

Hegel's Antinomian Eschatology

Abstract: This article addresses Hegel's eschatology as follows:

1. We shall first identify the main "open" concepts subjected to controversy. Even to this day we witness a great variety of very conflicting views on Hegel, which challenge us because clearly Hegel did mean *one* thing, not *many* different things.
2. In order to rigorously address this issue so as to secure a coordinated interpretation we need a *criterion* – the one thing that can with certainty be considered as the authentic spirit of Hegel's philosophy. We found this criterion in *the speculative principle* (the principle of concrete identity as unity of the abstract identity with the concrete difference). It is by systematically applying this principle that we examined *and arguably solved* five such open-concepts fueling constant debate over Hegel's legacy.
3. Our results indicate that many interpretations face us with false one-sided alternatives. Hegel's speculative thinking however overcomes such analytic *disjunctions* which are mostly grounded on partial quotations, unilateral material selection, subjective alien interests and – more significantly – on the limits of *Verstand* (finite intellect) in generally translating the content of *Vernunft* (infinite reason).

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1. Open-Concepts as undecided and repeatedly destabilized concepts

The main purpose of this article is to achieve some degree of clarity and straight forwardness in a complicated debate over Hegel's eschatological legacy. We use the idea of an "open-concept" (Noica1936) to identify notions that recurrently evoke debate and experience periodical destabilization or shifts in interpretation. These are concepts in Hegel's philosophy often qualified as "ambiguous", "ambivalent" or "undecided". Open-concepts are therefore always analytically fractured, disputed, and divergently interpreted.

No later than after Hegel's death, the posterity of his grandiose system bitterly split over this difficulty in *stabilizing* one rigid canonic interpretation of the great speculative achievement. Left-wing/Right-wing Hegelians, absolutist/relativist Hegelians, spiritual/political Hegelians etc. – these all give the impression of *arbitrarily isolating one part* of Hegel's ample and generalized reconciliation of thinking with being.

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Such one-sided selection includes: prioritizing method over system (Marx), subject over Substance (Feuerbach), individual over the political totality (Stirner), individual over the ontological totality (Kierkegaard), freedom over state (Popper), contingency over historical necessity (Russel), historical relativism over reason in history (Horkheimer), liberal democracy over inter-state negativity (Fukuyama), epochal eschatology over definitive eschatology (Löwith). However, it's not just this confrontation with Hegel's philosophy, but honest and neutral scholarship as well who is coming to difficult terms with Hegel's insights. I cannot think of one single philosophy that aroused so much debate and confrontations.

This isn't hermeneutical relativism. It is rather the acknowledgement of the difficulty we have in providing a clear-cut transcription of *speculative reason* within the limits of the *analytic intellect*. Our attempt therefore is rather the i) attestation to a fact *plus* ii) a theoretical ambition to engage this unstable interpretation, so as to (*möglicherweise*) provide a durable solution that would better accord with the letter and spirit of Hegel's philosophy.

In discussing these two opposing modalities of grasping Hegel's religious philosophy, Cyrill O'Regan states that they "are reducing in fact, to two: the theological with God as its transcendental signified and anthropological with human being as the transcendental signified". This implies the ambiguous nature of Hegel's logic with regard to its referent, therefore encouraging "a decision with regard to the real referent, thereby forming the split between right-wing and left-wing Hegelianism" (O'Regan 1994, 393). His final comment on the urgency for such a *decision*, however – in the true spirit of an antinomian not disjunctive solution observes that:

"Of course, there is no need of an either/or here, though this does not rule out an order of priority between transcendental signifieds. The overt declaration in the main body of the text that the subject is God or truth suggests that the primary transcendental signified is God, and thus the primary translation is theological. But this by no means excludes the human subject as the signified or rules out anthropological translations as a secondary modality of translation. Indeed, Hegel's complex onto-theological view will forbid the either/or of traditional theism and atheism and suggest a position identical with neither" (O'Regan 1994, 393-394).

2. The Speculative Principle as Dispute Resolution Mechanism

In trying to reach a standard *general interpretation* that can be universally used to settle conflicting interpretations of different concepts in Hegel's work, we must first identify the *principle* which can universally be considered the most general, overarching and all-pervasive achievement of Hegel's thought. This is, in fact, not that difficult, since Hegel repeatedly formulates it as the *strong statement* of his philosophy. The fundamental archetype of Hegel

thinking is what we can call the *speculative principle*. Within the ontology of the “*affirmative Unendlichkeit*” (Hegel 1816/2010, 114-118), the finite is twofold defective: a) ontologically and b) epistemologically.

The analytic intellect (*Verstand*) is the epistemological form of the ontological finitude. The consciousness of a *speculative reason* is the result of the inflexible pursuit of the finite intellect towards its own limits, to the *Unconditioned* in the series of conditions. Kant already established that the passage of the *finite disjunctive Verstand* into the *infinite conjunctive Vernunft* was logically unavoidable. The antinomies of reason are not only necessary for reason itself – they are also necessary for the intellect which unavoidably discovered and revealed them within itself, within its self-transcending infinite progression in the series of conditions. As such, the intellect *objectively collided with the antinomies by colliding with itself*. Kant’s reaction to this was: if the *Verstand* cannot conceive Infinity without falling into contradiction, then we should just (voluntarily) stop thinking whatever lies beyond the finite phenomenal sphere, since this will violate the analytical principles of logic. *The intellect is constitutive while reason is merely regulative* (Kant 1781, 1787/1998, 201/387).

Hegel’s answer is simple as well as essential: he will not obey this *convention* (similar to Russel’s types-theory restrictive stipulation), since the progression of intellect into contradiction -when consequently extended to infinity – is *necessary*, it is not the making of the subject. Hegel also notes that there are not just four antinomies of reason – but that all reason is fundamentally antinomian. He generalizes then Kant’s contribution whereby he also revolutionizes its meaning. Since this antinomian development is characteristic of all use of reason then this is certainly an objective rather than a subjective fact of reason. This must be the structure of reason itself and this is how truth must be conceived¹. And it is precisely the intellectual separation of things that must be the artificial error defining our common sense. Why should then a *subjective* conventional decree suspend the *objective* necessary progression of thinking (Hegel 1816/2010, 45-55)?

A different powerful argument Hegel uses against Kant limitative stipulation is: When we distinguish *phenomenon* from *Noumenon*, the question is where are we standing if not somehow between/above the two? When we set limits to our knowledge, where are we if not *already beyond* the very limit we endeavor to trace?

“In order for the limit that is in every something to be a restriction, the something must at the same time *transcend it* in itself – must refer to it from within *as to a non-existent*. The existence of something lies quietly indifferent, as it were, *alongside* its limit. But the something transcends its limit only in so far as it is the sublatedness of the limit, the negative-in-itselfness over against it. And inasmuch as the limit is as restriction in the *determination* itself, the something thereby *transcends itself*” (Hegel 1816/2010, 104).

Hegel revolutionizes therefore Kant as follows: *The intellect is regulative (as permanent striving to fix and separate things that dialectically complete each other) while reason is constitutive (as grasping of the totality in which disjunctions are superseded).*

The speculative principle is clearly formulated as early as in *Differenzschrift* (1801), it is given the most pure, clear and outstanding expression in *Wissenschaft of Logik* (1812-1816) and didactically exposed in *Enzyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* (1817).

The Speculative Principle is opposed to the *Abstraktheit* – to the reflective and inconsequential condition of thinking through which we *separate* identity from difference. When we completely distinguish infinite from the finite we are mistaken since this representation of infinity is already a finite one – as merely juxtaposed to and limited by the finite.

“It is essential to distinguish the true concept of infinity from bad infinity, the infinite of reason from the infinite of the understanding. The latter is in fact a *finitized* infinite, and, as we shall now discover, in wanting to maintain the infinite pure and distant from the finite, the infinite is by that very fact only made finite” (Hegel, 1816/2010, 109).

The authentic concept however requires that we conceive infinity as *unity (totality) of our abstract infinite with the concrete finite*. Abstract analytic identity as well is nothing but one of the two different terms. Real identity cannot be abstractly separated from difference without being compromised. Rather, the true and concrete identity is precisely: *”Identität von Identität und Differenz”* (Hegel 1801/1977).

Our hypothesis is that only if we consistently stick to this *Grundform* of the *speculative Vernunft*, are we able to avoid most of the current diverging interpretations that are simply over-concentrating on particular aspects of *das Ganze*. We may friendly call these interpretations *heretical (analytical) interpretations of the orthodox (speculative) of Hegel*². The *speculative principle* will be then our *criterion* for a coordinated interpretation of different passages liable to diverging solutions. The speculative principle, together with the requirement to *coordinate* (rather than *choose*) different accents within the system, will help us reconcile different oppositions that challenge each other in the Hegel’s reception.

3. Hegel’s Eschatology as privileged and culminative point within the system

Our topic is Hegel’s eschatology. Not only is this of renewed contemporary interest, but – as we believe – it holds a superior position within the architectonics of Hegel’s general system, as – arguably – *the culmination itself of the system*.

If i) *the Truth is the Whole* then the meaning can only be *successively* given in its *completion*.

If ii) the Absolute is *its own Result* and can only be fully given *am Ende* then eschatology is the sole manner to retroactively provide an integrated sense to it all.

Teleology is therefore (subjectively) the retroactive and holistic understanding of becoming from its *realized* purpose backward. Objectively it is the progression of Substance itself towards its own *projected* purpose. We believe then this is a privileged point to investigate currently open-concepts and subject them to this *speculative dispute resolution mechanism*. The main open-concepts within Hegel's philosophy fueling debate are:

3.1. Secularization of Religion or Sanctification of Philosophy?

a) *Secularization*. These called superseding of religion through philosophy (Hegel 1807/1977, 475-493) has been used to argue that Hegel's religious claim is a rather "camouflaged" secularization, since philosophy is the authentic *conceptual* access to truth, whereas religion would be nothing more than *pictorial* thinking. We include here theologians who abhor Hegel, as well as atheists who appropriate Hegel. Feuerbach is the first to oppose Hegel in this matter, while admitting Hegel's idealism is speculative Christianity: "We have shown that the substance and object of religion is altogether human; we have shown that divine wisdom is human wisdom; that the secret of theology is anthropology; that the absolute mind is the so-called finite subjective mind" (Feuerbach 1841/2008, 221). But whereas Feuerbach believes religion is but the self-mystification of man, Hegel insists that it is the finite intellect which creates the mystification of a solid, substantial and self-subsistent nature of man.

Others emphatically and ideologically appropriate Hegel beyond any reasonable conceptual reading: "Hegel was essentially an atheist... There is no God, only man". Hegel's "Absolute is in no interesting way God" (Solomon 1983, 582/630).

b) *Sanctification*. On the other hand conservatives insist that this is not atheistic progress *away* from religion. The conceptual sublation of religious representation is not the same thing as an atheistic suppression of religion. *Althegeleaner* comprise the first generation of disciples who saw Hegel as basically fulfilling a Christian speculative philosophy. They are mostly known as *Rechtshegeleaner* (but this is already an ulterior mirror-description by David Friederich Strauss to distinguish them from the emergent *Linkshegeleaner-Anti-Hegelian-Hegelian-Atheists* if we might put it this way, seeking to identify them by contrast. This clearly indicates however that they are the ones fighting and distorting Hegel in the first place.

The relation between religious *Vorstellung* and philosophical *Begriff* is not primarily a *chronological* but a *logical* succession. But rather than superseding of religion this signifies camouflaged sanctification of philosophy itself since

it is practically identified with a high-level elaboration of the same religious content. It is significant that one of the first systematic atheist philosophers, Feuerbach, insisted on the religious character of Hegel's philosophy, denounced to have converted atheism into a logical moment of the spiritual process³.

c) *The speculative unity of secularization and sanctification.* How are we to explain away this opposition unless we do not reconcile it through the speculative principle as we might suppose Hegel would do in recognizing his concept *beyond and within* this analytical opposition? In fact this is about secularization insofar as philosophy does not contradict and eliminate religion: *Begriff* is not an abstract negation of the *Vorstellung*, but rather its elucidation and transformation in the sphere of pure reason: this is "secularization" insofar as it is given back to the *world (saeculum)* – religious mysteries are explained and shared afresh in the language of reason. The content is the same albeit the form is different. This "superseding" of religion is therefore conservation as well: *Religion ist eigentlich aufgehoben nicht aber einfach vernichtet*. On the other hand philosophy is not "sanctified" in the sense that it becomes pure theology (dogmatic authoritative imposition of the *Substance*, without the mediation of the *subjective* understanding). Hegel is not a reactionary counter-revolutionary thinker. The moment of subjectivity as imposed by the *Neuzeitphilosophie* must be respected and preserved. Transcendental subjectivity however, is neither beginning nor end – it is always correlated and co-inherent with the *Substance* in the hermeneutical circle of the Whole (*das Ganze*). The finite subject therefore cannot be separated from the infinite *Substance*, and neither can the infinite *Substance* be separated from the finite subject. Hegel is neither Spinoza (infinity without finitude)⁴ nor Feuerbach (finitude without infinity)⁵. The *Truth* is their phenomenological "togetherness" and ontological consubstantiality. Philosophy has *Substance* as its content, but a content which is necessary for a *subject*. Philosophy and religion (substantially identical but formally different) are simultaneously theological and anthropological, *sanctified and secularized*, and their accomplishment cannot be but rationalization of religion *and* sacralization of philosophy alike.

3.2. Metaphysical or Political Eschatology?

a) Conceived dialectically, history has been determined as the progress in the consciousness of freedom. This has been differently accepted by liberals and socialists as well. Communism was to be a political reconciliation of the crudest contradictions in the bourgeois society. In his *Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx establishes his own version of teleological realization of reason. His opposition to Hegel's "all that is rational is real, and all that is real is rational" does not actually state that this is a radical notion, but that this is

not radical enough as it remains theoretical but not yet practical. The communist revolution envisages a complete *practical rationalization of the real* through a “Gnostic” revolutionary vanguard dedicated to liquidate everything within the real that is not “rational” enough: inequalities, private property, family and, ultimately individual freedom (since this is particular not universal freedom) (Marx 1848/2002). Others extracted from Hegel very much the opposite thing: liberal democracy was to be the achievement of realized freedom with no significant antagonistic alternative (Fukuyama 1992, 199-211/276-286). In one form or another, the state reconciles antagonisms *within* history. The fundamental dialectics that moved history through successive revolutions now appears to be consummated. The end and purpose of history is now *essentially* achieved in a planetary state (Kojève 1971, 67-74).

b) History cannot be however seen as an entity in itself, on a purely social and political level. Reason and history are ontological concepts for Hegel. Of course, the concept must have its actuality in the unfolding of nature and history, but the Concept itself is not dissolved in its own manifestation. The Idea exteriorizes itself in/as *nature*, but as such, this manifestation is not saturated since it is essentially *Spirit* while *nature* is just an alienated and unconscious external sphere. On the contrary, its realization as *finite subjectivity* bears the mark of self-conscious spirit, although in a limited finite form. It objectifies itself as subjective and objective spirit: family, civil society with the state as the highest form of manifestation of the ethical Ideal. But this reconciliation is limited to the sphere of the *objective spirit*, whereas the ultimate reconciliation is metaphysical and pertains to the sphere of the Absolute Spirit (Hegel 1807/1977, 493) According to the speculative principle, however, Hegel's eschatology should be conceived as *metaphysical* and *political as well*. It cannot be purely political because of ontological reasons, and it cannot be purely ontological because of phenomenological reasons. Negativity is at work in history, and no perpetual peace is possible as such in the sphere of politics. It cannot be purely metaphysical as well since it is mediated by the manifestation and completion of labor of Spirit *as, upon* and *within* history itself (religious eschatology as well ultimately implies a transcription of the metaphysical conflict within the politics of the City, although not in the form of a purely immanent political fight).

Critics shocked with the assimilation of the *State* to (any kind of) *absoluteness* ignore that in Hegel's system *everything* is holistically perceived as reflecting in different form and degree the Absolute: nature, the finite subjectivity and now the finite objectivity in the form of the State. This last stage is the realization of the ethical idea within the community. The State is therefore just an *intermediate* and not a *final* form (and cannot be sacred, therefore).

It is only with art, religion and philosophy that the spirit escapes the finite realm, conceiving *itself / Himself* in its *absoluteness* and *infinity*, following progressively deeper degrees of realization of the unity between subjectivity and objectivity. This leaves open therefore the perspective that the Spirit of the World (unfolded in multiple peoples and states) could direct history towards an *intrinsic purpose* (through surmounting limitations, universalizing as global society, federation or state) as immanent eschatology, millennial resolution of historical contradictions. But this finite reconciliation can in no way be Hegel's last word on the matter, and can only be as much as a limited ideological reading can expect.

We need to go beyond Hegel's philosophy of law to Hegel philosophy of spirit in order to contemplate not just "the end of history" as a political accomplishment of the idea of liberty, but the realization of the Spirit itself in the realm of spiritual liberty, as an ontological totality.

Through art, religion and philosophy, the Spirit contemplates itself on a superior level, *metaphysical* and not merely *political* (as in the ethical, legal and social reflexions). Hegel clearly implies that the political universalisation and immanent reconciliation of historical contradictions (between individuals, classes, corporations and states etc.) can be conceived as the highest purpose of history. But we should not forget that this is only meant to take place *within the sphere of the objective spirit* as *Weltgeschichte*. This is however in no way the *ultimate reconciliation* – which is to be conceived as more radical, completely transcending the relations within the finite, particular realm and pertaining to the sphere of the *Absolute Spirit itself*, as reconciliation of the subjective and the objective Spirit on a metaphysical level. Hegel envisages the reconciliation of finite and infinite – already contemplated and realized in different degrees of transparency in art, religion and philosophy.

There can be therefore no question of *resuming Hegel's eschatology within the sphere of the objective spirit* (Marx & Kojève style immanent teleology) – except for an *empty universalisation* as "end of history" in the sense that this intermediate level of the phenomenology of the spirit has been fulfilled without, however, being a full ontological completion (Hegel 1807/1977, 479-493).

Every political theology that tries to limit its reading at the *sacralization of the State* as *manifestation of the Absolute* ignores this coordinated interpretation, indicating the fundamental level disruption between the sphere of the *objective spirit* and the sphere of the *Absolute Spirit*. We might go as far as saying that Hegel *actually radically secularizes the state* as a low-level form of reconciliation within the *intermediate* sphere of the objective Spirit. The State can only be a particular or local form of Totalization as a *reflection* of the Absolute identity within a particular finite space and time, but finds itself essentially below art, religion and philosophy, as more fundamental spiritual

recognitions of the Absolute *in itself and for itself* in its true infinity, that is its *infinity and finitude*, as unity transcending finite subjectivity and objectivity.

3.3. Transcendent or Immanent Eschatology?

a) The critique of *transcendence, exteriority* and *separation* in Hegel seems to indicate an immanent eschatology— a mundane *terminus* of becoming, of *Weltgeschichte*. If transcendence and religion are superseded, the realization of the Spirit with its successive reconciliations will eventually close up the *gap* and the *alienation* of the unhappy consciousness (*unglückliche Bewusstseins*), subject and object – but somehow on the finite realm since infinity is abolished (as nothing but the projection of the idealized finite essence of man – Feuerbach). The major contradictions of history will finally be solved and we will witness a *new but final epoch*, sort of *immanent millennium* (Taubes 2009, 149-164), which is actually the *schematism* between *religious eschatology* and *political utopia*.

b) However, a “transcendent” solution is indicated by the very terms implicated into this final reconciliation (the exhaustive accomplishment of the Absolute). The surmounting of transcendence is not the abolishment of *one* of the terms of the relation (the Infinite), but the abolishment of the separation and exteriority dividing the terms of the relation, so as the relation needs to *collapse* its extremes in themselves. Transcendence is not, of course Hegel’s notion of Spirit. We must however use it to oppose the realization of the Spirit in history as a simple political reality. That which realizes itself is the very totality which is transcendent and immanent to its every part.

c) This alternative reflects again an analytical representation. The realization of Spirit is nothing but the final overcoming of its own transcendence from itself, but not within a *utopian immanent totalization of history*. That is to say that its own (metaphysical) exteriorization is itself the immanent finite world. This transcendence is overcome not through a nietzschean decapitation of Transcendence, but through the coming of the Spirit to itself, through the “sublation” (*Aufhebung*) of its own exteriorization as immanence within itself, by the overcoming of the separation (as bilateral exteriority) of “immanence” and “transcendence”. It is the *exteriorization of the exteriorization*, that is: final interiorization of the “immanence” *inside* the “transcendence” without abstractly abolishing its concrete content.

This is not a realization that is *consumed* on the realm of the finite, or on the realm of the infinite. But what the old metaphysics indicated as “Transcendence” is –following the speculative principle (or *Begriffgemäss*): *transcending the very exteriority between transcendence and immanence, without abstractly annulling (dissolving) it*, since the concrete immanence is now fully reconciled with and within the abstract “Transcendence”. So we can only indicate this

speculative condition as a “transcendent” condition provided we understand this *concretely* (= immanence included) and not *abstractly* (deprived of its own exteriorization or immanentization as unfolding). This is a Totalization through *Aufhebung* of transcendence and immanence.

Moreover, Agamben’s research seriously made the case that Hegel’s *Aufhebung* results from deep reflection on Luther’s translation of St. Paul’s *kathargein*: *already, but not yet*, which expresses as well the current speculative equilibrium between a transcendent and immanent eschatology characterizing the messianic time opened by Christianity (Agamben 2005, 99-103). However, the messianic time is less than the eschatological sublation of time. It only indicates what is to come.

3.4. Total or Epochal Eschatology?

a) The classical interpretation of Hegel’s *Totality* is centered upon *completion, closure and system*. Eschatology is therefore conceived as the *triumphant affirmative infinity of the absolute knowledge*. This is the absolutist reading: an eschatological *terminus* within a speculative vision, in contradistinction to a finite, local or provisional state (or else it wouldn’t be absolute since there will remain a non-actualized *rest* of becoming – inconsistent with the *definitiveness* requirement of an absolute ending).

b) Many current readings however insist that *dialectics* and the *restless movement of the concept* are the very life of the Spirit, and if annihilated, the absolute *Becoming (Werden)* will be extinguished, and the Spirit will be *devitalized and abstractized in Death*. Passages indicating an epochal reading of such concepts as a “*new world*” abound. The ever-going stream of history unfolds decay and birth of successive ages. Dialectics is unbound and Hegel will not be Hegel without the propulsive dialectical force driving history through the breaking of any limit, and the *End* will be precisely such a limitation. This point has been observed by Karl Löwith (Löwith 1964, 31-53 / 201-213) and energetically defended by Daniel Berthold-Bond (Berthold-Bond 1989, 113-162)

c) Following the *Speculative principle* we can, again, perceive the one-sidedness in both disjunctive options. In fact, the speculative truth will be the *End of history, as well as the sublated (aufgehobene) becoming within the End itself*. Otherwise put: there should be an *End*, since there’s no *Totality* unless the *End* is already given, but *Becoming (Werden)* should be preserved as the very life of *Totality*, otherwise the speculative solution will be reduced to *dead-end abstractness*. This means that the *Ends* should not be conceived as abstract, empty and static whereas becoming should not be conceived as serial, historical and chronologic. Eternity is determined by Hegel in *Encyclopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften (Die Wissenschaft der Natur, 1817)* not as *future* – past, present and future are the three dimensions of time. Eternity has to do

with *future* only in so far as it *opens up* our finite present to the awareness of the *Totality* beyond yet immanent to the tri-dimensional time, all-pervasive on its every single point. *Der Begriff* requires a difficult task to conceive the preservation of the “epochal” and dialectic movement within the *Totalized End*, without succumbing to the exteriority of time. That means that the *eschatological End* will be itself a *new epoch*, but *New* only in so far as the *Future* is not the Eternity itself but an image and a procession negatively consuming the decaying time – and therefore positively revealing the coming Eternity. This will rather be *the Arch-epoch* – the glorious epoch of reconciliation which will be the *interiorized-exteriority* (rather than temporal exteriority still-to-be-interiorized). This means *time* will not exist as exteriority, but becoming can still be conceived somehow as infinite pulsation rather than progression, as *infinite super-temporal life* rather than finite temporal life. Totalizing *definitive* (absolute) and *epochal* (relative) aspects of eschatology requires of course a counter-intuitive and counter-analytical effort, but neither isolated solution can be accepted within a pure Hegelian conceiving.

3.5. Absolute Knowledge: Rationalistic Arrogance or Logical Consistency?

a) Hegel's condescending view on religion, as well as his uncompromising rational approach brought him the widespread charge of philosophical *hybris* and rationalistic arrogance. The philosophical superseding of religion was reduced to a promethean defiance of pietism, a sectarian *gnosis* arrogating to a *subjective titanic totalization of knowledge* as well as the presumed liquidation of mysteries, the very opposite of the Socratic humbleness. Eric Voeglin makes this particularly hostile assessment, along with mostly every theologian and with pietism (Voeglin 2004, 396-414) – but almost every theologian tends to think alike.

b) But this is more calumny than truth. Hegel is actually consistent with his dialectical method. Self-movement and self-determination of *the Concept* must of course culminate in *die Absolute Idea*, out of purely logical consistency. Completion and totalization are objective results of a rigorous dialectical mastery. The work of the Concept is somehow moving for itself without Hegel's contribution as an empirical individual. On a religious level, Hegel is right to argue against pietism that why would we even call Christianity a revealed religion if it were not about disclosing the inner movement of the Absolute? Why not some occult mysteries instead?

c) But if this disjunction between a too subjective *versus* a too objective approach of the (indeed ambitious) concept of an Absolute Knowledge should be subjected to the Speculative principle, things do not seem so outrageous anymore.

The terms of this abstract relation are not simply subjective finite knowledge as opposed to *de incognoscibilitate Dei*. A speculative concept is precisely one that understands (*liquidates*) the *thing-in-itself* as *notexternal* to consciousness (Fichte 1796-1799/1992, 77-87). The speculative concept is not just a subjective artifact or projection, but the consciousness of an identity of the *ansich* with the *für-sich* (the *an sich* is always given in a consciousness). The *phenomenon* is not totally distinct (as in Kant) from the *Noumenon*, but it's precisely the *phenomenon-of-the-thing-in-itself*, the way it is manifest for a consciousness (Hegel 1801/1977, 79-89). As such, the progression in the phenomenology of Spirit is a progressive revelation of the Substance to the subject – this revelatory process is what Hegel actually names *Geist*, Spirit.

On the other hand, this is not about one empirical subject exercising knowledge. It is about the reconciliation of the (universal and infinite) *Substance* and (individual and finite) *subjects*. This reconciliation means that all particular and relative knowledge, if *totalized*, encompasses all opposition such as transcendent/immanent, phenomenon/Noumenon – all falling within the consciousness. The identity of the abstract absolute knowledge with the concrete relative one is to be conceived speculatively: *Totalization means the conceiving of successive moments in a simultaneous manner*. As such all relative and particular knowledge is *preserved* within the absolute knowledge while denied in their limitation, since error is but limitation and since with the *completion* of the process of self-manifestation, relative knowledge is *aufgehoben* – in its positive content- as necessary moment within the Absolute Knowledge, not just abstractly negated. Passages describing the Absolute Knowledge include the *consummation of time, of darkness and exteriority* into the *ultimate Er-innerung* of the *Substance* at the end of all its subjective successive mediations. There is no further exteriority, exteriorization itself is *aufgehoben*. *Er-innerung* (memory and interiorization alike) means that all *recollections of the odyssey of the Spirit* are eternally *Vergegenwärtigt* – rendered present, *consummated* (as achieved) *reconciled* and *interiorized* in a *totally transparent* Absolute consciousness). This is of course not about rationalist arrogance or merely objectivist logic (Hegel 1977, 79-89).

We believe this is a metaphysical reworking an *eschatological vision*, corresponding to the old scholastic problem of *visio beatifica*: “For now we see only in a reflection in a mirror, then we shall face to face (...) for now we know in part” (1 Corinthians 13:12). *Transparency* comes then with *totality*, since partial knowledge is inherently partially false and obscured. The Absolute knowledge is then the logical and ontological *sublation* (*Aufhebung*) of particular (phenomenal) divisive knowledge into a totalized inclusive knowledge that does not belong to one subject or another but to the Absolute Spirit itself and the totality of the realm of finite subjects⁶.

Notes

¹ Hegel conceives his logical analysis as subjective attestation (*füruns*) to the objective intrinsic movement of the Concept (*ansich*). As such, transcendental subjectivity has no limiting power as concerns the content of thinking, no more that it can change the intelligible content recognized in the mathematical expression $2+2=4$. This renders Hegel's philosophy a logicist program (e.g. Leibniz, Frege) – except not of the analytical (finite) sort, but of a speculative (infinite) one.

² *Hairesis* = arbitrary subjective option or *Willkürlichkeit*.

³ The main dispute between *Linkshegelianer* and *Rechtshhegelianer* is not so much exegetical but ontological. The *Linkshegelianer* mostly agree that *Rechtshhegelianer* correctly acknowledge the mystical content of Hegel philosophy, except they do not agree with Hegel metaphysical overcoming of the finite standpoint and with the conservative consequences resulting there from.

⁴ Spinoza's primary contribution is the theoretical construction of the Infinite Substance as *Causa Sui*, original existence in and through itself, with no exteriority and otherness. This monistic program posits Infinity as the only real, substantial existence, whereas all other finitude is determined as merely attributive or modal.

⁵ Feuerbach essentially follows Kant's path when treating God's idea as regulative totality. As such, The idea of Infinity would be nothing else than hyperbolized finitude, anthropomorphic infinitized self-projection. idem

⁶ I have extensively clarified this last topic in my article *Whose Absolute Knowledge?* forthcoming in *Hegel-Jahrbuch, Erkenne dich selbst*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 2018.

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