliation. There is to begin within, however, in the concept of religion as it arises in the sphere of absolute knowing, a distinction between the knowing and that which is known, i.e., finite spirit and the concept of religion involves “the distinction between the finite and the infinite spirit.”²⁶ On the one hand, there is the infinite, God, as the truth. On the other hand, there is finite consciousness’ *knowledge*. The latter constitutes the *form* of religion as religious consciousness.

(B) Religion’s Forms

As the knowledge of God by concrete human beings in their immediacy, religion is the universally external form of the knowledge of the truth. The most immediate form

²³ Ibid., 1:462 [352.]

²⁴ Ibid., 1:465 [354.]

²⁵ Ibid. Cf. also Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §564 r.

²⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:462 [352.]

of this knowledge is (1) feeling, and “*Religion must be felt, it must exist in feeling; otherwise it is not religion.*”²⁷ It is not, however, a single transient feeling – this would not be knowledge, for consciousness of the object would immediately pass away – but a feeling complex or *heart*.²⁸ This feeling is “the subjective aspect, the certainty of God”²⁹ which is, nonetheless, to be distinguished from the mere negative feeling of dependence, i.e., the negative feeling of one’s finitude. If religious feeling were merely such feeling of dependence and finitude, then as Hegel quipped, a dog would be the best Christian.³⁰

An animal, for example, just is its feeling, for example its hunger, and is to that extent negatively self-related insofar as it both posits its limit, its negation, in its urge and then negates that urge in its fulfillment. Its unity as an animal is this movement of restored identity and this movement is the feeling of negativity and dependence. In the case of human beings, however, this movement is not just the bad infinity, but the true infinity of infinite self-reflection such that the human subject knows itself as an ‘I’, that is, as the universal that is not merely dependent and negative but as affirmative and subsistent being-for-self.³¹ Feeling in religion is thus not just an immediate intuition that is empty of content. “Because human beings are not animals, they advance beyond mere feeling, making the content of the feeling an object standing over against them.”³² Admittedly, the animal may be said to have an object over and against it insofar as it desires something, but this desiring is not itself the explicit positing of the other as *its*

²⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 57 [18:245.]

²⁸ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:466 [355.]

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:396 [291.]

³⁰ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, “Forward to Heinrich’s *Religion in its Inner Relation to Science*,” in *Miscellaneous Writings of G.W.F. Hegel*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 347-8.

³¹ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1: 277-286 [183-91.]

³² *Ibid.*, 1:466 [355.]

other and as *ob-ject* (*Gegen-stand*.) “The second form of religion is thus (2) representation [*Vorstellung*.]”³³

When characterizing the form of religion as representation, Hegel often proceeds in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* to highlight the symbolic and allegorical manner in which religious doctrines are presented, taught and passed on. In 1827, for example, Hegel explains religious representation by pointing out that

if we say that God has begotten a son, we know quite well that this is only an image; representation provides us with “son” and “begetter” from a familiar relationship, which, as we well know, is not meant in its immediacy, but is supposed to signify a different relationship, which is something like this one.³⁴

Similarly, in the *Encyclopaedia*, he suggests that “representations in general can be regarded as *metaphors* of thoughts and concepts.”³⁵ Now, unquestionably the image, the symbolic, the metaphor and the allegorical all play an important role in Hegel’s detailed account of representation as this is developed in his *Philosophy of Spirit*. Nonetheless, if one focuses on these examples and takes them in abstraction from the context of Hegel’s detailed account and development of representation, the above is at least partially misleading and liable to lead to an inaccurate representation of Hegel’s position.

Vor-stellung, as Hegel defines this term, is “a consciousness of something that one has before oneself as something ob-jective [*Gegenstandliches*].”³⁶ This standing-before has a two-fold aspect. On the one hand, representation involves the subject’s *positing* a distinction between the subjective (and in particular the subject’s immediate sensory experience and intuition) and its ob-ject (*Gegenstand*.) As such, the ob-ject

³³ Ibid., 1:466 [355.]

³⁴ Ibid., 1:398 [293.]

³⁵ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §3 r.

³⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:396 [291.]

stands [*stellt*] before, i.e., is explicitly posited by, the subject. On the other hand, however, this ob-ject is also something that the subject has *before* it in such a way that “[t]he content of the representation is given, it is something immediately found [*Vorgefundenes*].”³⁷ On the one hand then, according to Hegel, in representation the subject is *free* insofar as it knows the content of representation precisely as *its* content. On the other hand, this freedom is limited and the subject knows itself to be free only with respect to the *form* of that content, while the content itself is something that it did not make or create, but is only immediate and given.³⁸ Accordingly, insofar as the term ‘objective’ (Objektiv) may be generally characterized as that which is true in-itself *independent* of the *merely* subjective, on Hegel’s account the immediate and merely given for representation constitutes “the outwardly or inwardly objective [*Objektiv*].”³⁹

Now, thought is the true infinite that passes beyond its own limits. Representation as in-itself thought is already in-itself this exceeding of the finitude of feeling and intuition, such that the content that it has is determined not as mere sensuous content or its own finite consciousness, but in opposition to this as the representation of that which is true independent of itself. Mere feeling and intuition cannot yet be the cognition of God, and indeed that would not be possible insofar as no finite, immediate sensuous object is God. Representation, however, negates the immediacy of feeling and intuition and distinguishes the subjectivity of its immediacy from that which is now posited as the true in-itself, i.e., that which is not just ob-ject, but is distinguished from the being for finite consciousness as the truth that is *objective*.

³⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, 213 [195.]

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 213 [195-6.]

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 213 [196.]

Just as feeling is the immediate subjective aspect of religion, then, so representation is the immediately objective aspect. In representation, God is given but in such a way that this givenness is itself negated as merely subjective and distinguished from what is objective. As the content of representation is concrete, however, this representation is not merely the figurative representation of God as he is eternally in himself, where representation abstracts the immediate sensuous sense of its terms and uses these terms in a metaphorical sense (e.g., ‘God begat a son’, where begat here is not meant in the normal biological sense.) Nor is God only represented indeterminately as related to consciousness, (e.g., God creates the world, where the word ‘creates’ “is the indeterminate expression for absolute bringing-forth”⁴⁰ as opposed to the manner in which human beings create.) Religious representation thus also includes an explicitly historical aspect and its content is characterized by this form such that God is taken to have entered in relation to consciousness in and through externally occurring events (e.g., ‘God created the world, sent his son.’)⁴¹

The third form of religion is (3) faith. The objective content of a religion as passed down by external authority is merely something outside the subject e.g., doctrine and historical assertions resting on the authority of chroniclers. No doubt, “[f]aith or conviction is mediated in each person by instruction, by education, by acquired culture, and then by the adoption of the general views of an era, its basic tenets and

⁴⁰ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:467 [356.]

⁴¹ Hegel’s account of representation in his 1831 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* upon which I am drawing is no doubt organized according to his account of representation and its three divisions, namely recollection, imagination and memory, in Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §§451-464.

convictions.”⁴² Nonetheless, it is essential that this content be internalized as the inner conviction of the subject. The sublation of representation and feeling as the opposition of the subjective and objective is devotion. Religion requires feeling, but it is only religion insofar as the knowledge of God is not merely an objective, nor merely a subjective feeling, but is the unity of both. As such, religion as the knowledge of God, as faith, is a determinate relation of (a) the individual’s inner belief or conviction with the believed, (b) the truth’s relation to a particular community or age, and (c) the historical founding of a religion.

(C) The Cultus

Consciousness does not merely stay at the level of abstractly knowing God, for unlike the abstract understanding and like speculative philosophical science, it is unwilling to let the finite and infinite rest side by side. Instead, faith itself in devotion is the transition to the cultus wherein consciousness raises itself to the consciousness of God through sacrifice and spiritual enjoyment. Here, throwing off its finitude, the inwardness of the individual consciousness “is also present as the consciousness of all within the community.”⁴³ The cultus is thus not just the individual raising itself to unity with God, but the participation of the individual in the concrete universality of the community and the reconciliation of the individual with its own universal substance. Implicitly, then, there is a distinction and contradiction between finite consciousness in its immediate knowledge and in its substantial and universal consciousness. At the same time, however, the cultus itself, although it begins from this separation, also “presupposes

⁴² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, 1825-6* trans. Robert F. Brown, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006ff) 1:250 [301.]

⁴³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:463 [352.]

the certainty that reconciliation has been implicitly accomplished.”⁴⁴ This reconciliation may either be immediate or mediated, “i.e., a unity that either has existed from the outset or is restored, and has to be restored, following a rupture.”⁴⁵ This restoration must not only be in-itself, however, but also for-itself, i.e. it must be for consciousness in the cultus itself. The separation thus again has a two-fold form that calls for its sublation, namely the immediate, “*natural* separation – external misfortune, crop failure, plague, and the like,”⁴⁶ or mediated as “the *spiritual* separation of the subjective will from the divine will, the separation of good and evil.”⁴⁷ In the cultus, the individual sublates its own immediate, natural, particular will and unites itself with the objective as God and its own substantial being in its community. Repentance is the undoing of the cleavage between the finite subject and God such that, through repenting, the individual is reconciled with God. This reconciliation is based on “the assurance that if human beings renounce their cleavage from God, they are reconciled with him.”⁴⁸

(D) *Human Life in the World*

In 1831, for the first time Hegel includes a discussion of the relation between religion and the life of human beings in the world, i.e., the relation between religion and objective spirit or the state. At first this discussion is bound to appear as an external consideration. As the editors point out, however, in 1827 Hegel claims that “ethical life [i.e., the sphere of family, civil society and state constitution] is the most genuine

⁴⁴ Ibid., 1:469 [358.]

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1:470 [358.]

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1:470 [359.]

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1:471 [360.]

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1:472 [360.]

cultus.”⁴⁹ This is only true, however, insofar as we are speaking of the fully developed and actual concept of religion in relation to the developed and actual concept of the state.

Initially, the state and religion are simply and immediately identical so that religion is state-religion or theocracy. There is, however, an implicit difference between the immediate particular subject in their everyday life and workaday world and their universal consciousness in the practices of the cultus wherein and whereby the individual is raised to the consciousness of God.⁵⁰ Insofar as the individual is not aware of its own substantial right and freedom in relation to the community, this difference is not for consciousness itself, but like itself is just a disappearing moment. Insofar as they are different, religion and the state are determined independently of one-another and indeed ultimately come into conflict. The truth however, according to Hegel, is that religion is not simply identical to the state, but that the two are manifestations of one and the same principle, i.e., one and the same spirit of their age. The actualization of the concepts of both religion and the state however, requires their distinction and separation. The truth is the sublation of this opposition.

Religion is the *foundation* of the state inasmuch as

Religion is the nation’s consciousness of its own being and of the highest being. This knowledge is in fact the universal being. 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 the conception of itself.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid., 1:446 [335.] my interpolation.

⁵⁰ Cf. Ibid., 1:469 [358.]

⁵¹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction, Reason in History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 105 [126.]

The state is thus the externalization of the peoples highest principle, namely their concept of freedom, and “the concept of freedom is realized in the state.”⁵² Thus Hegel claims that

[t]here is one concept of freedom in religion and the state. This one concept is the highest concept that human beings have, and it is made real by them. A people that has a bad concept of God has also a bad state, bad government and bad laws.⁵³

As we shall see, then, according to Hegel the explicit reconciliation of religion and the state such that the state is indeed the genuine cultus requires both the realization of the concept of religion and the concept state as such. As to philosophy, according to Hegel philosophy is itself “a continuous cultus.”⁵⁴ Moreover, in realizing its own concept, philosophy achieves the reconciliation of faith and secular finite understanding in reason.⁵⁵ This, however, is to anticipate the result of the entirety of the *philosophy of religion*.

(II) Determinate Religion

From the concept of religion we pass to the determination of the concept in its “primal division” or judgment [*Ur-teil*] “i.e., the concept as it differentiates and thus posits itself in a limited manner.”⁵⁶

⁵² Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:452 [340.]

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1:446 [334.]

⁵⁵ Cf. Ibid., 3:347 [269-70.]

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1:462 [352.] Cf. Hegel’s account of Judgment as primal division in Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 552 [12.55.]

(A) Immediate Religion

According to Hegel's account in 1831, immediate or natural religion as so-called primitive religions of magic, are merely "sensuously desirous consciousness,"⁵⁷ i.e., they have the form of mere immediate knowing and willing. Religion proper, Hegel argues in 1831, only begins when there is a rupture in consciousness such that consciousness

knows itself as merely natural and distinguishes the genuine or the essential from this. Within the essential being this natural state, this finitude, is of no value, and is known to be such.⁵⁸

This is not to say that according to Hegel there is no elevation of consciousness in immediate natural religion, only that this elevation is equally immediate, merely implicit, and that consciousness does not yet posit itself explicitly as finite in relation to its own other, namely universal power. *In* positing itself *as* finite, however, consciousness explicitly distinguishes the infinite from itself as the other that is over and against it and as the essential or the truth. Consciousness thus appears for itself, in opposition to God (i.e., the One, substance), as mere semblance, i.e., as "singular, contingent and accidental."⁵⁹

(B) Rupture of Consciousness

Religion proper thus begins when the distinction between the finite and infinite is not merely *in itself* but explicitly *for* religious consciousness. Religious consciousness is first aware of itself in its finitude in relation to God when God is articulated, according to

⁵⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:515-6, fn.5 [413-14.] Compare also *ibid.*, 2:722-4 and 1:463 [351-2.]

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:516 fn.5 [414.]

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:724 [613.]

the determinations of Being, as the infinite and the One. The aim of religious consciousness is the elevation of itself from its immediacy as finite *Dasein* to the infinite.⁶⁰ This elevation, according to Hegel, is expressed in the inference that is the cosmological proof.⁶¹ It should be noted, however, that in 1831, Hegel makes explicit the fact that

[c]onsciousness of the single steps of this inference pertains only to cultured consciousness. Of course this elevation takes place in thinking, but it cannot be said often enough that thinking is one thing and the consciousness of it is another.⁶²

The “thoughtful consideration of this thinking elevation is what we add to the process.”⁶³ *For-itself*, then, the movement that religious consciousness undergoes is merely the movement from the finite to the infinite. The truth of this movement, however, is that “the contingent, the many, etc. do not truly exist, but only the One. This can also be expressed abstractly as follows: “The truth in all determinate being [*Dasein*] is being [*Sein*].”⁶⁴

In itself or *for us*, then, this inference is expressed in thought as the opposition of the contingent and absolute necessity and may be formulated as the saying that “[e]verything contingent presupposes something necessary; but this world is something contingent, a mere aggregate; therefore it presupposes something necessary.”⁶⁵ This is the result of the formal syllogism such that God is here determined as absolute necessity.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 2:727 [616.]

⁶¹ Ibid., 2:726 [615-6.]

⁶² Ibid., 2:726-7 [616.]

⁶³ Ibid., 2:726 [615.]

⁶⁴ Ibid., 2:727 [616.]

⁶⁵ Ibid., 2:727 [616.]

For-itself, then, the religion of rupture is one thing, and for us another. That which is in-itself, as the thought of this rupture and which begins from the opposition of the contingent and necessary, is determined as the content of religion and its representation of God. According to Hegel, then, the opposition of the contingent and necessary that is thought in the formal syllogism is actual in and as the representation of the Oriental religions. Oriental religion, however is not just our concept, but is determinate and constitutes a development and progression:

Spirit does not confine itself to the result of the process but grasps it in its entirety. What is in and for itself necessary is without qualification, but it also implies accidents, which are determined as a kind of being [*Seiendes*] that is nothing.⁶⁶

God is thus determined as *power* over the finite⁶⁷ and “[t]his power is initially (a) substance, in which finite things disappear.” In other words, that which is determined as the in-and-for-itself of the first sphere of Oriental religion (including the Chinese religion, Hinduism and Buddhism/Lamanism) is *logically* the relation of substance and accident.⁶⁸ This constitutes the articulation not just of the starting-point of the proof, nor the conclusion according to the syllogism of the understanding, but the full articulation of the relation between the world, human beings, and God. In its articulation and development it is thus the determinate content of these religions.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 2:727 [616-17.].

⁶⁷ Cf. Ibid., 1:463 [353.].

⁶⁸ See Ibid., 2:727-8 [617.]. Also see Ibid., 1:463 [353.].

(a) *The Religions of Substance and Accident*⁶⁹

The contradiction of substance and accident is that substance is simply an abstract and indeterminate unity which as absolute power is related to its accidents. On the one hand, accidents are merely disappearing moments, are nothing, while on the other hand, the substance is what it is by virtue of these accidents.

The religions of this sphere are forms of pantheism, and God is only related to the world in as much as this world is the emanation of the One substance. This movement, the relation of substance and accident, is blind necessity and the annihilation is the highest point of this sphere of religion, for consciousness only knows itself as immediate and finite and thus as untrue accident, i.e., as the inessential that passes away. For Hegel, then, Buddhism and Lamaism, where the end is precisely *annihilation*, i.e., nothing, is the consummation of this sphere.⁷⁰ Transmigration of the soul and reincarnation awaits those who do not reach this nothing, *Nirvana*, in and through the annihilation of their self. Nonetheless, in this religion, this negation of the self,

is ideal Unity, the elevation above the limitation of Nature and of existence at large; - the return of consciousness into the soul. This element, which is contained in Buddhism, has made its way in China, to that extent to which the Chinese have become aware of the unspirituality of their condition, and the limitation that hampers their consciousness.⁷¹

As such, this religion forms the transition to the second sphere of Oriental religion. "The essence of this stage is that substance determines itself inwardly."⁷² In the second sphere

⁶⁹ Compare supra, pp.136.

⁷⁰ Cf. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 168 [12:210-11.]

⁷¹ Ibid., 168 [12:210.]

⁷² Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:736 [623.]

of Oriental religion, then, although God is still determined as substance and absolute power, now

substance acquires the determination of causality, in which finite things do not disappear but exist as posited by substance and as subservient to it, substance is accordingly the *Lord*.⁷³

(b) *The Religions of Transition or Causality*⁷⁴

Logically speaking, in the relation of substance and accident, the accidents simply disappear into the substance. A substance is only what it is insofar as it is related to its attributes as their unity, and accidents are only insofar as they appear as disappearing moments that collapse into nothing and substance. In this collapse, however, substance also returns to itself out of its external negation. Substance is thus now determined as

power *reflected into itself*, not transitive power but power that posits *determinations* and *distinguishes them from itself*. As self-referring in its determining, it is *itself* that which it posits as a negative or makes into a *positedness*. This positedness is, as such, sublated substantiality, the merely posited, the *effect*; the substance that is for itself is, however, *cause*.⁷⁵

In the relation of cause and effect according to the *Logic*, substance is determined as reflected within itself and full of content such that the determination of this content is the positing of an effect.⁷⁶ Such a cause as reflected within itself is substance that externalizes itself, i.e., it is absolute power not merely in itself, but a *creative* power. The relation here, because it arises from the determination or content that the cause is in-itself, is one of necessity and what is posited is its own self-exposition.⁷⁷ At the same time, however, what is posited is also immediately distinct from the cause, i.e., the effect is

⁷³ Ibid., 1:463 [353.]

⁷⁴ Compare *supra*, pp.126-8.

⁷⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 492 [11:396.]

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, 493 [11:397.] and Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 167 [169-70.]

⁷⁷ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 493 [11:397.]

itself a substance or independent actuality, but as an immediate actuality, something posited *as* posited (i.e. as contingent,)⁷⁸ as something that only is insofar as its essence is found in another, such that its being is being-for-another, while it itself is immediately passive in relation to its cause and presupposes it. The cause, on the other hand, is what is active.⁷⁹

Insofar as cause and effect are held abstractly apart by the understanding, it appears as though cause is something that is in itself, i.e., independent and prior to its effect. Yet cause is precisely only a cause in the relation of effect.⁸⁰ Moreover, while effect is immediately passive, as an immediate actuality it itself contains the necessity of its own unfolding, i.e., becomes a cause or *re-acts*. The relation of cause and effect thus becomes an infinite movement backwards and forwards, or rather it is just this infinite contradiction.

As in the first sphere of Oriental religion, where the relation of substance and accident unfolds as the Chinese religion, Hinduism and Buddhism, so this movement of the relation of cause and effect is externally manifested in (a) The Persian and Jewish religions, (b) the religions of anguish, and (c) Egyptian religion.

Now, because in the religions of this sphere substance is determined as *self-*determination, God does not receive some “finite determinateness but rather one that is appropriate to universality; therefore substance is defined right away as good.”⁸¹ ‘Good’ here is meant in its proper sense, i.e., not as external purpose good for some end, but as

⁷⁸ See *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §154., and Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 494 [11:398.]

⁷⁹ See Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §154.

⁸⁰ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 493 [11:397.]

⁸¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:737 [623.]

“the universal, that which is directly determined within itself.”⁸² Just as cause is immediately determined as posited in opposition to effect, however, so the good “enters into conflict with evil, which gives rise to dualism.”⁸³ The first dualism is the immediate and external opposition that is expressed in Persian religion as (i) the universal still in the natural form of *light*, and that (ii) has evil as an external antithesis.⁸⁴ This antithesis, however is immediate, i.e., is not mediated, so that

[g]ood is engaged in a struggle with evil, which it is destined to overcome, but destined only because the struggle knows no end.⁸⁵

Second, however, in Judaism, God is determined as the opposite of effect, i.e., as positing the world so that “for the first time God is truly known as *creator* and lord of the world.”⁸⁶ Judaism is thus, according to Hegel’s initial determination of the second sphere of Oriental religion, its very paradigm. Nonetheless, the weakness of this entire division of determinate religion is precisely the unresolved dualism of the universal as what is inner and the particular as outer, i.e., between spirit and nature, such that the two are contradictorily mixed together.⁸⁷ According to Hegel, then, the conception of God as creator is still defective and one-sided. This is manifest in Judaism in two ways:

First, this one-sidedness is manifest in the conception of the fall as a contingent event.⁸⁸ On the one hand, this is understood as an elevation, for God himself claims that in this act “human beings have actually become like God.”⁸⁹ On the other hand, human

⁸² Ibid., 2:352 [254.]

⁸³ Ibid., 2:737 [623.]

⁸⁴ See Ibid., 2:353 [255] and 612 [507.]

⁸⁵ Ibid., 2:354 [255.]

⁸⁶ Ibid. 2:739 [625.]

⁸⁷ Cf. Ibid., 2:516 fn.5 [414.]

⁸⁸ Ibid., 2:741 [627.]

⁸⁹ Ibid.

beings are precisely for this act, and “by way of punishment, driven out of Paradise”⁹⁰.

The fall is thus taken to be a cleavage of human beings and the loss of the natural state of innocence to which they aim to return. Such a return, however, would according to Hegel in fact constitute a degradation of both God and human beings. Second, although God has been raised here to the pure universality of thought and purified of the sensuous element still present in Zoroastrianism, in the Judaic religion, while “[o]bjectively speaking, God is universal lord, viewed subjectively the Jewish people alone is his chosen property, because it alone recognizes and worships him.”⁹¹

This one-sidedness is also manifest, according to Hegel in what he takes to be the formality and externality of Judaic law. The character of this law is, according to Hegel, rooted in the fact that only God is grasped as free subjectivity while the human elevation to God, the goodness of human beings, is only attained by the subjugation of the subject to laws and “do not yet appear as laws of reason.”⁹²

Judaism thus ends in the contradiction of the estrangement of nature and spirit or of the particular and the universal. The religion of anguish objectivizes this opposition such that the estrangement is internalized in God himself. This movement, however, is still burdened with natural immediacy. Thus the idea of the death and rebirth of God found throughout the Persian nations and manifest in the image and myth of the Phoenix and which recurs in the Egyptian myth of Osiris is still the contradiction and dichotomy of the inner and outer. This image is symbolic of the inner unresolved with the outer such that each turns into the other. Thus

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 2:741 [628.]

⁹² Ibid., 2:742 [628.]

it is presented in a natural course, which is, however, known essentially as symbolical and is accordingly not merely a natural course but a universal course.⁹³

This contradiction is not overcome in this sphere, but instead finds its most contradictory and enigmatic formulation in the ruins of Egypt and in the dead symbolism of Egyptian art,⁹⁴ in the monuments of the pyramids and particularly in the Sphinx:

The transition from this enigma of the natural to the spiritual is the sphinx, with its animal body and human head. It is the Greeks who make the transition from this enigma to the clear consciousness of spirit; and they express it in the most naïve form in the story of the sphinx, whose riddle was solved by the Greek Oedipus when he pronounced the answer to be: man.⁹⁵

(C) *The Religions of Beauty and Purposiveness*

While there can be no question that Hegel always regarded the teleological proof as correlating to the Roman religion – calling it the religion of expediency and external purposiveness – there is a certain ambiguity in Hegel’s account of the Greek religion. On the one hand, even in the 1829 *Lectures on the Proofs*, Hegel makes the discussion of Greek religion and its concept of fate integral to his criticism of the cosmological proof and the concept of absolute necessity.⁹⁶ On the other hand, however, in 1831 he claims that the teleological proof

first occurs among the Greeks; it was formulated by Socrates (Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, end of book 1). Socrates makes purposiveness – especially in the form of the good – the basic principle [of reason.] The reason for his imprisonment is, according to him, that the Athenians have deemed it good. Even historically, therefore, this proof coincides with the development of freedom.⁹⁷

⁹³ Ibid., 2:453 fn.572 [353.]

⁹⁴ “[T]he transition to Greek religion is found in Egyptian religion, or rather in Egyptian works of art.” Ibid., 2:744 [629.]

⁹⁵ Ibid., 2:747 [631.]

⁹⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, pp.108-9 [18:286-7.]

⁹⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:703 [593.]

At first, it would seem as though in 1831 Hegel resolves this vacillation in his position by simply associating the Greek religion with the teleological proof. Yet a new perplexity arises, for in 1831 Hegel does *not* immediately introduce the Greek religion via the teleological proof, but instead opens by stating that

[t]he first form of this religion of art is still characterized by immediacy and naturalness. Humanity first possesses the divine in an immediate, and therefore also finite, manifold form – this is the religion of beauty, the Greek religion, which although its basis [is] true thought, nevertheless belongs to the finite religions because of this sensible aspect.⁹⁸

Hegel only *then* proceeds to the discussion of the teleological proof, and, following this, provides an involved analysis of the Greek religion.

In light of the previous account of the logical correlation of the proofs, this perplexity disappears and the necessity of this progression becomes clear. Insofar as the first sphere of Oriental religion is correlated to the logical category of the relation of substance and accident, and insofar as the second correlates to the relation of cause and effect, there must be a religion that correlates to the third relation of necessity, namely the category of reciprocity. Now, the conclusion of reciprocity is also logically the deduction of the concept of freedom.⁹⁹ Let us accordingly see how Hegel's presentation of the Greek religion correlates to this logical movement.

(a) The Greek Religion

According to Hegel, Greek religion begins in “immediacy and naturalness”¹⁰⁰ and remains throughout “infected therefore with natural being.”¹⁰¹ Greek religion begins from

⁹⁸ Ibid., 2:748 [632.]

⁹⁹ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 504-5 [11:409.]

¹⁰⁰ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:748 [632.]

the immediate natural gods, the “old gods or Titus, Uranus, etc.,”¹⁰² but these immediate gods are banished by the new gods, who still contain the natural within them, “though in a subordinate position.”¹⁰³ The new gods, as merely immediately sublated nature, are not yet raised to thought, but are represented, although represented as finite spirits and in the form of finite spirit, i.e. as anthropomorphic beings.

Since these gods as finite beings are not yet raised to thought, they are “only pictured representationally, and are therefore not yet fused into a single God but are still many gods. Human beings do not simply find these essences [*Wesenheiten*] outside them, but bring them into being through their representation as phantasy.”¹⁰⁴ It is thus not only God or the gods who makes humanity here, but humanity also makes the gods. The gods themselves proceed from and

appear as “made”: ποιηταί means “makers.” As Herodotus says, Homer and Hesiod made their gods for the Greeks, while Phidias’s image [of Zeus] gave them their absolute representation of the father of the Gods.¹⁰⁵

Human beings thus create the gods in art works and intuit themselves in these idealized *anthropomorphic* figures. Art is thus no longer symbolic art that seeks to “externalize some abstract representation,”¹⁰⁶ nor are the gods represented as something merely natural, i.e., mere animals, nor even as a mixture of the human and animal as with the Sphinx, but in the external shape of spirit, i.e., the shape of ideal human beings. The

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 2:753 [636.]

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 2:755 [637.]

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 2:755 [637-8.] Cf. also 2:657 fn. 405 [549]: “But here they do not come upon their essentialities as present and unmediated natural shapes; to the contrary, they bring them forth for the imagination. [*Sie sind gemacht, gedichtet, aber nicht erdichtet.*]”

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 2:755 [638.]

Greeks know the gods and thus themselves in art works that are neither immediately natural objects nor symbols of something that is merely other. Instead,

[w]ith the Greeks we see that this essentiality became something that is not exterior and natural but interior and human, formed first of all as a [human] shape and as its beauty, so that human beings comprehend themselves as free.¹⁰⁷

Hegel thus calls this religion the religion of art, and takes *beauty* to be its principle, for here the existence and external element correlates to the inner concept or essence.

The individual does not just disappear into the universal but “is just as immediately self-referring negativity, *singularity*, *absolute determinateness* that stands opposed to anything other and excludes it – individual personality.”¹⁰⁸ These God’s are thus individual personalities who relate to one-another in their independence. Likewise the Greeks, to the extent that they produce and know themselves as such personalities, know themselves as free.

While these individualities are not immediately unified in one God, they are implicitly unified under a single power, *fate*, that is abstract universality and necessity “devoid alike of concept and purpose.”¹⁰⁹ Here the finitude of Greek freedom presents itself, for they “had still no absolute content to oppose” to either contingency or external necessity. Greek freedom is thus “tinged with finitude.”¹¹⁰ Decisions were still made on the external basis of, for example, oracles rather than determined inwardly from the subject. Likewise, if fate opposed a finite purpose, the response was to give up all purposes and subject oneself to fate, i.e., to external necessity, which appears as

¹⁰⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume 1*, pp.387-8 [338.]

¹⁰⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 514 [12:17.]

¹⁰⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:756 [639.]

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:757 [639.]

subjugation and the absolute loss of freedom that is called justice – yet justice as necessity is blind.

Greek religion thus contains the mixture of the natural and spiritual that we saw in the previous sphere of religion, but now represented as the harmonious relation between the gods of the hearth and the Olympian gods. This harmonious unity is free just as the truth of absolute necessity in reciprocity is freedom. This freedom, however, is still conditioned by fate that is something immediate and unconscious until later, when Zeus is recognized as fate and the true. “Greece did not yet have this consciousness in its Homeric texts but only achieved it at the highest point of its culture.”¹¹¹ To begin with, then, fate appears just as the incomprehensible external necessity.

The conflict of fate shows itself to consciousness to be a necessary conflict insofar as it comes to be represented as the necessary collision of the independent ethical powers.¹¹² This collision and its necessity also comes forth first in art, and in particular in Sophocles tragedy *Antigone*, where the “love of family, the holy, the inner, what is also called the law of the lower deities because it belongs to sentiment, comes into collision with the right of the state.”¹¹³ Such a collision is realized in the *Antigone* as itself necessary insofar as the conflict both arises from the undeniable right of each and reveals the one-sidedness of both. Necessity is thus no longer comprehended as the blind necessity of a substance indifferent to its other, but instead as

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² See *ibid.*, 2:665 [557] and 2:755 [638.]

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 2:665 [557.] Compare also Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* ¶¶ 429-37 [9:232-237] and ¶¶ 446-476 [9:241-260.]

the independence, that is the repulsion of itself from itself into distinct independent [terms], [but] which, as this repulsion, is identical to itself, and which is this movement of exchange *with itself* alone that remains at home *with itself*.¹¹⁴

As represented by Sophocles, however, “necessity is not blind; it is recognized as authentic justice... Blind destiny is an unsatisfying thing. In these tragedies justice is *comprehended*.”¹¹⁵ Since the finite purposes of individuals have been revealed as the self-movement of external necessity, in comprehending this external movement, consciousness grasps the whole as the self-determination of necessity according to which what it posits is not an other but necessity’s own activity. As the self-reflecting, self-positing and self-determining activity that coincides with itself, it is freedom.¹¹⁶ This very realization of freedom, however, is at once the undoing of the peaceful harmony of the Greek religion and state.

It may also be noted that according to Hegel this split coupled with the consciousness of freedom is the very condition under which philosophy can first arise. Only then can the subject become conscious of him- or herself as independent from the universal spirit. For Hegel, then, the trial and death of Socrates marks the end of Ancient Greece itself, its own self-judgment and ruination, for the emergence of individual consciousness in its independence was precisely the result of this culture.¹¹⁷ Nonetheless, in the calm ether of thought, consciousness raises itself to the idea, but only the idea in its immediacy such that the world is comprehended as “a harmonic whole, an organic life

¹¹⁴ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §158.

¹¹⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:665, fn. 428 [557.]

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:402 [302.]

¹¹⁷ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, 1825-6*, 2:127 [130], 2:154-5 [162-3.]

that is determined according to purposes – this was what the ancients understood by *νοῦς*.”¹¹⁸

Teleology and Life: Νοῦς

As explained previously, Hegel is deeply critical of external teleology that takes things to be mere external ends for our subjective human purposes and ends such that everything is reduced to a mere means. While nothing finite and particular absolutely manifests the idea, i.e. the result which internal teleology is, nonetheless such internal teleology is actual and is partially manifest in various finite and external objects. In particular, internal teleology “actually exists (even if only one-sidedly) in what is living or organism.”¹¹⁹

An individual organism determines itself in objectivity by positing itself in the externality and distinction of different organs that serve as the means for the continuation of its life. These means, however, do not fall outside of the organism and are not merely used, but instead are also the ends and the material “in which life comes to fruition and preserves itself.”¹²⁰ Such a living being thus produces itself and maintains itself in its own activity, i.e., the organic process is its self-preservation where each member is just as much means as ends and sensation penetrates the whole of the organism as its being for self.¹²¹

Now, insofar as the natural organism manifests itself as just such a self-subsisting and self-preserving being-for-self, the organism is the external manifestation of internal teleology. Nonetheless, natural organisms are finite – they do not absolutely sustain

¹¹⁸ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:715 [604.]

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:710 [599.]

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ See *ibid.*

themselves, but are susceptible to death. Furthermore, as Hegel points out, any particular natural organism may be regarded as still merely subjective, and thus one-sided, insofar as the organism itself is dependent upon and requires “favorable external conditions.”¹²²

An organism is thus only partially self-preserving and partially falls under external teleology insofar as it has various needs and turns outward objects into its inorganic nature and means. Furthermore, these organisms are dependent and presuppose the inorganic, while the inorganic, and even the relatively inorganic in relation to a particular organism, at least immediately speaking, seems quite independent so that “the earth could subsist without vegetation, the vegetable kingdom without animals, and the animal kingdom without humans.”¹²³ For this reason, the external conditions necessary for the existence and continuation of the organism, as external to the organism, appear to be quite contingent. Looked at from the point of view of finite spirit, i.e., subjectivity that is explicitly for itself, when it grasps itself as such an organism, “the question that arises is whether human beings will or will not find what is necessary there ready for them.”¹²⁴

The adaption of the inorganic to the organic, this harmony that does not lie immediately in the subjective organism or the inorganic itself, must lie in a *third* thing, i.e., God conceived of as wisdom. This third term is that which by the ancient Greek philosophers is “called $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$: the world is a harmonic whole, an organic life that is determined according to purposes.”¹²⁵ It may also be called the world soul or $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ where this “soul is the life principle in the organic.”¹²⁶ Here, thought moves beyond finite

¹²² Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 209 [206.]

¹²³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:712-13 [602.]

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:713 [602.]

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:715 [604.]

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

purposes to the thought of the “*one* principle, one organic life of the universe, one living system. Everything that is, constitutes the organs of the one subject.”¹²⁷ Thus finite purposes, including those of animal organisms as well as human beings are sublated – these purposes come to naught and the organism dies, only to be consumed by another, and life continues on in this manner.

According to Hegel, then, the ancient Greeks reach consciousness of freedom and the idea, but only the idea as *life* and not yet the absolute idea.¹²⁸ Finite spirit itself has not been posited explicitly in the idea, or what is the same thing, the idea is only the objective idea and not yet the self-reflexive idea that is also for-itself, namely *cognition* and the absolute, self-knowing idea.¹²⁹

Now, the flight of Greece into *theory* and the inner world of subjectivity turns around into *practice* as “the expansion of undeveloped subjectivity – inward conviction of existence – to the visibility of the real world.”¹³⁰ Here external purposiveness again arises, but explicitly as that which is supposed to count as objective and as the idea of the Good itself.¹³¹ This is the movement from the Greek to the Roman religion.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 2:716 [604.]

¹²⁸ Cf. Ibid., 2:715 [604], Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825-6*, 1:92 [269-70], 1:94 [272], 1: 163 [136], 1:234-5 [200-201], 1:286-7 [348-9.]

¹²⁹ On the absolute idea as the self-knowing idea, see Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 675 [12.178] and 735 [12.236.]

¹³⁰ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 281 [12.342.]

¹³¹ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 730 [12.232.]

(b) The Roman Religion

It has already been mentioned that, according to Hegel, the Roman religion is the religion of “external purposiveness or expediency.”¹³² All that is necessary, then, is to explain how Hegel distinguishes between the Greek and Roman religion and how the latter forms the transition to the consummate religion, i.e. Christianity.

Whereas Greece falls apart insofar as the inwardness of subjectivity appears as the harbinger of corruption, in Rome this inward subjectivity “is demanded and posited by the principle itself.”¹³³ Subjectivity, however, is opposed to objectivity and is the demand to sublimate it. The substance of the Greek community, fate, is now to become the outward, externally posited purpose as the empirically universal and “all-encompassing reality.”¹³⁴ The principle of this religion is thus external purposiveness.

First, the inwardness of subjectivity, in relation to objectivity, is taken as the absolutely commanding power to be realized as a practical end that is posited as the real universal end, i.e., “an all-encompassing purpose but on the plane of empirical reality – i.e., the purpose of *world dominion*.”¹³⁵ This end is the Roman state itself that has its universal dominion as its end. God here is “the power of abstract universality, and was worshiped by them as Fortuna Publica or Jupiter Capitolinus.”¹³⁶

Second, however, this universal purpose is only abstract such that particularity falls outside of it. The inward subjectivities are themselves concrete human beings with individual purposes, and these individual purposes are themselves worshiped as gods. If

¹³² Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:758 [640.]

¹³³ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 281 [12:343.]

¹³⁴ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:500 [398.]

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 2:500 [399.]

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:759 [640.]

the Romans take up the Greek gods, they no less transform them such that, far from being beautiful subjects who are honored as the manifestation of the substantial unity and spirit of the peoples, these gods are “universal elementary powers that are not free.”¹³⁷ The gods of Greece were worshiped and enjoyed in the inner relation of “free theoretical intuition”¹³⁸ as the manifestation of the spirit of the people. By contrast, the gods of Rome are not living concrete individuals, but rather “dead machinery.”¹³⁹ In this religion, the Greek gods are thus reduced to lifeless means, the worship of whom is for the attainment of particular purposes so that these gods are merely “powers of prosaic utility, devoid of any ethical power.”¹⁴⁰ Here, the gods appear, on the one hand, as subordinate to the purposes of human beings, and yet at the same time and on the other hand, human beings call on the gods because they need them. “This religion is consequently one of dependence; the prevailing feeling is one of dependence, unfreedom.”¹⁴¹

Now, subjectivity at first recognizes itself in this world of purposes whose end is Roman dominion, i.e., the dominion of Romans over the world, individuality and subjectivity. Moreover, its inward subjectivity has the manifestation of personality in possessing of private property.¹⁴² Laws recognize this right to property and this object is recognized as the subjects own. The subject gains recognition and is a citizen as one who owns property, but they are only recognized as “the abstractly juridical person capable of ownership.”¹⁴³ Yet, just as all the gods were ultimately subordinated to Jupiter as the

¹³⁷ Ibid., 2:207 [113.]

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 2:759 [641.]

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 2:508 [406.]

¹⁴² Cf. Ibid., 2:511 [409.], Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 281 [12:342.]

¹⁴³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:511-12 [409.]

supreme power, so these subjects, devoid of any ethical life and sunk “to the level of private persons with an *equal* status and with formal rights... are accordingly held together only by an abstract and arbitrary will of increasing proportions.”¹⁴⁴

The democratic constitution accordingly collapsed into the rule of the emperors. It is thus no less true of the gods than of human beings that “[o]ne of these particular spirits raises itself to become the fate of all the others.”¹⁴⁵ The state is held together only by the force of the will of one person.

Each person is, according to the principle of his personality, entitled only to possession, while the Person of Persons lays claim to the possession of all these individuals, so that the right assumed by the social unit is at once abrogated and robbed of validity.¹⁴⁶

Hereby, this single person is raised to the level of a god himself, as the “Fortuna or *fatum* hovering over the life and well-being of each and every citizen.”¹⁴⁷ The emperor, this person of persons, is the power not only over the property of individuals, but even over life and death.¹⁴⁸ Since there is no principle that was higher than the individual personality and its purpose, there was nothing with which to oppose this tyranny. Personality determined as private right and property is thus shown to be a nullity and this is a period of universal slavery. Such slavery might at first seem to pass over the emperor who reigns as power and lord over all. Yet these tyrants are no less shown to be not only capricious and finite in content, but also quite dependent, for “the Roman emperor [is]

¹⁴⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §357.

¹⁴⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:758 [640.]

¹⁴⁶ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 320 [12:387.]

¹⁴⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:224 [129.]

¹⁴⁸ Cf. *Ibid.* 2:223-4 [128-9.]

lord of the world, as long as he has guards to be the tools of his individuality; [but he has only] to offend these guards and he is lost.”¹⁴⁹

The highest expression of this Roman existence is contained in the spectacles of the coliseum in its *purposeless* bloodletting.¹⁵⁰ Here, the only remaining virtue is displayed, for ethical existence has collapsed and the only content of the will is the immediate content of desire. This desire, however, has been shown to be something external, dependent, and alienated from a consciousness that originally took its purpose to be the universal truth. Now this subjectivity recognizes that it is only formally infinite, and this formal infinity consists just in holding onto its subjectivity as pure self-conscious freedom that is free of all dependence in thought. The reality of the subject, which belongs to the subject itself in its externalization, is that reality is a nullity and mere being-for-other. In other words, the world has been reduced to the level of universal slavery, and all that remains is the virtue of dying unperturbed. This is the “ultimate and unique virtue that Roman patricians could exercise, and they shared it with slaves and malefactors condemned to death.”¹⁵¹

Thus arises a state of absolute unhappiness and self-contradiction. On the one hand, subjectivity is aware of itself as the infinite form, as free in thought such that objectivity that stands over and against it is a nullity and a mere means. On the other hand, however, this subjectivity also recognizes the need to externalize itself, but in doing

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 2:225 [130.]

¹⁵⁰ See *ibid.* 2:222 [127.]

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 2:223 [128.] Compare Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶206 [9:121.]: “The doubling, which was previously distributed between two individuals, the master and the servant, thereby turned back into one individual. Although the doubling of self-consciousness within itself, which is essential to the concept of spirit, is thereby present, its unity is not yet present, and the *unhappy consciousness* is the consciousness of itself as a doubled, merely contradictory creature.”

this it is aware of itself in this reality as a nullity and mere means. This despair of the world and reality is equally then a despair of itself and the self-consciousness of its own nullity from which it cannot escape. What has actually been negated, however, is the immediacy of subjectivity. Subjectivity at first takes itself to be infinite and immediately identical to the universal. The content which subjectivity has for itself, however, is thoroughly finite and contingent. Thus Hegel states that “The element of subjectivity that was wanting to the Greeks, we found among the Romans; but as it was merely formal and in itself indefinite, it took its material from passion and caprice.”¹⁵² What subjectivity experiences, then, is the nullity of the immediacy of its subjectivity and the nullity of the finite purposes and the gods of such purposes. From the point of view of this age, the Roman world is thus a time of despair, pain, and consciousness of its “abandonment by God”¹⁵³ and its evilness, i.e., of separation from the universal that is in and for itself. In itself, however, this despair is the renunciation of subjectivity’s one-sidedness and immediacy, so that this despair, this absolutely unhappy consciousness, constitutes the discipline and training that prepares the ground for the consummate religion.¹⁵⁴

(III) The Consummate Religion

As we already know, according to Hegel the ontological proof correlates to the consummate religion or Christianity alone. The task for now is thus simply to explain this assertion in relation to Hegel’s account of the consummate religion.

¹⁵² Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 319 [12:387.]

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 318 [12:386.]

¹⁵⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, p.320 [12.388.] and Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:230-231 [135-6.], 2:699 fn. 544 [590.] and 2:760 [641-2.]

According to the finite understanding, concept and being are absolutely distinct, for the concept is merely the subjective concept and thus merely finite, merely our thought, and merely something formal. The ontological proof, accordingly, is taken to merely assert the unity of subjective concept and objectivity. Speculatively, however, the ontological proof is the absolute idea. The absolute idea, however, is at once a syllogism of syllogisms that constitutes the *logic* as a whole. Likewise, according to Hegel's account of the Christian or revealed religion, in this religion the concept of religion is fulfilled such that "the concept has become adequate to itself."¹⁵⁵ The concept that is adequate to itself is the absolute idea, and thus in this religion God is known as the absolute idea.¹⁵⁶ God is, first, as the father, the essence, the abstract universal, the moment of the concept. God is, second, as the son, diremption and differentiation, appearance, the particular, and the moment of the judgment. God is, third, as spirit, absolute return to self from absolute negativity, the individual, and reconciliation. These three moments together are the moments of the syllogism. These three, moreover, constitute three spheres¹⁵⁷ – i.e., three syllogisms.¹⁵⁸

(A) Kingdom of the Father

According to Hegel, then, the first syllogism or sphere is the Kingdom of the Father. Here, God is taken up in pure thought as he is eternally, i.e., prior, so to speak, to the creation of the world. Here, accordingly, God is in pure thought as the abstract Universal and mystery. Yet he is also a self-movement and differentiation, a primal

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 1:462 [352]

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Ibid., 3:66 [5], 3:185-6 [119-20] and 3:273 [198.]

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 3:362 [280-81.]

¹⁵⁸ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §571.

division or judgment. God begets a son not yet outwardly but eternally. God is not merely βυθός, the indeterminate and unknowable universal, but λόγος. Third, however, this differentiation and movement is an eternal movement and positing, not yet an external one. Here,

in the idea of God thus indicated, the eternal positing and resolving of the primordial judgment is given, not as our subjective activity but as the objective or rather the absolute activity of spirit itself.¹⁵⁹

The trinity is the speculative moments and movement of the concept itself. This differentiation, however, is at first still finite insofar as it is only the movement of pure thought and is not an external, but only internal, differentiation.

(B) Kingdom of the Son

Second, then, this differentiation is posited as appearing and as being for representation. “God is creator, but as λόγος, or as he who externalizes himself.”¹⁶⁰ God is not merely essence, a *Schein* or reflection into himself, but equally being-for-another. The other is first the positing of the world, of nature, and of human beings or finite spirit. The world appears as something immediate and presupposed here, the finite as the starting-point, and the aim is to cognize the absolute or God. In this way, however, by starting from nature, the finite and limited character of appearances and nature is transposed to God and God is not recognized. This is the place of the fall and the recognition of the sinfulness of human beings that reaches its apex in the unhappy consciousness of Rome. The recognition and reconciliation of God requires that he be revealed not in nature but in spirit and to humanity.

¹⁵⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:364 [282.]

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:365 [283.]

God becomes present as man in Christ, his life and teachings and sublates this difference. The death of God is the reversal, the inwardizing whereby the teachings of Christ, the proclamation that “whoever sees me sees the Father” ceases to be a mere external and indeterminate universal.¹⁶¹ Instead, Christ takes on the inward significance in and for faith that God has revealed himself to human beings and that through the negation of death God is present as *spirit* in and for the community of believers.

(C) Kingdom of the Spirit

The third syllogism is the fulfillment of faith in the community as the knowledge of God and the reconciliation of God with humanity. It is difficult, if not impossible, on the basis of Strauss’ excerpts, to determine the precise logical character and moments of this final section. Nonetheless, the basic content, which shall be considered in detail in the following chapter, is fairly easy to discern. First, the reconciliation of the individual in the cultus and church is constituted such that God is known in faith to be reconciled with God in-and-for-himself such that evil and sin (i.e. the fall) are implicitly overcome. Second, however, the church and state, religious and secular authority, come into opposition to and oppose one another. These two are implicitly reconciled in Lutheranism on the one hand and the modern state on the other. However, this unity is unstable and the understanding attacks faith as irrational. Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, however have sought to demonstrate the rationality of the content of religion. He thus conclude by saying that:

Faith comprises the true content, but in the form of representation; what is still needful is to give the form of thought to the content. Philosophy, which achieves

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 3:368 [285.]

this, does not thereby place itself above religion but only above the form of faith as representation.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Ibid., 3:374 [289.]

CHAPTER SIX
THE CORRELATION TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION AND ITS
SIGNIFICANCE

In Chapter Four, it was argued that if Hegel's defense of the proofs was limited purely to the purely logical correlation it would be question-begging both with respect to Kant's, and indeed to Hegel's own, critique of the ontological proof. The problem is that "*cognition* already contained in the simple *logical* idea is only the concept of cognition thought by us, not cognition existing [*vorhandene*] for itself, not actual spirit, but merely its possibility."¹ The elevation of consciousness to the infinite, God, the truth, or the absolute must be shown not only to be logically possible, but actual. Against the assertions and assumptions of the finite understanding, it is thus necessary to show that and how finite human beings have achieved this elevation. It was tentatively claimed that religion provides the verification of such an elevation and thus the verification of the proofs. Additionally, in Chapter Five it was claimed that Hegel's 1831 account of the *philosophy of religion* is definitive insofar as it allows him to provide a consistent and unified account of religion that brings together his conceptions of logic, the proofs, freedom and history.

Having provided a summary of the 1831 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* in Chapter Five, we are now in a position from which it is possible not only to explain and justify these claims in and through articulating the significance of the correlation of the proofs to the *philosophy of religion*. In doing this, it will be explained that, how, and in what sense religion provides the verification of the proofs. This account, however,

¹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §381 z.

cannot ignore the fact that according to Hegel, the *philosophy of religion* is also supposed to provide the verification of religion, and in particular of the consummate religion, i.e., Christianity.

By explaining that and how this is achieved, I will thereby also address a parallel objection to the one raised in Chapter Three against the logical correlation of the proofs. Just as Hegel's account of the proofs in terms of his *Logic* may at first appear less as a defense of the proofs and more as though he artificially reads his own position into these proofs, so the correlation of the proofs to the *philosophy of religion* may well at first appear to be an artificial and external formal arrangement imposed upon religion. The solution here, as there, lies in the fact that, according to Hegel, it is the opposition of form and content that constitutes the finitude, untruth and immanent dialectic of finite shapes of consciousness and knowing, while the truth of the standpoint and method of philosophical science consists precisely in its being the sublation of this opposition. The explanation and exposition of Hegel's demonstration of this claim, however, will require lengthy discussion.

Following the account of the correlation of the proofs, it will first be necessary to explain the sense in which Hegel speaks of verification. After this, an account of the manner in which Hegel's project arises from out of the context of German Idealism and its criticisms of Kant will be used in a preliminary manner to explain how Hegel's conception of the subjectivity of the subject arises from this context and is conceived as the self-constituting act of the subject that is at once the subject's own conception and knowledge of itself and the knowledge of its freedom. The discussion of the various stages of the determination of the will and freedom will, as shall be seen, be central to

comprehending Hegel's account of the philosophy of religion in relation to history, freedom and the proofs.

The next stage of the discussion involves articulating Hegel's project in his philosophy of religion and the two-fold character of this account as not only an account of religion from the standpoint of philosophical science, but a phenomenology of the reconciliation of the crisis of the opposition between religion and the understanding. Next, a brief account of Hegel's conception of the relation between religion, the state and freedom will serve as the entrance-point for the discussion of the significance of the cosmological, teleological and ontological proofs in their connection with both the phases of religion and the development of the concept of freedom. In discussing the ontological proof in relation to Christianity as the consummate religion, we will see that and how the contradiction between religion and the Enlightenment of the understanding implicitly rises from the articulation of the ontological proof by religion in the form of the understanding. I will then proceed by articulating of Hegel's account of what he takes to be the third stage of European history and Christianity, namely "The Kingdom of Spirit."

Here, we shall see how the Enlightenment itself arises from out of the contradiction of the proofs as articulated by the understanding, leading to the opposition of religion and Enlightenment as well as their tentative reconciliation. As this reconciliation is still only immediate, however, and based on feeling, this reconciliation hides within itself a tension and crisis that is the opposition within itself of consciousness within Hegel's contemporary world between religion and the Enlightenment of the understanding. The genuine, philosophical reconciliation of this opposition is the *phenomenology* of the sublation of this opposition in and as the attainment of the

standpoint of philosophical science. The moments of this attainment are, as we shall see, already implicit within the prior account of the correlation of the proofs to religion and the development of the account of the philosophy of religion in terms of these proofs.

The Correlation of the Proofs to the 1831 Philosophy of Religion

As was seen in the previous chapter, according to Hegel's 1831 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, the cosmological proof not only introduces the Oriental religions, but is correlated, via the categories of the relations of necessity, to (a) substance and accident in the Chinese, Hindu and Buddhist religions, as (b) cause and effect in the religions of dualism, Anguish and Egyptian religion, and as (c) Reciprocity, to early Greek religion. The Greek religion, however, is also the transition as the religion of freedom and beauty that is correlated to the teleological proof via the immediate or objective idea, i.e. (a) the category of life. The Roman religion, the religion of expediency and external purposiveness, is correlated to the teleological proof via the category of (b) the subjective idea, i.e., the idea that is for itself. Finally, the consummate religion, as the religion that is the result of the other religions, contains them as moments of itself and implicitly comprehends the truth of these moments within itself, is the Christian religion. Within this religion, the idea is known as the absolute idea and spirit. Accordingly, this religion correlates to the speculative moment of the ontological proof. To recall, then, the following may serve as a useful representation of these correlations articulated in accordance with the account of the 1831 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*:

- (I) The Concept of Religion
- (II) Determinate Religion
 - (A) Immediate Natural Religion
 - (B) The Religions of Rupture: **Cosmological Proof**
 - a. Religions of **Substance and Accident**
 - i. Chinese Religion
 - ii. Hinduism
 - iii. Buddhism
 - b. Religions of **Cause and Effect**
 - i. Persian and Jewish religion
 - ii. Religions of Anguish [Image of the Phoenix]
 - iii. Egyptian Religion of
 - © Religion of Beauty and Purposiveness
 - a. Religion of Beauty and Freedom
 - Early Greek Religion **Reciprocity**
 - Teleological Proof**
 - Later Greek Religion [**Objective Idea: Life**]
 - b. Religion of External Purposiveness [**Subjective Idea**]
- (III) The Consummate Religion
 - The Christian Religion [**The Ontological Proof: the Absolute Idea**]
 - (a) Kingdom of the Father
 - (b) Kingdom of the Son
 - (c) Kingdom of the Spirit

The Verification of the Proofs and Religion

The claim, on the one hand, that religion provides the verification of the proofs, and on the other hand, that philosophical science provides the verification of religion must first of all be clarified in terms of Hegel's conception of verification itself. Verification (*Bewährung*) is, first of all, not to be understood in the usual sense as the result of a proof (*Beweis*) of the understanding. In a proof of the understanding, there is a permanent immediacy in the premises so that these premises accordingly stand over and against that which is verified through them. Verification in Hegel's terms is to be comprehended in relation to sublation, and in particular the moment of preservation (*Aufbewahrung*) as well as in terms of Hegel's account of the syllogism. Verification in

Hegel's sense is "showing itself to be mediated through and with itself, so that it shows itself to be at the same time the genuinely immediate."²

Philosophical science is thus supposed to verify religion insofar as the mediation of thought arises from out of religion, brings together the moments of religion as the determination of the concept of religion that unfolds in its externality, and comprehends religion, and indeed a particular religion, as the fulfillment and truth of the concept of religion. The immediacy of religion is restored and religion is verified insofar as philosophical science shows itself both as the mediated truth of religion and as presupposing religion.

The verification of the proofs in religion is already implicated in this previous movement. The proofs are that which are as articulated by thought, but at first only in and through the formal thinking of the understanding. The speculative content of these proofs, however, is not merely something that philosophical science knows in the *Logic*, but arises in-and-for-itself as the content that develops as the unfolding of religion that is comprehended from the standpoint of absolute knowing, i.e., as the *philosophy of religion*

Admittedly, this initial characterization of verification still leaves a good many questions. First and foremost, the claim that religion provides the verification of the proofs, particularly insofar as this is conceived as their verification in opposition to Kant's objections to the proofs, is bound to sound peculiar if not question-begging. After all, religion is usually understood as concerned first and foremost with an infinite being, namely God. The failure of the proofs, according to Kant, derives from the fact that God cannot be given as an object of intuition or sensation. Since we are finite and our

² Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §83 z.

experience is finite, it is impossible to determine *what* God is by means of the excurses through *a posteriori* experience carried out in the cosmological or teleological proof. Accordingly, these proofs must rest on the ontological proof, i.e., on the attempt to prove God's existence *a priori* by means of mere concepts, which, because divorced from all experience, produces merely an empty concept that can have only a regulative function for finite rational beings.

Now, Hegel does not deny that *if* experience is limited to sensation, intuition and feeling, God would not be knowable, nor does he deny that that the attempt to deduce God's *Dasein* from such finite things is impossible. Moreover, Hegel himself asserts that "nothing is *known* that is not in *experience*."³ What Hegel does deny, however, is that our experience and finitude is absolute. To the contrary, for Hegel, subjectivity is the activity of sublating its own finitude. To comprehend this, it is useful to consider Hegel's position as it emerges from out of German Idealism.

German Idealism and Spirit

As was explained in the Introduction, German Idealism originated in the attempt to fulfill the Kantian project. The aim was to carry forward the revolution that Kant was seen as initiating with his Copernican turn and critical system but which, due to what were seen as certain lacuna in the project, still appeared to the likes of Fichte and Schelling as incomplete and ungrounded.

In particular, the German Idealists were inspired by Kant's claim that philosophy can and must enter onto the path of science (*Wissenschaft*) and become scientific

³ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §802 [9:429.]

(*wissenschaftlich*.) They were far, however, from thinking that Kant had actually managed this feat and given philosophy scientific form. According to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, to be scientific meant to be systematic, i.e., to unite the manifold of cognition under a single principle or idea that ordered this whole and the particulars within it according to a priori necessity.⁴ Such an organization under a single principle, however, was conspicuously lacking with respect to the central junctures and divisions of Kant's system. The problem was not only that it appeared as though Kant's table of categories were merely derived empirically from the forms of logical judgment. Besides this, the distinction between sensuous intuition and categorical understanding, and even more broadly the distinction between theoretical and practical reason, appeared to be merely assumed empirically and explained away by appealing to the possession of diverse 'faculties,' while leaving the deeper issue of both the origin and resolution of the opposition between, for example, necessity and freedom, unresolved.

That the German Idealists saw this as problematic is far from a merely external concern or criticism. After all, Kant himself suggested in the *Critique of Practical Reason* that practical reason and the concept of freedom "constitutes the *keystone* of the whole structure of pure reason, even of speculative reason"⁵ and admitted that the results of that Critique

rightly occasion the expectation of perhaps some day to attain insight into the unity of the whole pure rational faculty (theoretical as well as practical) and to derive everything from one principle – the undeniable need of human reason, which finds complete satisfaction only in a complete systematic unity of its cognitions.⁶

⁴ Cf. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A 832/B 860

⁵ Immanuel Kant, "Critique of Practical Reason," in *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 5:4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 5:91

Thus the young Schelling, for example, concluded that “[p]hilosophy is not yet at an end. Kant has provided the results. The premises are still missing. And who can understand results without premises?”⁷

It is unsurprising, then, that Reinhold, Fichte and Schelling initially understood themselves, or at least presented themselves as attempting to provide, an exoteric articulation of the Kantian system based on principles that Kant must have presupposed, however clearly or unclearly he may have understood these principles himself.⁸ Likewise, it is unsurprising, given the centrality of the subject for Kant’s Copernican turn, the (albeit abstruse) deduction of the transcendental unity of apperception, and the importance of the subject in his practical philosophy, that Kant’s would-be successors quickly sought to take the subject or I as the originary basis and first-principle from which to provide a properly systematic deduction and articulation of the system of philosophy. Yet it was precisely in attempting to hold faithfully to the spirit of the Kantian Copernican revolution and its call for systematicity that Kant’s successors found themselves at odds with the letter of Kant’s works, and in particular his conception of the subject.

Despite Kant’s criticisms of Descartes, his conception of the subject, at least in the first Critique, appears remarkably Cartesian. Admittedly, according to Kant, Descartes’ I is merely the empirical I. According to Kant, by contrast the transcendental I is a thing-in-itself and is an idea that we only have problematically as the ‘I think’ that

⁷ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel: The Letters*, tran. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 29 [7.]

⁸ Cf. Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, 4 [I: 420,] 44 [I:471,] and 57 [I:485.] Cf. Schelling, “Of the I as the Principle of Philosophy or the Unconditional in Human Knowledge,” in *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge*, pp.64-6 [1:152-5.]

accompanies all my perceptions and as the ground that unifies them as the transcendental unity of apperception.⁹ Furthermore then, since substance is a category of the understanding, Kant quite explicitly denies that we can know that the transcendental subject is a substance.¹⁰ Descartes is thus mistaken, according to Kant, in simply taking the subject to be a substance and object, objecting that in Descartes's works

[t]he unity of consciousness, which grounds the categories, is here taken for an intuition of the subject as an object, and the category of substance is applied to it.¹¹

Nonetheless, Kant still conceives of even the transcendental subject on the model of substance. Despite denying that we can know the transcendental subject, much less know it as a substance, Kant insists that in its regulative use the psychological idea gives us the principle that we

connect all appearances, actions, and receptivity of our mind to the guiding thread of inner experience, **as if** the mind were a simple substance that (at least in life) persists in existence with personal identity, while its states – to which the states of the body belong only as external conditions – are continuously changing.¹²

In positing the transcendental subject as a *thing-in-itself* and understanding it as a substance with certain faculties and capacities, Kant's notion of the subject appeared problematic to the German Idealists. Not only did turning the I into a thing-in-itself block the way to gaining insight into the sought-for uniting first-principle, but it appeared contrary to the spirit of the radical reading of the Copernican turn understood in terms of

⁹ Regarding Kant's distinction between his transcendental I and the *cogito* of Descartes, see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 347/B 405 and fn. B 422-3.

¹⁰ Cf. *Ibid.* B 407-8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, B 421-2

¹² *Ibid.*, A 672/B 700

the two-aspect account of the thing-in-itself/appearance distinction.¹³ In attempting to fulfill the promise of the Kantian project, the German Idealists were thus led to a very Kantian sounding question, namely ‘what is the condition of the possibility of self-consciousness, i.e., how can the subject know itself?’¹⁴ This Kantian question, however, appeared to not admit of Kant’s own answer, for the ‘I’ cannot *merely* be given to itself as an object or a substance, but must be known as one’s own I. But how is this possible? What, or rather *who*, is the ‘I’ and how does it know itself?

Now, Hegel’s own answer to the problems and lacuna of the Kantian system may in large part be seen as provided by his conception of spirit. How so? Who or what is spirit? The ultimate answer to this question is the whole of the *Philosophy of Spirit* itself insofar as the *Philosophy of Spirit* is precisely the articulation, development and comprehension of spirit itself. Indeed, it may be said without exaggeration, as we shall see, that the answer to this question is nothing other than the system itself as a whole. Here, however, we can at least define spirit tentatively as the other of nature such that, whereas nature is the idea that is external to itself, spirit is the idea that is for-itself. More determinately, “spirit is the self-knowing, actual idea.”¹⁵ All this is bound to appear quite abstract at first, and yet spirit, albeit as *finite* spirit is what human beings, what we ourselves, are. How and why so? According to Hegel, “the innermost, concentrated

¹³ Admittedly, the interpretation of Kant’s notion of the thing-in-itself is, as has been mentioned repeatedly, problematic if not questionable. Nonetheless, insofar as one conceives of truth and knowledge as always taking place in the subject-object relation, then to take the ‘I’ as a substance in the sense of something independent from its manner of givenness appears as nothing more than a reversion to dogmatism.

¹⁴ Cf. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Science of Knowledge (Wissenschaftslehre): With the First and Second Introductions*, trans. Peter L. Heath, and John Lachs (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), 50 [I:477]

¹⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §381 z. Cf. also Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §438 [9:238.]

nature, the root of spirit...[is] Freedom, I, thinking.”¹⁶ All three of these characteristics or aspects essentially belong together in Hegel’s conception of spirit.

According to Hegel, human beings are distinguished from nature in general, and from animals in particular, by thought. Thought in Hegel’s sense, however is not to be understood merely as ‘brain waves’, sensations, drives, desires or even self-feeling. Admittedly, human beings share these things with animals, but “it is man who first raises himself above the individuality of sensation to the universality of thought, the awareness of himself, to the grasp of his subjectivity, of his I.”¹⁷

As was already seen in the Introduction to this dissertation, for Hegel the ‘I’ or consciousness is not a thing-in-itself or a substance, but its own self-positing and self-knowing activity in and through which the subject both distinguishes itself from an object and overcomes that distinction.¹⁸ This *movement* and activity, this self-knowing, according to Hegel, *is* the subject. In other words, for Hegel the subjectivity of the subject *is* its self-constituting activity.¹⁹ The ‘I’ is not a substance or thing-in-itself that is outside of the world of appearances, but the self-consciousness and self-knowing of the subject itself.

¹⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, 66 [12.]

¹⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §381 z.

¹⁸ See supra, pp.30-35.

¹⁹ Compare Emil Fackenheim, “Metaphysics and Historicity,” *The God Within* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 128-140. As Fackenheim argues, the self-constitution of the I is tied to the historicity of Hegel’s account and conception of spirit. This historicity itself, however, is predicated on the fact that, although the I is self-constituting, it is still immediately situated and presupposes nature and a natural situation. At the same time, as the very being of the I does not reside in this immediacy, but its activity, it also posits a second nature, the outward that is at once its own inwardness not as the natural *temporal*, but the historical properly conceived as actual in and as the activity of human beings that is articulated as religion and the formation of the state, religion and science, art and philosophy, etc. This essential historicity of spirit will become evident as we proceed.

Now, according to Hegel's account in the *Logic*, "the 'I' is the pure concept itself, the concept that has come into *Dasein*."²⁰ The 'I' is, in other words, first of all a *concrete* universal for it is not merely an abstract 'this' but universality that is negatively self-related. Hegel claims, then, that "speech enables man to apprehend things as universal, to attain to the consciousness of its own universality, to the enunciation of the I."²¹ To say 'I' is at once to say that which is universal, and thus common to all, but also to say that which is exclusive, for the I is negatively self-related, i.e., it is sublated particularity that excludes itself from the other.

In terms of the movement from the sphere of *nature* to *spirit*, where the concept of animal life remains in the externality of its genus and reproduction, the I is "for itself the genus, the universal fluidity in the individuality of its isolation."²² The I knows its own finitude and limit, i.e., knows that it can die, and yet it is also the power of the negative itself, for it can place itself above the world and its own immediacy and be for-itself in thought.²³ The infinite negativity and negative self-relation of the subject is itself, according to Hegel, the freedom of the subject. The will is thus not, on Hegel's account, a faculty that is distinct from thought and intelligence.²⁴

This concept of freedom as it has appeared is as yet still only immediate and abstract freedom, i.e., the abstract will that is only in-itself. As immediate, however, this will at once has an immediate content and is the natural will, i.e., "the *drives, desires and*

²⁰ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 514 [12:17.]

²¹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §396 z.

²² Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §176 [9.108.]

²³ See Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §376., Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §381 z., and Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §32 [9:27] and §80 [9:57.]

²⁴ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §§4 and 5.

inclinations by which the will finds itself naturally determined.”²⁵ The individual, however, is both of these moments, the universal that holds itself apart and the particular. It unites these moments within itself and constitutes itself as the individual will, and thus resolves itself to action and makes itself an actual will.

In this way, however, the will is determined as this plurality of moments and as containing within itself distinction between the form and content of its will. This distinction marks the *finitude* of this will, for in distinguishing the form and content of the will, the will is just the formal will, the will of the understanding that holds onto this abstract moment, i.e., the in-itself of the will. Because this formal will abstracts from all content and places itself above this content and its drives, the formal will now takes the content as possibilities that it may choose. The actuality of this will, accordingly, is sheer contingency, i.e., it is the arbitrary will.

The contradiction that is the arbitrary will, namely that the will is at once the universal, and that it is actual as contingent and merely particular, is resolved in the concept of happiness. Happiness is the universal good that unites the particular into a harmonious whole. This whole, however, is still only formal universality so that

urges, in respect of their particularity, are posited as *negative*, and they are supposed to be sacrificed, both sacrificed one to another for the sake of that purpose, and sacrificed to that purpose directly, in whole or in part.²⁶

This happiness is thus also tinged with sadness and indeed can progress to the point of absolute unhappiness.

This contradiction, however, is sublated because and insofar as “[f]reedom is the concept itself that has come into existence.”²⁷ Concrete freedom, according to Hegel is

²⁵ Ibid., §11. See also Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §§468-474.

²⁶ Ibid., §479.

the sublation of the immediacy of both the subject and the object. This freedom is neither merely the immediate will whose end is just the particular natural will, nor is it the arbitrary will that places itself above its immediate drives, and chooses this or that, or chooses the formal universality of happiness, but the sublation of this immediacy and mediation such that its freedom is “being at home with oneself in one’s other,”²⁸ i.e., it is self-knowledge.

It may further be noted that, to begin with, spirit is finite because and insofar as consciousness and self-consciousness are distinct and fall apart. The attempts of human beings to overcome this distinction and achieve its freedom, as we shall see, is itself the very motor and dialectic of history. For now, however, to return to the issue of the *philosophy of religion*, religion is according to Hegel one of the ways in which a people are aware of and know themselves, the world, and their own community. In other words, religion is a form, and indeed according to Hegel one of the highest forms, of self-consciousness and self-knowledge that human beings enact. In the representation of God, a people have for itself its conception of the absolute or the truth. At the same time, this representation is not just representation of an other, but involves the representation of the relation of human beings and the rest of the world to God, and thus also involves the self-conception and self-knowing of a people. This self-knowing that is represented is, as religion, equally a passing beyond representation to the activity of the cultus and the manifestation of itself historically. The spirit of a people is thus not only the inwardness of religion, nor the externality of religious doctrines, but the manner in which a people

²⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, 67 [15.]

²⁸ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §24 z. 2. See also *ibid.*, § 38 z. and Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, 67 [15.]

attempt to externalize its own conception of the truth and make this objective and actual for itself in the state and its constitution, as well as in its art and sciences, and so forth.

Now admittedly, insofar as a people's representation of God is the representation of something that is infinite, and accordingly opposed to the mundane, God is not an object that can be given to or known on the basis of sensation and perception, and yet neither is the 'I'. Nonetheless, this I is not some otherworldly thing that transcends experience, but the locus of my experience and that which makes experience 'mine' in the first place.

Philosophical Science, the Experience of Consciousness and the Proofs

The aim of Hegel's *philosophy of religion* is, first of all, to demonstrate that and how the concept and its movement constitutes the immanent necessity of the determination and development of the content with respect to a particular sphere of philosophical science. As such, religion itself is already approached from the absolute standpoint so that the path of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, wherein the elevation from finite to infinite, or rather to absolute knowing, is demonstrated, lies behind it as something presupposed. To this extent, religious consciousness as a shape of consciousness is already something that in its form lies behind philosophical science as one of the various and finite shapes of consciousness that philosophical science has already surpassed. Nonetheless, according to Hegel religion is not just one shape of consciousness, nor is it just one *particular* sphere of philosophical science. Rather, he asserts that "[p]hilosophy is only explicating itself when it explicates religion, and when

it explicates itself it is explicating religion.”²⁹ Hegel’s claim, more specifically, is that although philosophy and religion have the same object, namely the absolute or the truth as such, religious consciousness knows its object primarily in the form of representation (*Vorstellung*) while philosophy comprehends this object in thought.³⁰

This assertion has admittedly often been thought problematic, not least because, as Schlitt argues, it appears that in making this claim, Hegel does not

adequately take into account his own analysis of form and content, in which content is itself “formed matter.” It involves at least a purification of content through a realized adequacy between form and content in philosophy.³¹

Accordingly, given that Hegel argues in the *Logic* that form and content are not ultimately distinct, the claim that his philosophical system constitutes a certain kind of verification³² and defense of religion,³³ and particularly of the consummate religion, i.e. Christianity, appears rather problematic. Indeed, one might suspect that in making this claim, Hegel is guilty of sophistry, or more charitably dismiss this assertion as the political prudence of an atheist who would hide his esoteric message behind the veil of exoteric religiosity.

Needless to say, the question of whether Hegel may or may not legitimately be called a Christian, and if so in what sense,³⁴ is one that has given birth to many a critical study. As Burbidge points out, however, the conclusions are so varied as to make one suspect that these conclusions are merely the reflection of the external claims and

²⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:152-33 [63.]

³⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 1:302 [207-8.] and 1:333 [234-5.]

³¹ Dale M. Schlitt, *Hegel's Trinitarian Claim: A Critical Reflection* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), 35.

³² Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:462 [351.]

³³ Cf. *Ibid.*, 3:345-7 [268-70.]

³⁴ For one of the more sophisticated studies that takes up this question, see Cyril O’Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

commitments of the authors of these studies.³⁵ The problem, however, is that the attempts to ask the question in this manner in order to gauge whether or not Hegel is a Christian in any orthodox or even heterodox sense fails to take seriously *enough* Hegel's account of the relation between form and content, and for that matter, of identity.

According to Hegel, as explained previously, all finite shapes of consciousness, i.e., all shapes of consciousness other than that of philosophical science, are finite *because* these shapes of consciousness involve an internal opposition between form and content. This opposition, which is thus at the heart of the movement of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, no less holds of religious consciousness, which has representation as its form of knowledge but the absolute as its object and content, than the position of the abstract understanding, which has the form of thought but a finite content, merely presupposes the finite determinations as given and true in-themselves in their fixed opposition, and thus can admit of only finite cognition of finite objects. Hegel's claim, however, is that in philosophical science as the standpoint of absolute knowing, form and content are reconciled such that the method is the immanent movement and development of the content itself.

Now, it is no coincidence that in the context of discussing Hegel's account of religion, the understanding should arise and indeed appear as religion's opposite. According to Hegel, it is the opposition and antagonism between religion and the understanding that in his time constitutes "the need of the philosophy of religion, the

³⁵ See John. W. Burbidge, "Is Hegel a Christian" in *Hegel on Logic and Religion: The Reasonableness of Christianity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp.141-2.

necessity of philosophy in general.”³⁶ Thinking, identifying itself with reason as such, had raised itself in Hegel’s age to the point of taking itself not just as a standpoint, but a standpoint that claims to be independent of religion and religions authority and the arbiter of reason and law itself. This standpoint is what Hegel calls the Enlightenment of the understanding, for this thinking does not advance beyond the abstract categories and oppositions of the understanding, and thus remains merely formal thinking. Taking itself and the self-certainty of its own ‘reason’ as the measure of all thought and truth, it thus attacks and threatens to undermine all concrete content, turning religion into contentless immediacy of mere feeling, the proofs into proofs of the understanding, the state into a realm of revolution and terror, or at best alienation and unfreedom, and philosophy into merely “the subjectivity of arbitrary will and ignorance.”³⁷

Presented in this manner, the Enlightenment of the understanding appears as wrong and evil and as the destroyer of all that is concrete, good and true. Yet according to Hegel, the Enlightenment of the understanding also has its right over and against religious consciousness and religion itself. Cognition cannot surrender freedom and thought, and for religion to gain the surrender of the Enlightenment would be to give into tyranny and “the presumption to religious dominion over the world.”³⁸ Moreover, the right of thought and its freedom is something that religious consciousness itself confesses and against which it is powerless.³⁹ This follows from the fact that religion contains its own contradiction in the form of representation. The form of representation at once posits

³⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:104 [22.]

³⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3:510 [20:418.]

³⁸ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, 1825-6*, 1:256 [308.]

³⁹ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume 1*, 517 [516-

its ob-ject in representation and refers to it by means of the immediate content of intuition and sensation, but on the other hand *for representation itself*, this ob-ject is distinct from the objective truth that is supposed to be something other than sensuous content and even representation itself. Religion is not merely representation, but passes beyond this both within its own sphere as the enjoyment of the cultus and in its relation to and opposition to the mundane world. This mundane world with its mundane concerns is immediately opposed to religious consciousness, but this is also the space in which religion attempts to make itself objective and attain its actuality. Insofar as the abstract thinking of the understanding has become a standpoint unto itself that itself, in insisting on its finitude, distinguishes the mundane from the transcendent, religion cannot deny that it too makes this distinction, for it too takes its representation to be knowledge of and insight into *another* realm. As such, religious consciousness cannot but concede the right of the understanding to the mundane realm, and indeed cannot marshal any weapons against the claims of the understanding without already conceding the right of the understanding. Insofar as religion articulates itself in thought and seeks to argue, it must already pass over to and take up the form of thought. This movement that starts out in articulating the proofs of God, however, end in the denigration of the proofs.

The denigration of the proofs is carried to its highest pitch by the Enlightenment of the understanding, for since this thinking is the finite and merely formal thinking of the understanding, it can know nothing of the concrete content of religion. The content of religion, after all, is not something finite, but expresses the elevation of the finite to the infinite, and “this speculative [element] is what comes to consciousness in religion.

Otherwise, God is an indeterminate, empty name.”⁴⁰ For the Enlightenment of the understanding, however, the speculative is merely the “mysterious and incomprehensible.”⁴¹ In other words, this content is taken to be unthinkable and reduced to mere feeling. According to Hegel, however, insofar as philosophy in its truth as philosophical science is itself speculative, it can do justice to, comprehend and verify the content of religion and its *rationality*. Moreover, insofar as the Enlightenment appeals to reason, philosophical science can also satisfy the demand of the Enlightenment that religion not be something alien to it, accepted on external authority, and thus contrary to its freedom and self-certainty. Thus Hegel claims that philosophical science can do justice to both and bring about their reconciliation. Indeed, according to Hegel “[t]his reconciliation is philosophy.”⁴²

In claiming to be this reconciliation and do justice to both religion and the understanding so as to demonstrate the identity of religion and philosophy in and as philosophical science, Hegel thus sets a two-fold task for himself in the *philosophy of religion*. On the one hand, the *philosophy of religion* is just the development of the concept of religion and thus the articulation of the content of religion in the form of thought as the self-development of the concept and its content itself. On the other hand, however, insofar as philosophical science itself claims to be the reconciliation of religion and the Enlightenment of the understanding, it is not sufficient to merely show that philosophy is implicitly identical to religion. Nor is it sufficient to assert that this identity becomes explicit insofar as philosophical science comprehends the revealed religion as

⁴⁰ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:206 [115.]. Cf. also Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §573 r.

⁴¹ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §82 z.

⁴² Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:347 [269.]

identical to itself to the extent that the content of that religion is also comprehended by philosophical science as its own content, and thus to assert that religion is implicitly identical to philosophical science. What is required is to show that and how this reconciliation can be achieved from the side of this opposition itself. To provide such a demonstration in the context of the *philosophy of religion*, however, appears difficult if not impossible.

Granted, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* does provide the account of the immanent development by means of which philosophy reaches the standpoint of philosophical science in and through the immanent critique of the various shapes of consciousness. The movement and development of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, however, is not yet the self-movement and development of the concept as the unfolding of its own concept, but is carried out in terms of the opposition between knowing and truth articulated in the distinction between consciousness and self-consciousness. The treatment of religion within the sphere of philosophical science, i.e., the articulation of the *philosophy of religion*, appears not only to be distinct from, but seems thus to preclude the possibility of providing an immanent account of religion from the standpoint of religious consciousness itself. Hegel himself would seemingly have to admit as much given his claim that, while the conceptual thinking of philosophical science can understand both itself and the content of religion, religion, insofar as it occupies the standpoint of representation, cannot understand philosophy or do justice to philosophy.⁴³

Yet because religion, although it has the absolute content, has it in the form of representation, this form itself is self-contradictory on its own ground and passes over to

⁴³ See Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, 1825-6*, 1:82 [257.]

another in order to make itself objective. Insofar as this movement is achieved by religion itself than, in and through its articulation passes over from out of itself and develops its own content in the form of thought, religion and philosophical science are implicitly reconciled. Yet insofar as thought is not immediately the pure thinking of speculative reason but is the immediate, finite and abstract thinking of the understanding, religion does not immediately find itself in thought. To the contrary, in submitting to the limitations of the formal thinking of the understanding, it reduces its content to nothing and religion itself to the emptiness of mere feeling. This opposition, which according to Hegel is the crisis of his age, is precisely what he claims to reconcile in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.

This reconciliation can be articulated immanently, however insofar as the content of religion and the form of thought are both in-themselves absolute. The standpoint of philosophical science and the articulation of the concept of religion is at this one juncture, as we shall see, commensurable with a *phenomenological* account of this crisis as the *opposition* between religion and the Enlightenment of the understanding. How so?

The key, once more, is Hegel's account of the proofs,⁴⁴ and particularly their relation to the 1831 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. In the 1831 *Lectures on the*

⁴⁴ That the proofs themselves may be comprehended in part as not only commensurate with but as involving an aspect of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is indicated in Hegel's 1829 *Lectures on the Proofs*. Here he considers whether, in taking up the project of articulating the proofs, this would not have to be seen as involving or presupposing an account of knowing as such, i.e., the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Given the fact that the proofs do not, as we have seen, clearly belong to any particular part of his system, it is not surprising that Hegel does not respond as usual, namely by claiming that the justification for the presupposition of the object these lectures is demonstrated in previous sciences (cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §2. and Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:365-6 [265-6.]) Part of his justification is his familiar claim that we cannot get outside the knowing relation in order to examine it from outside, anymore

philosophy of religion, and here alone, the phenomenological aspect of Hegel's account is evident in the manner in which the proofs are articulated. In 1821 and 1824, Hegel takes the proofs to simply supply the metaphysical concept of the different divisions of determinate religion and develops his account accordingly. While his might be considered sufficient in and of itself insofar as the *philosophy of religion* is conceived as merely operating at the level of philosophical science, to proceed in this manner is to already presuppose the reconciliation that Hegel claims the *philosophy of religion* itself provides.

In 1831, however, the proofs are first formulated as the in-itself of various spheres of religion that is only *for us*. These proofs are thus not taken to be something that religious consciousness itself knows in the form of thought as formal inferences. Instead, Hegel claims that

[c]onsciousness of the single steps of this inference pertains only to cultured consciousness. Of course this elevation takes place in thinking, but it cannot be said often enough that thinking is one thing and the consciousness of it is another.⁴⁵

than we can learn to swim without getting in the water, as such an examination could only take place in terms of an object that is known. Accordingly, in choosing to discuss the proofs and taking this as the object to investigate, Hegel claims while it would certainly be possible to take knowledge itself as the object, there is nothing to stop us from sticking to our own chosen object, namely the proofs, and that "it is only the object that has changed with this demand and not the matter itself." (Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 43 [18:233.]) Yet that Hegel does not take this response to be philosophically sufficient is clear from his assertions in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. If, in the lectures on the proofs, the object is merely *presupposed*, then the account of the proofs would not be scientific and would not prove anything in Hegel's sense of the term. Instead, it would rest on a presupposition and mere opinion, but one opinion is worth just as much as the next. Hegel however then proceeds to claim that in and through examining the proofs, "[i]t will further appear, as we pursue our purpose, that the knowledge of our object will also in itself justify itself as knowledge." (Ibid.)

⁴⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:726-7 [616.]

Thus the “thoughtful consideration of this thinking elevation is what we add to the process.”⁴⁶ Now, in the lectures of 1821 and 1824, after articulating the proofs, Hegel’s aim is to show that and how these metaphysical proofs, thought as the in-itself of these stages of religion, is both for-itself and for-us developed as the content of particular religions. That which is in-itself (i.e., the concept articulated in the various proofs) would thus become the for-itself of particular religions, albeit in the form of representation. In 1831, however, the in-itself of the proof has two different values. On the one hand, the in-itself of the proofs is immediately speaking that which is articulated by and for thought in terms of the single steps of these inferences. This articulation of the proofs is carried out in terms of the difference and contradiction of being and concept taken as, for example, immediate being and absolute necessity. In other words, immediately speaking, the in-itself of the proofs is the proofs as articulated by and for the understanding. On the other hand, from the standpoint of philosophical science, the proofs are not just comprehended as articulated by the understanding, but involve an additional, speculative moment.

Now according to Hegel, as mentioned above, it is precisely this speculative moment that constitutes the content of religion and which the understanding takes to be mysterious. Likewise, taken in terms of the understanding, the *Logic* can be understood as nothing but a fancy of thought, for like religion, philosophical science contradicts the presumption of the understanding that there is and can be no passage from the finite to the infinite. Now, in 1831, unlike in 1821 and 1824, Hegel does not ascribe the individual moments of the finite categories in their opposition to the religions that are developed following his initial articulation of the proofs. Instead, he comprehends the content of

⁴⁶ Ibid., 2:726 [615.]

these religions in terms of the speculative moment of the proofs, i.e., in terms of the determinate and differentiated *unity* of being and concept.

Now, on Hegel's own grounds, the proofs articulated in terms of the *Logic* and their correlation to the *Logic* still initially appear to be just subjective, i.e., to be just the concepts of cognition and thus not actual spirit but merely its possibility. From the standpoint of philosophical science itself, however, the scientific articulation of the concept of religion is the actuality of the concept that is not merely an empty, subjective possibility, but the self-determination of the concept's own actuality. The movement of the *philosophy of religion*, accordingly, unfolds from this absolute standpoint in and as the unity of its own self-certainty and its object, thus of its self-consciousness and consciousness and of its knowing and truth, so that the articulation of the moments of religion is already for philosophical science its own being-in-and-for-itself. From the standpoint of the understanding, however, initially the speculative moment of Hegel's account of the proofs will appear to be merely a subjective thought while the articulation of the determination and development of the content of religion will appear to be the articulation of an alien content upon which the form of this subjective thought is imposed. In and through the development of this account of religion and its content, however, the standpoint of the Enlightenment of the understanding and its opposition to religion as well as its criticisms of the proofs are themselves comprehended as the *result* of the development of the content of religion. What immediately appeared just as the alien content against which the Enlightenment, in its self-certainty and the certainty of its freedom, understood as an alien substance, is thereby recognized as its own being-for-itself. In and through this recognition, however, the Enlightenment understanding as

infinitely reflected in itself from its other sublates its own finitude and the opposition between the Enlightenment of the understanding and religion that is its own inner contradiction and crisis. Now, this is not to suggest that Hegel's philosophy of religion comprehends or goes through the *Phenomenology of Spirit* in the totality of its moments. Indeed, it is not even to suggest that Hegel provides a phenomenology of religion. Religion is not here developed in terms of the immanent contradiction of this *shape of consciousness*, but in terms of the immanent development and contradiction of the concept of religion. Strictly speaking, then, Hegel's philosophy of religion is and can be at once a phenomenology, and thus articulates a moment of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, only at a single moment.

Now, the starting-point of the phenomenological aspect of Hegel's philosophy of religion is, in terms of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the absolutely unhappy consciousness that arises towards the end of the penultimate chapter on religion in and through the negation of the form of representation.⁴⁷ At this point in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, this consciousness expresses the thought that *God himself is dead* and collapses thereby into the night of the 'I=I' wherein all distinction and externality vanishes and where this consciousness feels the loss of its substance. According to Hegel, however, this moment is sublated in and through the comprehension of the spiritualization of substance that is become subject and is comprehended as subject, so that this death of God leads to the resurrection of spirit as the actual, universal self-consciousness.⁴⁸ What this, means, naturally, will only become clear as we proceed, but for the moment it may

⁴⁷ See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶785 [9:418-19.]

⁴⁸ See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶785 [9:419.]

be said that this is envisioned by Hegel already in *Faith and Knowledge* as the absolute freedom of the “speculative Good Friday.”⁴⁹

Religion, the State and Freedom

The *philosophy of religion* cannot of itself claim itself to be or provide a phenomenology of religion because and insofar as the form of religion and the manner in which religious consciousness knows the absolute immediately and for the most part, namely representation, is in-itself finite and inwardly self-contradictory. Due to the very contradiction that is inherent to and explicit in representation itself on Hegel’s account, the articulation of religious representation is in and of itself its passing over to an other. As we shall see, eventually the philosophical account of religion and the development of its content will articulate the passing over to thought or philosophy itself as occurring from out of religion itself. This passing over, however, is initially only the immediate transition to the finite thinking of the understanding and the immediate unity of religion and philosophy in philosophical natural theology which, from out of its own immanent self-contradiction, gives rise to the denigration of the proofs at the hands of the Enlightenment of the understanding.

The transition from religion to philosophy requires, first, the movement of religion to thinking. This is the point at which the in-itself that is for us the concept of the spheres of religion, i.e., the proofs, becomes religion’s own being-for-itself as its own movement and articulation from out of itself. Second, it requires that thinking free itself from the presupposition of the content of religion and representation so that it can

⁴⁹ Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, trans., H.S. Harris (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), 191.

become free for itself and enter into opposition to religion. Only then, from out of this conflict and in and through reason thinking this opposition and comprehending it, can the movement from the form of thinking to religion and its content be comprehended in their unity (i.e., as philosophical science, for religion is not capable of understanding philosophy without going beyond the form of representation) as the truth of both.

Pure thinking in the form of thought, i.e., philosophy, however, immediately presupposes religion insofar as it is neither the immediate nor the externally universal manner in which human beings know the truth – that claim belongs to religion which precedes philosophy and which in this sense philosophy itself, immediately speaking, presupposes. “For that reason, the content of religion expresses what *spirit* is earlier in time than science does, but it is science alone which is spirit’s true knowledge of itself.”⁵⁰ Because of the finitude of the form of religion, religion does not immediately express and know the truth of its content in a form that is adequate to that content, for this content is the absolute idea, i.e., reason itself as absolute knowing and self-knowing. Nonetheless, religion, is not *irrational*, but is in-itself the concept of religion and the development and determination of its own content as the absolute idea, and indeed as we shall see, as absolute spirit. Moreover, according to Hegel, as has been mentioned before,

Religion is the nation’s consciousness of its own being and of the highest being. This knowledge is in fact the universal being. 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 the conception of itself.⁵¹

The represents of religion is its knowledge of God, the absolute, i.e., the truth as such in the highest sense. Because the truth in this sense, because *God*, is thus concrete,

⁵⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶802 [9:430.]

⁵¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*, 105 [126.]

representation is not just the representation of an infinite beyond, but of the relation of God to the world and human beings. Accordingly, a people in its religious representation not only know the truth but implicitly know themselves. Religion is, in-itself, this self-knowing, but as that which is only in-itself this knowledge is also the consciousness of a distinction or cleavage, i.e., there is within it the distinction between its consciousness and self-consciousness.

Because representation is this contradiction within itself, religion itself does not remain at the level of mere representation but is already from out of itself the surpassing of its own limitations, not only inwardly, in its own sphere as the activity of the cultus, but outwardly. From out of the opposition to the immediacy of nature and itself from which it has separated itself in representation, as well as from out of the certainty of reconciliation that it has attained for itself in the cultus, a people thus create and must create for itself a second nature, for religion is the inner spirit of a people, and spirit “gives itself reality through the mediating process of self-objectification. Religion as such must give itself essential reality; it must create a world for itself so that the spirit may become conscious for itself.”⁵²

Religion, as the inner spirit of the people and as its highest principle, passes over to its other as it struggles to make itself objective. The work of the self-externalization of the state is the struggle to manifest the inner principle of a people and make this principle objective. This principle is expressed and has its existence as the constitution of the state and is there as an historical fact. How so?

⁵² Ibid., 110 [131.]

To comprehend this, it is necessary to recall Hegel's claim that history itself is the development of freedom. He expresses this by stating that in the Oriental world only one is free, in the Greek world some are free, while in the European world all are free.⁵³ It is essential, however, to recognize that Hegel's claim is neither to be understood as an immediate empirical claim, nor as a matter of quantity. As Hegel himself admits, the assertion that in the European world all are free does not entail as an empirical matter of fact that slavery altogether disappeared at the onset of the European era,⁵⁴ nor even that it had ceased to be practiced in places even in his own day.⁵⁵ What it entails, rather, is that the principle that lies behind the European era contradicts and directly opposes slavery, for according to this principle it is

self-evident that no human being ought to be a slave, and that no people or government thinks to wage war for the purpose of enslaving people. Only with this knowledge is freedom a legal right and not a positive privilege exacted by force, necessity, and so forth.⁵⁶

The difference between the various eras of history, on Hegel's account, is in other words first of all fundamentally a matter of knowledge and self-consciousness. Now as we have seen, according to Hegel the highest principle that a people have of the truth is most immediately known and expressed in religion, and this principle is then externalized as the constitution of the state. The fundamental stages in the development of freedom thus find their expression in the fundamental stages of religion as articulated by the proofs and these stages are just developments in self-knowing. Again, how so?

⁵³ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume 1*, pp.87-8 [152-3.]

⁵⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 457 [433.]

⁵⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, 1825-6*, 1:51 [214.]

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 1:181 [37.]

The answer is the subsequent account. It may be noted, however, than in answering this question in terms of and in relation to Hegel's account of proofs, what is provided is at the same time the answer to the question of the meaning and significance of the correlations of the proofs to Hegel's philosophy of religion. In addition, insofar as this account is articulated in terms of Hegel's 1831 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, this account is also the justification of the claim that the 1831 account of the *philosophy of religion* is definitive insofar as it allows Hegel to provide a consistent and unified account of religion that brings together his conceptions of logic, the proofs, freedom and history.

The Cosmological Proof: One is Free

The cosmological proof is, in terms of its categories and the categories of the *Logic*, first of all, the assertion of the immediate unity of being and absolute actuality as necessity. As a syllogism, however, this proof is at once the contradiction of the immediacy of this unity asserted in the conclusion, and the distinction and opposition of these terms that is asserted in and by the permanent immediacy of the premises. The speculative moment of this proof, however, is the mediation and sublation of this opposition as the relations of necessity. The relations of necessity, in and through which the opposition of the spheres of being and essence are sublated, are first of all, (a) substance and accident, and (b) cause and effect. Now, in the realm of Oriental religion, consciousness is for itself merely finite being or *Dasein* that, in relation to God, is merely the accident of substance, or something that is posited and thus exists merely as a thing

that is something caused and that has its existence only in being-for-another, but on its own accord is just finite *Dasein* that has no essentiality of its own.

Because this is the determination of the content of representation that these people have of God and themselves, this is at once the self-knowing of these people and thus their conception of their own freedom. As such, freedom as externalized in the state at this stage has the form either of the immediate natural will or of an alien universal command to which all must simply submit. Accordingly, the constitution of these states is such that “the individual personality has no rights and disappears altogether.”⁵⁷ Likewise, at this stage religion is immediately united with that which will later be explicitly distinguished from religion and its inwardness as the secular realm. As the distinction of inwardness is not yet recognized, the constitution of these states is that of theocracy and the religious and moral commands are at once law. The state, accordingly, does not yet constitute itself as independent in its own right. Thinking, likewise, does not yet appear as distinct from religion, so that “Oriental philosophy is, on the contrary, the Orientals’ religious mode of representation as such.”⁵⁸ In this realm, then, only one is free, for the individual does not have its own interiority, but is only reflected into itself by negating itself or having its own immediate desires and drives quashed.

The reconciliation of the immediacy of being and absolute necessity that is the relation of substance and accident as well as cause and effect is thus still only an immediate unity that negates distinction. It is not, accordingly, the sublation of this opposition that preserves the distinction and raises the opposition of immediate being and essence beyond themselves. In the Greek realm, by contrast, being and essence are

⁵⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §355.

⁵⁸ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825-6*, 1:103 [365.]

reconciled insofar as in this religion consciousness is determined not just as effect, but also as cause, i.e., it is (c) the relation of reciprocity. In Greek art as the religion of art, the individual not only knows itself as existing, i.e., not only knows that the I is a thing, but attains the infinite judgment according to which the thing is I.⁵⁹ The I is not merely externality, but externality that also achieves its interiority and essence. That the I is a thing and the thing is I means that the I=I, i.e., that consciousness now attains the recognition of itself and reconciliation of itself with the divine.

The movement described above is a movement from the finite to the infinite, not such that the infinite is the absolute beyond of the finite, but because it is a fundamental transformation in the subjectivity of the subject that is the sublation both of the immediacy of subjectivity and the conception of God as substance. With this we pass from the cosmological to the teleological proof.

The Teleological Proof: Some are Free

The teleological proof is, first of all, the opposition of existence to teleology. This opposition is sublated in the idea as (a) the objective idea or life, and (b) the subjective idea or cognition. These two moments are the realms of Greek and Roman religion respectively.

In the Greek realm, the individual knows itself not just as immediate being but as the sublation of its own immediacy as existence that is the unity of reflection into another and into itself,⁶⁰ i.e., it is not only being-for-another but also being-for-itself. As such, it attains to the consciousness of its freedom and subjectivity, for it is not merely the

⁵⁹ Compare Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶791 [9:423-4.]

⁶⁰ See *supra*, pp.126-7.

accident that disappears into substance, nor the effect of a cause, but is itself also cause and ground. This subjectivity, however, was still only an immediate subjectivity and its freedom was “only the first level of freedom; it was infected therefore with natural being, a finite freedom.”⁶¹

Finite spirit knows itself in God as spirit, but God “is not yet raised to absolute infinitude; on the contrary, God is still finite spirit.”⁶² The new gods who rise thus arise above and master the old natural gods, the titans and forces of nature. Yet, as the Olympians arise only by the immediate negation of the old, natural gods, these gods are not banished altogether, but have these gods of nature as their own mysterious substratum. The old gods of nature are merely mastered by the new gods, placed in the background, and subordinated to the hearth, while the new gods take their place on Olympus and reside there as the assembly of free personalities. Since the Olympians are free personalities only by means of the immediate distinguishing of themselves from the immediacy of nature, they thus still presuppose them as their mysterious substratum, and this substratum, that was only held in check by being subordinated, arises against them once more as the power that holds all under its sway as fate.

This is how the Greeks know the gods and poetize the gods and in doing this know them and themselves. In and through their own activity, which is first of all this poetization itself, the Greeks attain the standpoint of free personality, know themselves as the assembly of such free personalities, and know themselves as free in and as the assembly of personalities. Nonetheless, custom and habit remains the mysterious substratum that holds all together. Just as the gods of the hearth and Olympus are

⁶¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* 2:753 [636.]

⁶² Ibid.

separated, so religion and the secular realm are distinguished, and the Greeks constitute themselves as the plurality of independent city-states that exist in harmony, each city having their own god in the pantheon. The immediate basis of their assembly is the shared customs and habits that these free personalities share and which holds sway as the harmony of the natural and spiritual. Because and insofar as “the particular will is not yet free; the particularity of conviction and intention does not yet carry weight.”⁶³ Instead, lacking consciousness of the freedom of the particular will, the subjective and objective will are at first an immediate unity.⁶⁴

Freedom, accordingly, is still finite because it is something that is outwardly attained by the activity of the will that does not yet know and have the certainty of its own will except in its achievement. The subjectivity and freedom attained here is thus just the immediate unity of the subjective and objective as a *result* and as *outward display*. This willing is partially natural, such that “[f]or the Greeks, freedom holds good only because they are Greeks, because they are these particular citizens.”⁶⁵ Partially, however, this freedom and its certainty of itself is something attained. Thus

[b]eing born a Greek did not suffice to make one a Greek, and it is an essential quality of spirit to make oneself into what spirit is. That spirit is what it makes of itself is only one aspect; the other is that spirit is essentially and intrinsically what is originally free.⁶⁶

Greek freedom is accordingly only finite freedom such that the Greeks do not know that all are free, but only some, namely those who display themselves as having attained it. Just as the secular realm did not yet exist in Oriental religion, for religion was not yet

⁶³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume 1*, 399 [356.]

⁶⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, 400 [357.]

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 404 [362.]

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 390 [342.]

explicitly distinguished from it and the secular not yet granted its own rights, so for the Greeks, morality is as yet not something separate from the state, for this realm of inwardness is not yet recognized as having *its* own right. Accordingly, Hegel says of this Greek realm that “[i]t expresses the divine in the sensible; and thus ethical practice, which does not yet comprise morality, has here as such the character of custom and habit in the mode of natural necessity.”⁶⁷

This freedom that rests on an immediate harmony sustains itself only in its youth and development. The work of the self-externalization of these people as the state is, as always, the struggle to manifest their inner principle and make this principle objective. So long as this struggle occupies a people, the individual is united with the whole, or rather “the sundering of the whole from the individual has not yet taken place.”⁶⁸ Within this struggle, the labor of a people is at once the substantial existence of individuals who accommodate themselves to and reside in it as the purpose of each and all. The principle of purposiveness accordingly underlies this realm. This purposiveness, however, is not yet subjective purposiveness that posits itself from out of itself, but internal purposiveness that is objective, i.e., life. The attainment of this subjectivity and recognition of subjective purposiveness is the very death of Greece.

The achievement of the spirit of a people and its satisfaction is found when its inner principle has become manifest and the difference between what it is in-itself and what it is for-itself is suspended,⁶⁹ that is insofar as it has realized its concept, or at least

⁶⁷ Ibid., 401 [358.]

⁶⁸ Ibid., 160 [45-6.]

⁶⁹ I.e., the opposition is not yet sublated, i.e., not yet raised to a higher level and a new opposition of consciousness and self-consciousness. Instead, it is the mediation of the labor, i.e., mediation itself, that is sublated as the suspension of opposition. What is

realized this concept so far as that is possible within this realm. At that point, however, “[t]he substantial soul is no longer active; now it is only oriented to individual aspects, having lost the highest interests of life, which is found only in the antithesis [between goal and attainment].”⁷⁰ In the Oriental realm, this old age was just the stagnation or passing away of the state, but in Greece it is otherwise, for the moment of reflection is now a reflection of the individual as subjectivity into itself.

The consequence is that the mode of the real world’s existence, spirit in its real ethical life, in its vital energy, passes over to the reflection that assails and undermines this substantial mode of spirit, this ethical life, this faith. Thereupon the period of decay makes its entry.⁷¹

Thought which first brings about the breach in the real world, however, also brings about its reconciliation in philosophy, albeit only in “an ideal world, one into which thought takes flight when the earthly world no longer satisfies it.”⁷²

Philosophy thus arises here on its own behalf, in separation from religion and in the realm of pure thought that is free in its activity. Thus philosophy properly speaking arises here for the first time. According to Hegel, however, philosophy is its own time comprehended in thought, for it is essentially an outgrowth of the spirit of its age and merely articulates the principle announced by religion, the state and the other concrete formations of that age in the form of thought.⁷³ Because thought has already destroyed

attained, then, is an immediate unity of the concept that the spirit of a people sought to actualize and which constituted its purpose, and the immediate natural being that, as immediate natural being in opposition to this concept was the means and material for this concept’s actualization. As attained, this purpose is now something that itself is immediately there.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 160 [46.]

⁷¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825-6*, 1:68 [239.]

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid, 1:66-7 [236-8.]

this realm, philosophy at first arises in opposition to religion, and its reconciliation comes too late.

While thought constitutes itself as a realm apart, the Roman world appears and takes that which the Greeks intuited and transforms it into the form of reflection in practice. Here finite purposiveness and the understanding are let loose so that the gods themselves are not beautiful ideals, but are subordinated to finite purposes for the sake of which they are worshipped. Accordingly, “Roman religion is a religion of purposiveness, utility, and constraint.”⁷⁴ The Romans recognize those who are citizens as free, but this freedom is abstract, i.e., is only the recognition of abstract persons and abstract personality.⁷⁵ The realm of the state is the realm of the universal, which constitutes a realm apart as the realm of positive law with which to “counterbalance the mutability of men’s inner life and inner subjectivity.”⁷⁶ The individual as particular and as universal is thus drawn asunder.

On the one hand, the state constitutes the universal power to which all should be subordinated, but as an abstract universal it is filled with the greatest corruption of passions and private interests and could only be held together by “dominance on the part of unalloyed free will.”⁷⁷ The democracy of the senate falls to the rule of the single individual, but their will is shown to be something equally particular, finite and untrue, so the freedom of Rome becomes universal slavery and consciousness experiences itself as the absolutely unhappy consciousness that finds no satisfaction – neither in private particular interests, nor in the universal which ought to be the essential but in which it

⁷⁴ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume 1*, 434 [404.]

⁷⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 432 [400-1.]

⁷⁶ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 289 [12:351.]

⁷⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume 1*, 445 [416.]

sees only its own vanity. The gods have fled and appear as merely the products of human artifice and purposes, while consciousness in its unhappiness itself appears to itself as what it ought not to be. It knows itself as merely wrapped in its private concerns and in its particular will which is nonetheless a nullity for it, and thus knows itself as evil as separated from the universal that is in-and-for-itself.

The Ontological Proof: All are Free

As we know, according to Hegel, the ontological proof is correlated to the Christian religion alone. Furthermore, we know that according to Hegel it is precisely the through the Christian religion that all human beings are free. More specifically, he claims that the European or what he calls “[t]he Germanic nations were the first to come to the consciousness, through Christianity, that the human being as human is free, that the freedom of spirit constitutes humanity’s inherent nature.”⁷⁸ What remains, however, is both to explain how and why, for Hegel, the ontological proof is linked to freedom as well as the concrete meaning of freedom itself.

To begin with, the ontological proof is just the movement of the subjective concept to the objective concept, and thus is just as much their opposition. Speculatively speaking, however, this movement is sublated as the absolute idea, the self-knowing idea that is neither merely objectivity or life, nor merely the subjective concept or subjective cognition that seeks the Good as an eternal beyond. Furthermore, speculatively comprehended, the ontological proof is, as the final proof, the truth of the other proofs, not such that they are left behind, but such that it comprehends them within itself as its

⁷⁸ Ibid., 88 [153.]

own moments. Likewise, according to Hegel, the Christian religion is the consummate religion that is the truth of all of determinate religions and contains these moments as comprehended and sublated in itself.

Now, the absolute idea as that which is in-and-for-itself has, in its abstraction, two distinct moments. First, there is “the being determined on its own account of finitude, the category of being-for-itself, the category of the point relating itself to itself, of the belief that finitude is something absolute.”⁷⁹ This moment of the idea, thus taken on its own, is one-sided, and it appears and is actual in and as this one-sidedness in the Roman religion where finite purposiveness and finite freedom show themselves as absolute servitude. God appears here as the emperor who is “this one”⁸⁰ but is recognized as merely finite. Consciousness only escapes into freedom by being negatively related to the natural, but this relation of negativity is “the unhappy state of looking upon the bounds of constraint as what is ultimate.”⁸¹ The second moment of the idea, taken in its abstraction, is the opposite of this finitude, “the belief in infinite, in the universal that sets its own limits.”⁸² Here, God is the free universality that, as distinct from anything sensible and particular is nonetheless the ground of all and is their cause that, in opposition to all particularity, is the supersensible. “As the supersensible it emerges only in Israelite representation as the universal God of thought that exists for itself.”⁸³

The sublation of these two moments occurs in Christianity. God appears as ‘this one’, as sensibly present, but appears only once, for God is One. In Christ, God sacrifices

⁷⁹ Ibid., 450 [422.]

⁸⁰ Ibid., 451 [424.]

⁸¹ Ibid., 451 [424.]

⁸² Ibid., 450 [422-3.]

⁸³ Ibid., 452 [425.]

himself, dies and thus shows this natural death to itself be a nullity, is resurrected and dwells within the community as spirit in which God is now known as revealed.

Moreover, it is shown that

the individual as such has an infinite value since it is the object and aim of God's love, destined to stand in its absolute relationship with God as spirit, and to have this spirit dwelling in himself, i.e. man in himself is destined to supreme freedom.⁸⁴

This destiny is providence that is not opposed to freedom, but *is* precisely human freedom. The cunning of reason is not the harsh necessity that the individual rises above only in negating itself, but the inner necessity of freedom's realization; thus freedom and necessity are here unified.

Because all have this as their destiny, all are free and have infinite worth, so that "[i]nsofar as Christianity is actually practiced, it can have no slavery."⁸⁵ The particularity of human beings is, in Christ, recognized as not an absolute impediment to reconciliation, while human beings know themselves as essence, inwardness and spirit. It is an essential point to recognize, however, that according to Hegel this does not at all entail that humanity is immediately reconciled with God or that humanity is Good by nature. To the contrary, because human beings are spirit and have this as their destiny and freedom, they are precisely not what they ought to be in their immediacy and thus may, in this sense, be said to be evil by nature. Nonetheless, the individual can turn about in its own individuality, for it is born in the image of God so that it can not only know good and evil but can also negate its own negativity and turn to the good through its own self, for

⁸⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §482 r.

⁸⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume 1*, 457 [433.]

thereby “spirit—something inward—atones for itself, extricates itself, and acts only on this basis.”⁸⁶

This atonement, however, is not simply stoic equanimity. For the Greeks and stoics, necessity still has the form of something alien, so that

when confronted by fate it is only by self-denying submission that human beings can save their freedom—so that although fate conquers them externally, it does not do so inwardly. Because outward existence is not in harmony with *their* purpose, they abandon all purpose—this is an abstract freedom.⁸⁷

By contrast, Hegel insists that this cannot satisfy us now, for there is a higher freedom that does not merely give up its particularity, but requires consolation such that “the absolutely final end will be attained despite misfortune, so that the negative changes around into the affirmative.”⁸⁸ It can attain this because, for this consciousness, the external is now *merely* the external, and internality has its own right and truth over against it. This means that individuality is no longer simply to be sacrificed and particular interests and purposes count as valid for their own sake. In this religion, accordingly, in its intuition of God revealed as Christ and reconciled with itself in the holy spirit, finite consciousness as spirit is “absolute certainty of itself. This certainty seals all subjectivity within itself; it is in spirit, and in the truth of subjectivity, that subjectivity finds itself.”⁸⁹ The individual knows that it is subjectivity such that it is not merely the abstract personality that is locked away in itself, but can enter into particularity and unite itself

⁸⁶ Ibid., 456 [432.]

⁸⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:756 [639.]

⁸⁸ Ibid., 2:653 fn. 388 [544.] Compare also Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, pp.109-10 [18:287-8.] and Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 164 [166-7.]

⁸⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:65 [5.] Compare also Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History Volume 1*, 171 [63-4.]

with the universal, for the universal as God is also subjectivity and its truth is found in God.

Accordingly, however, it also knows that its own particularity is valid only as *a moment*, for “there is also present the spiritual, higher inwardness, and genuine inwardness calls even more so for its own law.”⁹⁰ The sensible and supersensible or spiritual world, although implicitly reconciled, are just as immediately distinguished. The reconciliation of these realms and realization of the Kingdom of God on earth constitutes the goal and end that Europe is to realize. This plays itself out as European history – a history that according to Hegel unfolds in the succession of three periods that can be distinguished as the Kingdom of the Father, the Son and the Spirit.⁹¹

The first period is the spread of Christianity throughout Europe and the development of Christendom. Europe took up the already completed Roman culture and the Christian religion that had itself already developed into a church with fixed hierarchies and dogma and Europe was united under the temporarily restored Holy Roman Empire. At this point “[t]he Christian world then presents itself as ‘Christendom’ – one mass in which the spiritual and secular form only different aspects. This epoch extends to Charlemagne.”⁹²

The second period is the antithesis of church and state. Here, the state and church as antithetical principles is constituted in such a way that this antithesis becomes “not only of the one to the other, but appearing within the sphere of each of these bodies

⁹⁰ Ibid., 457 [433-4.]

⁹¹ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 345 [12.417.]

⁹² Ibid., 343 [12.415.]

themselves.”⁹³ On the one hand, the individual states that rise up in the attempt to free themselves from the universal authority of the Frank empire lose all security. Individuals must thus seek protection under the powerful who then become their oppressors, i.e., they become serfs. The worldly realm thus shows itself to be “barbarity, unruliness, passions and desire.” On the other hand, the church, which to begin with seeks to keep in check “[s]ecular extravagances of passion... was itself secularized in the process and abandoned its proper position.”⁹⁴ The church, this spiritual realm and power itself, becomes a corrupt secular power whose rule is no less characterized by barbarism, greed and avarice and the two inevitably struggle for dominion. Moreover,

[t]his ongoing struggle with the spiritual must be at first a losing battle for the secular power, because it not only stands on its own but also acknowledges the other power; it must submit to the spiritual realm and its passions.⁹⁵

This reaches its culmination and collapse in the Crusades, for in searching for the Holy Sepulcher it finds only emptiness and must recognize the nullity of the ‘this’; Christ is risen and spirit is not to be found in the sensibly present ‘this’.⁹⁶ This is a turning-point insofar as, on the one hand, consciousness is directed inwards to the sciences, learning, and thought. “Thought was first directed to Theology, which now became Philosophy under the name of Scholastic Divinity.”⁹⁷ On the other hand, the secular realm begins to transform itself into something solid on its own accord so that Feudalism passes over to Monarchy. Monarchy arises at the end of this age to end this abominable servitude, for the Monarch is in principle

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 366 [12:441.]

⁹⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825-6*, 3:37 [25-6.]

⁹⁶ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume 1*, 494 [486.]

⁹⁷ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 397 [12:476.]

a supreme authority whose dominion embraces all – a political power properly so called, whose subjects enjoy an equality of rights, and in which the will of the individual is subordinated to that common interest which underlies the whole.⁹⁸

Nonetheless, “since this monarchy is developed from feudalism, it bears in the first instance the stamp of the system from which it sprang.”⁹⁹ Admittedly, then, Feudal Monarchy at first determines everything according to privilege and birth. Individuals, however, who were previously serfs to various vassals, come together and unify as members of Estates and Corporations, while the Vassals likewise only have power insofar as they constitute themselves as an Order. Although the authority of the sovereign is at first absolute, it must eventually cease to be arbitrary, for “[t]he consent of the Estates and Corporations is essential to its maintenance; and if the prince wishes to have that consent, he must will what is just and reasonable.”¹⁰⁰

From out of the stability that is achieved thereby, a secular consciousness now begins to establish itself for-itself on its own ground. How this is achieved is to be discussed when we turn to the third Kingdom. Before proceeding to this, however, and in light of the subject matter of this dissertation, a word should be said regarding Scholastic philosophy in relation to Hegel’s claim for the identity of religion and philosophy.

Natural Theology and the Ontological Proof: From Representation to Thought

As was explained previously, Hegel’s claim that religion and philosophy are identical can only be comprehended insofar as one recognizes that, according to Hegel, all finite shapes of consciousness, including and indeed especially religion, contain their

⁹⁸ Ibid., 398 [12:478.]

⁹⁹ Ibid., 399 [12:479.]

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 400 [12:479.]

own immanent contradiction. To establish the possibility of the identity of religion and philosophy, it is thus necessary to explain that and how religion and religious consciousness in the form of representation not only passes over, as explained above, into the state and the secular realm in general, but how it passes over of its own accord to the form of thought. Now as we have seen, the form of representation contains its own contradiction and the necessity of its passing over to another insofar as representation itself is at once the positing of an object and the distinguishing of that which it posits in and as mere representation from the objective truth. The form of representation is thus, according to the very concept of representation, inadequate and subjective. This movement, however, as religious representation, is neither immediately carried out by thought nor in thought. Nonetheless, the contradiction that belongs to the concept of representation is also the immanent contradiction of religious representation. This distinction is the distinction of form and content.

The form of representation is the form in which religious consciousness itself immediately and for the most part knows that which is for it the objective and unconditionally true. Nonetheless, the distinction of form and content that is immanent to representation according to its concept entails that religious representation is *in-itself* self-contradictory. On the one hand, the content of representation is supposed to be objective. On the other hand, however, the manner in which this content is formed depends upon a subjective synthesizing activity (specifically, on Hegel's account, the activity of recollection, imagination and memory.) Since this subjective form is for representation itself posited as distinct from its content, this form is in-itself and according to the concept of representation an external connection and relation. What representation lacks,

then, is insight into the necessity of its own content. The represented content is given to the subject as a ‘connectional matrix,’ but representation lacks insight into the necessity of these connections. As such, however, representation on its own grounds thus lacks insight into the immanent self-determination of the object itself.¹⁰¹ Thus the shape of knowledge of religious representation is *implicitly* self-contradictory.¹⁰²

Now, in order to explain how religion can pass from representation of thought, it is also necessary to comprehend the movement of religion from the form of representation to the form of thought as something that arises from the side of religion and its own content. Furthermore, this movement must arise in such a manner that in passing over to the form of thought, religion neither takes this thinking to be immediately identical to itself, nor such that the passing-over of representation to the form of thought is something that is simply other and externally opposed to religion. The first case, as we have seen, is what occurs in the Oriental religions, where philosophy as such does not exist but just is religion. The second occurs with the Greeks, for whom philosophy arises in opposition to religion and only when religion has already ceased to hold sway.

On Hegel’s account, however, both the possibility for and the demand that representation articulate its truth in the form of thought occurs, and can only occur, *at a certain point in time*, namely when the concept of religion has externalized itself in the totality of the finite determinations of its content and such that the next, which according to its content is thus the final religion that realizes and has the absolute content for itself in representation, proclaims that

¹⁰¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:249 [158.] Compare also *ibid.*, 1:107 [25-6.]

¹⁰² Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, 214 [166-7.]

God brought himself down to humanity, even to the form of a servant, that God revealed himself to humans; and that, consequently, far from *grudging* humanity what is high, indeed what is highest, God laid upon humans with that very revelation the highest duty that they should *know God*.¹⁰³

Insofar as this claim belongs to the content of this religion and its representation, the need to pass over from representation to thought becomes a problem and task for religion itself.

Now admittedly, at first the necessity of passing over to thought appears to come externally. The truth that is the content of this religion itself appears only after ancient philosophy has arose in opposition to religion. Additionally, this religion arises out of the collapse of belief in the Roman gods and in a context where a plurality of religions appear, each claiming to be true. The claim of the truth of this religion is thus from the beginning challenged on all sides by fools and philosophers and by Jews and Gentiles. Granted, according to this religion, God has manifest himself in sending his son. The claim to be the true religion, however, cannot be vouchsafed by any external witness. Just as the truth of revelation cannot be guaranteed by mere subjective feeling, for this appeal to feeling may and has been made by every religion, so the mere external historical fact of the person of Jesus is not sufficient, for this history can be understood in thoroughly mundane, secular or moral terms. The significance of Jesus lies in the fact that this history is supposed to be grasped not just as mundane, but as a divine history, and thus finds its witness in the spirit, in the inwardness of consciousness itself and its own conscience.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 67 [18:253-4]

¹⁰⁴ See *Ibid.*, 40 [230-1.], Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:399-40 [294-5], 3:144-152 [80-81], 3:214-233 [147-163] and 3:316-334 [239-257.]

[H]umans became aware of God as an objectivity essentially for *thinking* and *thought*; and likewise the subjective activity of spirit *recollected* or *inwardized* itself from feeling, intuition, and fanciful imagination into its essence, to thought, and sought to have before it what belongs properly to this sphere, indeed to have it purely as it is in this sphere.¹⁰⁵

What at first appears as the external necessity of passing over to thought thus becomes an internal necessity insofar as, from this religion and within it according to its own content, the contradiction between form and content that is implicit in the knowledge of religion as representation is for itself inadequate insofar as the truth of this content is fundamentally *other* than that which is sensuously given and present. In this way, in the demand that God is revealed and known and the knowledge that this truth cannot be known by feeling, sensation or external history, it recognizes “that contingent and arbitrary elements”¹⁰⁶, i.e., that which is *merely* subjective, have entered into its feeling, intuition and representation. Thought becomes the process in and through which, by turning inward, consciousness attempts to purify itself of these elements and raise itself to knowledge of God. This movement is a *meditation*¹⁰⁷ that forms the starting-point for the natural theology of the religion that expounds the concept of God in thought not starting from the immediacy of that which is sensuously given, or even from the purposiveness that is manifest, for example, in the purposive activity that is human history, but from the inwardness of the subject and explicitly in the form of thought as a meditation on its own thought.

As we have already seen in Chapter Three in the discussion of the denigration of the proofs, the thought that emerges here and is articulated by natural theology is, first

¹⁰⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 73 [18:258.]

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ See *Ibid.*, 74 [18:259.]

and foremost, the ontological proof. Now on Hegel's account, admittedly, religion and philosophy are ways in which the human spirit elevates itself to God and know God (i.e., the truth as such or the absolute.) The proofs are, according to Hegel, the "grasping in thought of what we have called the *elevation of spirit to God*."¹⁰⁸ As such, they are this elevation as it is *for* thinking.¹⁰⁹ The ontological proof is distinctive, however, insofar as "what we are considering is the *witness* of the *thinking* spirit insofar as the latter is thinking not only in itself but *for itself*."¹¹⁰

We have also seen, however, that the thinking of natural theology and thus the form in which it articulates the proofs is still the formal thinking of the understanding. The object of the proofs that is to be articulated by the understanding is already presupposed as having a determinate content, and the immediate presupposition of these proofs is this content of representation. Accordingly, the development of this account in and by natural theology is not the articulation of the proofs as the immanent self-development of the concept itself, but merely an external and formal movement that, as formal, is itself taken as subjective, i.e., merely *our* way of gaining comprehension of God. In agreement with the understanding and the fixity of its categories, the *concept* of God, God's *attributes* or relation to the world and his manifestation, and God's *being* are all articulated as distinct. Admittedly, they are *meant* to be, if distinct, certainly not separate, and yet their not being separate is assumed rather than thought through conceptually, so that what is said by the proofs articulated in the terms of the

¹⁰⁸ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:416 [310.]

¹⁰⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 73 [18:258.]

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

understanding and comprehended in the understanding's own terms, contradicts what is meant.

Now, at the conclusion of the second Kingdom, a secular consciousness begins to establish itself on its own ground. It achieves this in and through thought, and is accordingly the Enlightenment. This thinking, however, is still merely the abstract thought of the understanding, and thus this Enlightenment is merely the Enlightenment of the understanding which, taking the formalism of the understanding to be absolute, attacks all content and reduces religion to ashes. In turning to the third Kingdom, we shall see how not only how this occurs, but also how religion and Enlightenment understanding are reconciled. At first this reconciliation is still just immediate, i.e., based on feeling, which in its immediacy is fragile and threatens to collapse – this threat is the crisis of the opposition of religion and the Enlightenment understanding which constitutes the penultimate moment of Hegel's philosophy of religion.

The Kingdom of Spirit

Where Hegel refers to the immediate establishment of Christendom as the kingdom of the Father, and the second age, where the church and state enter into antithesis and conflict, the kingdom the son, he calls the third age the kingdom of spirit because, he claims, this age brings about the harmonization and reconciliation of the antithesis of the second age.¹¹¹ Now, this reconciliation, on Hegel's account, comes about from two sides.

¹¹¹ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 345 [12:417.]

The Protestant Reformation

First, from the side of religion itself, the reformation arises in opposition to the corruption and external authority of the Catholic Church. In this reformation, the content of this religion is preserved, but “it is preserved in such a way that this content receives its authentication from the witness of the spirit; that it is to be valid for me to the extent that it asserts its validity within my conscience or my heart.”¹¹² Human beings are not immediately what they ought to be, and the individual is evil because and insofar as it holds to mere immediate sensuous desires and particularity. In surrendering its particularity and making the teaching of the church its own and its own self-certainty, the external world ceases to be an impediment, for this world is *only* the external in relation to conscience, while conscience is that which is essential and in which the self has its certainty.

The secular realm and its concerns are thus no longer taken to be something negative and evil, for human beings rise above this in the mutual forgiveness and declaration of faith wherein spirit is present in the community. Thus “[i]t is now perceived that morality and justice in the state are also divine and commanded by God, and that in point of substance there is nothing higher.”¹¹³ The difference and hierarchy between priest and laity accordingly vanishes, for celibacy and holding oneself back from the world is no longer recognized as sacred but is itself renounced. Likewise here the individual must take responsibility for their own salvation, for this domain is both the

¹¹² Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825-6*, 3:79 [67.]

¹¹³ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 422 [12:502-3.]

right and responsibility of the individual themselves and “no authority can absolve me of accountability.”¹¹⁴

The Need for and of Secular Consciousness

The other side of this movement takes place from the side of secularity. For this to be achieved, however, it is first necessary that the secular should become a consciousness that distinguishes itself explicitly from religion. To put it another way, thought as it arises as yet in Christendom has still only arisen in such a manner that it is *implicitly* unified with religion. Thought must explicitly sunder itself and form for itself a secular consciousness and religion and secular consciousness must enter into opposition, for “the process of thinking consists in carrying through this opposition until it arrives at reconciliation.”¹¹⁵ This sundering of consciousness is already implicit in religion itself insofar as the state and the secular realm as such constitute, on this religion’s own terms, that which is distinct from itself. Religion thus appears to be a realm apart, the Sunday of life that is distinguished from the work-a-day and secular world. We shall now see how these two explicitly distinguish and enter into opposition with each other.

The Birth of the Enlightenment of the Understanding

First, pious consciousness, living in its immediate faith, regards its life as a whole and accepts and knows that which it receives, the whole of its finite existence, as the dispensation of grace so that

¹¹⁴ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy 1825-6*, 3:77[64.]

¹¹⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:346-7 [269.]

one accepts one's situation, one's life and rights, as they come along: it *is* so. With respect to God, [it is all his] gift, and particular happenings are a fate beyond the understanding.¹¹⁶

In opposition to this, from the secular side and identifying itself with this, consciousness, while admitting the supremacy of religion, nonetheless develops "free human understanding and human aims."¹¹⁷

That this work is merely human work and cognition and its finite aims is evident. Granted, "[w]e do indeed start from what we find present; but that is our *own* affair, *our* work, and we are aware that it is our work, [which we] *ourselves* have produced."¹¹⁸ The object is not left as just a sensuously present thing. Instead, this consciousness cognizes the laws of nature and properties, orders and characteristics of natural things and of the products of spirit."¹¹⁹ That which is produced is "the world of our insight and knowledge of our external possessions, our rights, and our deeds."¹²⁰ Against cognition and scientific knowledge, all that remains for pious consciousness is inner subjective feeling. Granted, this secular consciousness is also aware that its objects and ends are conditioned, aware that it is dependent on that which is external to itself, and thus still confesses that this world is God's creation. This admission, however is entirely empty, for "[t]he matter is disposed of once and for all by the simple admission that everything [has been] made by God, which is self-evident. Then in the course of knowledge and in the pursuance of goals no further thought is given to it."¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 1:94 [13.]

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 1:95 [14.]

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 1:94-5 [13-14.]

¹²⁰ Ibid., 1:95 [14.]

¹²¹ Ibid., 1:96 [15.]

Pious consciousness, however, is not satisfied with such emptiness and does not limit itself to the generality of God's creativity and power, but attempts to

make its reflection more thorough, [namely,] by dealing with the structure and arrangements of natural things in terms of their teleological relations, and similarly by regarding every petty incident of individual life, like the great events of history, as proceeding from divine purposes, or as directed by and leading back to them.¹²²

In this way, pious consciousness attempt to give divine activity a determinate content.

What it gains, however, are only finite purposes and contingent ends that "are picked up momentarily, and likewise they are forgotten straightaway without rhyme or reason."¹²³

These finite ends that are declared divine now appear only as finite ends and purposes.

On the one hand, "it is the progress of knowledge that has caused the depreciation and downfall of this external teleological view."¹²⁴ On the other hand, however, it is precisely finite *purposiveness* that secular consciousness itself employs in scientific discovery, for the criterion of its investigation is utility.¹²⁵ The being-in-itself of things, in other words, is taken as just an abstraction outside of its being-for-us, while we ourselves must create the conditions under which things becomes intelligible and thus organize them and interrogating them according to our own purposes. As cognition, the thought of this secular consciousness now

¹²² Ibid., 1:98 [17.]

¹²³ Ibid., 1:99 [17.]

¹²⁴ Ibid., 1:99 [18.]

¹²⁵ Although in *ibid.*, 1:92-103 [11-22.], Hegel does not directly reference the concept of utility, it is clear that his account here is intended to follow essentially the same path as the movement in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* from 'Faith and Pure Insight' to 'Enlightenment'. At the conclusion of this movement in the *Phenomenology*, the principle of utility articulated by Bacon as the appropriate method of empirical sciences becomes the principle of the Enlightenment that attacks religion and the world of culture and leads to the terror. (Cf. H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 2:329-330, 337 and 355. Compare Hegel's account of Bacon in *Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3:174 [20:77.]

ranges over what is and its necessity, as in the relation of cause and effect, of ground and consequent, of force and its expression, and of the generic universal of these singular existences.¹²⁶

Cognition thereby grasps the finite world as “a *system of the universe*, so that cognition has no need of anything for the system that is outside the system itself.”¹²⁷ In doing so, it neither intends nor needs to rise beyond the sphere of the finite in articulating itself in the sphere of exact sciences and its technical knowledge.¹²⁸ In observing nature, it on the one hand reduces everything to a mere immediate thing, including human beings themselves, while on the other hand, distinguishing this from the in-itself, whether this in-itself is the pure negativity of sensuous being, namely the abstraction of pure matter, or God as the supersensible. In either case, this ground is merely the abstract universal that is just an unknown x and thus is nothing for consciousness. Cognition, however, does not leave the object alone, but acts upon nature, i.e., it experiments and discovers nature as that which is externalized according to the design of thought and its own purposes. But thus it is not just that the I is a thing, but the thing is I. “Utility is the object insofar as self-consciousness sees through it and has the *individual certainty* of itself, its pleasure (its being for itself) within it.”¹²⁹

Cognition, however, is not and cannot be satisfied to remain at the level of theoretical cognition, but seeks to make its certainty and knowledge into the universal property of all, i.e., it is the Enlightenment. First, the Enlightenment attacks the externality of the church and its superstition, attributing to the priesthood nothing but the envious attempt to deceive the people by, on the one hand, claiming themselves to alone

¹²⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:101 [20.]

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 1:102 [21.]

¹²⁹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶581 [9:315-16.].

possess insight due to the purity attained by holding themselves aloft from the world, while on the other hand and in fact pursuing their own self-interest and conspiring with despots.¹³⁰ Second, it turns against the despotism of the secular state itself and against the irrationality of privilege and private. Third, it demands that an intellectual principle, namely the principle of certainty, the freedom of the will, shall be the basis for the state.¹³¹

The Enlightenment Understanding and its Contradiction

Thus far, Hegel takes the Enlightenment and its principle to be essentially correct.¹³² Its revolution is both justified and necessary insofar as “the Court, the Clergy, the Nobility, the Parliaments themselves, were unwilling to surrender the privileges they possessed.”¹³³ Insofar as the state is to realize its principle, it must recognize the principle of freedom of the will as holding for human beings as such rather than as members of a particular religion, culture, or state and it must make this rational principle into the basis of the state.¹³⁴ The privileges of the Feudal system and the divisions of the state into estates that are organized according to birth must be done away with and the church must

¹³⁰ See *Ibid.*, §542 [9:294.]

¹³¹ See Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, pp.442-3 [12:524-5] and pp.445-6 [12:527-8.] For Hegel, this principle is still one-sided, for on Hegel’s account it is not just freedom of the will that is the basis of the state, but the state that is the basis for the freedom of the subject such that freedom is itself realized not in opposition to, but in conjunction with the fulfillment of the particular duties of my station within the state. The one-sidedness of this Enlightenment understanding and its conception of freedom is that it does not raise its self-certainty and freedom to truth, but makes of it an empty, abstract ‘ought.’

¹³² Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3:401 [20:307.]

¹³³ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 446-7 [12:528.]

¹³⁴ See Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §270. For a similar reading see Robert R. Williams, *Hegel’s Ethics of Recognition*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp.327-333, esp. 332.

no longer hold the reigns of the state. The arbitrary rule of authority and independent privileges must be swept away and the rights of freedom of property and freedom of person must be recognized as universal and not as the privilege of the few. The individual must be acknowledged as having the freedom of its own conscience so that private morality and religion are not to be legislated over.¹³⁵ All individuals must also have the right to the possession of private property, and none can themselves be property, thus slavery is impermissible.¹³⁶ Finally, participation in the rule and governance of the state must be guaranteed to all.¹³⁷

Hegel himself acknowledges these rights as fundamental and essential to the modern state and its freedom. The problem is not that these principles are irrational. The problem is that the ‘reason’ of the Enlightenment is still not reason in the full speculative sense, but merely the formal and abstract thought of the understanding¹³⁸ which bases itself on the formal principles of contradiction and identity and judges everything according to this standard and criterion. As such, it does not get beyond mere formal freedom. Insofar as it attempts to make this principle actual and objective, then, it is destructive of all concrete content and determinacy.

The Enlightenment demands that ‘reason’ should not remain merely something subjective, but ought to be the objective and the universal will. Objectivity, however, requires the moment of particularity and the determination of the subjective will.

Decisions must be made, laws must be instituted, and the state must separate itself into

¹³⁵ See Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §66.

¹³⁶ See *ibid.*, §57

¹³⁷ See *ibid.*, §206. Compare also Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 448 [12:530.]

¹³⁸ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3:386 [20:293.]

spheres.¹³⁹ Thereby, however, the state is neither identical to the abstract universal, and thus not simply immediately identical to the *formal* will of self-consciousness, nor is it immediately identical to the particular purposes and ends of the individual, but rather appears as the impediment of its will and thus as something negative that ought not to be.

The attempt of the Enlightenment of the Understanding to realize its principle directly thus not only results in the overthrowing of the old regime, but also in its own self-destruction. Everything that it establishes appears only as the will of one faction that pretends to be the universal will, and thus the realm of absolute freedom that the revolution sought to establish becomes the realm of absolute terror. This terror results in the individual giving up the demand that its individual will should at once be the universal will, the reestablishment of organization of the state into various spheres “analogous to the one that had been displaced,”¹⁴⁰ and thus the settling of individuals back into their own limited spheres.

This, however, is not just a *return* to the old state, for the state is now organized as a constitutional monarchy. In this state, the principle of freedom of the will is not negated but actualized. 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,”¹⁴¹ 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

¹³⁹ Cf. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 448 [12:530.] and Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶587 [9:318.]

¹⁴⁰ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 451 [12:533.]

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 448 [12:530.]

universality, and the state *is* that universal end itself, the object and realization of the individual's will.¹⁴²

Because the recognition of the rationality of this state requires the comprehension of the sublation of the immediate and abstract will of the individual, however, the Enlightenment of the understanding cannot recognize this state and its organization into determinate spheres as anything but the negative limitation of its freedom. The Enlightenment of the understanding thus continues to attack and undermine the state. It cannot be satisfied with the establishment of freedom of property and person and the organization of the state into spheres wherein each perform their own function and mutually maintain each other and the whole. Instead, the Enlightenment of the understanding, under the title of 'liberalism,' holds on to the abstract will, takes the universal will to be nothing more than the aggregate of individual wills, and claims that the government must emanate directly from these wills. Direct democracy, however, would only be the tyranny of the majority and is moreover impracticable in light of the fact that the functioning of the state requires that individuals occupy themselves with particular needs and interests. The rule of representatives is no less contradictory and leads to agitation, unrest and suspicion, for a party claiming to represent the universal will as against the arbitrary personal will of their predecessor no sooner gains power than it, in making particular decisions, appears guilty of the same arbitrariness and self-interest, so that it too is met with the suspicion and hostility of the many, and thus shares the fate

¹⁴² Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §258 z.

of its predecessor.¹⁴³ The result is not that the people find themselves free within the state, but that the state appears as the sphere of alienation, suspicion and cynicism.

This same principle and contradiction arises insofar as the Enlightenment of the understanding turns inwards and articulates itself purely in thought. This principle is articulated first of all by Kantian philosophy:

According to it the simple unity of Self-consciousness, the Ego, constitutes the absolutely independent Freedom, and is the fountain of all general conceptions – i.e. all conceptions elaborated by Thought – Theoretical Reason; and likewise of the highest of all practical determinations [or conceptions] – Practical reason as free and pure Will.¹⁴⁴

As we have seen previously, with Kant the denigration of the proofs at the hands of the understanding is completed insofar as God becomes a mere subjective postulate and the content of religion is reduced to the abstraction of the ought and the Good.¹⁴⁵

Insofar as the Good is for consciousness merely an abstract universal and yet also that which is concrete and objective, the I can only identify itself with the Good by acting.¹⁴⁶ Its actions, however, necessarily require the determination of a content, for the pure will that wills itself is still only an ought, still only an abstract will and something only subjective, i.e., is only the immediate I. The will that wills itself must enter into particularity and determination, i.e., its will must have a determinate content. The only content that the immediate I has, however, is its own immediate urges, i.e., precisely that which it has previously determined as opposed to the good.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ See Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 452 [12:534-5.] Compare also *ibid*, 448 [12:530-1.]

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 443 [12:525.]

¹⁴⁵ See *supra*, 196 and 222.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §§133-4.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶¶660-665 [9:355-368.]

On the one hand, insofar as this consciousness thus attempts to act and pass its actions off as immediately identical to the universal, it is hypocrisy.¹⁴⁸ On the other hand, insofar as this I grasps the emptiness of the universal itself and grasps itself and its own conscience as the concrete unity of the universal and particular, because this I is once again still the immediate I, the will has no other content than its own immediate arbitrary willing. As such, this still formal and abstract conscience becomes a beautiful soul that cannot leave behind the immediacy of its own self-certain feeling, but submits everything to the judgment of its own arbitrary will. It is thus the “absolute sophistry which sets itself up as a legislator and refers the distinction between good and evil to its own arbitrary will.”¹⁴⁹ Because it cannot leave behind its own immediacy, it is the thorough-going skepticism of ironic self-consciousness that is lost in its own immediate I=I. Insofar as this beautiful soul becomes conscious of its own impotence, it is thus conscious of its own contradiction and “becomes unhinged to the point of madness, and it melts into a yearning tubercular consumption.”¹⁵⁰

Now, the inner substantial identity of these positions and their immanent collapse follows from the fact that “[t]here is an unresolved contradiction in the modern view because both what is concrete and the one-sided subjective concept are accepted as valid.”¹⁵¹ The problem and failure lies in the fact that the self-certainty of the modern consciousness clings to the one-sided subjective concept, to the abstract I of the understanding and the mere identity of the I=I that it holds as a fixed point. Nonetheless, insofar as it takes the concrete to be valid as well, it has already implicitly sublated its

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §140.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, §140 z.

¹⁵⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶668 [9:360.]

¹⁵¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:184 [119.]

own immediacy, for “in recognizing the concrete, we have already passed beyond the subjective concept.”¹⁵² How so?

The Immediate Reconciliation of Religion and Enlightenment

Insofar as the modern standpoint consists in taking the concrete human being as its starting-point, abstract thought is already taken to be one-sided, i.e., merely my thinking, merely formal and thus opposed to all content and being. Its awareness of the one-sidedness of thought presupposes the *recognition* that the subject is not *merely* such abstract thinking, but that we also intuit, represent, will, and so forth. Thinking, however, is not just one ‘property’ amongst these others, rather “to say that we think is to say this: that we intuit, we will, and our willing and intuiting is accompanied by thinking.”¹⁵³

Thought is thus taken to be *objective*, albeit one-sidedly so, such that the objectivity of these thoughts is again supposed to be merely a matter of *our* thinking. Nonetheless, because consciousness implicitly *recognizes* itself as the totality of these moments, thought has already sublated both these other moments and the immediacy of its own thinking, for its own I *is* the concrete unity of these determinations and their sublation.

The contradiction of the modern age, however, is itself worked out and sublated in its external unfolding in the reconciliation of religion and state. Catholicism, admittedly, places the conscience of the individual in opposition to the modern rational state insofar as it does not allow freedom, but only obedience and self-renunciation, to be the final goal and highest duty.¹⁵⁴ In Protestantism, however, the Christian religion is

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 3:182 [117.]

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 1:456 [343.]

articulated in such a manner that freedom of the will is explicitly its own principle, that conscience is free, and that the individual will, although it is not immediately Good, is not opposed to the worldly realm. To the contrary, it recognizes “the Secular as capable of being an embodiment of Truth”¹⁵⁵ that “Morality and Justice in the state are also divine and commanded by God”¹⁵⁶ and accordingly that salvation is to be achieved by our working it out in the world. Protestantism, far from being opposed to the rational secular state, is identical to it, and moreover constitutes the indirect foundation of the state. Where in Catholicism the conscience is sundered and at odds with the secular world, “the Protestant Religion does not admit of two kinds of conscience.”¹⁵⁷ Insofar as the state is rationally organized, not only does it articulate the same principle of freedom as Protestantism, but insofar as the rulers share this religion and thus this conscience with the people, it enjoys a mutual assurance of disposition which has its security in the fact that the individual, in pursuing its particular ends and in its particular sphere, also subordinates those ends to the state as a whole which is the substance and truth of the individual itself.¹⁵⁸ Because this relationship is not one-sided, however, the state is an organic unity that maintains itself precisely in and through maintaining individual freedom and personality as an essential moment of itself.¹⁵⁹ For this reason, particular interests are not suppressed but are fulfilled insofar as, in doing one’s duty, the individual attains their own satisfaction in the protection of their private person and property,

¹⁵⁵ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 422 [12:502.]

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 422 [12:502-3.]

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 445 [12:527.]

¹⁵⁸ See *ibid.*, 444 [12:526] and 449 [12:531.]

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §258.

substantial existence and consciousness of itself in its universality as a member of the whole.¹⁶⁰

Nonetheless, this reconciliation is still one that occurs in *feeling* and to this extent is only partial. On the one side, the Enlightenment of the understanding threatens to reduce this religion to nothing but feeling and expunge all content, thereby turning the conscience of the individual into mere self-certainty that lacks any truth and content. On the other hand, insofar as religion only knows the truth in the form of representation, it is thus still burdened with the opposition between its self-consciousness and its consciousness, which is represented as the opposition between the actual spirituality of the community and the kingdom of Heaven that is yet to come.¹⁶¹ In other words, “[t]he spirit of revealed religion has not yet overcome its consciousness as such, or, what amounts to the same thing, its actual self-consciousness is not the object of its own consciousness.”¹⁶²

Because this religion knows the truth in the form of representation, although it has the absolute content as its own self-consciousness, this content is not known as its own act and subjectivity that it has achieved through its own activity. On the one hand, then, this truth and content is still for it something that appears externally as the act of an other and as an event that occurred at a particular, external point in time. On the other hand, however much the content of the religion has become the inner conviction of the individual, the content of this conviction has still been gained externally from education and instruction and thus is known on the basis of external authority. For this reason,

¹⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, §261 r.

¹⁶¹ See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶787 [9:420-1.]

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, §788 [9:422.]

religion is still burdened with a certain unfreedom. The claim that *this* is the true religion, insofar as the appeal is made to feeling, faith and the witness of the heart is insufficient, for all religions may with equal justice make this claim,¹⁶³ and thus the content of this religion would once again be reduced to nothing. Likewise, any attempt to offer a proof from consensus would not only be futile, insofar as it would not only depend upon an unsubstantiated and unsubstantiable empirical claim,¹⁶⁴ but would reduce the content to nothing, for even if it is accepted that all people have believed in, represented or known God, the word God is thereby merely an empty name without any determinate content. Religion, insofar as its knowledge of the truth remains in the form of representation, accordingly remains one-sided and its reconciliation with the world is only partial.

Likewise insofar as religion passes over to thought immediately, it is the Enlightenment of understanding. This consciousness is merely *certain of itself* and its self-certainty is still immediate. Accordingly, its thought is only the abstraction of identity of formal self-consciousness, the pure I=I that holds to its own immediate self-certainty. Insofar as it declares this immediate self-certainty to be the truth, this truth is, as immediate, just intellectual intuition that, in declaring itself to be absolute, is merely the “*dogmatism of assurance*.”¹⁶⁵ Either it repels all content, determination and otherness, and thus everything substantial, or else, what amounts to the same thing, submerges everything in the subjectivity of feeling and its arbitrary will and so wastes away into nothing. If this understanding thus turns to religion in order to give itself a concrete

¹⁶³ See Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 64 [18:246.]

¹⁶⁴ See *Ibid.*, 71 [18:256.]

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶54 [9:39.]

content, it only manages to turn that content into the inwardness of feeling and thus reduce it to nothing.

Because the subject is implicitly the concept, however, it is thinking spirit that is infinite negativity. In its self-certainty, consciousness has the freedom to abstract from absolutely everything *including* itself. In abstracting from itself in this manner, however, it does not omit itself, but makes itself into merely a moment and thus gives up “the *fixity* of its self-positing as well as the fixity of the purely concrete, which is the I itself in contrast to the distinctions of its content.” This content, which previously appeared only as “the substance of the individual, that is, his inorganic nature,”¹⁶⁶ and thus such that the individual’s particular perspective was only a *result* of its history, education and culture, becomes its own self-knowing and the reconciliation of subjectivity and objectivity.

Philosophy of Religion, Proofs, and the Phenomenology of the Speculative Resurrection

The *philosophy of religion* achieves this reconciliation, not admittedly by demonstrating that and how *all* of the various shapes of finite consciousness unfold in their necessity leading to the point of absolute knowing, but by starting with a particular object, namely religion, and demonstrating the rationality of the content of religion. Insofar as, in doing this, philosophical science fulfills the demand that is at once the requirements of the Enlightenment understanding and the crisis and opposition of religion and Enlightenment, starting from this object is justified. Furthermore, in developing its account of this object, the *philosophy of religion* arrives at the negativity of the collapse

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., §28 [9:25.]

and death of God that is the penultimate moment of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, namely the loss of the content of representation and therewith of the substance of subjectivity, and thus coincides with the *Phenomenology of Spirit* at this single turning point. The essential moments that are the reconciliation of the *Phenomenology*, however, have also appeared of their own accord in and through the articulation of the proofs in the *philosophy of religion*, for, as Hegel claims in his 1829 *Lectures on the Proofs*, “the knowledge of our object will also in itself justify itself as knowledge.”¹⁶⁷ The proofs in their correlation with the *philosophy of religion* thus mark the essential moments of reconciliation.

The Enlightenment understanding that in its self-certainty separates itself from religion and faith, brings about the downfall of the cosmological, then teleological and then ontological proof, placing all of these proofs under the last one and reducing them to assertion of the unity of thinking and being while insisting that the two are absolutely distinct, that thought is mere form while being is the content that can only be known insofar as it is something finite given by way of intuition or sensation. The will, likewise, is understood as an abstraction that stands on the side of thought as mere immediate, contentless self-identity. The series, however, that is the undermining of these proofs is at once to the series of the ways in which this I as secular consciousness takes itself to be given. It knows itself, first, in scientific observation, as a mere immediate being or a thing, second, according to the principle of utility, as something that exists and is the unity of reflection into another and into itself, and third, in Kantian morality and its immediate offshoots, as essence that is merely the abstraction of the in-itself and the

¹⁶⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 43 [18:233.]

identity that posits its own law. The beautiful soul that collapses from out of this abstraction, sublates itself insofar as these ways of knowing are comprehended as ways in which it knows itself and are thus taken by it to be the moments of its own self-knowing.

Turning back from its end-point in the crisis of the opposition of the Enlightenment of the understanding that arises in its conclusion, the proofs as articulated explicitly in the 1831 *philosophy of religion* now appear as the thought, the concept or the in-itself of the various divisions of religion and the content of these religions now appears as the refutation of the claim of the understanding. Where the understanding claims that the experience of the infinite and the transition from the finite to the infinite is impossible, this is directly contradicted by the fact that these various religions show consciousness doing precisely that.

Admittedly, at first this experience still appeared to be something merely subjective, belonging only to the interiority of religion as the intuition and representation of God, or as an alien content, or as the external formal imposition of thought. Yet this movement from the finite to the infinite and their unity is not, according to the standpoint of philosophical science merely something inner and subjective, but is objective and explicitly posited as for-itself in the constitution of the state that is present as the actuality of the life of the community. Yet the series of ways in which secular consciousness knew itself in thought, namely as an immediate thing, as existence and as essence in the opposition of the understanding to religion, is also the series of the ways in which the individual intuits and represents itself in religion. As such, the content of religion is revealed to be not just the *object* of this secular consciousness, not just something that is *for* it, but its own reflection into itself.

Now, religion, does not hold fast to the side of the finite subject, but has as its content the relation that is the sublation of the difference between itself and the infinite and, moreover, externalizes this content and its highest conception of the truth and realizes this as its freedom. This speculative moment that initially appeared to be a content that is alien to secular consciousness, now reveals itself to be the movement in and through which its own conception of freedom and its previously immediate self-certainty is realized and founded. This self-certainty, which first arises through Christianity, is in-itself, and now is comprehended by secular consciousness itself in the form of thought as, the sublation of the previous merely partial conceptions of the self and its freedom.

Now, the movement of finite consciousness to the infinite, or from the individual through particularity or determination and up to the universal as essence, is reciprocated in the Christian religion as the movement of God from universality as the father, through particularity as the son, to individuality as spirit. In this manner, particularity is taken up into and reconciled in God, who is now not just the essence or universal but is the fully developed concept that is not only in-itself, nor merely for-itself, but is in-and-for-itself in the community of finite spirit. Christianity is thus the revealed religion insofar as God is now known as the self-knowing or absolute idea, but this knowledge *of* God is just as much the knowledge of the self *in* God. As such, human beings in this religion now know themselves as spirit, and God is likewise, then, not just the absolute idea that is merely subjective or merely in-itself, but absolute spirit.

In terms of the proofs, the speculative truth of the ontological proof is that it is sublated as the One proof that comprehends the other proofs as its moments so that God

is known as absolute spirit who is not just substance, but subjectivity that creates the world, i.e., posits its other, and posits it in such a way that this positing is at once absolutely free positing in which it realizes itself and its own purposes in its other who, as finite spirit, is raised in its proper time to the reconciliation with God and the knowledge of itself as spirit. The ‘proper time’, which constitutes the apparent externality and contingency of Christianity in the representation of this religion, is now comprehended as determined by the necessity of the concept, for the concept must separate itself into the distinct moments and externalize them in order to sublimate them and complete and perfect itself as the idea of religion.¹⁶⁸ This externality is history, which in its immediacy appears as the field of contingency and the play of personal interests and passions. These interests and passions, however, are the very means by which the idea realizes itself as spirit in the development of its own concept in and through finite spirit, i.e., these finite purposes are in fact sublated by the cunning of reason such that they serve the final end. This final end, however, is not just harsh necessity, for particularity is sublated and thus preserved as an essential moment.

The individual attains its consolation, for by recognizing its finitude as just a moment and sublating it, it knows itself in the universality of reason. It is not merely reason as the universal that determines itself to particularity and realizes its own ends, but the individual that through the particularity of its actions and the sublation of its particularity comprehends itself in the universal. The absolute truth is the unity that is the reciprocal relation as the complete is transparency of these two movements. This truth is first attained by religion insofar as this is the content that is represented in the revealed

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:111 [28], 1:143 [57], and 1:184 [92.]

religion, but this knowledge is still finite and incomplete due to the finitude of the form of representation, so finite spirit only represents this truth as the act of another and as something yet to come, but does not comprehend the totality of this movement as equally its own act and subjectivity. Accordingly, its self-consciousness is still distinguished from its consciousness of the truth, and thus the religious community must still achieve its actuality and objectivity.

In doing this, in attaining its actuality and objectivity, representation is raised to thought, while thought, which to begin with appears to be just subjective and abstract, externalizes the moments of its concept, and comprehends these moments in religion as its own universal self-consciousness and as the self-comprehension of reason itself. Thereby, the opposition between secular consciousness and religion is sublated, for the content of religion is just as much the content and development that is carried forth in and by pure thinking that has purified itself of its contingency and particularity and thereby comprehends this content as the self-development, self-externalization and self-realization of reason.

Because its content and form are here identical, and because certainty and truth are identical here as self-certainty that is comprehensive self-knowing, this is philosophy which has attained its own concept and is no longer the love of knowing, but actual and absolute knowing itself. Insofar as it has attained the self-transparency of the concept, this absolute knowing is purely at home with itself and thus free. When philosophy then, after articulating itself in the sphere of pure thought, later turns again to this content and explicates religion, what it explicates is only itself and this explication is the demonstration of the necessity of the content of religion which in its development attains

its consummation in Christianity such that this “religion will disclose itself to us to be the absolute religion.”¹⁶⁹ In this religion, philosophy as philosophical science finds itself and comprehends itself as the final moment of the reconciliation of the internal division and determination in and through which this religion brings itself to its completion.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 1:112 [29.]

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SYSTEMATIC CORRELATION AND THE ONE PROOF

The aim of the present chapter is to complete the account of the correlation of Hegel's proofs by articulating the meaning and significance of the correlation of the proofs to Hegel's system itself as such. In particular, it will be argued that the cosmological, teleological and ontological proofs respectively correlate to Hegel's account of the relation of the moments of the system articulated in §§575-577 of his *Philosophy of Spirit*. The articulation of the correlation of the proofs to the final sections of Hegel's system will serve to elucidate the meaning of these sections of Hegel's account while providing the opportunity to further consider and elaborate on the previous account of Hegel's conception of reason and freedom. In and through articulating the correlation of ontological proof to the final section of Hegel's system, it will become necessary to concretely articulate the sense in which Hegel takes both the three proofs and the system itself to be One. This will lead, by way of a critique of the non-metaphysical and metaphysical interpretations of Hegel's system, to the articulation of his concept of time and eternity in and through which it is alone possible to comprehend the One proof and the genuine middle of the Hegelian system. With this, the exposition of the correlation of the proofs to the system will be completed. Before turning to the consideration of the final sections of Hegel's system, however, it is first necessary to begin by providing an account not only of the limitation of the correlation of the proofs to the philosophy of religion, but the limitation of the correlation of the proofs to both the *logic* and the philosophy of religion conceived in its phenomenological role, or indeed, even both the *logic* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a whole. The articulation of the

necessity of Hegel to go beyond, or sublimate, these moments taken together will provide the entrance-point from which to consider and comprehend the final sections of the Hegelian system.

The Limitation of the Correlation to Religion And the Syllogism of the System

It has already been explained that and why the proofs cannot be correlated to the *Logic* alone insofar as, in doing so, Hegel's 'defense of the proofs' would ultimately reduce to and be guilty of the same contradiction that he locates in the traditional ontological proof. In other words, insofar as the *Logic* itself begins from the immediate unity of thinking and being, if Hegel's account and defense of the proofs was limited to their correlation with the *Logic* alone, then he would have presupposed precisely that which requires demonstration. If Hegel's account and defense of the proofs merely requires that it be demonstrated that and how finite consciousness can and has been raised to the infinite or the standpoint of absolute knowing, however, then it may well appear as though the discussion of the cosmological and teleological proofs, as well as the issue of the correlation between the proofs and religion, is superfluous and that Hegel's own proof of God can be clearly articulated and justified in terms of these two works alone. Kevin Harrelson has indeed recently proposed such an account.

There is a certain initial plausibility to the claim that Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Logic*, when taken together, can be understood as providing Hegel's proof of God. After all, it is certainly correct that Hegel takes the *Phenomenology of Spirit* to be the *immediate* presupposition of the standpoint of the *Logic*. It is correct that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is supposed to provide ladder for finite consciousness to the

standpoint of the *Logic*, while the *Logic*, which Hegel himself characterizes as an account of God, both begins and ends with the unity of thinking and being. Given this, one might well be led to suspect that, as Harrelson suggests, the argument of the *Logic* and *Phenomenology of Spirit* together constitute Hegel's own version of the ontological proof. Such a reading serves at once to both radically simplify the presentation of Hegel's account of the proofs and renders Hegel's own version of the proof readily intelligible as a variation on the formulation of the ontological proof proposed by Descartes and Spinoza. On this account, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Logic* respectively constitute the premises of Hegel's particular articulation of the ontological proof. Accordingly, Harrelson argues that the *Logic* provides the minor premise to the ontological proof, according to which "the *concept* of a perfect being implies the concept of necessary existence."¹ The *Phenomenology*, on the other hand, Harrelson claims, provides the major premise for this argument by demonstrating that "the necessity of our perceiving God's existence implies the real necessity of his existence."²

Such a reading, however, is fundamentally problematic and not only due to what might, after all, appear to be the merely external grounds that it fails to take into account Hegel's discussion of the cosmological and teleological proofs. First, this account in fact degrades the ontological proof to the level of the cosmological argument by defining God in terms of absolute necessity. Second, admittedly the *Logic* is supposed to take place at the point where the distinction between thinking and being and knowing and truth are sublated. Nonetheless, insofar as the *Logic* is simply taken as the *result* of the *Phenomenology*, and insofar as the *Phenomenology* starts from the distinction between

¹ Harrelson, *Descartes to Hegel*, 216.

² *Ibid.*

concept and being, then the *Logic* on its own would not be the truth itself, but as Harrelson says, would merely demonstrate the *logical possibility* of God or absolute knowing.³ Accordingly, the contradiction of the ontological proof according to which in the distinction between concept and being is both presupposed as something permanent and true on its own account and yet is supposed to be untrue and overcome at the beginning of the *Logic*, would be reinstated through the dichotomy between *Phenomenology* and *Logic*.

Yet this dichotomy does not prevail in Hegel's system. Although the *Phenomenology of Spirit* does constitute the immediate starting-point of philosophical science, the *Logic* does not return to the *Phenomenology*, but instead moves through the sciences of *nature* and *spirit*. The necessity of the movement from the *Phenomenology* to the system of science itself consists in the fact that the movement of the *Phenomenology* is articulated in terms of various shapes of finite consciousness and in terms of the distinction of knowing and truth. The *content* of this movement has the appearance of necessity for "[t]he diversity of content exists as *determinate content* in sets of relations, not in itself, that is, it consists in *negativity*."⁴ All of the shapes of consciousness along the way collapse in their own self-contradiction, and thus the path of the *Phenomenology* is, in one sense, "the path of despair."⁵ Yet because negation is negation of something determinate, and thus is a determinate negation that has a positive result, this development is not merely the skepticism which, in negating these stages, is left with

³ Compare Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §381 z.: "For the *cognition* already contained in the simple *logical* idea is only the concept of cognition thought by us, not cognition existing [*vorhandene*] for itself, not actual spirit, but merely its possibility."

⁴ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §805 [9:432.]

⁵ *Ibid.*, §78 [9:56.]

nothing, but the ladder to the standpoint wherein the finitude of these shapes of consciousness is sublated. It is only in the final shape of consciousness⁶ and only at this single point when the distinction of knowing and truth disappears, that spirit wins “the freedom of its being.”⁷ The content that appears in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, however, must still be comprehended as the self-externalization and development of the concept itself.

First, the concept must be comprehended from out of itself and as its own self-development in the pure ether of thought. This movement, carried out as the *Logic*, reaches its conclusion in the absolute idea. Second however, as we have seen,⁸ the *Logic* at its conclusion still appears, from the standpoint of one who has followed the system thus far, as locked up within thought and merely subjective. The going beyond itself of the *Logic* at first arises as the urge to sublimate this appearance, or the opposition to appearance, so that the conclusion of the *Logic* may be conceived in this way (although, as we shall eventually see, this movement is one-sided) as leading to the beginning of another sphere of science.⁹ In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel anticipates and articulates this urge and need to go beyond the *Logic* as based in the fact that, even in the liberty of the concept that is pure thought at home with itself in its own self-movement,

⁶ In a sense, admittedly, this final shape is no longer strictly speaking a shape of *consciousness* for this final shape is itself the unity of consciousness and self-consciousness and the unity of self-certainty with truth and is no longer determined by or structured by something absolutely other.

⁷ Ibid., §805 [9:432.]

⁸ See supra, 244.

⁹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 752 [12:253.]

the freedom of spirit is still one-sided and has “not yet attained its consummate freedom.”¹⁰

Knowing, however, knows that which is other than itself and is the freedom to sacrifice itself in order to recognize the coming-to-be of spirit from the other. To put it in other terms, although finite spirit raises itself to the absolute idea, it is still burdened with the other from which it has nonetheless divested itself in rising to the realm of pure thought. Immediately speaking, finite spirit has as its presupposition *nature*. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, finite spirit raises itself to absolute knowing in and through the dialectic of the finitude of its own knowing, and in so doing the content of *nature* and *spirit* is developed and passed over, but only such that it is developed as the object of a finite shape of consciousness. Accordingly, even at the conclusion of the *Logic* and in the absolute idea, finite spirit is still burdened with the opposition of the absolute idea and appearance insofar as, since the absolute idea is the truth, it must not be comprehended merely as the result of the development from out of appearance of finite spirit. Instead, finite spirit must be comprehended as the result of the absolute idea that externalizes itself as nature and, in and from out of its own absolute self-externalizing movement, has finite spirit and its appearance as the result. In comprehending nature and spirit as the self-externalization of the idea, finite spirit then comprehends itself and its movement from the finite to the absolute idea as absolute spirit.

Now, the final moment of absolute spirit is philosophy, which, as we have seen, is both the result of religion and the verification of its content in and through the sublation of the opposition between the finitude of the form of representation and its absolute

¹⁰ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §807 [9:433.]

content. Philosophy liberates itself from the one-sidedness of form and the formalism of the understanding and thereby achieves the fulfillment of its concept insofar as “[t]his movement, which philosophy is, finds itself already accomplished, when at the conclusion it grasps its own concept, i.e., only *looks back* on its knowledge.”¹¹

Historically, this movement is achieved in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which is the final moment of the history of philosophy¹² because here philosophy comprehends its own concept, i.e., comprehends the concept of philosophy as not just the love of knowing, but actual knowing of the truth. It achieves this by looking back on its knowledge, i.e., by making knowledge itself both its object and concept and in developing and comprehending all of the finite shapes of knowing in their necessity. Thereby, philosophy comprehends the truth of knowing and knowing of truth and thus sublates this opposition and constitutes itself as the final shape of consciousness, i.e., absolute knowing.

From out of the sublation of this opposition of form and content, philosophy proceeds to articulate the concept as the absolute idea in the *Logic*. Here the system becomes a circle insofar as the articulation of the absolute idea of the *Logic*, out of which it then passed to the sciences of *nature* and *spirit*, has now, in the final moment of

¹¹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §573.

¹² Admittedly, Hegel does not make this claim explicitly but rather, in offering his own account of the history of philosophy, stops with Schelling. Nonetheless, as his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* are themselves to be comprehended as a moment of philosophical science, they clearly belong to the moment of philosophy as the final moment of absolute knowing. It is not Schelling, however, but his own *Phenomenology of Spirit* that looks back on the shapes of knowing and thereby comprehends the *concept* of philosophy – note, the concept, not the idea. As Hegel says towards the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, “spirit necessarily appears in time, and it appears in time as long as it does not *grasp* its pure concept, which is to say, as long as it does not annul [tilgt] time.” (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §801 [9:429.]) The *Phenomenology* is as the grasping of this pure concept is at once, accordingly, this annulment which accordingly is not *in* history including the history of philosophy.

Philosophy of Spirit come to be for-itself as the result. Here the system itself thus goes back to its beginning, for

This concept of philosophy is *the self-thinking* Idea, the knowing truth (§236)[i.e., the absolute idea of the *logic*], the logical with the meaning that it is the universality *verified* in the concrete content as its actuality.¹³

The *verification* here consists in the sublation of the mediation by which the sciences of *nature* and *spirit* proceeded from *logic*.¹⁴ The *Logic* is thus verified insofar as its immediacy is restored in and through the unfolding that was, in fact, just its own self-unfolding as the externalization of the idea. The *Logic* is accordingly comprehended as the very soul of *nature* and *spirit*, i.e., the *Logic* is not, despite initial appearances, the *method* that is *applied* to the spheres of *nature* and *spirit*. Instead, these spheres are themselves the idea: *nature* is the idea that is external to itself insofar as, because it is merely the idea *in-itself*, its truth is its being-for-another. The idea, however, is also the sublation of this externality and thus is *spirit*, i.e., the idea that is for-itself and as absolute spirit is in-and-for-itself.

At this point, accordingly, philosophical science returns to its beginning and the system of philosophical science constitutes itself as a circle. Nonetheless, this system initially *appears*, as we have seen, from out of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*; for the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is nothing other than the deduction of the standpoint of absolute knowing or philosophical science. Accordingly, immediately speaking the system presupposes the *Phenomenology of Spirit* because pure science “presupposes the liberation from the opposition of consciousness.”¹⁵ In presupposing the *Phenomenology*

¹³ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §574.

¹⁴ Cf. *supra*, pp. 298-9.

¹⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 29 [21:33]

of Spirit which itself “as the system of spirit’s experience embraces only the *appearance* of spirit”¹⁶ the system itself initially *appears* as the result and thus is itself, in its immediacy, an immediate appearance. The initial appearance of the system of philosophical science must thus sublimate its own immediacy that is the immediacy of its appearance in and through grounding and verifying itself from out of itself in the distinction such that each moment of the system of philosophical science is both the immediate and the mediating middle. It must, in other words, constitute itself as a circle of circles, or rather, a syllogism of syllogisms.

The Syllogisms of the System

The Problem of Explicating §§575-7

To recall, according to Hegel the three basic forms of the syllogism are (a) U-P-I, (b) P-I-U, and (c) I-U-P.¹⁷ Likewise, at the conclusion of his system that is the final three sections of the *Philosophy of Spirit*, §§575-7, Hegel presents his system in terms of three syllogisms. The manner in which these syllogisms are supposed to be structured can be easily discerned from Hegel account. These syllogisms are (a) Logic-Nature-Spirit, (b) Nature-Spirit-Logic and (c) Spirit-Logic-Nature. Now, this final syllogism is “The self-judging of the idea into two the two appearances (§§575,576)” such that it determines these two as its manifestation and unite them. Accordingly, the final syllogism is the syllogism of syllogisms.

Although this formal structure is clear, these final three sections of the *Philosophy of Spirit*, because, they are the crown of the system that comprehends the whole of the

¹⁶ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §38 [9:30.]

¹⁷ See *supra*, pp. 134-137.

system in all of its moments (i.e., *logic, nature and spirit*) within themselves, they are also the richest and certainly amongst the most dense in all of Hegel's writings. Interpreting the meaning of these sections is accordingly no easy task. Thus, as Fackenheim remarks, there is reason to be hesitant in resting the exposition of the syllogisms of the system "on the important but obscure last three section (575-77) of the *Enzyklopädie*."¹⁸ Fackenheim attempts to avoid this problem by articulating the meaning and significance of these final three sections and the final three syllogisms of the system through the *Zusatz* to Hegel's *Encyclopaedia Logic* §187. According to this *Zusatz*:

Everything rational shows itself to be a threefold syllogism, and it does that in such a way that each of its members occupies the position both of an extreme and of the mediating middle. This is the case especially with the three 'members' of philosophical science, i.e., the logical idea, Nature, and Spirit. Here, it is first Nature that stands in the middle, as the member that concludes [*zusammenschließende*] the others. As the immediate totality, Nature unfolds itself in the two extremes of logical Idea and Spirit. Spirit, however, is Spirit by being mediated through Nature. In the second place, Spirit which we know as what is individual and actuating is the middle, and Nature and the logical Idea are the extremes. It is Spirit that knows the logical Idea in Nature and elevates it to its essence. Equally, in the third place, the logical Idea itself is the middle; it is the absolute substance of Spirit and of Nature, that which is universal and all-pervading. These are the members of the absolute syllogism.¹⁹

Following this passage, Fackenheim then reads the first syllogism of the system and its movement as "*The Realistic Mediation*"²⁰ of Hegel's system while he reads the second syllogism as the "*Idealistic Mediation*."²¹ Now, as Fackenheim rightly claims, the third syllogism is the genuine Hegelian middle. In reading the final syllogisms of the system through this *Zusatz*, however, Fackenheim fundamentally misinterprets and misrepresents Hegel's actual account in §§575-7, as is evident from a close reading of §575.

¹⁸ Fackenheim, *Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, 85 fn.

¹⁹ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §187 z.

²⁰ Fackenheim, *Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, 85ff.

²¹ See *ibid.*, 90ff.

Fackenheim's reading of the first syllogism as the realistic mediation of the system follows from the characterization of *nature* in the *Zusatz* above, according to which *nature* is itself taken to be the immediate totality that distinguishes itself in unfolding into the extremes of *logic* and *spirit*. According to §575, however,

Nature, which stands between spirit and its essence, does not in fact separate them into extremes of finite abstraction, nor does it separate itself from them into something independent, that as an other only joins together others.²²

Far from providing a realistic mediation such that *nature* is taken in this first syllogism, as Fackenheim claims, as "a self-existent Whole in its own right [that] persists in such self-existence through all mediation,"²³ in §575 Hegel states that the first syllogism "is determined *within the Idea*, and nature is essentially determined only as a transition and negative moment and *in itself* the Idea."²⁴ The first syllogism thus does not provide the grounds for the *realistic* interpretation or moment of Hegel's system. To the contrary, as merely determined *within the idea*, it is fundamentally idealistic and indeed, taken on its own and in abstraction from the subsequent syllogisms, this system would be *panlogism*.

Now, the incompatibility between Hegel's characterization of the moments of the system in the above *Zusatz* and the conclusion of the system is, in fact, fairly easy to explain. This *Zustatz* is not, as Fackenheim presumes, Hegel's account of the three syllogisms as they *immediately* appear and are *successively* presented in §§575-577. The topic of the above *Zustatz* is the truth as a *sylllogism of syllogisms*. On Hegel's own account, in §§575-7, this syllogism of syllogisms is the *result* of the, at first *immediate* rather than self-mediating, first and second syllogisms of §§575 and 576. In this *Zusatz*,

²² Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §575.

²³ Fackenheim, *Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, 85.

²⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §575.

by contrast, Hegel is discussing the syllogism of syllogisms which is itself the *final* syllogism of the system articulated in §577, i.e., *the absolute syllogism*. It is only *there*, i.e., in this final syllogism where the immediacy of the first two syllogisms are sublated by being taken up into the final syllogism of the system that is the absolute syllogism, that *nature* is constituted as an immediate *totality* that distinguishes *itself* as the extremes of the *logical idea* and *spirit*.

This being said, the problem of articulating the meaning of §§575-7 is far from resolved. To the contrary, we now have the additional problem of showing how these sections can be comprehended as leading to and resulting in an account of §577 that squares with the *Zusatz* to Hegel's *Encyclopaedia Logic* §187. Given the seeming obscurity and complexity of §§575-7, one might well despair of providing any reasonable account of these sections on the basis of these passages alone. In failing to comprehend these passages, however, insofar as they are nothing less than the articulation of the idea of Hegel's system, we fail to comprehend the very standpoint of that system as a whole, for according to §577, "[t]he third syllogism is the Idea of philosophy."²⁵ We, however, have not come unprepared to face this challenge. To the contrary, the comprehension of this syllogism of syllogisms and the One that is the system itself has, implicitly, been our task all along.

The Proofs and Hegel's Syllogisms of the System

In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel states:

The course of philosophy leads to the point that the final result of all this is God. This highest point is then the proof that God is, or in other words that this

²⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §577.

universal, which is in and for itself, embracing and containing everything, is that through which alone everything is and has subsistence – that this alone is the universal truth. This *One* is the result of philosophy.²⁶

Hegel's One proof is precisely what we have been seeking to comprehend all along, for the issue of this One is the question of how the ontological proof in its full speculative sense comprehends the cosmological and teleological proof so as to sublimate their diversity and raise itself to the truth of the absolute idea as absolute spirit. If we are to take Hegel at his word, then, there can be no question as to *whether* or not he saw the proof or proofs as in some sense correlating to the whole of his system of philosophy. The question remains, however, as to *how* and *in what sense* the proof or proofs correlate to the system *as a whole*. In particular, it is necessary to fill in what Hegel only elliptically refers to in the above passage as 'the course of philosophy'. Hegel's own account of the course of philosophy, however, is precisely the final three syllogisms of the system.

How, then, are these proofs correlated to Hegel's system as such? Hegel insists that the final moment of the system constitutes the *One* proof. This *One proof*, however, is the ontological proof which, taken in its speculative sense, comprehends the cosmological and teleological proofs as well. This, of course, is not to suggest that Schopenhauer was correct in dismissing Hegel by suggesting that Hegel, "whose whole pseudo-philosophy is one monstrous amplification of the ontological proof, tried to defend this proof against Kant's *Critique*."²⁷ While, as was explained in Chapter One, Hegel does reject Kant's objection to the traditional ontological proof as insufficient and criticizes Kant on these grounds, he also insists that Kant's objection has a substantial

²⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 1:367 [267.]

²⁷ A. Schopenhauer, *On the Fourfold Root*, 16.

ground and that it is correct, but merely partial.²⁸ Hegel's account and defense of the proofs was never the unconditional defense of the proofs in their traditional formulation and his own account and defense involves a radical transformation in the understanding of the meaning of '*Beweise vom Dasein Gottes.*' At the very least, it should be recognized that the correlation of the proofs to the system is not the immediate identity of the ontological proof with this system as a whole, but rather involves the mediation and sublation of the cosmological and teleological proofs in the ontological proof that is speculatively formulated the a syllogism of syllogisms.

Given this, if the proofs correlate to Hegel's system as a whole, it seems that they would have to correlate to the final three syllogisms of the system. Although Hegel never explicitly makes this claim, this supposition is at least indirectly confirmed by his preliminary discussion of the three proofs and their relation in *The Lectures on the Proofs*.

Hegel begins his ninth lecture by repeating his initial account of the distinction between the proofs in terms of the direction of transition from being to concept that was discussed previously. Following this, however, he then suggests

by way of anticipation a further distinction, that there are three fundamental modalities of the connection between the two aspects or categories [of being and concept]. The first is the *passing over* [*Übergehens*] of the one category into its other, the second is their *relativity* or the *appearing* of the one in or to the *being* of the other; the third modality, however, is that of the concept or the idea, in accord with which [each] category preserves itself in the other in such a way that the resulting unity, which is *implicitly* the original essence of both, is also posited as their subjective unity.²⁹

²⁸ See supra, pp 48ff. and 68ff.

²⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 89 [18:270].

It is evident from the context, and as should be expected in light of the previous account of the correlation of the proofs to *logic*, that these three modalities, namely passing-over, relativity or appearing to another (i.e., reflection), and the idea that is both subjective and objective,³⁰ are the fundamental determinations of the modes of relation of the cosmological, teleological and ontological proofs respectively. These modalities, additionally, are also respectively the three modalities of the final three syllogisms of the system. According to §575, the first syllogism is the relation of *logic*, *nature* and *spirit* that is just the movement of becoming such that “the mediation of the concept has the external form of *passing-over* [*Übergehens*.]”³¹ The second syllogism “is the syllogism of reflection within the Idea.”³² The third syllogism is “the process of the Idea’s *subjective* activity, and nature the universal extreme, as the process of the Idea that is *in itself* objective.”³³

Following his characterization of the proofs in terms of these modalities, Hegel then proceeds to “give to the concept the concrete signification of God and to being the concrete significance of nature,”³⁴ and uses these relations as ways of articulating the proofs such that they are taken to articulate the different manners in which the relations between God, nature and human beings are conceived and known. Now, as we have seen, the realm of humanity is *spirit*, while Hegel refers to the *Logic* as a series of definitions of God, even stating at one point that the *Logic* “is *the exposition of God as he is in his*

³⁰ Compare Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, § 577.

³¹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §575. Translation altered to read *Übergehens* as ‘passing-over’ rather than ‘transition.’

³² *Ibid.*, §576.

³³ *Ibid.*, §577.

³⁴ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 89 [18:271.]

eternal essence before the creation of nature and of finite spirit.”³⁵ Likewise, in the *Philosophy of Nature*, Hegel similarly articulates the relation of God to creation in terms of the divine, logical idea, nature and spirit.³⁶

Now, in his *Lectures on the Proofs*, after articulating these three modalities, Hegel then proceeds to articulate the result of taking the relation of being to concept or concept to being in terms of only the first two modalities. On the one hand, articulated in terms of the first modality, spirit would remain mere semblance and God would not return to himself through the other, i.e., the result would be panlogism. On the other hand, articulated in terms of the second modality, God would be something merely subjective or postulated by human beings, i.e., the result would be anthropologism. In other words, Hegel takes the one-sided relation of these modalities to suffer from the same inadequacies that, as we shall see, the first and second syllogism of the system would suffer from if they were not sublated in the final syllogism of the system.

Finally, just as the ontological proof when taken in its speculative sense is supposed to comprehend the cosmological and teleological proof within itself, so the final syllogism of the system is supposed to comprehend the prior syllogisms in themselves. In this final syllogism of the system, moreover, the middle term is precisely the *Logic*. Insofar as the proofs correspond to the syllogisms of the system, then as Hegel claims, in its conclusion, the proofs show themselves as sublating the opposition of form

³⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 29 [21:34.] Cf. also Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 79 [91.] “It can be said that, in the science of logic, the eternal essence of God is explicated as it still was before the creation of the sensory world.”

³⁶ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §247 z.

and content such that the “the logical does not merely constitute the formal aspect but rather stands at the middle of the content.”³⁷

The correlation of the proofs to the final syllogisms of the system articulated in §§575-6 will be confirmed in and through the articulation of the content of these sections insofar as it will be shown that not only the modes of the relations of these sections but their content correlates to the cosmological and teleological proofs respectively. Hegel’s critique and subsequent speculative formulation of these proofs, meanwhile, will provide us with the means to clarify the manner in which Hegel articulates each syllogism of the system as rising into the next and the internal necessity of this movement as well as the manner in which these first two moments are immediately sublated in the third syllogism.

In the process of articulation the meaning and character of the transition from one proof to the next, we will be provided with the occasion for elucidating some of Hegel’s most central but obscure claims, namely (a) Hegel’s conception of reason and his claim regarding the rationality of the actual and actuality of the rational, and (b) Hegel’s conception of freedom as reciprocal recognition. Finally, after having comprehended the manner in which both of these moments immediately pass over to the ontological proof, we will be prepared to address the third section as the syllogism of syllogisms that is the idea of philosophy and thus the true standpoint of the system

The consideration of this third syllogism will lead to the consideration of the limitations of contemporary ‘non-metaphysical’ and ‘metaphysical’ accounts of Hegel’s system. This will in turn lead to the articulation of Hegel’s reconception of the concept of time, the manner in which this is related to his reconception of reason and freedom, and

³⁷ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 37 [18:228.]

the comprehension of the One proof in and as the genuine middle or One of the Hegelian system.

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It is this appearing which initially grounds the further development. The first appearance is constituted by the *syllogism* that has the *logical* as its ground, its starting-point, and *nature* as the middle that joins *spirit* together with the logical. The logical becomes nature and nature becomes spirit. Nature, which stands between spirit and its essence, does not in fact separate them into extremes of finite abstraction, nor does it separate itself from them into something independent, that as an other only joins together others; for the syllogism is determined *within the Idea*, and nature is essentially determined only as a transition and negative moment and *in itself* the Idea; but the mediation of the concept has the external form of *passing-over* [*Übergehens*], and science has the form of the progression of necessity, so that only in the one extreme is the freedom of the concept posited as its joining together with itself.³⁸

The initial appearance of the system of science in the totality of all three moments that begins from the *Logic* is, according to §575, *explicitly not* a realist mediation, but is to the contrary determined as *within the idea*. Thus nature explicitly *does not* unfold itself as the extremes of the logical idea and spirit, but is merely the becoming of these moments from out of the logical idea. The negative moment that the logical idea becomes, i.e., immediately comes to be and just as immediately is negated and passes away, is *nature* as the middle term of this syllogism. The interpretation of Hegel's system that follows if one takes this first syllogism to be absolute is not *realism*, but *panlogism*, for neither *nature*, nor *spirit* is here comprehended and articulated as an independent totality, as self-standing and as distinguished within-itself. Instead, the movement that is the relation of these moments is determined merely as the *passing-over* from the logical

³⁸ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §575. Translation modified to read *Übergehens* as 'passing-over' rather than 'transition.'

idea to nature as a *negative* moment that thus itself becomes and passes over to spirit. Spirit is thus determined as the negation of negation, but this negation is only the infinitely negative self-relation of the logical idea, i.e., is only the return to itself of the idea and its own interiority, so that everything takes place as though within the idea while *nature* and *spirit* are merely the *appearance* of the idea. This movement is accordingly *necessity* that is only *freedom* in the one moment, namely as the *logic* returning to itself in this infinite reflection as negation of negation.

The substance of this syllogism, taken on its own and in abstraction, has already been made clear in and through the previous account of the cosmological proof, the articulation of necessity, and the speculative movement that is fulfilled through the relations of necessity. In its relation to *nature* and *spirit*, insofar as each is just determined as immediate being that is as nothing, i.e., that passes away, the logical idea or God, passes into himself and is determined as necessity. Its relation to *nature* and *spirit* is, on the one hand, the relation to a being that has the value of nothing, and thus *nature* and *spirit* are merely determined as contingency. Yet on the other hand, this movement through *nature* to *spirit* is its own being-for-itself so that this movement is, in fact the movement of its own necessity, i.e., it is absolute actuality.

This syllogism would remain merely one-sided if the idea was merely the movement of necessity. Now as we have seen, the idea is reason while necessity in its truth is absolute actuality. The meaning of the first syllogism is accordingly given in Hegel's famous or infamous claim:

What is rational is actual;
and what is actual is rational.³⁹

³⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 20 [7:24.]

These “simple propositions”⁴⁰ as Hegel later refers to them in the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, particularly because they were placed in the preface to Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* and thus in the context of his polemic against Jacob Fries, led to and continue to breed both misunderstanding and hostility to Hegel’s thought and system. They have been read as the statement of blind conservatism according to which whatever happens to exist, no matter however contingent, contradictory and evil, is to be accepted as the truth. This, coupled with the complete misunderstanding of Hegel’s proclamation of the end of history, led in his own time as well as subsequently, to the myth that his *Philosophy of Right* is nothing but the absurdity of pretending to provide an *a priori* deduction of the perfect state which just happened to be the Prussian state in which he lived. Hegel has accordingly been accused of being a reactionary conservative and even, quite anachronistically, a Nazi or proto-fascist.⁴¹

Such a reading, however, is both ill informed and rather ironic: It is ill informed, for this misapprehension is only possible insofar as one either only reads the polemical preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, or is ignorant of the contemporary institutions of the Prussian state of the day. It is ironic, because it is the polemical tone of this preface that has caused Hegel to be so greatly misunderstood. The polemical attacks of this preface, however, were directed particularly at Jacob Fries who, *unlike Hegel*, was a rabid nationalist and anti-Semite.⁴² Likewise, Hegel’s end-of-history thesis must be

⁴⁰ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §6 r.

⁴¹ Cf. the critique of Popper in Walter Kaufmann, “The Hegel Myth and Its Method,” in *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, ed. Jon Stewart (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1996), pp. 82-108.

⁴² Cf., Schlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974) pp.119-122.

comprehended in terms of his account of history as the progressive realization of freedom, so that history has reached its end, i.e., its goal, insofar as the principle that all human beings are free is now known and explicitly constitutes the fundamental basis and principle of the modern state. The ‘end-of-history’ thesis, accordingly, does not preclude the possibility of either the development and greater perfection of present states, nor even that there will be new states will emerge and perhaps constitute themselves in ways that cannot yet be foreseen – in particular, Hegel indicates that Russia and the Americas may be possible lands of the future, although he insists that such indications are not properly philosophical, for it is not philosophy to make predictions and say how things ought to be.⁴³ Instead “since philosophy is *exploration of the rational* it is for that very reason *the comprehension of the present and the actual.*”⁴⁴

At any rate, in responding to such misunderstandings in the introduction to his *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel on the one hand expresses surprise that those who are not yet ready to renounce philosophy, much less religion, should find these propositions shocking or scandalous, and on the other hand insists that actuality must be comprehended in these propositions in the manner in which it is articulated in the *Logic* and as it is differentiated from contingency, *Dasein* and existence. That the rational is actual does not imply that every particular and contingent *Dasein* or existence is therefore actual. Accordingly, Hegel himself explicitly claims that the *Philosophy of Right* dealt with the *idea* of the state saying that “we must not have any particular states or particular institutions in mind” but that any particular state, as “it exists in the world and hence in the sphere of

⁴³ See Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, pp. 86-7 [12:110], 350 [12:422.], Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume I*, pp.193-4 [94-96] and Hegel, *Letters*, 569 [406.]

⁴⁴ Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 20 [7:24.]

arbitrariness, contingency, and error, and bad behavior may disfigure it in many respects.”⁴⁵ Indeed, according to Hegel, no particular *Dasein* or existence, indeed nothing short of the God himself or the idea, is genuinely actual, while “quite generally, what is there is partly *appearance* and only partly actuality.”⁴⁶ Nonetheless, reason or the idea *is* actual, and thus it is not something far-away and beyond, not some ideal realm that does not appear and the way things merely *ought to be*. To the contrary, while every particular thing in its mere contingency and particularity is partially defective and untrue, for its reality is not fully identical to its concept,

without any identity at all between concept and reality nothing can subsist. Even what is bad and untrue can only *be* because its reality conforms to some extent to its concept. Precisely for this reason, what is thoroughly bad or contrary to its concept disintegrates inwardly.⁴⁷

To recall the discussion of the proofs in Chapter Three, the speculative significance of the cosmological and teleological proofs consists in the fact that the being of the finite which is the initial starting-point of these proofs, is comprehended as not having genuine being, i.e., its being is not its own being, but the being of another, namely God. It is not the idea or reason that lacks being, existence and objectivity, but rather the finite that has being only in and through the idea. The idea is the genuine being of everything that is, but it does not therefore succumb to the finite and does not suffer from any opposition between its concept and being or existence and essence. Instead, the finite is only the external appearance such that it collapses, and in collapsing back into the idea, the idea is reflected into itself as absolute actuality and necessity.

⁴⁵ Ibid., §258, z.

⁴⁶ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §6 r.

⁴⁷ Ibid., §213, z.

The propositions regarding the rational and actual, however, are not merely the expression of a tautology. This should be clear already insofar as, according to the *Logic*, actuality belongs to the sphere of essence, while reason, which Hegel equates with the idea, belongs to the sphere of the concept. Now, the idea, insofar as it finds its completion in the absolute idea, returns to the beginning of its own development, i.e., to immediate being and thus constitutes itself as a circle, but thereby also becomes the beginning of a new sphere.

This circle was discussed previously as the moment of the subjective urge that follows from the fact that, at its conclusion, the idea that is comprehended in the *Logic* still appears as merely the inner world of subjective cognition and thus appears as something formal in opposition to the content which had previously appeared in the various shapes of consciousness. This standpoint, however, has been sublated because and insofar as, in developing itself through the entirety of the system of philosophical science, the idea in its self-development is now comprehended not just as form but content, and thus the idea no longer has the value of subjective cognition, but is Reason that overarches everything as its truth and being. Accordingly, the absolute idea does not just immediately pass over to its other but

freely discharges itself, absolutely certain of itself and internally at rest. On account of this freedom, the *form of its determinateness* is just as absolutely free: the *externality of space and time* absolutely being [*seiende*] for itself without subjectivity.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 753 [12:253.] Translation modified to render ‘seiende’ as being rather than existence.

The idea thus posits its own other as nature, but nature is determined merely as the mediation and transition to finite spirit.⁴⁹ The freedom of nature with respect to the idea, however, is not freedom that is infinitely reflected into itself as being-for-itself, but is merely this externality that does not sublimate itself and its own immediacy, so that “Nature exhibits no freedom in its *Dasein*, but only *necessity* and *contingency*.”⁵⁰ Nature, however, itself reaches completion insofar as it passes over into subjectivity, i.e., spirit. Now, “[f]reedom is the concept itself that has come into existence.”⁵¹ Insofar as spirit is not just immediate being or *Dasein* but comprehends the idea in science and the path of science as the path of necessity, the idea’s essence and existence are identical, i.e., God, the rational, or the idea, is actual as absolute necessity, and idea’s freedom would be the reflection of its own absolute necessity. This syllogism, however, is a one-sided abstraction. Were this syllogism the truth of the system, the result would be

[a] knowing absolutely posited in advance, in fact an autonomous act of a formal universality that embraces everything within itself – a universality into which the unity that ought to be in and for itself collapses as merely an appearing without objectivity.⁵²

Insofar as freedom is only achieved on one side, the idea would not thus comprehend itself in its other, would not have returned to itself. Its immediate externalization of itself would be freedom only in the sense of abstract freedom that is the immediate natural willing, while its return to itself would be the formal freedom that is an empty abstraction. The idea or God would accordingly be mere actuality and absolute necessity as substance or cause. The rational is not *just* actual, however, but *because* the

⁴⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §575.

⁵⁰ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §248.

⁵¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, 67 [15.]

⁵² Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 90 [18:271.]

rational is actual, *therefore* the actual is rational. Just as the cosmological proof has freedom as its speculative result and thus passes over to the teleological proof, so the first syllogism of the system passes over to the second.

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In the *second syllogism* this appearance is sublated in so far as this syllogism is already the standpoint of spirit itself, which is the mediator of the process, *presupposes* nature and joins it together with the *logical*. It is the syllogism of spiritual *reflection* within the Idea: science appears as a subjective *cognition*, whose aim is freedom and which is itself the way to produce its freedom.⁵³

The result of the first syllogism of the system is freedom, but it is the immediate, one-sided, subjective freedom of the *subjective* concept. As the result of the first syllogism, then, finite spirit is not for-itself the immediate being of nature, but is as the immediate unity of inward reflection and reflection in an other, i.e., existence. This other, i.e., nature, is not just its immediate presupposition, but also that which it itself transforms out of this immediacy and uses as a means to the attainment of its freedom. As such, the relation of finite spirit to nature is immediately one of finite purposiveness, but its finite purposiveness is also the purpose of transforming itself so that finite spirit becomes itself the means to the attainment of its own freedom; it limits and negates itself in order to attain its freedom in and through uniting *nature*, as its immediate presupposition, with the idea.

We have already examined the one-sidedness of the second syllogism in the present chapter, namely in discussing the need to go beyond the two-fold correlation of the proofs to Hegel's *Logic* and *philosophy of religion* by way of the explanation of

⁵³ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §576

limitations of conceiving of Hegel's account of the proofs in terms of the *Logic* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit* alone. The standpoint that is articulated in this second syllogism is the standpoint of *spirit itself* that sublates the initial appearance of the system, i.e., sublates both the immediacy of its own appearance and the appearance of the logical idea. Initially, as was seen above, even in raising itself to the absolute idea, spirit still knows itself as finite insofar as it *presupposes* nature. As such, it is the *urge* to sublata its own limitation in and through the idea so as to attain its genuine freedom.⁵⁴ The end which finite spirit posits and thus which is inwardly its *urge* is the desire to produce itself and its freedom, i.e., to transform itself from out of its own immediacy. This transformation of itself, however, cannot be one-sided. If it were one-sided, then *logic* would be merely the reflection of cognition on itself and its own subjective categories, the external presupposition of nature would remain a fact, and the system would itself be an historically bound *a posteriori* account. Accordingly, the idea, or God, would be nothing more than what we subjectively posit as the fulfillment of an end that is, in principle, impossible to fulfill, i.e., the self-contradiction of the mere 'ought.'

In order for the one-sidedness of subjectivity to be sublata, the reconciliation cannot come about merely from the side of the subject and its own subjective action, but must come from the side of the idea itself, so that the relation is not just self-reflection and reflection in another but *reciprocal recognition*.

As explained above, while the rational is actual, it is not merely actual, but is the free and absolute idea. The absolute idea *is* free not only in positing an other, but in and through its own self-knowing which is the reflection of itself into itself from out of

⁵⁴ See *supra*, 369-371.

another. If the other were merely actual, the idea would not be actual as the absolute idea in its complete freedom. The actual must thus also be rational, i.e., must raise itself to the comprehension of its own actuality, which as the unity of its existence and essence is the knowledge of itself as free subjectivity. The *necessity* of this elevation is an elevation which, while necessary, is no less free precisely because it is just as much its own act so that in this necessity, finite spirit has its freedom as its subjective ends and achieves this ends and makes it objective. The necessity of this movement follows from the concept of freedom and self-consciousness itself.

Now, concrete freedom, according to Hegel, is being at home with oneself in the other, knowing one-self in one's other and thus self-consciousness and self-knowing. Self-knowing, however, is not just immediate identity, but requires the other and indeed requires that other to be an other that likewise knows in this way. Thus according to Hegel, self-consciousness is self-consciousness only insofar as it is "*for a self-consciousness.*"⁵⁵ That which self-consciousness knows itself in cannot be a *mere* thing for self-consciousness requires recognition, and insofar as this recognition is complete, i.e., insofar this self-consciousness is absolute self-knowing, this recognition must be reciprocal recognition that comprehends the full development of the concept and the distinction of these moments. Absolute freedom requires reciprocal recognition such that each is for the other not only an I that is immediately identical to itself, nor such that the I is just the universal which is expressed insofar as in saying I, the I is at once the I of all, i.e., the universal I. Rather, the I and the other I are both acknowledged in their free particularity and thus as the opposite of each other and independent of each other, but

⁵⁵ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §177 [9:109.]

such that both equally sublimate their own particularity. Precisely in and through this sublation of particularity, each recognizes the other, knows itself as at home in its other, and knows this knowledge as just as much its own knowledge and individuality as that of the other and indeed all other self-consciousness. Thus it is “the *I* that is *we*, and the *we* that is *I*.”⁵⁶

The question remains, however, as to if and how this reciprocal recognition is possible and indeed if and how it is *actual*. Admittedly, human beings can be understood as achieving reciprocal recognition at the level of the state. On Hegel’s account, however, the state achieves this reciprocal recognition insofar as this modern state that is rationally constituted as a constitutional monarchy is also a Protestant state. Yet this reciprocity is still partial insofar as the unity of religion and the state is grounded in the immediate mutual assurance of disposition and thus does not explicitly and for-itself have the absolute idea as its ground. At this level, the state is still something finite and belongs to the realm of objective spirit, while religion appears to lie in part on the side of subjectivity, so that although religion has a place set aside for it within the rationally organized state, namely the inner realm of morality, conscience, the family, etc., this religion is not, and indeed cannot be (indeed for the sake of both whether they know it or not, either identical to the state or rule the state from above.) Nonetheless, religion does in a certain sense occupy a position above the state not with respect to authority or such that it holds or ought to hold the reins of the state, but in terms of the idea of spirit.

As has been stressed previously, on Hegel’s account human beings do not posit the world of nature from out of themselves, and nature in its immediacy remains

⁵⁶ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §177 [9:108.]

something that is thus an external presupposition that finite spirit admittedly *in part* transforms and posits so as to make itself objective in this second nature. Nonetheless, nature still remains the presupposition of spirit at this stage, and this defect constitutes the defect of this stage of spirit as well. On the one hand, nature is a presupposition so that, although finite spirit knows nature in the form of reflection, for finite spirit makes nature intelligible to itself in the empirical sciences, nature still remains something “the positing of which precedes reflective thinking.”⁵⁷ On the other hand, while it does posit a second nature and make itself objective, “[t]he defect of this objectivity of spirit consists in its being only a posited objectivity.”⁵⁸

This posited objectivity is finite purposiveness, which thus remains in part external purposiveness and takes its matter from elsewhere. History, however, demonstrates itself to be the infinite internal purposiveness that sublates finite purposes in such a manner that freedom is the end which is itself actual as the posited end. This freedom, however, is still finite insofar as it is comprehended at the level of finite spirit. Accordingly, finite spirit “must again freely let go the world, what spirit has posited must at the same time be grasped as having an immediate being.”⁵⁹

Because finite spirit *is* spirit, it can sacrifice itself such that, in knowing its own limitation, it transcends that limit. At this stage, both finite spirit and nature thus appear as created and posited by subsisting in and as posited by infinite spirit. By virtue of its sacrifice, however, finite spirit does not disappear but is raised to the *knowledge* of the infinite or the absolute idea. This sphere is the sphere of absolute spirit. Here,

⁵⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §384 r.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, §385 z.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, §387 z.

Religion, as this supreme sphere can in general be designated, is to be regarded as issuing from the subject and situated in the subject, but is equally to be regarded as objectively issuing from the absolute spirit, which as spirit is in its community.⁶⁰

These two moments are reconciled and transparent to themselves in each other insofar as philosophy, as the system of philosophical science, sublates the externality of form and content. In doing this and comprehending the truth as the idea verified in nature and spirit as the idea's actuality, as we have seen, we arrive at the first syllogism of the system. In this way, the first and second syllogisms have now themselves circled back into each other.

Now, this mediation is not *idealistic*, for in establishing itself as self-determining being-in-and-for-itself, insofar as the externality of nature and the externality of itself from nature is reflection into itself and into an other, namely the *Logic*, it establishes its own freedom and independence. If the movement of this syllogism ended here, accordingly, and thus if the system were interpreted according to the second syllogism alone, the result would not be *idealism* but an anthropologism according to which everything is reduced to the subjective reflection of human beings that has nature as its insuperable presupposition. Yet this syllogism also, again as we have seen above, does not end here, but has the first syllogism as its *result*.

In the end, spirit knows itself as the center point or mediation that joins together nature with the logical idea and yet knows itself in its freedom and independence, and so also knows how to limit itself so as to grant independence not only to the absolute idea, but to nature as well. In this sublation of its own immediacy, carried out in relation to the

⁶⁰ Ibid., §554.

Logic, nature is verified in the *Logic* such that nature is, on its own part, a restored immediacy that is free. In this manner, the idea itself is grasped such that

the idea *freely discharges* itself, absolutely certain of itself and internally at rest. On account of this freedom, the *form of its determinateness* is just as absolutely free: the *externality of space and time* absolutely being for itself without subjectivity [*die absolut für sich selbst ohne Subjectivität seiende.*]⁶¹

Nature, however, is thus maintained in its independence though the idea. Only as such is it not just “the abstract determinateness of being... apprehended by consciousness... mere objectivity and external life; within the idea, however it remains in and for itself the totality of the concept.”⁶² Hegel’s talk of nature as ‘within the idea’ here, however, is not the same being within the idea that nature had immediately in the first syllogism of the system, for

what is posited by this first resolve of the pure idea to determine itself as external idea is only the mediation out of which the concept as free existence that from externality has come to itself, raises itself up, completes this liberation *in the science of spirit*, and in the science of logic finds the highest concept of itself, the pure concept conceptually comprehending itself.⁶³

The unity of subjectivity and objectivity that is posited as such is the ontological proof. It is thus within the next syllogism, namely the syllogism of syllogisms that is the system as such, that as Hegel says in the *Zusatz to Encyclopaedia Logic* §187, nature is not just the transition point or means and material of finite spirit’s activity, but is such that “[a]s the immediate totality, Nature unfolds itself in the two extremes of logical Idea and spirit.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 753 [12.253.] Translation modified

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

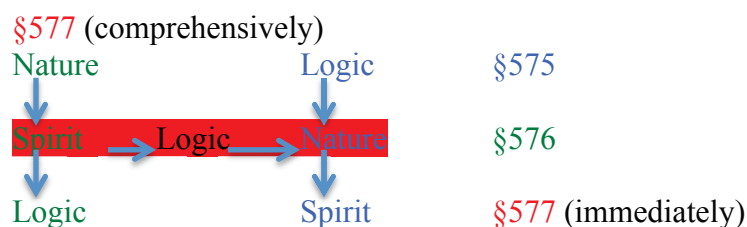
⁶⁴ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §187 z.

§577

The third syllogism is the Idea of philosophy, which has *self-knowing reason*, the absolutely universal, for its *middle*, a middle that divides into *spirit* and *nature*, making spirit the presupposition, as the process of the Idea's *subjective* activity, and nature the universal extreme, as the process of the Idea that is *in itself* objective. The *self-judging* of the Idea into the two appearances (§§575,576) determines them as *its* (self-knowing reason's) manifestations, and in it a unification takes place: it is the concept, the nature [Natur] of the *Sache*, that moves onwards and develops, and this movement is equally the activity of cognition. The eternal Idea, the Idea that is in and for itself, eternally remains active, engenders and enjoys itself as absolute spirit.⁶⁵

With the third syllogism, we reach the conclusion of the Hegelian system and what is, without a doubt, one of the most dense and rich passages in the whole of the Hegelian corpus. The syllogism of syllogisms that Hegel articulates here can be fairly easily represented. First, this syllogism has the idea, i.e., *Logic*, as the middle that distinguishes itself as *spirit* and *nature*, and makes the former into its presupposition and the latter into its universal extreme: Spirit-Nature-Logic. Now, these two extremes are the syllogisms of §§575-6, i.e., (a) Logic-Nature-Spirit and (b) Nature-Spirit-Logic. Given Hegel's characterization of this syllogism in §§575 and §576, the presupposition of the final syllogism of syllogisms that is the extreme of the idea's subjective activity is the second syllogism of §576. The universal extreme of the syllogism of syllogisms, then, is the syllogism of §575. The syllogism of syllogisms of §577 would accordingly have the following form:

⁶⁵ Ibid. This section is followed by a quotation in the original Greek taken from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, XII, 7 1072b. Surprisingly, given Hegel's penchant for misquoting texts (cf. the loose quotation of Schiller with which Hegel ends the *Phenomenology of Spirit* §808, [9:434]) here, Hegel quotes the text accurately. Accordingly, this quotation does not provide much insight into the meaning of §577, as interpreting this quotation would first require that the meaning of this passage itself be explicated in Hegel's own terms by being translated into Hegel's own terms and terminology as well as read in light of Hegel's interpretation of Aristotle.



This accords with Hegel’s characterization of the syllogism of syllogisms of the system as he articulates this in *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §187 z. insofar as, in organizing these syllogisms in this way, “each of its members occupies the position both of an extreme and of the mediating middle.”⁶⁶ Yet according to this *Zusatz*, the first syllogism is the one in which “Nature unfolds itself in the two extremes of logical Idea and Spirit.”⁶⁷ Accordingly, it appears as though in §577, Hegel reverses the order of the final syllogism and thus gives a different answer the question as to which moment is the presupposition and which is the conclusion.

This seeming inconsistency, however, is easily explained, and not only because the absolute distinction between presupposition and conclusion is, to say the least, a dubious one insofar as within a syllogism of syllogisms, the extremes are themselves both result and conclusion.

According to Hegel’s account of the relation of nature and the logical idea in the *Philosophy of Nature* “Nature is first in point of time, but the absolute prius is the idea; this absolute *prius* is the last, the true beginning, Alpha is Omega.”⁶⁸ Likewise, in the *Philosophy of Spirit*, Hegel states that “*For us* spirit has *nature* as its presupposition, though spirit is the *truth* of nature, and is thus *absolutely first* with respect to it.”⁶⁹ The

⁶⁶ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §187 z.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §248 z.

⁶⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §381.

clarification of the meaning of Hegel's distinction between what is first in point of time and absolutely first will require the examination of his concept of time. For now, however, we can at least say that *given* this distinction, there is no contradiction between §577 and *Encyclopaedia Logic* §187 z. In this *Zusatz*, the syllogism of syllogisms can be formulated such that §575 is presupposition and §576 is result insofar as they are ordered according to *temporal* priority of these moments, while in §577 the reverse is the case as they are ordered according to *absolute* priority of these moments.

Turning to the content of §577, according to Hegel's account, this syllogism of syllogisms is the idea of philosophy itself, i.e., the comprehensive fulfillment of its concept. The two extremes that are §575 and §576 are the self-judgment of the idea as its appearances, but these appearance are not, as in §575, merely the inessential appearances that pass away. The extreme of spirit is the *subjective* activity of the absolute idea, while nature is the universal extreme that is *objective*. Accordingly, these extremes are not merely appearances, but *manifestations* of the absolute idea. The subjective is not merely the subjective concept, but *cognition*, i.e., the *subjective idea*. Likewise, nature is the idea itself that is in-itself as objective, i.e., it is the *objective idea*.

Philosophical science in knowing the absolute idea and knowing nature and itself in and as the idea in its manifestation and self-manifestation, is thus not merely the external *reflection* of reason or the absolute, but the absolute reciprocal recognition and freedom both of humanity and the absolute itself, for “[i]n scientific knowledge alone it knows itself as absolute spirit; and this knowledge or spirit is its only true existence [*wahrhafte Existenz.*]”⁷⁰ Yet does this not therefore collapse reason into merely human

⁷⁰ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3:552 [20.460.]

reason, merely a matter of our thought? Or does it not collapse everything into thought, turning Hegel's system into panlogism? Or does it not entail that we ourselves are God, i.e., that we create ourselves absolutely? Not at all.

Finite spirit is finite insofar as it stands between nature and the absolute, so that "[t]he human being is spirit, is spiritual in its relation to God, but finite in its connection with nature."⁷¹ Absolute spirit is the goal and destiny of finite spirit, i.e., it is what spirit at first merely *ought* to be, and it can attain this insofar as it sublates its own finitude in pure thought. This thought is the knowledge of God such that both finite spirit and nature itself are posited in and by the absolute idea and are comprehended as the movement by which the idea externalizes itself and knows itself as absolute spirit. As such, philosophy is the knowledge 'of' God, and the 'of' here is to be comprehended in both senses, but not such that what is proclaimed is mere identity. Admittedly, according to Hegel,

God is God only in so far as he knows his own self; his self-knowledge is, moreover, a self-consciousness in man and man's knowledge *of* God, which proceeds to man's self-knowledge in God.⁷²

Humanity's knowledge of God is thus essential to God's knowledge of himself.

Nonetheless, as Hegel insists in his *Review of Göschel's Aphorisms*, this does not entail that "man *is* God."⁷³ To the contrary, Hegel argues that

I cannot know God insofar as the I that is meant is that of the sensory understanding. Only the I which has transcended this other I – having transcended it negatively through self-externalization and positively through God – knows God. Thus, stated otherwise, I know God only insofar as I am in God, and am not for myself this I.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, 58 [5.]

⁷² Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §564 r.

⁷³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "Review of G F. Göschel's Aphorisms," in *Miscellaneous Writings of G.W.F. Hegel*, ed., Jon Stewart (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 414 [16:201.]

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 416 [16:202.]

Humanity's knowledge of God, or the absolute idea, is a relation of reciprocal recognition, but God's being and the being of human beings is not therefore immediately identical. Thus according to Hegel, "[t]he eternal Idea, the Idea that is in and for itself, eternally remains active, engenders and enjoys itself as absolute spirit."⁷⁵ The individual human beings, by contrast, is mortal, such that

on one side it is the genus; the most beautiful life is that in which the universal and its individuality are completely united in a single form. But the individual is then also separated from the universal, and as such it is only one side of the process, and it is subject to change; it is in respect of this moment of mortality that it falls into time.⁷⁶

At the moment, Hegel's position is bound to appear paradoxical, for these assertions can only be comprehended in and through the comprehension of Hegel's concept of time. For now, however, it is at least possible to explain the sense in which the 'One' of Hegel's One proof is to be conceived.

Previously, in considering the problem of the multiplicity of the proofs, it was explained that Hegel both considers and rejects two ways of conceiving of God's attributes in accordance to the plurality of determinations that follow from the multiplicity of proofs.⁷⁷ The one way of conceiving of the unification of this multiplicity is to take these attributes as tempering each other, but Hegel rejects this, claiming that "*tempering, a mutual restricting, or blending* [is] a superficial, nebulous connection that can only satisfy conceptless [*begriffloses*] representation."⁷⁸ The other way of resolving

⁷⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §577.

⁷⁶ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §258 z.

⁷⁷ See *supra*, pp. 218-222.

⁷⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 86 [21:100.] Translating 'begriffloses' as 'conceptless' rather than 'mindless.'

this issue was to claim that God is to be conceived as a higher unity than these attributes, but because this unity abstracts from these attributes, this ‘higher unity’ is thus just the movement to “a more abstract unity, and since the unity of God is the highest of all, to the most abstract unity.”⁷⁹ These two ways of considering God, however, were also taken to be two ways of comprehending the One. Insofar as God is conceived as that which simply *has* its attributes, God is conceived as the neuter One (*das Eine*), i.e., substance. Insofar as God is conceived as a ‘higher unity’ then God is conceived either as this abstract unity itself “or perhaps (to express this as the subject or as an actual being at least) *the personal One* [*der Eine*],” i.e., as subject.⁸⁰ According to Hegel, however, “everything hangs on apprehending and expression the truth not merely as *substance* but also equally as *subject*.”⁸¹ More specifically, according to Hegel,

the living substance is the being that is in truth subject, or, what amounts to the same thing, it is in truth actual only insofar as it is the movement of self-positing, that is, that it is the mediation of itself and its becoming-other-to-itself. As subject, it is pure, simple negativity, and precisely by virtue of that, it is the estrangement of what is simple, that is, it is the doubling which posits oppositions and which is once again the negation of this indifferent diversity and its opposition. That is, it is only this self-restoring parity, the reflective turn into itself in its otherness – What is the truth is not an ordinary unity as such, that is, not an immediate unity as such. It is the coming-to-be of itself, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal and has its end for its beginning, and which is actual only through this accomplishment and its end.⁸²

The truth, in other words, is the *One* that is not only the neuter One (*das Eine*.) but the personal One (*der Eine*.) In other words, the One is not only substance but subject, and the ‘but’ is not ‘but *also*’ insofar as the ‘also’ would be taken as an abstract unity.

Instead, true subjectivity sublates the opposition of subjectivity and objectivity and *as*

⁷⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 86 [18:269.]

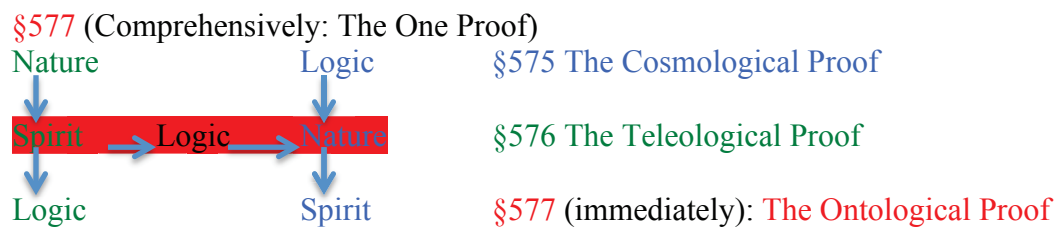
⁸⁰ See Hodgson, “Hegel’s Proofs of the Existence of God,” 418.

⁸¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §17 [9:18.]

⁸² *Ibid.*

this sublation is the absolute, eternal idea that “is in and for itself, eternally remains active, engenders and enjoys itself as absolute spirit.”⁸³

In accordance with the previous articulation of the first syllogism of the system in its correlation with the cosmological proof, and in accordance with the second syllogism of the system in its correlation with the teleological proof, the third syllogism of syllogisms is to be comprehended in its correlation with the ontological proof such that, in its speculative significance, this proof is the sublation of the cosmological and teleological proof that preserves, negates and raises up these extremes within itself as absolute spirit. This third and final correlation can thus be represented as follows:



To comprehend the idea of philosophy as absolute spirit is to comprehend the One proof (that is thus not merely the neuter, but the personal One) as the sublation of the distinction and opposition of necessity and freedom in and as the eternal self-activity of absolute spirit. To comprehend this eternity, however, it is necessary first to comprehend Hegel’s concept of time in relation to eternity, for according to Hegel, the eternal is the truth of time not as that which is before or outside time, not then as the *nunc stans* that is motionless, but as pure and absolute presence that is just as much absolute activity and movement. The failure to adequately address and comprehend this is the root of the contemporary opposition between the non-metaphysical and metaphysical readings of the Hegelian system.

⁸³ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §577.

Non-Metaphysical and Metaphysical Interpretations of Hegel's System

Panlogism, Anthropologism and the Misunderstood Middle

Before proceeding to the contemporary debate between non-metaphysical and metaphysical interpretations, it is both useful and important to consider the history of competing interpretations and accounts of the Hegelian system. Before 'post-metaphysical' accounts ever arose to challenge 'metaphysical' interpretations of Hegel's system, there was already a long and established history of competing accounts of the Hegelian system. The issue is, after all, hardly a minor one, for it is the question of the proper 'middle', i.e., the question of the proper comprehensive standpoint at which the dialectical tensions, oppositions and contradictions that are the very life and movement of the Hegelian system are, if not stilled, then brought together as the One. One such opposition has already been considered above in and through considering the one-sidedness of comprehending the system solely in terms of either the first or second syllogism of the system, the result of which is panlogism on the one hand anthropologism on the other.

Hegel was well aware of the danger of misreading his system in these alternate and opposing one-sided manners, and not only because these one-sided articulations of Hegel's system are moments of his account of the syllogisms of syllogisms that is the philosophical idea. In addition, Hegel was brought face to face with these

misinterpretations of his system in, on the one hand, his correspondence with Duboc,⁸⁴ and on the other hand, a letter that Hegel received from the young Feuerbach.⁸⁵

According to Duboc's initial understanding, Hegel's system entails that all distinction and difference is merely an illusion and everything is just one. On this interpretation, this system is thus a kind of spirit, or rather substance, monism in which everything sinks into the eternity of God who, as the absolute a priori, is outside and completely untouched by time and the illusion of difference and change. All transcendence here is erased because and insofar as all distinction between God and the world disappears into God.

Feuerbach, by contrast, read Hegel's system in thoroughly anthropological terms such that, at the conclusion of the system, all transcendence disappears into humanity. Religion and the present state, accordingly, is looked upon as that which will be done away with by human beings who are now post-historical insofar as they comprehend themselves and all of reality in their reason. Accordingly, Fackenheim writes,

[e]verything will become Idea and reason. What counts now is a new foundation of things, a new history, a second creation in which it is no longer time and – outside of time – thought, but is rather reason that becomes the general form of the intuition of things.⁸⁶

All or transcendence beyond thus collapses in this utopian anthropologism.

These two readings, or rather misreadings, of Hegel's system as concluding in panlogism on the one hand, and anthropologism on the other, are sometimes identified with what has come to be known as right and left Hegelianism respectively. The terms 'right' and 'left' Hegelianism, however, have a rather peculiar history, stemming as they

⁸⁴ Hegel, *Letters*, pp.496-9 [444 and 450.]

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.547-50 [592.]

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 549 [592.]

originally did from Strauss' polemical *In Defense of My Life of Jesus Against the Hegelians*. These terms are indeed polemical by their very nature insofar as, on the one hand, they suggest an allegiance to a one-sided account of the Hegelian system, while on the other hand, the distinction of 'right' and 'left' has certain, albeit historically questionable, political connotations. While right-Hegelianism is usually characterized as overtly conservative, as Jaeschke has pointed out, "[b]ecause the right-Hegelian interpretation advanced to the ideas of personality and immortality, it was regarded as progressive."⁸⁷ Similarly, the figures who are usually characterized as left-Hegelians not infrequently understood themselves as departing from Hegel's own stance and adopting a position that Hegel himself would not approve of while reading Hegel himself as a 'right' Hegelian due to Hegel's evident support for both Christianity and lack of sympathy with liberalism. This 'religious' angle only serves to complicate matter even more, for it is at least dubious to identify right-Hegelianism with political conservatism, panlogism and orthodox Christianity given the fact that Weisse, precisely as a progressive Christian, objected to what he took to be the panlogistic conclusion of Hegel's system.⁸⁸ Panlogism, after all, no less than anthropologism, reduces the distance between God and human beings, at least in the end, to nothing. Kojève, then, who is taken by Fackenheim as the very paradigm of left-Hegelianism, may certainly be considered 'left wing' insofar as he takes Hegel's system to atheistic,⁸⁹ and yet he also interprets and embraces Hegel's 'end-of-time' thesis in the most rigid manner possible, namely as proclaiming that absolutely nothing new could arise and suggesting that in the completion of the system the

⁸⁷ Jaeschke, *Reason in Religion*, 372.

⁸⁸ Cf. Hegel, *Letters*, pp.539-540 [603.]

⁸⁹ See Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, pp.89-90.

philosopher becomes timeless in the contemplation of the *logic* in which all distinctions and differences are abolished.⁹⁰ In this way, Kojève's anthropologism turns into panlogism.

That the one-sided anthropologic and panlogist interpretations of Hegel's system could be articulated such that, as with Kojève, each position passes over to the other in an equally one-sided manner, would certainly not shock Hegel, and by this point should not shock us. The important point is, first of all, to recognize that both positions are, on Hegel's terms, one-sided and inadequate such that neither panlogism nor anthropologism can be considered a credible or tenable interpretation of Hegel's system. With respect to panlogism, as Hegel points out in his response to Duboc, the absolute for Hegel is not static and abstract identity, but an identity that is concrete such that

the truth is not defined as stationary or immobile – abstract identity, being – but rather as movement, as life in itself, and as an indifference with a difference in it – a difference that, being contained *in* truth, is oneness, is at once no difference: a difference that exists as a *transcended* [*aufgehobener*], annihilated [*vernichteter*], and [yet] preserved [*aufbewahrter*] difference which, precisely because it does show forth, is *not* nothing.⁹¹

God does not *annihilate* finite spirit; rather finite spirit is preserved in the absolute. At the same time, Hegel was no less opposed to Feuerbach's atheism and utopianism than he was to the image of God as a transcendent beyond such that the Kingdom of God belongs to some indefinite future or in another realm altogether.⁹²

The terms 'right' and 'left' Hegelianism are accordingly of questionable value, both due to the complicated history of positions that have been identified as such at one time or another as well as due to their polemical and historical overtones. Similarly,

⁹⁰ See *ibid.*, 167.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 499 [450.]

⁹² Cf. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §787 [9:420-1.]

however, the terms ‘panlogism’ and ‘anthropologism’ are equally problematic insofar as they may collapse into each other in an immediate manner so that the middle fails to be articulated as concretely fulfilled. Both sets of terms are thus too imprecise to allow a clear evaluation as to whether or not an account truly manages to adequately articulate the Hegelian middle and these positions have become such caricatures anyway that few, if any, authors of serious works of Hegel scholarship would be willing, without a good deal of qualification, to identify their own interpretation as panlogism or anthropologism much less ‘right’ or ‘left’ Hegelianism. Nonetheless, the distinction between right and left Hegelianism can be rendered useful once more insofar as they are not identified simply with panlogism on the one hand and anthropologism on the other, which would merely be the opposition between two kinds of immanence that reduce the distinction between God and humanity to nothing, but also are conceived in terms of the opposition between transcendence and immanence.⁹³

Once again, neither right-Hegelianism insofar as this is identified with absolute transcendence, nor left-Hegelianism insofar as this is identified with pure immanence, is credible as an account of Hegel if taken on their own in the abstraction of their opposition. On the one hand, Hegel certainly affirmed that there is a second mediation such that, even if the first syllogism of the system is given priority, the second movement must still be acknowledged. Even if, in accordance with the first syllogism, the *Logic* is, in the language of religion, the thought of God prior to or outside his relation to the world and finite human beings or spirit such that God in his being is, at least immediately speaking, determined as the utterly transcendent being, this transcendence is also

⁹³ See Fackenheim, *Religious Dimensions in Hegel's Thought*, pp.78-9 and 81.

overcome such that human beings are raised to knowledge of God. If, on the other hand, human beings and human history are taken together to be the starting-point and basis, nonetheless, it is not credible to read Hegel's system in such a way as to reduce that system to an historically and empirically contingent anthropology. The *Logic* must be granted a status that goes beyond the conditions of just *our* finite categories.

The issue, accordingly, is not whether both movements, from the finite to the infinite and from the infinite to the finite, are recognized as necessary for Hegel's position, but how these two moments are reconciled and whether the middle is maintained or collapses in upon itself and topples, so to speak, to one side or the other. Insofar as these two positions remain in an unresolved tension that is merely covered over either by ambiguity or the appeal to external biographical or historical facts, Hegel's position and the Hegelian middle is merely represented and not concretely thought.

The opposition between non-metaphysical and metaphysical interpretations that I discussed at the outset of this dissertation is, I argue, another iteration of this unresolved tension between right- and left-Hegelianism on the one hand, and panlogism and anthropologism on the other, even as both positions attempt to distance themselves from these extremes. In order to both explain and demonstrate this, I will begin by taking Pippin's *Hegel's Idealism* as the exemplar of the non-metaphysical interpretation of Hegel's system. I will then articulate the metaphysical interpretation of Hegel's system by way of considering a line of interpretation that explicitly extends from Iljin, but in fact can be traced back to Schelling, and that runs up to more recent works of Hegel scholarship, including Schlitt's *Hegel's Trinitarian Claim*, O'Regan's *The Heterodox Hegel*, and Calton's *Hegel's Metaphysics of God*. Both the non-metaphysical and

metaphysical accounts of Hegel's system fail, I argue, to adequately consider and taken into account Hegel's concept of time. Calton's *Hegel's Metaphysics of God*, the aim of which is to articulate the role and significance of the ontological proof in Hegel's system, will serve to bring us back, by way of the issue of Hegel's concept of time, to the issue of the proofs and the One proof.

Pippin's Non-Metaphysical Interpretation

To begin from the side of the non-metaphysical interpretation, it may be admitted that Pippin does at one point identify himself with left-Hegelianism.⁹⁴ Pippin does this, however, in response to what he judges to be the mistaken assertion that, in Hegel's later writings, he abandoned the conception of recognition as grounded in inter-subjectivity "and believed instead that human social and political existence was best understood and legitimated as a manifestation of a grand metaphysical process, an Absolute Subject's manifestation of itself, or a Divine Mind's coming to self-consciousness."⁹⁵ Pippin thus identifies himself with left Hegelianism insofar as, on the one hand, he takes reciprocal recognition to be essential to Hegel's thought and, on the other hand, to the extent that he takes the alternative to be 'spirit monism', i.e., mere panlogism. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to assume that Pippin therefore reads Hegel's system as mere anthropologism.

In *Hegel's Idealism*, precisely in opposition to the reduction of Hegel's system to anthropologism, Pippin attempts to show how Hegel may be plausibly read so as to preserve the 'speculative' aspect of his thought in such a way as to neither reduce Hegel's

⁹⁴ Robert Pippin, "What is The Question for which Hegel's Theory of Recognition is the Answer?" *European Journal of Philosophy* 8, no. 2 (2000), 161.

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 155.

claim to absolute knowing to an absurdity, nor reduce the *Logic* to a merely contingent, historically conditioned account of the thought conventions of a particular community.⁹⁶ In opposition to what he takes to be the anthropologicist misinterpretation of Hegel, however, Pippin insists that a respectable and plausible account of Hegel's that preserves what is valuable in his system must be non-metaphysical, where metaphysics is defined as the claim to "a priori knowledge of substance."⁹⁷ Although on Pippin's interpretation Hegel rejects Kant's intuition-concept distinction, he argues that Hegel's *Logic* is still post-Kantian insofar as what it provides is an account of "the conceptual conditions required for there to be possible determinate objects of cognition in the first place, prior to empirical specification."⁹⁸ This knowledge is absolute, as opposed to contingent and local, because these conditions do not depend on intuition of empirical objects. Instead, the categories of the *Logic* are on Pippin's account developed purely from the non-sensible conditions of self-knowledge such that their necessity is not restricted, as in Kant, to what is "necessarily true of any possible world which we could sensibly experience," but are "necessarily true of any possible world that a self-conscious judge could determine."⁹⁹

The *a priori*, however, is itself essentially a temporal determination. Admittedly, this a priori is just supposed to be thought. If these thought conditions are supposed to be the universal and necessary conditions under which an object can be given to any subjectivity, then they must in some sense 'be' prior to their instantiation in or realization by human beings, even if their being is only ideal being. It is precisely this kind of

⁹⁶ See Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, 5, 39, pp.99-100 and 169.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 250.

metaphysical claim, however, that Pippin attempts to avoid, and this paradox chases him from one end of *Hegel's Idealism* to the other.

If the *Logic* is to provide an a priori account of the categorical conditions under which an object in general could be given to a self-consciousness, then what is provided is merely the *form* of thought, and thus something subjective. As such, the *Logic* can only provide a generally demarcated space as to what would count as a possible object.¹⁰⁰ Accordingly, on this account, the *Logic* cannot provide the criterion by which to distinguish the merely logically possible from the really possible.¹⁰¹ To put it another way, if read in this manner, the *Logic* does not provide the criterion by which to distinguish “the conditions under which a subject can make a judgments about objects and conditions necessary for objects to be objects at all.”¹⁰² This is to say, however, that there is no criterion by which to distinguish between *mere thought* and *rationality which is actual* (in the sense Pippin ascribes to actuality, namely “conceptually mediated objectivity.”)¹⁰³ But then the *Logic* is itself impossible without an appeal to extra-conceptual empirical determinations.

Despite Pippin’s best attempts to ‘save’ Hegel’s *Logic*, then, he cannot but conclude that the *Logic* fails to ground itself as a systematic totality such that the result is the necessity of the previous moments. Instead, Pippin reads the objective logic, i.e., the first two divisions of the *Logic*, as a critique of alternatives to Hegel’s own idealism. The doctrine of being is thus read as a critique of the logical adequacy of the account of classical, realist metaphysics. The doctrine of essence, is read a critique of the limitation

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 170.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 169.

¹⁰² Ibid., 176.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 183.

of a 'reflective logic' articulated in terms of the opposition between existence and essence and serves as an attempt to preserve idealism against skepticism. The third division alone, the doctrine of the concept, is read as Hegel's attempt to complete the case for absolute idealism.¹⁰⁴ Since Pippin claims that Hegel's "case against empiricist and subjective idealist accounts of experience requires that there be a logical autonomous Notion,"¹⁰⁵ however, he takes the construction of the *Logic* to be based not on the self-development of pure thought, but on an external τέλος,¹⁰⁶ namely the desire to comprehend the self-opposition of reason not as arising, as Pippin reads Kant as doing, in terms of the opposition of intuition and concept, but from the self-supporting activity of thought which autonomously grounds the conditions of the possibility of the judgment of an object by a self-conscious subject.¹⁰⁷

Accordingly, Pippin takes Hegel not to have established the completeness of the self-determination of the concept, for these previous divisions fall outside of the "self-knowing Notion [which] is not 'another Notion' but the comprehension of the nature of the limitations of metaphysical and reflexive notions."¹⁰⁸ The third division, however, when taken on its own is judged by Pippin to be "far too formal and abstract to resolve or complete anything except at this speculatively reflective level of comprehension."¹⁰⁹ Thus Pippin rejects Hegel's claim to the completeness of the *Logic*, (a claim which Pippin takes to entail the absolute permanence of the *Logic* and its complete

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp.181-2.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 256.

¹⁰⁶ See *ibid.*, 255.

¹⁰⁷ See *ibid.*, 179 and 257.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 256.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 257.

unrevisability in view of “genuine discoveries about objects,”¹¹⁰) and instead suggests, in its place, what he takes to be a more plausible, moderate view as a defensible consequence of Hegel’s idealism that can be separated from Hegel’s actual conclusion. This moderate view, according to Pippin, is to read the doctrine of the concept as “a reflective account of the subjectivity of Objective Logic, and beyond such a metalevel claim, not to resolve or conclude, in some permanent, traditionally ‘absolute’ way, thought’s ‘process.’”¹¹¹

In the end, then, Pippin cannot help but conclude that, on the one hand, the *Logic* does not actually get beyond abstract generalities and meta-level claims regarding the nature of the self-determining self-knowing concept, and on the other hand, that in attempting to move beyond the level of abstract generality, Hegel ends up confusing concepts that we arrive at due to empirical experience with those that arise from thought’s pure self-determination of self-consciousness.¹¹² But given Pippin’s account, in removing the unrevisability criterion, the claim of absolute knowing disappears, for if the idea is not the *a priori* that ‘is’ before time, nor is it a final result that at least permanently fixes constraints regarding the possibility of knowledge of objects, then nothing remains of the *Logic* on Pippin’s reading but the contingent, historically conditioned account of the thought conventions of a particular community.¹¹³ All transcendence thus reduces to immanence and the result is mere anthropologism.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 259. See also *ibid.*, 247 and 257.

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp.246-7.

¹¹² Ibid., 258.

¹¹³ See *ibid.*, 5, 39, pp.99-100 and 169.

Metaphysical Interpretations

Iljin's Philosophy of Hegel As a Doctrine of the Concreteness of God and Humanity – a work that continues to exert a significant influence of contemporary Hegel scholarship – may be taken as exemplary of the metaphysical reading of Hegel's thought. While Fackenheim, having not had access to the second volume of Iljin's work, takes Iljin to be the very exemplar of right Hegelianism,¹¹⁴ this assessment is at least partially unfair if right-Hegelianism is identified, without further ado, with panlogism. Admittedly, the first volume, focusing as it does on Hegel's account of God, is apt to give the impression that Iljin simply reads Hegel as a panlogist and God or the idea as a transcendent being. The entire second volume of that work, however, is dedicated to considering that and how Hegel attempts to show that the movement from God to human beings is reciprocated in and through a movement from human beings to God. Although Iljin thus acknowledges the necessity of both of these movements, he does not himself claim to have articulated the Hegelian middle, but to have shown that this middle is untenable. The basis upon which Iljin reaches this conclusion, however, is also the basis upon which his interpretation of Hegel may be regarded as 'metaphysical'.

¹¹⁴ See Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, 76 fn. The source of Fackenheim's knowledge of Iljin only through Iljin's own abridged German translation of his two volume work, the first of which dealt with the Doctrine of God, and the second with the doctrine of humanity. Thus Iljin himself points out that "[a]fter long deliberation and inner struggle I have decided to leave out chapter 13-20, to indicate Hegel's theo-anthropology only summarily, and publish the entire work as a *Contemplative Doctrine of God*." (Philip T. Grier, introduction to *The Philosophy of Hegel as a Doctrine of the Concreteness of God and Humanity* by I. A. Il'in (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 1:l.ii.) The title is apt, as the excised chapters constitute all but the two concluding chapter of volume two, the Doctrine of Humanity, and thereby gives the unfortunate impression that Iljin's interpretation is radically one-sided and that he does not appreciate the necessity in Hegel's thought of what amounts to the second syllogism of the system, namely the movement from finite human beings to the idea. (See *ibid.*, 1:xxiii and lii-liii.)

While acknowledging that, for Hegel, the movement of God or the idea to human beings involves and requires a parallel movement from human beings to the idea, Iljin takes these two movements as unfolding as distinct epochs so that Hegel's entire system splits into two, namely into what Iljin calls "the Concept-Logos and the Concept-Telos."¹¹⁵ Accordingly, Iljin assumes that the first movement is *temporally* prior, i.e., that God is who and what he is eternally in the sense of *before* the creation of the world.¹¹⁶ It is on the basis of this assumption that Iljin then argues that Hegel's system fails. The two paths, namely from God to man in the idea and from man to God in reality, cannot coincide on Iljin's account. For the empirical world to truly return to God as a God who must already in principle already be completed in that eternal beginning, God must at one and the same time both have an independent being and not have it. On the one hand, the world must not be reduced to what is already there in God, or it would not be at all and there would be no going of God into the world and no creation, but the world cannot be anything extra-logical, or else the return of God into himself would be incomplete, i.e., a mere ought, an end that is not and cannot be reached.¹¹⁷ The empirical world thus, on Iljin's account, constitutes a kind of excess such that for God as the idea to overreach and comprehend the world, God must in fact be something extra-rational. According to Iljin, then, this paradox is the failure of Hegel's system and this system must ultimately rests upon an immediate intuition. Thus Iljin concludes that, in the end, the Hegelian middle is vacuous such that, in claiming to have achieved this reconciliation, Hegel "pronounced

¹¹⁵ I. A. Il'in, *The Philosophy of Hegel as a Doctrine of the Concreteness of God and Humanity*, trans. Philip T. Grier (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 2:244.

¹¹⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 1:180 and 2:233.

¹¹⁷ See *ibid.*, 2:247.

no more than the result of a romantic ‘intuition’ and led himself into error relative to the ‘rationalism’ and ‘panlogism’ realized by him.”¹¹⁸

Iljin’s complaint is in fact not new; Schelling likewise objected that Hegel attempts to have “a double becoming, a logical one and a real one.”¹¹⁹ Also like Iljin, Schelling objects that Hegel thereby confuses the effective real cause and the final cause,¹²⁰ insisting that Hegel’s system can only be saved from inconsistency by positing God as a supra-rational real ground.¹²¹ Yet everything old is new again. Schlitt argued, on the basis of Hegel’s account of Christianity in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, that there remains a contradiction in Hegel’s thought that is expressed as the ambiguity between the relation and integration of the finite and the infinite on the one hand, and the relationship between ‘immanent’ trinity (i.e., God prior to the creation of the world) and ‘economic’ trinity (i.e., God as the trinity that unfolds in the world as history in the coming of the son and the resurrection in spirit).¹²² Schlitt’s conclusion is that Hegel’s argument is incomplete, arguing that

Hegel cannot establish his trinitarian claim as he intended to, namely, on the basis of an argumentation in the public realm from infinite to finite. Hegel’s argument always presupposes a prior movement from finite to infinite.¹²³

On the positive side, in *The Heterodox Hegel*, O’Regan attempts to provide something of a defense of Hegel that would reconcile Iljin’s epochal conception of God and the trinity with the post-Kantian demand that knowledge must be achieved within the

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 2:248.

¹¹⁹ Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. Andrew Bowie (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 149 [I 10:146.]

¹²⁰ See *ibid.*, pp.158-9 [I 10:158-9.]

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.157-8 [I, 10:157-8.]

¹²² Schlitt, *Hegel’s Trinitarian Claim*, 46.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 7. See also *ibid.*, 273.

bounds of experience, or in Schlitt's terms, that there must be a prior movement from the finite to the infinite. O'Regan's study appears particularly provocative in the context of the project of this dissertation. Not only does she suggest an essential connection between the ontological proof and Christianity, but she acknowledges that the ontological proof is supposed to contain or comprehend all of the other proofs as well. Furthermore, insofar as, in attempting to reconcile Iljin with Schlitt, she turns to Hegel's claim that the trinity is in one sense posterior but in another sense prior, she may be seen as anticipating the solution that I shall ultimately offer here. Nonetheless, the manner in which O'Regan articulates her proposal, while suggestive, is ambiguous and largely merely representational. Her account of the prior and posterior is articulated not conceptually and in terms of Hegel's concept of time, but in terms of narrative theory. On this very basis and for this very reason, her conclusion is ultimately, like Iljin, that an extra-rational presupposition, namely the representational form of narration, is essential to and underlies Hegel's system.¹²⁴

In light of the explicit topic of the present dissertation, one final exemplar of the metaphysical interpretation of Hegel's system deserves mention, namely Calton's *Hegel's Metaphysics of God: The Ontological proof as the development of a Trinitarian Divine Ontology*. On the one hand, this work may be seen as the attempt to articulate and defend that which O'Regan suggests but leaves underdeveloped and merely represents. On the other hand, because Calton does not confront the issue of time and the temporality of God, she thereby appears to simply ignore rather than solve the paradoxes and criticisms raised by the likes of Schelling, Iljin, Schlitt and O'Regan.

¹²⁴ O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel*, pp.363-370. Cf. also *ibid.*, pp.9-11.

Like these thinkers and commentators, Calton presupposes that as eternal God is prior to the creation of the world as an immanent trinity. Nonetheless, Calton must also admit that, according to Hegel, God is not opposed to and other than the being of the world, a point which Calton glosses as saying that the world “does not have its own independent being. Rather, the truth of the world is God.”¹²⁵ Likewise, she must admit that God completes himself by externalizing himself, creating the world and returning to himself in and through finite spirit, such that “human knowledge of God is clearly God’s knowledge of himself.”¹²⁶ According to Calton’s account, this self-knowledge is completed and achieves perfection at the conclusion of the system of philosophical science, and this conclusion is at once identical to the ontological proof. Given the opposition between the immanent and economic trinity, the ontological proof is seen as having two aspects, namely “a God who reveals himself and humans who become aware of this revelation.”¹²⁷

The first aspect of the ontological proof is the objective aspect, identified with the *Logic* and the divine ontology, as the account of God as he is and knows himself prior to the creation of the world.¹²⁸ Although Calton’s claims that God, as purely ideal knows itself and all of its content in pure thought as the idea, it is necessary for God to create the world because he cannot know himself as free insofar as this self-knowing is “achieved through knowing himself as interdependent concepts that have no concrete independence,

¹²⁵ Patricia Marie Calton, *Hegel's Metaphysics of God: The Ontological Proof as the Development of a Trinitarian Divine Ontology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), 122.

¹²⁶ See *ibid.*, pp.116-17.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

as we find in the intrinsic Trinity.”¹²⁹ Accordingly, the creation of the world and “particularization in the world enable God to know himself in a stronger sense than is possible within the intrinsic trinity.”¹³⁰

The second aspect of the proof is the subjective aspect and the extrinsic trinity that is the development of humanity’s knowledge of God. The manner in which Calton presents this elevation as being achieved such that philosophy arrives at the knowledge of God in his eternal being is rather questionable. According to Calton,

[f]rom a study of the agency of God, we can infer the qualities and ontological structures that are necessary in order for those activities to take place. It is by looking at what we can know about God based on what we have seen of God’s activities as they are revealed in the ontological proof, that Hegel develops his trinitarian divine ontology.¹³¹

This inference is possible, on Calton’s account, because “a study of human knowledge provides us with a set of three distinct components that are necessary for all knowing consciousness, including God’s.”¹³² Such an inference by analogy, however, is highly questionable to say the least, and certainly not the position of Hegel. Furthermore, the manner in which this elevation is achieved in and through the development of self-consciousness, the distinction between different modes of being, the stages in the development of freedom, and the relation between necessity and freedom with respect to God and human beings – all of this is glossed over by Calton.

In the end, Calton accordingly simply passingly mentions the cosmological and teleological proof and does not show how these are related to or are preserved in the One proof, but merely takes the One proof to be the ontological proof *simpliciter*. Admittedly,

¹²⁹ Ibid., 88.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid., 75.

¹³² Ibid.

this proof is supposed to contain the full content of the immanent trinity that completes itself and knows itself in the economic trinity, but the conclusion Calton reaches is not the syllogism of syllogisms of the system. Instead, Calton concludes by simply identifying Hegel's position with the first syllogism of the system, claiming that:

it is evident that, while the *Logic* gives us the connection between concept and being, Hegel's ontological proof in its entirety corresponds to Hegel's complete system, with the *Logic*, *Philosophy of Nature*, and *Philosophy of Spirit* examining the whole of the divine life.¹³³

On this reading, however, the conclusion of the system would not be the pure presence that is eternal self-activity, for all difference would collapse and the end would admit of not the slightest future change and development. Accordingly, Schelling's jibe, that "[i]n Hegel's *Logic* one finds every concept which just happened to be accessible and available at *his* time taken up as a moment of the absolute idea at a specific point"¹³⁴ would be a genuine complaint, as would the fact that scientific advances have occurred since the writing of the *Philosophy of Nature*.

Hegel's Concept of Time and Eternity: The One Proof

The Importance of Hegel's Concept of Time

The seeming contradiction between the requirement of immanence and transcendence lies at the heart of the Hegelian middle. The requirement of this middle is clear, for Hegel's system is a failure on its own terms if it is either an a priori account of truth (or God, if you like) that *is* before time, and it is equally a failure if it is an a

¹³³ Ibid., 119.

¹³⁴ Schelling, *History of Modern Philosophy*, [I 10:139.]

posteriori system that, as realized in time is contingent, finite, and merely the truth of human beings at a particular time.

Initially, Hegel himself appears to commit himself to the first horn of this dilemma when he says that the absolute idea is “[t]he eternal Idea, the Idea that is in and for itself, eternally remains active, engenders and enjoys itself as absolute spirit.”¹³⁵ This claim of eternity, however, is one that has caused a great deal of confusion. Admittedly, Hegel may be taken to be partially responsible for this confusion insofar as he claims of the *Logic* that “[t]his is the realm of truth unveiled, truth as it is in and for itself. It can therefore be said that this content is *the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit.*”¹³⁶ What *can* be said here, however, is merely a way of expressing the truth, for this exposition (*Darstellung*) is a representation (*Vorstellung*.) Everything here depends on recognizing that while one *can say* this, it is said only from a perspective that is partial and finite, i.e., it is one-sided and no less of an abstraction than the position according to which the *Logic* is taken to be nothing but the mere form of thought that is applied to an external content.

Confusion arises here from the failure to comprehend eternity in terms of Hegel’s account of time and thereby sinking back into the form of the understanding or representation. According to Hegel, however,

In the positive meaning of time, it can be said that only the Present is, that Before and After are not. But the concrete Present is the result of the Past and is pregnant with the Future. The true Present, therefore, is eternity.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §577.

¹³⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 29 [21.34.]

¹³⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §249 z.

The concept of time itself is, on Hegel's account, in truth eternal, and is eternal as the sublation of the opposition and externality of its moments such that it is itself "absolute Presence."¹³⁸ To comprehend the sense in which the logical idea articulated in the *Logic* is eternal such that it can be said, but only by way of representation, that the *Logic* explicates God prior to nature and spirit, it is necessary to comprehend his account of time itself.

Hegel's Concept of Time

Hegel presents the concept of time as the second category of the *Philosophy of Nature* immediately following the category of space. Nature is the idea that is external to itself such that externality constitutes the specific character of nature itself.¹³⁹ Space is the negative self-externality of indifferent differences that simply stand side-by-side, while time is this negation as for-itself, i.e., the self-external negation of space.

In its immediacy, then, (A) time is that externality which, in its self-externality, is just as immediately negated. As such, "[t]ime is the same principle as the I=I of pure self-consciousness, but this principle, or the simple concept, still in its uttermost externality and abstraction – as intuited mere Becoming, pure being-within-self as sheer coming-out-of-itself."¹⁴⁰ Time is accordingly first determined purely as becoming, as coming-to-be and passing-away, "the vanishing of being into nothing and of nothing into being."¹⁴¹ The *finite* present of nature, the 'now', is just this contradiction and this contradiction is the finitude of the thing itself. According to Hegel, then, time is not a container, and finite

¹³⁸ Ibid., §258 z.

¹³⁹ See *ibid.*, §247.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., §258 r.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., §259.

things are not *in* time, rather time is the externality of the finite itself, for the finite is that which is external with relation to itself such that its being is just as much nothing and so passes-away.

Nature is the idea only in-itself precisely because and insofar as nature is the idea that is external to itself. Because nature *is* this externality, its being-in-itself is its being-for-another, i.e., the things of nature are not merely externally related to another, but are externally related to themselves as well.¹⁴² Accordingly, these things are finite and pass away, for they collapse from the contradiction between their concept and being. Things that simply *endure* in and as this externality, however, are not therefore superior. Mere duration, characteristic of the static and lifeless objects, is rather the utter finitude of such objects, for the endurance of these things is merely the complete absence of being-for-itself and what endures in the utter externality of the ‘now’ is just the same contradiction posited *ad infinitum*.¹⁴³

(B) Because nature lacks being-for-itself as infinite self-reflection, the time of nature is only the contradiction of the succession of ‘nows’. The dimensions of time, the distinctions of past, present and future, do not accordingly belong to nature as such, but to the intuition of finite spirit, and in particular have their place “in subjective imagination, in *remembrance* and *fear* and *hope*.”¹⁴⁴ These dimensions subsist in the subject insofar as the past is *for it* being, but being that is posited as negated, that is posited as non-being, i.e., as having passed-away. The future, by contrast, is non-being posited as being, i.e., as coming-to-be. The middle term here, the present, is thus at first nothing but the

¹⁴² See *supra*, pp.146-7.

¹⁴³ See *ibid.*, §258 z.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, §259.

indifferent unity of these two opposed moments, i.e., the present *is* because the past *is not*, but the ‘now’ is also posited as non-being, and this non-being of the present is the being of the future as the not-yet that is coming to be.¹⁴⁵

The truth of time is according to Hegel (C) the *concept of time* which, because it is the concept of time itself, does not fall *into* the externality of time and is thus “not affected by the alternation of coming-to-be or passing-away and is, therefore, neither *past* nor *future*.”¹⁴⁶ As such, the truth of the concept of time is the eternal, but the true eternal is not just lifeless duration. Nor, however, is it the mere abstract beyond of the finite, nor is it simply the contradiction of the bad infinite as the alternation of limit and limitlessness, for otherwise it too would be finite. The true eternal is rather concrete, and thus is actual and actually present such that eternity in its truth is “not before or after time, not before the creation of the world, nor when it perishes; rather eternity is the absolute present, without before or after.”¹⁴⁷ The true eternal as the concept of time is the true infinite such that “its image becomes the circle, the line that has reached itself, closed and wholly present, without beginning or end.”¹⁴⁸

The Middle and the Eternal

Hegel’s concept of the eternal as the true present in which time is sublated is essential to the *comprehension* of the Hegelian middle, for without it that middle can only be represented ambiguously. Metaphysical and non-metaphysical interpretations, accordingly, precisely because they fail to confront and comprehend Hegel’s concept of

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., §259, z.

¹⁴⁶ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §406, z.

¹⁴⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §247 z.

¹⁴⁸ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 119 [21:126.]

time, and although they attempt to avoid the extremes of panlogism and anthropologism, and the extremes of immanence and transcendence, necessarily collapse into these extremes in the end or maintain themselves in their contradiction only through ambiguity.

The metaphysical interpretations of Hegel's thought take Hegel's claim that the *Logic* is the eternity of God prior to the creation of the world such that the *Logic* or God in some sense is or exists eternally in distinction from the world, outside the world and prior to the world and time. As such, they thus ignore Hegel's account of eternity and his insistence that the above representation of eternity is in fact untrue. According to Hegel, the idea is not outside of time, nor does it *precede* time or even nature. To the contrary, he claims, as mentioned above, that "[n]ature is the first in point of time."¹⁴⁹ God is not in truth the immanent trinity prior to creation – this is merely a representation. If God is the idea, however, i.e., if he is reason, then he is and must be actual.

Moreover, "God is God only in so far as he knows his own self; this self-consciousness is, moreover, a self-consciousness in man and man's knowledge of God."¹⁵⁰ Since self-consciousness is reciprocal recognition, God can only know himself, i.e., can only be the absolute idea, insofar as there is finite spirit. But the absolute idea is the self-knowing idea. Insofar as self-consciousness is reciprocal recognition, however, God's knowledge of himself is imperfect and thus God himself is not God (a) insofar as human beings do not yet know themselves as spirit, and (b) insofar as this knowledge is not yet absolute knowing. Thus Hegel claims that

Spirit produces itself as Nature, as the State; nature is its unconscious work, in the course of which it appears to itself something different, and not spirit; but in the State, in the deeds and life of History, as also of Art, it brings itself to pass with

¹⁴⁹ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §248 z.

¹⁵⁰ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §564 r.

consciousness; it knows very various modes of its reality, yet they are only modes. In scientific knowledge alone it knows itself as absolute spirit; and this knowledge, or spirit, is its only true existence.¹⁵¹

At first, this is of course liable to sound highly peculiar if not paradoxical, and it certainly runs contrary to the ‘orthodox theological position’ according to which God is already perfect in himself prior to the creation of the world and human beings and has no need for human beings. The word ‘God’, however, can be replaced with the word ‘reason’, i.e., it is reason that is the immanent movement and soul of the world which is first as nature, for nature is the idea that is merely in-itself and thus is just as much external to itself. The idea is only eternal as the idea of nature, but this develops into finite spirit, and thus this immanent reason that is the soul of *life* is also reason that is for-itself and attains its truth in being-in-and-for-itself, i.e., as self-knowing and self-comprehending reason. In this way, however, the idea as the absolute idea, as truth, sublates its own immediacy such that, “Nature is the first in point of time, but the absolute *prius* is the last, the true beginning, Alpha is Omega.”¹⁵²

Does this not, however, entail that the difference between ‘God’ or ‘reason’ and humanity is in the end erased such that God is either just a projection of human reason and the system is reduced to anthropologism, or that human beings are just a projection of reason so that the system reduces to panlogism? Not at all, for human beings remain mortal and are not eternal, but only enter into eternity as a moment. To mark another distinction between Hegel and orthodox Protestant theology, then, for Hegel the immortality of the individual is not a future life and does not preserve the individual in all its particularity and contingency. The immortality of spirit rather consists in the fact

¹⁵¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3:552 [20:460.]

¹⁵² Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §248 z.

that, on the one hand, the essential moments of spirit are always preserved in its later stages, and on the other hand, in the fact that human beings raise themselves to thought as pure knowing, for “[a]s pure knowing or as thinking, it has the universal for its object – this is eternity. Eternity is not mere duration but *knowing* – the knowing of what is eternal.”¹⁵³

This thinking is knowledge of reason as eternal and absolutely present, and it is the comprehension of itself and all finitude and externality as sublated in reason. Nonetheless, this knowledge is mediated through an other whose being is not simply immediately identical to the being of human beings. Accordingly, Hegel claims that “I know God only insofar as I am in God, and am not for myself this I.”¹⁵⁴ It is this second moment that left-Hegelianism fails to recognize and thus they conflate human beings in their immediacy and contingency with God, or to avoid the language of representation, with reason itself.

Human beings are *concrete*, i.e., they do not merely think, but intuit, represent, and will as well. The ‘as well’ here, however, has two senses. Insofar as the ‘as well’ is understood such that thinking is taken as something distinct from intuition, representation and willing, thought here is still the thought of the abstract and finite understanding. Insofar as the ‘as well’ is conceived speculatively, however, the different ways of knowing are recognized as finite moments in reason and reason’s self-knowledge as absolute spirit. This knowledge is achieved, however, not by simply denying finite determinations, but by finite spirit sublating its own immediacy and its finite purposes,

¹⁵³ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:209 [140-1.] Compare also *ibid.*, 3:304 [227.]

¹⁵⁴ Hegel, “Review of Göschel,” 416 [16:202.]

goals and aims and by simply following the self-explication and development of the concept itself. This is possible insofar as all of the essential shapes of finite consciousness have already historically appeared, while by comprehending itself as the result of these finite shapes of consciousness, it also comprehends itself as the completion and final shape of consciousness that is adequate to itself as absolute knowing.

As the final shape of consciousness, history is sublated in being comprehended as the development and completion of absolute knowing, and thus the externality of time is annulled [*tilgt*].¹⁵⁵ The immanent development of the concept leads to the absolute, self-knowing idea, and this idea externalizes and completes itself in nature and spirit.

Nature itself, to begin with, appears as the presupposition of spirit insofar as spirit is just finite spirit, for finite spirit creates neither nature, nor even itself in its immediacy. The theoretical knowledge of nature in the empirical sciences and the practical engagement with nature that turns it into a second nature, into its own property and subordinate to its own purposes, is still one-sided. Nonetheless, in the system, nature appears as presupposing the idea and as the externalization of the idea. Moreover, finite spirit is also comprehended as having its truth in the absolute self-knowing idea which in turn has its truth and self-knowledge as absolute spirit that is eternal in its pure self-presence. It is from this standpoint, in the idea, that philosophical science comprehends nature as well as itself. Thus, as Hegel claims, “[p]hilosophy is timeless comprehension, of time too and of all things generally in the eternal mode.”¹⁵⁶ This eternal ‘mode’ however, is not the *nunc stans* of traditional metaphysics, i.e., is not outside of time, but

¹⁵⁵ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §801 [9:429]

¹⁵⁶ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §247 z.

absolute presence as the sublation of time that is itself in its self-presence not motionless but absolutely active.

While nature is prior to the idea with respect to time, the idea is the absolute prius of nature insofar as nature is conceived of in its truth, i.e., in the eternal self-presence of the absolute idea as absolute spirit. Now, while finite spirit in its theoretical and practical engagements with nature remains one-sided, finite spirit can sublimate this one-sidedness by comprehending nature in terms of the eternal, self-present idea.¹⁵⁷ Comprehended in this manner, although philosophical science draws upon and presupposes the knowledge of the empirical sciences, it comprehends the thought-content of the empirical sciences in terms of the determination of the idea in its externality. That accordingly it merely draws upon the finite knowledge of nature as it appears at the present day is not a refutation of this sphere of science, for on the one hand, the finitude of the empirical sciences belongs to nature itself, and on the other hand, this finitude is sublated in the self-comprehension of absolute spirit that is eternal as pure presence. The organization of this science must itself be comprehended not as a temporal development.

The two ways in which nature can be conceived as a temporal development of stages are *emanation* on the one hand and *evolution* on the other. The first, which Hegel identifies with the Oriental world, conceives of nature as a series of degradations starting from that which is most perfect, God, whose creation is a likeness that falls ever further away into that which is entirely unlike and negative. The second takes the series to start from the simple and most immediate, imperfect and formless and moves to the more

¹⁵⁷ See *ibid.*, §§245-6.

complex and perfect modes of life, culminating in human beings.¹⁵⁸ This way of conceiving the series, which Hegel identifies with the problematic philosophies of nature current in his own age, Hegel also rejects, claiming that “though this quantitative difference is of all theories the easiest to understand, it does not really explain anything.”¹⁵⁹

The reason for this should be clear by now, for such an external organization of things as a progression is merely external teleology that collapses of itself, and thus Hegel claims that “[i]t is a completely empty thought to represent species as developing successively, one after the other, in time. Chronological difference has no interest whatsoever for thought.”¹⁶⁰ This is not because Hegel thinks that all species arose from the earth fully formed on the first day of creation, but because whether or not a species survives depends upon the contingent fact of whether that species will or will not find in inorganic nature what is necessary for their continuation. Because this is not always the case, because whole genera perish because the conditions necessary for their survival fail to be found, the “concordance of the organic and the inorganic is established as contingent; there is no need to ask for a unity, and the very fact of purposiveness is explained as contingent.”¹⁶¹

The truth, then, is to be sought neither in emanation, nor in evolution, for

[e]ach of these forms taken separately is one-sided, but they [are] together; the eternal divine process is a flowing in two opposite directions which meet and permeate each other in what is simply and solely *one*.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., §249 z.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:713 [602.]

¹⁶² Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §252 z.

In the *Philosophy of Nature*, the stages and divisions of nature are not to be comprehended temporally, but are to be articulated in terms of the self-determination of the concept in such a manner that, while the stages of nature are comprehended as the necessity of the concept, they nonetheless, precisely as the externality of the idea, are just as much independent from one another and fall prey to externality and contingency. The method of the *Philosophy of Nature* accordingly presupposes the natural sciences insofar as philosophical science must take up the thought determinations and distinctions that the natural sciences have already implicitly used, and develop and comprehend this content as arising from the necessity of the concept such that the concept is first fixed, and then it is shown that and how this concept is given in and corresponds to an empirical appearance.¹⁶³

Now, it is not only the logical idea that is the absolute prius of nature, but spirit is also the absolute prius of nature. To put it another way, if the relation of finite spirit to nature was only comprehend in the one-sided manner articulated above, then the idea would still appear as absolute necessity and as a first cause, and likewise the knowledge of nature would appear as something that was finite, and based upon the manner in which we currently know nature. The second prius is the second syllogism of the system insofar as the middle term of that syllogism, namely spirit that presupposes nature and raises itself to the idea, constitutes the starting-point and immediate presupposition of the final syllogism of syllogisms such that nature constitutes its conclusion. Since the absolute idea in its truth as the eternal self-present, self-knowing idea has its truth as absolute

¹⁶³ See *ibid.*, §246 r. and z. and §254 z.

spirit, the idea or reason comprehends itself in its truth insofar and only insofar as this comprehension is at once the comprehension of reason by human beings.

Since the truth of the absolute self-knowing idea is absolute spirit, and since this truth accordingly requires the elevation of finite spirit, then it is tempting to ask what God or reason was before or independent from its manifestation and completion in absolute knowing. The answer is simply that the question itself is nonsense from the standpoint of absolute knowing precisely because it requires that we forsake the truth of true eternity in the sense of the pure presence, i.e., we thereby leave the standpoint of absolute knowing and thus pose this question in terms of a finite shape of consciousness and way of knowing. This question may admittedly be posed in terms of representation according to which God is eternal as prior to time and the end and final purpose is beyond the present in some future time. This question may also be posed by the understanding for which being and thinking and the finite and the infinite are absolutely distinct. These shapes of consciousness, however, are finite and self-contradictory.

Human beings, admittedly, are not reason itself, for thinking is only one aspect of concrete human beings, even though it is their truth and final purpose. Human beings are instead partly immediate being or *Dasein*, partly existence that raises itself to actuality, and partly pure thinking in which they know and comprehend themselves and sublimate their finitude within Reason. Reason, meanwhile, passes through all of these modes of being and all of the determinations of thought and yet neither remains at any one stage nor falls prey to finitude, but has the finite merely as a moment of itself. The finite is not absolutely other because it is not absolute. Instead, the finite is that in and through which spirit comprehends itself precisely because the finite brings about its own sublation and

shows itself in its untruth. At the same time the truth as the idea that externalizes itself in nature and finite spirit comprehends itself and *is* as this eternal activity that produces and *knows* itself in its self-presence as absolute spirit.

The teleological and cosmological proofs, accordingly, have their truth in the ontological proof insofar the speculative truth of this final proof is not just the absolute idea but absolute spirit. Here, self-knowing reason is the unification and truth of the idea as purposiveness on the one hand and power and cause on the other, for these two moments are comprehended as One in the self-knowing of the absolute idea as absolute spirit. These two moments penetrate one-another, for purposiveness and external necessity are merely one-sided ways in which the absolute is manifest to finite spirit and by means of which it raises itself to absolute spirit in and through the sublation of this opposition in absolute knowing. But then in what sense is this a proof of God and how can this proof be comprehended as post-Kantian?

The One Proof

Insofar as the proofs are understood as the attempt to bridge a gap between thinking and being, subject and object, or the finite and the infinite, they necessarily invoke a ground that is placed beyond the bounds of possible experience. If Hegel's account of the proofs depended on such an understanding, then his task would admittedly be impossible. For Hegel, however, this very way of understanding matters is fundamentally misguided and self-contradictory. Insofar as the word 'God' is merely another name for 'truth' or 'reason', however, then the question of whether God *is* is quite trivial, just like the question as to whether anything is or not, for the very posing of

the question already presupposes an answer in the affirmative. The issue of the proofs is not a question of *if* 'God' is, but *how* he is and how this is known, i.e., it is a question of the determination of thought and being in their determination and interrelation. The question, in other words, is not a question of what 'is' independent of its being given in some way or other, but rather the question of what *kinds* of beings there are and how they must be related such that experience could arise for us in the first place and in the manner in which it does.

Now admittedly, immediately speaking, being and thinking are not just identical but distinct insofar as what we are speaking of is not the abstract thought of immediate being, but of a determinate being given by means of sensation, for example, and a determinate thought that is accordingly known by me as merely subjective. Nonetheless, being and thinking are not completely distinct, for I, in my thinking and knowing, *am* in some way or other, and indeed I am in various ways. If an external bridge was required between thinking and being, and likewise if a bridge were required between the finite and the infinite, then not only could this bridge never be crossed, but the other side could never even be suspected. According to Hegel, then, the finite, no less than the abstract infinite, sublates itself. In other words, Human beings have their *Dasein* as transcendence. This transcendence, however, is not the movement to the transcendent, i.e., to a realm that is outside of experience, for Hegel is thoroughly post-Kantian in this respect. The transcendence is rather the transcendence of experience itself such that human beings *are* as being in the world amidst beings and as being conscious of these beings, of knowing them, as well as in the infinite reflection of thought as self-knowledge and self-consciousness.

The knowledge of human beings is thus not limited to self-knowledge insofar as this is understood as the knowledge of the self in its immediacy, nor insofar as this is the knowledge of the object in the immediacy of sensation. Human beings are accordingly not the measure of all truth. Nonetheless, they are the site at which truth is realized. Hegel thus claims that “God’s manifestation, God’s being for an other, is God’s *Dasein*, and the soil of God’s *Dasein* is finite spirit.”¹⁶⁴

The proofs for God are various ways in which human beings as finite spirit both know themselves and God. According to Hegel, the defect of the old metaphysical proofs consisted in the fact that they were based upon the distinction between God’s concept, attributes and being. For Hegel, however, “The elevation of the spirit to God is found *in one thing – the determining of God’s concept, attributes and being.*”¹⁶⁵ The proofs for Hegel are thus not the proofs of God’s being or existence, but God’s *Dasein*, i.e., his determination and determinate being. The title that Hegel gave his projected final book is thus thoroughly appropriate: *Über das Dasein Gottes.*¹⁶⁶

There is another important sense in which Hegel’s account of the proofs must be comprehended as post-Kantian. As Hegel himself acknowledges, insofar as finite spirit raises itself to the absolute idea and comprehends everything in the necessity of the concept, it leaves behind its finite purposes and interests and comprehends everything within the idea, i.e., within the necessity of reason. Insofar as thought here presupposes nothing that is absolutely other or external to itself, philosophy is thus for Hegel the highest realization of freedom. Yet, as Hegel also points out at the end of the

¹⁶⁴ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:351 [271.]

¹⁶⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Proofs*, 77 [18:261]

¹⁶⁶ See Hodgson, Introduction to the *Lectures on the Proofs*, 1.

Phenomenology of Spirit, insofar as everything is just comprehended in the necessity of the idea, the freedom of spirit is still one-sided and has “not yet attained its consummate freedom.”¹⁶⁷ This consummate freedom is not to be found in the stoic equanimity that merely affirms what is as necessary, but is a higher freedom that requires consolation such that it does not merely give up its own particularity but wins this particularity back in the end and this can be achieved because the particular and its freedom is comprehended as itself a necessary moment.

Now, in the speculative comprehension of the proofs, the necessity of the content of religion is comprehended. Moreover,

[h]umanity is not just as pure thinking; instead, thinking itself is manifested as intuiting, as representing. Hence the absolute truth, as revealed to human beings, must also be for them as representational, intuitive beings, as beings engaged in feeling and sensation.¹⁶⁸

According to Hegel, then, religion must present the truth for the whole of humanity, not just for those who have raised themselves to pure thought. At the same time, however, Hegel also asserts that religion is still no *less* necessary for those who have comprehended the truth speculatively.¹⁶⁹ Human beings cannot live in the pure ether of philosophy alone, in the speculative Sunday that is remote from the goings-on of the world, but must also enter back into it as concrete beings and pursue their own particular purposes and ends. According to Hegel, then, “[t]hinking and believing are to be seen as parts of a single living whole, neither of which is self-sufficient by itself, so that in actuality neither can assert itself in separation from the other.”¹⁷⁰ Hope for the future is

¹⁶⁷ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §807 [9:433.]

¹⁶⁸ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:357 [276

¹⁶⁹ See *ibid.*, 3:357 [275-6.].

¹⁷⁰ Hegel, “Review of Göschel,” 427 [16:214.]

not a philosophical requirement *per se*, but it is a human need. Likewise, it might be said that the investigation of nature according to categories of the understanding such that what is to be unearthed is the causes and laws of nature that are supposedly hidden there is a worthy endeavor. More, these finite purposes and ends are necessary, as well as free, albeit as a moment of freedom. Moreover, the finite purposes, the urges of humanity, are themselves in-themselves the cunning of reason, i.e., it is necessity. The philosopher, in returning to daily life, thus finds consolation, for although these are finite and one-sided shapes of consciousness and one-sided moments, they are equally the activity in and through which the idea is eternal in the activity that is at once the pure presence of absolute spirit.

CONCLUSION

Hegel's Final Book

Gilles Deleuze once wrote that a work of philosophy should be something of a detective novel.¹ At the very least, with Hegel's *Über das Dasein Gottes* we have something of a mystery, although this mystery has rarely been noted, much less commented upon.

Unlike his once friend and colleague, Schelling, Hegel was neither a prolific author nor inclined to rush to publication. At the age of nineteen, Schelling had already established himself as a major figure in German Idealism with the publication of *Of the I* in 1794. Hegel, by contrast, although five years Schelling's senior, published his first book, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in 1807. His second work, the *Science of Logic*, was released in three parts in 1812, 1813 and 1816. A revision of the first book of the *Science of Logic* had been submitted by Hegel to his publisher in January of 1831, but would be published posthumously in 1832 – posthumously, because in the meantime, on November 14, 1831, Hegel died. Excluding his early publications in the *Journal of Critical Philosophy*, jointly edited by himself and Schelling, and excluding occasional and polemical essays and reviews, Hegel's only other published works, namely the *Philosophy of Right* and *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* were intended to serve as compendiums for Hegel's lectures that, as he wrote, would “receive the necessary commentary only in my lectures.”² It may thus be said with some justice that Hegel only wrote two books.

¹ See Gilles Deleuze. *Difference and Repetition*, xx.

² Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, 18[8:32.] Cf. also Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 9 [7:11.]

In the 1830's Hegel was at the peak of his career – he was the Rector of the university in Berlin, a popular lecturer, and indeed something of a celebrity. While Hegel's rise to fame had certainly been long and painful, in sharp contrast to the meteoric rise of his erstwhile friend Schelling, he had long since eclipsed his schoolmate. Indeed, Hegel's influence was so great that, even ten years after his death, Friedrich Wilhelm IV would feel it necessary to call Schelling out of retirement in order “to combat ‘the dragon seed of Hegelian Pantheism.’”³ Yet, the final years of Hegel's life were anything but quiet.⁴ Despite failing health, he managed to release a third revised version of his *Encyclopaedia* in 1830, and as mentioned above, was revising and preparing for publication a second edition of the first division of the *Science of Logic*, in a footnote to which he also promised the release of a revised edition of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* by the following Easter.⁵

It seems, then, that Hegel was attempting to put his house in order. Given all this, it is thus remarkable that on November 11th of 1831, Hegel signed a contract to produce what may with some justice be called his third – and in light of his failing health, what he must have suspected would be his final – book on, of all things, the proofs of God.⁶

³ John Laughland, *Schelling Versus Hegel*. (Wiltshire: Anthony Rowe Ltd., 2007), 124.

⁴ C.f. the last chapter of Pinkard's Hegel biography, which provides a detailed account of Hegel career and slow rise to fame and has the rather telling subtitle “Celebrity and Strife.” (Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 200) pp.605-658.)

⁵ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 11 [21:9.]

⁶ Regarding the history of the manuscript of *Lectures on the Proofs of the Existence of God* see Hodgson's excellent editorial introduction, esp pp.1-4, 21 and 25.

Granted, in signing a contract to write a book on the proofs, Hegel may be seen as fulfilling an obligation he had placed himself under in 1816 when, in the second volume of the *Science of Logic*, after once again mentioning the ontological proof, he wrote:

But I reserve for another occasion the task of elucidating in greater detail the manifold misunderstanding brought upon the ontological proof of God's existence, and also on the rest of the other so-called proofs, by logical formalism. We shall also elucidate Kant's critique of such proofs in order to establish their true meaning and thus restore the thoughts on which they are based to their worth and dignity.⁷

Nonetheless, given that Hegel was already obligated to produce a second edition of the rest of the *Science of Logic* as well as the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, why would he agree to increase his burden? After all, he rarely mentions his intention to write such a book, and the 1829 manuscript of *Lectures on the Proofs* that he did leave us, was for a long time largely ignored, seemingly regarded as a minor work of little significance.

Hegel's Many Challenges

At the time, Hegel certainly had enough to worry him. First, as mentioned above, he intended to produce a second edition of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.⁸ Hegel had always regarded the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as stylistically imperfect. Indeed, before the first edition had even gone to press he was already announcing to friends his intention to produce a revised second edition of the work.⁹ The problems with the *Phenomenology*, however, stretch far beyond matters of mere style. The difficulty of the text is clear from the fact that Hegel only once made an (abortive) attempt to use this work in his own lectures. This problem is explained in his introduction to the 1827 and 1830 editions of

⁷ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 628 [12:129.]

⁸ See Hegel, *Letters*, 119 [84.]

⁹ See *ibid.*, and 121 [605a.]

the *Encyclopaedia*. Hegel there states that, insofar as the *Phenomenology* had as its task to start from the most immediate form of consciousness and raise it to the standpoint of philosophical science, because this standpoint is the richest and most concrete,

it presupposed also the concrete shapes of consciousness, such as morality, ethical life, art, and religion. Hence the development of the *content*, or of the subject matters of special parts of philosophical science, falls directly within that development of consciousness which seems at first to be restricted just to what is formal; 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 partly within that introduction.¹⁰

Given Hegel's statements in the *Science of Logic*, it is clear that he regarded the *Phenomenology* to be the properly *scientific* introduction to the system. Nonetheless, insofar as the development of the *Phenomenology* turned out to be even more complicated than parts of the system itself, from a *pedagogical* point of view it is hardly the most appropriate introduction to Hegel's system. It is for this reason that in the *Encyclopaedia* Hegel found it necessary to provide a different introduction, even though he regarded it an "even greater inconvenience" that, unlike the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the account of the positions of thought with respect to objectivity in the introduction of the *Encyclopaedia* "can only be conducted descriptively and argumentatively [*nur historisch und rasonierend sich verhalten zu können*]." ¹¹ The problem of how best to provide individuals with a *pedagogically* appropriate ladder to the standpoint from which to comprehend his system as such, however, was not just an issue that Hegel faced with respect to the uninitiated.

¹⁰ Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §25 r.

¹¹ *Ibid.*.

Hegel's fame had made him something of a target, and many of his final articles were polemical works that sought to defend his system against attacks from both the left and right side of the political and religious spectrum.¹² On the one hand, the left were liable to read his defense of Christianity, monarchy, and the proclamation of the end of history as reactionary conservatism. The right, on the other hand, suspected Hegel of covert atheism while his claim that the monarch's only function in the state should be to dot the 'i's and cross the 't's did little to endear him to Friedrich Wilhelm III.¹³

Hegel's own position is nuanced enough that he could always sidestep such accusations by pointing to how his system sought to mediate between extremes, and thereby he could represent himself as an inoffensive moderate. Such representations, however, could hardly satisfy the initiated, particularly when the issue at hand was the charge of atheism or pantheism.

According to Hegel, the direct charge of atheism, that there is, as he puts it, too little of God in philosophy, has become rare and need not be discussed.¹⁴ His own system, after all, declared God to be the absolute truth, and with all his talk of spirit, would likely respond, as Socrates did to Meletus, i.e., by stating that one who believes in and teaches spiritual things certainly believes in spirits.¹⁵ The charge of pantheism, by contrast, he rejects as inappropriate insofar as he understands pantheism as the claim that every particular finite object is God. Consequently, however, Hegel claims that *no*

¹² Cf. Hegel, *Letters*, pp. 503-57.

¹³ See Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §280 r. Cf. also Hegel, *Letters*, 441.

¹⁴ See Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §573 r. Hegel refers to the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §71 where he explains that the charge of atheism has become rare insofar as with respect to *content* "the basic import and requirements in the matter of religion have been reduced to a minimum." (Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §71 r. fn. Cf. also §73.)

¹⁵ See Plato, "Apology," in *Complete Works*, ed. John M Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 26c-28a.

religion and *no philosopher* has ever held such a position.¹⁶ As to Hegel's further claim that his system of philosophy and the revealed religion or Christianity are identical in content and differ only in form,¹⁷ this likewise does little to clarify matters for the initiated, who are, as we have seen, instead liable to react only with confusion insofar, having read Hegel's *Logic*, they know that according to Hegel the distinction between form and content is far from absolute.¹⁸

The conflict and confusion regarding the proper interpretation of the Hegelian system, and thus the legacy of this system and the potential that his authentic position would be misunderstood was, as we have seen, a danger of which Hegel could hardly be ignorant, given the letters of Duboc and Feuerbach. While Hegel eventually managed to disabuse Duboc of the panlogist misinterpretation of his system, this misunderstanding of his system only appeared to surface again with Weisse's publication of *On the Present Standpoint of the Philosophical Discipline with Particular Respect to Hegel's System* (1829). Weisse's publication was praised to Hegel by the Heidelberg theologian Karl Daub, but with a warning that "the great misunderstanding which it [Weisse's publication] contains – namely that at the end philosophy returns to logic as such – will not be entirely dispelled until... you publish the worked-out *System of Natural Philosophy*."¹⁹ At issue, however, is not just the philosophy of nature, but also the relations and transitions between Hegel's philosophy of logic, nature and spirit, i.e., one

¹⁶ Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §573 r.

¹⁷ Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:345-6 [267-9.]

¹⁸ Cf. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia Logic*, §§133-4. Cf. also Jaeschke, *Reason in Religion*, 358.

¹⁹ Hegel, *Letters*, pp.540-1.

of the most difficult and obscure aspects of Hegel's system, but upon the comprehension of which rests the very meaning of that system itself.

Hegel and the Needs of His Time

There is an additional set of concerns that burdened Hegel both in his youth and in old age. One of the reasons that Hegel, in contrast with Schelling, did not begin to publish until later in life is that Hegel did not originally choose professional philosophy as his vocation. Instead, he originally intended to be a popular enlightenment educator à la Rousseau and Lessing, engaged with the more immediate and concrete religious, ethical and political concerns of the common people (*Volk*.) Even at the time of his conversion, as he explained to Schelling, when he found himself driven from the “more subordinate needs of man” to the pursuit of systematic philosophy, even then he expressed hope that a “return to intervention in the life of men can be found.”²⁰

The revolutionary tone of the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the connection of this work with the ideal of his youth is hard to miss given, amongst other things, Hegel's insistence that a ladder to the standpoint of absolute knowing must be provided so that it ceases to appear as the esoteric possession of a few and instead becomes “exoteric, comprehensible, and capable of being learned and possessed by everybody.”²¹ Admittedly, in his darker moods and later years, Hegel was liable to disapprovingly substitute the word ‘rabble’ (*Pöbel*) for ‘people’ (*Volk*)²² and to suggest

²⁰ Hegel, *Letters*, 64 [29.]

²¹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶13 [9:15.]

²² Cf. the comment of the editors of Hegel, *Letters*, 195. Compare Hegel's comments on the rabble in *ibid.*, 199 [148] and 307 [233.] Cf also Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §244.

that philosophy is, by its very nature, an esoteric possession of the few.²³ Yet on August 27th, 1831, the day after his birthday, Hegel addressed the following poem to his students:

Such a greeting from my friend I welcome,
But with this greeting now a call for resolve has come,
For a deed of words to conjure up – no less –
The many – friends included –enraged to madness.
Yet what means ‘crime’ to those accused by you,
If not that each but wants to hear himself, to do the talking, too.
Thus the word that was to ward the evil off
Becomes another means to increase the mischief,
And if this word, as it has long driven me, were at last to escape,
Your call would bind me to proceed with daring and not to wait,
But to hope that to this word other spirits would reciprocate,
That empty grievances should not dissipate this word,
That these spirits may bear it to the people and put it to work!
–From the little castle atop Kreuzberg
Hegel²⁴

At any rate, regardless of the ambiguity of Hegel’s conception of the immediate practical efficacy of philosophy and the possibility of its being popularly comprehended, he understood his own system as both inherently and integrally related to his time and the problems of his age. The polemical comments in the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, for instance, were directed explicitly against the abstract and formal philosophical accounts and conceptions of the absolute that conceived of the absolute in terms of abstract identity²⁵ and derived their content by means of an external and formal method.²⁶ Likewise, his *Philosophy of Right*, and even more his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* were, as we have seen, in large part concerned with and directed at what Hegel regarded as the crisis and needs of his time, i.e., a time when the Enlightenment

²³ Cf. Hegel, *Letters*, 544 [659] and particularly Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* 3:162 [96-7.]

²⁴ Hegel, *Letters*, 680 [680.]

²⁵ See Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, ¶16 [9:17] and ¶54 [9:39-40.]

²⁶ See *ibid.*, ¶15 [9:16-17], ¶50 [9:36.] and ¶51 [9:37-8.]

understanding threatened to undermine the concrete content and achievements of the consummate religion and the rationally constituted state.

This Dissertation and Hegel's Final Book

I am hopeful that against the background of the above reflections on the situation in which Hegel found himself in his final years, and in light of the previous account of the role and significance of the proofs in Hegel's system, Hegel's decision to write his final book on the proofs of God appears no longer surprising but quite natural. As I have attempted to demonstrate in and through the articulation of the threefold correlation of the three proofs to Hegel's system, for Hegel the question of these proofs, far from a minor issue, reaches into the core of his system. For this reason, had Hegel managed to write *Über das Dasein Gottes*, I am certain that, far from a minor work, it would have in its own way been a masterpiece of philosophy on the same order as his *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Science of Logic*. In and through offering his account, critique and defense of the proofs, Hegel would have been able to, as suggested in the introduction, speak at once esoterically and exoterically. In doing this, he would have been able to provide both a popular introduction to his system, speak to his own concerns with the crisis of his age while, and at the very same time, highlight and articulate the fundamental categories and most essential aspects of his system up to and including the very meaning of the Hegelian middle, the idea of philosophy, that is itself the One proof.

The present dissertation, naturally, cannot claim to be that work itself: The requirements of scholarly accuracy and rigor; the necessity to reconstruct from the beginning that which Hegel could simply assert in the end; the need to bring into the

account itself precisely that which Hegel need have only gestured at; the need to address scholarly debates regarding the interpretation of Hegel – all of this precludes the possibility that this dissertation could serve the function of an exoteric introduction for those lacking, at the very minimum, some prior philosophical training. Nonetheless, I do not believe that what I have achieved in attempting to articulate the correlations of the proofs to Hegel's system is inconsequential, as I hope my readers will agree.

As I stated in the Introduction to this dissertation, my original interest in articulating Hegel's the role and significance of the proofs in Hegel's system stemmed not from a particular interest in the proofs *per se*, nor from the mere scholarly interest and concern with elucidating some dusty old tome that I had noticed had sat neglected for some time. Instead, it was motivated by my conception of the Hegelian system as the culmination of a particular formulation and fulfillment of the project of philosophy itself. My focus on the proofs was not due to any particular interest in these arguments *per se* in their various historical formulations, but because and insofar as I conceived of these proofs as opening upon a number of broader ontological and philosophical issues, including the nature of reason, freedom and time. My original intention, accordingly, was to consider the role and significance of the proofs not just in the thought of Hegel, but in Schelling and Heidegger as well. Although it became clear that the original project could not be completed in a single dissertation, and thus although I had to limit the scope of the dissertation and consider Hegel alone, I still regard the project itself as worthwhile. By way of conclusion, then, I shall attempt to both indicate what I take to be the significance of the present account of Hegel's system and, in doing so, address certain misgivings that

the reader may have had regarding Hegel's account, and in particular his account of religion.

The Challenge of Hegel

On the surface, the claims made by and on behalf of the Hegelian system appear as absurd as the system itself appears monolithic. The claim to have attained absolute knowledge, to have comprehended the absolute truth, to have systematically articulated God himself – all of this sounds so boastful that it stretches credulity to its utmost limit. Likewise, it appears, the refutation of that system should be a simple matter.

Hegel's 'timeless' account of nature in the *Philosophy of Nature* is surely bound to its own time, and not just to his own time, but even to Hegel's particular knowledge of the empirical sciences of his time. The speed of scientific and technological progress would thus immediately appear to give lie to the claim of timelessness. And yet Hegel himself never claimed to provide a purely a priori account of nature, but to the contrary insisted that philosophical science itself "presupposes and is conditioned by empirical physics."²⁷ Far from denying the possibility of new scientific discoveries, Hegel claims that "philosophy is driven by the sciences to make up for its own inadequacy in point of realization [*Erführung*]."²⁸ Philosophical science, according to Hegel, is "in fact the queen of sciences, as much because of herself as because of the interaction between her and the other sciences."²⁹ For Hegel to claim that no scientific progress would be made,

²⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of Nature*, §246 r.

²⁸ Hegel, *Letters* 106 [55]

²⁹ *Ibid.*

or that his account of nature in the philosophy of nature was not capable of greater perfection and expansion in detail would be patently absurd.

Hegel's 'timeless' account of history, likewise, appears to be thoroughly bound to his time, for his account of past civilizations and cultures is certainly limited not just by the sources available to human beings at the time, but to the knowledge available to someone living in Western Europe, and moreover is limited to those sources which Hegel himself knew. That such sources might be lacking in some respects and that there were gaps in these accounts, however, is something that Hegel himself explicitly acknowledges, declaring openly in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* that "the materials pertinent to the Persian Empire are, however, largely incomplete"³⁰ and, with respect to his account of Chinese religion, that "information with regard to religion is difficult to come by because the Europeans could only obtain it in the role of missionaries, although as missionaries their own religion was an obstacle to their doing so."³¹

That we might today have better and more complete sources and access to information that was not available in Hegel's time would hardly surprise him given Hegel's acknowledgement both of the limitations of his sources and the fact that he was constantly attempting to appropriate and incorporate recent studies and discoveries in, for example, his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.³² Moreover, it is clear that in providing his account of religions other than Christianity "Hegel focused his attention on the original or classical expression of the religions, for the most part not attending to their

³⁰ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume 1*, 304 [234.]

³¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume 1*, 243 [157.]

³² See Hodgson, Editorial Introduction to Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 2:3-9.

subsequent histories or contemporary expressions, if any.”³³ It is unquestionable, then, that Hegel’s account of Judaism does not do justice to the richness of this tradition as it arose and was still developing and thriving even in Hegel’s own time and in Europe.

It is unquestionable that historical events have occurred since Hegel’s death, but this too is nothing that Hegel denied. As was mentioned previously, Hegel himself expected as much, indicating that Russia and the Americas might possibly be lands of the future, although insisting that such indications were not properly philosophical, that philosophy cannot say how things will or ought to go in the future, because its proper object and place is the present and what is actual.³⁴

Even of his *Science of Logic*, and in the introduction that work, Hegel openly declares “[h]ow could I possibly pretend that the method that I follow in this system of logic, or rather the method that this system itself follows within, would not be capable of greater perfection, of greater elaboration in detail?”³⁵

The claim of philosophical science to the possession of timeless knowledge (read the rational comprehension of the actual in and as its self-present) and the claim that, nonetheless, new things would be known in the future, does not contradict Hegel’s system but is in fact *required* by it. For Hegel to claim that nothing new would or could arise is *impossible* on his own grounds. On his own account, the true eternity of the absolute idea as absolute spirit *is* as the eternal *activity* that *enjoys* itself not because it is motionless and stands outside of change and time, but because its self-presence is the sublation of time itself. Time is sublated because and insofar as the activity of the

³³ Ibid., 2:4.

³⁴ See supra, pp. 396-8.

³⁵ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 33 [21:38.]

absolute idea is absolute spirit, and it is this in and through the activity that is the actuality of its creation and comprehensive knowledge of itself. The true eternal, as absolute presence and self-presence, is thus full of the past, for it is the truth of this past, i.e., the result in and through which that past is itself comprehended and gains its truth. The apparent contingency of history and that which passes away is just the necessity of the movement of externality in and through which the absolute idea's own essential being and objectivity is actualized and known in truth as absolute spirit. The rational is actual, and it is absolutely free in its actuality, for the necessity of this objectivity is also historical and the historical, as the contingent interests and urges of human beings is the cunning of reason. Likewise, the absolute present is *pregnant* with the future because the contingent being of nature and the existence and urges of human beings is just the self-objectification of the absolute idea. There is and can in principle be nothing that could arise that would be essentially other and there is nothing that cannot be comprehended in the absolute idea in principle that, in and through this comprehension, would leave behind an essential remainder.

The reason for this is one and the same reason that Hegel's system is difficult, if not impossible, to refute. Thus, although Hegel freely admits that even his *Logic* is "capable of greater perfection and elaboration in detail"³⁶ the devil is not in the details. Thus Hegel continues:

Yet I know that it is the one and only true method. This is made evident by the fact that this method is not something distinct from its subject matter and content – for it is the content in itself, *the dialectic which it possesses within itself*, which moves the subject matter forward.³⁷

³⁶ Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 33 [21:38.]

³⁷ Ibid.

The method is the immanent movement of the *Sache selbst* conceived as reason itself. The entire system is comprehended as reason in its immanent self-unfolding articulation that actively grounds itself in and through this articulation. Any piecemeal challenge to the Hegelian system is doomed to not just be ineffectual, but self-defeating.

Because the Hegelian system turns the contingent into the outward show of reason's own necessity, the attempt to challenge that system by pointing to one or another particular difference or distinction challenges the system not one whit, for this system can happily both accept the external presence of inessential and irrational differences without thereby being challenged in its claim to be comprehensive. The claim to comprehensiveness does not require that each and every particular detail be known in all its detail and particularity, only that the standpoint of philosophical science is so constituted that there is nothing that it can face that can and will remain essentially other. There can be no essential remainder because to substantiate the claim to be essential is to appeal to a ground. The difference must be demonstrated to be not just *a* difference, but an essential difference. But then the challenger must either confess that the proposed difference is a contingent, groundless and inessential difference after all, or else ground the claim that the difference is essential. Since nothing is more comprehensively rational than reason itself, however, the labor expended in offering such a refutation rebounds and is appropriated by the system itself.

For one and the same reason, as much one might wish to challenge Hegel's claim to be providing an account of the truth of religion, and however much one may object that his account fails to do justice to this or that particular religion in its historical and living fullness, this challenge is not so easily posed. One might want to say that what

Hegel claims to be the in-itself of religion is not what religion is 'from the inside' so to speak. The problem is that any argument proposed along these lines is, in being posed as an argument, no longer taking place in the sphere of religious representation but has either already become philosophy, or is at best articulated in terms of the understanding. This follows, according to Hegel, from the internal contradiction that is representation itself, namely that the truth it wants to articulate is always a matter of starting from the sensuous content, but taking that content not as the truth but merely as that which *represents* something *other*. Religion cannot say what it *means* to say on its own terms, and in attempting to say otherwise, passes beyond representation such that the content that it lived in as faith and the cultus is handed over to the understanding, which in turn, due to the limitations of the understanding, not only contradicts itself, but rises against religion and destroys its content. The truth of this content, however, just *is*, on Hegel's terms, this passing over that develops as opposition - the movement of the finite to the infinite and infinite to the finite - and philosophy *is* the truth of this movement as the sublation of this opposition, without which, religion is reduced to mere feeling. Religious feeling or an intuition of the numinous is without content, something that every religion and the atheist can appeal to with equal right. The interpretation of this feeling, however, is precisely what is at issue, for precisely what is claimed by this appeal to the feeling of the numinous is something definite, or at the minimum a sense of the transcendent. Yet *that* is no longer just a feeling, but has a determinate content, i.e., it is either a representation or, if articulated, is thought by and in terms of the understanding.

For one and the same reason, the question of whether Hegel is a Christian in an orthodox or even heterodox sense loses all meaning. This question as posed and the

standard presupposed by it, is posed in terms of the understanding that articulates the content of representation as dogmatic theology. As such, religion already employs the tools of its enemy and sows its own death, for living religion is already left behind and the understanding cannot articulate the truth of the content of religion.

For one and the same reason, Hegel's account and defense of the proofs is far more powerful than is usually recognized, despite the fact that to mention Hegel's defense of the proofs, much less to claim that his whole system is the One proof, is liable to provoke laughter and contempt. Such laughter and contempt, however, is based on the presupposition that Hegel's aim is to argue, as the traditional proofs are understood as attempting to do, that an absolutely transcendent being whose being is thus *absolutely* other than the being of the world and *absolutely* other than human beings, 'is' or 'exists.' For Hegel, however, insofar as the word 'God' is thought and not merely vaguely represented, the word 'God' means nothing more or less than *truth* and *reason*. The question as to whether or not there *is* truth and whether there *is* reason is no more or less absurd than the question of whether there *is* something rather than nothing, for to ask such questions is already to answer in the affirmative.

For one and the same reason, Hegel's correlation of the proofs to religion and his claim to verify the *Logic* and absolute knowing as knowing that is not limited to immediate, finite and particular beings is not absurd at all. Granted, as articulated in terms of the understanding, the proofs are taken as arguments for the claim *that* God is or exists. It might be assumed, accordingly, that insofar as Hegel takes the Christian religion to be the Consummate religion, and insofar as he correlates this religion to the ontological proof alone, that in claiming that the ontological proof is the "only genuine

one”³⁸ he must accept one of two things: On the one hand, it may be supposed that Hegel takes the other proofs to be false and refuted, and likewise the gods of these religions to be merely the subjective projection of individuals or the collective delusion of a group of people, while he takes the God of Christianity to *really* exist. On the other hand, it may be supposed that Hegel takes all of the proofs to be false, the subjective projection of individuals or the collective delusions of a group of people, and the God of Christianity to be no more or less true or false than the gods of other religions, i.e., no less of a delusion, for there is nothing beyond human beings and their knowledge.

For Hegel, however, this way of posing the issue is inappropriate both from the standpoint of living religious consciousness as it arose historically and the *Sache selbst*. On the one hand, the various ways in which religion is historically actualizes and persists as a shape of consciousness unto itself is prior to, and indeed constitutes the condition of the possibility of the standpoint from which these questions could be asked in the first place, i.e., the standpoint of the understanding that itself has become a shape of consciousness. The formulation of this question, namely the question as to whether religion is the delusion of an individual or a projection, presupposes the conceptual articulation of distinction between history and ‘myth’, between subjectivity in its inwardness and the externality of the world and its objectivity, between imagining, representing and thinking, and between this world and another, absolutely transcendent world. Indeed, this question not only presupposes these categories, but also presupposes a particular conception of truth and with this a particular criterion of truth and standard of

³⁸ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:352 [272.]

evidence. As presupposed, these categories, this conception of truth and the criterion of truth and knowledge that it applies to these religions is itself presupposed as *absolute*.

This is inappropriate to these religions, on the one hand, insofar as what is actually presupposed is a very particular and particularly determined shape of consciousness. The question thus cannot be posed this way to religious consciousness itself as it historically arose in its determinate actuality because such categories, and such a concept and criterion of truth, does not and could not belong to these religions as they were originally experienced by these people. From the standpoint of philosophical science, on the other hand, this way of posing the question is inappropriate to the *Sache selbst* because this question is posed in terms of the presupposition of the absolute opposition of categories, an inadequate conception of truth, and a shape of consciousness that by its very nature cannot know or acknowledge the truth of the content of religion.

The formalism of the Enlightened understanding, because it merely presupposes its categories and standpoint as fixed and true in themselves, wishes to 'refute' the proofs and the gods of old and understand these gods as a delusion, and it pats itself on the back in issuing this challenge for, by their very nature, such gods could neither be an object of immediate sensation that could be 'objectively' verified by scientific means, nor could they be the kind of thing that may be articulated and measured in terms of the abstract opposition of the categories of finite understanding. Religion is thus, from this standpoint, 'nonsense' or at best 'metaphysics' in the pejorative sense.

From the standpoint of philosophical science, however, the representation of a religion is the self-constituting and self-knowing activity of finite spirit in its historical presence. The representation of the truth in and by Religion does not, precisely because it

is *representation*, have something that is immediately sensuously given as its object and truth. The representation is not, then, of a particular, finite and sensuous being. Rather, insofar as living religion is a people's representation of the truth as such, this truth is not measured by any empirically given standard, but is itself the measure. Insofar as religious representation is the form in which a people know the truth in the highest sense, their representation of God or the gods is the very context within which the question of the 'truth' or 'falsity' of any particular thing could be asked in the first place. The truth in this sense is that within which such a people live and struggle, and because they struggle from within this truth, they manifest their truth, admittedly not immediately as a natural object, but as the sublation of the immediacy of the being of both outward and its own inward nature. Their truth is the being-in-itself and implicit being-for-itself that is the grounds and self-grounding of the historical existence of the community, its constitution of itself as a state, its laws, its culture, and so forth. Yet could such 'truth' still not be considered a delusion? Is Hegel committed to claiming that each religion is culturally and historically hermetically sealed point whose standard of truth and representation of the gods is no less or more true than any other?

Not at all, for Hegel in no way adopts such a simplistic form of relativism or historicism. Human beings in the very historicity of their being as self-constituting do not create themselves *ex nihilo*, but are immediately conditioned by an other that is not dependent on or altered by the mere immediate willing or wishing it be otherwise. To suppose the opposite is to embrace the kind of idealism that Hegel rejects outright, while pointing out that merely imagining something does not make it so and that there is a permanent immediacy of and for human beings insofar as objects intrude upon us in their

immediacy and do not immediately bend to our will. “That we are determined in an immediate way is the aspect of externality in relation to our freedom, the field of external necessity and unfreedom. Here there is no positing by us.”³⁹

Nature in its immediacy, both inwardly and outwardly, is not something that is given to us as the product of our willing. We must engage with it and act on it, and thus presuppose it. Likewise, reason itself and truth itself is not something that is immediately constituted by the will of an individual. Far from it, the I itself *is* I according to Hegel and as we have seen, only in and through *thought* as the sublation of its own immediacy and the immediacy of nature⁴⁰ and through recognition.⁴¹ Pure thought, reason itself, has its own necessity that, far from bending to the immediate will of the individual, is the very condition under which the individual is an I as such.

For the reason that the I only *is* as related both to the I of others and to nature, the self-constituting subject is, in its very being as I, historical. The I is negatively related to nature both without and within, situated within a community, and conditioned accordingly by the knowing and self-knowing of this community, i.e., that which this community has as its highest conception of truth. An historical community is thus not closed off to nature, but necessarily mediates itself and posits itself by transforming nature from this immediacy into its own possession. The truth in the highest sense is not, accordingly, something that merely arises from the whims of the individual or the community, but is constituted as a shape (*Gestalt*) of consciousness. As a shape of consciousness, it is thus not something that can be destroyed from without by pointing to

³⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, 177 [155.]

⁴⁰ See supra, pp.315-19.

⁴¹ See supra, pp.403-5.

some empirical example, but it does still, as a shape of consciousness, stand within the world and truth and as thus opened up to this world. Moreover a shape of consciousness as so opened up has within itself, insofar as it is a finite shape of consciousness, the possibility of some object appearing within the field of experience such that a shape of consciousness finds itself contradicted by its experience. This contradiction, however, is grounded in the immanent self-contradiction of that shape of consciousness itself.

Now, the self-comprehension of the individual and community that is in-and-for-itself historical to the ground, and thus that has itself as absolutely historical but still only knows this history externally as contingent, is the consummate skepticism and absolute self-alienation of subjectivity, the death of representation reduced to the immediacy of feeling, and the loss of all substantial being. As such, the I sinks into the pure inwardness of its own subjectivity, i.e., into the I=I which is at first pure darkness. This sinking within itself, however, i.e., this absolute skepticism, is at once the place from which consciousness can comprehend the shapes of knowing in their necessity so as thereby to comprehend the necessity of its own shape of consciousness. This self-comprehension, however is at once the sublation of this subjectivity in its immediacy and the raising of itself to the standpoint of absolute knowing.

What consciousness comprehends in and as absolute knowing is the truth of reason, and itself as a moment of reason's own self-externalization, self-actualization and self-knowing. Reason is not the *property* of the individual in his or her particularity. Instead, it is the individual who, in sublating his or her own particularity, knows itself in reason, as a moment of reason's activity, and indeed itself as the site at which reason exists in truth. This truth is the activity of the absolute idea that externalizes itself and

sublates that externality from out of that externality itself in finite spirit who, in comprehending itself in the absolute truth that is systematically articulated and sublating its own particularity, knows the absolute. This absolute truth is the reciprocal recognition of the absolute idea as absolute spirit. The idea, on the one hand, has nature and spirit as the means for its own self-comprehension. Yet nature and finite spirit are not just the external means and material of its activity. Reciprocal recognition is possible and actual only insofar as the other of the idea is itself free and self-knowing activity that, in raising itself to reason and comprehending itself in reason, is at once the movement of reason's, the absolute idea's, comprehension of itself in and through human beings. The development and progression of the natural sciences, like the continuation of natural processes themselves is merely one side, and a one-sided moment of, the reflection in and through which this one-sidedness is sublated in the absolute idea that is in its truth as absolute spirit that has its true existence as philosophical science.

The point, then, is not that nothing new thing can ever be known and no new 'truths' or rather 'correct fact' can be recognized, but that nothing can arise that is *essentially* new. This system, it seems in principle, can only be unseated by one that is *more* comprehensive and that succeeds in grounding itself better and more comprehensively in reason's own activity. The alternative, it appears, is that one either presuppose knowledge of something absolutely transcendent, i.e., become a dogmatic metaphysician, and contradicts oneself in making the claim to the very knowledge that one claims cannot be had, or forsake philosophy for poetry or religion, neither of which can definitively challenge the system, for they cannot definitively say what they

themselves mean without, in becoming intelligible, commit suicide in making themselves understood and thus preparing their own sacrifice by which they are reborn in the system.

Fackenheim, Hegel and Life

The attempts to challenge Hegel's system outwardly, by pointing to some experience that is not already included or some way of understanding things that is not already part of that system, is futile. Even Fackenheim's *Religious Dimension In Hegel's Thought* I argue, despite my own great appreciation for and debt to this work, fails in this regard.

Hegel's system may be understood, as Fackenheim himself points out, as a grand attempt to bring about a reconciliation between the finite and the absolute such that the finite is not ignored or dismissed, but instead becomes the very site and condition of the realization of the absolute in its truth as absolute spirit. As Fackenheim, argues, because this system is the grand attempt to not ignore the finite, historical and contingent, but rather to comprehend and actualize a grand reconciliation between the finite and the absolute, the formulation of the system itself depends upon the concrete reconciliation of the state and religion within finitude and finite spirit.⁴² The religion and state that bring about this reconciliation – a reconciliation which is the condition of the possibility of philosophy's realization of its own concept and subsequent sublation into the system of philosophical science – are themselves conceived by Hegel not just as some particular religion and particular state, but the very fulfillment of the concepts of religion and state. This religion is the consummate religion, Christianity, that in its fulfillment as

⁴² See *ibid*, pp.106-12, 206-213 and 220-2.

Protestantism both distinguishes itself from the state, letting the secular state go free, and finds itself reconciled with the state which, as a rational state, explicitly makes freedom into its own principle and organizes itself in such a way that this freedom is concretely realized in and through the activity of individuals. This reciprocal relation of religion and the rational secular state is, immediately speaking, the mutual assurance of conscience.⁴³

Fackenheim's claim is that this reconciliation has failed, that this reconciliation collapsed, and that consequently Hegel's system stands refuted by the fragmentation of the modern world. Fackenheim's rejection of the system, however, cannot be decisive insofar as it falls back on a merely external critique of that system which, because external, fails to demonstrate the necessity of the collapse of Hegel's system.

Fackenheim's appeal to the fragmentation of the contemporary post-Christian world is not sufficient from the standpoint of the system, for such fragmentation may be written off as a temporary set-back or a contingent happening. Hiroshima and Auschwitz do not refute Hegel for the same reason.⁴⁴ Indeed, in a sense, who would want to claim otherwise? To demonstrate that these events constitute a 'refutation' of Hegel's system would seem to require the demonstration that there is a genuine and authentic ground and inner necessity for these events, and thus that they are rational and accordingly justified. As it stands, there is nothing on Hegel's own ground that guarantees that humanity will not fall back into lower shapes of consciousness and self-consciousness temporarily. Meanwhile, Hegel's system endures as the property of the few, as well as negatively as the opponent who infinitely recurs, even if only under erasure, ever again requiring

⁴³ See supra, pp.367-9.

⁴⁴ See James Doull and Emil Fackenheim, "Would Hegel Today be a Hegelian?" in *Dialogue*, Vol.9, Issue 02 (Sept. 1970), pp.222-235.

refutation. All that he asks is that we “have faith in reason [and] a desire and thirst for knowledge of it.”⁴⁵ And how could we, at least we who have chosen philosophy as our vocation, do otherwise?

But then, from whence comes this urge to refute Hegel so that this need is posed by philosophy itself? Is it from a need to have new wares to sell? If the labor of articulating all of the parts of the system and educating others to this standpoint is not enough, then surely perfecting and augmenting the system could keep us well occupied. Is it a thirst for honor and a good reputation? Philosophy can hardly be in worse repute than when departments of philosophy are being closed down by the academy without a hint of irony. What then?

Fackenheim’s question regarding Hegel, whether Hegel would be a Hegelian today, has a deeper meaning than the question of whether one could still legitimately argue that the Hegelian system is tenable as a system of reason, i.e., as philosophical science. Hegel’s aim in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* was not merely to introduce others to the standpoint of philosophical science. His claim was that

Science requires that self-consciousness shall have elevated itself into the ether in order to be able to live with science and to live in science, and, for that matter, to be able to live at all.⁴⁶

The question posed by Fackenheim is, can one live as a philosopher? Can it be, as suggested by accounts of the origin of the word in the parable of Pythagoras, a way of

⁴⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Volume 1*, 80 [141.]

⁴⁶ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §26 [9:23.]

living, much less the good life?⁴⁷ Is it humanly possible to sustain oneself in this ether, or was Aristotle correct to say,

But such a life would be too high for man; for it is not in so far as he is man that he will live so, but in so far as something divine is present in him; and by so much as this is superior to our composite nature is its activity superior to that which is the exercise of other kinds of virtue.⁴⁸

Why must the philosopher go down and back to mundane matters? What is the impetus for reentering the cave? What kind of reason led, for example, to the down-going and under-going of Nietzsche's Zarathustra? And how is such going down possible, particularly and especially when the old metaphysical picture according to which the world of appearances is distinguished from another, true world, has been shattered?

Hegel's answer, as suggested at the end of Chapter Seven, is religious consciousness, his claim being that unity with the community, feeling and hope are necessary, humanly speaking. Fackenheim's charge that such a community has disappeared and that such hope, based in the faith in reason has been shattered by the events of the twentieth century may be correct, and thus that one cannot *live* as an Hegelian today, but this does not challenge the system of philosophical science. To the contrary, immediately speaking any attempt to formulate this issue or problem from the eternal (read absolutely present) standpoint of philosophical science is bound to fail, as it can only appear and be articulated, initially, in terms that are from the eternal standpoint, a return to a subordinate and sublated standpoints and as the appeal to something 'irrational', i.e., unphilosophical.

⁴⁷ See Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers, Volume II*, trans. R.D. Hicks, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), VIII:2, 8.

⁴⁸ Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics," in *The Complete Works of Aristotle* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), 2: 1861 [X, 7, 1177b 25-30.]

A Dialectical Critique of Hegel's System

It is for this reason that, in my Master's thesis, I attempted to provide an immanent dialectical critique of Hegel's system in order to demonstrate that and how the implicit reconciliation that Hegel saw as having occurred in and with the Protestant religion and the modern secular state collapses not contingently, but of its own necessity from the standpoint of philosophical science, and indeed collapses in such a manner that any future reconciliation on its own grounds was impossible.

Briefly, the argument may be summarized as follows: this collapse of philosophical science is due to the fact that religion and the state are, on Hegel's own grounds, incapable of understanding each other and cannot have anything but an implicit reconciliation, i.e., one that is held together by the immediacy of the feeling of mutual assurance. On their own grounds, however, neither secular consciousness nor religion can guarantee the continued existence of this mutual assurance, but to the contrary each must, according to their own principle, let the other go free. Moreover, insofar as the state itself requires the separation of religion from itself in order to achieve its concept, a plurality of religious consciousness within this state is required.

Since this state must allow any to hold office so long as they are fit, and can exclude none on the basis of their religious conviction, there is nothing that can be said in order to stop someone whose conscience is itself opposed to the state from holding office. For this reason, however, the immediate mutual assurance of conscience between the state, particularly in the application of its laws by the magistrates, and religion is undermined. Given such circumstances, circumstances that Hegel himself recognizes as

having occurred in his account of the relationship of religion to the state in his 1831 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*,⁴⁹ what could be done?

Since religion has already exhausted itself in own proper form as the form of representation, this after all being one of the conditions of the possibility of philosophical science arising in the first place, no new religion can appear as a result of this conflict. The state, for its own part, cannot dictate the conscience of individuals without losing the very concept of freedom that it sought to actualize and according to which such a state is, on Hegel's account, the realization of the concept of the state. It might be suggested, then, that philosophy itself become the universal external shape of consciousness. This, however, is impossible on Hegel's own grounds.

The impossibility of philosophy becoming the externally universal shape of consciousness cannot be attributed, for example, to the fact that most human beings do not immediately grasp the truth in the form of pure thinking, for the determination of the content of religion such that it is known itself already requires instruction and education. Likewise, this impossibility cannot be attributed to a lack of the intelligence of the general run of people who simply could not grasp the system. This explanation would make the need for religion into a contingent matter of the limitation of particular human beings. The necessity of religion follows not just from the fact that, as concrete, we do not merely think, but intuit, represent and will as well, so that we, for some reason, need religion in order to satisfy our particular finite wants and desires. This necessity is also due to the fact that, insofar as philosophy is philosophical science as the knowing of the truth in the rationality of the actual present, it cannot say what we ought to do and cannot

⁴⁹ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3:451-60 [339-47.]

will anything as philosophy. Philosophy *qua* philosophy, on Hegel's account, thus *cannot act*, for to do so would be for it to forsake itself and enter into the realm of contingency.

Despite the fact that philosophical science recognizes the immanent possibility and indeed necessity of the reconciliation of religion and the state, it cannot communicate this reconciliation to religion and secular consciousness because they cannot, according to their constitution, recognize themselves in the language of philosophy without abandoning their position. Likewise, since their own inner concept is freedom, for them to accept philosophical science's assertion of their identity on the force of its authority is equally impossible.

Since philosophical science cannot recognize or actualize itself in the world, it can only be maintained in a one-sided manner as (a) *form*, which is thought indifferent to its content and the world, (b) in terms of *content*, such that form is an indifferent moment and thus the state and religion are to be swept away as distortions of the truth, or (c) it can turn against these one-sided conceptions of itself and insist on the unity of its form and content. But because it does not actualize that reconciliation, it is equally one-sided and persists only through the negation of these other positions without sublating them while insisting on the utter contingency of its alienation from the world. This is what remains of the Hegelian middle.

If, however, this position seeks to think itself through to the end and grasp its own position concretely and attempts to grasp the idea of absolute spirit, then it collapses and recognizes the necessity of that collapse. The standpoint of philosophical-science itself comprehends that it *necessarily* no longer finds itself at home in the world. But then, insofar as this collapse is grasped as its own self-consciousness, and insofar as its own

self-consciousness is the self-consciousness of the absolute as spirit, then absolute spirit is no longer present to itself and thus absolute spirit is not absolute truth.

Results of this Dialectic and the Significance of the Proofs

It is at that point that a new dialectic might be proposed as emerging from the immanent contradiction of the system itself that leads to the sublation of the philosophical project as it has been traditionally understood, i.e., as knowledge of the truth. The negation of this system would simply be skepticism or the return to dogmatic metaphysics. The positive sublation of this system, on the other hand, would be the sublation of truth itself, not because truth is something too grand, something that is beyond, or some in-itself that we cannot reach, etc., but because it is *only* truth. But how could this 'only' be articulated? If truth is what 'is', then would that which is beyond truth not be nothing, or some limited kind of being? How could this even be suspected, much less articulated and known from within experience? How would this still be a matter of reason and a matter of philosophy?

Assuming that philosophy has its origin in the search for absolute knowing as the comprehensive knowing of what is in truth, to articulate this 'only' would no longer be philosophy. Yet philosophy, arguably, has an unthought origin that is other than the love of knowledge and truth. As Parmenides' poem tells us, "no evil fate sent you forth to travel this way (for indeed it is far from the track of men, but Right [Θέμις] and Justice [Δίκη]." ⁵⁰ Truth was not the end, but justice; yet since being is One, to know how things are in their truth and in accordance with the immortal right, is to know how to exercise

⁵⁰ Daniel W. Graham, trans. *The Texts of Early Greek Philosophy, Volume I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 211 [Fragment 10.26-7.]

justice. To know what is, in other words, is to have the model as the ground on which to know what one ought to do.

Hegel thus completes the project of philosophy according to its own explicit self-understanding, but in doing so, i.e., in making philosophy the knowledge of the truth actual in and as absolute self-presence, philosophy *qua* philosophy cannot say what ought to be, i.e., it cannot live. Since truth is knowledge of what is present in its actuality such that nothing is beyond it, *hope* for the future and the demand for justice is only intelligible as either contingency that will show itself to have been necessity and true or contingency that will have shown itself to be meaningless. If the system itself, however, has its own non-self-presence as its result, and if this result is taken to be not just a negative but a positive dialectical result, then the ‘may-be’ and this *urges* that which is *meaningful* yet not true, and not reducible to the truth, is possible only on the grounds that being is not One absolutely.

Now, at first there is the temptation here to simply reverse the order of meaning and truth and to attempt to ground truth in meaning. This, however, does not substantially change matters, for if truth without meaning is empty, meaning without truth is blind. Likewise, the grounding of meaning/truth in non-self-presence and difference does not change matters, but merely sustains itself in vacillating between dogmatism and skepticism by erasing itself as it asserts that difference is an origin, the origin of truth, but is not an origin in the normal way so that it could ever be present or realized. The ontology of difference does not give us more than the show of difference that is itself indifferent, and thus just another monism, another One and All. Moreover, because there is only One, a hierarchy of reason is established once again and reason is again one.

What is required, it seems to me, in order that the distinction of meaning and truth be sustained and philosophy be able to genuinely live, is that the difference of being and reason be articulated neither as one, nor as difference that again is just one, nor as dualism. The old dualisms collapse into a hierarchy so that all difference is simply the self-differentiation of the circuit of being and reason in and through which the immediacy of their distinction is either an illusion or else justified as the implicit truth that is truth in the resultant present. What is required, then, is a tripartite ontology, and indeed a tripartite temporal ontology where the relation between the three dimensions of being would at once be the relation of time, and we ourselves could know this insofar as we are the site of this turning. My thoughts as to how this might be established and worked through do not have their place here except to indicate the connection of the topic of this dissertation with my original project.

Insofar as the proofs for God, and in particular the ontological proof is thought through ontologically, what it contains is a succinct expression of the presupposition of philosophy that the truth is the highest One, and that this One is to be found in the being one and the same of reason. If the ontological proof, even in the manner in which Hegel articulates it speculatively as comprehending the other proofs as this One, is false, then the original project of philosophy as the search for the comprehensive and comprehensively grounded or self-grounding rational account of the truth is itself untenable. The alternative is either the embracement of irrationalism, or a rethinking of the presuppositions of philosophy itself.

Both Schelling and Heidegger, because their critiques of Hegel remains one-sided due to their failure to appreciate the subtlety of his account of time and his One proof, fail

to definitively refute Hegel's system. Nonetheless, both, in their opposition to Hegel, rethink the ground of philosophy and articulate distinct ways of conceiving of reason, freedom, time and being. The hope was that by articulating their positions in and through the role of the proofs in their thought, the distinction between the dimensions of being might both be made visible in terms of and in relation to distinct conceptions of reason, freedom and time. By articulating these positions in their opposition, my aim was to show that and how Hegel with his prioritization of the present, Schelling with his prioritization of the past, and Heidegger with his prioritization of the future, might be comprehended as one-sided moments. It was then hoped that this would lay the grounds upon which to think the sublation of these positions in and as a unified, living philosophy such that philosophy would be comprehended as living within both truth and meaning in their distinction and dialectic such that, rooted in the truth of the present, from out of the decision for good in opposition to radical evil, philosophy is the wisdom that knowing projects itself as seeking for justice in the actualization of possibilities that are not and need not, but yet may be true from out of its activity. Articulating the role and significance of the proofs in Hegel's system was thus conceived as the first step in this broader project that, because it exceeded the limits of what is possible in the present dissertation, shall now have to be articulated and justified in the future.

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