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Michael Letchford

Hegel's Absolute: a Monistic
Interpretation

Thesis submitted for the degree of MA (1993)

Abstract.

It is the intention of this thesis to propose a monistic interpretation of Hegel's theological system, and to analyse the mechanics of this structure with particular emphasis on Hegel's use of dialectic and the manner in which the historical, phenomenal world subsists within the monistic framework proposed. Thus, it is a thesis which concentrates largely on interpretation rather than evaluation, and the majority of its critical analysis will focus on alternative understandings of Hegel's theology rather than the theology itself.

Owing to limitations imposed on the length of the thesis, I have reluctantly had to omit many important aspects of Hegel's theology, most notably the Trinity, creation, and the Fall. I have instead selected issues which I feel most cover the workings of the system, and how these workings effect an immanent deity. Broadly speaking, the thesis moves from an exposition of the triadic structure, to the role and status of the phenomenal world, and it concludes by discussing how Hegel views God's being vis-à-vis time and history. I have also included a section on Hegel's ontological argument as a means of cementing his theology as a plausible proposition.

The majority of primary text material is taken from Hegel's *Logic* and *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. In terms of his development, I have therefore tried to confine the exposition to his latter period when in Berlin (c. 1824-31), and the translation of the *Logic* is of the third edition of 1830.

Hegel's Absolute: a Monistic Interpretation

Michael John Letchford

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Thesis for the degree of MA
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Department of Theology
1993



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Abbreviations used.

FK - *Faith and Knowledge.*

ILHP - *Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy.*

LHP - *Lectures on the History of Philosophy.*

Logic - *The Encyclopaedia Logic* (part one, *The Science of Logic*).

LPR - *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion.*

PS - *Phenomenology of Spirit.*

RH - *Reason in History.*

Footnotes.

References to Hegel's own works are included within the text of the thesis, using the above abbreviations. All other works referred to are footnoted with author and page numbers, and bibliographical details of the works are enclosed at the end of the thesis. References in the footnotes which include a title of a work are limited to cases where I have used more than one work by the particular author in the thesis.

Word limit.

The following thesis is approximately 47,000 words in length.

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1. Some ancient historical influences.

(1) *Parmenidian monism.*

So far as we know monism found its first, definitive form in Western thought in the philosophy of Parmenides (c500BC),¹ and Hegel awards to the Eleatic the grand compliment that from "Parmenides began philosophy proper." (LHP 1.254) Such a statement is, of course, remarkable for its exclusivist nature; the philosophies prior to Parmenides are implicitly relegated to what one might even term an amateur status, and a rejection of thinkers such as Anaximenes and, most notably, Pythagoras makes Hegel's claim seem almost outlandish. But the suggestion that only from Parmenides did philosophy find its proper starting point leads to an important insight regarding what philosophy actually was to Hegel, namely a *complete system*, and he writes "it is the principle of genuine philosophy to contain all particular principles within itself." (Logic, §14)

This idea of philosophy then, is first found for Hegel within Parmenides' absolute system, a system (here meaning 'totality'²) which ruthlessly states that there is no-thing beyond being, and that being is whole, complete, and self-sufficient. Moreover, Hegel understands Parmenides' being as synonymous with thought, and thus he notes with approval in his commentary on the Eleatic that:

"Thought produces itself, and what is produced is a Thought. Thought is thus identical with Being, for there is nothing beside Being, this great affirmation." (LHP 1.253)

For Hegel, this is a most attractive proposition; thought possesses unbounded positivity, and is complete within itself as what it posits is precisely itself. There is nothing external to thought in this context, ie. as pure, logical thought, because thought is equatable with nothing but being. To think of sensory things is not genuine thought, and Hegel stresses Plotinus' comment that Parmenides "did not place Being in sensuous things." (LHP 1.253) In other words, pure thought is in itself

whole, acting simply to inspire the emergence of itself. But there are differences. Of course, there is the important difference in that, for Parmenides, thought is purely static (as it can refer only to the constant and unchanging being), whereas for Hegel it is very much an active thing, positing and unravelling itself; hence he writes "philosophy (as science) is a development of untrammelled thinking." (ILHP, p87) Yet for Parmenides, thought pertains solely to the system, indeed is synonymous with the system, and whilst Hegel is able to find many faults within this system, he shares the broad concept of the unity of pure, logical thought and philosophy:

"[It should] be noted first of all that God and religion exist in and through *thought* - simply and solely in and for thought. And even though religious sensation may subsequently [take up] this object again and the relationship to it as feeling, the undifferentiated unity [is] just the unity of thought with itself." (LPR 1,208)

Thus, what we see is Hegel's attraction to Parmenides' system, namely the completeness of a single whole, logically cognisant through pure thought.

Of course, in many other ways, Hegel's Absolute is a vastly different concept from Parmenides' notion of being. Indeed, Kaufmann quite rightly points out that "any attempt to go back to Parmenides in modern times and to extol being in any comparable manner would have struck Hegel as utterly perverse and as evidence that anyone proposing to do such a thing had not profited from over two thousand years of philosophical thought."³ Certainly this comment is not misplaced for, as we shall see in chapters eight and nine, Hegel viewed the unravelling of history as representative in itself of the (or rather his) philosophical system, and thus for Hegel there must be some development of thought. So, with this in mind, what according to Hegel can be disputed in Parmenides' philosophical theory?

For Parmenides, the fundamental tenet of philosophy is that true being must be permanent and unchanging; if being changes, then it must move

from one state of being and pass via a state of not-being to its new state, and he writes "how might what is then perish? How might it come into being? For if it came into being it is not, nor is it if it is ever going to be."⁴ Thus, he argues that something cannot become because it can only derive from nothing, and nothing is not, and from this we find the summary traditionally attributed to Parmenides (although he did not actually employ the phrase himself) that "being is, not-being is not."

The second central teaching of Parmenides is that being is an undivided whole, the single being-itself, "for nothing either is or will be other than what it is, since fate has fettered it to be whole and unmoving."⁵ Here, then, we find that, in addition to being maintaining a permanent, unchanging state, it is also deemed to be "whole and unmoving," and this must qualify Parmenides' theory as monistic - indeed perhaps the most pure argument for monism - because there is nothing beyond the one, unchanging whole, nothing external to it and nothing to determine or affect it, i.e. no force to which the One is subject. Being cannot be considered as a plurality because this would mean that between being-A and being-B would again be not-being, and hence we find a genuine monistic principle, just as being's permanency ensures it maintains no causal or teleological roots, rendering it wholly independent and existing purely in and for itself. As Allen puts it, "the primary object of Parmenides' poem is to demonstrate that the common-sense belief in the reality of the physical world, a world of plurality and change, is mistaken, and to set in its place a One Being, unchanging, ungenerated, indestructible, shaped as a sphere."⁶

(ii) *Hegel's critique of Parmenides.*

The point that being is "shaped like a sphere" is an interesting one, and leads to the first of several notable criticisms of Parmenides' theory that Hegel himself stressed, only two of which are discussed in this chapter.⁷ (i) Although an issue still in dispute, it seems likely that Parmenides declared being to be finite through his adoption of the limited side of Pythagoras' table of opposites. Certainly there is a

clear resemblance, and Parmenides' logic follows the odd *gnomons* that Pythagoras devised. The Eleatic proposes that "necessity holds it firm within the bonds of the limit that keeps it back of every side, because it is not lawful that what is should be unlimited; for it is not in need - if it were, it would need all. But since there is a furthest limit, it is bounded on every side, like the bulk of a well-rounded sphere, from the centre equally balanced in every direction; for it needs must not be somewhat more here or somewhat less there. For neither is there that which is not, which might stop it from meeting its like, nor can what is be more here and less there than what is, since it is all inviolate; for being equal to itself on every side, it rests uniformly within its limits."²

What Parmenides proposes then, is a direct positive / negative scenario, with being maintaining a necessarily finite character to establish its positive, material identity, against which is only the negative nothing; as the negative is, however, quite literally no-thing, being thereby may be said to be self-limiting. This is how Parmenides attempts to describe his monism. It exists purely within the confines of itself, possessing its being not by virtue of what exists *outside* of its limits - this would, Parmenides argues, mean that an other must be existent - but by what one might term the positive content of itself. The emphasis regarding being's limit therefore lies entirely on its physical extension; "it is as far as it extends," it is feasible to say, "and the no-thing beyond has (of course) no power to determine this extension." Such emphasis thus again highlights Parmenides' insistence on a monistic One, self-limiting and content within itself.

The problem with this lies initially in being's material and spatial form. Parmenides' absolute rejection of the no-thing beyond the material One was an attempt to destroy the Pythagorean and Heraclitean use of opposites, to argue with remarkable simplicity merely "what is, is; what is not, is not." In fact what his theory produces is an abstract form of dualism, because the positive 'is' stands logically over and against the negative 'is-not'; by arguing the negative to be wholly detached from the positive, he renders it a natural and absolute

(if abstract) other to being, and thus it is arguable that Parmenides inevitably comes to opposites again. Furthermore, the supposedly self-imposed finitude of being necessarily implies a genuine opposite, for it is this that acts to enclose being within its limits; if no-thing was not beyond being, then being would be compelled to extend itself infinitely, and thereby it can only be said that being is dependent on not-being for its form. To suggest that because no-thing cannot limit as it is not-being, is an invalid proposition; logically no-thing has an abstract, antithetical quality, a status as 'that which is the other of being'.

This critical point is alluded to by Hegel in his discussion of quality, and whilst he acknowledges the value of Parmenides' general idea, he continues to assert the role of otherness:

"Parmenides ... says that, "only being is, and nothing is not." This must be taken as the proper starting point for philosophy ...

"... The Eleatics are famous as daring thinkers; but this abstract admiration is often coupled with the remark that, all the same, these philosophers surely went too far, because they recognised only being as what is true, and denied truth to every other object of our consciousness. And, of course, it is quite correct that we must not stop at mere being; but it shows only lack of thought to treat the further content of our consciousness as discoverable somewhere 'beside' and 'outside' being, or as something that is just given 'also'. On the contrary, the true situation is that being as such is not firm and ultimate, but rather something that overturns dialectically into its opposite - which, taken in the same, immediate way, is *nothing*." (Logic, §86A2)

What Hegel contributes to the issue at this stage is, therefore, that Parmenides was quite correct to interpret being as the whole, absolute truth; things which are not at first glance compatible with the One should not be understood as externalities. But he then disputes Parmenides' rigid structure, and avoids the dualistic problem Parmenides causes himself by arguing that being and not-being turn into each other. This, Hegel claims, is the case because each is grounded in

its other as, for example, light is grounded in dark, and only is 'light' because it is 'not-dark', and vice versa. Similarly, being is by virtue of nothing, because without nothing the concept of being cannot be apprehended. What this creates, therefore, is an implicit positive / negative relation, and these states are applicable to either of the two antagonists, so that when being is positive, nothing is the negative, and when nothing is the positive, being is the negative. In other words, each is its other because of their capacity for alteration, and the bare content (ie. the quality which is given either a positive or negative attachment, the 'essence') of each is the same. Whereas Parmenides argues that being is strictly self-limiting then, Hegel insists that limit (whilst self-positing by the Absolute) is that which has an internal contradiction:

"Let us now consider more closely what a limit implies. We find that it contains a contradiction within itself, and so proves to be dialectical. That is to say, limit constitutes the reality of being-there [*Dasein*], and, on the other hand, it is the negation of it. But, furthermore, as the negation of the something, limit is not an abstract nothing in general, but a nothing that *is*, or what we call an 'other'." (Logic, §92A)

Thus, in Hegel's understanding, limit possesses a concrete value; it is the quality of being the substantial constitution of a thing, and also the other of the thing, because each, the thing and its other, contains this limited character; each, that is, finds itself bound by the one limit. The inner contradiction therefore becomes quite clear, for limit can now be seen as having one element on this side, and the other on that side.

(ii) This leads to the second criticism Hegel holds against the Eleatic. By asserting "being is, not-being is not," Parmenides falters by proposing what proves to be purely a subjective concept of being, which remains unobjectified because he simultaneously maintains there is no other to the One. I will discuss this further later in this and, more particularly, the next chapter, but again we may note Hegel's disdain

for the prospect of an unobjectified Absolute as he comments "stopping short at this kind of philosophical definition means that no actuality at all is ascribed to individual things." (LPR 1.377) This is to say that, by denying any value to apparent otherness, the true being itself remains vacuous because it is not in relation and is thereby undefined. For being to be definitively concrete, it must be objectified by an antithetical relation, regardless of whether such relation be abstract or material, because in order to say 'this is X', X must be objectified by being further defined as not-Y. Definition, one might assert, occurs as a consequence of discriminating the object against alien things; we understand a chair to be a chair because it does not have the character of a table, for instance. Notably, however, Hegel's employment of dialectic for such objectification is applied exclusively to opposites, the reason for which I will try to unravel in the progress of this chapter.

(iii) *Hegel's debt to Heraclitus.*

The above critique is largely rooted in the works of Parmenides' predecessor, Heraclitus of Ephesus, and the influence of this ancient on Hegel is certainly profound. As Findlay writes, "there are, in particular, many often recognised resemblances between Hegelianism and the thought of Heraclitus. To look on the world as an 'ever-living fire' which is at once 'want and surfeit', which can only burn by generating the products which must ultimately serve as its own fuel, is certainly to frame a material analogue of Hegel's Spirit: so too does the Heraclitean notion of a constancy which depends on flux, and of a harmony which depends on opposing tensions."⁹

Of most importance is the relation between the dialectical logic used by these two philosophers. Heraclitus developed a vital philosophical principle that is implicit within virtually every aspect of Hegel's theology, commonly known as the 'Strife and Unity of Opposites'. Initially, one may look upon this principle as effectively an objectifying law, arguing that AA only is because of its relation and opposition to AB; as I briefly touched upon above, light for example is

only so because of dark - without the other, the one cannot be, and this in turn implies a common ground, the essence. Similarly, north is so only because of its contextual position over against south, heat is knowable only because of a knowledge of cold, and so forth. This then extends, dialectically, to assert that the conflict between AA and AB, by virtue of their essential identicalness, results in a common home being discovered, what we may here simply call A - the underlying, neutral essence. In comparison, we may comfortably say north and south illuminate their common essence, understood as 'direction', with each's essential and true feature being precisely, and only, this. In other words, every element is objectified by its other, or opposite, and is therefore not simply so on its own account, but exists owing to its ground upon which it rests, i.e. the system's universal; north exists by virtue of its grounding on its universal, direction, and thus north is an element of a wider system. For Hegel, this is perhaps the most significant influence on his theology, and the logic upon which his dialectic operates. Thus, he writes:

"Heraclitus says further, "Being is no more than not-being" (*ouden mallon to on tou meontos esti*); what this expresses is precisely the negativity of abstract being, and the identity, posited in becoming, between it and nothing, which, in its abstraction, is equally unstable. We have here, too, an example of the genuine refutation of one philosophical system by another. The refutation consists precisely in the fact that the principle of the refuted philosophy is exhibited in its dialectic and reduced to an ideal moment of a higher concrete form of the Idea,"

(Logic, §38A)

Here then, we can see how the dialectical process emerges from opposition. Being has an absolute other, not-being, its antithesis, but rather than regarding this opposite as something external or extra, Heraclitus and Hegel both argue that it is instead univocal with the thesis because a) the antithetical relation is necessary to define the thesis (i.e. it-is-this-because-it-is-not-the-other) and, b) the thesis and antithesis are both grounded on a common essence. Just as we say north and south are wholly dependent and grounded on direction, so good

and bad - again, both opposites - are dependent and grounded on their common essence of morality, and so forth. Indeed, Hegel's adoption of this principle is made explicit when we note his assertion that "pure being is the *pure abstraction*, and hence it is the *absolutely negative*, which when taken immediately, is equally nothing." (*Logic*, §87) The case argued, therefore, is that pure being, ie. being stripped of any predicate, proves itself to be the same as nothing, and here the universal essence, namely noumenality, is quite patent.

Most of Heraclitus' philosophy comes to us second-hand, with only a few fragments of his writings being extant,¹⁰ but, unlike others, our picture of him is quite reliable owing to the number of ancient commentators who are in agreement as regards his utterances, the list including Aristotle, Hippolytus, Sextus Empiricus, Diogenes Laertius, Clement, and a host of other equally revered authors. Please note that in the following excerpts, the italicised parts of the quotations are thought by their authors to be precise citations from Heraclitus.

Hippolytus quotes Heraclitus as follows, and writes "Heraclitus says that dark and light, good and bad, are not different but one and the same. For example, he reproaches Hesiod for not knowing day and night¹¹ - for day and night, he [Heraclitus] says, are one, expressing it thus: *A teacher of most is Hesiod: they are sure he knows most who did not recognise day and night - for they are one.*" Hippolytus continues his citations by quoting what is known to be a genuine fragment, which reads "*The path up and down is one and the same.* And he [Heraclitus] says that the polluted and pure are one and the same, and that the drinkable and the undrinkable are one and the same."¹² Similarly, we may cite Aristotle, who attributes to Heraclitus the following sentiments, writing "surely nature longs for the opposites, and effects her harmony from them ... that was also said by Heraclitus the Obscure: *Combinations - wholes and not wholes, concurring differing, concordant discordant, from all things one and from one all things.* In this way the structure of the universe - I mean, of the heavens and the earth and the whole world - was arranged by one harmony through the blending of the most opposite principles," and "Heraclitus says that opposition concurs and

the fairest connection comes from things that differ and everything comes in accordance with strife."¹³

Heraclitus's thesis then is that, for any given X, X's constitution and existence derive from internal, conflicting properties, and it is precisely such conflict that offers definition and actuality to X; with heat and cold, for instance, these two elements conflict but serve in reality to highlight the existence of 'temperature'. As Barnes puts it, "Heraclitus believed in the unity of opposites. The path up is the same as the path down, and in general, existing things are characterised by pairs of contrary properties, whose bellicose coexistence is essential to their continued being."¹⁴

It is, then, Heraclitus' form of dialectical logic - AA and AB being grounded, purely and essentially, in A despite the contrasting appearance - that I propose is the governing influence on Hegel's Absolute and, indeed, his philosophy in general. Hegel himself ascribes the following position to Heraclitus (so like his own):

"Becoming, the truth of Being; since everything is and is not, Heraclitus hereby expressed that everything is Becoming. Not merely does origination belong to it, but passing away as well; both are not independent but identical. It is a great advance in thought to pass from Being to Becoming, even if, as the first unity of opposite determinations, it is still abstract. Because in this relationship both must be unrestful and therefore contain within themselves the principle of life, the lack of motion which Aristotle has demonstrated in the earlier philosophies is supplied, and this last is even made to be the principle. This philosophy is thus not one past and gone; its principle is essential, and is to be found in the beginning of my Logic." (LHP 1,283)

The major similarities then in what Heraclitus and Hegel assert are, briefly, that unity is derived from an inner conflict of opposites (this, of course, is the shared dialectical logic, each proposing that the synthesis emerges from the antagonism between the thesis and antithesis), and that, within the inner contradiction, the two

antagonists prove eventually to be univocal. The second of these issues will be dealt with in detail shortly, but the first, what we may term as the composition of the unified Absolute, requires our immediate concern; after all, if we are to examine Hegel's system under the assertion that it is monistic, it is essential to define more thoroughly the pinnacle of such a system, namely the Absolute Idea.

Notes

1. So far as Western thought is concerned. It is possible to argue that Buddha, who lived at approximately the same time as Parmenides, advocated a form of monism.
2. See *ILHP*, p87.
3. Kaufmann, p214.
4. Barnes, p134.
5. Barnes, p135.
6. Allen, p11.
7. The second and third criticisms are discussed in more length in chapter two.
8. Allen, p45.
9. Findlay, p48.
10. Allen is able to list these on just 3 pages (p40-2).
11. This is in reference to Hesiod's genetic poem of c700BC *Works and Days*.
12. Barnes, p103-4.
13. Quoted from Barnes, p114-5.
14. Barnes, p39.

2. The pure being of the Absolute.

In my brief discussion and criticism of Parmenides, I referred to his monism as 'static', and by this I meant to highlight the is / is-not distinction in its opposition to any kind of system. This is to say that, for Parmenides, there is no relation, either abstract or concrete, between existence and not-existence, no grey areas in which a confusion or corruption regarding true being may be posited, as is the case with someone like Sankara and his concept of *maya*.¹ Or, in more Hegelian terminology, Parmenides' concept of being and not-being is wholly indeterminate and therefore collapses, or as Stace puts it, "being is real, but it is nowhere and nowhen. It does not exist,"² because it is argued to be one-sided, and is thus imprisoned in (presupposed) subjectivity. This forms the basis of Hegel's criticism against such philosophy as that of the Eleatic, i.e. the presupposed nature of Parmenides' theory (its failure to apprehend the One both subjectively and objectively), and its inability to be concretely identified via differentiation and determination.

Now, the question that needs to be addressed is whether Hegel finds Parmenides' proposition in general wholly, or only partly, at fault. Certainly Hegel carefully avoids the methodological error of Parmenides, namely the latter's refusal to allow distinction on any grounds, but the grounds which Hegel permits are without doubt strictly regulated by the all-encompassing nature of the Absolute, its purity in its ideal of itself, and its expressive, diremptive process within the Absolute as system. Here, it is essential to understand that by 'system' Hegel does not refer to a linear path of any kind, with the Absolute engaged in a chronological system which steadily enhances it until completion, something which would render it as no more than a 'final product', assembled like a motor car. As Hegel clearly states, "we usually suppose that the Absolute must lie far beyond; but it is precisely what is wholly present," (*Logic*, §24A2); and he observes "it is the very concept of a whole to contain parts; but if the whole is posited as what it is according to its concept, then, when it is divided, it ceases to be a whole." (*Logic*, §135A) In other words, the Absolute, by being the sole, ultimate realm of being, cannot be created by a variety of diverse particulars; as Croce puts it, "it is not the

mechanical aggregate, but the organic whole."³ Rather, the Absolute as system is engaged in an eternal, circular type of system, never abandoning itself (as indeed it cannot) as the totality, but continually maintaining its end within its beginning so that the effect of the system is merely to make lucid the sole, pure truth of the Absolute Spirit.

Thus, it must be stressed that the system does not create something *new*, but instead illuminates the omnipresent truth, with the beginning implicitly containing the end, and the end being the *clarified* beginning, ie. the *objectified* being of the Absolute Idea in and for itself - Mure notably remarks "the system, being a circle, might be said to have no beginning."⁴ Nonetheless, the Absolute must for its objectification express a distinction and, furthermore, a distinction which must be internal as nothing lies external to it.

But, despite the recognised necessity of this distinction, this becoming into apparent otherness to objectify the Idea, a number of critical points surge to the fore, disputing its logical plausibility. For example, if the Absolute is all, can there be any genuine difference; that is, in the final analysis, can X be meaningfully different from X? If the Absolute is "wholly present," and if "when it is divided, it ceases to be a whole," can it therefore be also essentially divergent? Surely, as Grisez argues, "if the Absolute achieves its completion and its unity by virtue of Hegel's philosophical act, then the Absolute is truth by virtue of a truth which is achieved *in one of its parts* - namely, in Hegel's philosophical act, which is not the Absolute."⁵ Also, is it not the case that the infinite being is necessarily objectified by what is finite, and can we really fail to regard this as a severe irregularity?

(i) *Pure being, nothing, and becoming.*

Let us begin this part of the investigation by examining Hegel's concept of being or, more precisely, the abstract ideal of this, namely *pure being*. With pure being, we find ourselves entangled with Parmenides once more as pure being, by its very definition, means being that is devoid of any determination, ie. being which pertains to nothing. Here we find a clue to

Hegel's dialectical analysis, because as pure being pertains to nothing, it is therefore the same as nothing because its indeterminate content is precisely the same as the more obvious nothing:

"This pure being is the *pure abstraction*, and hence it is *absolutely negative*, which when taken immediately is equally *nothing*.

"From this, the second definition of the Absolute is followed, that it is *nothing*, in fact, this definition is implied when it is said that the thing-in-itself is that which is indeterminate, absolutely without form and therefore without content - or again when it is said that God *is just the supreme essence* and no more than that, for to call him that expresses the same negativity; the nothing, which the *Buddhists* make into the principle of everything (and into the ultimate end and goal of everything too), is this same abstraction."

(*Logic*, 987)

Notably then, we can see here the earlier criticism of Parmenides; pure being, by virtue of its indeterminate nature, is synonymous with nothing, a theory despised by Parmenides. Moreover, we can also see that the Absolute is argued to possess a noumenal form, a purity without predication and that therefore the Absolute also encompasses the abstract notion of nothing. Thus, one can even say that Hegel is propounding a more authentic form of monism than Parmenides because, although nothing is quite literally nothing, whereas Parmenides truthfully employs it as that-which-is-not-being (ie. as a qualifier for being),⁶ Hegel ventures forward further and says such is indeed the antithesis of being and therefore not only an objectifying element, but in fact is included within the whole itself. Now, let us be precise about Hegel's meaning here. The argument is that pure being, because it has no determination, is essentially univocal with nothing, equally indeterminate and insubstantial (pure being, we must note, cannot be the being of *some-thing* (*Dasein*) because this would sacrifice its purity). Or, in other words, we are provided with *absolute noumenality*, pure being and nothing bereft of any predicate or determination that would characterise it.

But surely this means that we are left with a stagnant deadlock, an empty abstraction of sheer nothingness? No, argues Hegel, because *from pure being and nothing emerges becoming* - "nothing, as this immediate [term] that is equal to itself, is *the same* as being. Hence, the truth of being and nothing alike is the *unity* of both of them; this unity is *becoming*." (Logic, §88)

Hegel argues this because within being and nothing is an instability, a tension because, despite the abstract equivocality (ie. the shared content of noumenality), being suggests positivity (is) and nothing negativity (is-not). As Mure puts it, "a world of becoming is more than the sheer oscillation of Being and Nothing in one another. It is and is not, but it is rather than is not."⁷ In other words, within pure being and nothing is an implicit content and, whilst being and nothing are the same because not even the 'is' pertains to anything, Hegel asserts that this means also that pure being and nothing are wholly different:

"But correct as it is to affirm the unity of being and nothing, it is *equally* correct to say that *they are absolutely diverse too* - that the one is *not* what the other is. But because this distinction has here not yet determined itself, precisely because being and nothing are still the immediate, it is, as belonging to them, *what cannot be said*, what is merely *meant*.

(Logic, §88)

This is a highly controversial assertion on Hegel's behalf as what he is suggesting is that implicitly within this being / nothing deadlock is a hidden meaning of being referring to the more conventionally assumed antithesis of nothing, namely something. This something is not at this point particularity, but a general reference to substance. Hegel continues:

"As their unity, *becoming* is the true expression of the result of being and nothing; it is not just the *unity* of being and nothing, but it is inward *unrest* - a unity which in its self-relation is not simply motionless, but which, in virtue of the diversity of being and nothing which it contains, is inwardly turned against itself. *Being-there*, on

the contrary, is this *unity* or becoming in this form of unity; that is why it is *one-sided* and *finite*," (Logic §88)

So, put crudely, because being and nothing struggle in their absolute difference as the is and is-not (or the positive and negative), what occurs is the emergence of a hitherto presupposed meaning, a vague and obscure drive towards substantial being; the conflict of opposition, that is, creates activity (hence the unity being "not simply motionless"), and therefore an effect of becoming surfaces. In other words, Hegel asserts that from pure being and nothing determination arises, determination that was at first implicit and presupposed, but that now flourishes because of its propulsion from the inner conflict and tension. Croce offers an analogy: "this conflict (which is also a union, since two wrestlers, in order to wrestle, must lay hold of one another!) is becoming."⁹

In truth, this is a hard to follow argument, for what Hegel attempts is to leap from a state of pure, indeterminate being, equatable with nothing, straight through to determinate being, that which is becoming and driving itself forward. How seriously can one take such a proposition? Pure being and nothing are such because of their very noumenality, their complete lack of drive or predication. If Hegel says - as the above quotations explicitly show - that being and nothing can effect becoming because they have within them an implicit meaning (ie. the positivity and negativity), then he is at once removing the very purity and nothingness that they require. Or, put another way, how can pure being contain the predicate which an 'implicit meaning' undoubtedly indicates? If pure being is indeed *pure* being, it is surely absurd to say that it has an implicit reference for this is undeniably a predicate and unquestionably indicates determination. Croce quite rightly acknowledges this, and comments "*a = a* remains *a*, and does not become *b*;"⁹ but then he mistakes Hegel's meaning by suggesting that "being and nothing are not identical, but precisely opposite, and in conflict with one another."¹⁰ That is to say, $+A \neq -A$, which is reasonable in itself but clearly not with regard to Hegel who is insistent that nothing "is the same as being." (Logic, §88)

The solution Hegel offers to this problem is that pure being exists as abstract noumenality (necessarily abstract because of its lack of predication) *alongside itself as determinate being*. In its ideal, the Absolute is inactive and harmonious, complete as the ideal, but in its representation (ie. how it is apprehended by man) it is determinate. Like a man, therefore, the Absolute is essentially noumenal self, what Hegel calls the 'I' or 'ego', but this self, like the man's body is also actively expressive:

"In its truth, as the ideality of what immediately is, identity is a lofty determination both for our religious consciousness and for the rest of our thinking and consciousness in general. It can be said that the true knowledge of God begins at the point where he is known as Identity, ie. as absolute identity; and this implies, at the same time, that all the power and the glory of the world sinks into nothing before God and can subsist only as the shining [forth] of *his* power and *his* glory.

"Similarly, it is his identity as consciousness of himself that distinguishes man from nature in general, and particularly from animals, which do not achieve a grasp of themselves as 'I', ie. as pure self-unity."

(*Logic*, §115A)

Thus, what Hegel contends is that God is content and pure within himself and that all phenomenality "sinks into nothing." In addition to this, however, is the activity of God, his expression and 'shining'. To draw an analogy from human experience, if I stood before a stranger and said nothing, the stranger would not know who I was; if, however, I said "my name is Michael," this would enlighten the stranger as to my person, but crucially it would not affect me and, having spoken, I could return to silence no different from before.

But analogies are not the same as metaphysical laws, and an important point is missed if we simply accept that God can be purely at rest, as pure, abstract being, and then also express himself, for as soon as we say "can," or hint at his potential (see below), then we are immediately awarding him a predicate and denying him the status of being truly noumenal. If, that is, God is genuinely pure being, he cannot have the potential or ability to

illuminate himself via differentiation as this is an actual predicate, albeit one Hegel claims is in this context only potential.

This problem is something Hegel never satisfactorily resolves, but his insistence on this peculiar co-existence of purity and distinction within the Absolute is unwavering. The rigid 'being is, not-being is not' proposition has to be rejected and replaced with an active, dynamic structure, but Hegel demands that higher than this is the ideal, noumenality of the Absolute, the principle for which all activity has its purpose:

"To the proposition that being is the passing into nothing and that nothing is the passing into being. - to the proposition of *becoming*, is opposed the proposition; "*from nothing, nothing comes,*" "something only comes from something," the proposition of the eternity of matter, or of pantheism. The Ancients made the simple reflection that the proposition; "something comes from something," or "from nothing, nothing comes," does indeed sublate becoming; for that from which there is becoming and that which comes to be are one and the same; all we have here is the proposition of the abstract identity of the understanding. But it must strike one as amazing to see the propositions; "from nothing, nothing comes," or "something comes only from something," advanced quite naively, without any consciousness that they are the foundations of pantheism." (Logic, 588)

Wallace notably refers this to the more developed metaphysics of Aristotle, '1' quoting his comments that the Eleatics "say none of the things that are, either come to be or pass out of existence, because what comes to be must do so either from what is or from what is not, both of which are impossible. For what is cannot come to be (because something must be present as a substratum). So too they exaggerated the consequence of this, and went so far as to deny even the *existence* of a plurality of things, maintaining that only Being itself is."¹²

(ii) *Noumenality and Aristotle's potentiality.*

Aristotle's solution to the problem posed by Parmenidian monism is probably a governing factor behind Hegel's; indeed Hegel acknowledges his debt to the Greek, suggesting the Absolute Idea in and for itself "is the *noesis noeseos*, which was already called the highest form of the Idea by Aristotle." (*Logic*, §236A)¹³ The key similarity between the two is found in Aristotle's proposition that "motion is the possession of the end of what is in power as such ... [thus] when the buildable has its end in itself, it is being built, and this is construction ... the activity of the buildable as buildable is construction ... construction is the activity, and construction is a kind of process."¹⁴ The significance here is the concept that a process, or system, contains its end within itself,¹⁵ and that this system continues throughout to possess the potentiality of its ideal state (*entelecheia*); thus one may say that an acorn, for instance, contains its ideal of becoming an oak tree within itself - the being of 'oak tree', that is, exists abstractly within the unfulfilled acorn.

This principle is of no small importance to this discussion, for the parallel drawn here with Aristotle illuminates Hegel's understanding of the idealised, noumenal state of the Absolute. Aristotle develops his theory to identify a permanent quality which has the potential to assume different, material characteristics so that "activity is related to potentiality in some cases in the way coming-to-be is related to the power to become; and in other cases it is related in the way reality is related to its matter."¹⁶ This point, of course, must be considered only as a philosophical principle, and not be confused with Aristotle's own, distinct understanding of God in relation to Hegel's, but, as a philosophical point, one may therefore see that the chief characteristic of reality for Aristotle is activity, the adoption of matter that works towards the form's goal, so that the energetic being of matter is its form. Compare this with Hegel, who writes:

"In the progression of the Idea the beginning proves to be what it already is in-itself, namely, what is posited and mediated and not what simply and immediately is," (*Logic*, §239A)

Here, then, Hegel proposes that by 'beginning' what is referred to is not

any immediate type of 'point-A' but rather that which is itself also the result, because this is necessarily contained in the whole. Thus, just as an acorn contains the potential oak tree, so does the first apprehension of the Absolute contain the illuminated, cognitive Absolute - the "last stage of the logical process proves at the same time to be what is genuinely first and what is only through itself." (*Logic*, §215A)¹⁷ Hence, the *becoming* of the Absolute can here be seen not so much as a process of X becoming Y, but rather the Absolute *revealing itself further as X* via such becoming:

"Everyone has a notion of becoming and will also admit moreover that it is *One* notion; and further that, if it is analysed, the determination of *being*, but also that of *nothing*, the stark Other of being, is found to be contained in it; further, that these two determinations are undivided in this *One* notion; hence that becoming is the unity of being and nothing. Another example that is equally ready to hand is the *beginning*; the matter [itself] *is not yet* in its beginning, but the beginning is not merely its *nothing*; on the contrary, its *being* is already there, too. The beginning itself is also becoming, but it expresses already the reference to the further progression."

(*Logic*, §88)

What the above quotations therefore aim to highlight is that the Absolute is found *wholly* within the beginning, the becoming, and the result; the pure Absolute, that is, exists as the permanent quality upon which apparent difference lies. Here, then, is the pure Absolute which 'becomes' only in the sense that it enlightens itself through the adoption of matter (ie. the diremptive process), and again this indicates form being the active element as it is this that determines itself through its use of material being. Thus, the form determines its identity by its apparent distinction from the posited matter:

"As the *immediate unity* of existence with itself, Matter is also indifferent with regard to determinacy; the many diverse matters therefore merge into the *One matter* (or existence in the reflective determination of identity). As against this One matter, these [other] distinct determinations and the external *relation* which they have to

each other in the thing are the *form* - the reflective determination of distinction, but as existing and as totality." (*Logic*, §128)

What Hegel argues, therefore, is that X possesses a variety of distinct determinations that act together to compose the unity of X's material existence and, as with Aristotle, the basis of this composition is described as form. Indeed, Findlay goes as far as to say "it seems plain that Hegel has pushed the Dialectic in the present direction in order to take in the Aristotelian concept of Form and Matter."¹⁹ So, with the Absolute, one may regard this as the ultimately sole, noumenal (or pure) form, but that which can possess determinations that affect its *apparent* state of being, being which is encountered via the diremption. However, also within this category lies the noumenal Absolute, that is distinct from its apparent form in the sense that it is free from its restrictive appearance, and exists as an incorporeal, permanent quality, termed by Hegel as the Absolute Idea, and "this Idea is for-itself the *pure form* of the Concept." (*Logic*, §237) Thus, when one examines the Absolute solely as pure, noumenal form, disregarding its apparent dimensions, one finds a truly noumenal existence which is distinct from its reflection-into-self, i.e. distinct from its self-objectifying form and matter which *characterises* it.

Here it is important to view the Absolute as not only having the *potential* to be free as pure being, but also maintaining such as a logical necessity; that is, it is an intrinsic and essential element of the Absolute's system, as the ideal Absolute Idea is both what all derives from, and what all seemingly strives to return to, i.e. it is the absolute *ground* of being. (*Logic*, §121ff) Thus, when one reads the following, one cannot but help identify the noumenal being as that which matter and form mirror:

"What appears exists in such a way that its *subsistence* is immediately sublated, and is only One moment of the form itself; the form contains subsistence or matter within itself as one of its determinations. Thus, what appears has its ground in the form as essence, or as its inward reflection vis-à-vis its immediacy - but that only means that it has its ground in another determinacy of the

form. This ground of what appears is just as much something-that-appears (*ein Erscheinendes*), so that appearance proceeds to an infinite mediation of its subsistence by its form, hence by non-subsistence as well. This infinite mediation is at the same time a unity of relation to self; and existence is developed into a *totality* and a *world* of appearance, or of reflected finitude." (*Logic*, §132)

Implicit, then, is the pure being, nothing, towards which the finite being of the distinctive Absolute is reflected, and if such was not eternally present as the supreme Idea within the system in general, then there would be neither any basis for the apparent, nor anything the apparent could drive back towards or reflect.

What emerges, therefore, is that Hegel offers the Absolute as a pure form that illuminates itself via the adoption of matter whilst retaining its ideal, noumenal state. In this ideal state, the Absolute Idea is indeed equatable with nothing as it pertains as such to no determinate being, but its self-portrayal as material existence in *another moment* provides the required differentiation and subsequent objectification.

Of course, this must not be understood as a promotion on Hegel's behalf of any style of nihilism, as may be charged, for example, ultimately against Parmenides whose absolute being should (according to Hegel) be negated owing to its one-sidedness; the positive aspect (i.e. the *activity*) of the Absolute ensures against this threat. Rather, what Hegel propounds is that within the effectively diverse nature of the one Absolute, lies a pure, characterless state, in nature akin to Parmenides' being and Aristotle's pure form but objectified and given determination via its diremptive action, and thus we may deduce the Absolute Idea as follows:

The Absolute Idea is eternal as pure being, equatable with nothing, but (in a specific moment of the diremption) assumes both a form (its tangible being) and matter (phenomenal particularity). From this, one is compelled to agree that distinction within the Absolute is present or else one could not possibly encounter the sensible world nor, for that matter, identify with any certainty the Absolute Idea itself. However, one must also admit

the supreme, ideal state of the Absolute, ie. the noumenal realm of being in and for itself from which everything is born and returns to. To conclude this point that I have touched upon only too briefly, one may consider Hegel's own summary:

"As a process, the Idea runs through three stages in its development. The first form of the Idea is *life*, ie. the Idea in its form of immediacy. The second form is that of mediation or difference, and this is the Idea as *cognition* ... The result of the process of cognition is the re-establishing of unity enriched by distinction; and this gives the third form of the (herewith) *absolute Idea*. This last stage of the logical process proves at the same time to be what is genuinely first and what is only through itself." (Logic, §215A)

What the above attempts to argue then is that, within the system in general, an ideal, logically encountered state is existent whereby the Absolute is pure, noumenal being, and it is this state from which all apparently proceeds and strives back towards. However, from identifying this ideal, we must now consider the manner in which distinction is internally present within the Absolute.

Notes

1. An excellent exposition of this concept is given by Radhakrishnan, vol 2, p574-95.
2. Stace, p12.
3. Croce, p19.
4. Mure, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, p114.
5. Grisez, p200-1.
6. Stace, it may be noted, writes in his comparison of the Eleatic with Hegel that "Parmenides could not help trying to frame a pictorial *image* of Being, and all such images must necessarily be thought of as having some shape. And so Parmenides fell into this inconsistency" (p4).
7. Mure, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, p115.
8. Croce, p26.
9. Croce, p25.

10. Croce, p26.
11. Wallace commentary on §88.
12. Aristotle, *Physics* 1.8.191a26-7.
13. It should be noted that Aristotle is in fact referring to God's noesis (*Metaphysics* 9.1074.b33). Hegel, however, is applying such as a universal state.
14. Aristotle, *Physics* 3.1.201a.
15. Aristotle's application of this principle was, of course, directed towards particulars. However, the principle is nonetheless still valid within this context of system.
16. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 9.1048b8.
17. This shared line of thought is referred to by Mure, who writes "Aristotle, whom Hegel has a good deal in mind, observes that all things come to be and pass away, but coming to be and passing away do not come to be or pass away; they are timeless" (*The Philosophy of Hegel*, p115n).
18. Findlay, p196.

3. Internal distinction.

The most important aspect of Hegel's theology that must be kept in mind when discussing the Absolute's distinction is that the "Idea is the One Totality," (*Logic*, §242) and that, when one discusses distinction or difference, "this distinction concerns the *determination* of the unity." (*Logic*, preface (p8)) Hence, one may briefly surmise that the purpose of distinction is to give the Absolute concrete, meaningful existence and, further, that distinction is strictly a *self-objectifying* moment of the Absolute's system, as opposed to an absolute dualism. In more simple terms, the Absolute seeks to identify itself by its adoption of apparent otherness that reflects its being, as a man, so to speak, may identify himself by his appearance in a mirror, rather than by virtue of an *external* relation. Hegel's own terminology is similar, and he proposes that the Absolute as essence "shines *within itself*, or is pure reflection. In this way it is only relation to self ... *identity with itself*." (*Logic*, §115) Thus, when we speak of 'distinction', we must do so in the knowledge that such is distinction within *one thing*, and not of one in relation to an external other.

This raises the question of how X can be meaningfully said to be authentically different from what is, after all, X . This is to propose that the Absolute simply cannot objectify itself by an apparent other, when this 'other' is in fact merely the self-positing Absolute itself. Although Taylor exclaims "so far so good," when acknowledging that "the red object is also essentially not-blue; it can only be grasped as red if it is grasped as not-blue,"² the problem that lurks is that the Absolute is supposed to be, as the totality, blue as well. Hegel's attempt to resolve this problem derives from his employment of Fichte's understanding of reflection. Basically, the principle Fichte applied rested upon the classical understanding of identity and difference, the two simple laws of $X = X$ and $-X \neq X$ respectively. The former of these is the positive (or position), and the latter the negative (or opposition), and the problem for Fichte was how to legitimately unite these. Although the content of the two is the same, so that a unity of this content which synthesises the two formal elements occurs, for

Fichte this was illegitimate because it could not be viewed, according to his criterion, as intelligible in itself; any analysis of the unity, that is, would at once expose the division of the position and opposition. ³

It was this conclusion that Hegel was unwilling to accept, and understandably so since each of the two elements are in themselves quite vacuous. The principle that $X = X$, if regarded as a distinct universal law, results only in the impossibility of X's ability to distinguish and thereby objectify itself; because $X = X$ is wholly exclusive, that is, it cannot form a relation that can concretely identify it via differentiation because there is no other (ie. Y) for it to relate to. However, nor is it possible to simply assert that $\text{not-}X \neq X$ as this effectively renders both X and not-X as wholly unrelated and therefore still not objectively encountered because differentiation requires relation which this proposition denies; the equation merely argues that one is not the other, and neglects to portray what X actually is.

The implications that arise from this are certainly notable. If, on one hand, $X = X$, then all that emerges is a repetition of Parmenides' inadequate "being is, not-being is not." Yet if, on the other, $\text{not-}X \neq X$, then identification is impossible unless further, *related* information is given (for example, $\text{not-}X = Y$), and from this position only pluralism can be advocated because Y is *absolutely* distinct from X. Thus, Hegel's answer is to propose that the Absolute contains internal distinction by virtue of opposition, most concisely described as positivity and negativity. This proposition operates on a purely dialectical format, arguing that *the opposite of one is contained within the one*. For example, the infinite (subjective positive) is objectified and given concrete meaning precisely because it *is not* the finite (subjective negative); that is, infinity contains within it finitude precisely because finitude is the antithesis of infinitude. Or, put another way, infinitude is *self-related* because it is not-finite - its very being as infinitude is defined exactly by its negative antithesis, finitude, so that it is not-limited, not-bound, etc:

"Distinction *in its own self* is the *essential* [distinction], the *positive* and the *negative*; the positive is the identical relation to self in such a way that it is *not* the negative, while the negative is distinct on its own account in such a way that it is not the positive. Since each of them is on its own account only in virtue of *not being the other one*, each *shines* (*Schein*) within the other, and is only insofar as the other is. Hence, the distinction of essence in *opposition* through which what is distinct does not have an *other in general*, but *its own* other facing it; that is to say, each has its own determination only in its relation to the other; it is only inwardly reflected insofar as it is reflected into the other, and the other likewise; thus each is the other's *own* other."

(*Logic*, §119)

What becomes apparent from this then, is that the Absolute Idea can be viewed as true because it is not-finite, not-temporal, not-blue, and so on, *ad infinitum*. However, this draws us back to the existential criticism of Parmenides; the Absolute can only be not-this-and-that if this-and-that are existent in their own right. Here, however, Hegel makes a most critical point. One may argue that although the Absolute is not (for example) finite, this in itself identifies an other to the Absolute, i.e. finitude, and therefore the Absolute, if it is the sole realm of being, must incorporate finitude, and indeed everything else. Thus, what one arrives at is the proposition that the Absolute is infinite and not-infinite, blue and not-blue, and so forth or, as Hegel himself would put it, that distinction exists within unity.

It is, though, seemingly impossible not to find this logic at first glance quite absurd; after all, surely something either is blue or it is not, but certainly never both at once? Or, in other words, is it not bordering on the ridiculous to suggest that a monistic Absolute is both the abstract, conceptual realm of being, and also the finite phenomenal world? Emile Fackenheim is just one commentator who picks up on this point, and he writes "how can philosophy, identified with Reason, recognise any actual world besides itself, toward which it is directed? Or does philosophy recognise such a world, namely, the contingent and fragmented world of human experience? How then can it take that world

'as being essentially Notion [ie. concept, *Begriff*]?' From the outset and throughout, the Hegelian system seems faced with the choice between saving the claims of an absolute and therefore all-comprehensive philosophic thought, but at the price of loss of any actual world besides it, and saving the contingent world of human experience at the price of reducing philosophic thought itself to finiteness."⁴

But Hegel sees his argument as being applicable strictly to opposites, the positive and negative, so that one cannot argue not-blue is *another* colour, only that it is 'negative-blue' (see *Logic*, §119). Thus, when we say the Absolute contains distinction, in every possible concept the distinction must be regarded in the appropriate sense, ie. $+A = -A$, and $-A = +A$; the positive is always identified and thus objectified by the negative, and what cannot be stressed enough is that the principle is wholly aligned to the positive and negative, and not particularity *prima facie*. If one considers temperature, for instance, a reading may say $+10^\circ$ or -10° ; but either way the difference from zero is 10° and, whatever the case, it is one because it is not the other whilst correspondingly the other is not the one for precisely the same reason; $+10^\circ$ and -10° stand equally opposed, and yet the identified (ie. 10°) exists within both the positive and the negative.

From this, we can see what one may term as the common content, ie. the 10° . Certainly, in the experiential sense, -10° and $+10^\circ$ hold a marked difference and are undoubtedly distinct, but also there exists the principle that both the positive and the negative possess the *same* difference, and thus they are both distinct and yet identical.⁵ Furthermore, the positive and negative, the is and is-not, remain wholly dependent upon each other so that X cannot be unless there is negative-X to maintain it; one can only say, for example, "this is a pint of beer" if not-a-pint-of-beer is a possibility. This is not to argue so much that a pint of beer is so only because it is not a sandwich, but rather because its genuine other (ie. not-beer) is a plausible assertion; without the possibility of the latter assertion, the former cannot stand and vice-versa.

Of course, this is entirely abstract and seemingly bears no relation to the 'real world', but if the principle is viewed in reverse, so to speak, this problem begins to unfold. If we imagine the phenomenal world, we see positive-A. Positive-A is, however, wholly dependent on its other, negative-A, for objectification, and therefore, in identifying positive-A (the phenomenal) we are also identifying negative-A (not-the-phenomenal, ie. the noumenal). So, in identifying the sensible world, we are simultaneously and unavoidably also acknowledging the identical (though antithetical) noumenal realm. Each, as the antithesis of the other, stands in a peculiar, over and against position so that the positive is identically mirrored by the negative, as light is by dark. The phenomenal, therefore, is identical to the noumenal (and vice-versa) because it is precisely the same in abstract content, although distinct because one is positive and the other negative. A is the phenomenal because it is not the noumenal, and A is also the noumenal because it is not the phenomenal:

The *positive* is that *diverse* [term], which has to be on its own account and at the same time not indifferent vis-à-vis its relation to *its other*. The *negative*, as negative relation to *self*, has to be equally independent. It has *to be on its own account* but at the same time as strictly negative, it has to have its positive, this relation to self that belongs to it, only in the other. Both of them, therefore, are the posited contradiction, both are *in-themselves* the same. And both are the same *for-themselves*, too, since each is the sublation of the other and of itself,"

(Logic, §120)

What the above therefore shows is that the positive and negative are simultaneously united, distinct, and also mutually dependent. Furthermore, *they are each other* in their reflection because the emergence of +A immediately identifies the simultaneous emergence of -A and vice versa. The positive and negative attachments belong always to the 'this' and the 'other' respectively so that, from the other's standpoint, it is itself now the positive and the one is the negative, because now the one has shifted to being the other. In more simple language, if two people sat at a table one might overhear "I am one, you

are the other," but the one and the other (the positive and negative) attachment depends on which of the two speaks, and is applicable either way. Abstractly then, all that remains is an interchangeable positive and negative.

Findlay argues against this position. He writes of Hegel that "he is not saying that X is A in one sense, but not A in another, that it is A from one point of view but not from another, that it is A *in so far as it is X* but not in so far as it is something else. All these devices for avoiding contradiction are explicitly disowned by Hegel."⁶ The reason why Findlay rejects the proposition is implicit within this quotation, namely he fears that what one might term a 'perceptive distinction'⁷ is not an example of genuine opposition, and so he continues "Hegel makes it as plain as possible, that it is not some watered-down, equivocal brand of contradiction, but straight-forward, head-on contradiction."⁸

But Hegel does not employ the positive and negative as "devices for avoiding contradiction." Rather, the positive and negative attachments (ie. A perceived here as +A and there as -A) are the purest expression of contradiction, in precisely the same manner as 'is' and 'is-not', or pure being and nothing; the positive and negative, that is, do indeed provide "head-on contradiction." Certainly it is true that one cannot argue X is both A and not A simultaneously in the sense that God cannot be this object and yet also not this object! However, this is a clumsy reverse of Hegel's assertion on Findlay's behalf, because what is rather advocated is that +A is absolutely distinct from -A in so far as it is, quite literally, not-A, but *is* also -A in that -A is the absolute antithesis to +A. As Hegel clearly states, "the positive makes no sense by itself; rather, it is strictly related to the negative. And the situation is the same with the negative." (*Logic*, §111A) Again, *there must be implicitly within a thing its absolute negative (or opposite) for the thing to be actual and vice versa.*

Thus, from this, we may adduce the conclusion that X *is* A in one sense, in that (for example) God is being, and not A in another, not because

God is simultaneously also not-being, but because God is also the absolute negative contradiction of being. And, rather than declaring from this a nonsensical conclusion such as Findlay finds above, what emerges is a state by which the positive and negative are each other and as one, despite maintaining also a distinction through their oppositeness:

"In the positive and negative we think we have an absolute distinction. Both terms, however, are implicitly the same, and therefore we could call the positive 'the negative' if we liked, and conversely we could call the negative 'the positive' as well. Consequently, assets and debts are not two particular, independently subsisting species of assets. What is something negative for the debtor is equally something positive for the creditor. The same applies to a road to the East; it is equally a road to the West. Thus, what is positive and what is negative are essentially conditioned by one another, and are [what they are] only in their relation to one another. There cannot be the north pole of a magnet without the south pole nor the south pole without the north pole. If we cut a magnet in two we do not have the north pole in one piece and the south pole in the other."

(*Logic*, §119A1)

Thus, it is clear that X is +A on one hand, and -A on the other because, as Hegel analogises, assets equal debts, East equals West, and so forth. $+A = -A$, and if $X = A$, it may as the subject 'select' which aspect it likes, either +A or -A, which prove to be the same so that $X = +A = -A$.

Because unity is composed as $+A = -A$, it is patent that the unity is reliant on its inner distinction, and thus distinction is perennial. This is a principle many, and very notably Findlay, find difficult to accept. Findlay writes, "it is therefore all-important to stress that Hegel does *not* think that the harmonies of Reason [i.e. the pure, ideal Absolute] involve any mere rejection of the disharmonies and contradictions of dialectical thought. These disharmonies may be 'overcome' but their overcoming is also their perpetual preservation. For they are overcome only in the sense that they are seen to be necessary conditions of a reasonable result, and so, in a sense, *not* overcome at all."⁹ This in itself is quite accurate, for the Absolute's

ultimate identity is reliant on its *objective* being (derived from distinction), but Findlay continues by commenting that "it is supremely uncomfortable to believe in the presence of contradictions as 'preserved' permanently in the highest forms of reality and truth. There, at least, one may cry with thinkers like McTaggart or Bradley, they should be banished altogether."¹⁰

But if contradiction were to be banished, the Absolute Idea could not be encountered, as its identification (ie. its illuminating objectivity) rests wholly upon such. Nor could one possibly suggest that, once identified as being its other, the thesis could 'give up' its conflicting nature as this is quite implausible; identity through distinction is not a chronological process, and -A must continue to oppose +A for +A to be sustained. McTaggart is therefore correct to write "the dialectical process of the Logic is the one absolutely essential element in Hegel's system. If we accepted this and rejected everything else that Hegel has written, we should have a system of philosophy ... on the other hand, if we reject the dialectical process which leads to the Absolute Idea, all the rest of the system is destroyed."¹¹ In other words, Hegel's theological framework, whilst pertaining to a pure whole, is able only to breathe because of its active and distinctive dialectical nature.

Findlay believes such a continuum of distinction erases the goal of the Absolute, writing of McTaggart that he is "forced to jettison the whole of the remaining system,"¹² and finds candid support from Kaufmann who claims that "he [McTaggart] is wrong on this point."¹³ But this is a legitimate criticism only if we consider (as McTaggart admittedly does) that there is nothing of the Absolute except a dynamic dialectic, and neglect the unity of the harmonious Idea. That is to say, a perennial distinction is an unsatisfactory conclusion if it is not seen also as effecting a unity.

Christensen offers one solution to this problem by proposing that Hegel's dialectic in fact wilts (the exact reverse of McTaggart's interpretation). He writes "the method as a goal as distinguished from

the Notion has only a provisional status. This is to say, as subject and object regarded as distinct and separate have only a provisional status, method as pertaining to either or both has only a provisional status."¹⁴ Now, certainly it can be argued that the purpose of the dialectical format is to objectify the Absolute Idea, and therefore it is only proper that the means are subservient to the end, but it is quite improper to suggest that the dialectical format loses its distinctive nature, because the unity's very being is dependent on such, as a man's self-consciousness is reliant on the thought "I am myself because I am not something else." And, if we think simply in terms of interpreting rather than evaluating Hegel, we can hardly ignore the clear proposition that "correct as it is to affirm the unity of being and nothing, it is *equally* correct to say that *they are absolutely diverse too.*" (*Logic*, §88)

Christensen continues by then suggesting "Hegel failed to define his method in such a way as to maintain unambiguously such a distinction as would be required were a dialectical account to be falsifiable. In the Notion all distinctions are overcome and contained as discriminations, including the discrimination between method and the subjective and objective contents to which it pertains."¹⁵ In other words, Christensen argues that the dialectical method is unable to sustain a perennial distinction, and that distinction rather obscurely becomes mere "discrimination." Effectively then, Christensen attempts to adopt a position between the 'anti-distinctionists' (for example Findlay and Kaufmann), and the 'pro-distinctionists' (for example McTaggart), by arguing that distinction is superseded by unity but not entirely cast off, merely relegated to the very vague proposed area he calls discrimination.

However, this offering, like Findlay's desired amendment, must be rejected as it is surely still incorrect to say that +A bears no distinction in terms of -A, or that light is no different from dark, and re-classifying the distinction is no solution because the distinction must precisely reflect the unity which is itself inexorably bound to absolute contradiction. The assertion that +A is also the same as -A

cannot be made if distinction is not present because the unity is founded on the distinction, and if the foundation is removed the unity falls with it. Stace is absolutely right, therefore, in his interpretation which argues that "the unity is *concrete* because it still contains the difference preserved within it. It is not a mere abstract unity like the ordinary 'concept', which includes what is common to the things of a class, but excludes their differences. Becoming includes the differences as well as the identity. Being and nothing are identical, and this gives us the category of becoming. But we must not deny their difference merely because of their identity. They are at once absolutely identical and absolutely distinct. Becoming involves both."¹⁶

The unity, that is, exists in virtue of its paradoxical distinction, and vice versa. Each contains the other, and cannot be without the (its) other. The very basis of distinction is that $+A = -A$ because each is absolutely reliant on its other, and the unity is only concrete and objective because of its inner conflict.

Notes

1. Hegel means by 'essence' (*Wesen*) a noumenal, abstract "truth of being," so that "God is not merely an essence, and not even merely the highest essence either. He is the essence." (Logic §112A)
2. Taylor, p234.
3. Fichte, p106ff.
4. Fackenheim, p76.
5. It could be argued that this analogy is not quite precise as the elements are relative and thus not authentic opposites. However, whilst it is true that degrees are relative, my use of this analogy is valid as I am employing it abstractly in the sense of $-10 / 0 / +10$ being equatable with $-A / A / +A$, 0 and A acting as the 'pass through' points.
6. Findlay, p77.
7. By this phrase I mean to refer to how the Absolute can be viewed differently (as, for example, phenomena or noumena).

8. Findlay, p77.
9. Findlay, p67.
10. Findlay, p77.
11. McTaggart, §2.
12. Findlay, p75.
13. Kaufmann, p174.
14. Christensen, p224.
15. Christensen, p224.
16. Stace, p137.

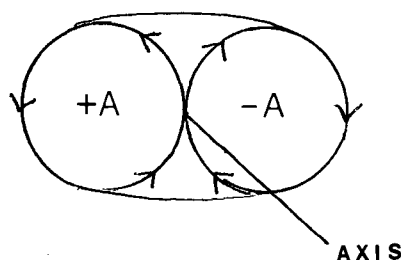
4. The circularity and 'axis' of the Absolute Idea.

(i) *Hegel's circle.*

When Hegel argues his theology "shows itself as a circle that goes back into itself," (*Logic*, §17) although denying a linear progression, he acknowledges a seeming split within the Absolute Idea, such that the Idea becomes two, opposing others. By 'other', we are again dealing with true opposites, not X as an other to Y, but the positive and negative perspectives of what is ultimately one. Again, what we must remember is that the positive is in turn the negative, and the negative the positive, so that when we say 'other' this ultimately refers not simply to opposition but to the pure Idea.

What this leads to is a first instance of what Hegel describes as a 'moment', and loosely this is in reference to a given perspective of the Absolute, namely the moment of otherness, the diremption when the infinite appears as the finite, the eternal as the temporal, and so forth. Thus, the Absolute moves, so to speak, to otherness (although this serves also to enhance by virtue of objectifying the unity) before returning to itself on its circular route. This suggests a movement of $A > B > A$ (which would appear to make the role of B pointless,² because if the Absolute begins at any point on the circle, and then returns to this point after moving through B, we have no difference in this situation, merely a change in its expression.

Here, however, we must remember that Hegel does not advocate one circular journey, but that "the whole presents itself ... as a circle of circles, each of which is a necessary moment." (*Logic*, §15) What is therefore rather the case then, is that *the otherness of the Absolute, a moment, acts in a circular fashion within the whole:*



The above diagram is designed to illustrate Hegel's meaning here. Immediately, what one may notice is an all-inclusive circle, the whole, which contains within it two other circles which stand opposed to each other, reflected in the diagram by the appellations provided of +A and -A. One may consider +A as (for example) concept, and -A as being, or vice versa, or one as finitude and the other infinitude, or, indeed, any applicable pair of genuine opposites. What is also highlighted is what I have termed as the 'axis', the central point of the whole where both conflicting, inner circles meet in their oneness:

"In nature, it is not something-other than the Idea that is [re]cognised, but the Idea in the form of [its] uttering [*Entäußerung*], just as in the spirit we have the same Idea *as being for-itself, and coming to be in and for itself*. A determination of this kind, in which the Idea appears, is at the same time a moment *that flows*; hence, the single science is just as much the cognition of its content as an object *that is*, as it is the immediate cognition in that content of its passage into its higher circle. The *representation of division* is therefore incorrect inasmuch as it puts the particular parts or sciences *side by side*, as if they were only immobile parts and substantial in their distinction, the way that *species* are."

(*Logic*, §18)

When we examine this passage, the diagram's meaning becomes more lucid. To begin with, we see the appearance of the Absolute in finite particularity - not the whole, but one of the two opposites standing against its other, finitude versus infinitude. But this is only half the story, an untruth, and because the positive and negative are ultimately also each other, when we see what appears only as one aspect of the Idea, we are in truth apprehending both the subjective and objective because of this synthesis. On the diagram, what we find is +A against -A, but the common, essential factor, the synthetic Absolute Idea in and for itself remains A; in other words, A holds its essential status regardless of the inferior positive or negative attachment. Thus, we may see that we can look at A from one side (for example, as positive thesis), and then from the other (negative antithesis), but also apprehend a supreme content of pure, ideal being, the essential unity of the one A. When Hegel writes "in nature, it is not

something-other than the Idea that is [re]cognised, but the Idea in the form of [its] uttering," we may, therefore, reconcile this notion of the Idea in its "form" with the seemingly incompatible statement that the Absolute "is precisely what is wholly present." (*Logic*, §24A2)

(ii) *The 'higher' circle.*

The second, notable feature extends from this. Hegel proposes that the Absolute as an object for-itself (ie. the Absolute in the moment of apparent otherness as phenomenal being) passes into a "higher circle," namely the whole, the Absolute Spirit. This echoes the above, for $+A = -A$, and therefore they are one and form the enveloping circle outlined in the diagram. They do not, that is, simply stand over and against each other as two, *absolutely* distinct circles, but are also each other *and thus the one, all-encompassing whole*. $+A = -A$ therefore means, in the most candid of language, simply A, the synthetic Absolute Idea.

Third, we may note that Hegel argues:

"The *representation of division* is therefore incorrect inasmuch as it puts the particular parts or sciences *side by side*, as if they were only immobile parts and substantial in their distinction, the way that *species* are." (*Logic*, §18)

This is to say that, again, $+A$ and $-A$ are not in truth absolute antagonists (ie. $+A \neq -A$), standing divided and "side by side," but rather that they retain their essential and uniquely true unity. On the diagram, I have represented this by the axis, the meeting point which is equatable with the enveloping 'whole' circle, and here one may therefore see the axis as the essence, the underlying which appears to be the result of the synthetic process, but which in fact is the beginning of the system, and indeed is mirrored throughout. Hence, what we find is a continual union of the thesis and antithesis, and thus also the synthesis as being not merely a result, but eternally and wholly present.

We may draw similar findings from another passage. Hegel writes "each of the parts of philosophy is a philosophical whole, a circle that closes upon itself; but in each of them the philosophical Idea is in a particular determinacy or element." (*Logic*, §15) Here, we can see that each 'part' is distinct from its other; the thesis, that is, stands opposed to the antithesis, 'whole' as the thesis, but awaiting, so to speak, its realisation that it is intrinsically univocal with its other, seemingly content in itself but inexorably united with its other. For example, consider heat: it is at first seemingly a whole, distinct in its own right. But, when one considers this further, heat only enjoys this status because of its opposition to cold, and indeed a reasonable definition of 'heat' could be given as 'not-cold'. Thus, in other words, we find ourselves again returning to Heraclitus' 'strife and unity of opposites'; heat is so only because of cold and vice-versa, and, moreover, heat is cold in this sense because each is merely a different appearance of the essence of each, ie. temperature. Each is mutually dependent on its other for the initial cognition of it, each exists by virtue of the objectification given by its other, and each eventually shows itself to be its other.

This point is again represented on the diagram by the inner circles, a line on which can be drawn from the axis, along the circles and back to the axis, each then "a circle that closes upon itself," the dynamism of which is highlighted on the diagram by the arrows. But, what we find at the axis is the unity, when $+A$ and $-A$ are wholly united owing to the negation of their difference (at this point there is not positive and negative, merely neutrality), and they thereby reveal themselves as the Absolute Idea in and for itself, where thesis and antithesis do not contrast but are synthetic. Furthermore, when this line is drawn along $+A$ and its opposite, this is continually mirrored - one opposite precisely matching its other - and, again, the difference is to be found merely in the perspective, the positive and negative attachments, rather than the essential content of neutral A .

It is exactly this precise opposition, mirrored through every single aspect of the one Idea, that enables Hegel to then comment:

"Every single circle also breaks through the restriction of its element as well, precisely because it is inwardly [the] totality, and it grounds a further sphere. The whole presents itself therefore as a circle of circles."

(*Logic*, §15)

The breaking through of the element occurs "precisely because it is inwardly [the] totality," so that here +A and -A, seemingly individual elements, prove themselves to be each other, and thus the whole, the essential Absolute, the all encompassing 'circle' of the Absolute Idea.

This then, forms the passage into the "higher circle," (*Logic*, §18) because, whilst each element can be viewed as distinct, they prove not to be divided but the same, $+A = -A$. Hence, we discover the presentation of the "circle of circles," A possessing +A and -A as distinct opposites. But, when we examine A - the Absolute Idea in and for itself - as a complete system, we discover the elements to be truly two characters that are logically rooted and committed to each other and thus the Idea. And, because each is its other, and thus the entirety of the Idea itself, we may also see that $+A = A$, and $-A = A$, thereby reconciling a seemingly independent, distinct facet with the omnipresence of the Idea.

(iii) *Problems and parallels with Hegel's 'circular' concept.*

This interpretation is by no means universally popular, and one of the most candid cries of opposition is from Terry Pinkard. Pinkard believes that the only category or notion that is compatible with such a cyclical structure is that of pure being, this the exception by virtue of its lack of predication.³ He writes, "Hegel thus speaks of a 'circle' of justification, although such talk is not entirely accurate. It is not circular in that the end is identical with the beginning (although Hegel euphorically says that also), nor is it circular in the sense in which some coherence theories of truth are circular, that is, the same proposition that appears at least once as a premise appears later on as a conclusion, thereby justifying itself."⁴ In fairness, Pinkard can be seen to have a point. For can an active, dynamic system truthfully find its result within

its beginning? Surely its very dynamism banishes its beginning into a distant history, and leads the Idea to a new home?

However, this is to misunderstand Hegel's intention here. The notion that Hegel is attempting to convey is that the Absolute does not traverse *literally* away from, and then back to, its resting place, but rather it reveals itself further via this *purely logical* triad. It is no different from any other cognitive process (according to Hegel) in that first we have immediate understanding of a subject, and then a mediate form of distinguishing the subject from what it is not, before reaching an objectified, *reasoned* account.⁵ What is critical is that the subject does not change, but is merely objectively comprehended and affirmed by this logical process. Indeed, were actual development to occur, it would be impossible to discover the result as the necessary thesis would have evaporated; if I was to be conscious of myself by virtue of acknowledging not being somebody else, it would be extremely disturbing to then find that I was not in fact my original self!⁶

Digressing slightly, one notable feature of this understanding is that a strong similarity is perhaps now present between Parmenides' finite sphere of pure being, and Hegel's circle; indeed, as has just been noted, Hegel himself employs the phrase "a circle of circles," and uses terminology such as "grounds another sphere." The differences that first appeared as quite striking, may in fact not be quite so powerful despite Parmenides' materialistic form of monism, for though Parmenides indeed writes that being "rests uniformly within its limits,"⁷ and so forth as was discussed in chapter one, this leads only to a nonsensical notion of being having to stand against its abstract, logically necessary, other of not-being for the term 'limit' to be plausibly employed. The problem for Parmenides, then, is that either not-being in fact maintains actuality, or pure being is not self-limiting and finite, but in truth infinite (because there is no opponent to limit it), both of which Parmenides strives to reject.

Parmenides' position, however, despite its failings, is I believe in many ways comparable with the aspect of Hegel's theological system being considered here, and perhaps even indicates the strength of Heraclitus'

influence on both the ancient Eleatic and the nineteenth century German. Hegel, as I have argued the case, professes the Absolute Idea to be infinite, but infinitude is something only possible to comprehend as a result of the initial conflict and subsequent unity of thesis and antithesis. The objectification of the whole rests entirely on the dialectical system of the antithesis objectifying the thesis, an initial conflict and appearance of limitation serving ultimately to remove all notions of limit. Thus, if we may consider Parmenides' being as objectified by the (illogical) not-being, *as must be the case if being is to be objectified*, we are left with a not entirely dissimilar idea.

Of course, this should in its way not be a total surprise; after all, both Parmenides and Hegel are monists; each argues, that is, a philosophy that pertains to a whole, a totality, and each bases his case on contrast. But the strength of the similarity is exciting. On one hand, we have Parmenides proposing that only being is, and it is self-limiting with its other of not-being acting as a peculiar, wholly abstract other to substantiate it.²⁸ Thus, from this we have dialectic, being contrasting with not-being. However, with Parmenides, not-being is not, and all that truly remains is the One, being, declared to be true because of its distinction from what is not. In other words, the *potential* abstract relation between being and not-being objectifies being through synthetic means, despite the eventual rejection of the abstract not-being. On the other hand, with Hegel, we have his assertion that the whole *appears* as otherness, such appearance of (for example) finitude and infinitude, the positive and negative, and so forth, all serving to illuminate the Absolute Idea. In both cases then, we see the system of the true being objectified by the untrue, the only difference being, not so much the method or result, but simply the validity of the apparent other. For Hegel, it is untrue because it is a half-picture of the Absolute, whereas for Parmenides it simply (and illogically) is not.

Parallels may also be drawn between Hegel and Spinoza. This is of no small importance owing to the many assertions made, from Hegel's lifetime to the present, that Hegel was (in Soll's words) "following Spinoza."²⁹ Jaeschke writes "Spinoza's thought acquires a preeminent and at the same time

lasting importance for Hegel's philosophy."¹⁰ Taylor, whilst taking care to elucidate the differences between the two, claims "Spinoza thus comes very close to the Hegelian position."¹¹ Thus, whilst exactly how alike some of the ideas of Spinoza and Hegel in fact are is a matter of continual debate, there are undoubtedly considerable and thought-provoking similarities.

Let us consider, very broadly, Spinoza's system which argues that the noumenal and phenomenal are identical, two aspects of the one substance, i.e. God.¹² Individually, neither the noumenal or phenomenal is substance as this would at once render them independent of each other; rather, substance is the unity of these, the unity of thought and extension. However, the two are essentially associated as the One, and the activity of God (thought) is *represented* in material form (extension). In other words, God, the sole truth, for Spinoza is this one substance, but such substance exists with inward, absolute mediation. Although there is nothing but the One (i.e. there is nothing external to, or not a perspective of, substance), internally there remains a profound distinction; the noumenal and phenomenal, that is, are distinct attributes that form substance. Although these attributes are considered to be simply two different aspects of the one substance, and therefore may be considered to be eventually univocal, a continual distinction is necessarily present because of the intrinsic nature of each. Thus, a mental event cannot be identically matched physically (thought matched *in actuality* by extension), or vice-versa. Spinoza rather argues that thought and extension are absolute representations of each other - "the human mind is the idea of the human body,"¹³ and so forth.

Spinoza admits this point quite freely, and relates the difference through what he terms as 'modes', effectively the particular forms which the attributes express themselves through. The modes, although always maintaining correlates, are actual in themselves but this actuality is dependent on their place within the whole and, as in Hegel's theology, such are therefore only fully realised and genuine only in their essential being; "in the nature of things nothing contingent is admitted."¹⁴ Spinoza, to analogise, argues that the tail side of a penny, and the head

side of a penny, are what constitutes the one, single coin; they are certainly united, but retain a continual element of difference within.

Hegel is receptive to this argument (see *Logic*, preface, p8-10) because (continuing with the analogy), although each side pertains to the overall being of the penny, there is an inward antagonism between the two sides which is never wholly resolved. Thus, both Hegel and Spinoza propose a system whereby a) phenomenality is not simply regarded as illusion (as is the case with Bradley, for example) but is actual, b) that phenomenality is only fully revealed in its truth when seen as being of the whole, and c) that despite such phenomenality being of the whole, it continues to struggle to maintain its distinction from noumenality. As Stanley Rosen says in his discussion of Hegel "the truth of life as absolute negative unity is the assimilation of all individuals within the genus or Absolute Spirit. The individuals are like the modes in Spinoza's substance."¹⁵ Applying this to the diagram, we may therefore see a similar triad with Spinoza, thought and extension being subsumed within the 'higher circle' of substance. Thought and extension retain a distinction from each other (as +A and -A do for Hegel), but they are also committed to their higher, collective status.

Of course, this comparison can only work in a rough sense - important differences are present between Hegel and Spinoza (most notably with regard negation) - but a similarity in the framework's of each is evident, and enough to prompt Stace to comment that "the roots of Hegel's teaching ... lie here in Spinoza."¹⁶ Harris too writes "what Hegel calls 'the supreme Essence' becomes recognisable as Spinoza's God."¹⁷ Yet the parallel barely extends beyond this very simplified framework, and whilst we may therefore take note of the influence of Spinoza, it is important to observe that, for Hegel, the theological structure continues so that the opposing elements dialectically pass into each other as univocal identities, whereas Spinoza's system is rigid and undynamic. As Reardon surmises, "Spinozism was correct in holding that every determination is a negation, but it overlooks the inevitable *negation of negation*, which supplies the dynamic of advance in reality as in thought. Spinoza's Absolute is an infinite receptacle that merely *contains* finite beings. Hegel's on the other hand,

is subject rather than substance; reality is process, becoming, development."¹⁹ If we continue with the diagram, therefore, and the circles within the 'higher' circle, we may consider such to be static for Spinoza, the outer circle being a 'receptacle that merely *contains* finite beings'.

(iv) *Distinction collapsing into ground.*

Returning directly to the diagram, such a proposition is plausible only if an abstract, neutral point exists, an axis, whereby +A and -A may pass into each other. Hegel implies this when he argues that the mutual dependence of the positive and negative results in each being the ground of the other, so that the distinction between them collapses, as each is effectively no more than their total dependence on the other. He writes:

"*Ground* is the unity of identity and distinction; the truth of what distinction and unity have shown themselves to be, the inward reflection which is just as much *reflection-into-another* and vice versa. It is *essence* posited as *totality*." (Logic, §121)

What this advances then is that, when the positive is the ground, the negative is the grounded, and when the negative is the ground, the positive is the grounded; the 'ground' is in effect the dependence of one on the other. This in turn implies two corollaries, namely: a) that a distinction is continually present for there is always the ground and the grounded, but also b) that the ground and the grounded are identical for, as each is the ground of the other as well as itself as the grounded (+A on -A and, simultaneously, -A on +A), so, by virtue of being both at once the ground and grounded, +A grounded on +A, and -A grounded on -A. In other words, something only *is* because it is grounded in its other, and yet the other, which sustains the plausibility of the thing, only *is* because it correspondingly is grounded in its other. Thus, each aspect of the thing, in order to be grounded, must act also as the ground for the other and thereby for itself. +A = +A because of -A, but simultaneously, -A = -A because of +A, so that each, +A and -A, both assert the value of each other, and in doing so assert their own values:

"Existence is the immediate unity of inward reflection-into-another. Therefore, it is the indeterminate multitude of existents as inwardly reflected, which are at the same time, and just as much, shining-into-another, or *relational*; and they form a *world* of interdependence and of an infinite connectedness of grounds with what is grounded. The grounds are themselves existences, and the existents are also in many ways grounds as well as grounded." (Logic, §123)

Stace explains this point with great clarity in his commentary, but curiously adds "the category of ground turns out to be empty and useless. It gives, as explanation, or ground, of a thing, only that very same thing over again. It explains a thing by saying 'it is so because it is'."¹⁹ Now, certainly the explanation of A is found within itself, but, as we are discussing what I understand to be a monistic Absolute, this is precisely the only plausible option open to our consideration. However, to say the employment of the positive and negative by Hegel to objectify A results in a scenario that is both "empty and useless" is, to say the least, somewhat harsh, for Hegel has manipulated what is essentially a point of logic to identify what one may comfortably term a principle of being, or, in Hegel's words 'existence'.²⁰ Existence is, effectively, the result of the distinction being reconciled in its unity and identicalness via such mutual grounding; it is the pure point in which that which is distinct becomes its other to produce a true and genuine unity:

"The term 'existence' ... points to a state of emergence [*deutet auf ein Hervorgegangensein*], and existence is being that has emerged from the ground and become re-established through the sublation of mediation. As sublated being, essence has proved in the first place to be shining within itself, and the determinations of this shining are identity, distinction, and ground. Ground is the unity of identity and distinction, and as such it is at the same time the distinguishing of itself from itself. But what is distinct from the ground is not distinction anymore than the ground itself is abstract identity. The ground is self-sublating and what it sublates itself toward, the result of its negation, is existence. Existence, therefore, which is what has emerged from the ground, contains

the latter within itself, and the ground does not remain behind existence; instead, it is precisely this process of self-sublation and translation into existence." (Logic, §123A)

Hence, the system can be seen to have driven through, so to speak, the distinction it necessarily and logically contains, to highlight the emergence of this point, or axis, that is termed existence.²¹ This is to say that, through the distinction provided by the positive and negative aspects of the thing, a distinction which objectifies the thing by offering also a paradoxical identity, and the subsequent unity of this distinction and identity (ie. the mutual ground), what comes forward is a pure state of existence in and for itself. From each aspect, which analysed as a single part is merely reflection-into-its-other, emerges the logical consequence that *each is also its other* by virtue of the mutual grounding, and this in turn translates into an ideal, logically abstract axis, ie. the existence of the thing. This, of course, does not abandon the positive and negative aspects from which the identified axis derives, for such would eliminate the entire plausibility of the thing because it is precisely this distinction within unity that objectifies the thing. Thus, it must be asserted that while distinction remains implicit throughout, the system itself, as a system, indicates the axis, or pure existence, of the thing:

"The reflection-into-another of what exists is not separate from its inward reflection; the ground is the unity of the two, out of which existence has gone forth. Hence, what exists contains relationality and its own manifold connectedness with other existents in itself; and it is *reflected* within itself as *ground*. Thus what exists is the thing."

(Logic, §124)

(v) *A return to pure (qualified) being.*

What Hegel argues, therefore, is that the identified, pure thing continues to be dependent on its dual, inner reflection-into-another (more precisely, *its other, its own*), in both its positive and negative aspects, for its very status as the thing; it is, that is to say, wholly reliant on its own, internal distinction for its authenticity and identity as a thing. In

highlighting pure existence then, Hegel is not constructing, or composing, so much as pinpointing, or revealing, the axis as the logical result, and to claim therefore, as Stace does, that it is "empty and useless" is to assert that the thing as *system* is vacuous; but if the system (which is ultimately the Absolute Spirit itself) is vacuous then Hegel's entire theology must also be so. Certainly the axis is empty in that, as an abstract ideal, it is, as we have seen, equatable with nothing, but the antithesis of nothing (and thus nothing itself) is pure being - God - which has proved its value through its relation with concrete being, or at least in as much as it has logically objectified itself. In this sense, then, one may even venture so far as to say that the abstract, ideal Absolute contains logical concreteness by virtue of the necessary implications that pure being contains which pertain to actual, concrete being.²² As Hegel clearly states:

"Mistaken is the notion according to which the Idea is only what is *abstract*. That the Idea is abstract is true enough in the sense that everything *untrue* [see chapter 6] is consumed in it, but in its own right the Idea is essentially *concrete* because it is the free Concept that determines itself and in doing so makes itself real [*sich selbst und heimit zur Realität bestimmende Begriff*]. It would only be what is formally abstract if the Concept, which is its principle, were taken to be the abstract unity, and not how it really is, ie. as the *negative return into itself and as subjectivity*." (Logic, §213)

Thus, the principle of pure existence is concrete because, although in one sense it is abstract owing to its logical genetics, its status as the result of the objectifying process gives it a defined nature. The result, one must remember, is contained in the beginning (Logic, §17), but here it has been enhanced from a merely subjective, abstract status to what one may term a confirmed position, where the dynamics of the system have carved out its place within distinction and unity. It sits, therefore, as the pivotal point from which the self-objectifying system stems and returns to through negation, ie. as the axis upon which the system circulates, the system working to elucidate its status and truth.

What one therefore may conclude is that there eternally exists the noumenal Absolute Idea, pure being, upon which distinction 'grows' between the two opposing sides of the Absolute (the infinite and finite, noumenal and phenomenal, etc, ie. the positive and negative antitheses). These aspects prove to be, however, also univocal, and the system shows them to be the same as each other by each being the sustenance of the other, and this in turn results in a unity, reasserting the pure being of the Absolute. Hence, the Absolute shows itself to be both a purity in and for itself as the beginning and the end, but also essentially diverse in its logically necessary system of continually positing its antithesis.

Notes

1. Hegel's employment of the term 'moment' does not imply that this should be considered as a point on a linear progression, but rather as a particular, finite aspect of the Idea.
2. See chapters eight and nine.
3. One might again assert, given the arguments of the previous two chapters, that Hegel's notion of pure being *must* entail predication. It is therefore somewhat surprising to note that Pinkard neglects to employ this line of criticism.
4. Taken from the essay *The Logic of Hegel's Logic* in Inwood's *Hegel*, p92.
5. I stress the term 'reason' as this differs from understanding by virtue of the development shown above. Stace (p136-40), and Finlay (p60-9) both give notable accounts of this relation and the process surrounding it.
6. It could be argued that this does not take into consideration history and time-related development. Please see chapters eight and nine for discussion.
7. Although, as has been discussed, Parmenides' philosophy falters because of his wish to deny being's other *any* status, the validity of his philosophy in this comparative context is irrelevant.
8. Allen, p45.
9. Soll, p116-7.
10. Jaeschke, p122.
11. Taylor, p280.

12. Spinoza, 1.
13. Spinoza, 2.13.
14. Spinoza, 1.29.
15. Rosen, p243.
16. Stace, p34.
17. Harris, *Hegel's Development*, p391.
18. Reardon, p139.
19. Stace, p190.
20. By 'existence' (*Existenz*), Hegel means that which pertains to the system as a determination of essence. *Existenz*, it should be noted, refers precisely to *essential being*, and Hegel's use of the term here highlights its concreteness.
21. It may be noted that Hegel is again presupposing the logical development of existence to actuality. Indeed, actuality (the objectively defined form of existence) may have been a more suitable term to employ in this passage.
22. I repeat that I am quite unsatisfied with Hegel's assertion that pure being and nothing effect becoming (see chapter two). However, this thesis is an interpretation rather than an evaluation, and whilst Stace's point may therefore be correct as a criticism, I contend it is at fault as an understanding.

5. The diremptive moment of appearance.

When we discuss appearance, we may do so in one of two contexts, namely either as the appearance of finite particularity seemingly content within itself (*Schein*), or the appearance of the Absolute as being, ie. in a collective context and as the opposite to the conceptual idea of such (*Erscheinung*).¹ The latter in itself is a moment, indeed could even be understood as the most critical moment, of the Absolute as a systematic proposition, for it is precisely this moment that highlights the apparent opposition and instigates the subsequent reconciliation, the Absolute seeming to be in conflict as +A over and against -A:

"Essence must *appear*. Its inward shining is the sublating of itself into immediacy, which as inward reflection is *subsistence* (matter) as well as *form*, reflection-into-another, subsistence *sublating itself*. Shining is the determination, in virtue of which essence is not being, but essence, and the developed shining is [shining-forth or] appearance. Essence therefore is not *behind* or *beyond* appearance, but since the essence is what exists, existence is appearance."
(Logic, §131)

Here, Hegel illuminates the meaning of the Absolute as essence, as neutral A, appearing in order to "shine," ie. to express itself and lay itself open to objectification.² If the Absolute fails to do this, then all that is left is the purely subjective, unobjectified notion, which possesses no more significant meaning than the notion of a god in the sky who hurls thunderbolts has for us today. In other words, the Absolute becomes manifest and dirempts into nature in order to prove the notion; here is the concept of God, here is the being, and therefore God must exist. Harris, deliberately aligning God's appearance as phenomenal being with man's self-consciousness, eloquently writes "in order to posit myself as the ground of my own cognition I must posit myself as a rational window on the world."³ In other words, the Absolute must be expressive in order for it to create the ground for its own self-consciousness. The Absolute therefore posits itself essentially, through which it appears in existence, and as essence is its appearance. As Taylor remarks, "the real is not 'just there', but is posited, deployed in fulfilment of a rational formula."⁴ Thus, when one

reads the almost mysterious sentence that "essence therefore is not *behind* or *beyond* appearance, but since the essence is what exists, existence is appearance," it is clear that appearance is not in truth an independent other to the Absolute, a dualistic phenomenal world standing hard against a speculative deity, but existent as the Absolute in the form of such being. Mure comments, "inasmuch as the essential moment is not hidden but apparent, spirit here clearly determines itself as some sort of system or world."⁵ Thus, at this point at least, a type of panentheism may be seen as the phenomenal world is given the status of being a determinate element of the Absolute.

Of course, this is not to say that the Absolute is *only* the appearance - this in itself would prompt questions directed against the entire meaning and purpose of appearance. Rather, appearance is nothing more than the Absolute, as indeed must be the case if one argues Hegel's theology to be monistic; for if appearance were in and for itself, then it would not be appearance, but authentic, self-contained being which is wholly independent. As Taylor writes, "in appearance the principal development is of the idea of relation. The force of 'appearance' here is that we see things as appearing, as posited, as coming to manifestation through necessity, rather than as just being there 'immediately'. To see things as appearance is to see them not as just reposing on themselves (*auf sich selbst beruhend*), but as moments of a larger whole ... and hence to see them as in necessary relation to others."⁶ Appearance, therefore, must be connected to something other for it to maintain its authenticity.

Thus, what we first arrive at is the proposition that appearance is the shining, or expression, of the Absolute, the adoption by the Absolute of a kind of character through which it may distinguish itself. It is, in this sense, very much a determination, a determination to objectify through an apparent division within the Idea, and again such is reflected on the diagram in chapter four, with the Absolute internally dividing and turning away, so to speak, from its axis on the circular tracks through the positive and negative circles:

"Existence, posited in its contradiction, is appearance. The latter must not

be confused with mere semblance. Semblance is the proximate truth of being or immediacy. The immediate is not what we suppose it to be, not something independent and self-supporting, but only semblance, and as such it is comprehended in the simplicity of self-contained essence. Essence is initially a totality of inward shining, but it does not remain in this inwardness; instead, as ground, it emerges into existence; and existence, since it does not have its ground within itself but in an other, is quite simply appearance. When we speak of 'appearance' we associate with it the representation of an indeterminate manifold of existing things, whose being is mediation, pure and simple, so that they do not rest upon themselves, but are valid only as moments." (Logic, §131A)

The above offers us more important advice regarding Hegel's meaning here. Notably, he writes "existence, posited in its contradiction, is appearance," and immediately, therefore, we learn that appearance is very much involved with opposition. That is to say that, by appearance, Hegel means that the Absolute *appears* as an other to itself (although, as we have just seen, appearance is never independent), and he distinguishes this from semblance because semblance is the immediate form of appearance (*Schein*), rather than the developed appearance within the whole. Hence, he contends that the semblance of being is only partially true; for instance, a table is never an entirely independent thing in its own right, because such a view would argue a table, or any finite particular, to be true in and for itself, and thus involve the misconception of it possessing "self-contained essence" rather than belonging to the system.⁷ Rather, the diremption provides us with a case of the Absolute appearing as other, but appearance here crucially differs from semblance because appearance contains mediacy owing to its opposition to the concept, which in turn makes it simultaneously united with it.

This situation, in itself an important element of Hegel's theology, may here be briefly summarised as follows. Appearance is the expression of the Absolute, the Absolute in the form of existent being. It is, as the initial, immediate *Schein*, the Absolute as essence, thus making it wholly the Absolute for-itself. However, as such, it is born from the Absolute Idea, and does not possess an independent existence in its own right over

and against the Absolute but stands in contradiction to the concept of the Idea. What this means, therefore, is that appearance is not genuinely anything but the Absolute; it is a presentation of the Absolute in a physical and contradictory fashion, and once this is recognised, ie. that the phenomenal is not immediate as it seems but the other of the noumenal, appearance can be termed as *Erscheinung* in its forming of the triad of the immediate, through the mediate and relational to unity. The diremption, therefore, the phenomenal world of nature, appears first as immediate being-there (*Dasein*), before opposing its conceptual other to unify it as the Absolute. What we have then, is really not so much a representation, but rather a misrepresentation; we suppose nature, the phenomenal, to be independent whereas in fact it is truly a distortion of the whole.

Within this account, we have Hegel's understanding of the phenomenal world, and also its purpose; put simply, the world is nothing more than the Absolute manifest, the appearance of the diremption. In more Hegelian language, it is the Absolute for-itself, becoming an apparent other to illuminate its hidden, inner self. Hegel compares it to thunder and lightning, and he writes:

"We take note of thunder and lightning. We are acquainted with this phenomenon and we often observe it. But man is not satisfied with this mere acquaintance, with the simple phenomenon; he wants to look behind it; he wants to know what it is; wants to comprehend it. We think about it, therefore; we want to know the cause as something distinct from the phenomenon as such; we want to know what is inward as distinct from what is merely outward. So we reduplicate the phenomenon; we break it in two, the inward and the outward, force and its utterance, cause and effect. Here again, the inner side, or force, is the universal, that which persists; it is not this or that lightning, this or that plant, but what remains the same in all. What is sensible is something singular and transitory; it is by thinking about it that we get to know what persists in it. Nature offers us an infinite mass of singular shapes and appearances. We feel the need to bring unity into this manifold; therefore, we compare them and seek to [re]cognise what is universal in each of them,"

(*Logic*, 521A)

Thus, Hegel proposes that what is outer, or for-itself, is more or less nothing but the self-identifying aspect of something or, as I have termed it, the thing's expression; when one sees a flash of lightning, one's senses are alerted to the occurrence of an electrical storm, but that it is an electrical storm is something that is only deduced from analysing the cause of the lightning. Notably, therefore, such analogy contains within it a hint of causal argument.

So, with the Absolute and phenomenal world, we begin by sensibly cognising the latter, questioning its meaning, and searching for a binding universal that can link all of its many parts together, and here a strand of Platonism is quite explicit as Hegel implies - or perhaps assumes? - that beneath the jumbled mass which we understand to be the phenomenal, lies an ordered reality, namely the Absolute in-itself, that is next to be apprehended. In many ways, this is a reversal of Hegel's normal deductive process, as instead of working ontologically, and searching to match being with the initial, conceptual thesis, he instead here suggests that, from finding being, we then move on to the noumenal side of the subject, hence the cosmological tendency. But this is very much the exception in his writings, and Hegel continues his exposition of appearance with the assertion:

"When we say of something that it is 'only' appearance, this can be misunderstood as meaning that (in comparison with this thing that only appears) what *is*, or is *immediate*, is something higher. In fact the situation is precisely the reverse; appearance is higher than mere being. Appearance is precisely the truth of being and a richer determination than the latter, because it contains the moments of inward reflexion and reflexion-into-another united within it, whereas being or immediacy is still what is one-sidedly without relation, and seems to rest upon itself alone. Of course, the 'only' that we attach to appearance certainly *does* indicate a defect, and this consists in the fact that Appearance is still this inwardly broken [moment] that does not have any stability of its own. What is higher than mere appearance is ... actuality." (Logic, §131A)^e

The message here is in fact really quite plain; appearance, often mistaken as that which is illusory, is closer to the Absolute than understanding a finite particular to be in and for itself. What we have, more than anything, is a question of definition, and Hegel insists that it is more accurate to say that the phenomenal is appearance (ie. an appearance of the Absolute in physical manifestation), than that it is independent being, because to assume the latter to be true is entirely to divorce it from the whole, a proposition totally unacceptable to Hegel. As Mure points out, "it must not be forgotten that each of these moments [of being-there] is implicitly the whole, or *quasi*-whole, World of Appearance."⁹ Thus, we read that "being or immediacy is still what is one-sidedly without relation," and what is undeniably rejected is the (presupposed) independence of a particular, whereas "appearance is higher."

What must be set against this, however, is Hegel's claim that the appearance is still defective; indeed he describes it as "broken." Such a statement, though, derives from logical necessity, because the diremption of the Absolute is, from man's logical perspective and as the preceding pages have attempted to stress, merely one aspect of the Absolute, ie. the Absolute for-itself but not in-itself. In other words, it is "inwardly broken" because appearance, at this logical point, lacks its conceptual other; certainly we cannot regard the Absolute as whole if we view it simply as appearance alone, although it is fair to say that *Erscheinung* does implicitly acknowledge the whole owing to its mediate nature.

This issue is developed further in Hegel's *Lectures*, where we find him arguing that:

"The first [aspect] is the *representation of God*. Here we are considering, not God in general, but God in his representation. God appears, then, but he does not merely appear in general - he is essentially this, to appear to himself. For God is spirit in principle, [so] the divine appearance is at the same time reflection into self. Hence God's appearing is more precisely defined thus; that he appears to himself, that his appearing is an appearing to himself; thus God is an object, indeed he is an object in the sense that he is an object for himself. The second point is that God

appears to himself in the way in which he is in and for himself. These two specifications are in this respect fundamental." (LPR I, 328-9)

The key difference found in this passage, as against the quotations above from the *Logic*, is that here Hegel is putting the diremptive action of the Absolute from the Absolute's perspective; the account from the *Logic*, that is, concerns itself with man's cognition of the phenomenal and noumenal, the logical triad of the immediate, through the mediate and relational to unity. Thus, instead of regarding appearance as the Absolute manifest *for-itself*, the *Lectures* instead speak of the fact "that God appears to himself in the way in which he is *in and for himself*" (my italics).

This conspicuous difference occurs simply because the subject and object standpoints are both applicable to the Absolute; for man, to view the appearance as the Absolute manifest is merely for-the-Absolute (ie. his understanding awaits the conceptual partner), and man's perspective is here purely subjective; we see the diremption as that which objectifies the Idea, that is, and thus it is 'for'. But, as far as the Absolute is concerned, it is self-conscious throughout, and therefore the diremption is reflection-into-self owing to the wholeness of the Idea, for-itself because it has posited itself as object, and also in-itself because the object is united with the conceptual, or spiritual, subject, ie. God. Again, this is strictly an exercise in theological language, God being continually aware of his truth in and for himself, whereas man has to see first the thesis, then the antithesis, before being able to comprehend at last the synthetic unity. It is thus a question of the order of systematic deduction rather than two different accounts. As Taylor suggests, "what we are dealing with ... is a pair of alternative ways of conceiving this relatedness as beyond or underlying external reality,"¹⁹ both of which pertain to the same goal. Hegel stresses this himself by continuing to discuss the internal moments of man's cognitive process, writing:

"The first [moment] is *appearance in general*, abstract appearing generally. This is the *natural life*, or nature in general. Appearing is being for an other, an externality, being differentiated one for an other; initially, therefore, it is unmediated appearing for the other, not yet reflected

being for the other."

(LPA 1,329)

Hegel continues along this line of argument, again insisting that the appearance must be for an other rather than itself. Appearance necessarily has a purpose of appearing for *something*, and its task of representing the Absolute in material form means that the world as the ultimate appearance is other than strictly for itself. Harris is therefore quite correct in proposing that "the rational necessity of cognition can only be reconciled with its freedom, if the world we are aware of, the given content of our cognition, is the *self as other for itself*."¹¹ More crucially still, appearance must prove itself reflective of its conceptual other, equivocal with it and eventually univocal:

"Along with reflection there enters the need that the determinacy [of appearance] should have an equivalence with the Concept, though initially it is no more than an abstract equality. Reflection has before it the Concept; the general need of the Concept, but only within its frontier; this thinking, although it has universality, the realm of the Concept, as its principle, makes the universal itself into a mere determinacy, because it gets stuck in abstraction. Or [it] amounts to identity, unity." (LPA 1,331)

Thus, what we find asserted is that appearance must, in a fashion again reminiscent of Spinoza's pantheistic doctrine, be matched equally by what it appears for, namely the concept; again, therefore, +A must equal -A, for the appearance to be compatible with what it represents.

This, it may be pointed out, is not simply the result of attempting to either qualitatively or quantitatively equal one side with the other, an attempt to balance correctly one 'half' of the Idea with the other. It is, rather, the direct result of the opposition between thesis and antithesis, the absolute contradiction between +A and -A. In other words, the appearance is not merely equal to the concept because, for example, the being of a hundred pounds *should* equal the concept of a hundred pounds. Rather, the concept is identically mirrored by the Absolute's appearance because it is equivocal owing to its absolute otherness and thus sameness.

Indeed, to digress slightly, this point may be used to defend Hegel from the Kantian criticism that being is not an attribute of a concept,¹² i.e. that the appearance of the Absolute is in no way obliged to mirror the concept of it simply on the assumption that they pertain to the same (presupposed) thing. Hegel, rather than insisting that the notion must match the being of something, instead argues via his dialectical logic that the positive must essentially equal the negative, $+A = -A$, precisely because of their absolute opposition; $+A$ must equal $-A$, that is, because without the other neither can be and, as we have seen, this results in each actually being its other.

The above point is alluded to by Hegel himself in the last quotation from him. For he continues the passage by arguing that, just as appearance reflects the concept, so does the concept, at this logical moment, reflect the appearance, thereby maintaining the absolute opposition of one against the other. This is to say that the concept mirrors the appearance of its being, i.e. its diremption, precisely because the appearance also possesses the concept as its other; the equality of the two rests either way on their interdependence and mutual grounding on each other:

"We have already called the first aspect [of God] *representation*, but we have to take note that it can be designated equally essentially as the aspect of God in his *being*. For God *is*, God is there, i.e. he is strictly related to consciousness. [If] God is determined, he is not yet the true God; where he is no longer determined, no longer limited in his existence, or in his appearance, he is *Spirit*, because he appears to himself as he is in and for himself. God's being, therefore, involves his being related to consciousness; only as an abstract God does he have being for consciousness as something beyond, something other. Since he now is in his appearance *as* he is, [namely] Spirit or Absolute Spirit, and since he thus is as he is, he is in and for himself. His appearing includes consciousness, essentially self-consciousness. In other words, we must not separate this at all: God is essentially consciousness, essentially self-consciousness. The determination of consciousness in general is thus also comprehended in the first [aspect], and what we have called 'the representation of God' can just as well be called the 'being of God'." (LPA 1, 335-6)

And thus we may again see the completed triad. God is the unity of his concept, and the other of this, his diremptive appearance. Notably, we may again note that "we must not separate this" because of God's eternal self-consciousness, but consider the development of the triad as a development only in terms of a logical construction.

A significant problem, however, emerges if we reconsider Taylor's comment that manifestation is a "necessity"; for whilst it is necessary for appearance to represent its higher master, we may detect a view whereby *the Absolute is compelled to appear*. Arguably, it could be asserted that for something to be, it must appear, must become manifest in order to be concrete, but then is it correct to suggest that a thought or an emotion never genuinely *is* simply because it does not encompass a material appearance? Part of this problem will be addressed in chapter eight, but here I feel it is important to question the purpose of the appearance *from the Absolute's perspective*, and the implication of the phrase "coming to manifestation through necessity," namely the Absolute's dependency on its diremption. If the Absolute is dependent on its phenomenal manifestation, the dependency can be satisfactorily dealt with by it being a self-dependency; that is, the Absolute is not *externally* dependent. But why should the Absolute maintain the diremption to be of necessity for any reason other than that the noumenal Absolute must be contradicted by its opposite in the contingent, phenomenal world? As Jaeschke points out, it is "not clear what law - other than the law of "absolute necessity," which is invoked on more than one occasion but not expounded - determines such a historical sequence."¹³ To be still more precise, what law other than that of absolute necessity determines there to be any history at all?

Stace offers a half-hearted solution to the problem based on the logic of the dialectic (which is the only possible source for a solution), and writes "the Idea is reason. Nature is the opposite of the Idea. Nature, therefore, is irrational. And since rationality is the same as necessity, nature must be governed by the opposite of necessity, viz contingency. There is no necessary logical reason why anything in nature should be as it is; it simply is so."¹⁴ This then, acknowledges that if there is

rationality and necessity, then it must also be the case that there is irrationality and contingency, and Stace neatly matches the former with the noumenal and the latter with the phenomenal.¹⁵ But still what is evident is that, simply because the Absolute is rational, it follows that it must also include irrationality and blind contingency, requiring it for its constitution. This in turn means that the Absolute is reliant not just on a *logical* other, but on a chaotic world of chance. And, if the contingent is genuinely the other of the rational, ie. if it is *wholly irrational*, then the Absolute is governed here by something that is entirely incompatible with, and alien to, itself as Reason.

Findlay's response is to suggest that necessity is two-fold, first as the other of contingency, and then as the synthetic harmony produced by the contradiction: "Real Necessity, having a contingent foundation, is therefore not really Necessary at all" is his interpretation.¹⁶ Similarly, Fackenheim proposes that "contingency *enters into* the necessity which in turn consists of nothing but its conquest."¹⁷ But neither of these views are satisfactory because they deviate from true dialectic by suggesting that the synthesis (necessity) is in fact the same as one of the theses (necessity as opposed to contingency); necessity cannot encounter contingency merely to evolve necessity again. Findlay continues by asserting that "it is therefore Necessity itself which determines itself as Contingency, in [that] its very being repulses itself from itself, and in this repulse has only returned to self."¹⁸ In other words, necessity exhibits itself as its other (ie. contingency) before reconciling as itself, thereby both positing its contradiction and then overcoming such; God, as noumenal concept, exhibits himself as the appearance of phenomenal being, whilst remaining at one with himself, supreme over his apparent contradiction.

Here then, we have an answer in the contingent being genuinely governed by reason, the former being a representation to objectify the latter. But still we find no solution as to the question of why the positing of the phenomenal, contingent world is needed other than to fulfil the law of opposition,¹⁹ and Jaeschke's question is therefore still unanswered. Furthermore, Taylor remarks with notable chagrin that "the law is

unsatisfactory as a candidate for the underlying reality behind the Appearance; for it neither really underlies everything, nor does it achieve the inner relatedness which it is supposed to ... [the law] is seen against this background, as a way of conceiving the necessary relatedness underlying the phenomena. As such it fails."²⁰ Thus, we have the second element of the problem surmised, namely that opposition does not authentically operate to effect a synthetic harmony, because the rational necessity is continually supreme over its supposedly equal other of contingency. Opposition does not pervade necessity as it does contingency, because necessity is both thesis *and* synthesis, and as such the purpose of the antithesis, the contingent world, is lost. Although it may be argued that the Absolute is objectively rational owing to it being not its appearance as the contingent irrational, dialectic demands that it *is also* the irrational, something that is here eventually denied.

The problem, therefore, in brief is that the Absolute dirempts but for no satisfactory reason. It is argued in response that everything must have an other, and thus the noumenal Absolute must have a phenomenal other within it, but this phenomenal other does not follow genuine dialectic because it simply disappears into the notion of the noumenal, contingency swallowed whole by necessity. And, if this is the case, not only is a deviation from dialectic evident, but also the purpose of the diremption is again lost; if it is to be simply taken over by the rational reality, rather than genuinely affect this reality, it is surely pointless.

Notes

1. There is much debate regarding the signification of *Schein* and *Erscheinung* intended by Hegel. Inwood provides a valuable comparison in *A Hegel Dictionary*, and I have adopted his view in considering *Erscheinung* to be "in contrast to *Schein*, ... [an] independent and fluctuating whole or world. *Erscheinung* contrasts primarily not with 'essence', but with 'concept'." (p39) However, see note below on the Harris and Geraets translation.
2. Although this passage may be understood as being concerned with *Schein* rather than *Erscheinung*, the translators have argued it to be

discussing *Erscheinung* because Hegel is here employing this word with regard to the direct movement of *Schein* to *Erscheinung*, the latter - described by Harris and Gereats as the "higher development" of the former (*Logic*, pXXV) - being the "'truth' of *Schein* in a fuller measure." (*Logic*, pXXVi) I do not believe this to be quite precise in representing Hegel's intention here, but I concede it is correct to understand *Schein* in its context with (and, indeed, ultimately as) *Erscheinung*.

3. Harris, *Hegel's Development*, p388.
4. Taylor, p274.
5. Mure, *A Study of Hegel's Logic*, p117.
6. Taylor, p273.
7. It could be argued, of course, that any particular can be in and for itself. Hegel, however, disputes this, arguing emphatically that everything must pertain to the whole.
8. By "mere being," Hegel is clearly not referring to being in the philosophical sense (ie. as substance), but being-there (*Dasein*).
9. Mure, *A Study of Hegel's Logic*, p118.
10. Taylor, p275.
11. Harris, *Hegel's Development*, p389.
12. Kant, B631.
13. Jaeschke, p153.
14. Stace, p309.
15. Again we may detect a notably Platonic aura in the chaotic world representing an ordered, higher reality.
16. Findlay, p213.
17. Fackenheim, p19.
18. Findaly, p213.
19. It should be noted that although the above commentators refer to the law as the 'law of necessity', or the 'law of contingency', the law itself is of opposition, as both necessity and contingency are obliged to oppose each other according to dialectical logic.
20. Taylor, p275-6.

6. Truth.

From analysing the basic structure of Hegel's triadic deity, it is important now to consider truth. For Hegel, the Absolute is equatable with truth, and so one needs to understand the Absolute both in itself, and with regard to untruth and falsity. Broadly speaking, philosophy had (and perhaps still has) considered truth to be of either correspondence or coherence.¹ With the former, a brief definition could be that X is true if it is compatible with its relevant state of affairs; a statement saying "this is my dog," for example, is true on this criterion if the object referred to possesses the appropriate canine characteristics, differentiating it first from a cat, and then a bitch. In other words, correspondent truth is dependent upon *external relation*, the aptness of a proposition in its relation to external reality. It is very much the truth of empiricism and mathematics - that two plus two equals four is regarded as true is an obvious example - and we may note also Kant's declaration that the "formal element of all truth consists in agreement with the laws of the understanding."² Importantly, it may therefore be added that correspondent truth is applicable directly to particularity.

For Hegel, however, this is an unacceptable criterion because every particular relation necessarily involves finitude - one being limited by an other. As Inwood remarks, for Hegel "no finite entity fully agrees with its concept. It is entangled in relations to other things which confer on it features that are not determined by its concept."³ Thus, Hegel says truth is not:

"External things [which] correspond with my representations
 (representations of this kind are just *correct* representations held
 by *me* as *this* [individual])." (Logic, §213)

Coherent truth (which is usually associated with idealism owing largely to its *a priori* nature) argues that truth is essentially system, the dynamics of which are motivated by, and directed to, itself as a single system of thought. Truth, that is, is predicable only of the system as

a whole, and Mure writes that "truth is the genuineness possessed by any phase in this active unity of thought and being in so far as it is a 'result' approximating to the *full* 'reconciliation' of the self-contradiction within the unity."⁴ One consequence of this is that, aside from the system as a whole (which maintains an absolute truth value), any derivative proposition is only *partly* true or false. This is to say that a proposition as a subdivision of the whole, maintains both facets; it is true in that it is reducible back to the system, and untrue because it distinguishes itself from the whole via its contradictory nature. In other words, coherent truth cannot admit that some object or other is wholly false because every object is of the system and therefore contains an element of truth by virtue of its status as such. As Mure quite rightly points out then, "degrees of truth are ... in some sense also degrees of error, for truth lives only in the conquest of error, and error is not illusion, but it has no positive source of content except truth."⁵

(1) *Hegel's understanding of truth.*

It is the latter interpretation of truth that Hegel employs, and he fine tunes it to provide the definition "agreement of a content with itself." (*Logic*, §24A2) As the preceding pages have implied, truth is ultimately that which is reconciled to exhibit a perfect, harmonious unity; the sublation of division and contradiction produces the character of absolute truth. Again, Mure summarises it well, writing "truth is genuineness, not the formal coincidence of the object, whatever its content, with our *Vorstellung* [ie. representational thought], but its accordance with itself."⁶ Thus what emerges from this criterion is that a statement such as "my dog is called Mahler" contains no (coherent) truth value whatsoever, for the statement is quite independent from that which qualifies X to be true, and the fact that my dog is called Mahler, and that I can mentally reconcile this with my *Vorstellung* of my pet is only an insignificant and irrelevant compatibility. Hegel stresses this point, proposing that "we can form a correct representation of a bad object ... but the content of this representation is something inwardly untrue." (*Logic*, §24A2)

The question this poses is what is a 'bad' object and a 'good' one, and Hegel's response is that "what is bad and untrue consists always in a contradiction between the object's determination or concept and its existence." (*Logic*, §24A2) When I picture my dog, no matter how precise the representation appears, a contradiction continues to exist because both my picture and my dog's existence are finite and thus in conflict. In other words, any apparent unity between my concept and Mahler's existence, whilst producing a similar effect, is in reality other than genuine because it is formed on that which is essentially untrue (ie. finite, antagonistic factors). As Hegel puts it:

"In ordinary consciousness we see nothing wrong with the finite determinations of thought; they are held to be valid without further question. But all our illusions arise from thinking and acting according to finite determinations." (*Logic*, §24A2)

What emerges, therefore, is a fine difference between genuine truth and merely correct representation. The crux of this difference, that is the discriminating aspect, is the nature of the object; if the object is infinite in the full sense of the term it is genuine truth because it is absolutely itself. And, as only the whole, the Absolute, is infinite, then consequently it alone is genuine truth. Particularity viewed empirically as independent substance can therefore not be true if so perceived. Only when it is considered as of the whole, coherent within the system, can its truth be acknowledged:

"Truth is understood first to mean that I *know* something *is*. But this is truth only in relation to consciousness; it is formal truth, mere correctness. In contrast with this, truth in the deeper sense means that objectivity is identical with the Concept." (*Logic*, §213A)

This elucidates the above example further still. It is *me*, as a finite individual, that pictures my dog. My dog is a finite being who merely happens to correspond to the representation of it in my consciousness. Yet each contains the breath of the untrue by virtue of their finite origins, ie. their contextual states, which define the representations

through their relation to other external objects and representations, this relation causing their finitude. Thus, the *content* of the representation is finite and therefore deficient, and so it is unqualified to provide an authentic truth. To analogise, a person can build a house from bricks and mortar, but if neither the bricks or the mortar are systematically interrelated, the very basis of the construction is removed.

This is something that is very much evident also in the linguistic philosophy of Ferdinand de Saussure. In Saussurian thought, every appellation is arbitrary, an algebraic tool of expression. If one calls an object a 'lemon', it is totally independent of what the thing referred to actually is. Thus, if one points at a yellow-coloured citrus fruit and calls it a 'hamster', only the appellation is different from if it is called a 'lemon'; the fruit itself is unchanged and remains unchanged whatever it is called.

This is an example of a 'sound-pattern' or 'signifier', a linear appellation designed to inform the recipient of what is being spoken about. That the recipient understands that the signifier refers to a yellow-coloured citrus fruit is, however, wholly dependent on the recipient's mental concept, ie. his/her *Vorstellung*. Because the recipient is aware that L-E-M-O-N in his/her language signifies a particular fruit (because the sound pattern causes and subsequently relates to a picture of such in his/her consciousness), the object becomes mutually shared between the communicator and recipient as a concept, or as a 'signified'. What emerges is a kind of dialectic: a signifier has introduced a conscious representation, and from this a 'sign' is synthesised. L-E-M-O-N (signifier) + conscious representation of a yellow-coloured citrus fruit (signified) = the complete understanding of, and reference to, the object (sign).

This process is a part of *Parole*, ie. it deals with single terms, and Saussure applies this process to part of a complete system, *Langue*,⁷ for example a phrase. Dealing with only *Parole* does not communicate any substantial information, and therefore a 'synchronic' study of language

is required (ie. how a language functions as a self-sufficient system) and, here, a 'syntagmatic' examination of the phrase. If, for example, one asks "who has eaten a lemon?", by acknowledging the sound patterns and consequential representations, the recipient understands the meaning of the individual words but not the phrase, for the words, rearranged, could read "a lemon has eaten who?". By being aware of the syntagmatic relations between words, however, the *linear pattern* of the signifiers leads to a determined and ordered concept and thus sign. Further, with 'who has eaten a lemon?', it is noticeable that the first few terms ('who', 'has', 'eaten') are only fully understood once they are contextualised by the remainder of the phrase, ie. given a conceptual background which is determined by relation.⁶

What we therefore find within Saussure's system, is a remarkable parallel with Hegel's notion of coherent truth. Single words are quite nebulous by themselves, and thus require their place within a phrase., and the phrase must subsequently then find its place within the entire language system for it to be effective. Saussure's language system is, like Hegel's concept of God and truth, a complete, single system, and its internal elements are absolutely reliant on their respective places within it.

The key point, then, is that each of the elements fit into a whole. If we consider this in relation to a correspondence theory of truth, we find a dog is finite because it stands in relation to a bitch, a cat, a sponge pudding, and so on. The very notion of 'dog' is therefore dependent, finite, and untrue. For Hegel, this does not produce genuine truth, ie. the Absolute Idea in its ideal, reconciled state; rather, it provides antagonism, that which the Absolute is to overcome. Because all phenomena are finite and merely representative of their concepts, coherence is replaced by correspondence, and only when the finite phenomenal is sublated to 'leave', so to speak, the essence in freedom, does authentic truth emerge:

"God alone is the genuine agreement between Concept and reality; all finite things, however, are affected with untruth; they have a concept

but their existence is not adequate to it. For this reason they must go to ground, and this manifests the inadequacy between their concept and existence," (Logic, §24A2)

What this quotation thus proposes is that the Absolute Idea is uniquely infinite, and uniquely true, because it has overcome the realm of finitude. Correspondingly, all that is finite must be regarded as untrue. But, when Hegel says 'untrue', does he mean false?

"'True' and 'false' belong among those determinate notions which are held to be inert and wholly separate essences, one here and one there, each standing fixed and isolated from the other, with which it has nothing in common. Against this view it must be maintained that truth is not a minted coin that can be given and pocketed ready-made. Nor is there such a thing as the false," (PS, §39)

(ii) *Untruth and falsity.*

Patently then, the answer to such a question must be an emphatic 'no'; to argue that truth and falsity can co-exist as attributes of any given particular is the equivalent of saying that what is, is not! Yet, on the other hand, this would seem to suggest that Hegel must either argue everything to be false, or everything to be true. This argument, applicable against both Hegel personally and monism in general, however, fails to appreciate the difference between ultimate reality and the world of appearance; it argues, to borrow Kant's language, that philosophy is confined purely to the empirical and not to the thing-in-itself.

Let us override this narrow approach and broaden the categories to the 'true', the 'false', and the 'untrue'. The true is solely the reconciled Absolute, the sole realm of existence. The false, as the above quotation implies is non-existence; false, as the opposite of true, that is, simply 'is-not', 'not-being'.⁹ If one deals only with these two categories as such though, one must conclude that the finite simply 'is-not', but then this leads to a complete denial of existential

and Cartesian logic; for, if something 'is-not', how can it appear and create the illusion of its existence?¹⁰

It is at this point that we must apprehend the difference between falsity and that which is 'untrue'. Ultimately, on the level of absolute ideality, all that is neither noumenal or infinite (which in this context are synonymous terms anyway) must logically be considered as false - they 'are-not'. But this 'appearance', finitude, is false in one sense only, ie. it is a distorted and incomplete exhibition of the Absolute, for finitude is derived from the Absolute and the diremptive process:

"Everything that is actual is the Idea inasmuch as it is something-true, and it has its truth only through the Idea and in virtue of it. The singular being is some side or other of the Idea; that is why the other actualities were needed for it - actualities which likewise appear to subsist distinctly on their own account. It is only in all of them together and in their relation that the Concept is realised. By itself the singular does not correspond to its concept; this restrictedness of its way of being constitutes its *finitude* and its fall." (*Logic*, §213)

Thus, finitude is intrinsically and unavoidably associated with the Absolute so that, on one hand, it appears first to be *true*, and then (when Hegelian analysis has confronted and redressed it) *false*, but in reality it exists as the *untrue*, ie. that which is true only insofar as it derives from the Absolute; X cannot become false - that is absurd for it must be grounded in the absolute truth - but it can be untrue *prima facie* if ultimately it is the other of what it *appears* to be.

Hegel states that, although we can "know something falsely ... to know something falsely means that there is a disparity between knowledge and its substance." (*PS*, §39) In other words, falsity is an appropriate term only when aligned to a wholly vacuous concept. Indeed, it could even be asserted that falsity is bound entirely to the abstract, for any hint of substance or actuality would at once relate the concept to something that maintains a truth value; at best the concept can only

untrue. Falsity, therefore, is a quite nebulous notion, and Hegel commented "nor is there such a thing as the false." (PS §39) Thus, with this in mind, one may say that the false is not that which is diametrically opposed to the true, but that which maintains *no definite or associative content*. It is not a corruption of the true, something which is merely perceived erroneously, but that which has no substantial being. This is the basis for the difference between the false and the untrue, and the untrue is not devoid of any connection with the true, but rather is a distorted and incomplete representation of the true. As Hegel somewhat sternly notes:

"The more conventional opinion gets fixated on the antithesis of truth and falsity, the more it tends to expect a given philosophical system to be either accepted or contradicted; and hence it finds only acceptance or rejection. It does not comprehend the diversity of philosophical systems as the progressive unfolding of truth, but rather sees in it simple disagreements." (PS, §2)

To clarify this, I would like to borrow from the Hindu monist, Sankara, and his analogy of a man on a dark night mistaking a rope for a snake. The man sees the object from a distance and believes it to be a snake; his eyes tell him it is so and his mind accepts his sensual conclusion. Only when he gets very close to the object does the man realise his error, and then he knows what he sees is in truth a rope. Translated, the man sees the empirical, finite world as actual because his senses tell him it is so, and in his ignorance he persistently argues the phenomenal is actual in and for itself. Objectively, however, the man is deceived and the finite world is never a reality *per se*, just as the rope is always most certainly a rope and never in any way a snake. This, it must be stressed, is not to say that phenomenality simply 'is not', as the very concept of 'is-not' is in this context absurd; whatever appears must possess some element of truth in order for both the appearance and subsequent cognition to occur - one cannot cognise nothing! Rather, appearance must be *that which in truth is something else*; with Sankara's analogy, the appearance of the snake is not, indeed *cannot* be no-thing - no-thing cannot deceive - it must be rather

something else, ie. a rope.¹² Here then, we may see that truth and untruth is not simply a straightforward case of right and wrong. The erroneous cannot be dismissed out of hand as its very being indicates that it maintains some truth-value, even if such is not to be found in its immediate presentation.

The similarities between Sankara and Hegel are here quite striking. Each regards the phenomenal as the appearance of truth, but the phenomenal *prima facie* is not the truth. That is, the truth is manifest as finitude, but such manifestation as *it is presented* is not the Absolute; rather, the Absolute is the noumenal essence on which phenomenality appears. Appearance is thus rooted in the Absolute, and as something existent *is* the Absolute, but such is sensually cognised wrongly as true being. Being is not, therefore, finite appearance, but the underlying essence, ie. the Absolute.

What is obviously important about Sankara's analogy is that the sentient is not automatically equatable with genuine truth and, moreover, that *untruth plays a determining role in the concept of reality*. The reality (in Sankara's analogy the rope) is not only qualified by being 'not-a-snake', but also the appearance objectifies the reality, and this illuminates the inner core of Heraclitus' logic, that the affirmative 'is' exists by virtue of the negative 'is not', and truth is objectified by untruth. As Stace puts it, "the appearance is the essence; ie. it is not less essential than the essence itself. This means that it is essential for the essence to appear ... essence and appearance are identical in spite of their difference."¹³ Quite simply, if anything 'is', it must ultimately be of the Absolute, regardless of however it appears; the appearance and the essence intermingle on the lower level, adopting a finite guise, but ultimately "the truth of the finite is rather its ideality." (*Logic*, §95) Therefore, the phenomenal is actual, but not as 'finite X', and "the necessity of the world is to sublimate its finitude." (*LPR* 1.255)

Notes

1. I mention these two theories because Hegel adhered to the coherent value of truth, to which correspondent truth is the most antagonistic. Other, established analyses of truth, such as Wittgenstein's theory that combined elements of both coherent and correspondent truth, Ramsey's 'redundancy', and James' 'pragmatic' theories of truth are all post-Hegel and thus to an extent irrelevant to this discussion.
2. Kant, B. 350.
3. Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary*, p299.
4. Mure, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, p21.
5. Mure, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, p24.
6. Mure, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, p21.
7. Saussure defined three linguistic categories. In addition to *Parole* (individual terms) and *Langue* (part of a complete language system), there is also the broad *Langage* which is the potential of language. This latter category, however, is not of relevance in this discussion.
8. Saussure's linguistic theory is the subject of his book *Course in General Linguistics*. It should be noted that Saussure applies his theory only to language, and most certainly not to theology, but the principle on which the theory operates is not, I feel, in any way incompatible with this part of the discussion.
9. I use the term 'opposite' here quite loosely and in its more common sense. As not-being, falsity cannot be other than a mere *abstract* other.
10. Descartes, p53f, 96ff.
11. Thibaut G (trans), 1.4.6.
12. Many critics of Sankara (Stace, for example, p200) argue that the Hindu does in fact propose that phenomenality is a mere nullity. This in part derives from confusion regarding the Sanskrit term *Maya* which is often loosely translated as 'illusion'. However, such interpretation is wrong; as Radhakrishnan points out, for Sankara "the world is not so much negated as reinterpreted," vol 2, p583.
13. Stace, p200.

7. Finitude and infinitude.

The previous chapter argued genuine truth to be solely the Absolute, and furthermore that truth is compelled to be infinite. In ultimate reality, all that is true is the Absolute Idea in and for itself, free from finitude; "the finite is not actual being, it is not something subsistent." (LPR 1.308) Thus, Hegel denies the truth of all finite particularity, and keeps such particularity confined to the realm of appearance, and what emerges is that we enter a new realm of (superficial) dualism, that of a higher and a lower truth, the former being the ideal Absolute Idea, and the other the material, finite world that appears to oppose infinity, *Jenseits* and *Diesseits* respectively. As we have seen, 'appearance' (*Erscheinung*) for Hegel does not refer to illusion, for what appears does so strictly as the *noumenal Absolute appearing to be its other* (ie. the phenomenal), so that it is incorrect to say that it is illusion of no authentic substance; if this should be the case, and finitude is that which is wholly false, then it would be *genuinely* independent from the Absolute, and not a manifestation of it. The notion of the finite as it appears, as a distinct entity existing independently in and for itself, is therefore untrue, but as being-there (*Dasein*), ie. as *some thing*, it is derived from the Absolute. In other words, appearance as it pretends to be is untrue, and rather that the appearance is in fact the other of what it seems to be, ie. it is the infinite:

"Essence does not remain behind or beyond appearance; instead, it is, so to speak, the infinite goodness that releases its semblance into immediacy and grants it the joy of being-there. When posited in this way, appearance does not stand on its own feet, and does not have its being within itself but within an other." (Logic, §131A)

Appearance, then, is the emergence of existence, the character which the Absolute assumes when becoming cognisant, but its truth lies in its logical roots, its being as the infinite Absolute *despite* its apparent otherness. Hence, we must understand at once Hegel's employment of the finite being-there, namely that it is strictly a part of the Absolute's

self-objectifying system, emerging from the Absolute as seeming otherness, but retaining its *essential* truth as the Absolute, so that "'being-there' [is] a determination which ... is incapable of grasping what is true because it is itself untrue." (*Logic*, §28A)¹

(1) *Pantheism and dualism rejected.*

Ivan Soll is one commentator who fails to grasp this point. He suggests that, because Hegel proposes that "to be finite is to be limited by something else,"² then from this it follows that "'the whole world' or universe is infinite, for since it includes everything, there can be nothing else left to limit it." In this way, Soll argues, Hegel is "following Spinoza."³ But Soll's commentary indicates an unsatisfactory tendency on his behalf to view Hegel as a pantheist in the sense that everything is crudely regarded to be divine rather than assuming a place within a logical system and, as Findlay writes, "for an all-inclusive Spinozistic infinite he [Hegel] has absolutely no place."⁴ Although Soll never makes this charge of pantheism explicit (he is very much concerned with Hegel the philosopher rather than Hegel the theologian), he is basically asserting that, for Hegel, the Absolute is merely the totality of all, the conglomeration of each and every particular, be the given particular abstract or material. Therefore, his argument effectively is that Hegel shares with Spinoza the opinion that the deity is no more than the *totality* of all forms of being, ie. God is that which 'is'. But such an argument in the end only follows Stace's point that everything must eventually be encompassed within some indeterminate universal, and that such provides a wholly impoverished philosophical basis.⁵

Soll's interpretation stems from the simple logic that if every particular 'is', then only no-thing can be in opposition, or, put in reverse, no-thing can oppose the Absolute, and so therefore one must regard all particularity as a part of the Absolute. In itself, this is not incorrect - of course a monistic Absolute is all - but the Absolute is not all in the sense of it being a mass of collective particularity, but rather as the whole which is the underlying, true essence and ground

upon which apparent particularity is exhibited. Soll fails to acknowledge this important element of Hegel's system, arguing instead that all forms of being are collected together, so to speak, and stand as an apparent unity against the presumed remaining no-thing; indeed, it is this that prompts Soll to contend that "the whole, and only the whole, is infinite."⁶ He thus argues that it is the totality alone which is truly infinite (this position is probably derived from a misinterpretation of the spurious infinite, for which see below). Soll does acknowledge that Hegelian theory maintains that "any 'being' that is less than the whole of being, any 'content' that does not exhaust all content, 'necessarily stands in relation' to what remains. And to stand in relation to something else is, in Hegel's view, to be limited by it and thus to be finite."⁷ However, he misinterprets Hegel's meaning when he says that every particular, because it stands in some relation, is logically finite (ie. finite in the sense that an opposition is present) and instead understands this to mean that every particular must be simply reconsidered as a part of the 'whole' in order for it to be unopposed, an argument that eventually leads to a proposal that every part, as a *distinct part*, is an element of the Absolute. Thus, the task of the finite in Soll's reading, ie. the removal of its opposition, becomes merely a process whereby the particular is *reclassified* as belonging to this very indeterminate and obscure 'whole'.

This is surely not what Hegel intended to convey. The Absolute is not the total being of every distinct particular that possesses an affirmative quality, but the noumenal essence on which particularity is grounded; that is, the reality is the one Absolute precisely because the finite particularity of both the being and concept of X is negated so that the qualitative differences (ie. the antithetical relations) that appear to exist are overcome. As Hegel clearly states:

"Alteration [*Veränderung*] exhibits the inner contradiction with which being-there is burdened from the start, and which drives it beyond itself. In representation, being-there appears initially to be simply positive and to be quietly persisting within its limits as well; but, of course, we also know that everything finite (and being-there is

finite) is subject to alteration. But this alterability of being-there appears in our representation as a mere possibility, whose realisation is involved in the concept of being-there, and is only the manifestation of what being-there is in-itself. The living die, and they do so because; insofar as they live, they bear the germ of death within themselves." (Logic, §92A)

Again, therefore, Hegel returns to Aristotle's proposition that the thing contains its end within itself (*entelechia*, see chapter four), and Soll misses this point with alarming alacrity, neglecting to apprehend the entire idea of the *essential* Absolute, the Absolute which is pure being, the noumenal alpha and omega. Furthermore, such a misinterpretation of Hegel's dynamics means that Soll is unable to engage with the logical system of the Absolute's emergence into particularity and subsequent reconciliation. By proposing that particularity is existent in and for itself, one may only achieve a result of dualism (or an extremely flimsy notion of monism which is qualified merely by everything being under the umbrella of an unsatisfactory and obscure whole, that's prerequisites for inclusion are merely that something is. The mechanics, as Soll understands them, are that X, in order to be infinite, encounters and encompasses Y, and so nothing may thus be said to stand outside of this unity. This 'unity', however, is not the Absolute Hegel purports because it has changed to become $X + Y$, the Absolute *plus* its bounty of finite particularity or, as will be noted in chapters eight and nine, the misconception of synthesising A with B to produce AB.

Hegel argues the reverse of this; the Absolute, as we have seen, does not change or become intrinsically enhanced by its system, but rather is enriched only in terms of its apprehension. It does not *include* particularity so much as it *appears itself as particularity*, and the system is therefore one to illuminate, and not to concretely alter, the Idea. Hegel argues: "this last stage of the logical process proves at the same time to be what is genuinely first." (Logic, §215A)

Further textual evidence that may be cited against understandings such as Soll's is found in Hegel's *Lectures*, and this provides also a possible clue as to where such misinterpretations stem from. For, while Hegel does indeed write that the realm of:

"Finitude is a diverse manifold of external [particulars], and this manifold of many [particulars] is the bounded, over against which the unbounded defines itself as the 'allness' of the many," (LPR 1,291)

he at once continues to point out that:

"This finitude endures [temporally], and it does so because it contains something false ... Something of this kind, however, is not a true [reality] precisely because one side is a manifold, a multiplicity, while the other is a unity. The multiplicity would have to relinquish part of its character in order to be subsumed under unity." (LPR 1,292)

Therefore, what Hegel offers is an implicit attack on Spinoza's pantheism, for such an 'Absolute of Totality' is in itself an opponent to what he regards as a true unity, thereby demoting it to a position of insignificance on the lower level. Hegel does not, as Soll seems to think, gather all the particulars together and provide the collection with the heading 'God', or 'Absolute'; rather, he identifies the intrinsic unity of the essence of both X and Y that lies within the antithetical relation, stripping away that which leads to particularity, multiplicity, etc, ie. he *negates* the finite and its associative relations, and demands that phenomenal being ultimately relinquishes its limited character of finitude.

A similar misinterpretation is found in Grisez's critical summary of Hegel. Grisez writes: "the Absolute is nothing but its parts taken as a unity. Truth is the whole; the whole is the Absolute. Still, none of the parts by itself is true. But this position is incoherent. If the Absolute is nothing but its parts taken as a unity, then all of the conditions for the Absolute are given by its parts. If none of the

parts is true, then the Absolute is not truth. On the other hand, if the Absolute is truth, each of its parts also must be true."²⁸ In other words, Grisez is arguing that Hegel is at fault by proposing that the Absolute is truth because it maintains a supreme property as the totality of particularity, and yet particularity itself is deficient because it is subjective and in relation to other particularity. This, to Grisez, is unacceptable because the property of being the sum of particularity must necessarily derive from a *formation* of the parts, and if the parts are not true then no such formation, and consequential supreme property, can exist. If one considers a chariot, for example, 'chariot' itself is merely an appellation given to a series of components that are arranged in a particular manner. But to argue that the components are unreal renders the chariot as no more than a vacuous name which refers to nothing. The chariot only is because it is determined by its actual parts, without which the chariot itself could not possibly be.

Grisez, however, makes the same error that Soll does, in that he understands the 'whole' to be the unity of parts which stand unopposed because beyond the whole is only no-thing. Furthermore, although Grisez acknowledges Hegel's own denial of pantheism, he continues to maintain that for Hegel "the particularity, the becoming, and the otherness of finite and contingent things are not lost in God, but are gathered up and maintained in the unity."²⁹ Implicitly, this reasserts the charge against Hegel of pantheism, if one may consider 'pantheism' to refer to God as the sum of particularity, but it also suggests that Hegel advocates a mechanism whereby particularity is encompassed within the Absolute as it appears *prima facie*. That is, for Grisez (and Soll), Hegel's God encompasses finitude, possessing this as the whole, dragging it, so to speak, into the infinite category because it is presumed, by virtue of it having the property of being, to be within that which is presumed to be unopposed. Effectively, Grisez's vision is, like Soll's, that Hegel merely reclassifies finitude rather than negates it, encompassing it in an obscure Absolute, which for Grisez includes any particular that possesses the property of being, thereby supposedly

denying its finitude because it is within the whole against which there is no-thing.

But Hegel does not propose such a weak 'whole' as Soll and Grisez purport. The notion that his theology must accept the *prima facie* appearance of particularity in order for the Absolute to be genuinely staggers far from what I believe to be the real Hegel, where the negation of finitude is taken seriously. Thus, if we reconsider the chariot analogy, Hegel would not argue that the parts are unreal but the composition is real, for this is patently illogical as Grisez is so keen to stress. Rather, what is offered by Hegel is that the finite appearance of both the parts *and the chariot* (ie. the entire phenomenal realm) is fundamentally untenable as it appears. The truth of the chariot and its constituent parts lies in the common, underlying, and supreme essence, because "the finite is not actual being, it is not something subsistent ... [but] the finite is a moment of the infinite," (LPR 1.308-9) and both the chariot and its parts are merely forms of finitude:

"Although being certainly does pertain to the [phenomenal] world, it is only semblance [*Schein*], not genuine being, not absolute truth; for, on the contrary, the truth is beyond that appearance, in God alone, and only God is genuine being." (Logic, §50)

The finite occurs, therefore, not as a part or element of the Absolute *per se*, as a wheel is a necessary part of a chariot, *but as a moment when it is apparently distinct from the Absolute owing to its seeming limitation*. The relationship between the Absolute and its finite appearance is therefore confined to the moment of this appearance, a moment which derives from the Absolute, and which is, indeed, ultimately the Absolute itself, because the truth of finitude lies in its other, the infinite Absolute Idea. Of course (as will be discussed shortly), the entire infinite / finite relation that Grisez presumes quite wrongly to be directly applicable to the whole (the Absolute) and the parts (finite particularity) is a fallacy, for were such the case, then the infinite would itself be limited by its other of finitude, and thus it

is an absurd proposition. Rather, what occurs in the moment of appearance is precisely what the name suggests, an *apparent* moment of opposition between the finite and infinite:

"The definition of the latter [the finite] is precisely to be not true in itself. If God has the finite only over against himself, then he himself is finite and limited. Finitude must be posited in God himself," (LPR 3, 264)

Again, this illustrates the two levels of reality, namely an apparent reality and the true reality, but importantly, and despite the finite being-there's status as merely appearance, finitude must be as *appearance* immediate to the Absolute (from which it necessarily derives). If there is 'appearance', it, as all else, must be of the whole, essentially identical to the whole regardless of its guise.

A further, unsatisfactory interpretation of Hegel's perception of regard the infinite comes from Emile Fackenheim. His account, I contend is untenable owing to the dualism which emerges from it as a logical consequence. Fackenheim argues that "Nature [i.e. the phenomenal], though contingent, is not *sheer* contingency. It is a *Totality*, made so by a structure."¹¹ By 'structure', Fackenheim is presumably referring to the logical constructions that derive from Hegel's dialectical process; that is, the very act of diremption produces opposing structures, but these structures, if they are to be considered as genuine antithetical counterparts, must themselves be able to sustain the mechanics that are existent within them, despite their status as of the Absolute. Thus, the phenomenal world, aside from its position in the whole, can be seen as a distinct and autonomous system, a "totality," which maintains a reality in itself.

The reality is present because, Fackenheim argues, the logic of Hegel's system determines that the phenomenal is both "other-than-self" and "pre-self", self here referring to the Idea. This is to say that the phenomenal is other-than-self because it is that which opposes the noumenal, and pre-self because the Idea "reenacts the structure by which

Nature is maintained,"¹² i.e. the phenomenal must already be for the Idea to subsequently subsume it. Pre-self, that is, refers not to the Absolute's self-consciousness of itself prior to the diremption (i.e. the Absolute aware of an obscure, forthcoming diremption whose being has already been conceptually determined), but that the Absolute is actually challenged by the phenomenal structure. The Absolute is obliged to confront nature, to encompass it at a point which enables it to gain a fuller identity and enhanced self-consciousness, and thus an actual, mechanical advance is advocated whereby the Absolute encounters a hitherto alien structure.

This latter concept then, operates on the theory that, for A to be subsumed, it must be actual as pre-self, and it is this element of Fackenheim's interpretation which forces him into absolute dualism. Although he admits "the Absolute Idea is not one category *besides* others, such as those manifest in the actual world; it has so altered others as to incorporate them," he continues "this is true in a sense only ... logical thought is forced to recognise Nature as other-than-self in the very act which displays it as pre-self; in doing so it recognises, as well, the reality of finite selfhood, which takes Nature as other-than-self. Consequently, if the absolute logical Self supersedes existing finite selfhood, it is only at the price of an abstraction which leaves finite selfhood a persisting reality: a reality, moreover, of which logical thought itself stands in persisting need."¹³

In other words, Fackenheim is proposing that there is primarily the finite being of A, A is conceptually subsumed into idea-of-B, but the finite being-there of A persists on its own account in opposition to idea-of-B. Thus A exists as the pre-self of its absolute truth, that which is before its subsumption into idea-of-B, and continues its autonomous existence in spite of B. This, Fackenheim contends, is necessary, for unless A as finite being-there is continually actual, it cannot be subsumed.

But this generates a crucial inaccuracy regarding Hegel's theory, as it postulates an absolute reality of finite A as necessary both for the concept of it, and the subsequent subsumption. This in turn results in an absolute (rather than superficial) dualism as the opposition relies on an independent and self-sufficient finite to conflict with the infinite; the conflict cannot be resolved as each quality is absolute over against the other.¹⁴

Indeed, Hegel argues against this point with considerable vigour. The existence of being-there is never so in its own right - "the finite is not actual being" (*LPR* 1.308) - but exists merely as a produced moment of the system, a moment when being is self-reflected by its antithesis of nothing (and these then prove to be the same). The moment at which this self-reflection occurs, therefore, is what is termed as appearance, but because the actuality of its status is derived wholly from the system, and returns back to it in unity, it is patently incorrect to suggest that being-there possesses the pre-self that Fackenheim suggests:

"Being and existence presented themselves earlier as forms of the immediate; being is quite generally unreflected immediacy and passing-over into another. Existence is immediate unity of being and reflection, and hence appearance; it comes from the ground and goes to the ground. The actual is the positedness of that unity, the relationship that has become identical with itself; hence, it is exempted from passing-over, and its externality is its energy; in that externality is inwardly reflected, its being-there is only the manifestation of itself, not of an other," (*Logic*, §142)

Therefore, we must rather acknowledge the untruth of the finitude of being-there, an acknowledgement that Fackenheim refuses to accept, writing "absolute idealism must recognise the reality of the finite."¹⁵ Untruth, as we have just considered, opposes truth, and thus Hegel's system is, in reality, that from B the being-there of A emerges, A exists truthfully only as thought-of-B, the finite character of A is rendered as untrue - only thought-of-B (ie, the Idea) is reality. To

suggest, therefore, that A is the pre-self of truth is misleading, as it must, if it is a genuine pre-self thing, contain truth within it, something which is quite absurd if "the finite has for it no truth."

(LPR 1.421) Rather, A is merely the appearance of B, which contains no authenticity in itself (ie. as finite A) whatsoever, but rather fills an objectifying role in order to qualify the thing, maintaining its *essential, fundamental truth as B*; or, explaining it rather differently, "truth is beyond that appearance, in God alone." (*Logic*, §50)

(ii) *The spurious infinite.*

We may now consider Hegel's concept of the 'spurious infinite'. What has been established thus far is that God is absolutely infinite, and as such qualified only by its antithesis, finitude. But this seems to have problematic implications, for if infinity stands in opposition, it must logically itself be limited, so that "the finite and infinite stand opposed only in such a way that the finite is duplicated." (LPR 1.307) This is to say that, as the finite is limited, it must necessarily be limited by an other, ie. not-finitude (infinitude) and vice-versa, hence the 'duplication'. In Findlay's words, "the very fact that the Infinite is thought of as lying beyond the Finite, and as being exclusive of it, makes the Infinite finite, bounded by what it excludes."¹⁶

If we reconsider the Strife of Opposites, the problem becomes more lucid. Light is not only objectified by dark, but also has its quality negated by it. Thus, dark not only objectifies light by its opposition to it, but also - by virtue of being the antithesis - diminishes light's quality. The platform on which these exist demands an interchange, an alteration, so that light and dark can contrast and thereby exist. Abstractly then, light and dark are identical by their immediacy to each other, their mutual nature of confining the other resulting in a peculiar kind of battle, each vying for the other's space, and yet remaining simultaneously dependent on the other for qualification; it is a war that neither can win. Similarly, finitude, if it is to be finite, must be limited by infinitude, but so too must the infinite be correspondingly limited by the finite, a contradictory position.

The problem that emerges is quite self-evident; as X is X because it is not-Y, so infinity is infinity because it is not-finite. But this reduces the infinite to a dependent situation, giving it a negative quality (ie. it *is* only because it is not its antithesis). It is a 'spurious' infinite because its definition lies only in its opposition to its other, and therefore it becomes a particular itself, limited by its very definition and character of being not-finite.

This awkward situation in the system is the same as was encountered in chapter three; a deeper unity, one that frees the infinite from its over-against position, needs to be located, and Hegel seeks this in the transitory nature of the finite:

"The world is relinquished as genuine being; it is not regarded as something permanent ... The sole import of this procedure is that *the infinite alone is*; the finite has no genuine being, whereas God has only genuine being." (LPR 1,424)

This then, provides the answer, Hegel arguing that ultimately the finite has no genuine value, thus leaving the infinite unopposed; to consider the finite as true and authentic is to confine the argument to the lower level of appearance. The finite mirrors the Absolute, qualifying the Absolute through its reflection, but this does not thereby mean that the reflection is truth (which patently it is not), merely that the Absolute, and the Absolute alone, is. In effect, it is again like a man facing a mirror, objectifying himself (so to speak) by his reflection. Yet the reflection, though real as an appearance, is never actually the man duplicated, simply a visual manifestation of him, and thus it is untrue as a distinct entity, with its only facet of ultimate truth being its relation to its owner. The reflection is real as an appearance of the man, it qualifies the man, but it is false as a distinct entity; to assume it is otherwise is presumptuous and unfounded.

Stace neatly surmises the overcoming of the problem of the limit that distinguishes finitude by writing that "the finite is constituted by its own inherent positive character, by its quality, and not by anything

merely external to it. The meadow is limited by its own being, by the very fact that it is a meadow. But limit is negation. Therefore negation, not-being, are of the essence of finite things. Their very being, i.e. positive character or quality, is not-being. They contain within themselves the germs of their death and dissolution."¹⁷ In other words, it is this quality of not-being that lies at the heart of finitude. The spurious infinite is therefore such only on a superficial level, in correspondence with the appearance of finitude, but as this appearance is ultimately untrue, the genuine infinite is the abstract unity of these lower, abstract antagonists, so that "the truth is the unity of the infinite in which the finite is contained." (LPR 1.309)

Finitude, therefore, persists not as an actual, concrete feature, but as a misconception, the untrue against the true, the 'is-not' against the 'is', and the spurious infinite must ultimately be placed on the same, lower level. To argue that being-there is thus ultimately opposed to the Idea is in itself wrong; it is the finite character assumed by being-there that is untrue:

"The finite has for it no truth but is something contingent; it is a being, to be sure, but one that in fact is only a non-being. This non-being of the finite in positive form is inwardly affirmative; this affirmative non-finite is the infinite, it is absolute being."

(LPR 1,421-2)

The question that needs to be considered, however, is just how Hegel denies finitude its authenticity. Again, the problem is that, on one hand, Hegel attempts to prove infinity via its antithesis of finitude, but, on the other, he also seeks to argue that the antithesis, this essential ingredient for the objectification, is in fact not such at all and has neither any truth nor genuine being.

The definition of finitude is that which stands in relation, and what it stands in direct relation to is infinitude, so "*the genuine other of the finite is the infinite.*" (LPR 1.423) From this, however, one may argue that the finite and infinite are in fact identical because each is

grounded in the other and thus also is its other; hence, there is no difference between the finite and (spurious) infinite, and they collapse into unity:

"The true determination of the finite in its relation to the infinite is the immediate unity of both ... The finite is grasped as affirmation. This absolute negativity, the unity, this affirmation, is an abstract, free power, which, however, is a mediation in itself. This unity of the infinite is in itself no truth; on the contrary, the infinite seeks self-diremption in order to be only the affirmative as negation of negation." (LPR 1,307)

What Hegel argues, therefore, is that within true infinity lies both the spurious infinite and the finite. The true infinite (God, the Absolute) is that which appears to posit the moment of both finitude and spurious infinitude, which prove themselves to be identical and empty in their negation of each other, and thus the result is that true infinity is affirmed by virtue of its abstract 'opposition' to that which is not. As Mure writes, "Hegel calls 'infinite' not the endlessness which characterises the world of finite things (that is the 'spurious infinite'), but the nature of what contains its own determining negation within itself and is therefore individual by 'double' negation and not by mere exclusion."¹³ In other words, Hegel qualifies his infinite by driving the antithesis into a wholly negative position, deeming it to be untruth, against which stands the true, and this renders the antagonism as no more than abstract. Hence, one may surmise that Hegel again objectifies the one truth by the appearance of the untrue, so that the synthesis is never an actual derivative but the beginning and result of a logical process that manipulates through itself its own identity.

The interpretations of Hegel's concept of finitude that were offered by Grisez and Soll are here worth reconsidering. First, we noted that a (quantitative) number of finite particulars does not produce the Hegelian infinite;¹⁴ quantitative infinity stands in relation and is therefore limited and unacceptable in Hegelian logic - an unending series of parts is not considered as infinite. Indeed, Hegel expounds this point to a notable degree, arguing:

"There is a spurious affirmation that consists in the repetition of the finite, in the fact that it only brings forth again the finite that was there before, with the result that one finite thing posits an other, and so on unto the spurious infinite ... In this way the other coincides itself with itself; it comes to itself and the negation is superseded. The passing over into an other, or this spurious affirmation, is the spurious progress of the finite; it is simply the tedious repetition of one determination," (LPR 1,423)

From this it is clear that Grisez and Soll are quite incorrect to assert that Hegel's Absolute is the sum of X number of finite parts. Such a sum is not of an infinite nature, it is merely a finite process of "tedious repetition;" the Absolute, that is, is in this (mis)understanding limited by the finite nature of its constitution which is compelled to stand in relation. Findlay is quite correct to note that "there is no *last* member to a series of enlarging finites, and the infinite cannot be reached by pursuing such a series to its *end*."²⁰

A second element of criticism follows on from this. If the Absolute is the sum of its parts beyond which there is nothing else, ie. if it is only this obscure 'whole' that encompasses a variety of finite particulars, then the Absolute itself must be finite because it exists merely as the 'finished article'. If we reconsider the chariot analogy, the finite parts determine a finite chariot because of the particular formation of them; 'chariot', therefore, is here nothing more than a nominal. If the parts were rearranged to produce a bicycle, then again it is the formation of the finite parts that determine the completed object, and once more 'bicycle' would simply be the nominal appellation, of no value in itself. In other words, if the Absolute is the sum of its finite parts, it must itself be determined as finite; if finite particulars are considered actual *prima facie*, then *their quality of finitude must extend to their collective status*. Furthermore, this is in itself quite illogical for Hegel as he contends that "the nature of the finite itself [is] to pass beyond itself," because as soon as one comprehends finitude (ie. something limited by something else), then one

immediately sees also beyond it owing to the implicit otherness. As Findlay puts it, "in the notion of a finite thing ... is contained the notion of an indefinite world of other things, otherwise qualified, lying beyond its barriers. One cannot indeed conceive of a barrier as a barrier without in thought passing beyond it."²¹ Thus, we may appreciate that the quantitative infinity awarded to the Absolute by Soll and Grisez is quite useless anyway, spurious both in its nature and logical status.

This, therefore, illustrates the illogical nature of the criticisms made by Soll and Grisez, each of whom misinterprets Hegel's concept of both infinity and finitude. Both commentators make the presumption that the process of collectivity, ie. the reclassification, naturally produces a result of infinity, simply because they assume "there is nothing left." Both therefore fail to cognise that by not negating the finite character of particularity, by allowing it to continue as a collection of limited and relating-to-other things, such character must persist to pervade the entirety, the Absolute. The Absolute thus becomes distinct not by its infinity but by the opposite, its persistent, "tedious" nature of finitude.

Notes

1. Hegel is actually using this phrase with regard to simplicity, but he makes clear in the passage that such is the same with being-there, writing "'simple' is a determination just as poor, abstract, and one-sided as 'being-there'."
2. Soll is here actually quoting from Spinoza's *Ethics* (1.8), and assumes Hegel to be in absolute (and, moreover, continual, on-going agreement. This is somewhat misleading as it implies that Hegel assents to the view that infinity is found only in the *collectivism* of finite particularity. The following paragraphs will therefore try and illuminate the poor contextualisation offered by Soll.
3. Soll, p116-7.
4. Findlay, p164.
5. Stace, p78-9.

6. Soll, p117.
7. Soll, p117.
8. Grisez, p199.
9. Grisez, p189-90.
10. Grisez, p200.
11. Fackenheim, p88.
12. Fackenheim, p88.
13. Fackenheim, p89.
14. Notably, Fackenheim's interpretation falters also because the infinite is held against the finite, thus causing it to be spurious (see below).
15. Fackenheim, p88.
16. Findlay, p163.
17. Stace, p145.
18. Mure, *The Philosophy of Hegel*, p22.
19. Stace provides an excellent discussion of the quantitative infinite in Hegel's philosophy, p154-67.
20. Findlay, p163.
21. Findlay, p162.

8. A produced Absolute?

We have already considered the manner in which the Absolute contains distinction within itself, but we may remind ourselves of Hegel's insistence upon a form of diversity in order to objectify the Absolute. With this in mind, the question now is therefore whether distinction within unity creates or produces the Absolute, or whether such distinction is merely what one might rather loosely term as functioning elements of an atemporal, incorporeal Absolute as, for example, the mind, body, nervous system, and so forth compose a person.

(i) *Arguments for an evolving Absolute.*

It is dubious whether anywhere within the mass of commentary on Hegel can opinion be found to differ so sharply. Peter Singer, for example, is just one commentator who adopts the former view and attempts to expose a dependency on the Absolute's behalf on the phenomenal. Singer's argument, briefly, follows the line that the Absolute is at first essence which requires manifestation so that the task is for the Absolute "to perfect the world in order to perfect itself."¹ Or, put another way, that the Absolute's self-identification and objectification is contingent on a physical manifestation, the diremption.

This is an argument which must be judged as deeply unsatisfactory because it appears to assert that the Absolute is imperfect, *requiring* its phenomenal other, *depending* on the physical manifestation. In fact, it is quite unfair to forward this criticism, for as Singer himself stresses, the phenomenal is the manifestation of the Absolute itself,² and thus the Absolute is dependent only on itself, i.e. it is self- (and therefore in-) dependent. However, a more serious implication in Singer's interpretation is that the Absolute changes, or *evolves*, becoming something different in substance through the diremption, and it is this which in turn implies the Absolute to be initially imperfect, and continuously unstable. In other words, it is only *after* the Absolute has expressed itself via the diremption that it is complete.

Of course, Singer is not wrong to suggest that the Absolute is a dynamic system, that it changes and alters within itself, and neither does he imply that such change and dynamicism is in relation to an other, writing "for Hegel the Absolute is everything."³ The Absolute undeniably does possess change within it, indeed *must* possess change, in order for a reconciliation between being and concept, finitude and infinitude, and so forth to be plausible. Rather, the problem lies in what Singer perceives to be the *effect* of such change. He writes, for example, that the Absolute "seeks to comprehend itself"⁴ and, if this is the case, does this mean - as it undoubtedly implies - that the Absolute is not always and fully omniscient? If the Absolute must *seek* comprehension of itself, it must therefore be, in part at least, deficient because it is not internally content with itself.

This precise point is also found within Findlay's reading of Hegel, and he offers us the interpretation that "Spirit *is* infinite, but it must pretend to be finite in order to overcome this pretence, to distinguish it from everything finite, to become aware of its own infinity. Spirit is the only reality, but it must confront itself with something seemingly alien, in order to see through its own self-deception, to become aware that it *is* the only reality. And the creation and setting aside of this strange deception is moreover *necessary* to Spirit, which could have no being without it."⁵ But, between the two understandings, a fine and yet vital difference may be located; whereas Singer argues the Absolute must "perfect the world in order to perfect itself," and that it "seeks to comprehend itself," Findlay uses phraseology such as the Absolute "must *pretend* to be finite" (my italics), that "it must confront itself with something *seemingly* alien" (again, my italics).

Thus, what we discover in the latter's interpretation, is that *the Absolute is aware* of its activity, that it *posits on purpose* the pretence of otherness. Singer, however, proposes almost the opposite of this, arguing that the Absolute begins a process whereby it seeks itself to become perfect, not so much proving by a form of self-deception that it is all, but discovering almost perchance its true status. Furthermore, the discovery trip that Singer advocates does not result in a scenario whereby the Absolute finds itself as what in fact it has been all the time (ie. the

perfect, united reality), but instead includes also a situation whereby the Absolute has changed in essence. Rather than positing otherness, as Findlay argues, *pretending* to maintain opposition, Singer contends that only on *encountering* such opposition does the Absolute become perfect, and that before such an encounter it is deficient. The change that Singer says occurs then, is not part of the Absolute *deliberately and purposively* objectifying itself, in the sense that a man might prove his existence by making himself known to another who had previously doubted such, but a process which the Absolute requires to *actually* perfect itself, to essentially enrich and alter it. This is the key difference: Singer argues that the Absolute actually changes to reach a hitherto unencountered perfection; Findlay, more properly, says the Absolute *chooses* to *seem* incomplete, and that its perfection is never doubted but illuminated by its system.

The same problem can seemingly be found with Mure's reading of Hegel. Mure proposes in discussing the Absolute's process that "absolute spirit, immediate and prior to self-alienation, is positive thesis; spirit 'othered' and alienated is antithesis; spirit returning on itself and 'reconciled' is synthesis. But these are not three separable thoughts; for the initial positive is positive only by virtue of the negation logically to *come* [my italics]. It is only the determinable, only to be named proleptically. Thesis and antithesis are inseparable 'moments' of a single thought: the antithesis *is* the negated thesis. But the single thought *is still logically incomplete* [again, my italics], because the antithesis is self-contradiction. Thought must pass through negative mediation to re-mediation in synthesis."⁶ Once more, then, we see the Absolute described as implicitly being a product that is merely derived from dialectical logic; as Grisez, in this context, quite rightly criticises, "if Hegel's dialectic were open-ended like Plato's, no ultimate claims about reality would be made. But Hegel's dialectic terminates in Absolute Spirit."⁷

But the factor that instigates Grisez's own dismissal of Hegel (he writes "only if Hegel's *final* standpoint is incoherent is his entire metaphysical project a failure"⁸) rests on the theory that the emergence of the Absolute Idea, in and for itself, is the *end* of the process, or, put algebraically,

that A and B synthesise to produce the wholly new being of AB. Clearly, this must be seen as a contentious point. If we say that the Absolute Idea is *only* the result, the final development of the process, then the Absolute as everything else, be this Concept, phenomenal particularity, or whatever, is imperfect and anything but absolute. Furthermore, if we regard the Absolute simply as an evolving process, such introduces an over-riding element of inconstancy and instability, for at no point in the active process can we positively identify the supreme Absolute Spirit, the Idea in and for itself. What we are provided with is nothing more than something continually becoming, striving to reach its complete state, and this can only be viewed as a wholly unsatisfactory proposition.

(ii) *Critique of the 'evolving' theory.*

But does Hegel himself forward this as Singer, Mure, and Grisez seem to suggest. The evidence of his writings, I contend, argues otherwise. To begin with, we may consider Hegel's comments in *Phenomenology of Spirit* regarding the Absolute as reason, and how reason contains its end within itself:

"If we start from what is first, then this in its End, or in the outcome of its action, returns only to itself; and through this very fact it demonstrates itself to be something that has its own self for its End, and thus, as a *prius*, has already returned to itself or is *in and for itself*. Therefore, what it arrives at through the process of its action is *itself*; and in arriving only at itself, it obtains its feeling of self." (PS, §257)

This passage, then, highlights the nature of the 'End', the moment which Singer, Grisez, and (to a lesser extent) Mure argue is the culmination of the Absolute's development, but which in fact is merely a point of self-identification. It is not, that is to say, the end in the sense of any sort of final piece being inserted into a kind of metaphysical jigsaw, but a point in the Absolute's apprehension when it is objectively, as well as subjectively, affirmed. What must be made clear at this point is that the affirmation spoken of is not a *conclusion* to the Absolute, but the end of its illumination; it is the *picture* of the Absolute that is completed, not

the Absolute itself. In other words, Hegel does not advocate that the Absolute is a synthetic result, but rather that the synthesis applies strictly to the manner in which the Absolute is comprehended. Hegel writes:

"The same development of thinking that is presented in the history of philosophy is presented in philosophy itself, but freed from that historical outwardness, ie. purely in the element of thinking. Free and genuine thought is inwardly *concrete*; hence it is *Idea*, and in all its universality it is *the Idea or the Absolute*. The science of it is essentially a *system*, since what is *concretely* true is so only in its inward self-unfolding and in taking and holding itself together in unity, ie. as *totality*. Only through the distinguishing, and determination of its distinctions, can what is concretely true be the necessity of these distinctions and the freedom of the whole." (Logic, §14)

What we discover, therefore, is that the Absolute remains eternally whole and complete when viewed "in all its universality," but we must not simply assume such universality to be an end result as such. On this point Hegel is quite clear, arguing for example that:

"Philosophy (as science) is a development of untrammelled thinking, or rather it is the entirety of this development, a circle turning back into itself, remaining wholly at home with itself, being entirely itself, and wanting only to revert to itself." (JLHP, p87)

Thus, we see a plain advocacy of the Absolute referring only to itself as "the entirety of this development." Clearly, therefore, what we have is an Absolute which in itself is complete as totality, a system which is fully-functioning (so to speak) as itself, and wholly content. The 'development' of such, however, exists purely in the sense of *analysing* the system's structure, seeking to discover *how* the elements combine and synthesise in unity, rather than assembling the elements to produce a brand new construction. Again:

"Just as a provisional, or general, notion of philosophy cannot be given,

because only the *whole* of the Science is the presentation of the Idea, so the *division* of it, too, can be comprehended only from the whole presentation; the division is only something anticipated, like the presentation from which it is taken. But the Idea shows itself as the thinking that is strictly identical with itself, and this at once shows itself to be the activity of positing itself over against itself, in order to be itself, and to be, in this other, only at home with itself."

(*Logic*, §18)

Undeniably, what is asserted then is that "division is something only anticipated," because division is never present within the Absolute in itself, only in an analysis of the Absolute (for itself), i.e. the examination of the Absolute's composition and systematic structure, borne out by Hegel's words that the Absolute proves to be "identical" and "only at home with itself."

There is, I suggest, no valid excuse for understanding Hegel's Absolute in any other fashion. and the reasons for this are easy to pinpoint. In the first place, as was just noted, the interpretation which posits $A > B > AB$ has no option but to concede that the Absolute is deficient and imperfect until it reaches its terminus. Secondly, we may note that, as an equally natural consequence of such an understanding, unsatisfactory assumptions concerning the Absolute in its beginning are also made. For example, if one considers the Absolute Idea as an evolved entity, a result that is derived from the synthesis of various independent elements, then how can one honestly consider the motivation of such elements to be governed towards effecting such a result? In other words, if the Absolute Idea in and for itself is found only on the completion of what is effectively a linear process, how can the elements which construct it realise to what end their purpose is? And the answer to such a question is that they cannot. Unless there exists a pre-defined goal for the process, it can only be described as blind and with no definitive purpose, for there is no master in control who can either guide or beckon it.

(iii) *A third option.*

Furthermore, it is not cogent to counter-argue that, rather than deriving AB from a synthesis of A and B, the Absolute Idea begins perfectly, and then dirempts to objectify itself, before returning as the perfect, but now objectified, Idea. Grisez is just one commentator who boldly proposes "the Absolute goes outside itself and in doing so becomes other than itself, assuming the form of a material world, in order that it can *become* - that is, come to be actual,"²⁹ and this commonly propounded view, which exists by virtue of mis-interpreting Hegel's phrase "returns into itself," is deficient in two ways, the first of which is logically, and the second (which is a natural consequence of the first) is purposively.

(a) With the former, if one proposes that the perfect Idea dirempts before reconciling as the perfect Idea once more ($A > B > A$), then at some point in the process (ie. B), the perfect Idea becomes something other than perfect. To suggest that the otherness caused by the diremption is merely the objective (as against the Concept) is not satisfactory, because to be genuinely different from point A - ie. to authentically "go outside itself" - point B must be *concretely different* and not merely an alternative perspective of A. In other words, if it is argued that the process is actual as a constructive process, actual difference must be found within it. Further, if this case is argued, and the Absolute Idea returns from its manifestation to resume its status as the perfect, but now objectified Idea, then implicit is the fact that the Absolute could not have been initially perfect when to be objectified is even more perfect. This is to say that, if the Absolute *seeks* its objectification, then it follows that it was deficient initially, and therefore less than perfect. Thus, on one hand, the argument is that from the start the Absolute is perfect, but, on the other, that it becomes 'perfect-er' after the diremption, an absurd proposition.

With the alternative proposition, $A > B > AB$, exactly the same error can be identified because AB is held to be the complete, synthetic Absolute, and if AB is perfect, the two, distinct elements of A and B cannot also be so. Again, the fault lies in the difference between the Absolute Idea, content in and for itself, and the Absolute as it is initially subjectively apprehended, and Hegel makes it quite patent that any imperfection

attributable to the Absolute lies solely in such subjective apprehension:

"What is it then to be perfect? For it to be something determinate, the perfect must be defined. The definition of what is 'perfect' we can see immediately in what is counterposed to the referent of this notion. For what is imperfect is just the mere thought of God, and hence the perfect is the unity of thought (or the concept) with [phenomenal] reality ... The perfect, therefore is not mere subjective being but objectivity." (LPR 3,181)

Thus it is made explicit that the only imperfection of the Absolute *is not in fact within the Absolute itself but in viewing it merely subjectively*, only as concept, only as being, etc, or as is the case here, viewing it as two, distinct and independent elements that either combine ($A > B > AB$), or one element that maintains a concrete relation with an obscure and absurd other ($A > B > A$).

(b) The second problem to emerge is again of *why* the Absolute Idea, if it is initially perfect, should want to manifest itself in phenomenality.¹⁰ After all, if the Absolute is genuinely absolute in and for itself, what prompts it to become manifest in finite particularity, and motivates its 'drive' through its process; if it is perfect, that is, why should it have the need for such purpose?

If we return to the first rejected suggestion, that the Absolute is imperfect until it has manifested and then reconciled as AB, or that the Absolute is reliant on finite particularity, then we are provided with one, plausible answer to this problem. However, the cost of such an answer is expensive, for it results in a wholly unsatisfactory proposition that the Absolute depends on the phenomenal world for its being, needing and requiring such for it to gain perfection. This option must be categorically rejected, for it is simply nonsensical to suggest that a supreme, perfect, infinite deity depends on anything. Furthermore, such a proposition leads to a second problem, for if the Absolute needs the phenomenal world, requires it for its purpose, then the phenomenal world must be considered as a *genuine* other to the Absolute.

This second point itself depends on having the $A > B > AB$ assertion as its base; it cannot be argued to apply to Hegel's thesis / antithesis relation because these two elements in fact prove to be each other. With $A > B > AB$, however, genuine otherness is present because *the Absolute begins in an imperfect state*. That is to say, it starts its absurd process merely as A and requires B for it to synthesise with, but B enters the relation as a wholly new and independent element. Certainly it is argued by those such as Singer that A and B contrive to produce AB, but AB is in truth nothing but a construction of two, independent elements which have been united at a late stage of the process. A and B, therefore, despite being married eventually, begin as genuine, alien others. What must therefore be immediately recognised is that the phenomenal world is *eternally* part of the divine being, however vague this may, at this stage, seem. This point is raised with typical eloquence by Reardon, who comments "the universe is the 'thought' of God as the eternal Idea, the 'Word', by which he is externally expressed and manifested. It thus must be conceived as existing *in* God, whether as material being, the natural order, or as the finite intelligence of individual subjects."''

The phenomenal is thus an intrinsic part of the Absolute's being, not a material element that comes into contact with a conceptual deity but an essential part of the Absolute's self. Or, in other words, we are not dealing with two independent parts that happen to come together in some obscure way, but rather elements which are as essential to the Absolute as the body and life-force are to a human being:

"The members and organs of a living body should not be considered merely as parts of it, for they are what they are only in their unity and are not indifferent to that unity at all. The members and organs become mere 'parts' only under the hands of the anatomist." (Logic, §135A)

In conclusion, then, we cannot persist with the notion of either $A > B > AB$, nor $A > B > A$. The analogical phrase "they are what they are only in their unity," employed by Hegel, makes this quite explicit, at least in terms of interpreting his theology, if not critically evaluating its plausibility.

Notes

1. Singer p83.
2. Singer p80.
3. Singer p81.
4. Singer p81.
5. Findlay, p38-9.
6. Mure, *Philosophy of Hegel*, p34-5. It should be noted that Mure does not persist in his argument and later retracts it (p140-4), the point again being, as with Findlay, that the Absolute *deliberately* posits an other to itself. However, even if Mure intended to follow Findlay's line from the outset, the clumsiness of his initial assertion highlights the complexity of this issue, and the thin yet critical dividing line between the two interpretations.
7. Grisez, p194.
8. Grisez, p195.
9. Grisez, p185.
10. See chapter five.
11. Reardon, p102.

9. The 'wholly present' Idea versus historical evolution.

Thus far, we have considered an unsatisfactory set of interpretations concerning the process of the Absolute, interpretations which argue for either an evolved Absolute ($A > B > AB$), or an Absolute which is illogically to become more perfect than perfect ($A > B > A$). These propositions I have attempted to expose as being logically deficient both in their understanding of the 'end', ie. the Absolute Idea in and for itself, and in their presuppositions and bogus notions regarding precisely how this end is derived. In short, we have deduced that the Absolute cannot simply be contrived from a system which maintains no Idea as the possessor of process, nor can the Absolute be enhanced by virtue of engaging itself within the logical process because this immediately implies an initial deficiency.

So, what can be said about the Absolute Idea in terms of the dialectical progression, a progression which Hegel undeniably does advocate? To begin with, we may consider Hegel's point that "we usually suppose that the Absolute must lie far beyond; but it is precisely what is wholly present." (*Logic*, §24A2) Here, we may at once note that Hegel does not suggest a contrived Absolute, a result which is constructed and becomes complete at the end of a linear development, but neither does this promote the second rejected proposition, that the Absolute "goes outside itself" before returning; if $A > B > A$ is the case, then the Absolute still cannot be "wholly present," *unless B is in truth A*.

Now, this proposition may, I suggest, be viewed in two ways. The first way, illustrated in the chapter above, is not plausible because this still implies a requirement on the Absolute's behalf to become essentially enhanced. As was noted, Grisez writes "the Absolute goes outside itself and in doing so becomes other than itself ... in order that it can *become* - that is, come to be actual,"¹ and so again we find either an initially imperfect Absolute, or this (mis)understanding of $A > B > A$ and the ridiculous idea of the perfect becoming more perfect. And, if we say that the Absolute is perfect, becomes imperfect by going "outside itself," and then returns to its perfection, we cannot reconcile this with Hegel's



insistence that the Absolute is wholly present, never mind find any sort of reason for such a jaunt. In other words, we are faced with a situation whereby the Absolute cannot, if it is wholly present, move from perfection, to imperfection, and then back to perfection, nor can it be initially imperfect and then rise to perfection because of the implications already listed, and because it would still not be wholly present.

But, if we examine the second understanding of $A > B > A$, with B ultimately being A and only *appearing* as its other, then the Absolute in and for itself, as the Idea, can be wholly present and, moreover, eternally perfect and thus genuinely absolute. That is to say, the Absolute does not shift or progress through a *linear* process as such, $A > B > A$, because B is in fact A and so there is no authentic, linear progression; it is instead essentially $A > A$ or, as Hegel puts it in more detail (and will be discussed shortly), $+A = -A$. This leads, of course, to placing a question mark over the role of apparent otherness; what is it there for, and how precisely does it play any substantial part in the Absolute? One cannot deny its existence, any more than one can deny the phenomenal world's being over against the concept of God; it is there, it seems to be different, and yet it proves itself to be the same - why?

The answer lies in the self-consciousness of the Absolute, its deployment of what we have here termed as B to create seeming otherness. Once more, the influence of Heraclitus is evident; the path up is the same as the path down because both up and down are contingent on their shared status of being their opposite's other. If we apply this to $A > B > A$, or the inversion of this, $B > A > B$ (which is precisely the same as A and B are merely nominal appellations), then we can see a tension in the relation, as to say 'up' implies the existence of 'down', but the emergence of 'down' immediately and in turn implies the existence of 'up'. Hence we find the paradoxical conclusion that $+A = -A$, because each contains the other within it owing to the mutual reliance and opposition. A simpler analogy exists in the human person; we exist both physically and spiritually, as body and soul in a state of mutual interdependence. In order to be conscious of one's self, one must have a body, something cognisant and tangible, something that is concretely identifiable as an object. Equally essential,

however, is the soul (or mind), which is able to sustain the consciousness of existence and prevents the body being merely a jumble of material elements: ²

"The purpose seizes upon the object in immediate fashion, because it is the power over the object; particularity is contained within it, and within this particularity objectivity is contained as well. The living being has a body; the soul takes hold of the body and, in doing so, it has objectified itself immediately. The human soul has much to do in making its corporeal nature into a means. Man must first take possession of his body, as it were, in order for it to be the instrument of his soul." (Logic, §208A)

What Hegel offers here, then, is a reason for the Absolute to posit itself as otherness, i.e. to objectify itself, to become self-conscious and aware of its own being. It is insufficient, that is, for the Absolute to be merely content in-itself, it must also be content through its self-objectification which is for-itself. Thus, once more we see dialectic, only here Hegel is actually applying it to God himself. Not only, therefore, does he apply the logic of the dialectic to his theological structure, confronting every thesis with an objectifying antithesis, but he persists further in demanding that the Absolute itself, at its most fundamental, be subject to such logic as well.

In many ways, this is justifiable; could we seriously consider a theology which pertains to the whole when the whole itself stands exempt from the logic that deduces it? Perhaps not. But this in turn takes us back to our recurring problem that if the Absolute has to posit apparent otherness in order to objectify and become self-conscious of itself, does this not imply that the Absolute is initially unconscious of its own being? Hegel is quite clear of what he means by consciousness (*Bewusstsein*), and one may read for example:

"Consciousness knows *something*; this object is the essence or the *in-itself*; but it is also for consciousness the in-itself. This is where the ambiguity of this truth enters. We see that consciousness now has two objects; one is the first *in-itself*, the second is the *being-for-*

consciousness of this in-itself. The latter appears at first sight to be merely the reflection of consciousness into itself, ie, what consciousness has in mind is not an object, but only its knowledge of that first object. But, as was shown previously, the first object, in being known, is altered for consciousness; it ceases to be the in-itself, and becomes something that is the *in-itself* only for consciousness. And this then is the True."

(PS, 986)

Hence it is clear that the true, the Absolute, must be self-conscious, what we are commonly terming as the Idea in and for itself. But does such consciousness arise for the Absolute? If it does, then Singer and Grisez have authority for their assertions, but at a price, as we have already observed, of the Absolute not being wholly present. Further, we may again say that if the Absolute's self-consciousness is not eternal, on what grounds does the Absolute know it must attain objectification; after all, if it is initially unconscious of its truth, it surely cannot know to venture forth. In fact, Hegel does not provide us with a straightforward solution, but rather he offers three perspectives under which the Absolute may be viewed as outside time and the world, as the world itself, and as the church:

"The first divine history is *outside the world*, it is not in space, but outside finitude as such - God as he is in and for himself. The second locale is the *world*, the divine history as real, God having to his determinate being in the world. Thirdly there is the *inner place*, the community, first of all in the world, but also the community insofar as it simultaneously raises itself to heaven, or already has heaven within itself on earth - the community which, as the church, is full of grace, and in which God is active and present."

(LPR 3, 187)

The first history, or category, is the most important to this thesis, and I shall return to it shortly in order to reinforce my attack upon the notion of a produced Absolute. Initially, however, I would like to examine the second and third categories which might appear to lend partial support to the evolutionary theories I am disputing, but more apparent than real because it is quite useless to view them except in context of their

relation to the first and major category, that of God outside finitude. As Findlay rightly says, "it is plain, in fact, that Hegel's metaphysical aim is not to *do* the work of history or science, nor to add to their results, but to frame concepts in terms of which these results can be philosophically grasped, can be allotted a place in the theological frame of notions and phases of being in terms of which Hegel sees the world."³ Thus, we must at once comprehend that Hegel is not simply aligning his Absolute to the development of the world and the church and, moreover, making it contingent on such (the argument that Singer propounds), but is rather facing the reality of the phenomenal world and trying to encompass it within his theological structure. We cannot deny the physical world, nor refute its chronological development, but if we argue that for Hegel everything is of the whole, that he is a genuine exponent of monism, then we must agree with Fackenheim's assertion that "Hegel is forced to confront history,"⁴ but in a way that keeps it ultimately subordinate to his dominant theological position.

Hegel himself note the tension between perspectives drawn from the first and second categories:

"We can say that the Absolute Idea - the way it is determined as an object, subsisting in and for itself - is complete. On its subjective side, however, this is not so; it is neither complete in itself - [for] it is not [yet] concrete - nor is it complete as consciousness with respect to what it has as its object."
 (LPR 3, 198-9)

In other words, the historical aspect of the Absolute is not complete and, should we consider this aspect in isolation, we find only a crumbling notion of Hegel's deity. As Fackenheim critically comments, it remains "wholly mysterious how any one time in human history could ever become ripe for Hegelian 'science', much more how human history could move necessarily in that direction."⁵

The notion of an entirely historically-rooted Absolute is therefore not plausible, but there remains the problem of how history can be intrinsically associated with Hegel's all-encompassing system. For, as

Findlay puts it, "the Philosophy of History is no independent part of the system, which can be studied in isolation. It is part and parcel of the teleological movement of the system as a whole,"⁶ and the answer lies in our return to the first category of God beyond the sensible, the finite, and time. If we return to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, we observe the three categories developed as follows:

"We can then define these three elements differently in regard to *time*. Thus the first element is God outside of time, God as the eternal Idea in the element of the pure thought of *eternity*, but eternity only in the sense in which it is set against time. This time that is in and for itself explicates itself by unfolding into past, present, and future. The second element is the divine history as appearance, but as a *past* time; it is [there], for appearance means something that is, that has being, but it has a mode of being that has been reduced to mere show. As appearance it is an immediately determinate being, which is simultaneously negated; this is the past - exactly what is called history, which proves itself to be mere appearance by the very fact that it is *only* history. The third element is the *present*, but only the limited present, not the eternal present as such but the present that distinguishes past and future from itself. This is the element of heart and mind, of immediate subjectivity - the spiritual 'now' as it is in this [single] individual. But this present has also to be the third element; the community raises itself to heaven as well. So it is a present that raises itself, it is essentially reconciled, brought to consummation through the negation of its immediacy, consummated in universality, but in a consummation that is not yet achieved, and which must therefore be grasped as *future* - a now of the present that has consummation before its eyes; but because the community is posited now in the order of time, the consummation is distinguished from this 'now' and is posited as future. These are the three universal ideas in which we have to consider the divine history." (LPR I, 187-8)

Here, then, we see God being vitally portrayed as beyond time, but in such a way that he maintains control over history, both past and to come, via the second and third categories which contribute in differing ways to the phenomenal aspect of the Absolute. What emerges from this is that the second and third categories are therefore subservient to the first, because

the first category of the Absolute beyond time determines the progress of history:

"The sole thought which philosophy brings to the treatment of history is the simple concept of *Reason*, that Reason is the law of the world and that, therefore, in world history, things have come about rationally." (RH, p11)

The Absolute as Reason therefore dictates the world and history, and from this it must be concluded that the Absolute does not evolve other than in its *self-determined and providential appearance*. It does not become perfected or complete as Singer propounds, but commands outside of finitude its changing nature within it. Stace summarises this as lucidly as anyone, offering the view that "in history the Idea unfolds its various phases in time and the dominant phase at any epoch is embodied in a dominant. The succession of these phases constitutes world-history, and this history is not governed by chance or blind fate but by the eternal reason, the Idea itself. Hence history is no blind medley of contingencies, but is a rational development. The Idea, when thus embodied in the history of the world is the world-spirit. It is spirit, because spirit means simply the concrete embodiment of the Idea."⁷

The notable implication of Hegel's theory is that the phenomenal, historical world is therefore not only the manifestation of the Absolute, but subject to divine rule. What we have is a doctrine of divine providence,⁸ and Hegel pursues this throughout the second and third categories, writing (for example) for the former that:

"Philosophy is the exhibition of the development of thought as it is in and for itself, without any addition; the history of philosophy is this development in time. Consequently, the history of philosophy is identical with the system of philosophy." (ILHP, p87-8)

The above quotation shows that history is employed as an "exhibition" of the Idea's movement, reflecting the Absolute's internal logic. It does not enjoy any real autonomy but matches the abstract development of the Idea, thus highlighting it as a phenomenal representation of God.

Here we perhaps find the closest similarity between Hegel and Spinoza's pantheism, with Hegel edging perilously near to Spinoza's concept of thought and extension, the two modes of the substance of God.⁹ Yet Hegel maintains his distance from Spinoza, because he stresses that the sublation of a thing's character provides a more apprehensible unity. That is to say, when the thesis and antithesis are reconciled in unity, the synthesis is not a pure negation, a result of one cancelling out its other, but a subjective thesis being objectified by its antithetical other. If we reconsider the light and dark analogy, neither of these two identical elements lose their character, but rather they can be fully understood only by their opposition to each other and their place within the higher, enriched (in terms of cognition) unity. Hegel attacks Spinoza for entirely negating the elements, writing:

"However, in Spinozism this world or this 'all' simply *is not* [*ist gar nicht*]. Certainly the 'all' appears, one speaks of its determinate being [*Dasein*], and our life is a being within this existence [*Existenz*]. In the philosophical sense, however, the world has in this view no actuality at all; it simply *is not* ... If one employs the expression 'all is one' and [claims] therefore that unity is the truth of multiplicity, then the 'all' simply is no longer.¹⁰

(LPR 1, 377-8)

In other words, although Hegel may agree with Heraclitus that "the path up is the same as the path down," he recognises also the unity's dependency on the logic that gives the unity its precise character. In application to the providential, historical world, therefore, whilst the world acts as an image of the dynamic Idea, it never leaves its status as 'an other' in the same way as my body does not relinquish its character and distinction from my soul, despite the fact that each serves to illuminate the higher unity of 'me'.

The issue of how Hegel's Absolute maintains both purity and distinction has already been discussed. But it is important again to stress how this can be the case, so that when we argue Hegel to be monistic, we do not blindly assume an absolute, indifferent, static deity, but a deity who possesses the phenomenal world within its being, as well as a deity defined as

concept. I possess a body *and* a soul, direction possesses up *and* down, and so forth; whilst the elements contribute to the unity of the whole upon which they are dependent - the 'possessor' - they retain an element of difference as 'others'.

Most significant to this part of the discussion, however, is the fact that one entity does not meet its other to *produce* the unity, $A > B > AB$, but that, *as opposites, they arise in exact opposition to each other.* $+A = -A$, and it is wholly reliant on $-A$ for its status because it is grounded in $-A$; it is precisely itself, that is, because of its absolute other, and the unity of the Absolute (A) is based entirely on this principle of $+A = -A = A$.

Hence we may say that the most important category is the first, that of God outside of space, time, and finitude. It is so because only from this category can God be omnipresent, omniscient, and all-powerful. This does mean that Hegel is compelled to adopt a strict doctrine of divine providence, but I suggest that a monistic theology can encompass no viable alternative. If there is free will, and man and history can determine themselves, then a conflict of volition becomes evident, the Absolute's will versus a genuinely alien other's. Instead, Hegel is compelled to argue for divine providence, so that the manifestation of God, the seeming other which objectifies the Idea in-itself, is indisputably controlled by the incorporeal Absolute Spirit. The self-consciousness of the Absolute is thus exhibited only in the subservient second and third categories, in the manifestation, yet ultimately this exhibition too has its source beyond such transient fields; instead of the Absolute seeking itself, therefore, it is eternally self-conscious and posits itself as otherness merely to exhibit its wholesome unity rather than to strive to reach it. Thus Hegel asserts:

"When we speak of the Idea, it must not be taken to mean something far away and beyond. Instead, the Idea is what is perfectly present, and it is likewise to be found in any consciousness too, however confused and impaired it may be. We imagine the world as a great whole which has been created by God - in such a way that God has manifested himself to us in it. In the like manner, we regard

the world as governed by divine Providence, and this implies that the world, in its mutual externality, is eternally led back to the unity from which it came forth, and is preserved in accordance with that unity." (Logic, §213A)

Thus, the Absolute exists in eternal perfection with apparent otherness which proves in truth to be its very self. Of course, this is an enormous amount of philosophy crammed into these few paragraphs, but further illustration is afforded by Hegel via an important passage in the *Logic*:

"With regard to the *beginning* that [this] philosophy has to make, it seems, like the other sciences, to start in general with a subjective presupposition, i.e. to have to make a particular object, in this case *thinking*, into the object of thinking, just like space, number, etc. But what we have here is the free act of thinking putting itself at the standpoint where it is for its own self, *producing its own object for itself* thereby, and *giving it to itself*. Within the Science [i.e. Hegel's system] this standpoint, which in this first act appears as *immediate*, must make itself into the *result*, and (what is more) into its last result, in which it reaches its beginning again and returns into itself. In this way, [this] philosophy shows itself as a circle that goes back into itself; it does not have a beginning in the same sense as the other sciences, so that the beginning only has a relation to the subject who takes the decision to philosophise, but not to the science as such ... This is even its [i.e. the Absolute Idea's] unique purpose, deed, and goal; to arrive at the Concept of its concept and so to arrive at its return [into itself] and contentment." (Logic, §17)

This paragraph again enforces support for the Absolute being beyond time and space, yet positing itself as an object within the realm of time and space. In assuming the claim is ontological, maintaining that the Absolute expresses its consciousness by making such the object over and against itself as subject in order to provide such consciousness with definition. Thus understood, we can picture quite simply the act of expression or uttering; in effect, the concept amounts merely to a declaration of being. Again, it is crucial to note that such an expression does not intrinsically alter the Absolute, but only illuminates it, making objective what would otherwise be just a presupposed, subjective being. The subjective being is

not changed by becoming also the object; instead it simply logically *proves*, as it were, its being.

There are a number of other vital points raised within this quotation. First, there is the contention that the beginning of the process is identical, indeed actually *is*, the result; the initial standpoint, that is, must also be the end, and so, rather than A and B contriving to synthesise AB, we again return to the A > B (as an appearance of A) > A proposition, with A (the Absolute Idea) "returning into itself." Second, we may note that Hegel is saying that his system is circular rather than linear or, put another way, that rather than progressing from A > B > AB (with B being the ingredient which enhances A), *there is an authentic return to A, and therefore no actual departure from it.*

What precisely does this mean? If we consider, as Singer and Grisez suggest, that A becomes 'more perfect' owing to its diremption via B, then the initial Absolute cannot be the same as the progressed Absolute because, as both Singer and Grisez readily admit, the Absolute has been enhanced, has "become" and been made "actual," in Grisez's words. Thus, there is no genuine return of the Absolute into itself, nor a situation whereby the Absolute is wholly present; there is an immense difference between the enhanced Absolute (AB) and the Absolute initially engaged (A). But, when Hegel says we have a "circle," and a "return into itself," this must surely mean a purely A > A proposition, with no enhancement or essential change in the Absolute's perfect status.

In other words, we are compelled to reconsider precisely what we mean by 'process' or, to be more accurate 'system'. A preference for this latter term is immediately of assistance, for lost is the linear implications of the former. Hegel proposes in his introduction to the *Logic* that "a philosophising *without system* cannot be scientific at all," (*Logic*, §14) but this need not, indeed should not, be understood simply as arguing AB proceeding from A + B in the evolutionary manner which I have already criticised. Instead, we must view the general notion of system as that which is a whole, or totality, but also that from which particular aspects can be cognised and examined separately.' Here we can refer to Hegel's

comments regarding cognition of particular elements, and the importance of understanding them as not being actual in and for themselves, but as parts of the Absolute:

"In nature, it is not something-other than the Idea that is [re]cognised, but the Idea in the form of [its] uttering [*Entäußerung*], just as in the spirit we have the same Idea *as being for-itself*, and *coming to be in and for itself*. A determination of this kind, in which the Idea appears, is at the same time a moment *that flows*; hence, the single science is just as much the cognition of its content as an object *that is*, as it is the immediate cognition in that content of its passage into its higher circle. The *representation of division* is therefore incorrect inasmuch as it puts the particular parts or sciences *side by side*, as if they were only immobile parts and substantial in their distinction, the way that *species* are."

(*Logic*, §18)

What we must appreciate, therefore, is that when we consider any given aspect of the Absolute, we should not consider it as something actual in and for itself, nor simply as an ingredient which contributes to the composition of the Idea, but rather the Absolute Idea from a certain perspective; we have before us not a component as such, but the very Idea itself only in a finite, incomplete guise because of our apprehension of it. In other words, *it is our viewpoint that is untrue and incomplete* at this point in the cognitive process, and not the Absolute Idea which is wholly present. This, then, is the first crucial thing to understand when analysing Hegel's system, that one must discriminate between the supreme Idea and how it might appear to us *prima facie*; the Idea is eternally complete in and for itself regardless of its apparent showing:

"Each of the parts of philosophy is a philosophical whole, a circle that closes upon itself; but in each of them the philosophical Idea is in a particular determinacy or element. Every single circle also breaks through the restriction of its element as well, precisely because it is inwardly [the] totality, and it grounds a further sphere. The whole presents itself therefore as a circle of circles, each of which is a necessary moment, so that the system of its particular elements constitutes the whole Idea -

which equally appears in each single one of them."

(*Logic*, §15)

Of particular relevance is Hegel's claim not only that "the *representation of division* is ... incorrect inasmuch as it puts the particular parts or sciences *side by side*," but that each element is "inwardly [the] totality." What this means is that the system is not a collection of particulars which contribute to the overall whole of the Idea, but rather that each particular is intrinsically the whole because it "breaks through the restriction of its element." In short, the Absolute Idea is continually wholly present.

Notes

1. Grisez, p185.
2. It should be noted that body and soul are not true opposites and that this analogy therefore contains an element of inaccuracy. However, I shall continue to employ it, as indeed does Hegel, as the important aspect of it - two different elements pertaining to the whole - remains relevant
3. Findlay, p24.
4. Fackenheim, p231.
5. Fackenheim, p57.
6. Findlay, p328.
7. Stace, p438.
8. Given the persistent popularity, particularly in Germany, of divine providence throughout Hegel's time, this is not of course surprising. Dickey offers one of the most lucid and thorough accounts of this climate.
9. Spinoza, 1; see also chapter three.
10. Although Hegel is here criticising Spinoza because of the wholly subjective status awarded to the all (ie. it has no authentic otherness), it is perhaps worth remembering Hegel's own understanding of pure being's status as univocal with nothing. It is arguable that these do not maintain any greater sense of authentic otherness than Spinoza's attributes which are different as aspects of substance.
11. Hegel actually says that this is something which is impossible

because something can only be known against the background of the
totality. When I employ this phrase, therefore, it must be understood
as meaning cognising and examining it against such.

10. Hegel's ontological argument.

The intention of this thesis has been to try and illustrate Hegel's Absolute as a monistic deity. My attempts to achieve this have been based on an exposition of Hegel's triadic structure, the Absolute's equivocalness with truth and infinitude, and its being and status vis-à-vis the phenomenal, historical world. But to confine the thesis entirely to this would omit one, essential feature of Hegel's Absolute that is pertinent to the argument, namely his efforts to prove the existence of the deity. I have therefore decided to conclude my work with a brief analysis of Hegel's ontological argument, in order to highlight both how he adopts the argument to affirm his Absolute, and how through it the Absolute may be considered further as monistic.

In discussing Christianity, the 'consummate' religion, Hegel opens his 1831 lectures on the ontological proof by offering three fundamental considerations. (LPR 3.351) The first of these is the "Abstract concept of God", the free, subjective concept of the deity. The second is the "determinate being" of God, God's manifestation in finitude, or, more precisely, the fashioning of this manifestation, finite spirit, and its status as being concrete with finite consciousness. The third consideration is the unity of concept and being within God. Indeed, so highly does Hegel value such considerations, he claims:

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"The main point in regard to this [Christian] religion is to cognise this process, that God manifests himself in finite spirit and is identical with himself in it." (LPR 3.351)

It is perhaps therefore not surprising to note also that he claims the ontological proof to be "the only genuine one," (LPR 3.352) and whilst Jaeschke writes "it is not immediately clear what qualifies it to constitute the formal explication of the concept of the "Consummate Religion," clearly the argument's attempt to reconcile the being with the concept of God is attractive to Hegel's dialectical reflections.

Hegel's argument is based upon Anselm's assertion that "God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived,"²² ie. 'God' as the most perfect concept, which cannot be denied as it would automatically be replaced by a new most perfect concept which would in turn assume the status of 'God', including actuality to retain the status of being 'absolutely perfect'.²³ Certainly Hegel agrees with Anselm's theory, calling it "quite correct," (LPR 3.70) but he also sees a methodological fault in Anselm's concept, in that 'that than which nothing greater can be conceived' remains a *subjective*, or possible, concept which is faulty by virtue of its subjective stance, its failure to be illuminated by something in opposition to it, ie. determinate being. He writes:

"The defect in Anselm's argument, however ... is that this unity [of the concept and being of God], which is proclaimed as what is most perfect (or subjectively as the true knowing), is *presupposed*, ie. it is assumed as *in-itself* only," (Logic, §193)

The issue, therefore, is how such argument can be developed so as to show God to be not merely a subjective notion, how the argument can be concretely related to the determination of being:

"We have the representation of God. But God is no mere representation, for God *is*. How then are we to accomplish this passage, how are we to gain the insight that God is not merely something subjective within us? Or, how is the determination of being to be mediated with God? For being and God are [seemingly] two different things," (LPR 1.433)

Hegel's concern is with the need for what is at first glance a merely subjective notion of God to be concretely objectified. The ontological proof for God, that is, must be objectified by demonstrating the concept's unity with being. To achieve that end, Hegel again employs Heraclitus' logic of the 'Strife of Opposites', X and Y conflicting to portray their underlying, essential unity:

"The ontological proof has the concept as its starting point. The concept is regarded as something subjective and characterised as opposed to the object

and the reality. Here the concept is the beginning, and what matters is to show that being also pertains to this concept. In more detail the argument runs as follows: The concept of God is set up, and is shown that it cannot be grasped except as including being within itself; to the extent that being is distinguished from the concept, the concept exists only subjectively, in our thinking. As thus subjective, it is what is imperfect, what falls only within finite spirit. That it is not just *our* concept but also *is*, irrespective of our thinking has to be demonstrated." (LPR 3.352)

In other words, if God is merely an abstract, subjective concept, it is vacuous as it lacks a concrete, definitive status. The concept of God *as concept* is unqualified because absent is apparent relation, that which can concretely unify the concept and being in the underlying essence of the Absolute. For God fully to be means that he must, as we have seen, appear to encompass an element of difference so as to become also the determinate object - be this difference external (as a transcendent theology might argue) or internal, as Hegel proposes.

The problem, then, becomes clear; God as concept must be shown to be intrinsically associated with that which is being. Anselm's argument falters in its *assumption* that, as God is the perfect representation, it must therefore be actual, as anything less than actual is not absolutely perfect.⁴ Such an assumption was, of course, ruthlessly attacked by Kant on the grounds that being is not a predicate of a concept but in fact something entirely different which need not add anything whatsoever to the other;⁵ Gaunilo criticised the argument in Anselm's own time more simply by pointing out that a concept of an island need never be an actual island.

Gaunilo's criticism we may discard, as by 'concept' Hegel (and Anselm) does not mean imagination or a mental picture (see LPR 1.436), but rather that "God is not a concept but *the* concept." (LPR 3.71) God, that is to say, is not one concept amongst many; he is not concept in the sense of notion, nor merely the result of abstract thought, but is *the* concept. God has a noumenal form beyond the immediate, phenomenal

world (however undefined this form might at this point be), the other to phenomenal being and not merely a mental concoction.

The other criticism, made by Kant, might seemingly hold more authority, yet Hegel is remarkably scathing when he comments that Kant:

"Treated it [the ontological argument] at first as if it were empty musing, nothing but an unnatural scholastic trick for conjuring reality out of concepts." (FK, p67)

Clearly Kant is right in his assertion that being does not maintain any necessary quality within a given concept, but only when considered from an empirical standpoint such as his own. His view considers being to be reality but only in itself, distinct from any abstract notion, and quite removed from any sort of universal. However, while his objections may succeed against a *transcendent* God such as Anselm envisaged, the position with regard to Hegel is quite different. Hegel is attempting to prove an *immanent* deity, a deity who is not (at this stage at least) anything other than the absolute totality of reality. Indeed, as Hegel argues "we are not supposed to be adding anything to the concept. Rather we are removing from it the shortcoming that it is only something subjective;" (LPR 3.354) "the main issue is whether being lies within the concept and may be deduced from it." (LPR 1.436)

This is quite a different track, as the task becomes not to consider whether or not being and concept add anything to each other, but whether ultimately being is within the concept. In consequence, the difference between what Kant and Hegel respectively consider 'concept' to mean becomes clearer; for the former in this context it is thought pertaining to X, whereas for the latter it is:

"God in his universality, this universal in which there is no limitation, finitude, or particularity, is the absolute subsistence and is so alone. Whatever subsists has its root and subsistence only in this One. If we grasp this initial content in this way, we can express it thus: "God is the absolute substance, the only true actuality." All

else that is actual is not actual on its own account; the uniquely
absolute actuality is God alone," (LPR 1,369)

What Hegel argues, therefore, is that, as the Absolute is monistic, the ultimately sole actuality, then the concept of God must contain the being of God because there is nothing other than this One to possess it.

At this point, then, one may say that Hegel sees the concept of God as being the ground on which being is dependent - concept becomes like a Platonic form which possesses being as a determinate aspect of itself. Thus, rather than siding with Kant in asserting an essential and total difference between being and concept, Hegel asserts a system in which being is within a conceptual framework. The concept of God is therefore not *also* being, but *encompasses* being.

(i) *The first premise for the concept of God encompassing being.*

This Hegel illustrates in two ways. First, the concept divides and particularises itself, positing finitude and then "negating this its own finitude and being identical with itself." (LPR 1.436) Here, then, we are shown the classic, dialectical logic of Hegel, +A manifesting, positing itself as -A, so that each, +A and -A, lie in opposition to the other. But +A and -A remain essentially identical, as indeed they must as both are grounded in each other and the Absolute. To say to the contrary, that being is wholly distinct from the concept, is therefore to argue that one or the other is not grounded in the Absolute but rather derives from a completely alien source, and this is not acceptable to Hegel; if ultimately there is the whole, the sole substance, then it is nonsensical to suggest that being and concept are not intrinsically and ultimately univocal. Thus, in the process of God particularising, despite the seemingly enormous gulf between the concept and being, the two are ultimately identical and, of course, reconcilable:

"God is this self-particularising. God creates the world and produces his Son, posits an other and in this other has himself, is identical

with himself. This is the case in the concept as such ... through the negation of the particularising (for which particularising the concept itself is equally the positing activity) the concept [comes] to be identical with itself." (LPR 1,437)

In the above quotation, of course, the logic parallels the doctrine of the Trinity, God becoming manifest in the Son, *revealing* his being through this process, before reconciling in unity:

"God is thus grasped as what he is for himself within himself; God [the Father] makes himself an object for himself [the Son]; then, in this object, God remains the undivided essence within this differentiation of himself within himself, and in this differentiation of himself loves himself, ie. remains identical with himself."

(LPR 1,126)

In particularity, therefore, God is absolutely and necessarily himself, manifest but immediate to himself, as must be the case, for "God remains the undivided essence," despite appearing to be otherwise. Finite being as such is thereby a revelatory tool, the platform, so to speak, upon which God's identity is displayed. Thus, in its form (ie. as finitude), being is, in Stace's words, "the reflection-into-self of the thing,"⁶ ie. it is that which God employs as an apparent medium for self-identification, although ultimately:

"Being is nothing more than the inexpressible or the conceptless; it is not the concrete, which the concept is, but is wholly and only the abstraction of relation to self." (LPR 1,437)

Put another way, actuality is within the concept, or Idea, rather than finitude; the latter is posited by the Absolute, and attached to that which we call 'being', in order for the Absolute to identify and relate to itself. Reardon comments with admirable simplicity that "God, the Absolute, as the ultimate reality cannot be other than *thought*,"⁷ and this point is enhanced by Grisez who writes: "[the Absolute's] conditions are everything else, for all else - even as *else*, as other -

reduces to the Absolute."²⁸ God, then, is self-conditioning, using finitude (which is rooted in him) to express himself, but without stepping outside his infinite nature, because all being derives from him. Further:

"Whatever is, is; it relates itself to itself ... it is immediacy. Being is immediate as such, and conversely, the immediate is being and is in relation to self, which means that mediation is negated. This definition of 'relation to self' or 'immediacy' is now directly explicit in the concept in general, and in the absolute concept or in the concept of God." (LPR 1,437)

This is to say that being is an immediate, or immanent, conceptual tool which determines the concept to realise itself; it is in absolute unity with the concept, grounded in the essence, the 'is', of the Absolute and, as Hegel makes quite clear, "'being' cannot be deduced from the concept or analysed out of it." (*Logic*, §51) Being is, therefore, *in the superficial sense alone*, not absolutely identical to the concept, but it is quite incorrect also to presume that they are wholly distinct, easily shown by the simple logic which renders either as vacuous without the other. In this sense, Gaunilo is in harmony with Hegel in asserting that a concept must have being, but so too must being have concept if it is not to become merely "evanescent externality and appearance." (LPR 3.70)

(ii) *The second premise for the concept of God encompassing being.*

The second way of showing being to be within the concept lies in the theory that, although it is contained within, "being is also different from the concept because the concept is the totality," (LPR 1.438) but this begs the question of how being can be the manifestation of the concept whilst remaining identical and immediate to the concept; after all, surely when one examines Hegel's frequent use of the phrase 'being-there' as regards this, implicit is change. Before addressing this problem directly, it is worth noting Hegel's criticism made against Spinoza's arguments that the ultimate totality of concept is identical

to the ultimate totality of being:

"Spinoza defines God as self-caused, *causa sui*. His concept and determinate being are identical, or in other words God cannot be grasped as concept apart from being. What is unsatisfactory is that this is a presupposition, so that when measured against it the concept must of necessity be something subjective.

"But the finite and subjective is not just something finite as measured against that proposition. It is finite in itself, and hence it is the antithesis of itself [ie, it is the infinite]."

(LPR 3, 355)

Such criticism against this presupposed unity, then, centres upon the argument that the Spinozistic claims falter because they *presuppose* an ultimately identical state, with each, according to Spinoza, the measure of the other. That is to say, for Spinoza, thought and extension measure each other precisely²⁹ but, unlike Hegel who advocates that negation creates (because the opposite of negation is affirmation), Spinoza sees negation in a far more limited role. Each, that is argues for distinction within an all-embracing unity, but whilst Hegel regards the negative antithesis as something that leads to becoming, Spinoza considers negation as simply the effect of affirmation, $+A \neq -A$. With Spinoza, there is no passing over of the opposites. As Stace writes, "to posit is to negate: this is Spinoza's principle. To negate is to posit: this is Hegel's."³⁰ Similarly, we may note Fackenheim's comment that "unlike Spinozism ... [Hegel's ontology] encompasses the finite - in both its subjective and objective forms - in an all-encompassing infinity."³¹

The result of this is that Spinoza is unable to reconcile fully the finite and infinite; he believes God to be infinite because thought and extension form the supposedly unlimited whole, but because the distinct attributes are not argued to synthesise in the Hegelian manner, to pass into each other, the phenomenal attribute of extension continues to stand stoutly over and against the noumenal attribute of thought, rendering the latter finite, and debarred from assuming its true

character. That is, the concept is denied the freedom to be anything other than the abstract measure of its finite counterpart, and because of this it is totally determined by being; it is the finite being of X that determines the concept to be no more than the concept of X, so that where the being of X is limited so too is the concept.

Thus, by acknowledging Kant's own criticism of the ontological argument, Hegel illustrates the poverty of the Spinozistic claims, illuminating the inner activity of the concept-being proposition, the unrest, *against the background of the Idea*. The nature of being, in its attachment to the concept, strives as subjective finitude, to transcend beyond its own limitations. Being, therefore, battles against itself, but this is only possible within the totality of the Idea, the Idea providing the abstract concept of 'more-than-being'. It is, therefore, Hegel's meaning that being 'wakes up' to the concept, to the possibility of infinitude, or, in other words, that being realises its potential to transcend its apparent, finite limits, to cast off the particularity that chains it to the finite phenomenal. Importantly, one should note that it is the essence, the underlying truth, of being that holds this potential, and that it is the finite that is abandoned for genuine (rather than spurious) infinity. This is a point some commentators, notably Collins, seem unable to appreciate, for Collins writes "finitude is not a simple characterisation of anything, but expresses its complex union of determinate act together with an active transcendence of its own boundaries."¹² In itself, this is quite wrong, for it is patently obvious that finitude does not transcend finitude, an absurd suggestion, but rather it is being that transcends its limits; finitude is that which being seeks to negate.

The importance of the above point cannot really be over-stressed. If we summarise the concept-being relation and unity within Hegel's ontological argument, the reasons as to why this is so become more lucid. As with the whole of Hegel's theology (and the greater part of his philosophy), the ontological argument for the Absolute is essentially based on the Absolute Idea as the ideal pinnacle of a cyclical structure;¹³ it divides into opposing elements (finitude and

infinitude, concept and being, etc), before exposing these contradictory elements as being in truth identical, objectifying itself through this system, with such objectification being almost, as I have mentioned, something coincidental, a bonus provided by the structure. Thus, with the ontological argument, the Absolute Idea is viewed on the one hand as concept, and on the other as the antithesis of this, being, and within this apparent relation a further series of opposites are found, the (at this point, spurious) infinity of the concept against the finite particularity of being, and so forth. But from this Hegel argues that such opposition eventually proves that the two are in fact one and in unity, each released from their over and against stances to melt into a univocal oneness.

The compatibility of Hegel's theology with Anselm's basic ontological argument, is therefore quite remarkable, even though, taking account of all the changes Hegel made to the argument, we can also agree with Reardon that "Hegel's own position is a good way from Anselm's."¹⁴ It is noteworthy that some have suggested the argument to be in truth the governing factor behind Hegel's entire structure, including James Collins, despite his misunderstanding noted above. In a somewhat grandiose fashion, he proposes that "the ruling framework of Hegel's philosophy is more precisely called an *onto-pneuma-logic*, to emphasise the centrality of his unique conception of the self-developing spirit. What binds together ontology and logic is the doctrine on spirit as the living, correlating whole within which all the divisions, transitions, and unifications of thought and being arise. Only by reference to this doctrinal centre does the philosopher gain assurance that thought and being stand open to each other."¹⁵ To go as far as Collins does here, and describe a combination of dialectical logic and ontology as being "the ruling framework of Hegel's philosophy," is probably too simplistic a claim, and neglects other influences previously discussed, particularly Hegel's use of Heraclitus' strife and unity of opposites. Nonetheless, it does seem to exercise a major position within his thought.

(iii) *Problems within Hegel's ontological argument.*

Of course, it is not difficult to criticise Hegel's use of the ontological argument simply because he maintains no intention of employing it to prove a transcendent, theistic God, but rather merely to arrive at what effectively Heraclitus reached over 2,000 years earlier; namely, that X cannot exist by virtue of itself but requires an (or more precisely *its*) other to distinguish and thereby qualify it within a deeper, true unity. Indeed, as Grisez rather irritably points out, "Hegel does not argue that God ... exists. Rather Hegel holds that the totality of reality exists"¹⁶ and one can feel an extent of sympathy towards such chagrin as Hegel does, in a sense, avoid the real issue of the argument by not applying the so-called 'proof' to anything other than his Absolute Idea, and this clearly does not conform to the orthodox understanding of God which the argument was originally designed to prove. Continuing along this track, one could even rather cynically suggest that Hegel uses the argument purely to illuminate the system of his own, distinct concept, as evidence of the Absolute's diremption into finite manifestation and supported by logic. As Jaeschke remarks, there is little that "is specifically Christian about the idea of the *id quo maius cogitori nequit* or the supremely real or most perfect being."¹⁷

But this is probably unfair; after all, why should Hegel not support his theology with an argument perennially popular with philosophers and theologians alike, regardless of whether they propound it or not? Though Jaeschke accuses Hegel of the sin of presupposition,¹⁸ he himself is guilty of the same fault, implicitly assuming that Christianity must comply with a particular nature; philosophically, "specifically Christian" is, I contend, a quite nebulous phrase because it presupposes particular parameters and characteristics attached to the faith. Moreover, Hegel portrays the argument in a strong, monistic tone, for it is the Absolute objectifying *itself* via the diremption that is proposed, through its appearance as the finite, rather than a case of trying concretely to relate the finite and the infinite as distinct, interdependent elements:

"It is within its own process that the Idea produces that illusion for itself; it posits an other confronting itself, and its action consists

in sublating that illusion. Only from this error does the truth come forth, and herein lies our reconciliation with error and with finitude. Otherness or error, as sublated, is itself a necessary moment of the truth, which can only be in that it makes itself into its own result." (Logic, §212A)

The Absolute, that is, is not objectified by a genuine other but by itself seeming to be an other, and from this it becomes evident that Hegel's use of the argument is centred entirely on the Absolute and its desire for self-illumination rather than as a means of attempting to prove the being of a theistic God. In other words, Hegel is virtually ignoring the ontological argument as a means for man concretely to identify the Absolute as a transcendent deity, and offering it instead exclusively for the Absolute's own self-identification. That is to say, he used the ontological argument as itself a way of explaining the Absolute's use of the apparent - or perhaps deceptive - finite phenomenal. And, in this sense, it is not even unfair to suggest that the human perspective becomes quite incidental; phenomenality, that is, never rises to any status other than the apparent, antithetical qualifier of the noumenal.

This latter point, however, contains the germ of a potential problem, that has consistently resurfaced throughout this discussion. This concerns whether such claims as Hegel makes in his handling of the argument can sustain his basic doctrine that God is ultimately Idea. Within his commentary there continually lurks an implicit *dependency* of the infinite on the finite for objectification, and the connotations of such are perilously close to undermining, if not making utterly self-contradictory, his entire theological framework.

What effectively surfaces is a direct choice: either a) Hegel must concede dualism (ie. the existence of God and an absolute, genuine other), or b) he must deny the apparent reality of finitude. This choice exists because, quite simply, if Hegel is proposing a genuine, monistic Absolute, his structure cannot afford such a claim to exist in conflict over against an other; if a monistic God is argued, it is

absurd for it to be in opposition to what must effectively be considered as not-being; if God is the whole, that is, it cannot have a genuine opposition. Thus, Hegel is compelled to either acknowledge some concrete status for an other (thereby rendering God not-the-Absolute), or follow the course that he does and negate the apparent opposition.

Such a choice cannot acknowledge any type of half-measure; if there is an other, a genuine objectifying counterpart to the Absolute, then Hegel's theology splits and collapses into a chaotic mess. Clearly this is unacceptable; if God is truly Idea, a system which is the essence and only true definition of reality, then there can be no accommodating the finite as an actual reality that stands in absolute opposition to this same Idea. To suggest as much would be to deny the basis of everything Hegel has thus far propounded. Furthermore, it is insufficient merely to argue that every distinct particular is within the one, all-encompassing God, for this becomes vacuous as by 'God' all that is referred to is a *collection* of particulars. This is a point raised with considerable vigour by Stace,¹⁹ and is merely a repetition of the problems that were found in the mistaken interpretations offered by Grisez and Soll.²⁰

Rather, then, one must return to the proposition that there is only the infinite being of God himself, a deity which by definition unites the being and concept of itself not because it is in need of an ontological status, but because its ontological status reflects its existence. Thus, rather than seeking a compatibility between the being and concept of God, a task for the theologian, God as the whole by definition is ontological. Of course this is, to say the least, a somewhat vague notion in that it does not tell us anything of value about the character of the Absolute, something which prompts Jaeschke to write that "this idea of God can be rejected as insufficient."²¹ But is this the central issue at stake? I suggest not for, as Hegel consistently states, his theology is concerned with system and God as the Absolute is at this point merely to be identified as the pinnacle of this system. The attachment of a character for the deity, his goodness, wisdom, and so forth, can only be considered *after* such an initial identification.

Notes

1. Jaeschke, p298.
2. Anselm, p117.
3. Hodgson points out that "in his proof, Anselm does not speak of God as "absolutely perfect" in the way Hegel here implies ... in other places he uses equivalents for "absolutely perfect," such as "supreme good" (*Proslogion*, preface), but not as premises of the proof." (LPR 1.434, n155)
4. Hegel criticises Anselm for arguing that a feature of the representation of God is that God is absolutely perfect, describing this as "a very indeterminate expression." (LPR 1.434) However, see note 3.
5. Kant, B.631.
6. Stace, p198.
7. Reardon, p99.
8. Grisez, p190.
9. Spinoza, 2
10. Stace, p33.
11. Fackenheim, p183.
12. Collins, p296-7.
13. See chapter four.
14. Reardon, p98.
15. Collins p279.
16. Grisez, p190.
17. Jaeschke, p298.
18. Jaeschke, p299.
19. Stace, p78-84.
20. See chapter seven.
21. Jaeschke, p302.

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