



## Durham E-Theses

---

### *Hegel, Political Theology and Apocalypticism*

LYNCH, THOMAS,JOHN

#### How to cite:

---

LYNCH, THOMAS,JOHN (2014) *Hegel, Political Theology and Apocalypticism*, Durham theses, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/9463/>

#### Use policy

---

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a [link](#) is made to the metadata record in Durham E-Theses
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the [full Durham E-Theses policy](#) for further details.

# Hegel, Political Theology and Apocalypticism

Thomas John Lynch

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Theology and Religious Studies

Durham University

2013



## ABSTRACT

Hegel, Political Theology and Apocalypticism  
Thomas John Lynch  
Ph.D. Thesis  
Submitted to Durham University, 2013

This thesis argues that new readings of Hegel's philosophical system generate a post-secular, philosophical political theology. This political theology is able to engage with the apocalyptic elements of the Christian tradition in order to understand the dual function of religion: the cultivation of social solidarity and the annihilation of the present world.

After an initial discussion of Hegel's role in the development of political theology and the current divisions in Hegel scholarship, this study turns to the significance of Hegel's understanding of religion as representation. In particular it focuses on the implications of the 'non-metaphysical' reading of Hegel. In this reading, religion is not concerned with an external, transcendent deity, but represents the emergence of a self-conscious, self-determining community. While drawing on this shift in the nature of religion, this thesis argues that the 'non-metaphysical' reading subordinates religion to the state, diminishing religion's role in social critique. This subordination to the state can be corrected by introducing apocalypticism as a representation of the negative moment of Hegel's philosophical system, resulting in a greater emphasis on contingency and contradiction. This expanded understanding of religion is the basis of an apocalyptic, Hegelian political theology.

Precedent for this form political theology is found in the work of Jacob Taubes. In addition to analysing Taubes's explicit discussions of Hegel, this study argues that Hegel's philosophy of religion draws out the methodology behind Taubes's intervention. Having drawn out these underlying Hegelian aspects, affinities between Taubes and contemporary work on Hegel becomes apparent. In particular, Catherine Malabou's understanding of plasticity is shown to closely parallel Taubes's understanding of apocalypse. Reading Malabou and Taubes together results in a political theology of plastic apocalypticism. This political theology is a model of a post-secular theology operating, beyond the contradiction between philosophy and theology.



## DECLARATION

This work has been submitted to Durham University in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It is my own work, and no part of it has been previously submitted to Durham University or any other university for a degree.

## STATEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

The copyright of this dissertation rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published in any format, including electronic, without the author's prior written consent. All information derived from it should be acknowledged properly.

Table of Contents	
Acknowledgments	2
Abbreviations	5
1.0.0 Introduction	9
1.1.0 Why Hegel?	10
1.2.0 Summary of argument	13
2.0.0 Hegel's Role in the Genealogy of Political Theology	16
2.1.0 Defining terms	16
2.1.1 Political Theology	16
2.1.2 Apocalypse	18
2.2.0 Hegel and Apocalypticism: Establishing a Connection	22
2.2.1 Historical and Sociological Perspectives	22
2.2.2 Philosophical and Theological Perspectives	24
3.0.0 The Divisions within Current Hegel Scholarship	31
3.1.0 Major Divisions	31
3.1.1 Left, Right and Middle	32
3.1.2 Metaphysical and 'Non-Metaphysical'	33
3.1.3 Systematic and Non-Systematic	38
3.1.4 Open and Closed	40
3.1.4 Hegel as an End and Hegel as a Beginning	43
3.2.0 Summary	44
4.0.0 Understanding the Role of Religion as Representation	46
4.1.0 The Basic Features of Hegel's Understanding of Religion as Representation	47
4.1.1 Natural Religion and Art as Religion	53
4.1.2 The Culmination of Representational Thought in the Category of Revealed Religion	54
4.1.3 A Comment on Christianity as Revealed and Consummate Religion	58
4.1.4 Hegel's Review of Göschel and the Two-Way Path	60
4.2.0 Interpreting Religion as Representation	64



4.3.0	The Reception of Hegel's Understanding of Religion: Beyond Left, Right and Middle	72
4.4.0	The 'Non-Metaphysical' Reading and the Relation of Religion and State	75
4.5.0	Representation and Secularisation	80
4.6.0	Conclusion	87
5.0.0	Openness and Discursive Bias in Hegel's Philosophy	89
5.1.0	Questioning Open Readings of Hegel: David Kolb	91
5.2.0	Discursive Bias in 'Non-Metaphysical' Readings of Hegel	100
5.2.1	The Subordination of Religion Through Discursive Bias	111
5.3.0	Freeing Negativity: Kierkegaard's Critique of Religion and a Hegelian Reply	113
5.3.1	Abraham and the Beautiful Soul	115
5.3.2	<i>Fear and Trembling</i> and the Critique of Discursive Bias	117
5.4.0	Fear and Trembling Before the Openness of the Future	123
5.5.0	Conclusion	126
6.0.0	Jacob Taubes: The Hegelian Groundwork of Apocalyptic Political Theology	127
6.1.0	Introduction to Taubes and the Hegel of Political Theology	128
6.1.1	Taubes on Hegel's Philosophical Project	130
6.1.2	Taubes and the Definition of Political Theology	134
6.1.3	The Problem of Apocalypse and History	142
6.1.4	Taubes and Bloch: Parallel Political Theologies	146
6.2.0	Taubes and Contemporary Readings of Hegel	150
6.2.1	Parallels Between Taubes and Non-Metaphysical Readings	150
6.2.2	Taubes and Anti-Liberalism: Against the Discursive Bias	152
6.2.3	Transcendental Materialist Readings of Hegel	158
7.0.0	Apocalypticism and Plasticity: Reading Hegel with Taubes and Malabou	163
7.1.0	Malabou's Plastic Reading of Hegel	164
7.1.1	Plastic Apocalypticism: Taubes and Malabou	169

7.2.0	The Problem of Alterity and the Rejection of Transcendence	170
7.2.1	Taubes and Immanence	171
7.2.2	Contradiction and Immanent Forms of Alterity	173
7.2.3	Immanent Alterity and Apocalypticism: Against Messianism	180
7.2.4	A Blochian Supplement	185
7.3.0	Contingency and Plastic Apocalypticism	187
7.3.1	Houlgate and the Necessity of Contingency	188
7.3.2	Burbidge: Contingency All the Way Down	192
7.3.3	Parallels in Recent Philosophies of Contingency	195
7.4.0	Concluding Thoughts on Malabou, Taubes, Bloch and Plastic Apocalypticism	198
7.5.0	Summary	200
8.0.0	Conclusion	202
	Appendix of German Quotations	205
	Bibliography	212



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to Professor Paul Murray and the Centre for Catholic Studies for sponsoring this research. Both the Department of Theology and Religious Studies and St. John's College have also generously provided travel funding throughout the course of my time at Durham. I have benefited greatly from the supervision of Dr Marcus Pound and Professor Gerard Loughlin. I am also thankful for the friendship, support and guidance of Professor Tina Beattie and the understanding of my colleagues at the University of Roehampton as I have worked to complete this thesis.

I've been exceedingly fortunate to have been surrounded by a community of fellow postgraduates and friends while carrying out this research, including Roberto Alejandro, Michael O'Neill Burns, Josh Furnal, Cullen McKenney, Marika Rose, Susan Royal, Andrea Saner and Charlie Shepard. I am especially thankful to Anthony Paul Smith for his feedback on drafts and Andrew Brower Latz for the many hours discussing Hegel and for his comments on this thesis.

My family has been incredibly supportive, in every way, over the course of my postgraduate research. Finally, I am grateful to my wife Hannah, who has been my partner in this research, as in everything.



FOR HANNAH



## Abbreviations

## Hegel

All citations give the page number of the English edition first, followed by the German. In addition to the listed editions of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, I consulted Terry Pinkard's forthcoming translation, available online with parallel German text at: <http://terrypinkard.weebly.com/phenomenology-of-spirit-page.html>.

The German text of block quotations may be found in the appendix.

- E1-3      *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, 3 Volumes
- The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*. Translated by T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991.
- Hegel's Philosophy of Nature: Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830): with Zusätze*. Translated by A.V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.
- Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Science (183) with Zusätze*. Translated by A.V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.
- Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830). Gesammelte Werke, Band 20*. Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Hans-Christian Lucas, eds. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1992.
- Zusätzen taken from Suhrkamp editions (W 8-10).
- ETW      *Early Theological Writings*. Translated by T.M. Knox. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.
- Frühe Schriften. Werke 1*.
- FK      *Faith and Knowledge*. Translated by Walter Cerf and H.S. Harris. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977.
- Jenaer Schriften, 1801-1807. Werke 2*.
- GW      *Gesammelte Werke*. Rheinisch-Westfälische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1968-.
- LPR      *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Translated by R.F. Brown, P.C. Hodgson and J.M. Stewart. Edited by Peter C. Hodgson. 3 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Vorlesungsmanuskripte I (1816-1831). Gesammelte Werke, Band 17*. Edited by Walter Jaeschke. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1992.
- PR      *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*. Translated by T.M. Knox. Edited by Stephen Houlgate. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.



*Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse, Mit Hegels eigenhändigen Notizen und den mündlichen Zusätzen. Werke 7.*

PS *Phenomenology of Spirit.* Translated by A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

*Phänomenologie des Geistes. Gesammelte Werke, Band 9.* Wolfgang Bonsiepen and Reihanard Heede, eds. Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1980.

RG1-2 'Review of C.F. Göschel's "Aphorisms: Part One and Two"'. Translated by Clark Butler. *Clio* 17:4, 1988: 369-393.

'Review of C.F. Göschel's "Aphorisms: Three"'. Translated by Clark Butler. *Clio* 18:4, 1989: 379-385.

*Berliner Schriften, 1818-1831. Werke 11.*

SL *Science of Logic.* Translated by A.V. Miller. London; New York: George Allen & Unwin; Humanities Press, 1969.

*Wissenschaft der Logik I. Werke 5.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986.

*Wissenschaft der Logik II. Werke 6.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986.

W1-20 *Werke.* Edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel. 20 vols. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969-1971.

#### Kierkegaard

FT *Fear and Trembling: Repetition.* Translated by Howard V. Kong and Edna H. Kong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.

#### Taubes

CS *To Carl Schmitt: Letters and Reflections.* Translated by Keith Tribe. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.

OE *Occidental Eschatology.* Translated by David Ratmoko. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009

PT *The Political Theology of St Paul.* Translated by Dana Hollander. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.

The essays collected in *From Cult to Culture* span 1949-1984. Though they are collected in a single volume and arranged thematically, each of the chapters is a standalone work and they are thus cited individually.

Bloch

AC *Atheism in Christianity: The Religion of the Exodus and the Kingdom*. London: Verso, 2009.

HT *Heritage of Our Times*. Translated by Neville Plaice and Stephen Plaice. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.

PH *The Principle of Hope*. Translated by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight. 3 vols. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995.

Malabou

FH *Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*. London: Routledge, 2005.

PD *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing: Dialectic, Destruction, Deconstruction*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.



### 1.0.0 Introduction

The ‘Hegel renaissance’, begun in the 1960s and reaching its peak with the publication of Charles Taylor’s *Hegel*, is gradually shifting the reception of Hegel’s philosophy of religion.<sup>1</sup> The last three decades have seen a proliferation of work on Hegel’s philosophy of religion with new critical editions of his lectures in German and English, new close textual studies and new appropriations.<sup>2</sup> Hegel’s understanding of religion has been addressed, not as an aberrant legacy of pre-Kantian metaphysics, but as a key element to understanding the development of philosophical thought and an essential facet of the cultivation of a just society. Most recently, debates about Hegel’s metaphysical commitments have inspired new interpretations. These new readings open up the possibility of a Hegelian post-secular political theology. Thus far, the resulting view of the relationship between religion and politics has been presented as subordinate to the state. While this subordination is certainly to be found in Hegel’s texts, I will argue that his broader philosophical system also justifies recognising religion’s more disruptive function. This expansion of political theology makes Hegel available as a resource both for building solidarity and critiquing social norms.

In order to contribute to this expansion of work on Hegel’s philosophy of religion, I will address four main points. First, I will examine the significance of Hegel’s understanding of

---

<sup>1</sup> Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975). On this renaissance of interest in Hegel, see Frederick C Beiser, “Introduction: The Puzzling Hegelian Renaissance,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Frederick C Beiser (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1–14.

<sup>2</sup> Walter Jaeschke edited a new edition of the three volumes of Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* in the 1980s, which were subsequently translated by Peter Hodgson (LPR). Hodgson also produced a thorough commentary on the lectures, *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). As this revival of interest in religion in Hegel is the focus of this thesis, it does not make sense to replicate the bibliography here. Of particular significance, however, are Walter Jaeschke, *Reason in Religion: The Foundations of Hegel’s Philosophy of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); John W Burbidge, *Hegel on Logic and Religion: The Reasonableness of Christianity*, SUNY Series in Hegelian Studies (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1992); David Kolb, *New Perspectives on Hegel’s Philosophy of Religion* (Albany: State university of New York press, 1992); Angelica Nuzzo, *Hegel on Religion and Politics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013); Thomas A. Lewis, *Freedom and Tradition in Hegel: Reconsidering Anthropology, Ethics, and Religion* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005); Thomas A. Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Nicholas Adams, *The Eclipse of Grace: Divine and Human Action in Hegel* (Oxford: Oxford-Wiley, 2013); and Slavoj Žižek, Clayton Crockett, and Creston Davis, *Hegel & the Infinite: Religion, Politics, and Dialectic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

religion as representation. As chapters three and four show, work already exists on this theme, but I seek to expand the discussion in two ways: first, by connecting the work done on Hegel's theory of representation in general to the work done on religion; and second, by emphasising the 'return to representation'.

Second, and in light of the importance of the return to representation, I argue that Hegel's understanding of religion is a key way of understanding Jacob Taubes's political theology. Hegel is clearly an important influence for Taubes, but I suggest that Hegel's philosophy of religion provides a methodological model that allows one to understand what Taubes is doing with religion. Not only does this provide a methodological underpinning to Taubes's philosophy, it offers one of the few extended analyses of his work.

Third, I develop Taubes's approach by exploring apocalypse as a representation. I argue that apocalypse should be understood in terms of contradiction and contingency. The apocalyptic potential of these concepts is developed by examining both Hegel's philosophy of representation and Jacob Taubes's political theology in light of contemporary Hegel studies. In particular, Catherine Malabou's understanding of plasticity illuminates how apocalypse represents these concepts. By focusing on open and dynamic understandings of Hegel's philosophical system, I argue that Hegel has much to contribute to thinking about the role of religion both in contemporary life.

Fourth, in the course of making these three arguments, I connect trends within recent Hegel studies which tend to ignore one another. Current scholarship often divides along the analytic/continental divide. Catherine Malabou does not engage Robert Pippin's work and Pippin is not concerned with transcendental materialism. This observation is not meant as a criticism. Malabou and Pippin have different aims in mind when writing on Hegel. Nonetheless, bringing these divergent studies together illuminates Hegel's philosophy in new ways.

### 1.1.0 Why Hegel?

But why Hegel? As my guiding interest is political theology, it might seem more reasonable to work with Marx or Schmitt. In his *Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*, Marx says that the critique of religion is the foundation of all critique, but he goes on to specify that this critique must be carried out in light of the fact that '*religious* distress is at the same time the *expression* of real distress and also the *protest* against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless

conditions.<sup>3</sup> For Marx, religion must be critiqued in order to realise the demand for real happiness – it is critiqued as the promise of an illusory happiness that is an obstacle to this realisation. Hegel would agree, albeit with significant qualification: determinate forms of religion curtail human freedom and demonstrate the forms of alienation critiqued by Marx. Absolute, or consummate religion, moves beyond these restrictions, instead facilitating freedom and functioning as a key element of society. From a Hegelian perspective, Marx’s position on religion requires further nuance.

The liberation theologian Juan Luis Segundo agrees, though without reference to Hegel. Segundo argues that while religion is certainly one of several institutions that perpetuate ideology, along with the state, factories and the nuclear family, it alone is treated as purely erroneous and requiring immediate rejection.<sup>4</sup> The state for example, while destined to wither away, plays a role in the revolutionary process.<sup>5</sup> At its simplest, Segundo’s objection is to the position that the rejection of religion is ‘a *precondition* for the revolution rather than an *effect* of the revolution.’<sup>6</sup> From Segundo’s perspective, this misses the opportunity for religion to play a role in the formation of a revolutionary consciousness.<sup>7</sup> ‘Instead of “abolition,” one would expect Marx to have talked about “changing” religion so that it might accentuate and eventually correct the situation being protested against.’<sup>8</sup> Marx’s objections are posed to religion externally. His ‘act of will to abolish religion is not an act of will from within theology itself, an act of will that could signify a change in the way of treating problems theologically. It is rather an abandonment of them.’<sup>9</sup>

This is the point at which Hegel can be of use – Hegel’s work on religion provides an alternative form of theology which changes religion in order to ‘accentuate and correct the

---

<sup>3</sup> Karl Marx, “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law,” in *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 3, Marx and Engels: 1843-1844*, trans. Jack Cohen and et. al. (New York: International Publishers, 2005), 175.

<sup>4</sup> I use the term ideology in the general sense defined by Terry Eagleton. In this understanding, ideology refers to processes of signification which are ‘primarily performative, rhetorical, pseudo-propositional’ but also including ‘important propositional content... including moral and normative ones’ (Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London; New York: Verso, 1991), 221–222.).

<sup>5</sup> Frederick Engels, “Anti-Dühring,” in *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 25, Frederick Engels: Anti-Dühring, Dialects of Nature*, trans. Jack Cohen and et. al. (New York: International Publishers, 2005), 268.

<sup>6</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, trans. John Drury (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002), 59.

<sup>7</sup> Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, 16.

<sup>8</sup> Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, 17.

<sup>9</sup> Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, 18.

situation being protested.’ Further, the changes to the nature of religion develop immanently, emerging through the subject’s own questioning of religious ideas.

But the question still persists – why Hegel? Three additional reasons further justify focusing on Hegel as a resource for considering these issues. First, as I will explain in the second chapter, Hegel occupies a key role in the development of political theology. For Marx, it is Hegel’s penchant for religion, the spiritual shell, which obscures the rational core of the dialectic. Later political theology, as seen in Taubes and Ernst Bloch for example, sees these elements as more intrinsically related.

Even if Hegel is important for the development of political theology one might still be inclined to focus on the theological reception of Hegel. The work of Anselm Min, for example, combines the study of liberation theology and Hegel.<sup>10</sup> This brings me to the second reason for focusing on Hegel – the recent ‘non-metaphysical’ interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy of religion. Though I depart from this interpretation in chapter four, it has changed the debate on Hegel’s religion, opening up new ways of conceiving of theology. I use the phrase working with ‘theological materials’ to describe this new form of theology. This phrase is identified as a method of thinking theologically in a post-secular context. Rather than focus on liberation theology, then, I focus on the work of Jacob Taubes, and to a lesser extent Ernst Bloch, as offering precedents of this form of Hegelian political theology.

Finally, in seeking to take up Segundo’s challenge, Marx would seem to be the more natural focus. Marx, however, for all of his insight, lacks the theological sophistication of his German idealist predecessors. If Marx is adept at identifying key ideological apparatuses, when it comes to religion he is less capable of teasing out the contradictions within that apparatus that might contribute to its ability to overturn its oppressive elements from within. Hegel presents his philosophy as an achievement of religious thought. It is religion which brings consciousness to the point of realising the speculative identity of subject and object. It is the activity of working with religious representations which takes consciousness to the concept, and having achieved absolute knowing, it is religion to which conceptual thought returns in order to cultivate institutions which reflect this achievement.

---

<sup>10</sup> See Anselm K. Min, *Dialectic of Salvation: Issues in Theology of Liberation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), and “Hegel on Capitalism and the Common Good,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 11, no. 2 (1986): 39–61. This combination of liberation theology and Hegel is rooted in a thorough examination of themes from Hegel’s philosophy of religion. See Anselm K. Min, “Hegel’s Absolute: Transcendent or Immanent?,” *The Journal of Religion* 56, no. 1 (January 01, 1976): 61–87, and “The Trinity and the Incarnation: Hegel and Classical Approaches,” *The Journal of Religion* 66, no. 2 (April 01, 1986): 173–193.

This relationship between concept and representation is the reason Hegel is the focus. He argues that Christianity produces a system of thought which arrives at a conceptual truth which then returns to the representational form and refines it. Philosophy's interaction with religion (and the theologies of those religions) is not a relationship of two externally related modes of thought. While Hegel states that there is a need, having arrived at the concept, to return to representation, I argue that implicit within his argument is the need for this process to continue. The return to representation helps us understand the concept further.

In *Dialectic of Salvation: Issues in Theology of Liberation*, Min describes the 'Hegelian moment of liberation theology' as presupposing providing 'the necessary mediation between the Marxian emphasis on historical liberation and the Christian theological emphasis on God and God's transcendent salvation, and enters into [the theology of liberation] as the organizing principle for its final synthesis of Christian faith and Marxism.'<sup>11</sup> The reading of Hegel developed in the following chapters diverges substantially from Min's, but this sentiment remains. Put another way, it is Hegel who allows one to see the dialectical relationship between religion and Marx sublated into something new.

These issues within Marx and liberation theology do not figure prominently in the rest of this thesis, but they are the impetus behind the argument. Liberation theology proposed a vision of theology oriented towards the cultivation of freedom and justice. Hegel offers a way to continue developing such a vision of political theology.

### 1.2.0 Summary of Argument

The thesis consists of two large movements. The first establishes Hegel's understanding of the relationship between philosophy, religion and politics (chapters 1-4). The second applies this understanding to the theme of apocalypse (chapters 5-7). Throughout, I am not only concerned with Hegel, but with Hegelianisms. Contemporary attempts to preserve or revive the relevance of Hegel's philosophy have resulted in a wide range of philosophies laying claim to Hegel's legacy. Many of these readings, as I will show in chapter three, blur the lines between interpretation and constructive analysis. As such, the lines between secondary studies of Hegel's texts and the generation of new forms of Hegelianism, are often unclear.

In the first chapter, I examine genealogies linking Christianity's apocalyptic traditions to contemporary politics. These genealogies vary significantly. Hegel is either a key link in the chain of ideas linking apocalyptic ideas to 20<sup>th</sup> century 'radical politics' or he offers a philosophical

---

<sup>11</sup> Min, *Dialectic of Salvation*, 32.



domestication of those ideas, charting the transition from the eras of religious belief to the modern, secular period. In these contrary views, offered by critics and supporters alike, Hegel's absolute is either the basis of totalitarianism or the end of ideological debates and a key philosophical account of modern, liberal democracy. While these genealogies disagree on the nature of Hegel's philosophy, they all present him as key to thinking about the relationship between philosophy, religion and politics.

Having established the significance of Hegel's philosophy for discussing the intersection of these themes, I then turn to exploring how he conceives of their relationship. Chapter three provides a summary of five different ways of dividing Hegel scholarship: left and right; metaphysical and 'non-metaphysical'; systematic and non-systematic; open and closed; and Hegel as end and Hegel as beginning. These divisions provide the context for chapter four's analysis of Hegel's understanding of religion as representation. Drawing on Thomas Lewis's 'non-metaphysical', systematic reading of Hegel's philosophy of religion, I explain how representation relates to philosophy and the implications for thinking about religion. The representational nature of religion is key to understanding the relationship between religion and politics, as well as determining whether or not Hegel offers a theory of secularisation. The idea of the 'return to representation' is the main concern of this chapter. While much of the literature on Hegel's philosophy of religion rightly emphasises the move from religious representations to the concept and absolute knowing, less attention is paid to how the continuing role of representation demands the transformation of those representations. By focusing on this return, a new perspective on Hegel and political theology emerges. This new political theology is, in Taubes's expression, the experimentation with theological materials.

In the second half, I present an analysis of apocalypticism governed by this method of the return to and transformation of representation. In chapter five, I offer a critique of Lewis's reading of Hegel's philosophy of religion. While in complete agreement with his reading of religion as representation, I argue that his understanding of the implications of this notion of religion are too narrow. Religion is left subordinate to the state. This removes the ability of religion to be a resource for those whose demand for justice is posed against the state. This understanding of religion results from two factors. First, Hegel himself allocates religion this role. I claim that this aspect of Hegel's philosophy reveals a tension internal to his philosophical system and thus requires a strategy of reading Hegel against Hegel. Second, the 'non-metaphysical' approach employed by Lewis has difficulty accounting for challenges to dominant social structures. This 'discursive bias', I argue, can be overcome.

With the aim of developing a more socially and politically critical Hegelian philosophy of religion, I turn towards the apocalyptic political theology of Jacob Taubes. In chapter six, I explore Taubes's explicit use of Hegel and show that his overarching approach to theology may be interpreted by Hegel's understanding of religion as representation. In this reading, Taubes is performing the return to representation, equipped with absolute knowing.

If Taubes is returning to apocalypse as representation, one must specify what it is being represented. In the seventh chapter, I argue that apocalypse represents plasticity, contradiction and contingency. These concepts are explored in the light of the open, dynamic Hegelianism developed in earlier chapters and with particular reference to Catherine Malabou's work on plasticity. All three concepts emphasise the tenuous nature of human, finite endeavours. Yet Hegel's philosophy of absolute knowing provides a framework for confronting that tenuousness and comprehending it. This comprehension, the absolute knowing which grasps the movement of thought, is the source of true freedom. As I argue in the conclusion, linking Hegel, Taubes and Malabou allows me to outline a political theology devoted to the cultivation of that freedom.

## 2.0.0 Hegel's Role in the Genealogy of Political Theology

The purpose of this chapter is to establish Hegel's place in the genealogy of political theology, with special emphasis on his relation to apocalyptic traditions. Throughout the thesis I make reference to Hegelian apocalyptic political theology. I use this phrase to indicate a body of literature constituted by two contrasts. First, as explained in sections 2.1.1 and 6.1.2, Hegelian apocalyptic political theology is opposed to Schmittian political theology. Second, it is distinct from other discussions of Hegel, religion and politics. In being apocalyptic, it allows religion a more disruptive social and political role than more traditional readings of Hegel's philosophy of religion.<sup>12</sup>

### 2.1.0 Defining Terms

Before addressing Hegel's role in the development of political theology it is necessary to define the main terms of this discussion: political theology and apocalypse. Both terms are contested and it is neither possible nor necessary to present a thorough survey here. Nonetheless, a brief description of each will clarify their meaning in the remaining chapters.

#### 2.1.1 Political Theology

The term political theology is most commonly associated with the 20<sup>th</sup> century German legal scholar Carl Schmitt. Schmitt famously argues

All significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development - in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver-but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts.<sup>13</sup>

For Schmitt, the key concept is the 'exception', which is the secularised miracle. The exception is an issue of sovereignty; it is the question of who is able to intervene to suspend the normal state of relations.

---

<sup>12</sup> This topic is discussed in great detail in chapters four and five.

<sup>13</sup> *Political Theology: Four New Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 1.

In contrast to Schmitt's legal approach to political theology, there is a more traditionally theological perspective. For Michael Kirwan, for example, political theology is concerned with religion understood as 'complexes of belief, worship and action which are deeply embedded in practices and traditions, and which are felt to be crucial to both individual and communal self-understanding.'<sup>14</sup> Situated within the confessional study of theology he understands the field to be primarily concerned with questions such as: 'Can a *polis* exist, be sustained, without God?... But how, then, does such a polity and its leaders avoid placing themselves on the Messiah's throne...'<sup>15</sup>

If Schmitt seeks to identify the theological roots of secular political concepts and Kirwan asks if true politics can be sustained without God, Andrew Shanks offers the Hegelian alternative. In his discussion of Hegel's political theology, he describes the essential issue as understanding

the gospel as a practical basis for the belonging-together of a community. Not just at the level of all speaking the same religious language, or all operating within a common framework of symbolism and ritual; but at a much deeper, and broader, level than that. This deeper level is constituted, partly, by a body of shared *experience*, underlying and coming to expression in the symbolism and ritual. And partly it is constituted by a set of shared *ethical standards*, a general consensus to what is to be admired and what condemned, or how disagreements are to be managed and resolved.<sup>16</sup>

Shanks offers a more theologically and existentially rooted version of the form of Hegelian civil religion described by Thomas Lewis (see 4.2.0-4.4.0). Adding the apocalyptic dimension to Shanks's definition, to provide a working definition for my argument, does not negate this function, but instead it expands political theology to include the dissolution and reconstruction of social and political relations. Religion, understood in the Hegelian sense, does not only facilitate belonging-together, but can speak to the contradictions that emerge in belonging-together, dissolving that unity in order for new forms of relation to emerge.

### 2.1.2 Apocalypse

---

<sup>14</sup> Michael Kirwan, *Political Theology: A New Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), ix. For other theological perspectives on political theology see William T Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2002) and Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> Kirwan, *Political Theology*, xiii.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Shanks, *Hegel's Political Theology* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 153.

I am proposing to amend existing Hegelian models of the relation between religion and the state by expanding his use of religious representations to include apocalypse. This amendment brings the discussion to the second problematic term. Eschatology, apocalypse and messianism are related terms conveying different aspects of Jewish and Christian attitudes towards revelation and the end of things. In philosophical writing, the distinctions between these terms can become obscured. Indeed, in his review of the English translation of Jacob Taubes's *Occidental Eschatology*, Roland Boer pillories Taubes for making this very error.<sup>17</sup> Given that Taubes's discussion of apocalypticism is a key element of chapters six and seven, it is particularly important to specify the relation of these terms.

Boer, himself a biblical scholar, explains these distinctions in his work on political myth. He defines eschatology as concerned 'with the transition from the present, somewhat undesirable age to another that is qualitatively better by means of an external agent, who usually turns out to be God.'<sup>18</sup> Messianism is a subcategory of eschatology, one in which 'a particular individual, divinely appointed and directed, effects the transition from old to new.'<sup>19</sup> With regards to Hegel, messianism is particularly unhelpful given that, in his early writings, one of the greatest obstacles to the flourishing of the Christian spirit was the focus on the individuality of Christ.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the 'apocalyptic refers to both a means of interpretation and a body of revealed knowledge, acquired by divine message or on a journey to the heavens.'<sup>21</sup> Boer notes that apocalypticism is characterised by dualisms and 'is usually a sign and an expression of intense political and social oppression.'<sup>22</sup> The need for deliverance coupled with dualisms results in a dependence on an external, divine intervention, replicating the problems of messianism. These issues are exacerbated by the fact that the predictions of the immanent end of the world have thus far proven incorrect.<sup>23</sup> In light of the deficiencies he finds in messianism and

---

<sup>17</sup> Roland Boer, "Review, Jacob Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology*," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 8, no. 2 (2012): 99. Boer has several other objections to Taubes's book, including its claim that the Jewish tradition occupies a unique place in the Ancient Near East and the originality of the Jewish and Christian emphasis on linear notions of time. While these objections are fair, they do not impede my use of Taubes as an example of Hegelian political theology.

<sup>18</sup> Roland Boer, *Political Myth: On the Use and Abuse of Biblical Themes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 18.

<sup>19</sup> Boer, *Political Myth*, 19.

<sup>20</sup> Hegel also cautions against trying to extrapolate morality from a small group of believers. As he explains in the 'Positivity of Christian Religion', moral teachings may be 'expedient, appropriate, and permissible in a small society of sectarian believers, but so soon as the society or its faith becomes more widespread and even omnipresent throughout a state, then either they are no longer appropriate... or else they become actually wrong and oppressive' (ETW, 86/124).

<sup>21</sup> Boer, *Political Myth*, 19.

<sup>22</sup> Boer, *Political Myth*, 19.

<sup>23</sup> Boer, *Political Myth*, 20.

apocalypticism, Boer advocates eschatological thought. This eschatological thought is the basis of his exploration of political myth, as he develops an ‘eschatology concerned with *process* rather than result, with the process of passing from hardship to peace, and one that does so by a means that is *external* to human agency...’<sup>24</sup>

Boer’s understanding of these terms is helpful in that they are defined in a context similar to my project. His development of political myth works through the contributions of Walter Benjamin and Bloch, connecting their work to the work of contemporary philosophers such as Alan Badiou and Slavoj Žižek. His summary of the differences between the terms covers the basic points of its usage in the Jewish and Christian contexts. Boer’s work is rooted in biblical studies, however, and it is possible to expand his category of apocalypse beyond this discipline. While preserving the tendency to focus on stark dualisms, in the context of Hegelian apocalyptic political theology it comes much closer to Boer’s understanding of eschatology.

As John J. Collins points out in his *Apocalyptic Imagination*, frequent, vague use of the term has resulted in a diffuse meaning.<sup>25</sup> Despite the resulting confusion, Collins determines that a ‘movement might reasonably be called apocalyptic if it shared the conceptual framework of the genre, endorsing a worldview in which supernatural revelation, the heavenly world, and eschatological judgment played essential parts.’<sup>26</sup> This definition widens the field, allowing for a wider range of positions than Boer’s definition.

Malcom Bull, who links Hegel and apocalypticism, extends this line even further, comparing the terms ‘apocalyptic’ and ‘epic’.<sup>27</sup> It is commonplace to refer to an ‘epic’ event without the term entailing any of the nuances of that literary genre. It simply refers to something immense. Similarly, the term apocalypse has its origins in specific, technical usage, but its meaning has expanded. It no longer refers only to the Jewish and Christian traditions, but is employed to describe aspects of other religious traditions. Bull thus agrees with Collins in claiming that ‘apocalypse’ denotes a diverse group of related literary forms, it comes to refer to a group of related but distinguishable historical movements.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Boer, *Political Myth*, 20.

<sup>25</sup> John Joseph Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed, The Biblical Resource Series (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans, 1998), 2. As Collins notes, it is possible to differentiate between apocalyptic as a noun, ‘literary genre, apocalypticism as a social ideology, and apocalyptic eschatology as a set of ideas and motifs that may also be found in other literary genres and social settings’ (2). These distinctions are further complicated within Collins’ understanding of apocalypse as literary genre by the presence of different forms of apocalypse, such as ‘other worldly journeys’ and ‘“historical” apocalypses’ (7).

<sup>26</sup> Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 13.

<sup>27</sup> *Seeing Things Hidden: Apocalypse, Vision, and Totality* (London: Verso, 1999), 48.

<sup>28</sup> Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 13.

Bull goes on to push the boundaries of apocalypticism further than Collins would allow, attempting to define apocalypse as a universal feature of human societies. In this broader definition, apocalypse names the reinclusion of the excluded element of society. This understanding emerges from his reading of Kristeva's notion of the abject.

The reversal of customary taboos embodied in apocalyptic may extend beyond the disregard for taboos in millenarian cults, and the identification of eschatological confusion with the dissolution of the taboo. There is much to suggest that the genre is not just a revelation of the dissolution of taboos, but itself a taboo revelation. What is seen in apocalyptic vision is more often than not a series of symbols embodying what is otherwise prohibited.<sup>29</sup>

Bull is aware that this understanding of apocalyptic is unusual, but defends it nonetheless. He argues that it includes the standard Judaeo-Christian texts, while also including other apocalyptic texts that more standard approaches exclude.<sup>30</sup> His reading of the apocalyptic tradition clearly points towards Hegel.

If apocalyptic is a revelation of the contradiction and indeterminacy excluded at the foundation of the world, then what is revealed may require a particular form of revelation. In societies where bivalence is assumed to be natural, the undifferentiated is inaccessible to normal patterns of thought, so access can be gained only by means that circumvent the accepted modes of cognition. Conversely, in these circumstances any supernatural revelation of hidden secrets is liable to disclose a world of contradictions and indeterminacies. The more strictly binarity is maintained, the more contradictions and indeterminacies there are to disclose – hence perhaps apocalyptic's affinity with dualism.<sup>31</sup>

While the affinity between apocalypse and dualism is more than affirmative, Bull accomplishes the Hegelian task of stating in abstract terms one key aspect of the philosophical truth of a religious representation. If apocalyptic thought engenders certain forms of politics, these too are carrying out a logic that Hegel's philosophy presents abstractly. The dialectic development of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* for example, works by trying to organise experiences and thinking, at each stage generating a binary that is then sublated.

---

<sup>29</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 71.

<sup>30</sup> Bull is discussing Christopher Rowland's work on apocalypse, which places a greater strength on the genre's Jewish and Christian origins with their shared emphasis on direct revelation. See Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1985). I have chosen to discuss Collins due to his greater emphasis on the fluidity of the idea of apocalypse, which helps establish the continuum of positions from Boer to Bull.

<sup>31</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 83.

Juxtaposing the position of Collins and Bull helpfully illuminates the transition that occurs in Hegel's work. Collins represents the study of apocalypse as a discrete literary genre originating from a specific historical context. Bull sees apocalypse as an idea which emerges in the process of making sense of the world. What initially appears in stories about the self-revelation of God and the judgment of humanity becomes a logical category employed by humanity in its self-understanding. As Bull explains, it is for this reason that Hegel may be regarded as a deeply apocalyptic thinker.

As I will show in a later section (7.2.2), I am not in complete agreement with Bull's conclusions about the nature of contradiction and apocalypse in Hegel. Nonetheless he provides a perfect example of how religion functions in Hegel's philosophical system. He also indicates the way in which the Hegelian discussion of apocalypticism avoids Boer's criticism. The dualisms and passivity which he critiques are problematic, but they are problematic elements resulting from mistaking representations for the ideas themselves. This misidentification is further explored in the chapter on representation. For now it suffices to say that apocalypse should be taken as a body of ideas combining revelation, destruction (or as Collins describes it, eschatological judgment) and dualism (or, in Bull's language, contradiction).

These definitions of political theology and apocalypse should be regarded as starting points. One of the aims the ensuing argument is to shift the understanding of apocalypse and identify a new Hegelian form of political theology. To use the language adopted in later chapters, this Hegelian political theology experiments with apocalypticism, philosophically comprehending the apocalyptic as representation and developing new ways of thinking with the apocalyptic. Consequently both these terms will be transformed as the argument moves forward.



## 2.2.0 Hegel and Apocalypticism: Establishing a Connection

The most common route to linking Hegel and apocalypticism is through Joachim de Fiore.<sup>32</sup> The 12<sup>th</sup> century prophet divided history into three ages, turning human history into a narrative of progressing salvation. This section will address the efforts to establish a connection between the two. First, I will use Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millennium* as an example of historical and sociological studies which establish this linkage. Second, I will survey Jacob Taubes's and Ernst Bloch's parallel genealogies of political theology.

### 2.2.1 The Historical and Sociological Perspective

Norman Cohn's influential work on European millennial movements between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries is an indicative example of efforts to establish a connection between medieval apocalypticism and 20<sup>th</sup> century political movements. Cohn's work is important for two reasons. First, he establishes the general social conditions of apocalyptic movements. Second, he links together Joachim, Hegel, Marx and totalitarianism.

Cohn outlines the significant uniformity of social and political contexts that mark communities which develop millennial views. These communities tend to experience extreme unbalance as they transition from agricultural to more industrial economies. Previous social orders, built around normalised relations between peasants and lords begin to break down as social mobility increases. Resultant tensions are only exacerbated by increasing population growth and movement. Cohn concludes that poverty and oppression do not provide a sufficient seed bed for millennialism. It is the insecurity caused by shifts in social and political organisation which must be added in order for these movements to emerge.<sup>33</sup> Or, Yonina Talmon explains in

---

<sup>32</sup> Cyril O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994); Glenn Alexander Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Henri de Lubac, *La Postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore. 1, 1*, (Paris; Namur: Lethielleux ; Culture et vérité, 1979); Henri de Lubac, *La Postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore. 2, 2*, (Paris; Namur: Lethielleux ; Culture et vérité, 1981); Karl Löwith, *Meaning In History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History* (Chicago: Phoenix Books, 1949); Clark Butler, "Hegel, Altizer and Christian Atheism," *Encounter* 41 (1980): 103–128; Clark Butler, "Hegelian Panentheism as Joachimite Christianity," in *New perspectives on Hegel's philosophy of religion* (Albany: State university of New York press, 1992), 131–142; and Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*.

<sup>33</sup> Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957), 22–32.

her later study, the ‘predisposing factor was often not so much any particular hardship but a markedly *uneven relation between expectations and the means of their satisfactions*.<sup>34</sup>

For Cohn, these conditions result in irrational, revolutionary political fantasies.

For where revolutionary chiasm thrives best is where history is imagined as having an inherent purpose which is preordained to be realised on this earth in a single, final consummation. It is such view of history, at once teleological and cataclysmic, that has been presupposed and invoked alike by the medieval movements described in the present study and by the great totalitarian movements of our day.<sup>35</sup>

Cohn’s narrative connecting medieval apocalyptic movements and contemporary politics displays the strengths and weaknesses of such efforts.<sup>36</sup> He helpfully identifies commonalities between the religious movements and later secular movements. Less helpfully, the actual connection between the two is asserted rather than substantiated. The affinities in ideas does not necessarily indicate an actual connection. The parallels he identifies are significant, but he fails to provide sufficient analysis of how these ideas travel from marginal medieval sects to Stalin. This connection is further weakened by his liberty with the idea of totalitarianism, which he thinks adequately describes Fascism, National Socialism and Communism.<sup>37</sup>

These concerns aside, Cohn makes key connections between millennial movements and radical politics. Most significant is his discussion of Joachim.

Horried though the unworldly mystic would have been to see it happen, it is unmistakably the Joachite phantasy of the three ages that reappeared in, for instance, the theories of historical evolution expounded by the German Idealist philosophers Lessing,

---

<sup>34</sup> Yonina Talmon, “Pursuit of the Millennium: The Relation Between Religious and Social Change,” *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes De Sociologie* 3, no. 01 (1962): 137. Talmon elaborates that this uneven relation occurs both in societies where population growth or industrialisation frustrate traditional ways of life as well as in societies where industrialisation or encounters with new societies introduces new expectations that cannot be fulfilled.

<sup>35</sup> Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 307.

<sup>36</sup> Cohn’s work emerged out of a seminar on apocalypticism at the University of Manchester. Other work associated with the group includes E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Norton Library (New York ; London: Norton, 1965) and Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of “Cargo” Cults in Melanesia*, 2nd ed (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968). Worsley’s book focuses on a different apocalyptic tradition, cargo cults, but it is notable that he identifies similar social conditions at the emergence of the apocalyptic groups.

<sup>37</sup> C.f. Talmon, “Pursuit of the Millennium,” 127. ‘Cohn’s study is extremely erudite and exhaustive. He over-stresses the analogy with modern totalitarian movements, yet this provides mainly a point of orientation and a general frame of reference and does not affect too much the study of medieval movements which stand in their own right.’ Later in the essay she draws attention to his egregious attempt ‘to equate communism and Nazism and treat them as one and the same for the purpose of comparison with millenarianism’ (145).

Schelling, Fichte and to some extent Hegel; in August Comte's idea of history as an ascent from the theological through the metaphysical up to the scientific phase; and again in the Marxian dialectic of the three stages of primitive communism, class society and a final communism which is to be the realm of freedom and in which the state will have withered away.<sup>38</sup>

His description of the connection between the idea of three ages, modern philosophy and the arrival of communist thought continues the same critique of the irrationality of apocalypticism. For Cohn this irrationality is located both in its ecstatic character and its belief in the ability to bring about unlikely or impossible realities. These 'phantasies', as Cohn so often calls them, are borne of situations in which there are no options. Only the apocalyptic provides a means of organising and deploying the energies necessary to create hope where none seemed possible.

This understanding of the social conditions of apocalyptic movements is important for the following chapters. In chapters four and five I take issue with readings of Hegel which, I argue, grant too much authority to institutions. These institutions are established by and maintain social norms, dictating the rules for the exchange of reasons. Left out of this exchange are those who either cannot or will not abide by those rules. In the terms of Hegel's philosophy of right, this group is the rabble. In Cohn's summary of the social conditions typical of apocalyptic movements, he describes an equivalent group – those who experience a confluence of social, political and economic shifts which reveals their precarious situation without providing a clear means of changing the situation. In these situations, apocalyptic movements appropriate a religious tradition, shared with a wider society, in order to voice objections to the nature of that society.

In his discussions of philosophy of religion and politics, Hegel does not allow religion to play this role. He emphasises religion's role in the promotion of social solidarity and the cultivation of an ethical society. Neither of those functions, however, addresses the situation of the rabble. I am arguing that apocalypticism can represent this demand – the demand for justice from those marginalised by the structure of society itself. It is this use of apocalyptic ideas which is taken up by philosophical and theological studies of Hegel's connection to apocalypticism.

## 2.2.2 Philosophical and theological perspectives

In this section on the genealogy connecting millennialism and radical politics, I will consider the group of writings that most explicitly indicate Hegel's role in this tradition. While different in their final evaluation of this tradition, they all explicitly connect Joachim, Hegel and

---

<sup>38</sup> Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, 109.

Marx.<sup>39</sup> These perspectives have much in common. For one, they provide a more detailed history of these ideas. Second, this greater specificity is complemented by a more striking correspondence in their genealogies.

The material may be divided into descriptive and constructive approaches. In the former, Karl Löwith's work in *The Meaning of History* traces this genealogy across the history of Western thought. In the latter, Jacob Taubes's *Occidental Eschatology* and Bloch's *Atheism in Christianity* provide parallel attempts to think the contemporary significance of theological ideas in relation to Marx. I will take each of these approaches in turn.

Karl Löwith's *Meaning in History* is a succinct summary of the philosophy of history as a practice. Löwith understands this practice to consist of the 'systematic interpretation of universal history in accordance with a principle by which historical events and successions are unified and directed toward an ultimate meaning'.<sup>40</sup> Löwith claims that this reading of history is 'entirely dependent on the theology of history, in particular on the theological concept of history as a history of fulfilment and salvation.'<sup>41</sup> In this understanding of the relationship between theology and history he parallels Schmitt's reading of the relationship between theology and law.

*Meaning in History* presents the history of this relation between the philosophy of history and theological ideas of history in reverse from Burkhardt to the biblical text. Hegel, he argues, in posing occidental and oriental views of history, obscures the fact that his view of history is really just 'the pattern of the realization of the Kingdom of God, and philosophy as the intellectual worship of a philosophical God.'<sup>42</sup> Hegel's history is theological in two senses. First, it preserves the providential directionality of Christianity. The cunning of reason guides the actions of individuals, who think they are acting of their own will, in order to achieve the realisation of absolute reason. In this sense, Hegel's history is 'secretly' Christian, philosophically papering over theological concepts. Second, the figure of Christ is central to Hegel's history. 'With Christ the time is fulfilled, and the historical world becomes, in principle, perfect, for only the Christian God is truly spirit and at the same time man. This principle constitutes the axis on which turns the history of the world.'<sup>43</sup> For Löwith the connection between the philosophy of

---

<sup>39</sup> In Cohn, Marx is the stand in for radical political movements. This usage of Marx is justified in our case by the fact that much of Hegel's philosophy is transmitted through Marx, and the significance and study of the latter help explain Hegel's enduring significance. Some critics of this tradition have taken care to refer to Communism rather than Marxism, though even this term is problematic (is it Soviet communism? he Communism of Luxemburg? Latin American American liberation theology?).

<sup>40</sup> Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 1.

<sup>42</sup> Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 54.

<sup>43</sup> Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 57.

history and theology is so profound that Hegel is actually the last philosopher of history. After Hegel, Christianity's dominance of the organisation of history begins to break down. Löwith is critical of Hegel's philosophy, arguing that it problematically assumes the possibility of a speculative philosophy realising the Christian faith or even the possibility of such a realisation.<sup>44</sup>

Of the works that attend to this genealogy, *Meaning in History* provides one of the more thorough descriptions of Joachim's own teaching, lending more credence to Löwith's overall thesis. This thoroughness enables a greater understanding of what Hegel takes from Joachim and the important differences that separate the two. While Hegel may adopt a similar pattern of history, Joachim's version of the end is both more traditional and more radical. He is more traditional in that he preserves a greater continuity with the Catholic church of his age. At the same time, there is a greater anarchism to his final age, which includes 'the liquidation of preaching and sacraments, the mediating power of which becomes obsolete when the spiritual order is realized which possess knowledge of God by direct vision and contemplation'.<sup>45</sup> Finally, Löwith provides the clearest statement of the relationship of Joachim to later political movements.

The political implications of Joachim's historical prophecies were neither foreseen nor intended by him. Nevertheless, they were plausible consequences of his general scheme; for, when Joachim opened the door to a fundamental revision of a thousand years of Christian history and theology by proclaiming a new and last dispensation, he questioned implicitly not only the traditional authority of the church but also the temporal order. His expectation of a last providential progress toward the fulfilment of the history of salvation within the framework of the history of the world is radically new...<sup>46</sup>

Or again, 'Joachim, like Luther after him, could not foresee that his religious intention – that of desecularizing the church and restoring its spiritual fervor – would, in the hands of others, turn into its opposite: the secularization of the world which became increasingly worldly by the very fact that eschatological thinking about last things was introduced into penultimate matters...'<sup>47</sup> For Löwith, this means that German Idealism, Marxism and the Third Reich are all perversions of the original theological intentions of Joachim, but connected to Joachim nonetheless. The ground of this connection is the introduction of a new kind of history. This new history is contrasted to the view of traditional theology, represented for Löwith, as for Taubes and Bloch, by Augustine. Traditional Augustinian, that is institutional, Christianity writes

---

<sup>44</sup> Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 57–59.

<sup>45</sup> Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 151.

<sup>46</sup> Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 154.

<sup>47</sup> Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 158.

history with an eye for self-preservation; or put differently, the history of Christianity is the history of the Church. Hegel is a Joachimist in seizing upon a different notion of the history of Christianity.<sup>48</sup>

While Löwith offers the history of the history of philosophy, Bloch and Taubes engage in the practice of what Löwith only describes. Both draw parallel histories drawing on a strikingly similar series of theologians and philosophers. For both Joachim plays a central role in a genealogy that leads to Hegel, following whom it fractures into the two immediate alternatives of Kierkegaard and Marx. It is appropriate to conclude these initial thoughts with Bloch and Taubes, for it is their work which mine most closely resembles. I will return to Taubes and Bloch in later chapters, so the present discussion will concentrate on the role of Hegel for both.

Taubes links Hegel and Joachim early on in his discussion of the nature of eschatology (OE, 12). Already, Taubes begins to create problems for the more common genealogies of political theology. The same line is kept, but the mutations are more profound. After critiquing both historicism, which emerges particularly amongst conservative Hegelians, and the ‘ideology of progress’, Taubes offers a rival understanding – an apocalyptic ontology rooted in both the Joachimist tradition and Hegelian philosophy. ‘Apocalyptic ontology is only possible in the dialectic of axiology and teleology’ (OE, 13). Apocalypticism only makes sense in relation to a history that stretches between creation and redemption.

In contrast to Löwith, Taubes places Hegel at the periphery of, if not outside, traditional theological understandings of history. If for Löwith Hegel was the last philosopher of religion because he was the last to maintain the Christian notion of universal history, in Taubes’s account Hegel and Marx reinaugurate a form of thinking lost due to Christianity’s submission to Aristotelian and Scholastic logic (OE, 35). Granted, this lost form of thinking has been preserved by others, which Taubes describes in later sections, but takes on a new, reinvigorated form in Hegel’s philosophy. This form of thought is dialectics. ‘Dialectical logic is a logic of history, giving rise to the eschatological interpretation of the world’ (OE, 35). This connection to dialectics is not accidental. ‘Apocalypticism and Gnosis form the basis of Hegel’s logic, which is often discussed but seldom understood. The connection between apocalyptic ontology and Hegelian logic is neither artificial nor an afterthought’ (OE, 36). Taubes relies only on Bauer’s

---

<sup>48</sup> In his *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth Century Thought*, trans. David E. Green (Garden City, N.Y: Anchor Books, 1967), Löwith expounds further on the debates that form around this understanding of history, including Hegel’s relationship to Kierkegaard and Marx. As this work focuses more specifically on the debates between the Old Hegelians and the Young Hegelians, his detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this present discussion, but his insights into how these debates contribute to the development of Nietzsche’s position are nonetheless important.

famous work to justify this claim, but subsequent research by Dickey, O'Regan and Magee has continued to develop the understanding of Hegel's relationship to these religious traditions.<sup>49</sup>

As Taubes moves from theoretical exploration of the concept of eschatology to the tracing of its place in Judeo-Christian thought, he develops the most detailed genealogy yet. Bloch offers a genealogy too, but the esoteric nature of Bloch's prose means the account lacks the clarity of Taubes's. Beginning with biblical texts, Taubes works through Daniel, Jesus, the Gospel of John, Paul, into the early Christian church and Origen.<sup>50</sup> The genealogy, to this point, has focused on the development of apocalyptic ideas. Following Origen, Augustine introduces a fundamental shift in the Christian church's view of eschatology. 'Instead of the concept of *universal* eschatology, *individual* eschatology emerges. The destiny of the soul is central and the End Time is eclipsed from the last day of human life... Universal eschatology, which bears within it the expectation of the Kingdom, from now on appears within the Christian sphere of influence as *heresy*' (OE, 80). This first section of his genealogy concludes with Joachim, in which the promises of universal eschatology are transferred to a new age. That is, they are inscribed within history rather than beyond it. This transferral breaks with the underlying Augustinian metaphysics that dominated medieval Christianity's understanding of history.<sup>51</sup>

His genealogy resumes with Thomas Müntzer before jumping to Lessing's *Education of the Human Race*, the text that transfers the chiliastic sense of history from Joachim to Hegel and German Idealism. Lessing's text 'is the first manifesto of *philosophical chiasm*' (OE, 86). The end of history, Joachim's third age, becomes Hegel's kingdom of the mind. The left Hegelians, like the Joachimists, thus devote themselves to the realisation of this kingdom of the mind on earth. It is this 'on earth' that essentially links Joachim and Hegel, their mutual 'equation of the history of the spirit with the course of world history' (OE, 93).

The genealogy offered to this point is a history of theological conceptions of eschatology. Taubes then shifts to a philosophical history of the same. This history includes Leibniz, Lessing,

---

<sup>49</sup> Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis oder die christliche Religionsphilosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967).; Laurence W. Dickey, *Hegel: Religion, Economics, and the Politics of Spirit, 1770-1807* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel*. and Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*.

<sup>50</sup> Taubes discusses the Hebrew origins of apocalypticism in Daniel before moving on to New Testament texts. When Löwith goes back to the biblical text, he focuses exclusively on the New Testament. Taubes, and Bloch too, therefore see something *Judeo-Christian* in the apocalyptic tradition. To clarify, Taubes sees this apocalyptic tradition beginning in Daniel as a break with Israel's traditional, Oriental conception of history. So while this apocalypticism has its origins in Judaism it does not represent its dominant understanding of history.

<sup>51</sup> It is important to express again the point made by Löwith – Taubes here is expressing a valid reading of Joachim's prophecies which nonetheless breaks with Joachim's intentions.

and Kant before arriving at Hegel. Taubes offers a reading of Hegel in relation to religion, which will be discussed below, but the essential connection has been established.

Working from the principles of *love* and *freedom*, which are identical in the essence of the spirit, Joachim and Hegel construct world history from the perspective of an end to fulfilment. They both consider the history of the spirit to be synonymous with the course of history. Just as Joachim's exegesis interprets the metaphysical fate of Christ, including the resurrection, in terms of a historical dialectic, Hegel, too, in his philosophy of religion, builds his dialectical, historical speculations on the foundation of death and resurrection (OE, 162).

Taubes concludes his study with the splitting of the Hegelian legacy by Kierkegaard and Marx. He treats both as valid heirs of Hegel, the former internalising Hegel, the latter driving outward into society.<sup>52</sup>

Bloch, like Taubes, goes beyond Löwith in asserting quite a direct linkage between Joachim and Hegel. Bloch is a Hegelian in a particular sense. For one, it is difficult to describe Bloch as anything without attaching an immediate qualification. While Bloch's work is addressed more broadly in chapters six and seven, his *Atheism in Christianity* is the most relevant to the present discussion. As the title suggests, his argument is that Christianity contains its own end. Further, for Bloch, this results from Joachim's insights.

Bloch divides Christianity into two basic tendencies: religion of the On-high and religion from below. These correspond to two contrary aspects of the biblical text: creation and apocalypse. The task taken up by Bloch is the 'detective work' of discerning which texts and ideas fall into each of these categories. He runs through an analysis of recent (for him) biblical hermeneutics before beginning his own interpretation of the text. Compared to Taubes, Bloch's treatment of both Joachim and Hegel is brief. His reading of the Old and New Testaments is littered with references to Origen, Joachim, Müntzer, Hegel and Marx. Unlike the other works in the philosophical/theological perspective, there is no attempt to link these sources. They are merely presented in key figures in realising the Christianity from below in opposition to that of the On-high.

---

<sup>52</sup> Taubes presents, in a much abbreviated form, the same break between Old and Young Hegelians that Löwith discusses in *From Hegel to Nietzsche*. They concur on the nature of the relation between this division and Hegel himself: the careful balances Hegel strikes between individual/society and religion/philosophy are thrown off kilter by his successors. Löwith's book returns to these divisions continuously in describing the philosophical shifts that follow Hegel. Taubes describes this same unbalancing as the consequence of Marx and Kierkegaard's decision to follow one side or the other of these Hegelian oppositions.



While Bloch's discussion of Hegel is slightly more sustained than his treatment of Joachim, the specifics of neither are of particular concern to at this point. Bloch deserves mention here not only for his insights into Joachim and Hegel, but the interpretation he offers of the tradition as a whole. Bloch develops a reading quite similar to Taubes, though one that remains implicit underneath his reading of the biblical text. If for Taubes, the essential thesis of this genealogy is the ever greater realisation of the identity of the history of spirit and the history of the world, Bloch's insight is the reframing of the history of theological development given this identity. Rather than dismissing mythology or religion, Bloch returns to it convinced of this identity to reread the tradition of Christianity. In a sense, Taubes agrees with this rereading. After all in his theological and philosophical histories of eschatology, the only points which are contained within both are Lessing and Hegel. With Bloch as an ally, I will argue that this process was already underway with Hegel. While Bloch himself not only drew upon Hegel, but was also highly critical of much of his work, I will show that much of this criticism may be displaced by returning to Hegel and re-examining his relationship to the apocalyptic tradition.

### 3.0.0 The Divisions within Current Hegel Scholarship

As noted in the introduction, this thesis is concerned with both Hegel and Hegelianisms. While a great emphasis will be placed in this chapter and the next on Hegel's stated intentions when discussing religion, I do not consider this the final test of whether or not a reading is Hegelian. It is clear that Robert Pippin's controversial reading of Hegel, *is Hegelian*. It is equally clear that Peter Hodgson and Žižek each are Hegelian. Beginning from this position helps avoid easy dismissals of readings of Hegel. Given the complexity of Hegel's philosophical system, it only makes sense that it would generate varied, and at times contradictory, readings.

This chapter will begin by introducing several ways of schematising readings of Hegel (3.1.1-3.1.5), including the implications for thinking about Hegel's philosophy of religion. At this point, his philosophy of religion will only be discussed in general terms, with a detailed examination following in the subsequent chapter. I conclude the present chapter by explaining how my reading of Hegel relates to the existing divisions.

#### 3.1.0 Major Divisions

The wealth of work on Hegel makes an exhaustive schematisation of positions impossible. There are several helpful surveys which provide a more thorough summary than the one presented here. The most helpful, recent survey is the bibliographical essay included at the end of Stephen Houlgate's *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth and History*.<sup>53</sup> Published in 2006, Houlgate includes almost all of the secondary sources on Hegel which will be discussed in the following chapters, with the exceptions of the work of Karin de Boer, Angelica Nuzzo, Lewis and Malabou, all of whom have published in the period since the issuing of the second edition of Houlgate's text. Houlgate's survey, while drawing attention to select controversies, focuses

---

<sup>53</sup> Stephen Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy: Freedom, Truth and History* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991), 300–303. There is also the thematic bibliography of recent literature at the conclusion of Frederick C Beiser, *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008)., as well as Kurt Steinhauer's voluminous *Hegel bibliography: background material on the international reception of Hegel within the context of the history of philosophy/Hegel bibliographie: materialien zur Geschichte der international Hegel-Rezeption und zur Philosophie-Geschichte. Part I* (München: Saur, 1980); *Hegel bibliography: background material on the international reception of Hegel within the context of the history of philosophy/Hegel bibliographie: materialien zur Geschichte der international Hegel-Rezeption und zur Philosophie-Geschichte. Part II, Volume 1* (München: K. G. Saur, 1998); and Kurt Steinhauer and Hans-Dieter Schlüter, *Hegel bibliography: background material on the international reception of Hegel within the context of the history of philosophy/Hegel bibliographie: materialien zur Geschichte der international Hegel-Rezeption und zur Philosophie-Geschichte. Part II: Volume 2* (München: K. G. Saur, 1998).

mainly on breaking down the available literature according to topic. The purpose of this chapter is to identify the divisions relevant to the following argument linking Hegel's philosophy, apocalypticism and political theology.

There are five lines of demarcation, which are particularly important, each of which is addressed in a following subsection (3.1.1-3.1.5), before locating this present work in relationship to those categories (3.1.6). Each subsection will also address the relevance of the category for the contemporary discussion of religion. While early readings of religion in Hegel often fall easily along the division between left and right, appreciating the role of religion as representation requires a systematic reading, attentive to the openness and dynamism of Hegel's system as a whole. As I will show in later chapters, without maintaining this tension between systematicity and dynamism, religion is consigned to a narrow role supporting the state.

### 3.1.1 Left and Right

The first distinction to emerge in the wake of Hegel's death was between, Left, or young, Hegelians and Right, or old, Hegelians. Löwith explains the division primarily in terms of religion.<sup>54</sup> Hegel divides religion into its content (philosophical truth) and form (representation). The right Hegelians were primarily concerned with Hegel's preservation of religion as a site of truth, though sometimes questioning the notion of religion as representation.<sup>55</sup> Left Hegelians reject both aspects of Hegel's philosophy of religion seeking to appropriate the dialectical method and turn Hegel's philosophy on its head. Of the two, the Left Hegelians, including Ludwig Feuerbach and Marx, were more influential, but their attempt to extract the dialectical core from Hegel's philosophy fails to capture the diversity of more recent Hegel scholarship.

Many contemporary readings of Hegel do not fit easily into this division, arguing instead that the divisions constitutive of the left and right are precisely the oppositions that Hegel seeks to overcome. This overcoming is not a final resolution, but an understanding of how these oppositions structure thought. The division is nonetheless historically significant and traces of the opposed orientations continue to manifest. For instance, one might take Peter Hodgson as representative of the on-going right Hegelian argument for interpreting Hegel as broadly in line with the Christian tradition and Slavoj Žižek as a left Hegelian subversion of that tradition. Even here, however, the categories are imprecise. Žižek's reading of Hegel may continue the politics of left Hegeliansim, but emphasises Hegel's notion of the absolute more than the 'traditional' left

---

<sup>54</sup> Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, 50–51.

<sup>55</sup> See the discussion of Karl Friedrich Göschel in section 4.1.4.

Hegelians. Similarly, Lewis, whose reading is a central resource for my development of Hegel's theory of representation, explains that his 'non-metaphysical' reading would be rejected by the right Hegelians, while his defence of Hegel's idealism would offend the left.<sup>56</sup>

In response to the collapse of Left and Right, Emile Fackenheim proposes a middle reading. This interpretation focuses on Hegel's attempt to 'unite a pluralistic openness as hospitable to the varieties of contingent experience as any empiricism with a monist completeness more radical in its claims to comprehensiveness than any other speculative rationalism.'<sup>57</sup> Even with the addition of a third option, however, the schema is not sufficient for sorting the various readings. As will be discussed further in section 4.3.0, Lewis rejects middle Hegelianism as well, due to its emphasis on the otherness of the absolute. Expanding the category of the Hegelian middle to include the work of Gillian Rose, however, allows one to define the middle, not by this otherness, but by the need for a notion of the absolute which does not slip back into pre-critical metaphysics.

Ultimately, the division between left and right Hegelians is important historically but fails to capture the key divisions dominating Hegel studies today. A new set of categories is thus required.

### 3.1.2 Metaphysical and 'Non-Metaphysical'

A likely candidate for replacing left and right is the split between metaphysical and non-'metaphysical'. The term 'non-metaphysical' is the most problematic category used in this system of classification.<sup>58</sup> Those most often described as 'non-metaphysical' repeatedly reject the term as unhelpful, specifying that Hegel, in their reading does not reject metaphysics as such, but any pre-Kantian metaphysics.

Beiser provides a lucid summary of the main issues presented by the phrase 'Hegel's metaphysics'. The term metaphysics is often taken to refer to 'a form of speculation about supernatural entities, such as God, Providence, and the soul.'<sup>59</sup> This sense of metaphysics is not

---

<sup>56</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 167–168.

<sup>57</sup> Emil L. Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* (Bloomington ; London: Indiana University Press, 1967), 76–77.

<sup>58</sup> Helpful overviews of the development of this reading can be found in Simon Lumsden, "The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel," *Philosophy Compass* 3, no. 1 (2008): 51–65, and Torjus Midtgarden, "Conflicting and Complementary Conceptions of Discursive Practice in Non-metaphysical Interpretations of Hegel," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* (January 23, 2013).

<sup>59</sup> Frederick C Beiser, "Introduction: Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics," in *The Cambridge companion to Hegel*, ed. Frederick C Beiser (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 4–5.

the one intended by Hegel. It mistakenly understands metaphysics as concerned primarily with things. For Hegel, metaphysics is ‘the rational knowledge of the absolute’ and the absolute is ‘simply the whole of which all things are only parts.’<sup>60</sup> Hegel has a metaphysics, but this metaphysics arises from experience and is purely immanent.

In the end, it is the relationship between Kant and Hegel which determines the different factions in these debates. As Beiser explains, Hegel argues that the whole, the absolute is ‘an organism... a totality of living forces.’<sup>61</sup> This puts them at odds with Kant for whom

[t]he idea of an organism has a strictly heuristic value in helping us to systematize our knowledge of the many particular laws of nature. We cannot assume that nature *is* an organism, then, but we can proceed only *as if* it were one... Rather than describing anything that exists, it simply prescribes a task, the organization of all our detailed knowledge into a system. Here, then, lies the basic sticking point between Kant and Hegel: Kant denies, and Hegel affirms, that we can know that nature *is* an organism.<sup>62</sup>

Consequently, in Beiser’s view, the idea of a ‘non-metaphysical’ reading of Hegel is incoherent.<sup>63</sup>

The metaphysics referred to in the expression ‘non-metaphysical’, however, are the first form of metaphysics, concerned with supernatural entities. The term ‘non-metaphysical’, in this usage, originates with Klaus Hartmann’s essay ‘Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View’, which argues that Hegel should be primarily understood as a category theorist.<sup>64</sup> For Hartmann, Hegel’s philosophy is ‘a philosophy devoid of existence claims and innocent of a reductionism opting for certain existences to the detriment of others.’<sup>65</sup> This results in construing Hegel’s philosophical ambition as a modest ‘hermeneutic of categories.’<sup>66</sup> This ‘non-metaphysical’ reading seeks to recover from readings which emphasise Hegel’s continuity with Christian metaphysics, for example in the work of Charles Taylor or Joseph Findlay.<sup>67</sup>

The work begun by Hartmann is carried on by Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard. Pippin rejects any Christian romanticism or cosmic spiritual interpretation of Hegel’s notions of spirit and absolute. While there are ambiguities within Hegel’s philosophy, he claims, it is clear that if ‘a

---

<sup>60</sup> Beiser, “Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics,” 5.

<sup>61</sup> Beiser, “Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics,” 9.

<sup>62</sup> Beiser, “Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics,” 9.

<sup>63</sup> Frederick C Beiser, “Hegel, a Non-Metaphysician? A Polemic Review of H T Engelhardt and Terry Pinkard (eds), *Hegel Reconsidered*,” *The Hegel Society of Great Britain* 32 (1995): 1–13.

<sup>64</sup> Klaus Hartmann, “Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View,” in *Hegel: a Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Alasdair C. MacIntyre (Notre Dame, Ind; London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), 101–124.

<sup>65</sup> Hartmann, “Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View,” 110.

<sup>66</sup> Hartmann, “Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View,” 124.

<sup>67</sup> Taylor, *Hegel*; J. N Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination* (London; New York: Allen & Unwin ; Macmillan, 1958).

metaphysical monist or speculative, contradiction-embracing logician is the “real” Hegel, it is not the historically influential Hegel.<sup>68</sup> Pippin’s central question is whether or not Hegel has managed to avoid the transcendental scepticism of Kant and Fichte. That is, can Hegel circumvent Kant and Fichte’s scepticism, by which they admit ‘that they have no way of establishing that the conditions for a possibly self-conscious experience of objects are genuinely objective. The results of their respective “deductions” either relativize claims about objects to mere phenomena or create an infinite and infinitely futile task, a “striving” for a reconciliation that can never occur.’<sup>69</sup> For Kant, there is no such thing as absolute knowing. For Hegel, absolute knowing is the apex of philosophical thought.

Comparing Beiser’s description of Hegelian metaphysics and Pippin’s description of his own approach, it would seem that the difference is not as extreme as one might think.<sup>70</sup> If, as Beiser puts it, Hegel’s metaphysics are concerned with ‘a discursive knowledge of the absolute’, this phrase seems like a suitable description of both Pippin and Pinkard. It also seems like a fair description of recent efforts to defend Hegel’s metaphysics, as in the work of Stephen Houlgate and Robert Stern.

In reality the positions of Houlgate, Stern, Pippin and Pinkard are fairly close. The difference is, of course, greater at either extreme of the spectrum. Comparing the work Peter Hodgson to Robert Brandom or John McDowell, it is possible to forget that they are writing about the same philosophical system. At these extremes, the metaphysical reading becomes more strongly linked to religious interpretations, like that of Hodgson or Min, and the ‘non-metaphysical reading’ more connected to the ‘analytic’ tradition.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 4.

<sup>69</sup> Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism*, 92.

<sup>70</sup> It is important to note that Beiser does not actually mention Pippin in his polemic review or his introductory chapter on Hegelian metaphysics, preferring to concentrate his critique on Pinkard. Elsewhere he has grouped them together as deflationary interpretations, with Pippin described as neo-Kantian and Pinkard as social epistemological (Frederick C Beiser, *Hegel* (New York; London: Routledge, 2005), 317n3. This grouping, as well as the overlap in Pippin’s and Pinkard’s approaches, validates the application of Beiser’s critique of Pippin. For a comparison of Pippin and Pinkard see Midtgarden, “Conflicting and Complementary Conceptions of Discursive Practice in Non-metaphysical Interpretations of Hegel.”

<sup>71</sup> Tom Rockmore groups Brandom, McDowell and Pippin as sharing a commitment to metaphysical realism. He also adds Beiser to this group, which complicates the metaphysical/‘non-metaphysical’ divide, as Beiser advocates the importance of Hegel’s metaphysics. Rockmore critiques this reading as overly determined by trends in current Anglo-American philosophy, finding that their readings are philosophically interesting but inaccurate depictions of Hegel’s philosophy. See Tom Rockmore, “Some Recent Analytic ‘Realist’ Readings of Hegel,” in *Hegel and the analytic tradition*, ed. Angelica Nuzzo (London: Continuum, 2009), 62–71.

As with the division of left and right, then, it would seem that these categories are no longer helpful (if they ever were). Beiser, in his polemical treatment of the opposition of metaphysical and ‘non-metaphysical’, expresses doubt about the usefulness of either characterisation. The former is an ill-defined category ‘whose only purpose is to foster the sense of identity of an academic clique’ and the latter’s position is not as innovative as it would like to think.<sup>72</sup> While it is important to emphasise Hegel’s continuity with Kant’s critique of rationalist metaphysics, this position is found in ‘classical interpretations’ as well.<sup>73</sup> The opposition of metaphysical and ‘non-metaphysical’ is thus shown to be a false dilemma. ‘Surely it is possible that Hegel disapproved of the methods and conclusion of traditional pre-Kantian metaphysics, but that he did so only to vindicate a metaphysics of his own.’<sup>74</sup> Hegel’s metaphysics are not ‘non-metaphysical’, they are non-fully-Kantian.

While Beiser’s critique has some strong points, particularly about the ill-defined categories used to define different approaches to Hegel, the replies to this vein of criticism usually identify a fundamental misunderstanding, stemming from the use of ‘non-metaphysical’. Pinkard suggests adopting post-Kantian as a more accurate designation.

I take Hegel to be basically radicalizing the Kantian programme, extending it and drawing out what he takes to be the normative commitments of a Kantian picture of things... I prefer the term ‘post-Kantian’ to the term ‘non-metaphysical’ that I have previously used to characterize my work. Hartmann’s own reading of Hegel was itself ‘post-Kantian’, and his use of the term ‘non-metaphysical’ to characterize his own interpretation was not a happy one. Hartmann meant that Hegel did not revert to any pre-critical metaphysics to make his criticisms of Kant, that his criticisms were intended to be carried out immanently within the terms originally set by Kant himself. His use of ‘non-metaphysical’ to characterize his reading only obscured that point and suggested that he was proposing an interpretation according to which Hegel practised only some neutral form of ‘conceptual analysis’ or something similar.<sup>75</sup>

Pinkard makes an important point - too often one finds references to the ‘absurd’ suggestion that Hegel has no metaphysics.

Nonetheless, there are important differences between the ‘non-metaphysical’ and ‘metaphysical’ readings. Houlgate explains this division clearly. Pippin presents Hegel as preserving Kant’s transcendental logic. In this reading, Hegel’s investigation of the categories ‘simply describes the logical, categorial structure of the world that is given to us through ordinary

---

<sup>72</sup> Beiser, “Hegel, a Non-Metaphysician?” 2.

<sup>73</sup> Beiser, “Hegel, a Non-Metaphysician?” 2.

<sup>74</sup> Beiser, “Hegel, a Non-Metaphysician?” 3.

<sup>75</sup> Terry Pinkard, “Virtues, Morality and Sittlichkeit: From Maxims to Practices,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 7, no. 2 (1999): 230n2.

experience; it tells us what that world is in truth.<sup>76</sup> Houlgate objects, arguing that in Hegel ‘the categories cannot be contrasted in this way with what there ultimately is or might be because they themselves contain “all that ‘being’ could intelligibly be.”<sup>77</sup> In this reading, ‘the categories articulated in the Logic... are forms or ways of being as well as categories of thought. Speculative logic is accordingly not merely transcendental by ontological logic.’ Houlgate thus offers a strong ontology against Pippin’s ‘deflationary’ account of Hegel’s system.<sup>78</sup> Put another way, for Pippin, logic replaces ontology. For Houlgate, logic is ontology.

The imprecision of the term causes confusion, leading some to express shock at those who deny that Hegel is concerned with metaphysics.<sup>79</sup> For example, Nicholas Adams advocates for readings which attend to Hegel’s metaphysical claims and suggests what may be a more helpful distinction between epic and dramatic metaphysics. The former adopts a ‘God’s eye view’ as the ‘criterion of truth’, while the latter ‘rejects the God’s-eye view as the criterion of truth, and instead assumes that human thinking is the only thinking that counts...’ These are ‘investigations into how we *think* about reality, and as clarity is gained on this question, the task will be to show how our talk about objects in the world is structured by this thinking.’<sup>80</sup> Dramatic metaphysics, with its emphasis on discursivity, begins to sound much like Pippin and Pinkard’s understanding of what is often referred to as the ‘non-metaphysical’ reading.

This confusion poses a challenge to those writing on debates involving Pippin and Pinkard. It seems inappropriate to continue to use a clearly problematic designation, but this designation is also the one most widely used to indicate a particular trend in the reading of Hegel. Employing a new set of terms, such as Adam’s epic and dramatic, would introduce a new set of challenges. For one, ‘non-metaphysical’ is used to designate a fairly wide set of philosophical perspectives. In light of these issues, I have chosen to use ‘non-metaphysical’ throughout. While scare quotes are not the most satisfying solution, this thesis is not concerned

---

<sup>76</sup> Stephen Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic: From Being to Infinity*, Purdue University Press Series in the History of Philosophy (West Lafayette, Ind: Purdue University Press, 2006), 126.

<sup>77</sup> Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 137.

<sup>78</sup> I borrow this term deflationary from Rockmore. See Rockmore, “Some Recent Analytic ‘Realist’ Readings of Hegel,” 162.

<sup>79</sup> For example, in the introduction to his excellent work on Hegel and theology, Nicholas Adams comments on the state of current Hegel scholarship. He notes that Hegel’s purported defenders address Hegel’s work on the basis that it speaks to contemporary issues, rather than the fecundity of Hegel’s philosophical system. ‘Worse, those philosophers often neglect Hegel’s theological interests and some even deny (astonishingly) that Hegel has a metaphysical project at all’ Adams, *The Eclipse of Grace*, 3. Adams does not specify particular interpretations, but it seems likely that he has in mind some version of this ‘non-metaphysical’ reading.

<sup>80</sup> Adams, *The Eclipse of Grace*, 123.



with the exploration of ‘non-metaphysical’ readings which would be the prerequisite for suggesting a revision of the dominate terminology.

The implications of the ‘non-metaphysical’ reading for Hegel’s philosophy of religion will be examined in greater detail in the following two chapters. Even from this initial survey, however, it is clear that this reading could not tolerate a form of religious thought concerned with a transcendent deity. If Hegel’s philosophy is concerned with the determination of the forms of thought, whether these determinations are simply transcendental categories or also ways of being, there is no reference to a world beyond immanent, material existence. For the ‘non-metaphysical’ reading, if religion continues to have a role, it will have to make function within this plain.

### 3.1.3 Systematic and Non-Systematic

In his recent book on Hegel’s philosophy of right, Thom Brooks introduces another method of differentiating approaches referring to systematic and non-systematic readings. Brooks presents many of the same concerns discussed in the previous section. Noting that ‘non-metaphysical’ readings largely agree that Hegel’s philosophy *does* present a metaphysics, Brooks rightly questions the usefulness of the term.<sup>81</sup> The disagreement is not over whether or not Hegel has a metaphysics, but the nature and significance of that aspect of his philosophy. Brooks suggests that systematic and non-systematic would be a more accurate description.

For Brooks, using this opposition has the advantage of naming the same division, only more accurately. Those who advocate ‘non-metaphysical’ readings tend to be non-systematic; those who argue for the ‘metaphysical’ approach tend to be systematic.<sup>82</sup> Changing the terminology allows one to preserve existing debates, but to name the stakes of these debates in a more accurate fashion. Yet, these terms present their own set of issues. For instance, Brooks describes Pippin’s reading as non-systematic. In explaining this characterisation, Brooks refers to Pippin’s introductory comments in *Hegel’s Idealism*. Pippin describes the dilemma confronting modern readers of Hegel. Either one must appeal to implausible metaphysical readings, per his descriptions in the previous section, or one must update Hegel’s philosophy, trimming his insights of their speculative fat.

---

<sup>81</sup> Thom Brooks, *Hegel’s Political Philosophy: a Systematic Reading of the Philosophy of Right* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 2, 11.

<sup>82</sup> Brooks, *Hegel’s Political Philosophy*, 6.

Without any systematic attempt to rely on the incredibly opaque details of the *Science of Logic* to understand Hegel's full or "real" positions, his claims about the historical character of human spirit, about the social nature of self-consciousness, about the alienation and fragmentation of modern society, about the limitations of the "moral point of view," about the modern nation state, or even some aspects of his general antifoundationalist holism, can all be discussed more manageably, in their own right, as independently valuable insights.<sup>83</sup>

This statement, Pippin's description of revisionist Hegelianism, certainly seems to lend credence to the idea that Pippin provides a non-systematic reading. Yet, the next page, Pippin argues that there must be an alternative reading.

The metaphysical Hegel looks like some premodern anachronism (or totalitarian bogeyman in some versions), and accounts of Hegel's political and social theory cannot be said, finally, to be genuinely Hegelian without some reliance on the speculative system. Obviously such an interpretive dilemma could be solved if it could be shown that Hegel's speculative position, basically his theory of the Absolute Idea, his claim that such an Idea alone is "what truly is," could be interpreted and defended in a way that is not committed to a philosophically problematic theological metaphysics.<sup>84</sup>

The answer, Pippin argues, is a Hegelianism that is at once speculative and 'non-metaphysical'. He proceeds to develop this reading through a close reading of the relationship between Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel, drawing heavily on the full breadth of Hegel's writings, but with special emphasis on his logic. Pippin does not reject the systematic nature of Hegel's philosophy. Rather, he attempts to revise that system in order to save Hegel's systematic theory of absolute knowing.

If this example shows that the correlation of 'non-metaphysics' and non-systematicity is not as strong as Brooks claims, the contrast of systematic and non-systematic still remains useful in distinguishing between those who think Hegel's insights must be abstracted from his system, and those who see that system as fundamental to his insight.<sup>85</sup> This distinction can be further nuanced, by a further division between readings which are intentionally, methodologically non-systematic and those which are accidentally non-systematic. Brooks demonstrates, for example, that Allen Wood offers an intentionally non-systematic reading of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, with problematic results. In terms of non-systematic readings, Alexandre Kojève's highly influential

---

<sup>83</sup> Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, 4.

<sup>84</sup> Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, 5.

<sup>85</sup> Paul Redding arrives at a similar judgment in his response to Brooks's book in a special issue of the *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* devoted to the book. See Paul Redding, "Thom Brooks's Project of a Systematic Reading of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 66 (2012): 2–3. This criticism does not mean that the correlation does not exist, just that it is not quite as strong as Brooks claims.

(mis)reading of the *Phenomenology* results, in part, from his failure to read this text in relation to the rest of Hegel's philosophical system.<sup>86</sup> Adding this further clarification allows one to differentiate between approaches which adopt a 'non-metaphysical' method and those offering erroneous readings of Hegel's philosophy.

The question then arises whether the non-systematic reading is problematic because it makes claims that are philosophically indefensible or if it is problematic only as an interpretation of Hegel. Brooks's criticisms of Wood, for example, focus on the inadequacy of his interpretation of Hegel rather than the specifics of his conclusion.<sup>87</sup> Bearing this point in mind, it begins to become clear that the term systematic does not only refer to systematic connections between texts and within text, but describes those who claim Hegel's system works *as a system*. Non-systematic readers are those who believe Hegel's philosophy remains significant, but ultimately fails as a whole system. It must be reformulated, elements extracted and rearranged, in order for his philosophy to continue generate new insights.

In terms of religion, a systematic reading is particularly important. As Lewis's work on religion shows, misinterpretations of Hegel's philosophy of religion most often stem from forgetting Hegel's rejection of transcendence and his insistence that, whenever religion features in a discussion, that it functions as a representation of the concept.<sup>88</sup>

### 3.1.4 Open and Closed

If the division between metaphysical and 'non-metaphysical' is, though problematic, the most significant divide in Hegel studies today, a close second are debates on whether Hegel offers an open philosophical system, or if this system is closed. This distinction receives a fuller treatment in chapter five, but an initial discussion will help contextualise the chapters leading to that discussion.

Hegel thinks that his system is, in some sense, complete. The nature of that completeness is less clear. As with the 'non-metaphysical' and non-systematic readings, the open reading is often motivated by a desire to preserve Hegel's relevance in the face of statements such as the 'The actual is rational and the rational is actual.' As David Kolb describes these readings, they 'are designed to allow considerable historicism at some level while retaining Hegel's concern for

---

<sup>86</sup> Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. Raymond Queneau and Allan Bloom, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

<sup>87</sup> Brooks, *Hegel's Political Philosophy*, 7–8.

<sup>88</sup> This issue is addressed in detail in the following chapter.

rational closure. They keep Hegel's goal of thought's return to itself but open up that self-relation to provide continual novelty in both empirical detail and logical categories. They promise both historical variability and comprehensive rationality.<sup>89</sup> As examples of this effort, Kolb considers the meta-logical approach of Pippin and the contingency focused reading of Burbidge. As will be shown in chapter five, Kolb determines that these readings are both insufficiently Hegelian and insufficiently open. There is no way to preserve Hegel's philosophy as a systematic whole. 'For those who want to use Hegel without subscribing to his meta-philosophy, Hegel must be inserted in a field he does not control, and that goes against what he stands for. But he would still stand with us in vision of thought's turnings, and his feelings for life's fractures and self-reversals, and his attempts to comprehend the problems of modern economy and society and culture.'<sup>90</sup>

Kolb's criticism of open Hegelianism replays the same issues as the debate about systematic/non-systematic readings. When Kolb argues that these readings are insufficiently Hegelian, he means that they do not preserve the system as a whole. As stated above, I am not convinced that this criterion is sufficient for determining whether a philosophy is Hegelian.<sup>91</sup> It is possible to preserve Hegel's philosophical system while still revising that system. Even Hegel acknowledges that the core of this system, the *Logic* is both imperfect and complete.<sup>92</sup>

Kolb's essay predates Angelica Nuzzo's important work on Hegel's system. Nuzzo offers an open reading of Hegel through her work on the dynamism of Hegel's logic and her argument for understanding Hegel's absolute as method.<sup>93</sup> She emphasises that 'absolute' most often

---

<sup>89</sup> David Kolb, "What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel," *Philosophical Topics* 19, no. 2 (1991): 30.

<sup>90</sup> Kolb, "What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel," 48.

<sup>91</sup> Rockmore, "Some Recent Analytic 'Realist' Readings of Hegel," 171.

<sup>92</sup> Hegel's preface to the second edition opens by noting the imperfections of the first edition and closes by lamenting his inability to continue revising 'in the face of the magnitude of the task' (SL, 31/W5: 19) and under the constraint of 'circumstances of external necessity, of the inevitable distractions caused by the magnitude and many-sidedness of contemporary affairs' (SL, 42/W5: 34).

<sup>93</sup> Angelica Nuzzo, "'... As If Truth Were a Coin!' Lessing and Hegel's Developmental Theory of Truth," *Hegel Studien* 44 (2009): 131–55; Angelica Nuzzo, "The End of Hegel's Logic: Absolute Idea as Absolute Method," in *Hegel's theory of the subject*, ed. David Carlson (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 187–205; Angelica Nuzzo, "The Truth of Absolutes Wissen in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit," in *Hegel's Phenomenology of spirit: new critical essays*, ed. Alfred Denker and Michael G Vater (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2003), 265–293; and Angelica Nuzzo, "Dialectic as Logic of Transformative Processes," in *Hegel: New Directions*, ed. Katerina Deligiorgi (Chesham, Bucks: Acumen, 2006), 85–104. Nuzzo's reading is discussed further in 7.2.2. See Gillian Rose, who also makes this point: 'those critics of Hegel who divide his through into a method and a system impose a schema on it which he fundamentally rejected' (Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology* (London: Verso, 2009), 45).

appears as an adjective – absolute knowing, absolute spirit, absolute idea, absolute religion and absolute freedom.<sup>94</sup> As such, '[t]he being of the Absolute should rather be thought as the being of "absolute knowledge."<sup>95</sup> Hegel has a metaphysics, but it is not a metaphysics of the absolute, rather his revision of metaphysics is accomplished in absolute knowing. Returning to the important question of Hegel's relation to Kant, Nuzzo affirms the positions expressed above: Hegel critiques Kantian metaphysics, not in the name of a return to the pre-Kantian, theological or transcendental metaphysics, but in order to develop his own metaphysic. 'Hegel's fundamental transformation of Kant's philosophy does not consist in a shift from the finite subject of thinking to a new theory of the Absolute... Hegel shows that the logic of the 'absolute' is nothing but the logic of our subjective finite consciousness once it recognizes the 'concept' as its constitutive (and not merely regulative) method.'<sup>96</sup> The resulting absolute knowing of being

points to the fact that the cognizing subject not only has a cognition of the object but also knows that she has that cognition. The knowing subject knows that the object is constituted in the way reproduced by her cognition and its judgments. In other words, she knows that her cognition is true. Wissen is, therefore, the act according whereby the cognizing subject knows not only the object but also the truth of her cognition - i.e., the correspondence between her judgments and the object.<sup>97</sup>

This understanding of the absolute both preserves the completeness of Hegel's philosophical system and an open Hegelianism. In fact, the openness results from the completeness of the system. Absolute knowing is a result. Only at the end of the *Phenomenology* does the reader arrive at absolute knowing. The completeness of absolute knowing is 'the recognition that all consciousness's and spirit's figures are products of the activity of the self.'<sup>98</sup> There is nowhere to go after arriving at this knowledge – all that remains is to apply that knowledge, through the return to representation, through the cultivation of the ethical community and the pursuit of natural scientific knowledge. Hegel's philosophy is open because its result is a beginning – 'to be "absolute"... means to inaugurate a new use of the structure in question. Hegel's use of homonymy amounts to the "absolute freedom" of a thinking that has proved itself capable of reaching the standpoint from which alone "absoluteness" can be predicated.'<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>94</sup> Nuzzo, "The Truth of Absolutes Wissen in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit," 274.

<sup>95</sup> Nuzzo, "The Truth of Absolutes Wissen in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit," 271.

<sup>96</sup> Nuzzo, "The Truth of Absolutes Wissen in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit," 278.

<sup>97</sup> Nuzzo, "The Truth of Absolutes Wissen in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit," 287.

<sup>98</sup> Nuzzo, "The Truth of Absolutes Wissen in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit," 280.

<sup>99</sup> Nuzzo, "The Truth of Absolutes Wissen in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit," 284.

In terms of the analysis of apocalyptic political theology, this version of open Hegelianism is important for two reasons. First, it is from the perspective of absolute knowing, and thus absolute freedom, that one is able to return to representations; this return allows philosophy to, as discussed in the following chapters, experiment with theological materials. Second, it is the basis for rejecting the ‘end of history’ readings of Hegel’s philosophy. The result or completion in Hegel’s philosophy is the achievement of this absolute knowing. While the moment of this completion is historical, it is not a terminus. Thought must continue.

### 3.1.5 Hegel as an End and Hegel as a Beginning

Finally, a distinction may be made between those commentators who seek to extrapolate Hegel’s philosophical system and those who seek to recapitulate that system or abstract aspects of that system and apply them in new philosophical systems. One might think of this division as analogous to the distinction between biblical exegesis and biblical theology. Or, put yet another way, one might think of the distinction as that between a *primary* concern with what Hegel said and what Hegel can say now. These designations might describe a general approach or specific works.

H.S. Harris, John Burbidge, Robert Stern, Quentin Lauer and Stephen Houlgate are all examples of philosophers who treat the study of Hegel as an end in itself. They offer commentaries on Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* or *Science of Logic*.<sup>100</sup> They are systematic in their efforts to connect Hegel’s philosophy of religion, right, religion and spirit. Also included in the category ‘Hegel as an end’ would be historical treatments of Hegel’s work. This includes Pinkard’s biography and works on various facets of Hegel’s historical context.<sup>101</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> H.S. Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder I: The Pilgrimage of Reason* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997); H. S. Harris, *Hegel’s Ladder II: The Odyssey of Spirit* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997); John W Burbidge, *On Hegel’s Logic: Fragments of a Commentary* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1981); John W Burbidge, *Hegel’s Systematic Contingency* (Basingstoke [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Robert Stern, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit*, Routledge Philosophy Guidebooks (London: Routledge, 2002); Quentin Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1976); and Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic*.

<sup>101</sup> Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Dickey, *Hegel*; Stephen Crites, *Dialectic and Gospel in the Development of Hegel’s Thinking* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998); H. S Harris, *Hegel’s Development: Toward the Sunlight, 1770 - 1801*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); and H. S Harris, *Hegel’s Development: Night Thoughts (Jena 1801-1806)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

Those who are non-systematic in the sense I specified above, finding that Hegel's philosophical system is untenable as a *complete* system, offer a counter position.<sup>102</sup> Hegel is combined with other philosophers such as Heidegger, redeployed within the Anglo-American analytic tradition or combined with the insights of critical theory and psychoanalysis.<sup>103</sup> Hegel provides resources for thinking about contemporary issue, but the goal is not to arrive at a systematic, exhaustive account of his philosophy.

This division is not about on whether or not Hegel has contemporary significance. The debate is on whether that significance comes from understanding Hegel's philosophical project and redeploying in the contemporary context, or if aspects of Hegel's arguments must be extracted or reformulated. As with 'metaphysical'/'non-metaphysical' or systematic/non-systematic, these divisions are not hard, but indicate a spectrum.

### 3.2.0 Summary

As is clear from the preceding discussion, these divisions are problematic on two fronts. First, there are debates about the validity or usefulness of distinctions. Second, even if one agrees on terminology, the meaning of that terminology is still contested. In one reading, Houlgate is metaphysical, in another 'non-metaphysical'.<sup>104</sup> These divisions are thus useful heuristic tools, but if they are viewed as absolute distinctions rather than tendencies they lead to skewed understandings of interpretations.

---

<sup>102</sup>See for example, Robert B. Pippin, "You can't get there from here: Transition problems in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit," in *The Cambridge companion to Hegel*, ed. Frederick C Beiser (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 52–85, and David Kolb, "The Necessities of Hegel's Logic," in *Hegel and the analytic tradition*, ed. Angelica Nuzzo (London: Continuum, 2009), 48–60.

<sup>103</sup> David Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger, and After* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Paul Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Robert Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2002); John McDowell, *Mind and World: With a New Introduction by the Author* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, 2nd ed., with supplementary chapter (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954); Slavoj Žižek, *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London; New York: Verso, 2012); and Adrian Johnston, *Žižek's Ontology: A Transcendental Materialist Theory of Subjectivity* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008).

<sup>104</sup> Paul Redding, *Hegel's Hermeneutics* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 15n25., describes Houlgate in terms of the 'non-metaphysical' reading, while Houlgate himself argues against Pippin's reading in Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 137–143. Stern too, argues that Houlgate helps recuperate Hegel's metaphysics. See Robert Stern, *Hegelian Metaphysics* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 19.

As stated in the introduction, one of the aims of this thesis is to speak across these divisions. While Lewis has contributed to a volume edited by Žižek, neither of the two engages with the work of the other. Neither Žižek nor Malabou engages substantially with the work of Burbidge, Nuzzo or Kolb, all examples of people who offer adjacent readings of Hegel. Most of these missed encounters are features of the increased sub-specialisation within Hegel studies. Yet in the name of a systematic reading of Hegel, which seeks to preserve the connections between Hegel's logic, philosophy of religion, philosophy of right and concept of the absolute, bringing these various interpretations together allows me to investigate both what Hegel said and what he still has to say.

While drawing on a variety of sources, the following chapters are focused particularly on the impact of 'non-metaphysical' readings. As will be seen in the next chapter, by emphasising Hegel's break with traditional metaphysics, Lewis is able to offer a compelling reading of Hegel's notion of religion as representation. In this reading, religion still has a place within society, but the nature of religion itself is transformed. While the 'non-metaphysical' approach helps open this interpretative possibility, it also tends toward the discursive bias described in chapter five. To combat this tendency, I draw on a less deflationary understanding of Hegel's absolute. As Rose argues 'Hegel's philosophy has *no* social import if the absolute is banished or suppressed, if the absolute cannot be thought.'<sup>105</sup> The explorations of this understanding, with the aid of open Hegelianism, leads to the discussion of apocalypse as an important representation.

---

<sup>105</sup> Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 45.



#### 4 Understanding the Role of Religion as Representation

This chapter builds on the preceding survey of interpretations of Hegel's philosophy, showing the implications of these understandings for Hegel's philosophy of religion. Given the range of current interpretations, it will not be possible to cover every discussion of Hegel's concept of religion. The chapter is thus focused on Hegel's concept of religion as *Vorstellung* or representation. Work on Hegel's understanding of the Trinity or the Incarnation, then, will not be directly examined, but only used in considering the implications of the understanding of religion as representation. Similarly, the excellent historical work on Hegel's theological resources or other cultural influences on the development of Hegel's religious ideas will only be treated as they relate to clarifying the nature of religious representations.<sup>106</sup>

The first section presents the basics of Hegel's concept of representation and his discussion of religion (4.1.0). While Hegel also discusses art as a form of representation, the focus will solely be on religion.<sup>107</sup> Hegel develops this understanding of religion as representation mainly in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the *Philosophy of Spirit* in the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences* and the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. While using these key texts in presenting his understanding of representation (4.1.1-4.1.2), I also turn to his review of Karl Friedrich Göschel's *Aphorisms on Ignorance and Absolute Knowledge* (*Aphorismen über Nichtwissen und absolutes Wissen*). Here Hegel clarifies the relationship between concept and representation, stating that the concept enables a return to representation. This return is the basis for the understanding of Taubes's philosophy developed in chapter six and the apocalyptic political theology developed in chapter seven.

I then outline the most significant previous efforts at outlining Hegel's theory of religion as representation (4.2.0). I rely particularly on the work of Thomas Lewis, whose research connects religion as representation to politics. I supplement his work with that of Malcolm Clark and Kathleen Magnus Dow, bringing together these three perspectives on the significance of representation for the first time. These interpretations are then considered in terms of the categories developed in the previous chapter's schematisation of current Hegel scholarship (4.3.0). In particular I focus on religion and the middle reading of Hegel. Lewis rejects Emile

---

<sup>106</sup> Dickey, *Hegel; Crites, Dialectic and Gospel*; O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel*; Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*; James Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983); and Dale M Schlitt, *Hegel's Trinitarian Claim a Critical Reflection* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012).

<sup>107</sup> On the relation between art and religion as forms of representation, see Kathleen Dow Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001).

Fackenheim's understanding of middle Hegelianism, but I suggest that Gillian Rose's variation on the middle reading draws closer to Lewis's approach.

Turning to the political implications of these readings of religion, I examine how the focus on representation can lead to an emphasis on the authority of the state (4.4.0). While acknowledging that this tendency is clearly evident in Hegel, I argue that his philosophy provides resources for thinking of religious representations as tools for voicing opposition to the state and social institutions, as seen in Rose's speculative reading of the relationship between religion and the state. The question then becomes whether or not religion in this form is actually a secularised form of Christianity. Countering the arguments of Jaeschke and Lewis I argue that philosophical post-secularism is a more accurate description (4.5.0). Finally, in the conclusion (4.6.0), I explain how this reading of religion as representation, potentially antagonistic towards the state and advocating the demystification of religious teachings, offers the grounds for a Hegelian apocalyptic political theology, thus preparing the ground for the remaining chapters.

#### **4.1.0 The Basic Features of Hegel's Understanding of Religion as Representational Thought**

Apart from historical work on the philosophical, political and theological context of Hegel's philosophy of religion, there have been several studies of different key theological concepts, as well as reflections on Hegel's usefulness for those practicing more traditional forms of theology.<sup>108</sup> This chapter focuses on a separate set of concerns: Hegel's understanding of religion as a form of representational thought and the relationship of that form of thought to philosophy. These concerns are inextricably related. It is impossible to understand the relationship of religion and philosophy without first grasping the representational nature of religion. Hegel himself makes this point in the *Encyclopaedia*:

Whereas the vision-method of Art, external in point of form, is but subjective production and shivers the substantial content into many separate shapes, and whereas Religion, with its separation into parts, opens it out in representation, and mediates what

---

<sup>108</sup> Peter C. Hodgson, "Introduction: G.W.F. Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit," in *G.W.F. Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit*, by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, The Making of Modern Theology (Edinburgh: T & T Clarke, 1997); Rowan Williams, "Hegel and the Gods of Postmodernity," in *Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion*, ed. Philippa Berry and Andrew Wernick (London; New York: Routledge, 1992); Andrew Shanks, *Civil Society, Civil Religion* (Oxford; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1995); Andrew Shanks, *God and Modernity: A New and Better Way to do Theology* (London; New York: Routledge, 2000); and Shanks, *Hegel's Political Theology*.

is thus opened out; Philosophy not merely keeps them together to make a totality, but even unifies them into the simple spiritual vision, and then in that raises them to self-conscious thought. Such consciousness is thus the intelligible unity (cognized by thought) of art and religion, in which the diverse elements in the content are cognized as necessary, and this necessary as free (E3, §572: 302/554-555).

Leaving aside the comments on art, Hegel here portrays philosophy as the means of raising religious thought to the level of self-consciousness. What religion grasps at separate moments, linked together through the historical unfolding of Christianity, philosophy comprehends in its philosophical unity.<sup>109</sup> The route for attaining this self-consciousness in relation to religious ideas is explained in the following paragraph. ‘Philosophy thus characterizes itself as a cognition of the necessity in the content of the absolute representation’, which in the religious representations is presented in the form of ‘first the subjective retreat inwards, then the subjective movement of faith and its final identification with the presupposed object’ (E3, §573: 302/555).

Philosophy’s grasping of the necessity of the content in the representation is the essential difference between philosophy and religion. In the main section of the *Encyclopaedia* on representation, Hegel describes it as

between that stage of intelligence where it finds itself immediately subject to modification and that where intelligence is in its freedom, or, a thought... as representation begins from intuition and the ready-found of intuition, the intuitional contrast still continues to affect its activity, and makes its concrete products still “syntheses”, which do not grow to the concrete immanence of the notion till they reach the stage of thought (E3, §451: 201-202/W20, 445-446).

Applied to religion, this contrast between syntheses and the concrete immanence of the notion is manifested in three stages: subjective retreat inwards, subjective movement of faith and identification with the object as a chain of moments. These stages, the content of religious faith, philosophy understands in its unity with the form of thought:

This cognition is thus the *recognition* of this content and its form; it is the liberation from the one-sidedness of the forms, elevation of them into the absolute form, which determines itself to content, remains identical with it, and is in that the cognition of that essential and actual necessity. This movement, which philosophy is, finds itself already accomplished, when at the close it seizes its own notion – i.e. only *looks back* on its knowledge (E3, §573: 302/555).

---

<sup>109</sup> While Hegel’s understanding of religion applies to religion as such this chapter will primarily concern itself with Christianity, which occupies the central role in Hegel’s philosophy of religion.

This last phrase returns the discussion to the point above – the relationship of religion and philosophy is only understandable as religious representations propel thought beyond the representational form to grasp the absolute as concept. It is this transition and, as shown below, the eventual return to representation (4.1.4), that is key to the ensuing chapters.

In the beginning of the section on religion in the *Phenomenology*, Hegel explains the place of religion in the development of self-consciousness. Earlier sections have dealt with religion, ‘although only from the *standpoint of the consciousness* that is conscious of absolute Being; but absolute Being in and for itself, the self-consciousness of Spirit, has not appeared in those “shapes”’ (PS, §672: 410/363). To use terminology Hegel employs elsewhere, spirit has appeared as object, but not yet as subject. Religion in its broadest Hegelian usage, including natural religion, religion in the form of art and revealed religion, marks a decisive move from relating to the absolute as an externality to an understanding of the absolute as something immanent to the sphere of human activity. Harris, in his commentary on the *Phenomenology of Spirit* explains how this transition from morality to religion brings together a number of essential Hegelian themes:

When we move from the standpoint of Morality to that of Religion, the consciousness that we are observing moves from the awareness of itself as finite to the awareness of the “other” self that is infinite... The chapter on “Spirit” began with the immediate identification of the finite consciousness, with an absolute Law that it does not create, generate or legislate for itself but which is, on the contrary, *given* to it in the natural bonds of its organic morality. The giver of that Law of “True Spirit” is Zeus, the seemingly almighty Lord of life and death. But his infinite power is an illusion, and his finite community passes away.

In the true infinite community of Reason which eventually takes the place of that finite community, the Lawgiver is recognized as the immanent might of Reason itself... the adequate embodiment of Reason is an actually infinite community of finite spirits.<sup>110</sup>

This givenness that characterises religion at the outset of its movement towards self-consciousness is the positivity of religion. From his early theological work onwards, Hegel critiques positivity within religious thought. Positivity is problematic for two reasons. First, it leads to confusing the accidental for the essential (ETW, 174/223). When Christianity is understood as a received body of doctrines and historical facts, aspects of the tradition such as stories of miracles or the gospels relaying of the words of Christ are taken as the essential components of the faith. ‘We see humanity less occupied with dynamical categories, which theoretical reason is capable of stretching to cover the infinite, than with applying to its infinite object numerical categories... and mere ideas drawn from sense-perception’ (ETW, 161/210).

---

<sup>110</sup> Harris, *Hegel's Ladder II*, 523.

For Hegel, however, it is the spirit of Christ's enabling of communal self-determination that is essential.<sup>111</sup>

Second, it replicates a Kantian understanding of ethics as duty. As Hegel explains in an enigmatic passage from the 'Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate'

positivity is only partially removed; and between the Shaman of the Tungus, the European prelate who rules the church and state, the Voguls, and the Puritans, on the one hand, and the man who listens to his own command of duty, on the other, the difference is not that the former make themselves slaves, while the latter is free, but that the former have their outside themselves, while the latter carries his lord in himself, yet at the same time is his own slave (ETW, 211/323).

Hegel's target is Kantian morality. The references to the Shaman, prelate, Voguls and the Puritans make this clear as in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Kant claims that between them 'there certainly is a tremendous distance in the *style* of faith, but not in the *principle*', namely their shared aim 'to steer to their advantage the invisible power which presides over human destiny; they are of different minds only over how to go about it.'<sup>112</sup> Only those who count themselves 'members of an (invisible) church which encompasses all right-thinking people within itself' can move from this form of religion to one entirely different and rooted in reason.<sup>113</sup> As Houlgate explains, Hegel argues that Kantian morality internalises an external law. The subject is 'bound by laws (albeit determined by its own free, self-determining reason) that constrain its ever reluctant will. Such a moral consciousness is, however, an 'unhappy consciousness' in Hegel's view, one that is forever bound by laws it cannot fulfil, forever caught in the struggle between duty and inclination.'<sup>114</sup> Hegel combats this internalised law by claiming that faith transforms the will of the subject. 'Faith, by contrast, does not feel bound by laws and obligations or by the burden of duty because it is the consciousness of being reconciled with God, of being filled with the spirit of love, and thus of actually having been transformed and reconstructed in accordance with God's will, with what is right.'<sup>115</sup>

In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel explains another facet of positive religion. Initially 'Spirit's *existence* is distinct from its *self-consciousness*, and its reality proper falls outside of religion' (PS, §678: 412/364). Spirit is alienated from itself. There is only one spirit, though, so religion's task is

---

<sup>111</sup> Houlgate, *Freedom, truth and history*, 253.

<sup>112</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*, trans. Allen W Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 171.

<sup>113</sup> Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*, 171.

<sup>114</sup> Houlgate, *Freedom, truth and history*, 264.

<sup>115</sup> Houlgate, *Freedom, truth and history*, 264.

to recognise the identity of religion as spirit's existence in reality, as activity, and spirit's self-consciousness. Religion does not begin, in the form of natural religion, with this task in mind. As in the previous sections of the *Phenomenology* it emerges through contradiction. Religious consciousness, through an investigation of the nature of faith, moves from an initial, positive understanding of religion, to the consummate religion which in turn propels thought into philosophy.

Religion comprehends this movement of spirit through *Vorstellung*. As with many key Hegelian terms, there is disagreement over the correct translation.<sup>116</sup> Miller, in his translation of the *Phenomenology*, uses 'picture-thinking'. While picture-thinking certainly captures an aspect of representation, it has too heavy a visual connotation. I follow Peter Hodgson, Terry Pinkard and others in preferring representation.<sup>117</sup> This language allows for wider scope. Representations can be ideas or feelings; indeed representation in both these senses is essential to understanding religion's role in Hegel's philosophy.<sup>118</sup> In the following discussion I will use representation and the translations based on Miller's version of the *Phenomenology* will be accordingly modified.

Hegel explains this understanding of *Vorstellung* as a mode of spirit's self-consciousness.

So far as Spirit in religion *represents* itself to itself, it is indeed consciousness, and the reality enclosed within religion is the shape and the guise of its representational thought. But, in this representational thought, reality does not receive its perfect due, viz. to be not merely a guise but an independent free existence; and, conversely, because it lacks perfection within itself it is a *specific* shape which does not attain to what it ought to show forth, viz. Spirit that is conscious of itself. If its shape is to express Spirit itself, it must be nothing else than Spirit, and Spirit must appear to itself, or be in actuality, what it is in its essence (PS, §678: 412/365).

In this paragraph, Hegel thus specifies two key elements of this discussion of religion. First, religion will culminate in the recognition of the identity of spirit's existence and self-consciousness. Second, that the representational form of thought is at least initially an obstacle to this goal. Hegel elaborates on this second point at the outset of the *Encyclopaedia* as well. There he explains that representations share the content of thought, but that this content is presented as an 'admixture' with the form of the representation. Thus, while 'the content is *object* of our consciousness... the *determinacies of these forms join themselves onto the content*; with the result that each

---

<sup>116</sup> Quentin Lauer, *Hegel's Concept of God* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 34.

<sup>117</sup> Hodgson uses representation across his work on Hegel's philosophy of religion, including his translations of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Pinkard does the same in his new, forthcoming translation of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Lewis, too, favours representation instead of 'picture-thinking'.

<sup>118</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 156–158.

of these forms seems to give to rise to a particular object' (E1, §3: 26/41-42). This manifestation as a specific object is both the source of religion's force in society and an obstacle to its elevation to thought.

These quotes alone leave the impression that Hegel's discussion of religion is relatively straight-forward. Elsewhere, however, Hegel makes statements that muddy the picture. For instance in the introductory materials of his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, he first states that this philosophy is a continuation of natural theology, before claiming that

God is the one and only object of philosophy. [Its concern is] to occupy itself with God, to apprehend everything in him, to lead everything back to him, as well as to derive everything particular from God and to justify everything only insofar as it stems from God, is sustained through its relationship with him, lives by his radiance and has [within itself] the mind of God. Thus philosophy *is* theology, and [one's] occupation with philosophy – or rather *in* philosophy – is of itself the service of God (LPR1, 84/6).<sup>119</sup>

Hegel provides proofs for the existence of God and explores the doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation. From examples such as these, it is clear that more theological interpretations of Hegel are not without basis. The interpretative direction of any given reading ultimately hinges on the degree of emphasis placed on the idea of representation. For in the same introductory material, Hegel goes on to specify that 'the whole of our treatment – indeed, even immediate religion itself – is nothing other than the *development* of the concept, and that [in turn] is nothing other than the *positing* of what is contained in the concept. This positing constitutes the reality of the concept; it elevates and perfects the concept into the *idea*' (W1, 110-111/30-31). Hegel makes the same point in the *Philosophy of Right*. In a passage particularly relevant to the political theology being developed here, he writes:

*The essence of the relation between religion and the state can be determined, however, only if we recall the concept of religion.* The content of religion is absolute truth, and consequently the most elevated of all dispositions is to be found in religion. As intuition, feeling, representational knowledge [vorstellende Erkenntnis], its concern is with God as the unrestricted principle and cause on which everything hangs. It thus involves the demand that everything else shall be seen in this light and depend on it for corroboration, justification, and verification (PR, §270r: 242/417).<sup>120</sup>

---

<sup>119</sup> As Hodgson notes in his translation, the word translated as 'service' is 'Gottesdienst', which means service of God, but also worship. Hodgson thinks that service is more appropriate, but I think the sense of worship must be preserved. For Hegel, how else would one worship, but to think the divine idea?

<sup>120</sup> My emphasis.

In order to understand representation, the significance of that idea for the relationship between religion and philosophy, I now turn to the three shapes of religion. As I am primarily concerned with the relationship between religion and philosophy, I will only briefly outline natural religion and art as religion, before turning to Hegel's discussion of Christianity as consummate religion.

#### 4.1.1 Natural religion and Art as Religion

The first form of religion is natural religion. As will be seen in later discussions, Hegel understands 'natural' in terms of immediacy and givenness.<sup>121</sup> In these sections, Hegel draws connections to the earlier passages of the *Phenomenology*, connecting forms of consciousness to forms of religion. Given that natural religion concerns the immediate, it correlates to the form of consciousness at the start of the *Phenomenology*: sense-certainty. Three forms of natural religion are considered: natural religions of light, of plants and animals and finally the artificer, who facilitates the transition to religion in the form of art.<sup>122</sup>

While the first form of religion is not particularly significant for the argument of this chapter, it is worth noting that Hegel draws particular attention to the repetition of the lord and master relationship. '[Natural religion] also includes the form which appeared in immediate *self-consciousness*, the form of *lord and master* over against self-consciousness that retreats from its object' (PS, §686: 419/371). Just as knowing in general develops by overcoming the distance between subject and object, eventually arriving at their dialectical relationship, so too does the section on religion present a gap that is gradually redefined into a dialectical relationship. The relationship of lord and master is even to be found internally, as seen in the discussion above on Hegel's critique of Kantian morality.

Hegel then turns to religion in the form of art. Hegel has in mind Greek religion, which he describes as developing into a cult in which 'the self gives itself the consciousness of the divine Being descending to it from its remoteness, and this divine Being, which formerly was not actual but only an object over against it, through this act receives the actuality proper to self-consciousness' (PS, §714: 432/382). Hegel traces the development from epic to tragedy and then

---

<sup>121</sup> 'The first reality of Spirit is the Notion of religion itself, or religion as *immediate*, and therefore Natural Religion. In this, Spirit knows itself as its object in a natural or immediate shape' (PS, §683: 416/368).

<sup>122</sup> The artificer produces representations, 'blending the natural and the self-conscious shape' (PS, §698: 424/375) until the self-conscious element becomes dominant and the artificer surrenders 'the *synthetic* effort to blend the heterogeneous forms of thought and natural objects' (PS, §699: 424/376).



to comedy, which is literally the unmasking of the divine. ‘The self, appearing here in its significance as something actual, plays with the mask which it once put on in order to act its part; but it as quickly breaks out again from this illusory character and stands forth in its own nakedness and ordinariness, which it shows to be not distinct from the genuine self, the actor, or from the spectator’ (PS, §744: 450/398).

In both natural religion and religion in the form of art, there is an emphasis on the gap between the god who is represented and produced, and the subject. Plotting the development of the relation between these two-sides, Hegel leads the reader through a gradual dawning of recognition of their identity, culminating in revealed religion.

#### **4.1.2 The Culmination of Representational Thought in the Category of Revealed Religion**

Hegel uses three terms to describe religion that is moving from determinate religion to philosophy: consummate religion, revealed religion and absolute religion. The three terms are not synonymous, but related.

The consummate religion is the one in which the concept has returned to itself, the one in which the absolute idea – God as spirit in the form of truth and revealedness – is an object for consciousness. The earlier religions – in which the determinateness of the concept is deficient, being poorer and more abstract – are determinate religions, which constitute the stages of transition for the concept of religion on the way to its consummation. The Christian religion will disclose itself to us to be the absolute religion, and we shall treat its content accordingly (LPR1, 111- 112/31).

Consummate religion indicates the site of religion’s grasping the revealedness of God as an object of consciousness. Put another way, consummate religion represents the process of religion’s grasping the revealedness of its object. Absolute religion is this consummate religion comprehended in absolute knowing.

Revealed religion, for Hegel, is Protestant Christianity. It marks the last stage in the development of representational thought before the achievement of absolute spirit.

Spirit has in it the two sides which are presented above as two converse propositions: one is this, that substance alienates itself from itself and becomes self-consciousness; the other is the converse, that self-consciousness alienates itself from itself and gives itself the nature of Thing, or makes itself a universal Self. Both sides have in this way encountered each other, and through this encounter their true union has come into being. The alienation [or kenosis] of substance, its growth into self-consciousness,

expresses the transition into the opposite, the unconscious transition of *necessity*; in other words, that substance is *in itself* self-consciousness (PS, §755: 457/403).<sup>123</sup>

In this key passage, Hegel restates the goal of religion, to recognise the identity of religion as spirit's existence in reality *and* spirit's self-consciousness. He describes this moment by invoking the Incarnation. Here is a prime example of what Hegel means when he describes religion as a representational thought. The Incarnation is not the final representation, however. For, 'Spirit as an individual Self is not yet equally the universal Self, the Self of everyone' (PS, §762: 462/407).

Finally, after considering the problem of the Incarnation as representation, Hegel arrives at the level of the community. While the religious community was present at the preceding stages, it is here that the community becomes the apex of religious thought. Self-consciousness, which operated earlier at the level of the individual, is now a communal self-consciousness.

This *form of representational thought* constitutes the specific mode in which Spirit, in this community, becomes aware of itself. This form is not yet Spirit's self-consciousness that has advanced to its Notion *qua* Notion... This combination of Being and Thought is, therefore, defective in that spiritual being is still burdened with an unreconciled split into a Here and a Beyond. The *content* is the true content, but all its moments, when placed in the medium of representational thought, have the character of being uncomprehended [in terms of the Notion], of appearing as completely independent sides which are externally connected with each other (PS, §765: 463/408).

Here is one of Hegel's clearest formulations of spirit. It is not something external to the world; it is immanent to the realm of human activity. It is this activity as self-conscious of itself, not reducible to the individual, but the product of collective labouring and thinking of humanity.

As is often the case, what is expressed more abstractly in the *Encyclopaedia* or *Phenomenology* is more clearly presented in Hegel's lectures, correspondences and occasional writings. In his review of Göschel he describes this relationship succinctly:

if ordinary training in reflective [thought] enables one, whether argumentatively [*räsonnirend*] or unctuously, to give an account of a content in its interconnections and grounds, such a knack nonetheless must be distinguished from logical awareness of the worth of the forms in which all connections between the representations in question are made. Yet in a speculative treatment these forms are not only essentially but exclusively at issue. For in this higher sphere of thought – and here we arrive at the deepest point – the untruth of the difference between form and content comes to be known: the pure form itself which becomes the content (RG, 1:375/357).

---

<sup>123</sup> Miller translates 'Entäusserung' as externalisation. This translation, while emphasising the move outward, obscures the continuity of the paragraph. In earlier sentences, Entäusserung is rendered alienation. Connecting alienation and kenosis presents a different theological vision than Miller's translation suggests..

All that remains for revealed religion is to clear the last representational obstacles necessary for self-consciousness to know itself as spirit. ‘The dead divine Man or human God is *in himself* the universal self-consciousness; this he has to become explicitly *for this self-consciousness*’ (PS, §781; 473/417). Crucially, Hegel does not present this development as something which happens *to* the representational thought of religion. There is no engagement with an external force. The earlier encounter of superstition and Enlightenment reasoning explained how a less developed form of religious consciousness understood itself to be in opposition to an external force (PS, §541-573: 329-349/293-311). This encounter is, in part, what generates the form of religious consciousness Hegel treats in the final pages of the section on revealed religion. The movement is internally generated as religious thought finds its alienated divinity to be the essence of a self-determining community.

Comprehension is, therefore, for that self-consciousness not a grasping of this Notion which knows superseded natural existence to be universal and therefore reconciled with its [natural] existence. The grasping of how this idea now expresses more definitely what was previously called the spiritual resurrection in the same context, i.e. the coming into existence of God’s individual self-consciousness as a universal self-consciousness, or as the religious community. The *death* of the divine Man, *as death*, is *abstract* negativity, the immediate result of the movement which ends only in *natural* universality... death becomes transfigured from its immediate meaning, viz. the non-being of this *particular* individual, into the *universality* of the Spirit who dwells in His community, dies in it every day, and is daily resurrected (PS, §784: 475/418).

This leads Hegel to conclude that ‘what belongs to the element of *representational thought*, viz. that absolute Spirit *qua* individual, or rather *qua* particular, Spirit, presents the nature of Spirit in its [natural] existence, is here shifted into self-consciousness itself, into knowledge that preserves itself in its otherness’ (PS, §785: 475/418). Here, he presents the truth that is represented by the Incarnation.

This self-consciousness therefore does not actually *die*, as the particular self-consciousness is pictured as being actually dead, but its particularity dies away in its universality, i.e. in its knowledge, which is essential Being reconciling itself with itself. The immediately preceding element of representational thinking is, therefore, here explicitly set aside, or it has returned into the Self, into its Notion; what was in the former merely in the element of being has become a Subject (PS, §785: 475/418-419).

As with the passages above, Hegel is not arguing that the metaphor of Incarnation is a helpful way of grasping the relationship between particular and universal which could otherwise be demonstrated abstractly. That is, representations are not simply illustrations. They are the means

by which a particular point in history grasped a conceptual truth. That conceptual truth was not true prior to this moment in history. That is to say that the development of the doctrine of Incarnation is, for Hegel, the means by which spirit achieves self-identity.<sup>124</sup> Arriving at this understanding is not only the arrival of spirit as self-knowing spirit. It is the death of an abstract, divine being. “The death of this representation contains, therefore, at the same time death of the *abstraction of the divine Being* which is not posited as Self. That death is the painful feeling of the Unhappy Consciousness that *God Himself is dead* (PS, §785: 476/419).

Even after the community has arrived at a notion of the spirit as self-consciousness, ‘its content exists for it in the form of *representational-thinking*, and the duality in this thinking still attaches even to the *actual spirituality* of the community’ (PS, §787: 477/420). It is only in philosophy that the community can move beyond the limits of a mode of thought which ‘does not grasp the fact that this depth of the pure Self is the power by which the *abstract* divine Being is drawn down from its abstraction and raised to a Self by the power of this devotion’ (PS, §787: 477-78/420). Even the recognition of spirit’s self-consciousness, as the essence of spirit, remains muddled by the confusions of representation. The recognition of this problem, the problem of representation, is what propels religious thought to philosophy. “The Spirit of the community is thus in its immediate consciousness divided from its religious consciousness, which declares, it is true, that *in themselves* they are not divided, but this merely *implicit* unity is not realized, or has not yet become an equally absolute being-for-self’ (PS, §787: 478/421). Or, as Hegel states at the outset of the following chapter, “The *content* of this representational thought is absolute Spirit; and all that now remains to be done is to supersede this mere form, or rather, since this belongs to *consciousness as such*, its truth must already have yielded itself in the shape of consciousness’ (PS, §788: 479/422).

In this community the alienation of the consciousness from its object begins to be overcome.

Thus set free, the content of religion assumes quite another shape. So long as the form, i.e. our consciousness and subjectivity, lacked liberty, it followed necessarily that self-consciousness was conceived as not immanent in the ethical principles which religion embodies, and these principles were set such a distance as to seem to have true being

---

<sup>124</sup> The fact that Hegel depicts the development of Christianity as the historical process of spirit’s achieving of self-identity should not be confused for an argument that Christianity is necessarily the only means by which this moment could have been reached. As discussed below in chapter seven, spirit’s achievement of self-identity is a necessary result of the nature of being itself. The means by which this identity is achieved is completely contingent. For Hegel, this contingent manifestation of the necessary marks all historical events. The necessity of the self-identity of spirit, as shown in Hegel’s explorations of logic, is a consequence of the nature of being itself.

only as negative to actual self-consciousness. In this unreality ethical content gets the name of *Holiness*. But once the divine spirit introduces itself into actuality, and actuality emancipates itself to spirit, then what in the world was postulate of holiness is supplanted by the actuality of *moral* life (E3, §552: 286/535).

#### 4.1.3 A Comment on Christianity as Revealed and Consummate Religion

As evidenced by the discussion in the preceding section, Hegel regards Christianity as the height of religious thought. Much recent work on Hegel's philosophy of religion has sought to overcome his chauvinistic depiction of other religions. Wariness of this aspect of Hegel's philosophy is evidenced by the comparatively few citations of the second volume of his *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*. The lectures on the concept of religion and consummate religion receive much more attention than his treatment of determinate religion. For Hegel, the consummate religion of Protestant Christianity is the representational system most conducive to facilitating the transition to absolute knowing and capable of supporting modes of self-determination conducive to the flourishing of the state. The latter point will be addressed in greater detail below (see section 4.3.1). Before moving on to Hegel's view of the return to representation, however, it is appropriate to address the relation between Christianity and other religions.

For example, John Burbidge argues that, if one takes Hegel's logic seriously, philosophy adopts a much more open and unresolved attitude toward other religions. In this sense, contemporary Hegelians have surpassed Hegel's own stated position by expanding the logical pattern developed throughout Hegel's philosophy beyond the Christian tradition. As Burbidge says

It is potentially a universal phenomenon that singular, historical incarnation passes away and becomes universal. So Jesus is now only one among many – the Koran; the founding of Israel, Sri Aurobindo; the Jacobite revolution (or the Paris commune); nature's struggle for survival; the traditional Ojibwa hunter, smoking a peace pipe over the bear he has just killed; Freud's therapies;... Each has become the focus of stories, because in each all the transcendent and ultimate has become actual.

Not all of them will turn out to be genuine. While Hinduism and Buddhism have survived from the ancient world, the cults of Apollo and Thor, of the ancient Mayans and the palaeolithic cave-painters of Lascaux have vanished. At the present time it is impossible to identify those current ultimate perspectives that are sufficiently based in the actual world to justify their perpetuity.<sup>125</sup>

---

<sup>125</sup> John W Burbidge, "Hegel's Open Future," in *Hegel and the Tradition: Essays in Honour of H.S. Harris*, ed. Michael Baur and John Edward Russon (Toronto, Ont.; Buffalo, N.Y.: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 185. See also, Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 182, 208.

Christianity's status as consummate religion is thus not the result of its unique role in history as the receiver of divine revelation. Such an understanding would be constrained to the positive form of religion described above. Rather it is consummate by virtue of its representations of key logical concepts.<sup>126</sup>

Lewis makes a similar point, though he attaches the criteria for judging religious traditions to their relation to the state.

Where Hegel worried about the kind of state that Catholicism and Islam could support, the experiences of pluralism and religious transformation since Hegel's time... strongly suggest that more religious traditions (and some we might conventionally refer to as nonreligious) have the capacity to support modern democratic regimes than Hegel could have imagined. If we focus closely on the way that Hegel conceives of religion as cultivating our intuitions, we can learn from Hegel today without concluding that religious pluralism is intrinsically a challenge to the state.<sup>127</sup>

What is essential about a given religious tradition is its ability to be conducive to supporting modern democratic ways of life, not whether it nominates a particular historical figure or transcendent being to be the ultimate deity.

The relation of religion and the presently existing state is something that will be considered in the ensuing chapters. Lewis's underlying point, however, seconds Burbidge's earlier claim: Hegel's claims for Christianity's unique role as consummate religion result from Christianity being the tradition, as far as Hegel knew, which represented the truth of philosophy most adequately. As Hegel says in his review of Göschel, neither philosophy nor faith 'proceed *from* the Bible but *to* the Bible – in which it lays hold not only of truth but of itself as well. It is said [bv Göschel] to be a prejudice (to which philosophy directly opposes itself) to seek the principle and thus the concept of philosophy in its starting point, in its beginning, since neither is discovered to be except in its completion' (RG, 2:382/386). In Butler's reading of Hegel's review, he takes Hegel to be indicating that

---

<sup>126</sup> As Jaeschke argues, "The consummate religion is not consummate for instance by virtue of the true God having revealed himself in it, sent his Son into the world and redeemed humankind from its sins whereas this had not previously been the case. It is consummate because in it the three moments of the concept of religion - spirit's substantial unity, and its division into itself and into knowledge - are not only factually present and foreshadowed in the sphere of representation (as they are in the preceding religions) but here, and only here, constitute the central dogmatic content" (Walter Jaeschke, "Philosophical Theology and Philosophy of Religion," in *New perspectives on Hegel's philosophy of religion*, ed. David Kolb (Albany: State university of New York press, 1992), 12.

<sup>127</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 247.

speculative philosophy.... does not proceed from the assumed truth of Christian faith. If the principle of speculative philosophy is nonetheless Christian, it is because such philosophy moves *toward* rather than *from* its principles. It achieves its position through the autonomous self-determination of reason. That this position agrees with Christianity, with biblical faith, is a historical observation made after the autonomous self-determination of speculative reason. Hegelian philosophy... may be a product of Christianity. But that does not necessarily mean that it is Christian in the sense of agreeing with the Christian faith.<sup>128</sup>

Hegel's philosophy thus emerges in a context indelibly marked by Christianity. Yet, as the *Logic* shows, his philosophical system is 'presuppositionless'.<sup>129</sup> It does not presume Christianity. It is certainly fair to be suspicious that Hegel does not presuppose Christianity yet winds up concluding that it is the consummate manifestation of religion. Even if there is cause to be suspicious of Hegel's conclusions, Burbidge and Lewis show that the category of consummate religion can now be greatly expanded.

#### 4.1.4 Hegel's Review of Göschel and the Two-Way Path

Thus far, I have focused on the move from representation to philosophy. In the course of the discussion, I showed that representational forms of thought are both necessary and problematic. Representations tend to become divorced from the act of representing undertaken by the subject. This subject then relates to its own representations as external object rather than a tool for reflective practices. 'Religion thus effects a double alienation: The self is alienated from what it conceives to be absolute and from the actual world. The revealed religion partially overcomes this alienation in the cultus, but precisely insofar as it completes this overcoming, it passes from religion into philosophy.'<sup>130</sup>

Religion is the use of representational thinking to reach truth and this realisation marks the shift from religious to philosophical thought. The transition from religion to philosophy involves a kind of cancellation, but it also preserves representational thought.<sup>131</sup> Having arrived at

---

<sup>128</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 538.

<sup>129</sup> Hegel's claim that his logic is presuppositionless is one of his most controversial. A careful explanation of what Hegel means by this claim is found in Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel's Logic*, 54–72. He also provides a rebuttal of Kierkegaard's famous critique of Hegel's logic and the claim of presuppositionless philosophy (88–93).

<sup>130</sup> Thomas A. Lewis, "Religion and Demythologization in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit," in *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Critical Guide*, ed. Dean Moyar and Michael Quante (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 194–95.

<sup>131</sup> Donald Phillip Verene, *Hegel's Absolute: An Introduction to Reading the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 91–2.

philosophical thought, representational thought is now viewed in its appropriate light, but continues to function as a moment of that philosophical thought. As Hegel explains in the *Phenomenology*, spirit maintains the universal determinations of consciousness, self-consciousness and reason, but as moments of a unity that *is* spirit.

Religion presupposes that these have run their full course and is their *simple* totality or absolute self. The course traversed by these moments is, moreover, in relation to religion, not to be represented as occurring in Time. Only the totality of Spirit is in Time, and the “shapes”, which are “shapes” of the totality of *Spirit*, display themselves in a temporal succession; for only the whole has true actuality and therefore the form of pure freedom in face of an “other”, a form which expresses itself as Time (PS, §679: 413/365).

Understanding this relationship, philosophy may then return to representational thought to modify those representations. This return to representations was not something that Hegel strongly advocated in his published works or lectures. He notes that in his interactions with Karl Friedrich Göschel, the author of *Aphorisms on Ignorance and Absolute Knowledge* (*Aphorismen über Nichtwissen und absolutes Wissen*).<sup>132</sup> Published in 1829, Göschel argues against the ‘ignorance’ of Jacobi, the theology of feeling found in those like Schleiermacher and the varieties of theological rationalism that emerge after Kant. The specifics of the text are not of concern for this present discussion. It is Hegel’s review of the book, which draws on his own philosophy, which provides some interesting reflections on the nature of Hegel’s understanding of religion.

In the initial sections of the review, Hegel summarises the main features of the book, occasionally pausing to elaborate an understanding of the relationship between religion and philosophy similar to the ones found in the *Phenomenology*, the *Encyclopaedia* and the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. He then addresses a question raised by Göschel on the point of the relation of Hegel’s philosophy to scripture.

The question, namely, is whether this philosophy would not gain in definiteness and clarity in its progress if it were to attach itself more decisively to the Word out of which it

---

<sup>132</sup> Karl Friedrich Göschel, *Aphorismen über Nichtwissen und absolutes Wissen im Verhältnisse zur christlichen Glaubenserkenntnis: ein Beytrag zum Verständnisse der Philosophie unserer Zeit* (Berlin: E. Franklin, 1829). In addition to this review, Hegel makes a complimentary reference to the work in the first paragraph on revealed religion in the *Encyclopaedia*: ‘God is God only so far as he knows himself: his self-knowledge is, further, a self-consciousness in man and man’s knowledge of God, which proceeds to man’s self-knowledge in God. – See the profound elucidation of these propositions in the work from which they are taken: *Aphorisms on Knowing and Not-knowing, &c.*, by C.F.G...’ (E3, §564: 298/550). While Hegel’s review of the book helpfully clarifies the relationship between representation and concept, it is rarely referenced. It is not mentioned in either Clark or Magnus’s work devoted to this topic, though Magnus argues for something similar to the return to representation.



has developed; if it were to proceed more definitely and in name (i.e., with the naming of names) from the sin which has become manifest to it as abstraction, without the presupposition of which no understanding of the world is possible, without the recognition of which no self-knowledge is possible, and without the transcendence of which no knowledge of God is possible.

According to this philosophy itself, it is not thought but representation which is highest... (RG, 1:389/377).

Affirming this higher role of representation would allow Hegel's philosophy more clearly to demonstrate its connection to scripture. Hegel acknowledges there is some truth to Göschel's claim, but quickly moves to refute it. The passage warrants citing at length:

The author has touched on an interesting point – *the general transition from representation to the concept and from the concept to representation, a two-way transition which is already present in scientific mediation*, and which here meets with the demand that it be also expressed in the scientific exposition...

The present reviewer may, at least with a view to apologizing for the imperfection of his works in this respect, recall that it is precisely from the beginning, to which the author as well refers, which chiefly imposes the necessity of holding more fixedly to the concept which is expressed in pure thoughts, and which has often been won in hard battle with representation. This at once means the necessity of attaching to the course of the concept's development, of holding oneself more strictly in its tracks so as to win self-assurance with respect to it, and of holding off by force the distractions which the manysidedness makes the danger of yielding something in the methodological strictness of thought too close for comfort. *But greater firmness attained in the movement of the concept will license greater unconcern before the temptation of representation, and once allow representation to breathe more freely within the overlordship [Herrschaft] of the concept; and to do so with as little fear of its consequences as concern over its [internal] coherence, which – in relation to presupposed faith – need not prove itself free* (RG, 1:390/378-379).<sup>133</sup>

Hegel thus argues that his presentations of the relationship between representation and concept have been pedagogically necessary for the historically situated task of elevating humanity to conceptual thought. As Butler explains in his commentary on Hegel's relationship with Göschel, 'Once the transition from representation to the concept has been made, an enlivening transition from the concept back to representation is permissible. Freer reign can be given for representation to develop under the ascendancy of the concept.'<sup>134</sup>

Shortly after Hegel clarifies the two-way transition between representation and concept, he addresses a common flaw in the critiques of speculative philosophy, namely their one-sided determination.

---

<sup>133</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>134</sup> Hegel, *Hegel: The Letters*, 538.

Such determinations, as previously indicated, are in part called forth by falsification of the speculative fact and put forth as a complaint against that fact. But they are also in a part advanced as assertions against this fact. Such one-sided determinations, [viewed] as bound up with the matter, are moments of its concept which thus arise, in the course of the exposition of it, in their momentary positions. *The negation of these moments must be exhibited in the immanent dialectic of the concept.* This negation, insofar as such moments have been posited as objections, assumes the guise of their refutation (RG, 1:392/380-381).

Not only does this affirm the above claim about the immanent movement of the dialectic, it provides a basis for extending Hegel's argument further. The cessation of movement at the concept allows a one-sided determination of the concept itself. Conceptual thought must return to the level of representation in order to be actualised. The abstraction of the concept is not final, but generative.

Here too, it is necessary to push past Hegel's own conclusions. In returning to representations the concept not only allows 'greater unconcern', it enables the transformation of representations. As is clear in his review, Hegel does not see a great need for revising those representations. He is primarily concerned with affirming Göschel's position that scripture may be used to cultivate philosophical thought. I am claiming that it is possible to push further: not only should conceptual thought return to representations, but these representations should be transformed. These kinds of transformations are implicit within Hegel's formulations of Christian doctrines such as sin or the Trinity. Another way of expressing Hegel's heterodoxy is to view these doctrines as reformed by the return from the concept. As such, they enable the representations to present their truth more fully, which is not the representations themselves, but the abstract concepts which they represent. This reformulation is the common theme in the political theologies discussed in the next chapter. Both Taubes and Bloch trace the malleability of religious doctrines and then transform Jewish and Christian teachings in order to express more clearly the negativity they find in the Hegelian system. Of course, this reformulation is not all they accomplish and both Taubes and Bloch express wariness of Hegelian philosophy. Yet given the re-readings of Hegel found in the 'non-metaphysical' approach, as well as in the work of Malabou, Taubes and Bloch are brought much closer to the Hegelian tradition.

Nowhere else does Hegel articulate this return to representation so clearly. I am arguing that Hegel's reference to the 'two-way' relationship between representation and concept deserves greater attention. Taking Hegel's review of Göschel into account in no way alters the movement from representation to concept. At the moment when representation begins to become conscious of its activity of representing, it begins the transition to the concept. The concept thus, in comprehending representations in their specific relating of form and content, is in a sense 'above' representation. The necessity of representations remains, however, as it is only through

representations that the concept becomes embedded and actualised. As I will show, in the following section, representational thought is the moment of thought connecting absolute knowing and the embodiment of that knowing in the life of a society. With this notion of the return to representation in place, the basic features of Hegel's understanding of representation have been covered. I now turn to the reception of the idea of representation in Hegel studies.

#### 4.2.0 Interpreting Religion as Representation

While previous work on the nature of representation has discussed religion, it has not been the primary focus. When it has received attention, there has been no discussion of how the return from the concept might actually change the representations. This section will look at existing literature, building off its conclusions in order to develop an understanding of the transformation of representations.

Malcolm Clark's *Logic and System* and Kathleen Dow Magnus's *Hegel and Symbolic Mediation* both provide helpful analyses of the function of representation in Hegel's philosophy, particularly with regard to language as representation.<sup>135</sup> Clark discusses the tension between a system that is expressed through representations while simultaneously systematising the functioning of representations.

Hence the paradox of Hegel's system: logical thought is at once the whole of philosophy and but a part of it. In Hegel's own terms, logical thought contains its other. That is, true philosophical thought *contains* all reality and is not simply opposed and applied to it. Nevertheless, thought contains reality as its *other*, not merely as a "confused thought", but as that which reduces the system of pure thought to one part of a greater whole.<sup>136</sup>

Magnus, on the other hand, is writing in response to Derrida's critique of Hegel's supposed elision of sensuousness. In particular, she focuses on Derrida's assessment of Hegel's

---

<sup>135</sup> Malcolm Clark, *Logic and System: A study of the Translation from "Vorstellung" to Thought in the Philosophy of Hegel*. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971); Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*. Clark, Magnus and Lewis all focus their attention on Hegel's theory of representation. Lewis does the most of the three to connect Hegel's understanding of representation to Kant. Lewis is not concerned with showing the parallel notions of representation in Kant and Hegel, but with situating Hegel's understanding of representation in the context of a 'non-metaphysical' reading which interprets Hegel as the radicalisation of Kant. For a reading of representation which connects Hegel's understanding of representation directly to his philosophical contemporaries see Louis Dupré, "Religion as Representation," in *The Legacy of Hegel: Proceedings of the Marquette Hegel Symposium 1970*, ed. J.J. O'Malley et al. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 137–143.

<sup>136</sup> Clark, *Logic and System*, xi.

treatment of metaphor.<sup>137</sup> In this critique, Derrida argues that the material ground and ambiguity of any metaphor is domesticated by the concept. This allows Hegel to hide 'a fundamental contradiction: self-grounding spirit negates the sensuous element of reality in the same moment that it uses it.'<sup>138</sup> There is a parallel between Clark and Magnus; both explore the ways in which Hegel depicts representations leading to a concept which comprehends that act of representation in its essentiality. While this comprehension places the concept 'above' representation, it does not remove the need for representations. Extrapolating from Clark and Magnus, any argument that claims the need for representation is somehow overcome is guilty of freezing Hegel's thought in the moment of the concept. While reaching the concept in the *Phenomenology*, the *Encyclopaedia* or the *Logic* is a grasping of the whole - it is a dynamic whole. It is the comprehension of thought in its movement (PS, §20: 11/19).<sup>139</sup>

While both Clark and Magnus play a key role in demonstrating the essentiality of representations for Hegel's thought, the recent work of Thomas Lewis focuses much more on the implications of the representational nature of religion. In linking this representational nature to modernity and the politics, Lewis's work is the closest to that undertaken in this thesis. As will be clear in the following chapter, I differ in the application of Hegel's theory of representation, but Lewis's account of the theory itself is essential for grasping not only the specifics of representation, but its relation to political theology. As Lewis does not consider the work of Clark or Magnus, this section will link together the three attempts to trace the significance of Hegel's presentation of religion as representation.<sup>140</sup>

Lewis examines representation within the context of religion's role in facilitating social cohesion. Translating *Volksreligion* as civil religion, he explains that religion works to 'secure effective bonds among members of a society as well as between them and the society's central

---

<sup>137</sup> Magnus deals with another of Derrida's texts, but most significantly, for the task of this present work, Jacques Derrida, "The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel's Semiology," in *Margins of philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Jacques Derrida, "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve," in *Writing and difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). Though she does not discuss Derrida's work on messianism, her refutation of Derrida's critique also bears on the differences between his messianism and Malabou's plasticity. See Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (London: Routledge, 2006)., I address Malabou's critique of Derrida and develop a plastic apocalypticism in chapter seven.

<sup>138</sup> Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 9.

<sup>139</sup> The argument for preserving the dynamism of Hegel's thought will be a recurring theme, see in particular section 7.3.0. This focus on dynamism is particularly indebted to the work of Karin de Boer, Angelica Nuzzo and John Burbidge.

<sup>140</sup> Magnus mentions Clark, but only in noting that he offers a helpful summary of representation, but one which neglects its symbolic elements (Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 26.).

institutions.<sup>141</sup> This concern with religion's role in society is present from Hegel's early writings onward. Lewis's account, thus far, is in continuity with much of the other work on Hegel's understanding of religion. Where Lewis offers something new is re-examining religion as representation in light of 'non-metaphysical' interpretations of Hegel's philosophy.<sup>142</sup> Situating Hegel's philosophy of religion in the light of these interpretations has two key effects:

the basis of Hegel's account of God lies in his confrontation with the problem of thought's spontaneity that Hegel took to be at the heart of post-Kantian German idealism. Second, in interpreting Hegel's use of the term "God" – or related terms such as "divine" – we cannot simply take for granted meanings of these terms borrowed from more conventional usage; their significance is radically under dispute in Hegel's milieu...<sup>143</sup>

The two effects are, of course related. 'Non-metaphysical' readings emphasise the centrality of judgement and reason giving. *That is what the absolute is*. As Hegel writes at the end of the *Science of Logic*, the concept's

entire course, in which all possible shapes of a given content and of objects came up for consideration, has demonstrated their transition and untruth; also that not merely was it impossible for a given object to be the foundation to which the absolute form stood in a merely external and contingent relationship but that, on the contrary, the absolute form has proved itself to be the absolute foundation and ultimate truth. From this course the method has emerged as the *self-knowing Notion that has itself*, as the absolute, both subjective and objective, *for its subject matter*, consequently as the pure correspondence of the Notion and its reality, as a concrete existence that is the Notion itself.

Accordingly, what is to be considered here as method is only the movement of the *Notion* itself; but *first*, there is now the added *significance* that the *Notion is everything*, and its movement is the *universal absolute activity*, the self-determining and self-realizing movement (SL, 826/W6: 551).

The absolute *is* the notion in its knowledge of itself, through necessary categories. If this absolute is what is represented in religion, as Lewis suggests, then the nature of religion shifts considerably. Most significantly, God is no longer understood as a transcendent being. Pointing to Hegel's claim in *Faith and Knowledge* that 'God is not an entity that subsists apart' (FK, 169/W2, 411), Lewis argues that God is instead the representational name of the unity of being

---

<sup>141</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 2.

<sup>142</sup> For an excellent summary of the developments in Hegel scholarship leading up to Lewis's 'non-metaphysical' reading, see Thomas A. Lewis, "Beyond the Totalitarian: Ethics and the Philosophy of Religion in Recent Hegel Scholarship," *Religion Compass* 2, no. 4 (July 01, 2008): 556–574. Here, Lewis helpfully examines the convergence of developments in the study of Hegel's philosophy of right and philosophy of religion.

<sup>143</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 73.

and thought.<sup>144</sup> Hegel moves from the divine to the divine concept, claiming that ‘this movement of thinking itself, of the concept itself, is that for which we should have the utmost awe. It is at the heart of, in some sense, everything and consequently is appropriately referred to as “divine.”’<sup>145</sup> The resulting philosophy of religion develops ‘a conception of religion that supports social solidarity for the broader populace’ and maintains that ‘the basis for this vision must lie in the confrontation with Kant’s legacy.’<sup>146</sup>

As will be discussed in the concluding section on secularisation (4.5.0), there are two things that make Hegel’s claim particularly interesting. First, it is not only the self-knowing notion which is represented by religion but the process of that notion coming to know itself. Second, and consequently, the notion comes to know itself through religious representation, which is to say that the self-knowledge of the notion, the absolute, emerges from a religious tradition, which then looks back at that tradition and comprehends religion as representation.

This claim that Hegel offers an immanent analysis of Christianity which generates the philosophical position capable of grasping religion as representation has two dimensions: it is a historical claim and a theoretical claim. The works of Dickey, O’Regan and Magee provide a textual analysis that may be interpreted as supporting this historical claim.<sup>147</sup> While neither O’Regan nor Magee actually make this claim, Clark Butler draws on a similar reading of Hegel’s theological resources in order to argue for a transformed version of Christianity.<sup>148</sup> Lewis addresses this historical claim briefly in his discussions of Hegel’s early religious and political context, but his primary concern is the theoretical claim.

Lewis offers a particularly strong reading of the significance of religion as representation, claiming that it does not allow philosophy to suspend judgment on God.<sup>149</sup> Paul Redding provides an example of the counter argument, claiming that by focusing on the philosophical idea of God one is able to avoid questions about the ‘commitment to the *existence* of God.’<sup>150</sup> For Lewis, Hegel’s understanding of representation only makes sense in the broader context of Hegel’s philosophy and that philosophy is concerned with thought thinking itself. The resulting understanding of reality does not allow for the existence of a divine, transcendent being. Hegel’s philosophy of religion entails a theology, though this theology remains latent in Hegel’s own

---

<sup>144</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 78.

<sup>145</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 96.

<sup>146</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 97.

<sup>147</sup> Dickey, *Hegel*; O’Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel*; Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*.

<sup>148</sup> Butler, “Hegelian Panentheism as Joachimite Christianity”; Butler, “Hegel, Altizer and Christian Atheism.”

<sup>149</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 124n.47.

<sup>150</sup> Paul Redding, “Some Metaphysical Implications of Hegel’s Theology,” *European Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 4, no. 1 (2012): 131.

work. Lewis's position is also at odds with Nicholas Adam's recent work on the significance of Hegel's logic for theological thought. Adams argues that theologians would do well to be cautious regarding Hegel's doctrinal speculations and instead 'recognize Hegel's logical investigations as reparative for philosophy and generative for theology'.<sup>151</sup> Following Lewis, Hegel's understanding of representation is generative for theology, but the logic Hegel develops contradicts the content of some religious doctrines, namely anything predicated on a transcendent notion of divinity. This strong reading of representation challenges any notion of transcendence, bringing it into tension with more traditional understandings of religious ideas such as the Trinity.

While Lewis rightly emphasises the centrality of representation to Hegel's understanding of religion, he focuses on the implications of this understanding rather than offering a detailed analysis of the activity of representing. Here, Magnus's and Clark's work clarifies the mechanics of representation. First, Magnus notes the distinctive aspect of religion as a form of representation, differentiating it from art. 'Art presents spirit in a finite, immediate form, but religion represents the movement from the finite to the infinite: it conceives the transition from the finite world to the infinite realm of absolute spirit.'<sup>152</sup> If representation marks the transition to absolute knowing, then religion is the culminating moment within representation which enables this transition. Within religion, in turn, there is a translation between finite and absolute religion. The former uses 'symbols that perpetuate the distinction between their own consciousness and its content, their religious subjectivity and its divine object', while the latter 'works with symbolic representations that are themselves understood to embody the perfect unity of the human and the divine. This subjectivity is therefore inclined toward an awareness of the identity between its symbolic forms and its own activity.'<sup>153</sup>

What is sometimes elided in this process is the persistence of representational forms of thought. Lewis draws out how representations are necessary for the state, but Magnus and Clark emphasise the ways in which it is necessary for thought as such. As Clark argues

---

<sup>151</sup> Adams, *The Eclipse of Grace*, 8. Adams is thus correct to argue that the rules for interpreting Hegel's work on religion include that 'Hegel should wherever possible be taken to be engaged in second-order philosophical discourse about theology, rather than first-order theological discourse' and that Hegel's use of 'logical terms should wherever possible be taken as a display of logical analysis, rather than as the intrusion of bizarre unorthodox theological neologisms' (217). However, I am claiming that the theological implications of that logical analysis result in the philosophical post-secularism described in 4.5.0.

<sup>152</sup> Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 170.

<sup>153</sup> Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 177–178.

Before it can rise above the limitations of mere consciousness and become the infinite, self-relating unity its concept supposes it to be, it must appear to itself as outside of itself. It must, in other words, take on various symbolic forms. *But even after it recognizes its object as itself in absolute religion, spirit remains in need of the symbolic.* Its discovery of its self-identity does not delete its internal difference; its being as spirit eliminates neither its experience as consciousness nor its need for symbolic representation.<sup>154</sup>

Clark expresses this necessity of representation in the same language I use above: the return to representation.<sup>155</sup> 'If philosophical thought be seen as abandoning its stake in the familiar world, it is only in order to return to a profounder experience of it. The transition from *Vorstellung* to thought is itself but an abstraction of the concrete movement which includes no less a return from thought to *Vorstellung*.'<sup>156</sup>

One of the continuing roles of representation is to provoke thought. In Magnus's reading of Hegel, 'symbols are in a certain sense the negative of thought; they are the material thought must transform in order to be thought.'<sup>157</sup> Or as Clark claims, '*Vorstellung* must be seen both as thought and as the "other" of thought.'<sup>158</sup> This otherness is not an externality, though it initially manifests as such. In terms of religion, initially representations are other as the divine object, then as divine subject, before absolute religion's realisation that the consciousness of divine subjectivity is a moment of self-consciousness. This process represents spirit's self-alienation into the form of another subject, to which it relates. This transition marks the move from a divine object to divine subject, which prepares the grounds for recognising the identity of human and divine subjectivity – the becoming substance of subject. Yet all the while, otherness is maintained. The transition is not one of otherness to sameness, but otherness is misidentified as external, to the recognition of otherness as interior.<sup>159</sup>

These statements should be read in light of Hegel's claim that spirit is the unity of identity and difference. It is not that in the transforming of the symbolic thought is completely eliminated. Rather it is maintained as a negativity necessary for the continual activity that spirit is,  
Spirit

never gets to the point of being able to "be" in a simple, immediate, or nondifferentiated way. Spirit's identity *depends upon* the real difference it bears within itself. Its identification is only as true as its difference... Spirit never gets to the point of being able to deny or

<sup>154</sup> Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 181; Clark, *Logic and System*, 4. My emphasis.

<sup>155</sup> Clark mentions Hegel's review of Göschel in an earlier section, but does not refer to the review of the context of the return to representation.

<sup>156</sup> Clark, *Logic and System*, 38.

<sup>157</sup> Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 34.

<sup>158</sup> Clark, *Logic and System*, 128.

<sup>159</sup> Clark, *Logic and System*, 40.



cancel its intrinsic negativity because this negativity is essential to what spirit is. It cannot forget or disregard its internal difference because this difference is the source and substance of its life. For Hegel, spirit, the ultimate truth of reality, is something that both is there *and* something that *makes itself* be there; it is both immediate and mediated, self-identical and self-differentiating. Spirit is the activity that unites these two dimensions of reality.<sup>160</sup>

This further clarifies the relationship between representation and philosophy. While Lewis traces the political implications of religion as representation, he does not consider this negative aspect. He describes the negation of negation as at the heart of spirit's self-determination and as a necessary foundation of freedom.<sup>161</sup> He also stresses the role of negativity in Hegel's system, showing how the death of Christ is the negative moment of the absolute and that Hegel's absolute preserves negation, but these forms of negativity are not explicitly connected to the nature of representation in the manner demonstrated by Magnus.<sup>162</sup> By supplementing Lewis with Magnus, the role of representation becomes clearer. Representation's connection to concrete existence preserves an otherness within and constitutive of thought. Through Magnus's and Clark's reading of representation 'we can come to see how the contradictoriness, negativity, and "otherness" inherent to spirit is less an impediment to spirit's self-realization than the condition for it.'<sup>163</sup>

This understanding of representation is the ground of Magnus's rejection of Derrida's accusation that Hegel ultimately resolves every negative into a positive. Derrida's reading is in one sense true – Hegel does have a complete system which one could regard as resolving every negative, but only if 'every negative' is taken to refer to contradictions emerging within the categories of thought. 'Both alienation and totality, identity and difference, remain a part of what spirit is. Spirit reconciles these two sides, but, as Hegel points out over and over again, spirit is the continual activity of this reconciliation, not merely the end result of it.'<sup>164</sup> This understanding still allows for negativity, it just comprehends the way negativity 'works' in the broader philosophical system. As I will argue in a later section (7.3.0), this insight parallels Hegel's argument for the necessity of contingency and the refutation of critiques of Hegel as a totalising thinker. Representation marks one of the points at which Hegel asserts the identity of identity

---

<sup>160</sup> Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 33.

<sup>161</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 94.

<sup>162</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 219. This difference in the evaluation of negativity does not bring Lewis and Magnus into direct contradiction, but there is a tension emerging. This tension is addressed more directly below in the discussion of Gillian Rose's understanding of the Hegelian middle (4.3.0).

<sup>163</sup> Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 31.

<sup>164</sup> Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 33.

and difference: ‘the difference intrinsic to the symbol remains within spirit as part of its act of self-identification. Logically speaking, there can be no self-identifying spirit that does not also contain and bear difference within it.’<sup>165</sup>

Magnus like, Lewis, thus emphasises the necessity of representation.

spirit obtains a conception of itself as distinct from its content and contacts itself in the purity of thought for the first time: for all theoretical purposes, it grasps the unity of its self-conscious act and its being... But while this recognition represents the height of spirit's theoretical development, it does not constitute spirit's absolute manifestation. After theoretical spirit reconciles itself with its practical desire and realizes itself in the ethical community, it must still manifest itself absolutely in art, religion, and philosophy, forms which contain or depend upon significant symbolic elements.<sup>166</sup>

Clark, Magnus and Lewis all emphasise religion, as representation, importantly expressing the truth of philosophy in a manner which allows that truth to become the foundation of an ethical society.<sup>167</sup> ‘Even if a given representation may be judged as accidental and inessential to spirit’s meaning, the form of representation is necessary to its manifestation in the existential lives of human beings.’<sup>168</sup> For Lewis, this need is primarily related to the social and political ends of Hegel’s philosophy: the cultivation of an ethical society and the strengthening of the state. Representations are not only more accessible than philosophy’s abstract formulations, they are ingrained in rituals and impact communities on an emotional level.<sup>169</sup> As Giorgio Di Giovanni explains, ‘The Hegelian consciousness finds itself in the process of acting and explaining and must understand itself, and others like it, in order to fully participate in this process. This requires moments in which the subject must act in a way that ‘commits his being totally.’<sup>170</sup> In order to act, and later explain these actions, the self needs what Giovanni refers to as an ‘existential matrix’. The process of adopting such a matrix is fraught, for it never lines up with the lived actuality that the self experiences. ‘As defined by Hegel, the problem that this self must resolve is how to recognize itself in representations that are necessary to the process of self-knowledge but which, precisely in order to create the intentional space required for the

---

<sup>165</sup> Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 213.

<sup>166</sup> Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 72.

<sup>167</sup> Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 171.

<sup>168</sup> Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 212; Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 251–252. Clark goes so far as to speak of the ‘inadequacy of thought in its opposition to *Vorstellung*’ (Clark, *Logic and System*, 35.). See also Terry Pinkard, *Hegel’s Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 226.

<sup>169</sup> Lewis, “Beyond the Totalitarian,” 571.

<sup>170</sup> George Di Giovanni, “Faith Without Religion, Religion Without Faith: Kant and Hegel on Religion,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41, no. 3 (2003): 367.

recognition, must be universal—therefore abstracted from its individuality.<sup>171</sup> The subject must navigate her way between ‘pure negativity in the form of universality’ and ‘the same negativity in the form of individuality’ (PS, §674: 410/363). It is the self-consciousness negotiating of these relations which is undertaken in a socially embedded absolute knowing.

Absolute religion’s navigation of this complex relationship to representation is nonetheless necessary. Not only is it the key to Hegel’s ‘general conception of spirit as the self-creating, self-differentiating unity of the human and the divine’ it also presents ‘*the necessity of representation, and the need to think through the representations given to us, regardless of what they are. Only in this way can they become our own. Only in this way can they be transformed from something imposed upon us to something determined by us.*’ To use Hegel’s terminology: only this way does spirit’s abstract being *in itself* become *for itself* and free.<sup>172</sup>

While Magnus and Clark provide the helpful analysis of the nature of the activity of representing, its social and political implications are only addressed from the most abstract perspective. Clark and Magnus thus complement Lewis, with Clark and Magnus filling out the mechanics of representation and Lewis drawing out their social and political implications.

#### 4.3.0 The Reception of Hegel’s Understanding of Religion: Beyond Left, Right and Middle

In the preceding chapter on divisions within the study of Hegel, I introduced the major divides of left, right and middle. Lewis’s interpretation does not conveniently fit this schema. On the one hand, the rejection of pre-critical metaphysics aligns him against the Hegelian right. On the other, Lewis argues that thought plays a role in the constitution of reality. This emphasis on Hegel’s idealism puts him at odds with the Hegelian left. It would seem that perhaps he would join Fackenheim and Rose in the Hegelian middle, but Lewis argues that this characterisation, too, is inadequate. This section will thus consider the Hegelian middle with regards to religion, in an effort to place Lewis in relation to earlier interpretations.

Middle readings of Hegel’s philosophy argue that both left and right present aspects of Hegel’s philosophy, but do so in a one-sided manner.<sup>173</sup> Fackenheim, for example, argues that

---

<sup>171</sup> Di Giovanni, “Faith Without Religion, Religion Without Faith,” 368.

<sup>172</sup> Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 209.

<sup>173</sup> Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel’s Thought*; Gillian Rose, *The Broken Middle: Out of Our Ancient Society* (London: Blackwell, 1992). Although its primary function is not developing this middle reading, Rose’s *Hegel Contra Sociology* explores the implications of this alternative with regard to social theory. Fackenheim’s work is more frequently cited within Hegel scholarship. Rose, while less influential philosophically, continues to be a reference point for theologians,

the right Hegelians are correct in emphasising Hegel's serious engagement with metaphysics and Christianity, but their defence of orthodoxy often neglects his rejection of any final division between the human and the divine.<sup>174</sup> The left Hegelians, on the other hand, are too reductive, diminishing the ambitious nature of Hegel's philosophical project. That project cannot be limited to the 'experience of the world.'<sup>175</sup> In opposition to both of these approaches, Fackenheim's middle Hegelianism emphasises the contingent and finite (the left), but only in the process of conquering it (the right). Hegel's logic is the result of a process of abstraction from the messiness of actual existence, but having reached the summit of absolute knowing, it must return to that actuality. It must re-immense itself in the realm of lived reality, but, for Fackenheim this return does not result 'in a surrender to the contingent and the finite but rather in their conquest. But if this is to be an actual conquest it requires the persistent reality of what is conquered by it.'<sup>176</sup>

Much of what has been developed above points to a similar conclusion. Fackenheim emphasises the centrality of Hegelian method, arguing that, 'The Hegelian middle, the 'having-grown-into-identity' is not a final achievement – 'The result is the process – its perpetual re-enactment.'<sup>177</sup> This falls close to the claims in the following chapter dealing with open readings of Hegel, namely that the logic's completeness is the systematic grasping of the inherent incompleteness of that logic. What is known in absolute knowing are the shapes of the movement of thought, which are necessarily contingent.

Despite these similarities there are two differences between Fackenheim's reading and the one offered here. First, Fackenheim preserves an otherness that Hegel rejects. 'The religiously represented remains other than the representing activity; speculative thought, in contrast, is a sheer, infinite self-productivity which has surpassed and vanquished all otherness... Religion, then, remains a relation between the human and Divine, but speculative thought is a human activity at one with the Divine.'<sup>178</sup> As Lewis points out, this position is adopted in response to the fear that this reading conflates God and humanity. While 'conflation' is perhaps not the right term, Hegel does unite humanity and divinity in such a way that what is represented

---

most notably John Milbank, Andrew Shanks and Rowan Williams. One exception is Pippin's references to Rose in *Hegel's Idealism*, wherein he includes her in a list of those who effectively critique 'the "historical spirit" Hegel or the "systematic," metaphysical Hegel' (5, 262n.8) and affirms her analysis of subjectivity as a fundamental Hegelian concern (272n.49).

<sup>174</sup> Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, 77–80.

<sup>175</sup> Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, 81.

<sup>176</sup> Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, 107. While Rose shares the desire to develop a middle reading, she arrives at an understanding of a 'broken' middle which places greater emphasis on the contingent and finite.

<sup>177</sup> Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, 108.

<sup>178</sup> Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, 162–63.

and the activity of representing are found to be the same in the community of spirit – the ‘transformation of religious representations into philosophical concepts reveal that what religion presents as other than human beings is not.’<sup>179</sup> The difference denoted by human and divine is instead understood as internal to humanity. ‘The contrast between immediate humanity and humanity that actualizes its potential is crucial; it enables Hegel to make philosophical sense of language contrasting the (merely) human and the divine, while still seeing these as implicitly reconciled – and reconciled in actuality through the work of religion.’<sup>180</sup> Put another way, and echoing Pinkard’s discussion of religion in the *Phenomenology*, the divine is a form of human activity. Rather than religion denoting a relation between the human and the divine, in contrast with speculative thought, religion names a particular form of human activity – a self-determination which involves a degree of alienation, but not one which requires maintaining Fackenheim’s emphasis on otherness. Religion is the recognition of the internality of this alterity, which renders the opacity of religious representation transparent, allowing humanity to grasp spirit as its own essence.<sup>181</sup>

Second, following from the previous chapter, this reading of Hegel does not entail the ‘conquest’ of the finite and contingent. Absolute knowing does not offer a necessity that overcomes contingency, but articulates the necessity of contingency itself (see section 7.3.0). The comprehension of contingency by the necessary forms of thought should not be confused with the taming of that contingency.

Lewis argues that Fackenheim’s typology excludes the truly Hegelian option. Fackenheim ‘identifies the “simply-finite” and the “purely-human” and juxtaposes these with something beyond the human.’<sup>182</sup> Indeed, Fackenheim argues that a ‘Divinity immanent in finite human acting and creating has lost its emptiness. It has done so, however, at the price of depth...’<sup>183</sup> In order for religion to continue its role within Hegel’s system, he claims that the Divine must preserve its ‘transcendence, infinity, and incommensurability with all things human.’<sup>184</sup> For Hegel, however, religion is not focused on a beyond, but on the nature of absolute spirit and its relation to humanity. ‘The humanity that is identical with the absolute – spirit – is not humanity in its immediacy but rather humanity that has developed its implicit potential, that is raised to spirit.’<sup>185</sup>

---

<sup>179</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 168.

<sup>180</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 168.

<sup>181</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 169.

<sup>182</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 168.

<sup>183</sup> Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel’s Thought*, 56.

<sup>184</sup> Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel’s Thought*, 56.

<sup>185</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 168.

While Lewis rejects Fackenheim's middle, Rose's understanding is perhaps closer. In *Hegel contra Sociology* she argues for a 'speculative reading of Christianity which transcribes religious into philosophical terms in order to expound the *concept* of the absolute religion, of substantial freedom. This reading does not refer to *history* of religion, to the history of Christianity. It tells us how the absolute is subject...'186 Without moving to absolute religion, and consequently philosophy, one preserves the alienation of religious consciousness from its object. Religion must culminate in the consideration of actuality as its object, lest it slip into earlier forms of religious thought which understand actuality and God in negative relation to one another.187

Yet Rose pushes the speculative logic of Hegel's philosophy of religion further than Lewis would allow. In a manner which anticipates the later discussions of apocalypticism, Rose argues that this speculative logic entails an orientation to the future. As Howard Caygill explains, for Rose, following Hegel '[t]he 'is' of a speculative proposition... does not mark a present identity, but rather the promise of a future meaning that will arise out of unforeseeable experiences.'188 For Rose, this speculative logic is wrought with political implications. As such, I now turn to the relationship between religion, as representation, and the state.

#### 4.4.0 The Non-Metaphysical Reading and the Relation of Religion and State

In the above section, I made frequent reference to Lewis's reading of Hegel's philosophy of religion. While he offers the strongest explanation of religion as representation, and the significance of this understanding for thinking the relation between religion and state, he also is consolidating earlier 'non-metaphysical' readings of Hegel. While Pippin is an important methodological resource, it is Pinkard's work which provides the closest version of social reasoning. As Pinkard explains in his work on the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, '[r]eligion is a form of institutionalized social practice in which a community reflects on what it takes to be the "ground" of everything else that is basic to its beliefs and practices; it is the communal reflection on what for a community in Hegel's terms counts as "existing in and for itself."189 This understanding of religion as a site for the institutionalised social practice of the exchange of reasons will be further considered in the next chapter's discussion of discursive bias.

---

<sup>186</sup> Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 115.

<sup>187</sup> Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 118.

<sup>188</sup> Howard Caygill, "The Broken Hegel: Gillian Rose's Retrieval of Speculative," *Women: A Cultural Review* 9:1 (1998): 22.

<sup>189</sup> Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, 222.

In Pinkard's reading, religion entails reflection on the divine as a process of determining 'what is ultimately of value for a form of life. It is thus a reflection on the essential self-identity of a people, on where they stand on the issues that for them are of fundamental importance.'<sup>190</sup> Like the approaches surveyed in the last chapter, he highlights both the necessity of representation in the development of thought and the return to representation: 'Spirit must move on to develop itself in the practical and objective dimensions of reality (namely, in subjective desire and the ethical community) and then return to acts of symbolization in art and religion.'<sup>191</sup> Pinkard, like Lewis, is not concerned with the transformation of the representation used in acts of symbolisation, though they both stress that the representations cannot be arbitrary.

Pinkard thus provides a reading of the *Phenomenology of Spirit's* discussion of religion which anticipates one of Lewis's central claims:

Hegel's point is that we regard as divine, as the object of awe and reverence, that which we take to be the "ground" of all belief and action, and that which we take to have absolute value; the concept of the divine is not at first identical with the concept of self-founding humanity, but in working out the insufficiencies of its previous accounts of itself, humanity as "self-conscious spirit" comes to realize that identity, to see the divine as implicit in its own activity of reflection on what it can take as divine.... Indeed, the divine, the sacred is exactly that which makes a claim on human agents to change their desires and their inclinations if they find that they do *not* value it.<sup>192</sup>

The divine does not indicate a transcendent realm of being, but a mode of communal existence. In order for philosophical truth to function as the foundation of the state, as Hegel claims, 'it must penetrate the depths of our subjectivity and become "our own".'<sup>193</sup> Without the facilitation of this process by representation, one risks the internalisation of the master-slave relation described above in the discussion of Hegel's *Early Theological Writings*. It is thus not enough to express philosophical truths with arbitrary representations – the concept must return to the form of absolute religion in order to continue the process of absolute knowing.

Lewis similarly sees Hegel as primarily discussing religion in terms of this social function: 'Hegel argues that although religious representations do not cognize the truth as adequately as philosophical thinking does, these religious representations are still capable of instilling and

---

<sup>190</sup> *Hegel's Phenomenology*, 240–241. Pinkard's definition of religion is quite similar to Paul Tillich's understanding of theology. The connection between Hegel and Tillich's definition of theology is also made by Houlgate (Houlgate, *Freedom, truth and history*, 246.)

<sup>191</sup> *Hegel's Phenomenology*, 217.

<sup>192</sup> Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, 255.

<sup>193</sup> Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, 233.

expressing the reconciliation necessary for social cohesion.<sup>194</sup> In his understanding, Lewis is particularly helpful in establishing two points. First, he shows that ‘Hegel attributes to the practices of the religious community a vital role in shaping our intuitions about justice and about how society should be ordered. These religiously informed intuitions, however, are not fixed; they can be challenged by and evolve through encounters with philosophical reflection.’<sup>195</sup> Lewis continually revisits this theme throughout his work on religion and politics in Hegel – religion is primarily about social cohesion.

Second, despite religion’s role in shaping notions of justice and social order, Lewis emphasises religion is an insufficient ground for a notion of the state.<sup>196</sup> It may provide a foundation, but *only* a foundation. Hegel makes this point in the paragraph in the *Philosophy of Right* which most directly deals with the relationship between the state and religion:

Religion is a relation to the Absolute, a relation which takes the form of *feeling, representation, faith*, and brought within its all-embracing centre everything becomes only accidental and transient. Now if, in relation to the state, we cling to this form and make it the authority for the state and its essential determinant, the state as the organism in which enduring differences, laws, and institutions have been developed, must become a prey to instability, insecurity and disorder (PR §270; 244/418).<sup>197</sup>

Recognising the limits of religion is essential for the political theology developed in this thesis. The purpose of religion is not to establish the grounds of the state, but to provide a crucial moment in the process of social reasoning.

As Hegel explains in the preface to the *Phenomenology* the speculative statement is the form of truth: ‘Only this self-*restoring* sameness, or this reflection in otherness within itself – not an *original* or *immediate* unity as such – is the True. It is the process of its becoming, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal, having its end also as its beginning; and only by being worked out to its end, is it actual’ (PS, §18: 10/18).

---

<sup>194</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 116.

<sup>195</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 14.

<sup>196</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 14.

<sup>197</sup> This section of the *Philosophy of Right* is particularly pertinent as it highlights the major tension in the reading of Hegel I am developing. Only a few lines later, Hegel comments on the subjectivity of religion and cautions that this may lead to a negative attitude which ‘may give rise to the religious *fanaticism* which, like fanaticism in politics, discards all political institutions and legal order as barriers cramping the inner life of the heart and incompatible with its infinity... But since even then decision must somehow be made for everyday life and practice, the same doctrine which we had before [subjectivity of the will which knows itself to be absolute] turns up again here, namely that subjective ideas, i.e. opinion and capricious inclination, are to do the deciding’ (PR §270; 245/?).



Speculative unity of the statement, its truth, is this movement. In Rose's consolidation of Hegel's understanding of speculation, reading

a proposition "speculatively" means that the identity which is affirmed between subject and predicate is seen equally to affirm a lack of identity between subject and predicate. This reading implies an identity different from the merely formal one of the ordinary proposition. This different kind of identity cannot be pre-judged, that is, it cannot be justified in a transcendental sense, and it cannot be stated in a proposition of the kind to be eschewed. This different kind of identity must be understood as a result to be achieved.<sup>198</sup>

For Rose, the key speculative statement is Hegel's declaration of the identity of religion and the state in the 1831 lectures on the philosophy of religion. 'Universally speaking, religion and the foundation of the state are one and the same – they are implicitly and explicitly identical' (LPR1, 452/W, 17:236). Rose explains, that '[t]he identity of religion and the state is the fundamental speculative proposition of Hegel's thought, or, and this is to say the same thing, the *speculative experience of the lack of identity* between religion and the state is the basic object of Hegel's exposition.'<sup>199</sup> In her description of speculative logic, Rose claims that the 'subject of the proposition is no longer fixed and abstract with external, contingent accidents, but, initially, an empty name, uncertain and problematic, gradually acquiring meaning as the result of a series of contradictory experiences.'<sup>200</sup>

This view of the speculative identity of religion and the state complicates Lewis's reading of their relationship. In that understanding, the series of contradictions represented by religion are contained within the process of moving from determinate religion to consummate religion, and from consummate religion to philosophy. This philosophy, represented in the institutions of the state is then the arbitrator of religion's claims. This authority of the state makes sense within Hegel's larger understanding of civil society.

The practice of righteousness attains stability only when religion forms its basis, when its most inward mode, namely conscience, first finds in religion its absolutely genuine sense of duty, an absolute security regarding its obligation... The state must rest essentially on religion; the security of attitudes and duties vis-à-vis the state becomes for the first time absolute in religion. Against every other mode of obligation one can supply excuses, exceptions, counter reasons. If one knows how to disparage the laws, the regulations, and the individuals who govern and are in authority, to regard them from a point of view from which they are no longer worthy of respect, [one can do this]. For all these objects have at the same time a contemporary, finite existence. They are so constituted as to

---

<sup>198</sup> Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 52.

<sup>199</sup> Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 53.

<sup>200</sup> Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, 52.

invite reflection and investigation with a view to justifying them or criticizing them... they invite subjective consideration. It is only religion that suppresses all of this, nullifies it, and thereby introduces an infinite, absolute obligation... reverence for God or the gods secures and preserves individuals, families, states; contempt for God or the gods dissolves rights and duties, the bonds of families and states, and leads to their destruction (LPR1, 200/43).

Religion is affirmed, not because of its inherent truth, but in its role supporting the family and the state.

As Walter Jaeschke explains, religion lacks the grounds to challenge the state. Insofar as it 'directs itself polemically against the actualized rationality of the state' religion becomes an antiethical force. 'Religion is the foundation, but only the foundation and not the substance, of the ethical life. It contains indeed the "deepest confirmation," but only "as the inward, abstract side" which is merely added to the ethical relationships of the "actual rationality" of the state. In religion the ethical mode of life is only borrowed from the state and reduced to a lesser form...' <sup>201</sup> Religious representations have self-conscious freedom as their content, but, due to the limitations of their form, 'all religion grasps the principle of freedom in an unfree mode.' <sup>202</sup>

It is thus clear that Lewis's position is justifiable from the perspective of Hegel's philosophy. He argues that Hegel allows for some questioning of the state. In order to be legitimate, in Hegel's view, the state must be capable of sustaining 'rational, critical scrutiny.' <sup>203</sup> Nonetheless, both Jaeschke and Rose, allow for a greater tension between religion and the state. The end of religion is thus philosophy, which grasps religion's relation to its form, and clarifies the role religion plays as the foundation of the state. This support of the state does not totally preclude religious critiques of the state.

there can be situations in which the Christian community conceives of itself as a corrective against the state and as the representative of the Christian principle. It can assume this function only under two conditions. The community has as such no immediate political function in the state, for such a function would wipe out Hegel's strict organizational separation of church and state. Further, the community can be such a corrective only if it does not try to found the state immediately upon or obligate it to specific articles of faith inaccessible to the universality of reason, but rather formulates as best it can the Christian principle of the self-consciousness of freedom. <sup>204</sup>

Stephen Houlgate makes a similar argument, claiming

---

<sup>201</sup> Walter Jaeschke, "Christianity and Secularity in Hegel's Concept of the State," *Journal of Religion* 61, no. 2 (1981): 131.

<sup>202</sup> Jaeschke, "Christianity and Secularity in Hegel's Concept of the State," 139.

<sup>203</sup> Lewis, "Beyond the Totalitarian," 561.

<sup>204</sup> Jaeschke, "Christianity and Secularity in Hegel's Concept of the State," 139.

that the authority of the state and its laws must itself be rooted in the recognition by faith that the state's laws are just. Hegel argues that in secular matters the state is a higher authority than the Church, but he understands that the propriety of the state's higher authority must nevertheless be acknowledged by faith. If not, the state's laws will not take root in the hearts of people and will thus threaten to become a superstructure at odds with people's convictions.<sup>205</sup>

Rose argues that the *speculative* identity of religion and state means that there is an enduring tension between the two that operates between these two statements. Jaeschke's conditions for religious intervention in the affairs of the state are necessary, but religion's role is not only to assist the internalisation of the state's laws.

It is this speculative identity which occupies the remaining chapters of this thesis. Much of the work which connects to Lewis's reading, either directly or indirectly, ultimately sides with social institutions against those who feel alienated by the organisation of their society. This discursive bias will be taken up in the next chapter (5.2.0). As noted with reference to Lewis, I am not arguing that these readings are gross misinterpretations of Hegel's philosophy. Hegel is clearly inclined to affirm the authority of institutions and, in his explorations of religion and the state, generally offers few explicit resources for thinking about process of dramatic social and political change. His dynamic method, however, is at odds with this emphasis on social stability. By connecting aspects of a dynamic reading of that method to the representation of apocalypse, I will show how one can develop a Hegelian political theology which emphasises the *speculative* identity of religion and state.

#### 4.5.0 Representation and Secularisation

In the course of this chapter, I have shown the basic understanding of religion as representation, traced some of the implications of this conception of religion, examined how this understanding plays out in the scope of existing interpretations of Hegel's ideas about religion and connected this understanding of religion to the state. Throughout this discussion I have emphasised that Hegel takes religion seriously, while not accepting it on its own, initially positive terms. This representational understanding of religion might thus be taken as arguing for secularisation. Robert Solomon offers the strongest version of this thesis, claiming that Hegel is a

---

<sup>205</sup> Houlgate, *Freedom, truth and history*, 274.

secret atheist humanist.<sup>206</sup> Before moving on to consider the implications of this representational understanding of religion, it is necessary to address the relationship of this understanding of religion to theories of secularisation.

First, in preceding sections, I have argued that Hegel's understanding of Christianity as consummate religion is unduly narrow. I cited Burbidge and Lewis as examples of others sharing this position, citing Hegel's review of Göschel as further support. In Butler's reading of the review, he makes the point that the affinity between speculative philosophy and Christianity is not due to the former arising out of the latter, but from 'the autonomous self-determination of reason.'<sup>207</sup> In the view of Burbidge, Lewis and Butler, then, Hegel's philosophy of religion is open to a pluralisation of consummate religion.

Lewis, in a manner similar to Burbidge, argues that as this pluralisation occurs, cultural forms that are not traditionally understood as religious may begin to occupy the role of consummate religion. As an example, Lewis cites the work of Jeffrey Stout.

In Stout... histories represent our ethical visions and self-understandings. Whether these histories are connected to a belief in a transcendent being is irrelevant... This connection of commonality reveals that Hegel's conceptualization of "religion" includes more than what we conventionally designate as "religion." Where the discussion of the "Concept of God" has shown that religion's object matters, the key is that this object is taken to be the absolute, even if this is not ultimately conceived as a transcendent being. Here, in the "Knowledge of God," Hegel makes the form of representation central to the conceptualization of religion and shows that representation is engaged in a wider range of activities than those conventionally recognized as "religious."<sup>208</sup>

Lewis articulates a way in which Hegel's concept of religious representation can lead to something like secularisation. This term must be used cautiously, however. Lewis does not advocate the separation of religion and the public sphere. Hegel is useful precisely in his refusal to separate politics, religion and philosophy. Simultaneously affirming the need for religion and changing the meaning of that term is neither straightforwardly theological nor clearly secular.

Lewis demonstrates this tension when stating that the central claim of *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*: 'Hegel argues that "God" is the religious language for spirit, which he conceives in terms of socially constituted subjectivity that is self-realizing activity rather than a thing or being. Moreover, spirit is properly understood as our own essence. Hegel's "God" is no

---

<sup>206</sup> Robert C Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel: A Study of G.W.F. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 582.

<sup>207</sup> Hegel, *Hegel: The Letters*, 538.

<sup>208</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 156.

transcendent Other, not an entity separate from human beings.<sup>209</sup> A major issue is definitional: religion and secularity are defined in relation to one another.<sup>210</sup> What makes Hegel's philosophy of religion provoking is that he not only affirms the centrality of religion while changing the meaning of the term, he presents this transformation of religion as emerging necessarily from within the tradition. 'In a profoundly transformative historical moment, Hegel offers a conception of Christianity that he takes to be simultaneously expressive of the genuine content of the tradition and consistent with modern social and intellectual developments.'<sup>211</sup>

This reading rejects Walter Jaeschke's claim that not only does Hegel's philosophy of religion entail the death of God, but it demands the death of religion. If Solomon's strong claims about concealed motives are relatively easily dismissed, Jaeschke offers a much closer reading of Hegel's philosophy of religion.<sup>212</sup>

As Jaeschke explains, the death of God is not actually the death of God, but the death of a philosophy which posits God as unknowable. It is the God of this philosophy which is dead. This rejection of philosophies which posit an unknowable God is rooted in an affirmation of reason. What is required is a philosophy which goes beyond the achievements of Enlightenment rationality, for only a philosophy which continues in this direction can legitimate religious representations.

It consists in testing whether the content of religion, under threat from rationalist critique, cannot perhaps, be legitimated in another way, and only in another way namely, by philosophy itself... If, in good Enlightenment fashion, reason is recognized as the sole basis of legitimation, then the only refuge for the threatened content does not come from any means of escape, any supposed practical necessity or something similar, nor from a supposedly immediate conviction or the experience of the religious community, but solely from rational knowledge of all events, from reason. If reason alone counts, then nothing counts but what stands up to reason. But that reason alone counts, results from the process of rationalization... the only course that remains is either to abandon the content of religion for reason's sake or, with and through reason, to cast it in a new form.<sup>213</sup>

---

<sup>209</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 12.

<sup>210</sup> The problem of definitions in discourse on secularisation was raised nearly half a century ago in David Martin, "Towards Eliminating the Concept of Secularization," in *Penguin Survey of the Social Sciences 1965*, ed. Julius Gould (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1965), 169–182.

<sup>211</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 13.

<sup>212</sup> Indeed, Jaeschke is the editor of the standard collection of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* as well as the author of Jaeschke, *Reason in Religion*., a benchmark text in the study of Hegel's philosophy of religion.

<sup>213</sup> Jaeschke, "Philosophical Theology and Philosophy of Religion," 4–5.

It is the rationalist critique which results in the death of God. This death is a passage to resurrection for Hegel. As Jaeschke argues, he revives the significance of religion in his linking of philosophical theology and philosophy of religion. Philosophical theology is not philosophical discussions of confessional beliefs, but the realisation that ‘philosophical thought is the sole basis and legitimizing authority of discourse about God, not reports concerning actual or supposed historic events, nor theological propositions stemming from one or other tradition, nor by any means the direct inspiration of religious contents, understood as revelation, nor personal experience of some mode of acting of a divine being.’<sup>214</sup>

This definition recalls the basic understanding of religion as representation discussed above (4.1.0). In philosophy’s grasping of the nature of this representation, it moves from philosophical theology to philosophy of religion. Philosophy of religion is not concerned with developing a theory of religion based on empirical study nor to scientifically defend religion in the modern world. The task of the philosophy of religion is to grasp what religion *is*.<sup>215</sup> In philosophy’s understanding of religion, religious representations continue to have a role in contemporary society, yet this means ceding elements of traditional understandings of religion. In Jaeschke’s formulation, ‘the end of religion is the price paid for revoking the death of God.’<sup>216</sup> George di Giovanni offers a parallel position, writing that ‘because religion no longer has to carry the explanatory burden that it bore before, it is let free to fulfil its function of expressing and nurturing spirit in its most individual forms. Religion has been liberated, so to speak, just as art was once liberated when it no longer had to fulfil a religious function.’<sup>217</sup> Philosophy is the end of religion in the same way that religion is the end of morality. It provides the vantage point from which the movement and complexities of religion can be seen and analysed. Movement is still necessary and eventually the subject descends, now able to navigate the path of religious thought with the clarity taken from its earlier view.

Religious thought in the form of philosophy of religion shifts from consideration of God, to consideration of what communities are doing when they think of God. What it means to

---

<sup>214</sup> Jaeschke, “Philosophical Theology and Philosophy of Religion,” 6.

<sup>215</sup> Jaeschke, “Philosophical Theology and Philosophy of Religion,” 10, 14.

<sup>216</sup> Jaeschke, “Philosophical Theology and Philosophy of Religion,” 16.

<sup>217</sup> Di Giovanni, “Faith Without Religion, Religion Without Faith,” 383. David Kolb, too, makes this point: ‘Religion exhibits a growing self-consciousness of our whole situation, where over time more complex logical categories underlie more sophisticated representation in images, stories, cultic actions, and theological elaborations. Hegel sees earlier religions as understanding spirit’s life with one set of representations and categories, then as giving way when the underlying categories and social structures shift. Religion’s general historical trajectory echoes larger transitions in the logic. As a mode of absolute spirit, religion becomes increasingly self-transparent’ David Kolb, “Hegel and Religion: Avoiding Double Truth, Twice,” *Hegel Bulletin* 33, no. 01 (2012): 79.

think God is to think the ultimate, the grounds of the community, the determinations of value. There is thus no opposition between God and the world. To think God, is to think of a particular aspect of being in the world. Consequently, the opposition ‘between the state (as Notstaat) and religion, and then between ethical life and religion, finally shows itself as a discrepancy between the concept of religion and its historically real, but nonetheless untrue, shape, in which religion opposes the desired reconciliation with the state and philosophy.’<sup>218</sup>

Does this understanding of the end of religion make Hegel a theorist of secularisation? The relationship between Hegel and secularism largely depends on how one determines the latter term. Epsen Hammer argues that, if one uses Charles Taylor’s definition of secularism, Hegel clearly offers a secularising philosophy.<sup>219</sup> In *A Secular Age*, Taylor argues that secularism may be defined first as marking the transition from a society rooted in belief in God, to the privatisation of religious belief. Participation in society is not dependent upon theological commitments. The public spaces have been emptied of the divine. Secondly, secularism may be taken as the decline in religious practices.<sup>220</sup> Finally, secularising refers to a shift in the conditions of belief. It is this third sense, the ‘move from a society where belief in God is un-challenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others’, that Taylor is focused on.<sup>221</sup>

Hegel is concerned with both the first and third meanings of secularisation. It is clearly the case that, for Hegel, God does not authorise the state. Yet, as seen in the discussion above, religion does play a role in legitimating the state and, as will be seen in the following chapters, offers resources for challenging the state. So it is fair to say, with Rose, that religion maintains its speculative relation to the state. There is a tension between describing Hegel as a theorist of secularisation while also addressing the on-going role of religious representation for his philosophical system. This tension is borne out in Hammer’s conclusions. Hegel is a theorist of secularisation, but he does not think that Hegel holds the state to be ‘secular in the sense that its foundation merely reflects the general will or principles that rational agents will be able to agree to behind the veil of ignorance. Rather, the secularity of the state follows from his theory of spirit, which in the state objectifies itself such as to achieve full expression and manifestation.’<sup>222</sup> Yet, Hegel argues that the spirit achieves full expression and manifestation through a process of

---

<sup>218</sup> Jaeschke, “Christianity and Secularity in Hegel’s Concept of the State,” 131.

<sup>219</sup> Epsen Hammer, “Hegel as Theorist of Secularization,” *Hegel Bulletin* 68, no. 2 (2013): 223–244.

<sup>220</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 1–2.

<sup>221</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 3.

<sup>222</sup> Hammer, “Hegel as Theorist of Secularization,” 231.

self-alienation and reconciliation, described in the movement of absolute religion. Hammer acknowledges this point, as well as ‘Hegel’s belief that only the incorporation of Christianity and the Christian God into his system could save the Christian religion from itself.’<sup>223</sup> Hammer echoes the earlier point made by Jaeschke – the death of religion is the price of revoking the death of God.

This tension is not one that needs to be resolved, only renamed. I am arguing that Hegel is a theorist of post-secularism, rather than secularism. To use a distinction offered by Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler, Hegel’s understanding is a philosophical rather than a theological post-secularity.<sup>224</sup> The theological post-secular is associated with the work of John Milbank and the affiliated ‘theological sensibility’, radical orthodoxy. In his outline of this theological post-secularism, Phillip Blond focuses in on Hegel’s thesis that God is totally revealed, without remainder.

For me the inexhaustibility of the Trinity, its infinity, requires that being... is not fully exhausted in being known, not even in being known as infinite negation... Another way of putting this is that *God cannot be exhausted by being known*. To suggest that He is, to maintain that which stands apart from our thinking cannot be thought, is to risk, despite all the protestations to the contrary, reducing God to the level and shape of our own mental life.<sup>225</sup>

This theological critique of Hegel is a repetition of Karl Barth’s critique of Hegel’s philosophy of self-confidence, in which Hegel ‘finally disposed of the God who had somehow stood in opposition to reason, who was in some way an offence and a foolishness to reason... by making the offence and foolishness of this opposition relative, by seeing that this relationship with God was something which was necessary but which was also provisional, by seeing that it could finally be resolved in the peace of reason.’<sup>226</sup> Through genealogical analyses of modern and post-modern thought, this theological post-secularism maintains that ‘secular modernity and its

---

<sup>223</sup> Hammer, “Hegel as Theorist of Secularization,” 240.

<sup>224</sup> Smith and Whistler use the term ‘generic secular’ rather than philosophical secular, but the forms of secularity described are congruent with my reading of Hegelian philosophy. To describe a form of secularity as ‘generic’ is a philosophical determination in this perspective. See Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler, “What is Continental Philosophy of Religion Now?,” in *After the postsecular and the postmodern: new essays in continental philosophy of religion*, ed. Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2010), 14–16.

<sup>225</sup> Phillip Blond, “Introduction: Theology before philosophy,” in *Post-secular philosophy: between philosophy and theology* (London; New York: Routledge, 1998), 18.

<sup>226</sup> Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background & History* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 381.



institutions are not ultimately religious or theological visions – but heretical parodies of orthodox Christian faith...<sup>227</sup>

This charge of heretical parody is echoed in William Desmond's critique of Hegel's God as a 'counterfeit double'. 'A counterfeit double is an image that is almost exactly like the original, but something has been altered that vitiates its claim to be true... It looks good, but there is something missing, or something added that is not quite right.'<sup>228</sup> For Desmond, this anomalous feature is Hegel's rejection of transcendence, as 'for monotheistic religions some sense of transcendence as other... is *finally not negotiable*.'<sup>229</sup> Hegel's rendering transcendence an immanent transcendence violates the core of Desmond's understanding of Christianity.

The philosophical post-secularism of Hegel, in contrast, agrees that God cannot be exhausted by being known in the sense implied by Barth or Blond because God is not an object. God represents the divinity of self-determining self-consciousness. It also agrees with Blond's claim that thought must reject the merely given. It is this rejection of the merely given, as will be shown in later chapters, which is the basis of freedom. Yet Hegel holds these positions while maintaining an immanently developing philosophy of religion which rejects any notion of a divine that exists independently of or in opposition to humanity.

To use Taubes's expression, this post-secular philosophy embraces the task of working with 'theological materials' (PT, 69). It is a liberating of religious representation in order for those representations to be used in thinking the world. While not denying that this work may involve rejecting aspects of past uses of these theological materials, it is a process of experimentation rather than parody. To put this in more Hegelian terms, Christianity does not begin as absolute religion, but develops into absolute religion from its original finite shape. This development is the 'progress from the unreflective use of symbols to the conscious awareness of their necessity and their limitation.'<sup>230</sup> Religious representations become the means by which self-consciousness is elevated to pure thought, recognising that its object is not an external divinity, but divinity actualised in the community of spirit. It is the moment where self-consciousness is not only elevated, but realises that it elevates itself. As Lewis writes, 'Hegel is not resuming an earlier metaphysical project by claiming our knowledge can reach an object that Kant declared

---

<sup>227</sup> James K. A Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004), 139. Smith effectively offers a theological version of Schmitt's thesis on political theology. As will be seen in chapters six and seven, Taubes defines his notion of political theology in contrast to Schmitt's.

<sup>228</sup> William Desmond, *Hegel's God: A Counterfeit Double?* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 9.

<sup>229</sup> Desmond, *Hegel's God*, 9.

<sup>230</sup> Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 178.

unattainable but rather reconceptualising the object that is to be known in the act of “cognizing God.”<sup>231</sup> That object is self-consciousness in the process of self-determination.

As noted at the start of this chapter, what makes Hegel’s claims particularly interesting is that he insists that this is not a philosophical action upon religious traditions, but emerges from the logic of those very traditions. As Lewis writes, ‘Most fundamentally, the philosophy of religion’s treatment of the consummate religion consists in a *philosophical account of the representational account of the contents of philosophy*, i.e. of Hegel’s philosophical system. It articulates the philosophical significance of these religious representations. In so doing, it does not simply preserve their content but reveals their genuine content.’<sup>232</sup> Hegel may demythologise Christianity, but he does so theologically.<sup>233</sup> Hammer’s conclusion that, for Hegel, there is ‘no recourse to authoritative representations of a transcendent God’ is thus correct, but incomplete. For Hegel, representations of God are authoritative insofar as they represent the self-determination of spirit. These representations reject any notion of a transcendent God, while freeing the network of religious representations for philosophical post-secular experimentation. To reiterate the point above, Hegel’s philosophy of religion is thus far from a parody of theological tradition, but the development of that tradition through an immanent exploration of its representations.

#### 4.6.0 Conclusion

The conclusion of this chapter marks the transition described in the introduction. In chapter two I described the various ways in which Hegel is described as linking philosophy, religion and politics. For some, such as Karl Löwith, he secularises theological concepts and plays a role in allowing the modern political translation of eschatology to progress. For others, as seen in Bloch and Taubes, his philosophical method preserves something of the theological ideas of eschatology, redeployed in a philosophical context that sees humanity as the agents of eschatological transformation. For both these approaches, Hegel does something to the idea of religion. In chapter three, I briefly considered the relevant trends in the interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy in order to establish the philosophical context for the rest of this thesis.

---

<sup>231</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 117.

<sup>232</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 203.

<sup>233</sup> Lewis, “Religion and Demythologization in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit”; Graham Ward, “Hegel’s Messianic Reasoning and Its Politics,” in *Politics to Come: Power, Modernity and the Messianic*, ed. Arthur Bradley and Paul Fletcher (Continuum, 2010).

In this chapter, I focused on what exactly it is that Hegel does to the idea of religion. To begin (4.1.0), I traced the basic features of Hegel's understanding of religion as representation. Emphasising the relationship between representation and philosophy, I showed that religion is a necessary moment within Hegel's philosophical system, one which has an on-going role. Any suggestion that religion is overcome or cancelled by philosophy ignores that religion is also *preserved* by philosophy. Viewed from the perspective of philosophy, religion can be understood as representing philosophical truths in a manner that is both less conceptually precise and more subjectively affective.

In addition to discussing the standard aspects of Hegel's notion of representation (4.1.1-4.1.3), I also emphasised the return to representation (4.1.4). Highlighting Hegel's review of Göschel's *Aphorisms on Ignorance and Absolute Knowledge*, I argued that the 'two-way' relation between representation and concept is not emphasised. Losing sight of this relation contributes to the tendency of downplaying the role of religion in Hegel's philosophy; emphasising this relation results in the return to religion, but only as representation. I then summarised the work of Lewis, Magnus and Clark, all of whom develop the notion of presentation in helpful ways (4.2.0). Lewis received the most attention, because it is his linking of philosophy, religion and politics which is the most important for the following chapters. Subsequently, I discussed the difficulties of describing his reading of Hegel as right, left or middle (4.3.0).

In the above discussion of the role of representation in Hegel's philosophical system, I repeatedly emphasised the continuing necessity of representation. As an example of the return to representation, Magnus points to Hegel's use of the Trinity to represent philosophical concepts.<sup>234</sup> Neither she, nor Clark or Lewis, suggest that other representations might manifest Hegelian concepts. While the section on consummate religion (4.1.3) suggested that other cultural forms, whether traditionally religious or not, might play the role of absolute religion, the result was still the promotion of social cohesion. As seen in the discussion of Rose's reading of Hegel, the speculative relationship between religion and the state allows for a greater degree of negativity than in Lewis's interpretation. Rose's reading fits with the more open readings of Hegel's philosophy described in the previous chapter. The emphasis on the absolute as a dynamic method means that representation is not only oriented toward social cohesion but the expression of the negative moments of the absolute. In the following chapters I will argue that apocalypticism offers a means of representing these moments. In this construal, Taubes's apocalyptic political theology offers an example of the return to representation in order to think the negativity of the absolute.

---

<sup>234</sup> Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*, 198.

## 5.0 Openness and Discursive Bias in Hegel's Philosophy

In the previous chapter, I developed a reading of Hegel's philosophy of religion. I argued that thought does not cease its movement having reached absolute knowing. Rather, it must return to representations in order to actualise that knowing through the cultivation of institutions and social practices. This understanding is the basic, dominant view of Hegel's philosophy of religion. Yet, I also argued that there is a more disruptive role for religion. If Hegel's philosophy is a completed system constituted by the grasping of the dynamics of thought, religion must reflect this dynamism. In this chapter I will argue that this systematic dynamism necessitates an open reading of Hegel.

Hegel's thought is often taken to epitomise philosophy's tendency towards totalizing and overreaching systems of knowledge.<sup>235</sup> One of the advantages of the 'non-metaphysical' approach is the opening of this system. Both Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard present more open and dynamic readings of Hegel, with Pinkard in particular emphasising the social dynamics at work in the construction of knowledge. In developing the connections between Hegel's philosophy, political theology and apocalypticism, this question of open versus closed readings is particularly relevant for three reasons.

First, one critique of political theology, or at least one conception of political theology, is that it leads to totalitarianism. From Norman Cohn to Mark Lilla, social historians have argued for a connection between religious fanaticism and political totalitarianism.<sup>236</sup> There are substantial problems with constructing this connection, both in terms of the historical scholarship offered by Cohn and the political assumptions of Lilla. Some of these issues were addressed in the previous chapter. For now it is only necessary to remember that Hegel alternates between two roles in these genealogies. In some, as in Löwith, he plays a part in the secularising of apocalyptic ideas, paving the way for Marxism, Nazism and Fascism.<sup>237</sup> For others, most famously Francis Fukuyama, he describes the end of history. In a manner similar to Lilla and Cohn, this approach argues that political ideologies have failed and that liberal

---

<sup>235</sup> The standard reference here is Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Revised 2nd Edition, 1952).

<sup>236</sup> Mark Lilla, *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West*, Reprint (Vintage Books USA, 2008); Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*. For an excellent summary of the politics of constructing this genealogy, see Alberto Toscano, *Fanaticism: On the Uses of an Idea* (London: Verso, 2010).

<sup>237</sup> Löwith, *Meaning in History*.

democratic discourse is to be recognised as the apex of human political organisation.<sup>238</sup> In both these readings, Hegel's philosophy provides a philosophical reading of history in which human events are heading, irreversibly, towards a pre-determined goal. Whether that goal is revolution or liberal democracy, those who observe the cunning of reason in the development of human history are able to operate as agents of spirit. Hegel thus occupies an ambiguous place in political theology – either as facilitating the sublation of religious ideas into radical politics or announcing the end to all such projects.

The 'non-metaphysical' reading, along with much of the rest of contemporary Hegel scholarship, argues against both these understandings. While Hegel certainly has a vision of human development, it is more nuanced than the brute determinism suggested by the readings offered above. In describing the absolute not as pre-defined telos, but a form of being and knowing, Hegel's philosophy maintains the form of a series of developments while allowing for a greater level of historical accident. This reading is more agreeable to the form of political theology being developed here.

Second, even amongst those arguing for a more open reading of Hegel's philosophy there is a debate about the degree of openness. This debate includes discussions of locating openness and contingency in Hegel. For instance, as mentioned in chapter two, David Kolb has argued that a degree of historical contingency is incorporated in the larger logical necessity of Hegel's philosophy, but that the Hegelian must maintain a distinction between historical and logical innovation. The critiques of a more open Hegel easily slips into a critique of the 'non-metaphysical' approach more generally.<sup>239</sup> Even amongst those who agree in the basic tenets of the 'non-metaphysical' reading differ on the degree of openness within the system. The end goal of these reflections on Hegel is the development of a political theology rooted in an understanding of dialectics in apocalyptic terms. The degree of openness allowed by Hegel directly bears on this theme.

Third, this issue of openness is essential for determining the feasibility of reading Hegelian dialectics in terms of apocalypticism. It is evident that religion has a *primarily* conservative function in Hegel. Even though his theological ideas are provocatively heterodox, those ideas are developed in the service of a religion which 'sanctions obedience to the law and the legal arrangements of the state... in short the moral life of the state' (E3, §552: 286/535). The question is whether or not there are other ways of understanding religion in Hegelian terms,

---

<sup>238</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Penguin, 1992). See also Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1960).

<sup>239</sup> See Beiser, "Hegel, a Non-Metaphysician?"

even if this requires a Hegelian reading of religion which contradicts his own philosophy of religion. This requires looking at how religion features in the ‘non-metaphysical’ reading and the openness allowed in religion thus conceived. This issue can be further divided into understanding openness in terms of religion (addressed in this chapter) and openness regarding religion within Hegel’s system (addressed in the following chapter).

The first point, regarding totalitarianism, was addressed in chapter two, so I now turn to the second two. First, I engage the debates about the openness of Hegel’s philosophy, focusing on David Kolb’s essay on the theme. Second, I turn to a more specific issue in scholarship on the ‘non-metaphysical’ reading, tracing the recent debate about discursive bias prevalent in this approach. Finally, I consider how this debate relates to one of Hegel’s early theological critics – Kierkegaard.

### 5.1.0 Questioning the openness of Hegel’s philosophy: David Kolb

The relative openness of Hegel’s system has been a point of much contention. It is one of the delineating factors in current Hegel studies. At one end of the spectrum, there are highly restrictive readings, such as in Popper. In general, this view is no longer considered viable, with the exception of those who use it as the basis of critique. At the other, there is the work of Slavoj Žižek, who argues that Hegel’s philosophy is primarily concerned with contingency and negativity.<sup>240</sup> Within this range of interpretations, there are several interrelated issues. First, there is the question of openness as it relates to the absolute. That is, is the attainment of absolute knowledge a telos, a final knowledge marking some form of universal completion? Or is absolute knowledge really absolute *knowing*, a form of self-reflexive knowledge which acknowledges its contingent and historical nature, but understands that the construction of systems of knowledge are nonetheless necessary? Second, this epistemological and philosophical question bears political and social consequences. Even within the second understanding of the absolute, a reading advocated by the ‘non-metaphysical’ Hegelians, there still remains the issue of the degree of openness. This line of inquiry raises the issue of discursive bias.

As noted above, there are various approaches to developing a more open reading of Hegel: privileging the social dimension of reasoning (Pinkard); emphasising the tragic (Comay and de Boer); reading Hegel’s philosophy in terms of plasticity (Malabou); or focusing on Hegel’s

---

<sup>240</sup> Žižek, *Less than Nothing*.

‘tarrying with the negative’ (Žižek).<sup>241</sup> These readings, while not necessarily ‘non-metaphysical’, do achieve their more open understanding of Hegel through a rejection of interpretations which read Hegel as recovering the pre-Kantian metaphysical tradition. David Kolb described this tendency as ‘designed to allow considerable historicism at some level while retaining Hegel’s concern for rational closure. They keep Hegel’s goal of thought’s return to itself but open up that self-relation to provide continual novelty in both empirical detail and logical categories. *They promise both historical variability and comprehensive rationality.*’<sup>242</sup> Kolb offers a critique of attempts to open up Hegel’s philosophy in this way and roots his comments in a ‘non-metaphysical’ approach. Hegel is not describing the end of history in any strong sense, but he is describing the attainment of a definitive understanding of the basic forms of thought.<sup>243</sup> Kolb thus argues for a Hegel that ‘allows novelty only on the level of empirical detail and historical embodiment’, but ‘envisioned the logic as in principle complete.’<sup>244</sup>

Kolb offers brief summaries of the various strategies used to argue for this open reading. The first and most simple strategy, he claims, is to downplay the third moment of the dialectic. Doing so preserves the ‘splits and tensions’ of the second stage. Some 20 years after Kolb, this strategy still has appeal, as seen in the work of Comay, Žižek and, most thoroughly, de Boer. A second strategy ‘is to read the logic as about the process of generating the categories rather than as providing a final table of categories.’<sup>245</sup> Here, Kolb is describing Pippin’s meta-logical understanding of the *Logic*.<sup>246</sup>

---

<sup>241</sup> Pinkard, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*; Rebecca Comay, *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution* (Stanford University Press, 2010); Karin de Boer, *On Hegel: The Sway of the Negative* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic* (London: Routledge, 2005); *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing: Dialectic, Destruction, Deconstruction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); and Žižek, *Less than Nothing*. The emphasis on openness is derived from a variety of approaches to reading Hegel and used in developing a range of philosophical positions. Agreement on this one point does not indicate more general consensus.

<sup>242</sup> Kolb, “What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel,” 30. It is important to bear in mind that, while Kolb addresses many of the tendencies in contemporary Hegel scholarship, his article predates much of this work.

<sup>243</sup> ‘Hegel’s claims concern the basic foundational categories that set the stage for intellectual and practical activity. He never claimed that such activity would stop, and he fully expected science (and to a lesser extent mathematics to continue generating new discoveries and theories. He did claim, however, that those activities would continue on a stage that was now fully furnished, and knew itself as such’, Kolb, “What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel,” 30–31.

<sup>244</sup> Kolb, “What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel,” 31.

<sup>245</sup> Kolb, “What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel,” 31.

<sup>246</sup> Kolb also discusses an additional strategy which reads Hegel as developing a totalizing rational consciousness which shifts to match its historical context. As this strategy does not anticipate any under consideration here, it is not pertinent to our argument.

In addition to sharing a tendency to reject metaphysical readings, Kolb argues that these interpretative strategies depend on a common separation of form and content. This separation is problematic, as a prime function of the absolute idea is to overcome this very distinction, placing open Hegelianism in ‘the awkward position of denying Hegel the closure he needs for overcoming the nihilism of modern subjectivity, while itself falling back into standard modern oppositions (of theory and practice or subject and object) in just those ways that Hegel was trying to avoid.’<sup>247</sup>

Kolb offers two primary criticisms which need to be addressed to surpass his criticism of open readings of Hegel: first, the objection that Hegel explicitly rejects the possibility of categorial novelty; second, the charge that opening Hegel’s philosophy leaves it incapable of addressing the nihilism of modern subjectivity.

The first objection is connected to the separation of form and content. This separation runs counter to Hegel’s section on the absolute idea in the *Science of Logic*:

If the content again is assumed as given to the method and of a peculiar nature of its own, then in such a determination method, as with the logical element in general, is a merely *external* form. Against this however we can appeal not only to the fundamental Notion of the science of logic; its entire course, in which all possible shapes of a given content and of objects came up for consideration, has demonstrated their transition and untruth; also that not merely was it impossible for a given object to be the foundation to which the absolute form stood in a merely external and contingent relationship but that, on the contrary, the absolute form has proved itself to be the absolute foundation and ultimate truth. From this course the method has emerged as the *self-knowing Notion that has itself*, as the absolute, both subjective and objective, *for its subject matter*, consequently as the pure correspondence of the Notion and its reality, as a concrete existence that is the Notion itself (SL, 825-826/W6: 551).<sup>248</sup>

He continues,

what is to be considered here as method is only the movement of the *Notion* itself, the nature of which movement has already been cognized; but *first*, there is now the added *significance* that the *Notion is everything*, and its movement is the *universal absolute activity*, the self-determining and self-realizing movement (SL, 826/W6: 551).

These selections, at first, seem to substantiate aspects of Kolb’s criticism of open Hegelianism. To some degree, ‘non-metaphysical’ readings may be guilty of this separation. For example, Pippin, in his analysis of the *Science of Logic* argues the ‘entire “Subjective Logic” section

---

<sup>247</sup> Kolb, “What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel,” 32.

<sup>248</sup> Kolb uses a selection from this passage to initiate his argument.



would thus appear to be a reflective account of the subjectivity of the Objective Logic, and beyond such a metalevel claim, not to resolve or conclude, in some permanent, traditionally “absolute” way, thought’s “process.”<sup>249</sup>

Alternative open readings, for example those of de Boer and Malabou, avoid this tendency by locating the negativity of the method in the content as well. For de Boer, this negativity is located within being, because Hegel deals with being as a concept rather than as being as such.<sup>250</sup> Malabou offers a similar, though not identical, idea in her discussions of plasticity.<sup>251</sup> Adrian Johnston offers the strongest version of this position: ‘Hegelian dialectics is both an epistemology and an ontology, namely, a mobile, dynamic knowledge-process that, in its functioning... simultaneously reveals the very configuration of being itself... being becomes something incomplete and inconsistent, a sphere penetrated by divisions and ruptures.’<sup>252</sup> It is not a matter of a method divorced from content, but finding negativity or contingency within the concept of being itself. If the concept is not ultimately finalised or resolved, but a self-reflexive grasping of contingency or negativity reflecting the nature of being itself, it thereby avoids Kolb’s critique. This approach is supported by Hegel’s own description of absolute knowing: ‘this Knowing of which we are speaking is not Knowing as pure comprehension of the object; here, this Knowing is to be indicated only in its process of coming-to-be, or in the moments of that aspect of it which belongs to consciousness as such, the moments of the notion proper or of pure Knowing in the form of shapes of consciousness’ (PS, §789: 480/422-423).<sup>253</sup> Such a re-joining of form and content does, however, mark the beginnings of a break with the ‘non-metaphysical’ approach. That is, the difficult, sometimes vague and speculative method Hegel employs cannot, as Pippin suggests, be divorced from Hegel’s conclusions.<sup>254</sup>

---

<sup>249</sup> Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism*, 246–47.

<sup>250</sup> de Boer, *On Hegel*, 216 n.2.

<sup>251</sup> Malabou makes frequent use of the term plasticity’s polyvalence, meaning the ability to give form, the ability to receive form and the ability to destroy form. In a manner similar to de Boer, she emphasises the plasticity of the philosophical task itself, though she offers a less adamant opposition to reading being in Hegel as being as such. See Malabou, *The Future of Hegel*, 5–12, 63–65.

<sup>252</sup> Johnston, *Zižek’s Ontology*, 129. Johnston offers this reading of Hegel in the context of his reading of Žižek. Johnston’s commentary, however, is never just that and the reading of Žižek develops a systematic, materialist reading of Hegel that is a refinement of Žižek’s work.

<sup>253</sup> This reading of Hegel is also supported by his definition of Spirit as ‘the transformation... of the object of *consciousness* into an object of *self-consciousness*, i.e. into an object that is just as much superseded, or into the Notion’ (PS, §803: 488/430). The tension within the concept of being, de Boer’s tragic element or Malabou’s plasticity, continues into the concept as self-conscious.

<sup>254</sup> Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism*, 4.

Addressing the division between form and content still leaves Kolb's second criticism: the open Hegelians simultaneously affirm the need to overcome the nihilism of modern subjectivity while stripping him of the tools necessary for accomplishing this task.

If forms of life take their unity from logical categories, and if the logic is complete, then on some level no new shapes of life are possible. But spirit lives time: even if spirit has achieved the final rational constitution for free community, that does not mean an end to the dramas of individual lives, internal politics, or world history in which nations rise, compete, and fall. Even if there will be no radically new structures, the final structures will be embodied in surprising ways by new peoples and nations.<sup>255</sup>

Kolb is right to highlight Hegel's emphasis on logical completion, but too quickly settles on a narrow understanding of what this means for philosophy. Leaving aside, for the moment, whether or not 'spirit has achieved the final rational constitution for free community', Kolb immediately adopts an aggressive definition of logical completion. Returning to the earlier quote from the *Logic*, this completion must be understood in terms of the movement of the absolute. Or rather, the absolute, understood as logical completion, must be understood in terms of a movement. If Malabou and de Boer identify a plasticity and negativity in method (form), which reflects the nature of being (content), Kolb seems to identify a basic level of stability in content which he then reads back into form.<sup>256</sup> Allowing for a certain degree of geo-political melodrama or personal existential crisis, he nonetheless affirms a basic categorial stability. Logical completion does not necessarily imply this stability. Rather, the *Logic* grasps the contingent and unstable flux of thought – the plasticity of the concept. *The completed logic is the logic of this flux and change, understood in terms of a stable group of categories, but stable in terms of their ability to explain instability.*

Hegel's closure is in the interconnection between these two points: the system is complete because the kind of self-referential structures involved necessarily include all the categories by which we could conceive any object that would be other to pure thought. Hegel is claiming that the full system would leave no Other untouched or outside. This does not mean that everything is reduced to the enforced sameness of the night in which all cows are black. But he is claiming that in some important sense there will be nothing remaining to be *systematically* understood. Nothing a priori will remain untouched by the system.<sup>257</sup>

---

<sup>255</sup> Kolb, "What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel," 33.

<sup>256</sup> Even Kolb comes closer to this position in his more recent work. In an essay on religion he describes Hegel as offering 'key logical categories' found in various religious concepts and practices. These stable categories provide a basis for Hegel 'to critique some versions of historical religions as not being true to the key features and categories embodied in their central symbols...' (Kolb, "Hegel and Religion," 79).

<sup>257</sup> Kolb, "What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel," 33.

Again, the contention is not that Hegel does not intend or fails to offer a completed logic. The question is, a logic *of what?* Much of what Kolb argues is essential to the correct evaluation of Hegel's philosophical system – there is no untouched or outside 'Other' to the system of thought. The source of novelty is immanent to the system of thought itself. For Kolb, Hegel is describing a logic which provides a complete system of knowledge, with a concomitant social arrangement, allowing for a continuing restricted novelty within a field defined by that system of knowledge. I am arguing that Hegel offers a logic which is a complete system of knowledge *of* the inherent failings of knowledge and the need to recommence the project of understanding the implications of that system, with its dual emphasis of self-reflexivity and self-determination. Further, these two points are, by virtue of Hegel's idealism, identical; self-reflexivity is itself a form of self-determination.

Since there is no passing-over within the *absolute Idea*, no presupposing, and no determinacy at all that would not be fluid and transparent, this Idea is for-itself the *pure form* of the Concept, which intuits *its content* as itself. It is its own *content*, inasmuch as it is the ideal distinguishing of itself from itself, and [because] one of the distinct [terms] is its identity with itself; but in this identity the totality of the form (as the system of the determinations of the content) is contained. This content is the system *of the logical*. All that remains here as *form* for the Idea is the *method* of this content – the determinate knowing of the currency of its moments (E, §237; 303-04/228-229).

Given the instability that is the object grasped by Hegel's logic, it is necessary to exert greater caution when announcing the attainment of the final rational constitution of the free community.

Kolb also finds this closed version of Hegel necessary to sustaining Hegel's dialectical method. The process of sublation proceeds through determinate negation:

When a category of thought or a structure of action is found to be inadequate, thought or action finds itself already with a new but related category or structure. There is no moment of indeterminacy when the first is negated and we cast around for a substitute. Basic categories or structures are not tools which we can fashion as we please; their inadequacies turn out to be their connections to more encompassing categories. We have no indeterminate space from which we subjectively manipulate or arbitrarily change the fundamental categories and structures.<sup>258</sup>

Again, Kolb makes an important point, but in the service of an unnecessary closing off of Hegel's philosophy. The open Hegelianisms which Kolb critiques do not assume that it is possible to subjectively manipulate or arbitrarily change fundamental categories. Open Hegelianism is not a vulgar subjective idealism. Rather it suggests that the modes of

---

<sup>258</sup> Kolb, "What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel," 34.

understanding are socially determined and maintained. Further, what is grasped in the *Science of Logic* are the categories which govern this understanding, and the historical variation and development of the operations of these categories is portrayed in the *Phenomenology*.

In Kolb's reading of Hegel, philosophy proceeds through ever more complete closures until reaching the final closure which, as constitutive of the identities of the preceding elements, 'must in some sense already be in operation'.<sup>259</sup> If Hegel's focus is on the determinate negation that relates the differences between categories, this is true. And if these categories must also bear traces of the reality which it constitutes and is constituted by, then these categories must also reflect the instability of that reality. The final closure, then, is of a logical system oriented to the dynamics of change. When Kolb objects to the depiction of Hegel's dialectic as 'continuous generator of difference' he is correct. Not all of the forms of open Hegelianism under review here, such as those represented by de Boer and Malabou, offer such a depiction. As Hegel notes in the prefatory remarks to the first edition of the *Science of Logic*, 'it can be only the nature of the content itself which spontaneously develops itself in a scientific method of knowing, since it is at the same time the reflection of the content itself which first positions and *generates* its determinate character' (27/7). This passage backs Kolb's insistence on thinking form and content together. The content is thought itself, the Concept. The novelty present is the result of the contingent happenings of the non-conceptual, conceptually comprehended. The generator of difference is reality which is adequately understood through dialectically attained categories which nonreductively comprehend that difference.

Kolb is thus correct when he argues that philosophy may be the comprehension of its time in thought, but the self-reflexive element which Hegel sees himself as introducing marks a kind of break.

For Hegel, it is our age that first understands the motion and principles of pure thought. This achievement is long prepared for by developments in philosophy, religion, and social organization (which themselves follow the general development of the categories in the logic). This achieved self-understanding is definitive of the nature and role of thought. It justifies the very claim that philosophy is its own time comprehended in thought. That principle, which sounds like a liberation from closure, actually depends on the closure to establish its validity. Otherwise it is only a subjective opinion about the relation of philosophy to history.<sup>260</sup>

---

<sup>259</sup> Kolb, "What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel," 35.

<sup>260</sup> Kolb, "What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel," 37.

This places Kolb at odds with the meta-logical view developed by Pippin and others.<sup>261</sup> Pippin argues that Hegel overstates his ability to demonstrate ‘that the logic has gone through all possible determinations by which an object can be thought.’<sup>262</sup> Kolb thinks that one should take Hegel at his word, though this ignores the fact that Pippin is not saying that Hegel meant something else only that he fails to accomplish his stated end while nonetheless offering something very important. Thus while ‘Pippin goes on to say that the purity and complete self-relation can still be had on the meta-logical level’ Kolb argues that ‘they are compromised on all levels.’<sup>263</sup> Pippin thinks that Hegel has the right goal, only fails to reach it; Kolb thinks Hegel has an impossible goal.

The core of Kolb’s objection is that the meta-logical interpretation ‘would weaken the combination of justification and criticism offered by the Hegelian system for particular structures of politics and religion. That would decrease the rational necessity the system offers for the current structure of politics and life, and so would not heal the aching dualities and tensions Hegel was concerned about.’<sup>264</sup> This indeed may be the case, but the fact that the meta-logical would impede the forms of final closure Hegel intends is not itself sufficient for rejecting the meta-logical reading. Perhaps, as seen in de Boer’s work, it is a matter of the appearance of irresolvable tensions.

The significance of Kolb’s critique, as indicated above, is not only epistemological, but extends to the concrete manifestations of Hegel’s philosophy. For Hegel, ‘without including an enclosing glance over the whole sequence of categories the Absolute Idea would remain an empty form of thought. The retrospective grasp that sees the inadequate categories and structures as themselves part of the motion of pure thought gives Hegel his way of ranking and linking concrete content in the latter parts of the system.’<sup>265</sup> It is not that Pippin and Kolb have substantial disagreement about the most philosophically adequate forms of social and political life; Kolb only argues that Pippin’s meta-logical approach fails to provide adequate justification for the same arrangement.<sup>266</sup>

---

<sup>261</sup> This metalogical approach is also found in those who use Hegel in broader philosophical projects, such as Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*; McDowell, *Mind and World*.

<sup>262</sup> Kolb, “What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel,” 38.

<sup>263</sup> Kolb, “What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel,” 38.

<sup>264</sup> Kolb, “What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel,” 39.

<sup>265</sup> Kolb, “What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel,” 39. This sentiment is conveyed in the preface to *Phenomenology of Spirit* when Hegel states, “The True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development” (§20; 11/19).

<sup>266</sup> Kolb admits that he does not provide sufficient evidence in his critique of Pippin’s reading (Kolb, “What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel,” 39.).

The penultimate version of open Hegelianism considered by Kolb, is one that presents a two level structure in which Hegel provides a completed philosophy at the higher level which is developed in an endlessly progressing fashion on the lower level. Kolb describes this approach as half right, in establishing this distinction, but argues it is ‘More likely Hegel intended the lower-level activities to be thought using his notions of contingency and the imperfection of nature. The necessarily contingent details neither possess nor need systematic integration beyond being confined within their essential limits by higher-level categories... it is a contingent happening without any necessity.’<sup>267</sup> Kolb widens the gap between the two levels – rather than completion at the philosophical level generating progress by way of novelty in the realm of the concrete, those areas susceptible to novelty are simply contingent.

John Burbidge, Kolb’s final example, offers the reading closest to the one being developed here. Burbidge advocates the most modest form of open Hegelianism in what Kolb refers to as the methodological interpretation. Broadly, this approach ‘reads the third part of the logic as more than meta-logical, but includes among its conclusions a self-conception of the role of dialectic such that only the method is final. Any end is a limit which implies a drive beyond itself. Any completion and unity confronts a more radical otherness for which a new completion and unity need to be achieved.’<sup>268</sup> What is complete is the method, a refrain which I have trumpeted throughout this section. ‘In understanding its own incompleteness the logic leads into the otherness of nature; similarly the completed system will be open to new tensions and new totalities yet to be achieved. The method remains stable because it is the affirmation of this very movement of dialectical totalization followed by new tensions, new reconciliations, and so on again.’<sup>269</sup> Kolb reads this move as a division of form and content, a reading he rejected at the outset of his essay. ‘The unity of form and content Hegel affirms in the discussion of the Absolute Idea does not mean that we have closure concerning a very general methodological form to be applied to a changing content.’<sup>270</sup>

Kolb’s critique of these various forms of open Hegelianism is not in the service of an unqualified defence of Hegel. Burbidge’s reading, the one Kolb finds most appealing, still presumes the ability for reason to reign in all forms of difference at some level. For all its openness, it is nonetheless Hegelian, and ‘to be Hegelian, the thinker must presuppose that thought can, now or later, permanently or temporarily, achieve unity and self-relation through the dialectical process, or at least that thought can envision this as a satisfactory regulative ideal.

---

<sup>267</sup> Kolb, “What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel,” 40.

<sup>268</sup> Kolb, “What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel,” 41.

<sup>269</sup> Kolb, “What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel,” 41.

<sup>270</sup> Kolb, “What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel,” 42.

But this goal presupposes that a method which conceives of difference as determinate negation will be able to comprehend all difference and encompass all thought.<sup>271</sup> Hegel remains significant, even if he fails at this level. As Kolb writes elsewhere, Hegel ‘still leads us in the self-interpretation of the process of historical interpretation and change within a whole that is a circle we do not escape, because it is where we, in the strongest sense of the words, find ourselves.’<sup>272</sup> Kolb argues that the open Hegel does not work as a way of moving past the attempt to recover Hegel as such and encourages the deployment of Hegelian concepts in non-Hegelian philosophical environments. His concluding lines, that ‘Hegel must be inserted in a field he does not control, and that goes against what he stands for. But he would still stand with us in his vision of thought’s turnings, and his feeling for life’s fractures and self-reversals, and his attempts to comprehend the problems of modern economy and society and culture’ is both true and surprising.<sup>273</sup>

In short, Kolb is right to argue that Hegel offers a philosophical system of logical completion, but errs in the degree to which he restricts the capacity for novelty within that system. It is true that Hegel is anything but modest in his ambition, but his success is in elaborating a system that not only accounts for the possibility of changes in understanding, but recognises that insofar as self-reflexivity is self-determination, the development of absolute knowledge inevitably brings about such changes. Kolb offers an important critical reading of the limits of Hegel’s thought (which will feature in the following chapter). On the specific issue of the capacity for openness, however, he does not account for novelty to be present in the concept of being itself. Kolb’s reading is arguably closer to Hegel’s intended position, but as Kolb considers the possibility of Hegelian philosophy beyond Hegel’s own work, he opens up the potential for reading Hegel beyond Hegel.

### **5.2.0 Discursive Bias in Non-metaphysical readings of Hegel**

Here is where the issue of openness confronts the question of normativity. If Hegel is taken at his most teleological, accepting some degree of historical development, is it possible for this process to become warped and misguided? Is there in fact an ‘end of history’, an ‘end of ideology’ marking the cessation of political and social innovation? In this position the basic elements of a stable, liberal democracy have been established as the fundamental basis of society. The questioning of these foundations is ideological or irrational. While Pippin does not adopt

---

<sup>271</sup> Kolb, “What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel,” 43.

<sup>272</sup> Kolb, “Hegel and Religion,” 83.

<sup>273</sup> Kolb, “What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel,” 48.

this position explicitly, Simon Lumsden argues that there is an implicit discursive bias to Pippin and other ‘non-metaphysical’ readings.<sup>274</sup> This section will examine this critique and possible responses, before turning to how a similar critique might be made of Thomas Lewis’ application of the ‘non-metaphysical’ interpretation to questions of religion. As noted throughout earlier sections this discursive bias is not imposed on Hegel’s philosophy. I am arguing that even if it is the dominant tendency in Hegel’s discussion of philosophy, religion and politics, there are still other tendencies which may be drawn out. Towards this end, this section establishes the discursive bias within Lewis’s ‘non-metaphysical’ reading. I can then turn towards Kierkegaard’s critique of Hegel’s own domestication of religion as an example of an earlier confrontation with these same issues.

As stated above, Hegel allows for the accidental and contingent in nature and, more complexly, history. There is, though, a form of closedness that is intrinsic to Hegel’s system. The logic is complete – Hegel makes no allowance for a subsequent logic that will eventually supplant his own. Again, the question is what does completion mean in the logic? As argued above, one approach is to see Hegel as offering a total, systematic account of the functioning of categories which govern knowledge. Understood in this way, it is possible to allow for natural and historical contingency while maintaining a strictly necessary logic. It is also possible to allow for conceptual contingency. This tension was addressed in part in Kolb’s essay, but the broader institutional implications and the significance for thinking about religion become clear in a series of articles prompted by Robert Pippin’s reflections on Robert Brandom’s *Tales of the Mighty Dead*.<sup>275</sup> Brandom, like Pippin, is interested in the functioning of social norms and their relation to institutions. For both, this concern reaches back to Hegel, who saw the dialectical development of norms as essential to the actualisation of freedom.<sup>276</sup>

Early in his review, Pippin summarises how Hegel sees these norms emerging, failing and developing:

For the basic ethical notions Hegel is interested in also function as instituted (made more than found) and constitutive. One becomes a citizen by being taken to be one, recognized as one; there are citizens only in so far as there are these rules applied in

---

<sup>274</sup> Lumsden, “The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel.”

<sup>275</sup> Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*. While Brandom presents a ‘non-metaphysical’ reading of Hegel, *Tales of the Mighty Dead* and other his other works addressing Hegel are part of a more constructive philosophical project. Pippin is the main focus of this section, with Brandom’s work and its defenders only assisting in the discussion of discursive bias and the confusion surrounding it.

<sup>276</sup> Robert B. Pippin, “Brandom’s Hegel,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 13, no. 3 (2005): 382; Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, 15.



discriminating social roles, and yet it is still possible for such a practice to begin to fail in some way not at all tied to something essential in citizenship-in-itself that a former practice had simply ‘missed’ (as, for example, in Hegel’s account of the failures of Roman or Jacobin citizenship), nor (to anticipate again) tied simply to what a later community in fact ‘re-constituted’ as citizen.<sup>277</sup>

Pippin clarifies that this understanding of the institution of norms does not mean that there was a prior, ‘normless’ time. Rather there is ‘only an on-going, continuous historical process of initiation or socialization into a community’s normative practices, demanding allegiance in all sorts of practical, engaged and largely implicit ways and receiving it in an equally various number of practices of consent, affirmation, sustenance, in a variety of modalities of self-legislation and self-obligation.’<sup>278</sup> Pippin uses art as an example of the modalities of self-legislation and self-obligation, but religion would work equally well.

Thus far norms, for Hegel, are instituted, based on recognition and open to reformulation through a process of failure and reconstitution. Brandom, like both Pippin and Pinkard, is interested in this process – a series of demands for recognition and account giving amongst individuals, communities and institutions. While Pippin is fine with this focus, he argues that Brandom falls short in his inability to account for ‘how either an external interpreter or internal participant can properly challenge the authority of the norms on the basis of which the attributions and assessments are made, or how those norms can fail to meet those challenges. Brandom can describe what happens when such a challenge occurs but he wants to stay out of the question of the putative merits of challenges in general.’<sup>279</sup> Put another way, Brandom admits that norms may be disrupted, but does not describe why this might be the case. Brandom thus displays what Lumsden calls ‘discursive bias’.<sup>280</sup>

Pippin describes this tendency in terms of positivity. Hegel critiques positivity frequently, particularly in the *Early Theological Works*. Here the term refers to ‘the successful administration of what appear to be norms, but which, even with actual acknowledgement and the attitudinal support of individuals, still must count as missing some crucial element which would distinguish alienated from a truly affirmative (self-imposed) relation to the law.’<sup>281</sup> Positivity plays a role in his initial critiques of Christian religion as well as Kantian morality. While Hegel had not yet settled on the terminology of his later works, this positivity as presented is defined as ‘a contranatural or a supernatural one, containing concepts and information transcending

---

<sup>277</sup> Pippin, “Brandom’s Hegel,” 385–86.

<sup>278</sup> Pippin, “Brandom’s Hegel,” 391.

<sup>279</sup> Pippin, “Brandom’s Hegel,” 392.

<sup>280</sup> Lumsden, “The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel,” 59.

<sup>281</sup> Pippin, “Brandom’s Hegel,” 393.

understanding and reason and requiring feelings and actions which would not come naturally to men: the feelings are forcibly and mechanically stimulated, the actions are done to order or from obedience without any spontaneous interest' (ETW, 167/217). Hegel goes on to complicate this definition by questioning the assumed understanding of human nature, defined in opposition to the divine. The remainder of this earlier essay focuses on determining whether the positivity of Christian religion was present from the start of that tradition or if it is something which develops as historical accident.

...the relation between man and the Christian religion cannot in itself exactly be called positive; it rests on the surely beautiful presupposition that everything high, noble, and good in man is divine, that it comes from God and is his spirit, issuing from himself. But this view becomes glaringly positive if human nature is absolutely severed from the divine, if no mediation between the two is conceded except in one isolated individual, if all man's consciousness of the good and the divine is degraded to the dull and killing belief in a superior Being altogether alien to man (ETW, 176/224-225).<sup>282</sup>

Understanding Pippin's use of positivity does not require further elaboration of Hegel's concept. It suffices to highlight that this positivity results from an alienation of the divine and human. Redeployed in the discussion of social norms, Pippin is arguing that Brandom divorces social norms and mediating institutions from the process of constructing those various norms.<sup>283</sup> Brandom elides the construction of the process of exchanging reasons and navigating social norms, which misses the point of Hegel's meta-logical observations on precisely these points.

As stated above, what is of real interest is less Pippin's thoughts on Brandom than what his critique says about his own philosophical position. There are two points which are relevant to the present discussion. First, Pippin argues that Brandom offers a romantic view of resolution in which all differences are overcome and everyone gets along. This view overlooks the real, tragic conflict which Hegel finds in the development of consciousness. Pippin's desire to preserve this realm of conflict resonates with de Boer's work on tragic negativity. While Pippin does not place

---

<sup>282</sup> Religion thus occupies a crucial role in the movement from alienation to the affirmative self-imposed relation to the law. This supports the previous suggestion that religion is an equally significant modality of self-legislation and self-obligation. In the *Early Theological Works*, Hegel argues that the state cannot bring the citizens to morality through laws, but must convince them to trust in institutions. Religion is the most efficacious manner of accomplishing this task (ETW, 98/137).

<sup>283</sup> Torjus Midtgarden points to this same issue, though without invoking positivity, as one of the central points of divergence between Pippin/Pinkard and Brandom: 'the modes of abstraction assumed for Brandom's original conceptualization of the normative... systematically leave out of account ways in which the nature of normative authority itself has been historically altered and is institutionally embodied in modernity' in "Conflicting and Complementary Conceptions of Discursive Practice in Non-metaphysical Interpretations of Hegel," 2.

this tragic conflict in as central a role as de Boer, it suggests that the two are more related than one might initially think. Second, Pippin argues that the breakdown of social norms plays a more central role than Brandom allows.

Hegel is trying to introduce into a distinct kind of historical explanation an account of the way normative notions can begin to lose their grip, are experienced with weakening authority, and that explanation counts crises like incompatible commitments or tragic dilemmas as arising from within the community's own experiences, and not because a new case has contingently arisen. It is possible that some of these crises arise from trying to apply a familiar norm to a new, problematic case, but in almost all the significant cases in his *Phenomenology*, that is not so and the account of the underlying crisis points to the developmental account of the relation between freedom and authority that makes up the basic 'plot' of that book.<sup>284</sup>

As will be seen in a later discussion, Lewis' 'non-metaphysical' reading of Hegel's philosophy of religion does not see religion as facilitating such tragic dilemmas. Indeed, Hegel's own work seems not to allow religion this role. It is precisely this point that it is necessary to take Hegel beyond the limits of his own development. In a manner similar to de Boer's work on the tragic, I hold that Hegel apprehends this potential of religion in earlier work. While this earlier work is still far from the political theological tradition that will later appropriate Hegel's work, it more consistently points in this disruptive direction. Pippin here identifies the specific point of this present intervention – how does political theology manage the tension between authority and freedom?

Pippin still has a broader trust of institutionally constituted norms than, say the liberation and political theologians referenced in chapters one and two. For him, Hegel demonstrates that 'the nature of normative authority itself, the 'truth' that such authority is socially instituted, tied to claims of reason which are cashed out in terms of social roles embodied in institutions, *institutions the basic structure of which have begun to develop in ways finally consistent with, rather than in underlying tension with, the true nature of normative authority.*<sup>285</sup> These institutions include the rights based modern state, the property based economy, civil society and Protestant religion. While the emergence of civil society and the expansion of access to democratic participation in the state are both potential, partial indications of such a development, it is much less clear that the property based economy and Protestant religion justify such an optimistic outlook.

This tension, between Pippin's critique of Brandom's 'positivity' and his own optimism regarding the development of institutions, is highlighted by subsequent discussions of

---

<sup>284</sup> Pippin, "Brandom's Hegel," 400–01.

<sup>285</sup> Pippin, "Brandom's Hegel," 400. My emphasis.

institutions, the restrictive potential of social norms and the ‘non-metaphysical’ reading of Hegel. This optimism is found in Pinkard’s work as well. For Pinkard, Hegel is concerned with a form of reasoning in which groups of people self-consciously come to understand how and why they know, and then express and defend this method of knowing in moral and political interactions with others.

In one of his most succinct summations, Pippin describes Hegel’s view of self-consciousness as understanding the inherently explicable nature of knowing. That is, in order to know, one must be able to explain what and how one knows.<sup>286</sup> If an act is inexplicable, it is irrational and thus outside the borders of justified behaviour. This explicability is the goal of the development of consciousness traced in the *Phenomenology*. As that work nears its conclusion, self-consciousness moves from morality to religion. For this ‘non-metaphysical’ reading, however, the sublation of morality into religion must be viewed in terms of the subsequent sublation of religion into philosophy. In the course of this movement, self-consciousness comes to understand the divine as humanity’s self-determination. As Pinkard argues, self-consciousness discovers that the divine is the process by which the human community discovers that it has already determined that which has intrinsic value in and for itself. In recognising this self-determining activity, the community engages in ‘reason-giving, reflection, [and] self-undermining attempts at reassurance and the development of new accounts’ whereby the divine shifts from naming an alienated externality to a constitutive dynamic of the community itself.<sup>287</sup> Reason as a social operation is itself the divine. Absolute knowing, then, is the realisation of this self-contained process. It is an account of accounts; it is the understanding that the determining of the grounds of value in human communities is a completely self-determining activity.

Returning to the form of moral reasoning resulting from this reading, it relies upon a complex normative social process of mutual recognition and holding each other to norms. Moral reasoning, as with all forms of reasoning, proceeds within the context of this mutual recognition. Pinkard explains further,

---

<sup>286</sup> Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel on Self-Consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 54–55.

<sup>287</sup> Pinkard, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, 257. He continues, ‘Reason, which develops itself out of the communal practices of reason-giving, reflection, self-undermining attempts at reassurance and the development of new accounts, is the dynamic of divinity, the found and source of all that we can value “in and for itself.”’ For Pinkard, this understanding of divinity is part of a process of secularisation generated from within Christianity itself. ‘The result of the Christian community’s account of itself it must become a secular community that nonetheless tries to understand itself in terms of the religious, metaphysical representations that have made that form of communal practice possible in the first place... for the Christian religious community, such a secularization of itself will appear to it like a new falling away from the central truths that made it the community that it is’ (260).

our own “mindedness” requires a form of “like-mindedness”, and that form of “like-mindedness” is not always purely a matter of propositional, or even theoretical reflection. We always begin with a practical sense of ourselves as in the world, sharing a view-point with others, and adjusting our judgments in light of how we take those others to be “carrying on”, and ultimately, in light of how we take the “idealized community” of others to proceed.<sup>288</sup>

Thus, while Pippin and Pinkard are not identical in their reading of Hegel, they both offer optimistic views of the role of institutions to construct and mediate social norms. There is one key difference. As seen in the above passage, Pinkard specifies that this like-mindedness, or basic shared social norms, is not necessarily found in the form of theoretical reflection.

This optimism comes under criticism in Simon Lumsden’s work on the discursive bias of ‘non-metaphysical’ readings. Lumsden still finds much to praise in ‘non-metaphysical’ interpretations, of which he uses Pippin, Kreines, Brandom and others as examples. Pippin develops the innovative reading of Hartmann, but using the *Phenomenology*, rooted the emphasis on epistemological normativity in the development of self-consciousness in all its existential richness.

The question for Hegel that constitutes the modern problem of philosophy is not an epistemological question concerned with how consciousness could know anything about external realities but the question of how a finite being can find a meaningful place in a world set in constant motion? The issue that concerns him is the possibility of taking our bearings in a world in which no absolute and immutable measure can be envisaged. The approach of authors like Pippin, Pinkard, Brandom and Neuhauser takes Hegel to be concerned with capturing a kind of modern self-understanding, which would enable the modern subject to identify with the self-transforming nature of norms. On this view, Hegel articulates the political, social and historical conditions that would allow modern consciousness to be at home in such a collective self-transforming enterprise.<sup>289</sup>

This strength is also the weakness of the ‘non-metaphysical’ approach. While Hegel’s philosophy provides an understanding of the manner in which communities produce norms, these norms themselves become the criteria by which the development of further norms are judged. The norms are naturalised as the community which emerges from the production of those norms takes on the role of ‘the social’ by which reasoning is evaluated. While this reading of Hegel recognises thought’s freedom and self-grounding, it does so through a process of recognition mediated by social norms and institutions. Recognising this process of mediation is not in itself problematic, but in Lumsden’s account, Pinkard and Brandom in particular, tend to constrain

<sup>288</sup> Pinkard, “Virtues, Morality and Sittlichkeit,” 221.

<sup>289</sup> Lumsden, “The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel,” 58.

thought by demanding discourse conform to these social norms and institutions.<sup>290</sup> Lumsden refers to this constraint as ‘discursive bias’, understood as ‘an over-emphasis on the conceptual rather than the intuitive component of experience.’<sup>291</sup>

For Lumsden, this bias is problematic for two related reasons. First, it over estimates the extent of self-reflection that governs the ‘use’ of norms.

... on this view, it appears that what we say we are determined by, the values that are made transparent through our explicit identification with them, simply are the values that determine our experience. The norms that determine experience and that transform our individual and collective self-understandings are not just made explicit by our discursive practices (that is in our commitments and reflections). Norms so conceived do not define the Hegelian idea of experience. The conditions of experience and the determinations that underlie all our judging activity are more than the norms we assent to.<sup>292</sup>

Secondly, this constrains the forms of thought which relate to the process of reasoning. Lumsden is particularly concerned with the implications for intuition. As Lumsden argues for the importance of the non-conceptual it is necessary to recognise a form of thought that is pre-reflective. Ignoring intuition effectively allows the discursivity of conceptuality to dictate norms.<sup>293</sup>

If Lumsden’s critique is justified, the problem with the ‘non-metaphysical’ reading of Hegel is that it reduces discourse to a conversation between recognitive subjects assenting to shared norms. He focuses in particular on Pinkard and Brandom, arguing that they are guilty of this ‘over-emphasis on *conceptual* rather than the intuitive component of experience.’<sup>294</sup> Lumsden suggests that Pippin presents a less discursively biased form of the ‘non-metaphysical’ reading.<sup>295</sup>

---

<sup>290</sup> Lumsden notes that Pippin also emphasises these discursive practices, but ‘his understanding of this self-correction is much more self-consciously concerned with the limitations of conceptual explanations than Pinkard’s and Brandom’s’ (60).

<sup>291</sup> Lumsden, “The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel,” 59.

<sup>292</sup> Lumsden, “The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel,” 59.

<sup>293</sup> Lumsden, “The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel,” 59–60.

<sup>294</sup> Lumsden, “The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel,” 59. Lumsden’s critique is on the whole accurate, though there is a curious tendency to link Pinkard closely to Brandom. While all three prioritise self-conscious reflection, Pinkard, like Pippin is aware that such reflection does not always take on a theoretical form. To repeat a line quoted above, Pinkard acknowledges that the ‘form of “like-mindedness” is not always purely a matter of propositional, or even theoretical reflection.’ Pinkard, “Virtues, Morality and Sittlichkeit,” 221. The confusing presentation of the relationship between various ‘non-metaphysical’ interpreters is the source of Midtgarden’s critique of Lumsden in “Conflicting and Complementary Conceptions of Discursive Practice in Non-metaphysical Interpretations of Hegel.”

<sup>295</sup> Lumsden’s critique is on the whole accurate, though there is a curious tendency to link Pinkard closely to Brandom rather than Pippin. While all three prioritise self-conscious

This ability to avoid a strong bias is due in part to the emphasis on the retrospective nature of philosophy. Social norms pre-exist actions, but the process of reason giving only occurs after actions. Implicit to this sequence is the possibility of actions which shift norms in the process of reason giving. ‘Experience is for Hegel the process by which our knowledge, self-understanding and thought are transformed. While this transformation of thought and identity has a determinate forward direction, the understanding of that transformation is necessarily retrospective.’<sup>296</sup>

While it is clear that Hegel does privilege the kind of social and institutional mediation detailed above, the underlying logic of Hegel’s system prevents one from limiting the scope of development to this sphere. Lumsden’s insistence on the disruptive potential of intuition in relation to the concept is doubly significant given my broader focus on apocalypticism. First, it recognises that the social and institutional processes entailed in conceptualisation are potentially exclusive. Second, it does not make a process of conceptualisation a necessary condition for offering alternatives. He is correct to conclude that

despite the inability of discursivity to engage with the non-discursive, in any way other than conceptually, that does not mean that the non-discursive has no role in Hegelian Spirit. Hegel’s *Phenomenology* can be understood as a struggle to make our pre-conceptual engagement with the world into something conceptual and this is not a relationship that is straightforwardly won by our discursivity, in which it converts a static pre/non-conceptual domain into concepts leaving nothing behind.<sup>297</sup>

In short, Hegel allows for the influence of the non-conceptual, but this influence is still conceptually graspable. Put another way, the relationship between the discursive and non-discursive can be discursively presented without reducing the non-discursive to discursivity.

Before preceding further, several qualifications are necessary. First, if Pippin reads Hegel in this manner, it is not without reason. Indeed, Lumsden concludes his essay by showing how postmodernism both continues and challenges Hegel’s philosophy. Postmodernism is, in part, a response to the valorisation of social norms found in Hegel.<sup>298</sup> Here, one can read Lumsden’s conclusion as congruent with Kolb’s – Hegel’s philosophy continues to have much to contribute,

---

reflection, Pinkard, like Pippin is aware that such reflection does not always take on a theoretical form. To repeat a line quoted above, Pinkard acknowledges that the ‘form of “like-mindedness” is not always purely a matter of propositional, or even theoretical reflection.’ Pinkard, “Virtues, Morality and Sittlichkeit,” 221.

<sup>296</sup> Lumsden, “The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel,” 60.

<sup>297</sup> Lumsden, “The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel,” 61.

<sup>298</sup> Lumsden, “The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel,” 58.

but these contributions are made in a context no longer dominated by Hegelian philosophy.<sup>299</sup> Lumsden's presentation leads one to conclude that, while discursive bias is present in Brandom and Pinkard, Pippin's work shows the possibility of at least a less discursively biased 'non-metaphysical' reading of Hegel, opening up a potential line of continuity between Hegel and contemporary poststructuralist philosophy. In this reading, Hegel's insights remain pertinent, but must be redeployed in a less Hegelian context.

Thus Pippin criticises Brandom for failing to sufficiently acknowledge the extent to which norms are constructed and revised through a process of crisis and breakdown, followed by Lumsden joining Pippin in critiquing Brandom, but adding that Pinkard and, to some extent Pippin, are guilty of the same bias. Finally, Midtgarden adds to this exchange by arguing against Lumsden that Pippin and Pinkard both surpass Brandom, but privileging Pinkard as the one who develops the position which best balances the role of discursive practices with lived actualities which often present themselves in a less coherent fashion. Pinkard's strength lies in his emphasis on self-reflexive institutions. Such institutions

[make] it possible to account for normative change and development without an appeal to some metaphysical principle underlying historical progression. The emphasis is here on the content of the accounts of normative authority that are developed through such 'reflective institutions'. A sceptical stance toward such accounts is developed through determinate negation by bringing out incoherencies and contradictions in the accounts themselves. Scepticism about an account of normative authority, and hence the very possibility of new accounts overcoming that scepticism, is thus generated by terms set by the account itself.<sup>300</sup>

This survey of tertiary literature serves to highlight three points. First, it recasts the point made in chapter two, namely that the boundaries of the various 'non-metaphysical' interpretations remain contested and unclear.<sup>301</sup> This observation corresponds to the opening reflections on the nature of the 'non-metaphysical' approach, the various critiques levelled against it and its potential usefulness for political theology. Second, there is a blurring between tertiary literature and the development of new forms of Hegelian philosophy. The debates around discursive bias, for example, show little concern about whether Pippin, Pinkard and Brandom are accurate readings of Hegel. Third, even given these contested boundaries, there is

---

<sup>299</sup> Kolb, "What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel," 47.

<sup>300</sup> Midtgarden, "Conflicting and Complementary Conceptions of Discursive Practice in Non-metaphysical Interpretations of Hegel," 4.

<sup>301</sup> In the course of his defence of Pinkard over Pippin and Brandom, Midtgarden reaches a similar conclusion, noting that the single term 'non-metaphysical' suggest much wider agreement than is actually the case (Midtgarden, "Conflicting and Complementary Conceptions of Discursive Practice in Non-metaphysical Interpretations of Hegel," 13.)



an observable tension between freedom and authority manifested in the discursive bias characterising ‘non-metaphysical’ readings. Even if elements of the ‘non-metaphysical’ approach are helpful in refocusing the discussion of Hegel’s philosophy of religion, this discursive bias is an obstacle to appropriating that approach for use in a political theology that aims at social critique.

Returning to Lumsden’s critique, it is necessary to consider the non-conceptual. As he notes, it is indisputable ‘that the way Hegel conceives the hierarchy of freedom’s expression that philosophy is supreme, yet despite its pride of place intuition, religion and art all have an important role in spirit’s aspiration to realise itself and in its self-understanding.’<sup>302</sup> Art and religion contain the drive towards self-conscious freedom, but in a not yet fully conceptualised form. Understood this way, religion becomes the site of a tension within Hegel’s philosophy. On the one hand, it is clear in the *Philosophy of Right* and the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* that religion plays a role in civil society.<sup>303</sup> It provides a means of induction into social norms – a ritualised education into citizenship. It is also clear that, for Hegel, this is religion’s primary function and a necessary feature of developing an ethical society.

Yet, as with de Boer’s reading of the tragic, there is a tension. In Hegel’s exploration of religion, he often challenges the role of religion as understood by the social norms that religion itself is meant to uphold.<sup>304</sup> The ethical community (*Sittlichkeit*) as presented by Pinkard and other ‘non-metaphysical’ Hegelians is a conservative concept. Yet, insofar as Pippin speaks of various modalities of self-legislation and Lumsden points to the disruptive potential of the non-conceptual (or, I prefer, non-fully conceptual), there is room for religion to disrupt the norms of this ethical community. As Lumsden notes, this critique fits in a trajectory beginning with Schelling and Kierkegaard, passing through Heidegger and being further developed in the work of post-structuralism. While not denying this trajectory, recent readings of Hegel in de Boer, Malabou and Žižek, in different ways, see this line of critique differently. Rather than forcing one beyond Hegel and into poststructuralism, it draws out tensions implicit in Hegel’s own work, inviting us to tarry a bit longer with the Hegelian spirit. To begin to understand the issue within

---

<sup>302</sup> Lumsden, “The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel,” 62.

<sup>303</sup> For example, in ‘the character of this estate as ‘substantial’ undergoes modifications through the working of the civil law, in particular the administration of justice, as well as through the working of education, instruction, and religion’ (PR, §203:194/356). See also the longer discussion of the relation between the state and religion (§270)

<sup>304</sup> Especially in the *Early Theological Works*, it is clear that Hegel wants to maintain a place for religion, but his criticisms of contemporary religious belief are severe. See in particular the first essay, ‘The Positivity of Christian Religion’.

the confines of political theology, I now return to Lewis's work applying the 'non-metaphysical' reading to religion.

### 5.2.1 The Subordination of Religion through Discursive Bias

As explained in the previous chapter, Lewis provides a closer analysis of the implications of this approach in his *Religion, Modernity and Politics in Hegel*, explaining how the 'non-metaphysical' approach draws out the significance of Hegel's understanding of religion as representational thought.<sup>305</sup> Having concurred with Pippin and Pinkard's view of the overarching purpose of the *Phenomenology*, he explains how this representational thought functions as a moment in the self-determination of spirit.

Lewis' book is the first to take this method and apply it to Hegel's treatment of religion. In grouping his approach with Pippin and Pinkard, Lewis sets himself in opposition to the majority of commentators who have discussed Hegel's work on religion. In particular he draws a contrast between his own reading and that of Peter Hodgson, translator of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* and a frequent object of Lewis' critique. From Lewis' perspective, previous readings of Hegel's philosophy of religion share a propensity for misunderstanding of Hegel's central task. They evaluate his work as either succeeding or failing in articulating a post-critical Christian metaphysics. In contrast, Lewis uses Pippin and Pinkard to show how Hegel's primary concern remains is the structure of thought and as such marks a departure from what is commonly indicated by the term 'religion'.<sup>306</sup>

As explained in the previous chapter, Lewis applies his reading to all of Hegel's works which deal with Christianity. In the early works, Hegel is primarily concerned with determining whether or not Christianity is able to function as a *Volkreligion*, which he translates as 'civil religion'. This civil religion 'stimulates our action by shaping and instilling ... a common ethos according to which society acts'.<sup>307</sup> Though Hegel initially determines that Christianity cannot function as a civil religion these early works show how Hegel transforms religious concepts such as God. 'Hegel argues that "God" is the religious language for spirit, which he conceives in terms of socially constituted subjectivity that is self-realizing activity rather than a thing or being...'<sup>308</sup>

---

<sup>305</sup> These initial observations on Lewis' work are a modified version of review of *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, forthcoming in the *Journal of Culture, Religion and Theory*.

<sup>306</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 70–73.

<sup>307</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 26.

<sup>308</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 12.

Using the *Early Theological Writings* to help establish Hegel's basic disposition towards religion, Lewis turns to Hegel's broader philosophy and the role of religion within that wider schema. These sections draw on Pippin and Pinkard to describe Hegel's relationship to Kant. If religion is a form of knowing that is one moment in the self-determinations of spirit, then Hegel's discussion of religion must be understood within that context. Here Lewis begins to drive home one of his central themes – Hegel understands religion as representational thinking (*Vorstellung*). His criticism of alternate interpretations often hones in on this key point. For Hegel, religion is the representation of philosophical truth – its form allows access to these truths, but nonetheless is ultimately inadequate to the nature of the content. Herein lies one of the key differences between religion (or any *Vorstellung*) and philosophy. Philosophy's form is suited to its content. Yet this adequacy is also its limitation. In order for philosophy's form to be adequate to its content, it must be abstract. If philosophy's truths are to be actualised, however, they must be available to society. So while philosophy's form matches its content, this form is inadequate to the actualisation of that content. Religion, as *Volkreligion*, may not be adequate in regards to form, but it is able to provide the source of social cohesion necessary to actualise spirit.

In addition, his methodical analysis covers the shift in the treatment of Christianity from that found in the *Phenomenology* as well as the relationship between the logic and the structure of the development of religion. In his *Lectures*, Hegel rejects his earlier evaluation of Christianity and describes how it might function as *Volkreligion*. As Lewis considers the three main sections of the *Lectures* (the concept of religion, determinate religion, and consummate religion), he continuously returns to his central theme – understanding religion as representational thinking, as a moment in the self-determination of spirit. 'The principal object of investigation, God, is none other than the actualization of thinking itself.'<sup>309</sup>

The result of this 'non-metaphysical' reading becomes clearer when Lewis discusses Hegel's understanding of the state, explaining 'that which is actualized in the state is precisely what spirit has before it as an object of consciousness in religion as well as in philosophy.' When Hegel discusses religion as the foundation of the state he is not suggesting that religious ideas be translated into political positions or law. Rather religion, at the level of representation, enables 'citizens to view it as expressive of who they are.'<sup>310</sup> While Hegel privileges Christianity, Lewis argues that this argument may extend to other religions and even Jeffery Stout's understanding of the democratic tradition. Along with Christianity, these may provide the foundation of the state.

---

<sup>309</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 119.

<sup>310</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 235.

When Lewis begins to draw out the contemporary significance of Hegel's philosophy of religion, he turns to Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor, arguing that Hegel allows religion to continue to play a crucial role in forming the character of citizens. That is, religion may provide the ethic necessary for the formation of functioning democratic society. Here is the conservative implication of the 'non-metaphysical' understanding of religion in Hegel. In emphasising this role Lewis risks limiting religion to its ideological function. Indeed, he is clear that for Hegel, the state has the right, if not obligation, to respond to religious groups 'that cultivate disposition inimical to a commitment to the state'.<sup>311</sup> This right highlights Hegel's problematic evaluation of the state, one left unchallenged by Lewis. Thus while Lewis avoids the charges of authoritarianism often levelled at Hegel, in his application of Hegel's philosophy of religion he passes over religion as a source of a critique of the state.

Lewis' acceptance of Hegel's privileging of the state is another form of the discursive bias described above. Religion, in Lewis' reading, plays an indispensable role in the reproduction of norms. There is room for revision to those norms, but access to that space is dependent upon submitting to those same norms. This allows for the self-legislating role of religion in society, but denies it the possibility of contributing to the non-conceptual disruption of norms. Lewis is aware of this issue, raising it in another work in which he discusses the relation between the state and philosophy. After asking if 'genuine freedom require[s] everyone to be able to articulate this freedom in rational terms?'<sup>312</sup>, he concludes that 'the anthropology Hegel articulates in the subjective spirit calls for everyone to be able to reflect self consciously on this freedom.'<sup>313</sup>

### 5.3.0 Freeing Negativity: Kierkegaard's Critique of Hegel's Religion and a Hegelian Retort

This discussion of discursive bias in 'non-metaphysical' readings generally, and Lewis' work on religion specifically, recall one of Hegel's much earlier critics – Kierkegaard. While Kierkegaard frequently critiques Hegel, this section will focus on *Fear and Trembling*. This text is particularly useful for three reasons. First, writing as De Silentio, Kierkegaard refers directly to Hegel, rather than referring to Hegelians or a Hegelian.<sup>314</sup> Second, Abraham's dilemma is one of

---

<sup>311</sup> Lewis, *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*, 243.

<sup>312</sup> Lewis, "Beyond the Totalitarian," 561.

<sup>313</sup> Lewis, "Beyond the Totalitarian," 162.

<sup>314</sup> Jon Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 305. The directness of the criticism does not change Stewart's opinion that the Hegel described is more a result of the Danish Hegelians than an accurate description of Hegel's position.

balancing norms and authority, and offers a critique of Hegel that resembles Lumsden's critique of discursive bias in 'non-metaphysical' readings. Finally, at the end of this section, I will show how the teleological suspension of the ethical connects to themes within apocalyptic political theology.

Before looking at some of these specific themes, it is helpful to bear in mind the broader context of the work. *De Silentio* presents a compelling argument against Hegelian political philosophy's valorisation of the role of the state as the manifestation of the ethical community. This critique continues to be relevant as new readings of Hegel's work on religion and politics are being developed. The relationship is not one-sided, however, as Hegel's emphasis on the role of the community corrects the singular focus on the individual in the analysis of Abraham's story. Recent readings of *Fear and Trembling* have suggested that this social aspect is subterranean rather than absent from the text. I will thus consider parallels between these recent readings and Hegelian philosophy.

This set of concerns involves many moving parts. In recent years, there have been new considerations of Kierkegaard's relationship to Hegel, the general social implications of Kierkegaard's philosophy and the possibility of appropriating Kierkegaard for political theology.<sup>315</sup> In the context of these newer perspectives on Kierkegaard, there are two basic points of consensus. First, the distance between Kierkegaard and Hegel has been reduced by taking into consideration the extent to which Kierkegaard was reacting to Danish Hegelianism rather than Hegel himself. Second, while Kierkegaard does emphasise the role of the individual, a position often drawn in contrast to Hegel, there are nevertheless important social and political aspects to his philosophy.

Complicating the issue further, while Kierkegaard presents Hegel as a philosopher who submits everything to the totalitarian reign of reason, this Hegel is increasingly absent from Hegelian scholarship. Including 'non-metaphysical', transcendental materialist or hermeneutical readings of Hegel, there has been a recent proliferation of perspectives on Hegel which are

---

<sup>315</sup> On Kierkegaard's relationship to Hegel, Jon Stewart's *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*. The social and political implications of Kierkegaard are explored in Merold Westphal, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Reason and Society* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991). And in a volume edited by Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Influence on Social-Political Thought*, vol. 14, *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2011). This second volume connects Kierkegaard to more contemporary thought. Finally, the implications of Kierkegaard's work for political theology is discussed by Jacob Taubes in both *Occidental Eschatology* and the *Political Theology of St Paul*, along with various other essays. Kierkegaard is an important reference point for Ernst Bloch, as seen in his *The Principle of Hope* and *The Spirit of Utopia*, where he discusses Kierkegaard, often in relation to Schelling. The theological implications of Kierkegaard, taken as a philosophical foil to Hegel, are also explored in Min, *Dialectic of Salvation*.

concerned with extracting more open, dynamic views of the Hegelian system. The task of this section is to consider how this more open reading of Hegel might relate to Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*.

### 5.3.1 Abraham and the Beautiful Soul

The two points of consensus mentioned above, that the gap between Kierkegaard and Hegel has narrowed and that Kierkegaard has something to say about the social, are both pertinent to this task. Jon Stewart has shown that, though Hegel is used as a foil throughout the text and is invoked at the outset of each of the three Problemata, these discussions are superficial. Kierkegaard's real targets, in the voice of de Silentio, are the Danish Hegelians, especially Hans Lassen Martensen.<sup>316</sup> Not only is Hegel being used as a stand-in, upon closer reading Stewart finds significant parallels between Hegel's view of morality and de Silentio's discussion of Abraham's trial.<sup>317</sup>

Despite these parallels, there is a real difference between Hegel and de Silentio. The divisive issue is de Silentio's foregrounding of Abraham's isolation. Abraham alone receives God's command. Indeed, it is this isolation and the inability to communicate his task which is at the core of de Silentio's analysis and differentiates his position from Hegel's.<sup>318</sup> The whole of *Fear and Trembling* can be read as a critique of Hegel's discussion of subjective morality in the *Phenomenology*.<sup>319</sup> In the sections on conscience and the beautiful soul, Hegel begins by rejecting a form of morality which sounds similar to de Silentio's. This form of morality is rooted in the idea that 'non-moral consciousness has moral validity, its contingent knowing and willing are assumed to have full weight, and happiness is granted to it as an act of grace. Moral self-consciousness did not accept responsibility for this self-contradictory idea, but shifted it on to a being other than itself' (PS, §635: 385/342). In the ensuing sections he describes the development of a form of conscience which depends on an abstracted notion of pure duty:

---

<sup>316</sup> Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, 306.

<sup>317</sup> Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, 335. Stewart compares Hegel as presented in *Fear and Trembling* and in *The Concept of Irony*. 'In both works Hegel is thought to play a substantial role. However, in *The Concept of Irony* Hegel's primary texts are quoted frequently and long analyses of them are offered. The content of Kierkegaard's discussions of Socrates' daimon, his role vis-à-vis the other Greek schools, his conception of morality, and his use of irony are largely the same as those found in Hegel's discussions. By contrast, in *Fear and Trembling* Hegel is merely named at the beginning of each of the Problemata in a single sentence. There are no quotations from his primary texts and no analyses' (335).

<sup>318</sup> Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, 312–13.

<sup>319</sup> Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, 314–15.

But this abstraction [of pure duty] has attained in its reality the significance of the self-conscious "I". The self-certain Spirit rests, *qua* conscience, within itself, and its *real* universality or its duty lies in its pure *conviction* of duty. This pure conviction is, as such, as empty as pure *duty*, is pure in the sense that there is nothing in it, no specific content that is a duty. But action is called for, something must be *determined* by the individual, and the self-certain Spirit in which the in-itself has attained the significance of the self-conscious "I", knows that it has this determination and content in the immediate *certainty* of itself... It determines from *its own self*... Everything that in previous forms of experience presented itself as good or bad, as law and right, is something *other* than the immediate certainty of self... (PS, §643: 390/346-347).

Hegel is arguing that the content of the duty has become subjectively determined, allowing individual caprice to provide the content. The consequences of this bring us to Abraham's situation.

Since morality lies in the consciousness of having fulfilled one's duty, this [conviction of moral obligatoriness] will not be lacking when the action is called cowardice any more than what it is called courage... [he] knows what he does to be a duty, and since he knows this, and the conviction of duty is the very essence of moral obligation, he is thus recognized and acknowledged by others (PS, §644: 392/348).

Indeed, de Silentio himself makes this ambivalence one of the central paradoxes of the essay – how can one affirm Abraham's act when it appears no different than a willingness to murder his son?<sup>320</sup> The section transitions when Hegel begins to discuss language as 'self-consciousness existing *for others*', striking a stark contrast between Hegel's emerging conception of morality and de Silentio's description of the religious act which necessitates silence as it transgresses that very morality (PS, §652: 395/351).

This brings into relief the contrasting aspects of Hegel and de Silentio's vision of morality. Hegel is critical of forms of moral reasoning which rely upon individual, subjective consciousness, pushing instead towards situating morality within the discourse of the community. De Silentio presents Abraham's act as superseding that morality in a subjective, isolated act, the absurdity of which prevents him from even expressing the anxiety he experiences. To adopt the language of the previous section, De Silentio presents the divine command as a non-conceptual disruption of social norms.

### 5.3.2 *Fear and Trembling* and the Critique of Discursive Bias

---

<sup>320</sup> 'Is it because Abraham has gained a prescriptive right to be a great man, so that what he does is great and when another man does the same thing it is a sin, an atrocious sin? In that case, I do not wish to participate in such empty praise' (FT, 30).

To understand the significance of this for the ‘non-metaphysical’ reading, it is helpful to remember an earlier quote taken from Pinkard’s understanding of reasoning ‘a complex *normative social* process of mutual *recognition* and mutual holding each other to norms’.<sup>321</sup> Moral reasoning, as with all forms of reasoning, proceeds within the context of this mutual recognition. Pinkard explains further,

our own “mindedness” requires a form of “like-mindedness”, and that form of “like-mindedness” is not always purely a matter of propositional, or even theoretical reflection. We always begin with a practical sense of ourselves as *in* the world, *sharing* a view-point with others, and adjusting our judgments in light of how we take those others to be “carrying on”, and ultimately, in light of how we take the “idealized community” of others to proceed.<sup>322</sup>

On the one hand, this goes some way to address concerns raised by Kierkegaard. It is a process of thinking with existence and acknowledges the significance of non-propositional, and hence non-abstract, positions. On the other hand, it only intensifies the notion that Hegel is concerned with the submission of the singular individual to the ethical norms of the community. This calls to mind the discussion of discursive bias in general and Lewis’ subordination of religion to the state.

There is a further wrinkle in applying Kierkegaardian criticism to the ‘non-metaphysical’ reading of Hegel. As was clear in Lewis’ application of that reading to the philosophy of religion, if the ‘non-metaphysical’ Hegelians are right, then Hegel’s discussion of God is not a discussion of God as understood by pre-Kantian metaphysics, but absolute spirit as embodied in the self-determined reasoning of communities. In this reading, does Kierkegaard have anything to say to Hegel on the topic of religion? There are two reasons to answer in the negative. First, Abraham’s act is justified through an appeal to God, and in de Silentio’s text it is evident that this God is not metaphorical. If the religious act is identified through the teleological suspension of the ethical in response to God’s command, it initially appears difficult to conceive of something else which might issue a similar command. Second, in the ‘non-metaphysical’ reading, religion plays a role in the formation of *Sittlichkeit*, effectively subsuming religion to morality. Thus, as mentioned above, Lewis’ analysis ends with the affirmation of Taylor and MacIntyre. This denies religion its disruptive function as presented by Kierkegaard. In a sense, this is a concession – religion is able

---

<sup>321</sup> Pinkard, “Virtues, Morality and Sittlichkeit,” 220.

<sup>322</sup> Pinkard, “Virtues, Morality and Sittlichkeit,” 221.



to maintain a voice and role in contemporary society, but it concedes the irrationality associated with believing God has commanded someone to sacrifice his son.

Yet, this view of religion is not necessitated by the ‘non-metaphysical’ reading. There is nothing in Pippin’s *Hegel’s Idealism*, for example, which requires adopting the narrower reading of Hegel’s philosophy of religion offered by Lewis. Recall the passage from Pippin’s reading of Brandom, in which he claims that it is possible for the process of self-generating and self-legislating social norms to fail.<sup>323</sup> Alternatively, consider Lumsden’s argument for the significance of the non-conceptual.<sup>324</sup> So it might be possible to extend the ‘non-metaphysical’ reading to include a more disruptive form of religion. In this sense de Silentio’s elaboration of religious acts, the teleological suspension of the ethical and the individual’s ability to transgress the universal all continue to be important critiques of Hegel’s view of morality, religion and the state.

If Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms provide this important critique of a limitation within Hegel’s philosophy, does the Hegelian tradition have anything to offer de Silentio? The ‘non-metaphysical’ emphasises the social nature of ethical reasoning, so this social focus seems a natural place to start. After all, de Silentio returns several times to Hegel’s tendency to privilege the universal over the particular. In elevating the singular individual above the universal, into direct relationship with the Absolute (understood as transcending that universal), is there any room for the social or communal?

The ability to detect this social element is dependent on determining the significance of *Fear and Trembling*. On the surface, the essay is rife with contradictions. Assuming that Kierkegaard has in mind a purpose to these contradictions, there are at least two options. Either de Silentio is simply fodder, there to show the impossibility of coherently thinking of Abraham as an exemplar of faith, or he is performing a literary act which plays into Kierkegaard’s larger philosophy.<sup>325</sup>

Stephen Mulhall, argues the latter in his reading of the text as ironic. De Silentio forces the reader to experience the contradictions of various readings of the story of Abraham and Isaac. If Mulhall is correct in reading the reference to Tarquin as an indication of allegorical or figurative intention of Johannes de Silentio, then *Fear and Trembling* is arguing that literal readings of the story lead to obliviousness.<sup>326</sup> Mulhall is pushing on one of the central tensions in the text

---

<sup>323</sup> Pippin, “Brandom’s Hegel,” 385–86.

<sup>324</sup> Lumsden, “The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel,” 62.

<sup>325</sup> For examples of this first view, along with a strong refutation, see Daniel Watts, “Dilemmatic Deliberations In Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*,” *Faith and Philosophy* 28, no. 2 (2011): 174–189.

<sup>326</sup> Stephen Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality: Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 371.

– de Silentio’s insistence on the significance of Abraham’s silence and the significance he grants the refusal or inability to speak. This inconsistency forces home the point that ‘the full depth of its distinctiveness and difference from other texts, emerges only when we move from the level of literal meaning to that of the figurative.’<sup>327</sup> If one’s reading remains trapped at the level of the literal *Fear and Trembling* becomes incoherent. Moving to a figurative reading draws out the performative element of the text.

This point is made more directly by Daniel Watts, who argues that the purpose of the text is to induct us into a method of dilemmatic deliberation.

*Fear and Trembling* is not solely constituted by the attempt to depict Abraham’s dilemma, however. For its author evidently thinks that we (for some “we”) face a real dilemma when we reflect on this story, and on its implications for our understanding of faith. Indeed... de Silentio’s dialectical lyric is plausibly characterized as a whole by the aim to articulate a real dilemma about Abraham, and in such a way as to elicit its proper recognition as such.<sup>328</sup>

Having been inducted into his dilemmatic deliberation through the reading of the text, one is again confronted with the question of Abraham’s witness. In one sense is he an exemplar of the religious act? How can the man willing to his murder his son be the father of faith? In Mulhall’s reading, Abraham is the father of the faith in the most direct sense. The faith of Israel is a result of his progeny.<sup>329</sup> This reading drives home the specific nature of the subjectivity manifested by Abraham’s act. He is not the father of the faith in the moment in which he raises the knife to kill Isaac. In this moment, he will have been the father of the faith, but also could not have been the father of faith.

This emphasis reiterates the need for a reconsideration of the surface reading of the text. In that reading, Johannes de Silento argues that the individual rises *above* the universal, rather than *to* the universal, as in Hegel (FT, 53-67).<sup>330</sup> While acknowledging that Abraham does not establish an ethical norm in his *specific* act (as in the Kantian sense of the categorical imperative – it is not the case that everyone should all go to their sons and hope that God provides an alternative), he does establish an ethic in general. Faith becomes the embracing of the anxiety produced by a willingness to subvert or transgress the norms of society in fidelity to truth known in the direct relation to the absolute. This reading thus returns to the Hegelian structure which

<sup>327</sup> Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality*, 381.

<sup>328</sup> Watts, “Dilemmatic Deliberations In Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*,” 182.

<sup>329</sup> Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality*, 376.

<sup>330</sup> ‘... after being subordinate as the single individual to the universal, now by means of the universal becomes the single individual who as the single individual is superior, that the single individual as the single individual stands in an absolute relation to the absolute’ (56).

Johannes de Silentio is so adamantly rejecting. Abraham in his act embodies the truth of the singular, in anticipation of the singular truth which Christ represents even more fully and eventually becomes constitutive of the community of the Holy Spirit.<sup>331</sup>

While the literal reading focuses on the subjective decision, a more figurative approach forces us beyond the text to consider how it is that Abraham becomes faithful. The text clearly poses this dilemma yet, as Watts points out, leaves it unresolved.<sup>332</sup> Perhaps with the silence indicated by the author's name, the reader is left with the same question, now disabused of easy and clichéd readings. It is impossible to avoid participating in the dilemma of faith: believers must experience the paradox faced by Abraham. This forces the community of believers to experience the paradox of faith (FT, 66).<sup>333</sup> The resolution of the paradox does not render the act of faith any less absurd. The goal of the text is not to domesticate this absurdity, but to force the reader to undergo Watts' 'dilemmatic reasoning'.

---

<sup>331</sup> 'What emerges is a prophetic dimension of significance in Abraham's words of which he is oblivious. When he states that 'God will provide himself a lamb for the burnt offering, my son,' what he predicts turns out to be literally false, since God provides a ram rather than a lamb for the sacrifice on Mount Moriah; but it remains prophetically true, since God later provides the Lamb of God, his only Son in whom he is well pleased, for the sacrifice on Golgotha. In short, Abraham's ordeal prefigures the Atonement. – the Incarnation, Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ, God's sacrifice of himself to overcome human sinfulness. God's substitution of his own Son for human offspring, so that the sins of the fathers are no longer visited upon the sons; and Isaac's unquestioning submission to his father's will (his carrying of the wood of his own immolation to the place of sacrifice) prefigures Christ's submission to his own Father' Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality*, 380. Mulhall does not, however, make the leap to a Hegelian understanding of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>332</sup> As Watts says, 'One relatively straightforward gloss on the significance of de Silentio's name is that he remains silent about how his central dilemma is to be resolved,' "Dilemmatic Deliberations In Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling," 187.

<sup>333</sup> For Watts, this dilemmatic reasoning problematizes all attempts to dabble in theology. "These features of the argument strategy of *Fear and Trembling* begin to indicate that its manifest aim is the broadly Socratic one of inducing in its addressees a state of aporia about its central concept, by articulating a particular dilemma regarding that concept. If so, and to the extent that they are compelling, de Silentio's dilemmatic deliberations present a problem to all those who regard themselves as in a position to apply the concept of religious faith, not just to those who already venerate Abraham, or the hyper-orthodox, or even those who regard themselves as religious. Attending to their dilemmatic form thus allows us to see how these deliberations present an ongoing challenge to philosophers of religion and professed believers, including those who would prefer to interpret religious faith in a way that does not imply anything so unpalatable as the possibility of a teleological suspension of the ethical, or an absolute duty to God, or justified silence in the face of the demands of ethical disclosure; for the overall upshot of de Silentio's manifest argument is that we must either somehow come to terms with these paradoxical consequences of taking seriously the Biblical Abraham, or else acknowledge that we have no real use for the concept of religious faith' Watts, "Dilemmatic Deliberations In Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling," 17.

Taken together, Mulhall and Watts force the reader of *Fear and Trembling* to experience Abraham's trial in order to confront the absurd nature of faith and recognise the possibility of that faith requiring us to violate the ethical norms of society. The text draws the reader into Abraham's dilemmatic reasoning in order to confront the contemporary dilemma – whether or not to affirm Abraham as an exemplar of the faith. Finally, Abraham's act only becomes an act of faith through its recognition by the resulting community of Israel.

This last point draws out the social dimension downplayed in the actual text. De Silentio emphasises that 'the single individual asserts himself in his singularity before the universal' (FT, 54), it is the lone individual who teleologically suspends the ethical (FT, 66) and it is only as individual that one 'stands in absolute relation to the absolute' (FT, 81). Yet for all the discussion of the inability of discussing Abraham's act, *de Silentio is in fact discussing Abraham's act*. The act of writing *Fear and Trembling* ironically subverts this asserted isolation by grounding the story in the life of the community of faith.

Drawing out this social dimension of the text does not necessarily undercut the significance of de Silentio's critique of Hegel. It simply resituates the significance of Abraham's act. Its nature as a religious act, rather than child abuse, can only be determined by the community which will, in the future, adjudicate Abraham's decision.<sup>334</sup> Recognising this retroactivity is the beginning to finding a middle ground between the 'non-metaphysical' reading of Hegel and de Silentio's description of Abraham. The knight of faith in *Fear and Trembling* is journeying to Moriah in obedience to God and the future community that God has promised. He violates ethical norms in the name of that future community and that future community is the one who decides that Abraham is indeed a knight of faith. Further, from a Hegelian perspective, it is the community, not God that validates Abraham's perspective. This reconciliation is itself the divine, rather than the divine being the external figure with whom Abraham is reconciled.<sup>335</sup>

Placing Abraham's act in its social context is helpful in allowing us to specify precisely what separates Hegel and de Silentio. The distinction lies in the ability to conceive of religious acts as those that transgress a set of ethical norms, due to a direct relation to the absolute unmediated by the universal. As de Silentio writes '[f]aith is namely this paradox that the single

---

<sup>334</sup> Expanding beyond de Silentio to Kierkegaard more generally, allows us to present his relationship to Hegel more dialectically. As Anselm Min succinctly surmises: 'If Kierkegaard's demand is that we think in relation to existence, this corrects Hegel's tendency to sometimes get lost in abstraction. Yet the Hegelian response is to insist that we think in relation to social existence', *Dialectic of Salvation*, 54.

<sup>335</sup> As Harris puts it, Kierkegaard's conclusion 'is still a cheat, because in the end "the ethical" is reinstated, and the story concludes in reconciliation with God' Harris, *Hegel's Ladder II*, 523.

individual is higher than the universal—yet, please note, in such a way that the movement repeats itself, so that after having been in the universal he as the single individual isolates himself as higher than the universal’ (FT, 55). What de Silentio fails to do is recognise the possibility of this founding a new understanding of the universal – one which is capable of recognising these transgressive acts as in some sense good and necessary.

Mark Dooley comes close to arriving at the same conclusion in his analysis of the teleological suspension of the ethical. The problem is not submission to ethical norms as such, but submitting to a particular set of insufficient ethical norms.

Kierkegaard rejects the Hegelian assumption that to be ethical and responsible demands merely fulfilling one’s civic obligations as prescribed by the established order or the state; that is, in privileging the God-man as unconditioned ethical goal and criterion, Kierkegaard endeavors to resist the state’s autodeification – which, he believes, Hegelianism propagates at the expense of singularity and responsibility.<sup>336</sup>

Responsibility, in Dooley’s estimation, is an awareness of the ultimate insufficiency of any set of ethical norms. Abraham’s fidelity to the divine command is simultaneously a relativizing of all ethical systems. Consequently, ‘in matters of ethical concern we can never have certainty, only fear and trembling, trial and error.’<sup>337</sup>

Dooley’s understanding of *Fear and Trembling* returns the discussion to the ‘non-metaphysical’ Hegel. In that reading, this suspicion is precisely what is engendered by the method expounded in the *Phenomenology*. It is concerned with understanding how communities share modes of reasoning by which they explain knowledge and actions to one another. Hegel’s philosophy is about tracing the failure of previous shared modes of reasoning until he arrives at an understanding that is finally sufficient. For the ‘non-metaphysical’ approach, this sufficient mode of reasoning is one which recognises the inevitable failure of all modes of reasoning. Whether through scientific discoveries, historical events or ethical dilemmas, eventually shared forms of reasoning break down. In the aftermath of that failure, the dusk at which the owl of Minerva takes flight, philosophy constructs a new self-understanding. It should engender suspicion toward ‘any normative framework that claims to know exactly what the conditions are for the realization of an absolutely good life.’<sup>338</sup>

Yet, stepping back from the text, it is clear that the story of Abraham does precisely that – the ultimate good is unquestioning obedience to divine will. True, it is a rejection of the

---

<sup>336</sup> Mark Dooley, *The Politics of Exodus: Soren Kierkegaard’s Ethics of Responsibility*, 1st ed, no. 20 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 25.

<sup>337</sup> Dooley, *The Politics of Exodus*, 42.

<sup>338</sup> Dooley, *The Politics of Exodus*, 42.

ultimacy of certain norms, but ignores the fact that the story of Abraham occurs in a canonical context which defines this act as essential to the foundation of Israel, itself an anticipation of God's own sacrifice of his son. Mulhall acknowledges this issue and argues that Abraham's act must be viewed in terms of the later development of Christianity. 'There can be no teleological suspension of the ethical in the sense that ethical requirements might ever be made null and void; from a Christian perspective, any voice in our heads that demanded such a thing would thereby declare itself to be that of a devil rather than of God.'<sup>339</sup> For Mulhall, *Fear and Trembling* is a figurative exploration of the demand to surrender the security of belonging to the current social order through an act of total faith which transcends current beliefs.<sup>340</sup> Dooley is in agreement on this point, reading the text as an argument 'for faith as a way of teleologically suspending one's absolute attachment to the established order... faith is not a wild and irrational response to a divine ordinance, but rather a passionate way of taking cognizance of what it means to be a responsible and ethical self in one's daily life.'<sup>341</sup>

#### 5.4.0 Fear and Trembling Before the Openness of the Future

While both Mulhall and Dooley helpfully offer readings which extract subterranean social dimensions from the text, the resulting reading seems to come close to domesticating Abraham's struggle. Presenting the text as focused on the significance for one's daily life (Dooley) or ruling out the possibility of a command that truly transgresses ethical norms (Mulhall) begins to sound like the pastor de Silentio mocks at the outset of *Fear and Trembling*.<sup>342</sup>

Yet, more radical implications of the text remain latent in these readings. Abraham's anxiety results from the uncertainty of the future – will God really let me sacrifice my son? What about the nation that he has promised? Abraham is confronted with the openness of the future. His ability to obey God's absurd command is rooted in the conviction that God will be faithful to his promise. The 'non-metaphysical' reading makes Abraham's dilemma more distant by rejecting any notion of a transcendent, metaphysical conception of God. As noted above, it is difficult to read Abraham's story and replace God with something else capable of placing such a demand. Yet it is just this demand that is the focus of Slavoj Žižek, Alain Badiou and other political philosophers concerned with the potential of future political transformation. These

---

<sup>339</sup> Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality*, 383.

<sup>340</sup> Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality*, 49.

<sup>341</sup> Dooley, *The Politics of Exodus*, 57.

<sup>342</sup> Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality*, 28–29.

philosophies preserve the sense of fear and trembling before the openness of the future, but the demand placed is not by a transcendent God, but the potentiality of the future itself.

Žižek explains this demand of the future in his ironic reversal of Hegel and Kierkegaard's philosophies. One of the frequent distinctions drawn between Hegel and Kierkegaard is that Hegel offers a closed philosophical system and Kierkegaard's philosophy remains open. Yet, while Kierkegaard, in the guise of *de Silentio*, offers an open philosophy, it is open only to the transcendent which may demand the violation of ethical norms. Though Hegel initially affirms those norms, the 'non-metaphysical' reading shows an underlying dynamism to Hegel's philosophical method, even if that dynamism does not always manifest in his application of the method. In understanding the divine as a 'constitutive dynamic of the community itself',<sup>343</sup> the 'non-metaphysical' approach affirms the self-determination of communities, thereby opening up social norms to change. If Kierkegaard's critique pushes the 'non-metaphysical' reading further, this self-determination can take on a more radical form of transformation. The disruptive nature of religious acts can reveal the inadequacies and contingency of those norms, breaking open the possibility for new communities to emerge.

While he does not refer to *Fear and Trembling*, Žižek makes this point in his discussion of Kierkegaard as a Hegelian. He questions Kierkegaard's presentation of his relationship to Hegel, asking if one should accept the view that 'for Hegel, everything has already happened (and thought is, in its basic dimension, a recollection of what has happened); while of Kierkegaard, history is open toward the future?'<sup>344</sup> For Žižek, this view is founded on a misunderstanding of the nature of Hegelian dialectics and should be rejected. Hegel's philosophy aims

not to adopt toward the present the "point of view of finality," viewing it as if it were already past, but, precisely, to *reintroduce the openness of the future into the past, to grasp that – which-was in its process of becoming*, to see the contingent process which generated existing necessity... In contrast to the idea that every possibility strives fully to actualize itself, we should conceive of "progress" as a move of *restoring the dimension of potentiality to mere actuality*, or unearthing, at the very heart of actuality, a secret striving towards potentiality.<sup>345</sup>

From a Žižekian, and I would argue Hegelian perspective, *Fear and Trembling* enacts this reintroduction. Abraham's journey and experience are a process of becoming. Retroactively, one is able to see Abraham's dilemma as a moment of potentiality. In that moment, Abraham may murder his son. He may discover that the God he is following is a demon. Israel may never be.

---

<sup>343</sup> Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, 257.

<sup>344</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (The MIT Press, 2006), 78.

<sup>345</sup> Žižek, *The Parallax View*, 78.

He could refuse. All of these possibilities drive home the significance of Abraham's decision. De Silentio restores the potentiality to actuality and, in doing so, invites the discovery of new potentialities in the actuality of contemporary reality.

The ability to teleologically suspend the ethical, understood as the violation of the social order which presents itself as universal, is to realise the contingent nature of what is. It all could be otherwise. It is that realisation that is essential to grasping the nature of freedom. Here is where Hegel and de Silentio parts ways. De Silentio criticises Hegel, again rightfully, for his affirmation of the state. Yet in conceiving of the religious act as that which transgresses, or at least can possibly transgress, the social and ethical norms of society, he presents this transgression as demanded by the transcendent, all knowing God of Israel. Kierkegaard 'admits the radical openness and contingency of the entire field of reality, which is why the closed Whole can appear only as a radical Beyond, in the guise of a totally transcendent God'.<sup>346</sup> God is totally beyond, and the importance of Abraham's obedience stems from the fact that this obedient relationship to the divine is the only form of knowledge of God available to humanity. In Hegel's immanentisation of this relationship, in locating the divine as a moment in communal life, this assurance is removed.<sup>347</sup> The absolute to which the knight of faith relates is no longer the God of Israel, but the potential community that is 'Israel' itself.<sup>348</sup>

Kierkegaard's writings continue to provide an important critique of Hegelian thought. Even amongst the 'non-metaphysical' Hegelians, those most likely to amputate any limb of the Hegelian corpus which hints at conservative and closed tendencies, wind up consigning religion to precisely the role which Kierkegaard finds objectionable. While the proliferation of new readings of Hegel answer many of Kierkegaard's other critiques, at this point de Silentio's essay remains salient. His telling of Abraham's story demands that religion embrace its nature as 'epistemological rupture, and "offense" and "absolute paradox" demanding the "crucifixion of the understanding."<sup>349</sup>

### 5.5.0 Conclusion

---

<sup>346</sup> Žižek, *The Parallax View*, 79.

<sup>347</sup> This parallels the point made above (n.37). While it is important to be cautious when discussing violating ethical norms, within this new Hegelianism there is still room for the absolute to place such a demand.

<sup>348</sup> Malabou puts this especially well in her rejection of the lingering messianism found in contemporary philosophy: 'with no irruptive transcendence, there is no open door to the pure event. Nor any messianism. Nothing happens except self-transformation... this is no outside, nor is there any immobility. The plasticity of unavoidable transformation. The lifeline of a radical transformation without exocitism.' Malabou, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*, 44.

<sup>349</sup> Min, *Dialectic of Salvation*, 26.



In the course of this chapter, I have examined the question of the openness of Hegel's philosophy, how this debate manifests itself in the discussion of discursive bias present in 'non-metaphysical' readings of Hegel and how the application of 'non-metaphysical' readings to Hegel's philosophy of religion perpetuates that bias. Finally, I considered how these debates parallel earlier Kierkegaardian critiques of Hegel. Having determined that there is room for something like the teleological suspension of the ethical in Hegel, I then concluded that such an operation would require a greater emphasis on the communal.

### 6.0.0 Jacob Taubes: The Hegelian Groundwork of Apocalyptic Political Theology

In chapter four I explored Hegel's understanding of religion as representation (*Vorstellung*). Examining the role of representations in his philosophy, I concluded that representations are necessary for the functioning of philosophy. I cited Hegel's position, left latent in his major philosophical works, that the relationship between concept and representation works in both directions. Representations provide the material used by self-consciousness in order to grasp its being as both in-itself and for-itself. The concept is a moment of abstraction. The whole process of the *Phenomenology* is one of abstraction, the final moments involve the abstraction from the revealed religion into philosophy, the final movements of Spirit before reaching absolute knowing. Hegel's review of Göschel specifies that, having performed this abstraction, it is appropriate to return to those representations. In Hegel's explanation, one can then be less cautious with the representations. I am arguing that Hegel does not go far enough. Not only should conceptual thought return to religious representations, it should transform those representations in order that they might more fully point to the truth of philosophy.

In the previous chapter I discussed how Thomas Lewis's 'non-metaphysical' reading emphasises this representational nature of religion, the on-going relevance of representations even after reaching absolute knowing and the political implications of this understanding. On this last point, I suggested that, while Lewis has much of value to say about the political significance of religion, he ultimately curtails religion's ability to speak against the state. While acknowledging that this restriction is found in Hegel as well, I argued that there are resources for a more antagonistic political theology. Though religion may place a role in the promotion of social order, this role does not exhaust the function of religion.

It is this desire for a more critical political theology which brings me to apocalypticism. As explained in chapter two, apocalypse is a particularly political form of religious thought, most commonly emerging from the most marginalised communities of a given society. It is a tradition steeped in the protest of the fundamental institutions of society. In this chapter and the next, I will argue that, just as Hegel uses the Trinity and Incarnation to represent the logical stages in the development of an ethical community, apocalypticism can represent fundamental challenges to social and political structures.

The present chapter argues that Jacob Taubes offers such a transformation of religious representations. While it would be misleading to describe Taubes as a Hegelian, his philosophy is deeply indebted to Hegel. In his discussions of Hegel's philosophy, he anticipates trends in contemporary readings of Hegel in the process of developing an apocalyptic political theology.

The primary focus will thus be to explore the basics of the Hegelian aspects of Taubes's philosophy (6.1) and compare this reading to the contemporary readings already discussed (6.2). Taubes's contribution to the development of a Hegelian apocalyptic political theology is supplemented by Ernst Bloch. As explained in chapter two, Bloch offers a parallel political theological genealogy (2.2.2). As I will show in this chapter, this parallel extends to the transformation of apocalyptic thought.<sup>350</sup> Together, Taubes and Bloch establish the basis for the following chapter, which develops a Hegelian apocalyptic political theology by joining their understanding of apocalypse with Catherine Malabou's 'Hegelian plasticity'.

### 6.1.0 Introduction to Taubes and the Hegel of Political Theology

Jacob Taubes was a German philosopher and scholar of religion. He published one monograph *Occidental Eschatology* in 1947 as well as a number of articles and essays, many of which are collected in the volume *From Cult to Culture*. He is perhaps most well-known for his posthumously published series of lectures, *The Political Theology of Saint Paul*. As will be explored later in this chapter, Taubes belongs to a generation of Jewish philosophers who reconfigured the concept of messianism in the face of growing Jewish accommodation to German culture and the looming Nazi threat. In many ways, these two themes are his fundamental concerns. First, he aims to recover something repressed within his religious tradition, a radicalism lost as religion became a cultural form like any other. Second, he responds to the emergence of National Socialism with dismay. As he says in a 1952 letter to Armin Mohler, he cannot comprehend 'that both C.S. [Carl Schmitt] and M.H. [Martin Heidegger] welcomed the National Socialist "revolution" and went along with it and it remains a problem for me that I cannot just dismiss by using catchwords such as vile, swinish... What was so "seductive" about National Socialism?' (CS, 19-20).<sup>351</sup> This dismay is an important motivation in Taubes's desire to reignite an alternative, apocalyptic passion.

---

<sup>350</sup> For a systematic overview of Bloch see Wayne Hudson, *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch* (London: Macmillan, 1982). Hudson's study does not treat religious issues with as much depth as one might expect given the nature of Bloch's philosophy. For these issues see Roland Boer's work, especially *Criticism of Heaven: On Marxism and Theology* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009), 1–55; *Political Myth*.

<sup>351</sup> Mohler was a right-wing thinker with whom Taubes corresponded. The letter was circulated amongst Mohler's acquaintances and eventually read by Schmitt, who seconded Taubes's appraisal of theologians. 'Taubes is right: today everything is theology, with the exception of what theologians talk about...' (CS, 26). The circulation of the letter ultimately led to a meeting between Taubes, the left-wing Jew, and Schmitt, the Catholic defender of National Socialism.

As noted in the preface to the English edition of *From Cult to Culture*, Taubes's work is complicated by his tendency to address specific points in contemporaneous, on-going debates. While *Occidental Eschatology* is a monograph, his other major works are compilations. *The Political Theology of Paul* is taken from transcripts from a series of lectures Taubes gave in Heidelberg in 1987, *From Cult to Culture* consists of essays published in journals and collections and *To Carl Schmitt* contains letters detailing the relationship between Taubes and Schmitt. Despite the occasional nature of this work, clear themes emerge. The following sections will draw out these themes, beginning with an examination of Taubes's understanding of Hegel (6.1.1). This discussion will draw on the overview provided in the first chapter. While Taubes is not unique in connecting Hegel, Gnosticism and apocalypticism, I will argue that he makes significant progress in thinking about this theological tradition as a series of representations. As such, he offers a 20<sup>th</sup> century Hegelian reading of the relationship between religion, philosophy and politics. This series of relationships is the basis of his distinctive version of political theology (6.1.2). Taubes often defined his political theology in opposition to Schmitt, a strategy that I follow. In exploring his political theology, I will further illuminate his underlying Hegelian tendencies. Taubes is not straightforwardly Hegelian, however, and the section concludes with considerations of his objections. Some of his criticisms, such as those taken from Marx, speak to a Hegel no longer prevalent in contemporary readings. Others articulate concerns with what I earlier referred to as discursive bias. Taubes thus helps establish links between Hegel and apocalyptic thought while also assisting in the formulation of an internal critique that reads Hegel's method against some of Hegel's conclusions.

These first two sub-sections expose a tension in Taubes's political theology. On the one hand, he speaks of the annihilation of the world 'as it is'. On the other hand, he seeks to employ a theological tradition, translated into immanent and material concepts, in order to defend and further the modern project. Taubes critiques modernity for modernity's sake. Yet this affection for modernity sometimes contradicts his disinvestment from a world he wishes to see destroyed. In the third section (6.1.3), I argue that Hegel provides the grounds for understanding Taubes's call for destruction, providing an understanding of the relationship between nature and freedom that rejects calls to emphasise eschatology or messianism over apocalypticism. Finally, to conclude this initial section, I will trace some parallels between Taubes and Ernst Bloch's political theology. Bloch's work is similarly occasional and even more wide ranging than Taubes's. Focusing exclusively on the ways in which Bloch connects Hegel and apocalypse helps

---

The details of this exchange are found in Jacob Taubes, *To Carl Schmitt: Letters and Reflections*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

heighten the political significance of Taubes's conclusions. Bloch is slightly more well-known and establishing this connection between Bloch and Taubes will help integrate Taubes into a political theological discourse in which he is often overlooked.

### 6.1.1 Taubes on Hegel's philosophical project

As noted in chapter 2, Taubes connects Hegel to Joachim de Fiore. In his reading, Hegelian philosophy is the modern expression of Gnostic and apocalyptic theological traditions. He puts this more strongly than either O'Regan or Magee, claiming that '[a]pocalypticism and Gnosis form the basis of Hegel's logic, which is often discussed but seldom understood. The connection between apocalyptic ontology and Hegelian logic is neither artificial nor an afterthought' (OE, 36). Taubes relies only on Bauer's work to justify this claim, but Magee and O'Regan have subsequently validated a weaker form of this thesis.<sup>352</sup> Using the language explored in the previous chapter, Taubes approach could be described as a philosophical recognition of the representational nature of key symbols of these theological traditions. In arguing for their contemporaneity, Taubes effectively performs a return to representation from the perspective of Absolute Knowing, redeploying those symbols in order to more effectively represent their truths.

In the introductory remarks to the German edition of a collection of Taube's essays, Assman, Assman and Hartwich places Taubes in a distinct line of 20<sup>th</sup> century German cultural criticism, fostered by the Jewish tradition, drawing on the works of Kant, Hegel and Marx and including Benjamin, Marcuse, Adorno and Steiner. Although Bloch is not mentioned his work also falls into this category. What unites these figures is the development of a form of Jewish thought that is radical, secular and Messianic.<sup>353</sup> What distinguished Taubes is that he does not

---

<sup>352</sup> Ferdinand Christian Bauer, *Die christliche Gnosis oder die christliche Religionsphilosophie* (Tübingen, 1835); Glenn Alexander Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); and Cyril O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994). While it is the case that he appeals solely to Bauer in *Occidental Eschatology*, in other writings he cites Herbet Grundman, Hans Jonas and Eric Voeglin. See in particular the essays contained in Jacob Taubes, *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010). Magee and O'Regan trace a profound influence, but stop short of claiming that it is the basis of Hegel's logic.

<sup>353</sup> Anson Rabinbach, "Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse: Benjamin, Bloch and Modern German Jewish Messianism," *New German Critique* no. 34 (January 01, 1985): 78. As will be seen shortly, one difference between Taubes and these others, is that Taubes sees his work as resolutely modern. He thus offers an immanent critique of modernity for modernity's sake, rather than developing a position in opposition to modernity. His position is not as firmly opposed to modernity as Benjamin, for example. Thus Rabinbach's description of this period of thought as 'radical, uncompromising, and comprised of an esoteric intellectualism that is as

follow the rest in making the turn to aesthetics.<sup>354</sup> He remains fixated on cult in opposition to culture. Bloch mediates the two, with his *Atheism in Christianity* arguing firmly from the position of cult, but also moving into the aesthetic realm in other works.<sup>355</sup> Taubes, like Bloch, offers a philosophy ‘that was both secular and theological – and which represents an intellectualist rejection of the existing order of things.’<sup>356</sup> Redefining the relationship between the secular and theological is one of Taubes’s central contributions and one of the most Hegelian features of his philosophy.

In a 1954 essay on Karl Barth and dialectics, Taubes claims philosophy cannot ‘accept the self-interpretation of theology’, but ‘can try to understand the meaning of divine revelation.’<sup>357</sup> Doing so allows theology to ‘serve as a concrete negation of a status quo that the dictatorship of common sense accepts as man’s permanent situation.’<sup>358</sup> For Taubes, this concrete negation is theology’s central task, one which highlights the central claim made above in chapter four – the need for an understanding of Hegel’s philosophy of religion which respects the role of religion without slipping into either dogmatic orthodoxy or a discursively biased form of religion which simply supports existing social norms.

---

uncomfortable with the Enlightenment as it is enamoured of apocalyptic visions’ (80), is less applicable to Taubes than Benjamin and Bloch. As the title suggests, Rabinbach’s essay deals mostly with Benjamin, Bloch and, to a lesser extent, Luckas, as instrumental figures in the development of a messianism that broke with the more predominant options of assimilationist Judaism or Zionism. Much of his description captures themes congruent with Taubes’s contribution to this distinctive version of 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish thought, even though Taubes is not explicitly mentioned

<sup>354</sup> Aleida Assmann, Jan Assmann, and Wolf-Daniel Hartwich, “Introduction to the German Edition,” in *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, by Jacob Taubes, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), xxi.

<sup>355</sup> For example, Bloch discusses musical theory in *The Spirit of Utopia*, trans. Anthony A. Nassar (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) and theorises folklore in Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, Weimar and Now 1 (Cambridge: Polity P, 1991). While it might seem pertinent to include Benjamin in my broader discussion of apocalyptic political theology, he differs from Taubes and Bloch on two key points. First, Hegel is a less significant figure in his philosophy. While he might be described as performing a similar return to representations, this return is not accomplished in a self-consciously Hegelian manner. Second, as Rabinbach indicates, there is an anti-political tendency within Benjamin (Rabinbach, “Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse,” 82, 111–21.). To be clear, this anti-political aspect is only a tendency, one associated with a rejection of violence. Nonetheless, these two differences are a significant difference between Bloch and Taubes on the one hand and Benjamin on the other.

<sup>356</sup> Rabinbach, “Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse,” 101.

<sup>357</sup> Jacob Taubes, “Theodicy and Theology: A Philosophical Analysis of Karl Barth’s Dialectical Theology (1954),” in *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 177.

<sup>358</sup> Taubes, “Theodicy and Theology,” 177.

Theological language is born out of the dualism between the ideal standard and the status quo of man's situation. *So long as this cleavage is not healed, there remains a legitimate task for theology.* But the language of theology itself reflects the cleavage between the ideal and the ruling norms of man and society. In the movement that the ideal standards that theology has put as a judgment upon man and society are realized in the course of human history, the task of theology has been fulfilled... *The development of theological language is, therefore, relevant for a philosophy that studies the stages of man's self-realization.*<sup>359</sup>

Not only does Taubes recognise theology's task as concrete negation, he understands the need for the development of theological language, he avoids advocating a retrieval of lost theological meanings or pure origins untainted by the developments of modernity.<sup>360</sup>

In the same essay on Barth's theology, Taubes poses the question of the relationship between theology and philosophy and again puts forward a Hegelian position:

It is true that (as Barth once remarked) all philosophy has its origin in theology. It is, however, possible to turn around the relation between theology and philosophy. Dialectical theology can point to the development of history from theology to philosophy: theology is the origin. But an equally legitimate interpretation of this sequence might be given from the other side: philosophy is the end. If I emphasize the origin, then the later development takes the form of gradual alienation and eclipse of origin. If I emphasize the end, the process of development takes the form of gradual fulfilment. The scheme is the same in both interpretations. At no point does the premise of Barth's pantheology contradict the *scheme* of Hegel's dialectic...<sup>361</sup>

Taubes thus anticipates more recent pronouncements by Žižek and Vattimo that Christian theology fathers modernity.<sup>362</sup> Whereas Barth presents this story in an Oedipal light, with

<sup>359</sup> Taubes, "Theodicy and Theology," 178., my emphasis.

<sup>360</sup> There is a slight tension between his celebration of modernity and his description of the tainting of Jewish and Gnostic apocalyptic thought by Hellenisation. Taubes makes it clear that there is no simple recovery or return of a pure past. In his comments on the 're-' of the Reformation and Renaissance, as well as his comments on Kierkegaard's recovery of the early church and Marx's retrieval of the Greek polis, Taubes 'transposes' history into the future. Rabinbach includes this understanding of the relation between origin and future in his general description of this era of Jewish Messianic thought as 'connected to the idea of a return to an original state which lies in both the past and the future' ("Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse," 84.). Bloch's concept of non-synchronicity or non-contemporaneity addresses these temporal issues in *Heritage of Our Times*. In these approaches there is a distinctly Hegelian theme of a return through mediation; thought emerges through a process of abstraction only to return to concrete reality, but it returns to a reality mediated by this path of spirit.

<sup>361</sup> Taubes, "Theodicy and Theology," 188.

<sup>362</sup> Vattimo claims that global society is on the verge of the 'Age of the Spirit' understood as a cosmopolitan community that emerges out of Christianity but breaks with its hierarchical structures and outdated metaphysics: "To understand modernity as secularization, namely as the inner and "logical" development of the Judeo-Christian revelation, and to grasp the dissolution of metaphysics as the manifestation of Being as event, as its philosophical outcome, means to

philosophy forgetting its origins and returning to kill the father, the Taubesian interpretation sees the story as one of the passing of generations. It is not that philosophy has to return and kill the father, it is simply the case that as one generation is born another dies away.

Taubes presents a similar perspective on the relationship between theology and philosophy in a later essay on ‘The Dogmatic Myth of Gnosticism.’ Here, he argues for the importance of an allegorical reading of myth. He cautions against a narrow understanding of allegorical readings of myth as simply a form of archaic exegesis. In a wider understanding, allegorical interpretation ‘becomes a vehicle for a new understanding of reality that is differentiated from archaic myth. Allegory is a form of translation. *It translates mythic forms, names and the destinies of mythic narrative into concepts.* In allegorical interpretation... the mythic template gains a new content.’<sup>363</sup> Moving on to a later Greek, philosophical allegorical interpretation, he argues that this reading ‘acts not only as the rationalizing exegesis of archaic myth, but itself turns into the form of representation of a “new” myth.’<sup>364</sup> Continuing the reproductive metaphor, the transformation of the mythic forms, names and destinies is product of new couplings, diversifying the gene pool. Or more strongly, it is a mutation, the result of the mutual contamination of philosophy and theology.<sup>365</sup>

---

read the signs of the times, in the spirit of Joachim of Fiore’ (Gianni Vattimo, *After Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 36.) In one of his more well-known statements on religion, Žižek writes, ‘My claim is not merely that I am a materialist through and through, and that the subversive kernel of Christianity is accessible also to a materialist approach; my thesis is much stronger: this kernel is accessible only to a materialist approach – and vice-versa: to become a true dialectical materialist, one should go through the Christian experience’ (*The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 6.) Žižek’s statement is more dramatically phrased, but the underlying Hegelian logic is the same as Taubes’s – it is only by arriving at the materialist consequences of religious thought that religious truth can be adequately comprehended. Žižek’s frequent theological provocations could thus also be understood in light of Hegel’s two-way relation between concept and representation.

<sup>363</sup> Jacob Taubes, “The Dogmatic Myth of Gnosticism (1971),” in *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 62. Taubes also defends allegorical readings in *The Political Theology of Paul*, where he argues that Paul uses allegorical readings of Hebrew scriptures (44-6).

<sup>364</sup> Taubes, “The Dogmatic Myth of Gnosticism (1971),” 62. In a more practical vein, in *The Political Theology of Paul* he suggests the creation of chairs in Old Testament, New Testament and Church History within departments of philosophy in order to combat the isolation of the departments (4).

<sup>365</sup> This contamination is how Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler define their understanding of contemporary continental philosophy of religion: ‘The task here is simply that of finding a way to perform a philosophical operation upon theological material, while retaining something properly philosophical. Here philosophy turns outwards, both as a critical operation on theology and *as a liberation of aspects of religion from their own theological contamination*’ (“What is Continental Philosophy of Religion Now?”, 2). They also hold out the possibility of ‘an aggressive alternative: a complementary philosophical contamination of theology.’



All this amounts to what Agata Bielik-Robson describes as a ‘positive, theological evaluation of modernity.’<sup>366</sup>

Modernity, the age of enlightenment, man’s rational empowerment and emancipation, is thus to be defended against itself, against its inner dangers that threaten to overthrow the promise it gave at its onset. The theological definition of modernity, therefore, wholly depends on the right understanding of this precarious promise, which is always threatened to disappear in the course of modern history: the messianic promise of a universal liberation, that is, leaving all the Egypts of this world for good, with its hierarchies, glories of domination and self-renewing cycles of power.<sup>367</sup>

This theological defence of modernity requires the process of developing a new theological language, one which is ‘materialist, messianic, historical, emancipatory, focused on the finite life, immanentist and this-worldly.’<sup>368</sup>

### 6.1.2 Taubes and the Definition of Political Theology

While it is not unusual for mid-20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy to be materialist and immanentist, it is more difficult for these to be defining characteristics of political theology. As explained in the introduction, political theology is an ambiguous term, but it is most widely associated with the German jurist Carl Schmitt.<sup>369</sup> Taubes had a tense relationship with Schmitt, commenting on Schmitt’s work and eventually engaging in an exchange of letters, despite Schmitt’s support of National Socialism. Taubes frequently defines his position in opposition to Schmitt, who famously claims that ‘[a]ll significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development – in which they were

---

Experimentation here risks a disintegration of the philosophical body, in order to disturb theology’s ideological and orthodox identity (that is, to contaminate it). What is at stake in both cases is a practice of philosophy which avoids dissolving into theology or becoming a tool of theological thought’ (2). Equally it is the case that theology should not become a tool of philosophical thought, a risk made evident in the discussion of discursive bias (section 5.2.0). Rather, political theology in the Taubesian vein is an example of Smith and Whistler’s proposed ‘experimenting on and with theological and religious material’ (4).

<sup>366</sup> Agata Bielik-Robson, “Modernity: The Jewish Perspective,” *New Blackfriars* 94, no. 1050 (2013): 189.

<sup>367</sup> Bielik-Robson, “Modernity,” 189–90. Kolb makes a similar claiming, though focusing on Hegel’s understanding of civil society as a distinctly modern phenomenon. So for Kolb, Hegel critiques civil society in the name of the freedom which only a reformed civil society can sustain. See Kolb, *The Critique of Pure Modernity*.

<sup>368</sup> Bielik-Robson, “Modernity,” 191.

<sup>369</sup> There are many other varieties of political theology, but given the focus on Hegel and the German political theological tradition, Schmitt is the most pertinent. From a broader range of political theologies see Kirwan, *Political Theology*.

transferred from theology to the theory of the state...but also because of their systematic structure, the recognition of which is necessary for a sociological consideration of these concepts.<sup>370</sup> This section will examine contrasts between their positions, as described by Taubes.

These similarities are overshadowed by two key points of divergence. The first difference is the competing directions of their political theologies. Taubes articulates the ‘work’ of apocalypse as moving in one of two directions. Either it moves from above, revealing ‘the central point of God and the world’ or ‘the centre is revealed from below’ (OE, 7). Corresponding to these two movements of apocalypse are two political theologies. As Taubes said in a 1986 lecture, ‘Carl Schmitt thinks apocalyptically, but from above, from the powers that be; I think from the bottom up’ (CS, 13). For Schmitt, political theology is about containing a destructive force; it is the maintenance of what Schmitt ‘later calls the *katechon*: The retainer [*der Aufhalter*] that holds down the chaos that pushes up from below’ (PT, 103).<sup>371</sup> Taubes, when he fully embraces the apocalyptic spirit, seeks to unleash this chaos. Grimshaw suggests in his introduction to the correspondence between Taubes and Schmitt that perhaps this insight is precisely what liberal Christianity has sought to cover up – its apocalyptic core. Schmitt’s exception becomes ‘the sign in the secular society of liberal modernity of the apocalyptic power that exists, that is referenced by both exception and miracle, that reminds us that what we believe to be the case, the norm, is in fact only fragile and transitory?’ (CS, xvii).

The second point of divergence is found in their views on the relationship between religion and secular modernity. Schmitt inquires about ‘the theological potentials of legal concepts’, Taubes looks for ‘the political potentials in the theological metaphors’ (PT, 69). While Schmitt views the secularisation of theological concepts as a negative development, Taubes sees his version of political theology as necessary for the development of theological thought. There is a parallel here to Taubes’s discussion of Barth. Schmitt is like Barth in offering an understanding of the progression from religion to secular thought as a loss or corruption, whereas Taubes sees philosophy as a *telos* of theological thought. Put another way, Schmitt sees the separation of legal concepts from their theological origins as an abuse of theological ideas. Taubes’s political theology provides a constructive method of philosophical engagement with religious texts and history. He sees his work, not as philosophical theology, but as a working with ‘theological materials’ (PT, 69). Taubes argues it is advantageous to experiment more openly with

---

<sup>370</sup> Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, University of Chicago Press Ed (University of Chicago Press, 2006), 36.

<sup>371</sup> This passage is from the lectured appended to Taubes’s *Political Theology of Paul* on ‘The Jacob Taubes - Carl Schmitt Story’.

theological materials, and rejects Schmitt's claim that theology provides rules when it comes to such experimentation.

As already established, Taubes views religious language, and thus apocalypse, as representations, capable of development and novel usage. Like Hegel, Taubes does not view this development as secularisation. While Taubes do not use Hegelian terminology, this development is an immanentisation, a revisiting of religious *Vorstellung* from the perspective of absolute spirit. In his view, any attempt at employing archaic religious or mythic language is doomed to failure. 'Insofar as the mythical discourse on the gods preserves itself as residues and remainders in the accounts of monotheistic religions of revelation, it retains the weight of a poetic metaphor only. Its power or legitimacy as a religious expression, however, has wasted away.'<sup>372</sup>

With rare exceptions, namely Barth and Tillich, Taubes is of the opinion that theology is no longer practiced by the theologians. In his letter to Mohler, he both criticises the theologians of the day and advocates for a wider understanding of theology. 'What is there today that is not "theology" (apart from theological claptrap)? Is Ernst Jünger less a "theologian" than Bultmann or Brunner? Kafka less so than Karl Barth?' (CS, 22). In Taubes's view, much of what passes for theology is precisely this poetic metaphor, trading power and legitimacy for platitudes.

Rather than remaining in this mode of theology, Taubes seeks to renew the development of religious language in order to address the cleavage between humanity as it is and as it could be. In this context, apocalypse is transferred from a chronological feature of revelation, to the revealed temporal and political logic that drives the work of Hegel, Kierkegaard and Marx. As Grimshaw writes, a key question for Taubes is 'how is political theology as a movement to be rethought, for within such a redefinition apocalypse becomes a type of judgment central to any political theology...'(CS, xvii). Taubes's insight, in Grimshaw's view, is that 'in post/modernity theology, if not sectarian, is the self-reflexivity of modern thought that thinks the unthought of both secularity and "religion."<sup>373</sup> This unthought is that which unites secularism and religion in their opposition. In more Hegelian terms, Taubes offers a model of theological reflection in which thought has returned from the concept. The Hegelian dialectic works by uncovering the commonality that manifests itself as opposition.

From the Hegelian perspective, this unthought consists in at least three themes. First, as seen in the *Phenomenology's* treatment of superstition and enlightenment, both reason and faith are concerned with pure thought, but in their simplistic forms understand this pure thought in

---

<sup>372</sup> Taubes, "The Dogmatic Myth of Gnosticism (1971)," 67.

<sup>373</sup> Mike Grimshaw, "Introduction: 'A Very Rare Thing'," in *To Carl Schmitt: letters and reflections*, by Jacob Taubes, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), xxiv.

opposition to their self-consciousness.<sup>374</sup> Second, there is the representational form of religion. Religion tends to lose sight of its form while secularity forgets the necessity of representations for the actualisation of concepts.<sup>375</sup> Third, the truth of religion is often forgotten by religion itself. Put in a more Taubesian way, the truth of religion is no longer thought by religion in its predominant institutional or cultural forms. While Taubes does not make use of Hegelian language when describing his political theological method, his work enacts a transition from representation to concept by thinking the unthought of both religion and secularism from the perspective of a philosophy which experiments with religious materials.

Taubes's refers to the resulting perspective as a 'transcendental eschatology'. This form of eschatology 'requires that everything be grounded in *subjectivity*, making this the condition of possibility of cognition, as self-knowledge, self-apocalypse' (OE, 132). This eschatology is an internalisation that resists depoliticisation. 'All apocalypses associated with history or natural occurrences, all sounding of trumpets and symbols of wrath, all global conflagrations and new parodies are only *coup de theatre* and parables; they are simply the orchestral arrangement for the one real apocalypse: the Apocalypse of Man' (OE, 132). This line captures the essential elements of Taubesian political theology – the immanentisation of apocalyptic ideas accomplished by the treatment of religious ideas as representations.

---

<sup>374</sup> In the initial stages of the analysis of the relationship between Enlightenment and superstition, Hegel puts it thus: '[The absolute Being of the believing consciousness] is pure thought, and pure thought posited within itself as an object or as *essence*; in the believing consciousness, this *intrinsic being* of thought acquires at the same time for consciousness that is *for itself*, the form – but only the empty form – of objectivity; it has the character of something presented to consciousness. To pure insight, however, since it is pure consciousness from the side of the *self that is for itself*, the "other" appears as something *negative* of *self-consciousness*' (PS, §552: 336/299). This critique of faith, in the simplified form of superstition, is developed in the process of Enlightenment's break from the myth of pure insight. 'One part of this process is the differentiation in which intellectual insight confronts its own self as *object*; so long as it persists in this relationship it is alienated from itself. As pure insight it is devoid of all content; for nothing else can become its content because it is the self-consciousness of the category. But since in confronting the content, pure insight at first knows it only as a *content* and not yet as its own self, it does not recognize itself in it (PS, §548: 333/297). Both Enlightenment and superstition mistake their content for something external to self-consciousness, rather than their own self.

<sup>375</sup> As Hegel explains the representational form of thought falls short of speculative thought: 'it has the content, but without its necessity... Since this consciousness, even in its thinking, remains at the level of picture-thinking, absolute Being is indeed revealed to it, but the moments of this Being, on account of this [empirically] synthetic presentation, partly themselves fall asunder so that they are not related to one another through their own Notion... relating itself to it only in an external manner' (PS, §771: 465-466/410-411). The paragraphs following this one, demonstrate how this transition in form, from representation to concept, is accomplished through representational thinking.

Yet this immanentisation of apocalyptic ideas renders these ideas potentially unsuitable for their original ecclesial contexts. One of Taubes's central contributions to political theology is his proposal of expanding the context of theology.

Perhaps the time has come when theology must learn to live without the support of canon and classical authorities and stand in the world without authority. Without authority, however, theology can only teach by an indirect method. Theology is indeed in a strange position because it has to prove its purity by immersing itself in all the layers of human existence and cannot claim for itself a special realm... Theology must remain incognito in the realm of the secular and work for the sanctification of the world.<sup>376</sup>

Theology, stripped of its customary ecclesial authority, must seek out new, 'incognito', activities. As Tina Beattie puts it, theology moves from the queen of the sciences to the court jester, disrupting the forms of hierarchical authority it once exercised.<sup>377</sup> Taubes finds this alternative activity in the exploration of the gap between what is and what should be. In doing so he affirms Marx's observation that the critique of religion is the basis of all criticism. It is possible to take advantage of the linguistic ambiguity of the phrase 'the critique of religion' (though this ambiguity is not in Marx's German). The critique of religion is, as Taubes explains, 'the model for a critique of profane existence'.<sup>378</sup> This critique is the critique which religion provides. Yet this critique is self-incriminating. Theology's complicity with that profane existence means that the critique of religion entails the critique of religion itself. This initial form of critique persists through the political, economical and technological. 'Every level propagates its own illusory appearances, develops its own apologies, but also forges its own weapon of critique.'<sup>379</sup> Taubes's political theology is the process of transformation described by Marx in his comments on Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: 'the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law and the criticism of theology into the criticism of

---

<sup>376</sup> Jacob Taubes, "On the Nature of the Theological Method: Some Reflections on the Methodological Principles of Tillich's Theology (1954)," in *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 205.

<sup>377</sup> Tina Beattie, "Nothing Really Matters: a Bohemian Rhapsody for a Dead Queen," in *Theology After Lacan*, ed. Marcus Pound, Clayton Crockett, and Creston Davis (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, forthcoming).

<sup>378</sup> Jacob Taubes, "Culture and Ideology (1969)," in *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 275.

<sup>379</sup> Taubes, "Culture and Ideology (1969)," 265.

politics.<sup>380</sup> From theology and religion to law and politics, the concepts of religion, understood in relation to philosophical truth, are still capable of articulating the ‘cleavage between the ideal and the ruling norms of man and society.’<sup>381</sup> Political theology does not attempt to explain the political through theological concepts, as in Schmitt. Taubes uses religion not to ‘transform the worldly question of industrial society into a theological one; rather, we transform the theological into the worldly.’<sup>382</sup>

This political theology is not wholly Hegelian, however. He follows Marx in questioning the relationship between idea and actuality.

Individual sections of the *Phenomenology* contain the critical elements for entire realms, like religion, the state, and bourgeois life, but admittedly in an alienated form. For the real process of history is only depicted as the phenomenon of the process, which comes about through self-consciousness... Hegel’s dialectic is a dialectic of the idea, not of actuality. What Hegel burns in the dialectical fire of the idea is not actual religion, the actual state, actual society and nature, but religion itself as already an object of knowledge, as theology and dogma. It is not the state and society which undergo sublation, but jurisprudence and political science; it is not nature which is sublated in its objectivity, but the natural sciences (OE, 179).

While he is correct to highlight the importance that Hegel is primarily concerned with the concept, he overstates the gap between concept and actuality. Taubes does not offer a fully developed reading of Hegel, which would be helpful in forming a response to his repetition of Marx’s criticism. Even without this reading, it is possible to avoid Taubes’s criticism by drawing on his broader philosophy and identifying basic issues in this presentation of Hegel.

First, Hegel would object to the notion of actual religion, society and nature as objects completely divorced from the process of conceptualisation. Taubes’s claim is a familiar one: Hegel deals only with ideas, not material, lived reality. It is true, in a sense, that the *Philosophy of Right* is concerned with political science rather than actual politics. What would sublation mean in politics if not a sublation that involves ideas about politics? If Marx attempts to sublimate philosophy into a material politics, this move is itself comprehensible from the perspective of a Hegelian philosophy which insists on the actualisation of the absolute. The difference is that Marxism sees this actualisation as something that occurs beyond a finalised philosophical system, whereas a Hegelian philosophy would describe actualisation as a moment of a larger movement

---

<sup>380</sup> Karl Marx, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” in *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 6, Marx and Engels: 1845-1848*, trans. Jack Cohen and et. al. (New York: International Publishers, 2005), 176.

<sup>381</sup> Taubes, “Theodicy and Theology,” 178.

<sup>382</sup> Taubes, “Culture and Ideology (1969),” 264.

which philosophy comprehends. In a sense, this understanding makes Hegel the more realistic of the two. Marx sublates philosophy into material reality as part of a process in achieving final resolution. For Hegel, the absolute contains a persistent negativity between thought and reality as immediately given. The absolute does not denote the end of that negativity, but its comprehension.<sup>383</sup>

Second, in the concluding sentence, Taubes claims that it is natural science that is sublated, not nature itself. Again, for Hegel, this statement assumes too great a division between nature and natural science. Abstract reflection on nature includes the material sublation of nature in humanity's creation of its own freedom. While transcendental materialism will be discussed in further detail below (6.2.3), it is helpful to state one key transcendental materialist thesis. As Adrian Johnston argues

Hegel's emphasis on the need to think substance also as subject reciprocally entails the complementary obligation to conceptualize subject as substance. This reciprocity reflects his post-Spinozist (in both senses of the qualifier "post-") immanentism in which transcendent(al) subjectivity nonetheless remains immanent to substance in a dialectical-speculative relationship of an "identity of identity and difference." Thinking subject as substance, which is a move central to transcendental materialism, involves treating subjectivity and various phenomena tied up with it as "real abstractions"... As real qua non-illusory, such abstractions are causally efficacious and, hence, far from epiphenomenal. In Hegelian phrasing, the thought of the concrete apart from the abstract is itself the height of abstraction.<sup>384</sup>

As Johnston explains elsewhere, nature gives birth to a process of denaturalisation.<sup>385</sup> Taubes displays a similar, though not as clearly expressed, tension with nature. It is possible to accept Taubes's point that political science is not politics as such, but it is a mistake to posit them as completely distinct. The relationship between material and abstract reflection is, as Johnston points out, the identity of identity and difference. This claim is essential to his definition of

---

<sup>383</sup> Jean Hyppolite makes this point in his discussion of the relationship between Hegel and Marx. 'Hegel retains the notion of alienation even within his conception of the Absolute. It is only in appearance that the Absolute transcends contradiction, that is, the movement of alienation. There is no synthesis for the Absolute apart from the presence of a permanent internal antithesis. Indeed, it is natural to think that Absolute Knowledge still contains alienation, along with a movement to transcend it... The Spirit is the identity of Logos and Nature, though the opposition between these two moments is always present within it, even if continuously transcended. In Language, the expression of this notion of the Absolute is the Hegelian *Aufhebung*. For Marx, on the other hand, there is in history a definitive synthesis that excludes the permanence of the antithesis...' *Studies on Marx and Hegel*, trans. John O'Neill (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 86.

<sup>384</sup> Adrian Johnston, "Points of Forced Freedom: Eleven (More) Theses on Materialism," *Speculations* no. IV (2013): 94.

<sup>385</sup> Johnston, *Zizek's Ontology*, xxiii.

philosophy in the *Encyclopaedia Logica*: ‘philosophy should be quite clear about the fact that its content is nothing other than the basic import that is originally produced and produces itself in the domain of the living spirit, the content that is made into the *world*, the outer and inner world of consciousness; in other words, the content of philosophy is *actuality*’ (E1, §6: 29/44). He goes on to explain that the first interaction between consciousness and actuality is experience. Those attentive to experience quickly realise the difference between the transient and that actuality underlying those appearances. The following paragraph is even more explicit: ‘right from the start, our meditative thinking did not confine itself to its merely abstract mode... but threw itself at the same time upon the material of the world of appearance’ (E1, §7: 30/46).

Taubes’s objection is also refuted at the beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Here, Hegel rejects both the simple immediacy of the pre-conceptual as failing to understand the becoming that characterises actuality. Reason, he insists, must be understood as a purposive activity generated by the immediacy of experience and moving toward the concept.

The exaltation of a supposed Nature over a misconceived thinking, and especially the rejection of external teleology, has brought the form of purpose in general into discredit. Still, in the sense in which Aristotle, too, defines Nature as purposive activity, purpose is what is immediate and *at rest*, the unmoved which is also *self-moving*, and as such is Subject. Its power to move, taken abstractly, is *being-for-self* or pure negativity. The result is the same as the beginning, only because the *beginning* is the *purpose*; in other words, the actual is the same as its Notion only because the immediate, as purpose, contains the self or pure actuality within itself. The realized purpose, or the existent actuality, is movement and unfolded becoming... (PS, §22: 12/20).

This relationship is also found in Hegel’s definition of nature. ‘Nature has presented itself as the Idea in the form of otherness. Since therefore the Idea is the negative of itself, or is *external to itself*’ (E2, §247: 13/237). Arguing that Hegel is wrong to speak of nature when he really means natural science is to misunderstand the relationship between the two. Taubes’s objection to Hegel is understandable, arising as it does from a Marxist tradition of critiquing Hegel’s idealism, but nonetheless errs in neglecting the Hegelian understanding of the relationship between substance and subject.<sup>386</sup>

Rather than following Taubes in offering these points as critiques of Hegel, one should read Taubes as drawing out the latent principles within Hegel’s philosophy. ‘The explosive material as already latent in the principle of Hegel. Even though in the Hegelian system the power of the state coincides with the divinations of religion and the principles of philosophy, as

---

<sup>386</sup> This series of refutations focusing on the relationship between actuality and idea also reiterates, in a different form, Magnus’ insight from the previous chapter concerning the persistence of sensuousness in the symbolic. See Magnus, *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*.



he reconciles actuality with spirit, the state with religious conscience, and religious conscience with philosophy' (OE, 164). Taubes is not a Hegelian in the sense that he seeks to replicate and clarify Hegel's texts. He is a Hegelian in his creative redeployment of Hegel's philosophical method.

The extent of this Hegelianism is clear at the conclusion of *Occidental Eschatology*. He ends with a criticism of all thought which aims to return. Kierkegaard, in Taubes's reading, aims to recover early Christianity, Marx something of the Greek polis. Hegel, though, sees his philosophy as the fulfilment laying at the end of the development of Western history. 'Hegel's fulfilment, however, is a reconciliation of destruction...' (OE, 192). As highlighted by the earlier comparison with Kolb, Hegel stands at the apex of modern thought, destroying modernity for modernity's sake. At this tipping point between the modern and what will follow, Hegel writes in a moment of revelation and annihilation.

This epoch, in which the threshold of Western history is crossed, regards itself primarily as the no-longer [*Nicht-Mehr*] of the past and the not-yet [*Noch-Nicht*] of what is to come. To all weak spirits longing for shelter and security, this age appears wanting. For the coming age is not served by demonizing or giving new life to what-has-been [*das Gewesene*], but by remaining steadfast in the no-longer and the not-yet, in the nothingness of the night, and thus remaining open to the first signs of the coming day (OE, 193).

Taubes thus offers an argument for uncovering a persistent, latent element that lies within modernity – a willingness to destroy the world as it is in the name of that which it will be. This alternation between affirmation of modernity and call for the destruction of the world presents a persistent tension in Taubes's thought.

### 6.1.3 The Problem of Apocalypse and History

Taubes is torn between the affirmation of modernity and its critique, between history and apocalypse, progress and providence.<sup>387</sup> He calls for the destruction of the modern world in the name of the values of modernity. Bielik-Robson argues that rather than accepting Taubes's apocalypticism, one should emphasise his more eschatological or messianic tendencies.<sup>388</sup> Contrary to this position, I claim that it is important to retain the apocalyptic elements of Taubes's philosophy, continuing the tension between preservation and destruction. While

---

<sup>387</sup> 'The idea of progress crushes the myth of providence.' Jacob Taubes, "Theology and Political Theory (1955)," in *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 230.

<sup>388</sup> Bielik-Robson, "Modernity," 192.

agreeing with Bielik-Robson that this tension is problematically unresolved in Taubes's work, it is possible to read texts such as *Occidental Eschatology* as willing the destruction of the world more in the sense of the present arrangement of people and their relations to one another and the material world. It will become clear that the apocalyptic energy of Taubes is only worrying if one accepts the apocalyptic as the in-breaking of a transcendent force, rather than an immanent rupturing.

At the start of *Occidental Eschatology*, Taubes defines apocalypse as 'in the literal and figurative sense, revelation' (OE, 4). Revelation, in turn, is 'the subject of history; history is the predicate of revelation' (OE, 7). Seeing this revelation as both concealment and unveiling, Taubes defines the 'apocalyptic principle' as entailing 'a form-destroying and forming power. Depending on the situation and the task, only one of the two components emerges, but neither can be absent' (OE, 10).

If modernity is primarily concerned with the finite, this-worldly and immanent, it is difficult to reconcile Taubes's development of theological language with his position that he can image the world's destruction.<sup>389</sup> He admits that he has 'no spiritual investment in the world as it is' (PT, 103). As Bielik-Robson indicates, this final phrase is crucial. Either one emphasises 'the world' or one focuses on 'as it is':

If we follow the first apocalyptic possibility, history will only emerge as a passive waiting for an event which will finally lead us out of the world into the original divine Nothingness. But if we follow the latter, history will have a chance to emerge as a process that can finally lead us from the world-as-it-is, that is: naturalised, hierarchised, spatialised, and ideologically stabilised in the cyclical succession of powers.<sup>390</sup>

Before addressing this tension further, it is important to read Taubes's claim in light of Bielik-Robson's earlier insight that Taubes's defence of modernity is not only against the anti-modern, but against modernity's worst tendencies. Mindful of this context, it is possible to read Taubes's statement's apocalyptic tone as focused on 'as it is'.

Bielik-Robson's objection to Taubes's apocalypticism is not only that it presents the destruction rather than salvation of the world. It is the submission to the force of necessity.

---

<sup>389</sup> Taubes is not the only Jewish Messianic figure to struggle with this tension. Rabinbach includes it as one of the defining characteristics of this form of thought: 'The apocalyptic element involves a quantum leap from present to future, from exile to freedom. This leap necessarily brings with it the complete destruction and negation of the old order. Messianism is thus bound up with both violence and catastrophe' (Rabinbach, "Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse," 86.)

<sup>390</sup> Bielik-Robson, "Modernity," 193.

What creates history in Taubes's account is neither an annihilating shock awaited by the apocalypticists, nor the inherent norm inscribed into some impersonal "laws of history", but the antinomian tension, which always presses against the grain, against "nature", against any progressive normativity. History, therefore, is never a progress, it is rather a disruptive staccato of breaks, awakenings and traumas that never simply evaporate without trace but always leave a disquieting mark that, despite all the "natural" obstacles, initiates messianic transformation of the world.<sup>391</sup>

The two halves of this passage can be disconnected and reworked within an apocalyptic framework. If apocalypse is simultaneous revelation and annihilation, what is revealed are the gaps and fissures which are the sites of the birth of a new world.. If Taubes's political theology is immanent, material and finite, than this definition should determine one's reading of 'apocalypse' as a dominant theme, rather than rejecting the apocalyptic. As suggested in the previous section, Taubes offers a Hegelian treatment of religious representation. Understanding representation as entailing an alienation overcome in philosophy, the impersonal law is understood as the movement of spirit itself. Apocalypse is no longer something awaited, but an active, negative moment of that movement. Apocalypse, in this sense, is not something humanity awaits, but something humanity does. Understanding apocalypse in this way is a transformation of the apocalypticism of the historical examples considered in chapter two in the same way that philosophy's understanding of religion as representation is a transformation of the way religious communities understood those representations. Accepting definitions of apocalypse as related to external or impersonal forces is to continue to operate within the alienation that besets all religious thought that does not continuously circle from representation to concept.<sup>392</sup>

The significance of 'the world as it is' is further clarified when the destruction of the world is read in terms of Taubes's opposition to nature. Similar to the question of history, one might ask how it is possible to argue simultaneously for the transformation and the destruction of the world. Taubes frequently expresses a negative view of nature.<sup>393</sup> Freedom is established by

---

<sup>391</sup> Bielik-Robson, "Modernity," 197. Rabinbach, whom Bielik-Robson cites throughout, is again useful on this point: 'the cataclysmic element is explicit and consequently makes redemption independent of either any immanent historical "forces" or personal experience of liberation' (Rabinbach, "Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse," 86).

<sup>392</sup> This same issue presents itself if one affirms messianism over apocalypticism. As will be discussed in the later chapter on Malabou, the rejection of Derrida's understanding of messianism is rooted in its origins in a beyond, which Malabou fears becomes the other as transcendent. In this regard, the choice is between an immanent apocalypticism, which admittedly does entail an awaiting for events (hence an acknowledgment that some of the forces entailed in dramatic social and political change are beyond the reach of individuals) and messianism which may smuggle back in the transcendent.

<sup>393</sup> In addition to the passages discussed here, one might examine his discussion of the overcoming of nature in the Greek context (OE, 58), the gnostic division between divinity and

a negation of Nature in the founding of history. ‘To exist in freedom is the only way that mankind becomes part of history’ (OE, 5). Freedom and history are posed against the fatalism of the cycle of nature. These positions are thus not to be understood in terms of nature in the vernacular sense. On this point, Hegel is, surprisingly, helpful. He is also well known for his negative view of nature, which he sees as the realm of mere causal relations. Yet, the opposition to this basic nature is in the name of a more profound version of the concept.

If knowledge [*Wissen*] exists, if we do not wish to sacrifice knowledge to non-knowledge (to nullified knowledge, to knowledge of what is null), this knowledge must like faith be [itself] divine and supernatural. Philosophy as supernatural must, like faith, have the Divine Word as its sole basis. And its sole goal must be to cancel nature as fallen, [to effect] salvation from nature. Both [knowledge and faith] are supernatural insofar as they raise man above nature as fallen – a goal which nature cannot accomplish by itself. But at the same time both are natural, insofar as they have as their consequence the restoration of nature in its actuality [in the actualization of its potential]. It is [rather] rationalism which exhausts itself in [a] supersensory [realm] devoid of content (RG, 2: 380/383-384).

For Hegel, nature is acceptance of the immediate as given. The transcending of the natural is the essence of human freedom. It involves turning one’s gaze from this world as it is to what it could be. Apocalypticism is not about replacing what is now with something better. It’s about ‘opposing the totality of this world with a new totality that comprehensively founds anew in the way that it negates... namely, in terms of basic foundations’ (OE, 9).<sup>394</sup> This new totality is not actual within nature as ground, but is the possibility actualised by the activity of spirit.

Bielik-Robson describes the ‘moment of revelation’ as outside of history; revelation is its initiating otherness. It ‘cannot be reconciled with the “natural” course of events. Unlike the spontaneous cults of nature and their immanent deities, messianic belief can be impressed upon human beings only through a violent event called revelation.’<sup>395</sup> This returns the conversation to the earlier section on *Fear and Trembling*. It is correct that the moment of revelation is a rupture, something which does not fit within the strictures of history. At the same time, adopting a more Hegelian position than Taubes allows one to say that it will have been part of history. History, as

---

nature (OE, 161), or the elevation of human creativity and history over nature (Jacob Taubes, “Nachman Krochmal and Modern Historicism (1963),” in *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 30.

<sup>394</sup> Rabinbach identifies a similar relation to nature in Bloch, describing it quite Hegelian terms: ‘History for Bloch is predicated on a future oriented knowledge that transcends the empirical order of things, that does not take flight in false images or fall prey to naturalism, but is directed beyond the existing world toward a yet unrealized “messianic goal”’ (Rabinbach, “Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse,” 100).

<sup>395</sup> Bielik-Robson, “Modernity,” 198.

the response to revelation, is the incorporation of that moment. It is not natural in the Hegelian sense that it requires an act of freedom. History as the response to revelation, understood in terms of spirit, also means realising that revelation is not actually ‘impressed upon human beings’ by an other in any transcendent sense. Indeed, the reincorporation of revelation is the movement of reconciling the alienation of human from divine in the community of spirit.

In this regard, Taubes’s position falls under the category of 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish messianism described by Rabinbach, characterised by a utopian vision ‘of a future which is the fulfilment of all that which can be hoped for in the condition of exile but cannot be realized within it. Redemption appears either as the end of history or as an event within history, never as an event produced by history.’<sup>396</sup> Rabinbach’s formulation changes the significance slightly. Revelation is something that happens to history rather than is produced by it. As he describes it the apocalyptic ‘element involves a quantum leap from present to future, from exile to freedom. This leap necessarily brings with it the complete destruction and negation of the old order. Messianism is thus bound up with both violence and catastrophe.’<sup>397</sup> The language again suggests a break or fissure within history, addressed from within history, but which is a simultaneously annihilating and founding rather than producing. ‘Freedom may occur in history, but it is not brought about by historical forces or individual acts.’<sup>398</sup> The crucial point of Rabinbach’s description, as with Bielik-Robson, is that apocalypticism and messianism are not religious concepts which can be merely translated into secular forms of progress and development. They reject ‘the possibility of an optimistic and evolutionary conception of history, of progress, without of course foreclosing the possibility of freedom.’<sup>399</sup> This understanding of the apocalyptic or messianic tendency in turn relates back to the Hegelian concept of nature, which sees the actualisation of freedom through the work of rational self-consciousness as proceeding in opposition to natural immediacy.

#### 6.1.4 Taubes and Bloch: Parallel Political Theologies

Taubes is not the only one to philosophically discuss religion in these terms. As noted in the introduction to this section, there is a strong link to a broader German political theological tradition. Assman, Assman and Harwich, differentiate Taubes by claiming that this broader

---

<sup>396</sup> “Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse,” 85.

<sup>397</sup> Rabinbach, “Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse,” 86.

<sup>398</sup> Rabinbach, “Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse,” 87.

<sup>399</sup> Rabinbach, “Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse,” 87. Rabinbach thus confirms Bielik-Robson’s claim that Taubes offers a ‘polemical alternative’ to Karl Löwith’s thesis on secularisation in his *Meaning in History*.

tradition veers into the aesthetic. Bloch remains closer to Taubes, though the latter describes the former as ‘wishy-washy’ (PT, 74) and as producing a ‘utopia picture-book’ (PT, 71). Notwithstanding these objections, there remain key points where Bloch seconds Taubes’s position as well as pushing his more apocalyptic tendencies. In doing so he tends to maintain greater focus on the concrete aspects of human existence. So while Taubes might be concerned with theology as it operates on an immanent plane, Bloch is concerned with the theologies of oppression and liberation.

First, Bloch offers a similar spatialisation of political theology. For Bloch, theology is an activity that can be practised from On-High or From-Below. Describing the institutional forms of Christianity, he writes that ‘the religion of the On high had to be kept for the people: the old myth of lordship from on-high which, in Christianity, sanctioned, or at least explained, the unjust distribution of this world’s goods with the just distribution of those of the next’ (AC, 8). Bloch’s criticism of the On-high demonstrates his awareness of the ambiguity of religion.<sup>400</sup> Theology from On-High often comes from ‘the church’, but Bloch is quick to remind his readers that this church is not the Bible (AC, 9). The Biblical text provides the undoing of the authority of the institutions which hitherto have appealed to the text in the justification of their actions. The Bible is the source of ‘master-ideologies’ (12) as well as ‘the counter-blow against the oppressor’ (13).

In order for the Bible to serve its liberatory function, it must be read carefully. The reader must engage in the ‘detective work of biblical criticism’ which demands that one ‘identify and save the Bible’s choked and buried “plebeian element”’ (AC, 62). This recalls the ambiguity of the Marxist ‘critique of religion’ – rather than Bloch urging a critique of the Bible he encourages ‘criticism *through* the Bible’ (AC, 70). Such investigative work reveals the dual nature of the Biblical text, ‘a Scripture for the people and a Scripture against the people’ (AC, 70) or, a Bible from below and a Bible from on high.

Second, Bloch offers a similar opposition to the world. Speaking of the apocalyptic repetition of Exodus themes, Bloch notes that Israelite Messianism offers a strong antithesis to the world (AC, 101). This divestment from the world as it is, to use Taubes’s phrase, is presented with a greater Marxist inflection in Bloch than in Taubes. Indeed Taubes sometimes seems passive in his view of apocalyptic political theology. ‘I can imagine as an apocalyptic: let it go down. I have no spiritual investment in the world as it is’ (PT, 103). Bloch is the more active, advocating a ‘practical chiliasm’ in line with earlier movements such as Müntzer’s. Yet for both,

---

<sup>400</sup> This ambiguity is also addressed in his discussion of connections between National Socialism and German mystic and pagan traditions Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, 48–62.

there is a conviction that there is a gap between the world and another which is possible. As Bloch writes, ‘there is always an exodus from this world, an exodus from the particular *status quo*. And there is always a hope, which is connected with rebellion – a hope founded in the concrete given possibilities for new being. As a handhold in the future, a process which, though by no means achieved, is yet by no means in vain’ (AC, 107). Apocalyptic thought is thus opposed to the world as it is, in the name of the world that might will be.

A theory of religion based on *wish ipso facto* passes over into another, Utopian dimension, which does not cease to exist in the subject even when the illusion of an hypostasized Beyond is shattered. Indeed the subject, aware of itself now, and powerful, gains in stature from it, till it stands above nature itself. The idealism reflected in the now pulverized Other-world is revealed as the fruit of purely human powers of transcending which, far from going beyond nature, operate within it (AC, 95).

Here Bloch expresses the Hegelian understanding of nature articulated above. Spirit is not the abolition of nature, but the transcending arch of freedom which emerges from its material ground.

This apocalyptic focus is also central to Bloch’s understanding of a Jesus who preaches that ‘there will be no time for tranquil observation: the Kingdom will break through suddenly, in a single all-transforming bound’ (AC, 118). He opposes any attempt to suggest that this kingdom is an internal one in the hearts of believers (AC, 117) or that the world as it is now will continue in some form. ‘This world must pass away before the next...’ (AC, 119). Substantiating my argument from the previous section, Bloch clarifies the meaning of such passages.

Whenever the words “this world” and “the other world” appear... “This world” means the same as “the present aeon”; “the other world” means the same as “the better aeon”... What is meant is eschatological tension, not some sort of geographical separation from a fixed This-world here and a fixed Beyond there. The only real thing now about this world is its submergence in the next... (AC, 119).

Further, the coming of Christ as Messiah is a ‘new eschatological Exodus, overthrowing all things from their beginning to their end: *the Exodus into God as man*’ (AC, 123). The repetition of exodus marks not only an apocalyptic break within history – it is an apocalyptic event within the concept of God.

Third, like Taubes, Bloch is not in pursuit of what would normally be referred to as atheism today. Rather, he proposes a form of post-secularism. For the questions posed by religion, such as the problem of evil, determinism, or ultimate meaning, remain important questions for atheism. And ‘if atheism is not just the unhistorical unrealistic folly of optimism, or

of equally unhistorical nihilism, with man as a laughable begetter of illusion... and with the alien specter of death all around us, and that gorgon of cosmic inhumanity which can never contain any shred of concern for man' (AC, 107). He presents a path between the continuation of religious belief as it has hitherto been experienced and an absolute rejection of all things religious.

Bloch clearly thinks atheism is a pertinent term, given its inclusion in the title of his *Atheism in Christianity*. In a similar way as Taubes engages in the critique of modernity for modernity's sake, or the critique of rabbinic Judaism for Judaism's sake, Bloch could be said to engage in the critique of theism for religion's sake. Joining Taubes in offering a theology which is 'materialist, messianic, historical, emancipatory, focused on the finite life, immanentist and this-worldly'<sup>401</sup>, Bloch offers a vision of a fully anthropocentric new heaven and new earth in which the 'Christ-impulse' can 'live even when God is dead' (AC, 167). If '[a]theism-with-concrete-Utopia is at one and the same time the annihilation of religion and the realization of its heretical hope' (AC, 225), 'with-concrete-Utopia' sufficiently modifies the term atheism that it does not slip into the virulently anti-religious rhetoric associated with New Atheism.

Bloch does not always agree with Taubes, however. Most notable is their divergent views of Paul. For Taubes, Paul represents a transvaluation of values, the establishment of a new covenant-community and the vehicle of an apocalyptic message. For Bloch, Paul twists the Hebrew scriptures in order to explain that Christ is the Messiah because of the cross, rather than in spite of it (AC, 156-59). This understanding of Jesus' death gives rise to the

*patience of the Cross* – so praiseworthy an attitude in the oppressed, so comfortable for the oppressors; a sanction, too, for the unconditional and absolute *obedience to authority*, as coming from God. Every theology of hope which might have placed itself in the front rank of change opted instead for conformity when it accepted these ideas – an acceptance whose convenient passivity broke the fine edge of Jesus' own hope... (AC, 61).

His harsh rhetoric does not prevent Bloch from acknowledging that Paul played a crucial role in the development of Christianity; Bloch simply places much more emphasis on Jesus, whose message was obfuscated by the preaching of Paul. Christ is the usurper, the one who disrupts the On-high and rejects any association of divinity with mastery or lordship.

Bloch also develops his philosophy in a more explicitly Marxist direction. While Taubes refers to Marx in his essays and at the conclusion of *Occidental Eschatology*, it would be inaccurate to describe Taubes as a Marxist. Bloch on the other hand, not only identified his philosophy as

---

<sup>401</sup> Bielik-Robson, "Modernity," 191.



Marxist, he was active in Communist circles.<sup>402</sup> Perhaps due to these involvements, Bloch's apocalypticism is manifested in a more active and overtly politically engaged fashion.

Even with these differences, Taubes's Hegelian tendencies, used to develop an apocalyptic political theology, are further enhanced by occasional Blochian supplementation. Both their work arises out of a conviction that the rational critique of false consciousness had not succeeded in impeding fascism. As members of the intellectual left, they both argue for a recommencement of utopian myth-making in order to create an imaginary capable of speaking against the social norms of their day. They both develop philosophies which employ theological concepts in the development of immanentist and materialist political theologies. Their readings of Hegel both parallel and challenge more recent readings.

### **6.2.0 Taubes and Contemporary Readings of Hegel**

The following sections revisit the earlier readings of Hegel, drawing connections to Taubes. Establishing these points of convergence shows ways in which Taubes anticipates contemporary readings and then providing a bridge between these readings and apocalyptic political theology (6.2.1). His understanding of Hegel parallels key insights of the 'non-metaphysical' reading, especially his emphasis on immanent, human activity and his rejection of pre-critical metaphysics. These connections show that Taubes reading of Hegel remains relevant to contemporary conversations. The following section examines how Taubes's philosophy might be used to further my earlier critique of discursive bias in the 'non-metaphysical' reading (6.2.2). The concluding section (6.2.3) discusses parallels between Taubes and transcendental materialist readings of Hegel in order to set the stage for the following chapter, linking this present discussion to Catherine Malabou's reading of Hegelian plasticity.

#### **6.2.1 Parallels Between Taubes and 'Non-Metaphysical' Readings**

The 'non-metaphysical' readings discussed in chapters two and four focused on the social construction of knowledge and the production of social norms. While Taubes does not develop as deep an analysis of these processes, he is nonetheless aware of similar implications in Hegel's philosophy. In his essay 'Four Ages of Reason' he begins by observing that 'reason is a social

---

<sup>402</sup> See Hudson, *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch*, 31–49. As Hudson makes clear, Bloch's connection to both Marxist theory and Communist politics was never simple. He inevitably advocated positions that were at odds with mainline positions. This perpetual heterodoxy is also highlighted in Rabinbach, "Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse."

category: it presupposes that men are speaking. The logical rules are incarnated in language. Language... mediates between the isolated individual and the community, between man and society.<sup>403</sup> Broadening the scope to the wider Jewish messianic tradition as analysed by Rabinbach, one can describe both Taubes and Bloch as engaged in the ‘language-work’ of apocalypticism.<sup>404</sup> While not placing as much emphasis on this language work as Benjamin, for example, they both present engagements with texts, traditions and discourses, in order to exploit unspoken, obscured or repressed elements as sites of disruption. For Taubes, ‘the logical operations and all possible judgments are mediated by man’s historic existence. Even the most abstract sentence is still a “verdict,” a spoken word. Even formal logic is “functional” and not an a priori ideal realm.’<sup>405</sup> This affirmation of the role of history in the production of norms is paralleled in the ‘non-metaphysical’ emphasis on historical subjectivity. Pippin describes one of Hegel’s central contributions as demonstrating that what was once ‘an empirical fact or a conceptual truth or a moral claim now seemed to many distinctly historical phenomena – products, in some way, of the activity of human “spirit”...’<sup>406</sup>

Similarly, Taubes offers a linguistic understanding of the master-slave dialectic when he later writes on psychoanalysis. He describes ‘the Hegelian concept of truth as a progressive disclosure that occurs through the communication of one self-consciousness with another. This communication occurs precisely through reciprocal “recognition,” or through language.’<sup>407</sup> If the ‘non-metaphysical’ reading sees philosophy as a process of uncovering the rules for the exchange of reasons, Taubes and Bloch present an apocalyptic form of Hegelianism which does the same work, but in the name of letting loose forces repressed by those rules.

While he parallels aspects of the social-linguistic focus of the ‘non-metaphysical’ reading, Taubes’s view of the overall nature of Hegel’s project is different. In Taubes’s understanding theology is inherently ontological. ‘For an inquiry into the structure of being, its categories and concepts, which does not beforehand establish the meaning of being for us is doomed to failure. An ontology that stops short at describing the objective structures without recourse to the

---

<sup>403</sup> Jacob Taubes, “Four Ages of Reason (1956),” in *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 270.

<sup>404</sup> Rabinbach, “Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse,” 101.

<sup>405</sup> Taubes, “Four Ages of Reason (1956),” 270.

<sup>406</sup> Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism*, 3.

<sup>407</sup> Jacob Taubes, “Psychoanalysis and Philosophy: Notes on a Philosophical Interpretation of the Psychoanalytic Method (1963),” in *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 324.

subjective source of this act remains ungrounded.<sup>408</sup> Yet, Taubes affirms a theology and ontology which is immanent and materialist, concerned with this-worldly affairs. He thus avoids the category of ‘those commentators who treat Hegel as an idiosyncratic Christian, romantic, metaphysician, a “world-soul,” or a “cosmic spirit” theologian’ who offers an ‘onto-theological metaphysics’.<sup>409</sup> Here it is important to remember the earlier point about the specific meaning of ‘non-metaphysical’. If ‘non-metaphysical’ really means non-pre-Kantian metaphysics, then appreciating the work of Brandom and Pippin does not exclude the possibility of Hegel’s philosophy expressing something about the nature of being itself provided that the nature of being itself is attached to material reality.

Along these lines, and keeping with the other points of similarity, Taubes identifies the spirit with what is actual. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, when Hegel finally arrives at his exploration of the spirit he ‘talks about the Greek polis, about government and war, about the Roman Empire, about the French Revolution and its pre-history in the *philosophers*, and the Enlightenment, and so on, and so forth. He depicts the history of the world...’ (PT, 43). Since he acknowledges the concept of spirit has been discredited by post-Hegelian intellectual developments: economically (Marx), philosophically (Nietzsche) and psychologically (Freud) (PT, 43-4), he finds Hegel’s understanding of world-spirit deficient, and returns to Paul’s reading of Hebrew scriptures in order to develop a theory of nature and spirit which survives the discrediting of Hegel’s spirit. Taubes thus argues that the spirit is actual, but understands this statement in light of his discussion of Paul rather than in terms of Hegel. As shown above, however, it is clear that Hegel’s understanding of the statement is richer than Taubes allows.

### 6.2.2 Taubes and Anti-Liberalism: Against the Discursive Bias

Taubes’s political theology thus shares concerns with the socio-linguistic nature of reason and rejects the transcendent spirit in favour of a philosophy concerned with spirit understood in an immanent, this worldly sense. Yet he also changes that approach’s acceptance of social norms, or the world as it is. As acknowledged in earlier sections, discursive bias is not the result of a

---

<sup>408</sup> Taubes, “On the Nature of the Theological Method (1954),” 206.

<sup>409</sup> Pippin, *Hegel’s Idealism*, 3–4. Pippin’s dismissal of onto-theological metaphysics initially seems to contradict O’Regan’s claim that Hegel’s rendition of Christianity is an onto-theology. Yet the onto-theology that Hegel develops is heterodox. Being is understood in terms of a divinity that is both realised end and process. An onto-theology which claims that ‘God is only as the movement from potential to actual, that is, God is only as the process of actualization’ is not the same form of onto-theology attacked by Pippin (O’Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel*, 48.). That is not to claim that O’Regan and Pippin are compatible, only to clarify that Pippin’s criticism does not apply to O’Regan’s nuanced reading of Hegel’s heterodoxy theology.

misinterpretation of Hegel, but arises out of Hegel's own tendency to valorise institutions. Early chapters have argued that there is also a more disruptive form of religion latent within Hegel's work. Combining his dialectical method, understanding of the absolute and religion as representation, it is this form of religion that Taubes illuminates.<sup>410</sup>

In the comparison of Taubes and Schmitt, I noted that they both construct anti-liberal political theologies. For both, this anti-liberalism connects to the potential of apocalypse, though Schmitt is concerned with constraining this potential while Taubes aims to unleash it.<sup>411</sup> Schmitt's formula, that all political ideas are secularised theological concepts, sees the secularisation itself as key to this constraining of religious energies which might disrupt social norms. Taubes's anti-liberalism comes about in his critique of modernity, but in the name of a fuller version of the modern project. Schmitt's anti-liberalism attempts to contain forces of social disruption which Taubes sees as necessary for the realisation of this alternative modernity.

Revisiting this anti-liberal tendency now, it is important to note that anti-liberalism does not imply a rejection of the accomplishments of liberalism. A recommenced Hegelian anti-liberalism is similar to Marx's anti-capitalism. The *Communist Manifesto* includes a list of the great achievements of capitalism: 'machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam-navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalisation of rivers, whole populations conjured out of the ground.'<sup>412</sup> Similarly it is possible to make a list of the achievement of liberalism: the articulation of equal rights (even if the implementation lags behind) regardless of gender or race or in the universal declaration of human rights. Hegelian anti-liberalism is not a rejection of these advancements, but a rejection of the naturalisation of liberalism. As Taubes says in a 1986 address,

I really would like to be liberal; don't you think that I would like it? But the world is not so made that one can be liberal. For that is at the cost of others; the question is who pays the cost, and third and fourth worlds, the fifth and sixth worlds that are approaching, they will not be liberal at all, but brutal demands will be made there. The question is, how does one deal with them, when one starts to deal with them? If you work only at this liberal level of democracy, you just don't see what happens in history (CS, 192).

---

<sup>410</sup> I use the term liberalism in the sense defined by John Rawls in his *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995). There, he argues that political liberalism assumes 'a plurality of reasonable yet incompatible comprehensive doctrines is the normal result of the exercise of human reason within the framework of the free institutions of a constitutional democratic regime' (xvi). It is the right of individuals to pursue the exercise of that reason and the role of society to protect that right.

<sup>411</sup> Grimshaw, "Introduction: 'A Very Rare Thing,'" xi.

<sup>412</sup> Marx, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," 489.

In Grimshaw's commentary on Taubes's correspondence with Schmitt he argues that, for Taubes

liberalism involves, in the end, a denial of the cost others suffer by our being liberal. That is, liberalism is not a neutral state of affairs, nor a neutral society, but a claim that is inherently oppositional and judgmental, with associated decision and implementations, and such decisions are primarily focused on the benefits to the victors in what is seen as the inevitable march of human progress. Taubes's point is that liberal democracy fails to see what happens in history, which is a history of brutality. In short, liberals have too high a view of humanity and human nature, views that a realistic encounter with and examination of human history would quickly overturn.<sup>413</sup>

Taubes rejects liberalism in the name of a greater form of liberation. Not only does this anti-liberalism have Hegelian antecedents, but Taubes's relationship with Schmitt plays out the dangerous tension contained within the rejection of liberalism. Schmitt and Taubes repeat a tension internal to Hegel's own work.

There are at least two ways in which Hegel demonstrates an anti-liberal or un-liberal tendency.<sup>414</sup> First, the most direct critique of liberalism comes in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. As Karen de Boer argues, while Hegel sees the achievement of individual freedom as an essential goal, his primary focus is 'the structures that allow a modern state to establish itself as a rational whole.'<sup>415</sup> True freedom is something attained by the community of spirit, not something that functions at the level of the individual. As Hegel writes, 'society is not dispersed into atomic individuals, collected to perform only a single and temporary act, and kept together for a moment and no longer. On the contrary, it makes the appointment as a society, articulated into associations, communities, and corporations, which although constituted already for other

---

<sup>413</sup> Grimshaw, "Introduction: 'A Very Rare Thing,'" xxxi. Grimshaw's point mirrors Žižek's claims about objective and subjective violence. Liberalism's denunciation of subjective, interpersonal violence is dependent upon a subjective level of violence which maintains the societal norms which in turn provide the base line for measuring subjective violence. See Slavoj Žižek, *Violence* (London: Profile, 2008), 9–15.

<sup>414</sup> I introduce the distinction between anti-liberal and un-liberal because anti-liberal is too strong a term to describe de Boer's position. Her concern about the limits of democracy which privileges individual rights above all else is motivated by the current state of affairs in which the same freedom of speech 'granted to all citizens is also the freedom that allows transnational corporations, investors and other interest groups to finance the election campaigns of politicians and curb their opinions in favour of their own interests' (Karin de Boer, "Democracy Out of Joint? The Financial Crisis in Light of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," *Hegel Bulletin* 33, no. 02 (2012): 48.). The Hegelian strong state that would respond to this dilemma is not necessarily anti-liberal, but is the essential idea behind anti-liberal interpretations which connect Hegel to totalitarian ideas. For instance, Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. As will become clear in this chapter, there is an alternative anti-liberalism at work in Taubes and Bloch.

<sup>415</sup> de Boer, "Democracy Out of Joint?," 37.

purposes, acquire in this way a connection with politics' (PR, §308: 294/476).<sup>416</sup> De Boer makes this point specifically in opposition to those who read Hegel as emphasising individual freedom and uses Pippin as one of her examples. The practical consequences of Pippin's emphasis on the exchange of reasons are brought out in his *Hegel's Practical Philosophy*, where he explains that 'for Hegel freedom consists in being in a certain reflective and deliberative relation to oneself (which he describes as being able to give my inclinations and incentives a "rational form"), which itself is possible, so it is argued, only if one is also already in certain (ultimately institutional, norm-governed) relations to others, if one is a participant in certain practices.'<sup>417</sup> This description of freedom is familiar from the early discussion of the 'non-metaphysical' approach. Pippin works from this starting point to the conclusion that Hegel's 'suspicions about moral individualism, an ethics of conscience, etc., should not obscure the fact that he also wants to defend, in his own way, the supreme importance of an individual's free, reflective life, however much he regards it as a necessarily collective achievement.'<sup>418</sup> It is this passage that triggers de Boer's concern, for in her reading the state is not the means by which individuals achieve their own rational goals, but an expression of the rational whole to which 'the ultimate interests of citizens ought to coincide.'<sup>419</sup> The first un-liberal strain within Hegel's philosophy is thus found in this relationship between the individual and society. The needs of the society as a whole are primary.

Second, and somewhat at tension with the first, is the un-liberalism that is continued in Taubes and Bloch. While Bloch in particular shows the same concern for the formation of a community of shared will, both Taubes and Bloch are more suspicious of institutions than traditional Hegelianism would allow. If de Boer's focus on the un-liberal elements of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* leads to a stronger role for the state, this alternative anti-liberalism seeks new forms of the social whole. Both objections to liberalism are rooted in a rejection of individualism as the basis of society, but differ in that one is more accepting of the presently existing social whole than the other. Compared to Bloch, Taubes has the greater aversion to the state, indeed formulating his position in terms of the contrast between utopianism and chiasm: 'the nature of utopia is to be distinguished from chiasm, for utopia belongs to essentially politicized man and

---

<sup>416</sup> In Hegel's remarks on this paragraph, he explores this point further: 'the individual is a genus, but it has its immanent universal actuality in the next genus. — Hence the individual fulfils his actual and living vocation for universality only when he becomes a member of a corporation, a community, etc.' (PR, §308r: 295/477)

<sup>417</sup> Robert B. Pippin, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>418</sup> Pippin, *Hegel's practical philosophy*, 23.

<sup>419</sup> de Boer, "Democracy Out of Joint?," 39.

merges from the political spirit. The state is the vessel for the fulfilment of this concept of humanity... Even the ideal of utopia needs to take its bearings from the real state' (OE, 135).<sup>420</sup>

Bloch, on the other hand, maintains a standard Marxist critique of the state.<sup>421</sup> This critique includes standard objections to Hegel's valorisation of the state. 'Hegel's religious man does not touch the brink of the human mystery at all; he remains complacently within the limits of man, the community and the world, as present and given: the limits of a pre-ordained, paternalistic faith' (AC, 144). *Atheism in Christianity's* invectives against theology from On-high are not only aimed at ecclesial authorities. They also target the collusion between those authorities and the state. He describes Job as one of the heroes of the Bible, for he realised that 'piety was not to be confused with conformity to law and order' (AC, 19). This conformity with the law as manifested by the state is problematic because it involves submission to that which is imposed from On-high. Much of Bloch's critique of institutional religion is rooted in Christianity's abandonment of its liberating message – a religion from below. 'There was always opium there for the people – in the end it tainted their whole faith. If the Church had not always stood so watchfully behind the ruling powers, there would not have been such attacks against everything it stood for' (AC, 47). Bloch is led to the Hegelian conclusion that whatever form of social organisation emerges in his concrete utopia, it must not contain the alienation of a state that is defined in contradiction to its people. If the 'non-metaphysical' reading is characterised by a discursive bias then Bloch aims to free the subject from discursive restraint .

Taubes's caution is a balance to Bloch's enthusiasm. As Bielik-Robson notes, Taubes is aware of the necessary balancing act of materialist eschatology, wavering between messianism and nihilism.<sup>422</sup> While chapter four argues that the discursive bias in the 'non-metaphysical' reading ultimately obscures the more socially transformative role of religion, its basic

---

<sup>420</sup> This opposition to utopia might seem to distance Taubes from Bloch. It is telling, however, that Taubes uses Moore as an example of utopian thought and opposes this to 'the events in Müntser... The millennium is not being inaugurated, but it is coming. It is not to be found in any location, but it is happening. It is not being discovered, but it is expected' (OE, 136). While this description does create some distance between Taubes and Bloch, it is less than it initially appears. Bloch's concrete utopia does not see the state as the vessel for the utopian urge, but he does think that the utopian impulse can be described as Not-yet. Taubes's chiliastic expectation indicates a passivity that Bloch rejects. For Bloch the millennium is both inaugurated and coming, though without taking the blue-print like form of Moore's utopia.

<sup>421</sup> See Hudson, *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch*, 168–70. For a summary of Bloch's reflections on the state.

<sup>422</sup> As she writes, 'modernity can be regarded as the most religious of all epochs, precisely in its consciously historiosophic emphasis on the messianic transformation of our earthly conditions, aiming at achieving a better, more meaningful, freer life here and now. In its attempt to achieve this goal, modernitas walks a thin line between messianism and nihilism, which, for Taubes, is not necessarily a bad thing' (Bielik-Robson, "Modernity," 192.).

understanding of social change is nonetheless helpful on this point. The exchange of reasons governed by social norms describes the everyday functioning of society. The apocalyptic as a mode of thought which gives rise to certain forms of self-understanding or political action which question or challenges is unusual. The more historical studies in chapter one demonstrate precisely this point. Apocalyptic challenges to social order do not begin, even under substantial oppression, until elements within a community are convinced that they have no future from the perspective of the present order do the fractures within that order begin to appear. Or, as explored in chapter four, it is the point at which opposition to social norms or institutions are unable to conform to the rules governing the exchange of reasons that the apocalyptic emerges as a possibility.

In adopting this position towards the religious tradition, Taubes displays one side of the Hegelian tendency. Lewis' description of Hegel as secularising religion winds up conceiving of religion in the other, more Schmittian vein. It is not Schmittian in every sense, but in the relation of subjects to the state. Lewis' reading of Hegel's philosophy of religion results in the containment of religion's apocalyptic elements. This attempt to constrain apocalypticism is one aspect of the discursive bias. For Schmitt, the constitutive moment of political authority is the declaring of the exception. Grimshaw asks if this exception is 'the sign in the secular society of liberal modernity of the apocalyptic power that exists, that is referenced by both exception and miracle, that reminds us that what we believe to be the case, the norm, is in fact only fragile and transitory?'<sup>423</sup> The answer to Grimshaw's question, from the perspective of Hegelian political theology is yes. Reading Hegel in this way results in a political theology closer to the negative political theology that Taubes finds in Paul. Paul 'fundamentally negates law as a force of political order. With this, legitimacy is denied to all sovereigns of this world, be they imperial or theocratic.'<sup>424</sup>

Hegel himself is aware of this problem. In the *Philosophy of Right*, he outlines the issue of the rabble. The rabble refuses or is unable to adapt to the norms which dictate the rules of reason giving for a particular community. 'Poverty in itself does not turn people into a rabble; a rabble is created only when there is joined to poverty a disposition of mind, an inner indignation against the rich, against, society, against the government, etc' (PR, §244z: 221/389). Hegel's response to the rabble is judgment, followed by charity and economic mobility (PR, §245: 221-

---

<sup>423</sup> Grimshaw, "Introduction: 'A Very Rare Thing,'" xvii.

<sup>424</sup> Wol Hartwich, Aleida Assmann, and Jan Assmann, "Afterword," in *The Political Theology of Paul*, by Jacob Taubes (Stanford University Press, 2004), 121.



22/390).<sup>425</sup> Individuals move from the rabble into civil society. Yet, Hegel admits that the system of production and ownership which he accepts as given, industrialised capitalism, necessarily produces the rabble. This position is based on the rushed conclusion that ‘despite an *excess of wealth* civil society is *not rich enough*, i.e. its own resources are insufficient, to check excessive poverty and the creation of penurious rabble’ (PR, §245: 222/390). Despite his awareness that the issue of poverty is ‘one that agitates and torments modern society in particular’ (PR, §244z: 221/390), Hegel concludes that this lack of resources drives what one would now call globalisation (PR, §246: 222/391), though even that is not sufficient to resolve the negativity represented by the rabble.<sup>426</sup> The rabble is the blind spot of discursively biased Hegelianism.

Taubes turns to religion as a primary resource for articulating this negativity. Whether it is understood in terms of his chiliastic reasoning or Bloch’s concrete utopia, the representations of the Jewish and Christian tradition are tools for articulating possibilities within the present of a Not-yet future. Hegel’s own understanding of religion does not recognise this function of theological tradition. His philosophy of religion, however, provides the method of interacting with theological materials which undergirds Taubes’s and Bloch’s apocalyptic political theologies.

### 6.2.3 Transcendental materialist reading of Hegel

Before turning to how Taubes’s apocalyptic political theology resonates with Malabou’s Hegelian plasticity, it will be helpful to consider the broader philosophical context of transcendental materialism, of which she is a part. Though the transcendental materialist reading of Hegel was mentioned above in chapter three, it has not featured strongly in the subsequent discussions. The work of Žižek, Johnston and Malabou is less concerned with establishing a new interpretation of Hegel than with defining a new philosophy which incorporates aspects of Hegel’s work. The political theology I am developing here does not adopt the transcendental materialist framework, largely because its major proponents do not engage with either

---

<sup>425</sup> Thom Brooks helps translate Hegel’s point into contemporary political discourse by posing the challenge of the rabble in terms of ‘stakeholders’. Those who identify as members of a society ‘believe that any problems are best resolved within the system rather than without... the essential concern is whether persons identify themselves as having a stake in the political community or not. Some may believe they do not have a shared stake and can “opt out” in a position we might call political exceptionalism, which is rooted in alienation’ Thom Brooks, *Punishment* (Routledge, 2012), 145.

<sup>426</sup> This unsatisfactory conclusion drives Frank Ruda to describe the rabble as the failure of Hegel’s attempt to philosophically comprehend politics. See his *Hegel’s Rabble: An Investigation into Hegel’s Philosophy of Right* (London; New York: Continuum, 2011).

contemporary secondary literature or the political theological tradition.<sup>427</sup> Nonetheless, the interpretation of Hegel that has emerged in previous chapters remains open to the insights of transcendental materialism. Malabou's rejection of transcendence in the following chapter is rooted in the basics of this transcendental materialist reading and its notion of the emergency of subjectivity parallels Bloch's notion of transcending without the transcendent (section 6.4.3).

There are three specific themes in Taubes which connect to the transcendental materialist reading of Hegel. First, Taubes repeatedly refers to the importance of grounding political theology in material reality. He cautions against 'crass-materialism' which is circumvented through a Hegelian mediation of materialism and idealism. Hegel himself does not perform this mediation, but Hegel's philosophy is part of the transcendence of self-alienation which allows this mediation to occur. Citing Marx's view of communism as 'the complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e., human) being' Taubes adds that 'Communist naturalism or humanism is different from both idealism and materialism; at the same time it is the truth that binds them together' (OE, 182). Noting the Hegelian language, he quotes the *Philosophic and Economic Manuscripts of 1844*, in which Marx further claims communism as 'the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man--the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species. Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution.'<sup>428</sup>

This binding together of idealism and materialism is mirrored in Johnston's definitions of transcendental materialism. This philosophy proposes:

The break induced by the more-than-material subject splitting off from its material origins is irreparable, opening up an impossible-to-close gap, a non-dialecticizable parallax split. The transcendental materialist theory of the subject is materialist insofar as it asserts that the Ideal of subjective thought arises from the Real of objective being, although it is also simultaneously transcendental insofar as it maintains that this thus-generated Ideal subjectivity thereafter achieves independence from the ground of its material sources and thereby starts to function as a set of possibility conditions for forms of reality irreducible to explanatory discourses allied to traditional versions of materialism.<sup>429</sup>

---

<sup>427</sup> There are of course exceptions. Žižek and Malabou reference Houlgate and Pippin. Malabou also references Burbidge. Both Žižek and Malabou, along with Johnston, devote most of their energy to developing highly original readings of Hegel, drawing heavily on psychoanalysis. This emphasis on psychoanalysis places their readings in a different though adjacent vein of commentary on Hegel.

<sup>428</sup> Karl Marx, *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 3, Marx and Engels: 1843-1844*, trans. Jack Cohen and et. al. (New York: International Publishers, 2005), 296–7.

<sup>429</sup> Johnston, *Žižek's Ontology*, 275.

Johnston develops this materialism further than Taubes, but the emphasis on achieving independence from the material origins of the subject is another way of articulating spirit's relation to nature.<sup>430</sup> The possibility of a freedom arising from material reality, maintaining a dialectical relationship to that material reality, and without recourse to any form of transcendent being, is a fundamental concern of both Taubes and Bloch's apocalyptic political theology. Whatever the *Vorstellung* of God and apocalypse mean for Taubes, they are materially manifested. These passages support Bielik-Robson's description of Taubes's political theology as 'materialist, messianic, historical, emancipatory, focused on the finite life, immanentist and this-worldly.'<sup>431</sup>

Second, and on a related note, Taubes claims that Hegel's ontology moves from the metaphysical to the transcendental: "They do not take nature as a norm but the production of man: history. Human creativity is placed above nature."<sup>432</sup> Johnston does not state his position in opposition to nature, but celebrates a similar irreversible production of the transcendental from its material basis. This point recalls the above discussion of Taubes's understanding of nature and freedom in section 6.1.2.

Finally, Taubes wants to preserve a kind of incompleteness to Hegel's philosophy. Taubes's understanding that 'Hegel, like Joachim, conceives of the course of world history as a progression and, consequently, as a constant negation of any system that currently exists' (OE, 166) parallels Johnston's observation that 'the reconciliation achieved by absolute knowing amounts to the acceptance of an insurmountable incompleteness, an irresolvable driving tension that cannot finally be put to rest through one last *Aufhebung*.'<sup>433</sup> This advocating of openness in Hegel recalls the discussion of Kolb's critique of open readings of Hegel. As argued earlier, Hegel's philosophy is complete in its grasping of its inherent incompleteness. Kolb's complaint was that open readings confuse the contingencies of history with the necessity of Hegel's logical system. Transcendental materialism is the sublation of this opposition: Hegel's system is comprehension of the logical, and therefore necessary, nature of the material being which gives rise to the reasoning subject. The closed nature of Hegel's thought refers to the systematic conceptualisation of the shape of Hegel's restless spirit.

That this comprehension is still a form of closure is necessary to an adequate understanding of Hegel's project. If there is only a persistent failure and reconstitution, then

---

<sup>430</sup> Indeed Hegel's understanding of nature, specifically the view that emerges in the transition between the *Philosophy of Nature* and the *Philosophy of Mind* in the *Encyclopaedia* is central to Johnston's philosophical project.

<sup>431</sup> Bielik-Robson, "Modernity," 191.

<sup>432</sup> Taubes, "Nachman Krochmal and Modern Historicism (1963)," 30.

<sup>433</sup> Johnston, *Zizek's Ontology*, 235.

thought is trapped in the position of the unhappy consciousness. It is not enough for philosophy to be dialectical; dialectics must lead the subject to self-consciousness. Hegel, summarising the sections leading up to religion in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, makes this point: “Then there was the self-consciousness that reached its final “shape” in the *Unhappy* Consciousness, that was only the *pain* of the Spirit that wrestled, but without success, to reach out into objectivity. The unity of the *individual* self-consciousness and its changeless *essence*, to which the former attains, remains therefore, a *beyond* for self-consciousness” (PS, §673: 410/363). Religion is the next step in realising the unity of the subject with that beyond, first as a unity with an other, then as a unity with an other that is also the subject. The distinctive form of alienation experienced by self-consciousness engaged in religious thought is a necessary stage for the development of philosophical thought.<sup>434</sup>

While Johnston is generally resistant to theological appropriation of philosophy,<sup>435</sup> Taubes’s political theology, with a God which ‘comes into being through history, through antithesis and negation, through *corruptio*, through suffering and formlessness’ (OE, 101), provides a compatible theological reading of Hegel’s philosophy. For Taubes, political theology must be done in a new philosophical framework, with categories that ‘are transcendental and not metaphysical.’<sup>436</sup> In this regard, Johnston’s position is the reversal of Göschel’s. If Göschel asks Hegel if it would not be better to root philosophical concepts more directly in biblical imagery, Johnston suggests that this imagery is too risky. Political theology, following the legacy of Taubes and Bloch, echoes Hegel’s reply to Göschel – absolute knowing instils the confidence necessary to return to representations.

This chapter has sketched the basics of Taubes’s political theology with particular focus both on the role of Hegelian ideas and the contrast between Taubes and Schmitt. Taubes’s apocalyptic political theology emerges as a critique of modernity for modernity’s sake; a willingness to let loose apocalyptic fervour on a society which he felt did not live out to the ideal of modern freedom. Navigating the tension of both affirming the modern world and calling for its destruction, I then supplemented Taubes’s political theology with the more politically active philosophy of Ernst Bloch. With Bloch supplementing Taubes, it became clear that there were many parallels between their reading of Hegel and the ‘non-metaphysical’ commitments to this-worldly concerns and embodied reasoning. Despite these points of connection, however, Taubes

---

<sup>434</sup> This understanding of the relationship between religion and philosophy is the overarching argument of Kathleen Dow Magnus’ work *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*. See in particular the section on spirit’s self-determination (235-37).

<sup>435</sup> See in particular his “Conflicted Matter: Jacques Lacan and the Challenge of Secularising Materialism,” *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 19 (2008): 166–188.

<sup>436</sup> Taubes, “Nachman Krochmal and Modern Historicism (1963),” 30.

uses Hegel to articulate a political theology which speaks from precisely the points obscured by discursive bias. Even clearer in Bloch's thinking from below, Hegelian philosophy of religion provides a method for thinking with theological materials in order to articulate a project of liberation. Finally, in order to prepare for the next chapter, I considered parallels between Taubes and recent transcendental materialist readings of Hegel.

### 7.0.0 Apocalypticism and Plasticity: Reading Hegel with Taubes and Malabou

The discussion thus far has demonstrated several lines of thought which support an apocalyptic reading of aspects of Hegel's philosophy. In the second chapter, I surveyed a variety of literature connecting apocalyptic movements to contemporary radical politics by way of Hegel. In the fourth and fifth chapter, I explored the relation between religion, philosophy and social norms, suggesting that religion might be the site of disruptive forces questioning the boundaries of those norms. In sixth chapter, I traced how Hegel's ideas influenced Taubes's political theology and, with reference to Ernst Bloch, explored his treatment of religion as an example of practicing Hegel's philosophy of religion in a 20<sup>th</sup> century historical context. If Taubes and Bloch translate Hegelian thought into modern Jewish apocalypticism, I interpreted aspects of their philosophies in terms of Hegel's own philosophical method. Historically and theoretically there is a clear case that apocalyptic ideas influenced Hegel and that Hegel influenced modern philosophical appropriations of apocalyptic thought. This present chapter is another iteration of that process, engaging with current readings of Hegel in order to deepen this apocalyptic political theological tradition.

In *The Future of Hegel*, Catherine Malabou writes that, by accepting the challenge of producing an interpretation of the triad 'Man, God, philosopher', 'we set ourselves in opposition to any approach that believes it can discard the anthropological, theological and philosophical material whose novelty Hegel brings to light. For it is within this material that the unique perspective of a philosophy of the event can be uncovered' (FH, 20). In a properly Hegelian fashion, these terms do not indicate objections of reflection, but 'sites where subjectivity forms itself' (FH, 20). Reading Hegel with Taubes and Malabou, further draws out religion as a form of representational thinking that enables the self-determination of subjectivity.

In the first section (7.1.0), I will consider how Malabou's concept of plasticity relates to the readings of Hegel discussed in previous sections.<sup>437</sup> In particular, I will emphasise the affinity between Malabou's understanding of plasticity as the giving of form, malleability and explosiveness and Taubes understanding of apocalypse as revelation and annihilation. In the

---

<sup>437</sup> In recent years, Malabou has gradually turned from the development of the concept of plasticity in this sense to the concept of 'neuroplasticity'. See her *What should we do with our brain?* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008); *The New Wounded: from Neurosis to Brain Damage* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012). The two explorations of plasticity are clearly related, but differentiable. I am focusing purely on her more general, philosophical use of the term. For the connection between her two explorations of plasticity, including the link to transcendental materialism, see her collaboration with Adrian Johnston in *Self and Emotional Life: Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, and Neuroscience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

second section, the resulting plastic apocalypticism furthers the goal of developing an immanent and material understanding of apocalypse (7.2.0). In comparison to other philosophical employments of eschatological ideas, especially messianism, plastic apocalypticism is able to avoid the establishing of a transcendent horizon. To draw out how Hegel is helpful in articulating this understanding of apocalypse, I refer to Malcolm Bull's work on Hegel and apocalypse, as well as studies of Hegel's understanding of contingency. I then consider the connections between the concept of plasticity and Hegel's understanding of contingency (7.3.0). What might initially seem mystical longing or utopian hopefulness in Taubes or Bloch is here recast in terms of Hegel's logical relation of actuality, possibility and contingency. These explorations return the discussion to Malabou's plasticity in the conclusion (7.4.0).

### 7.1.0 Malabou's Plastic Reading of Hegel

In the preface of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel describes speculative thought as the negation of the form of standard propositions: 'the general nature of the judgment or proposition, which involves the distinction of Subject and Predicate, is destroyed by the speculative proposition, and the proposition of identity which the former becomes contains the counter-thrust against the subject-predicate relationship' (PS, §61: 38/43).<sup>438</sup> He uses the example of the statement 'God is being' to illustrate his point. In this proposition, the Subject disappears into the Predicate. Instead of grasping the unity of the proposition the two terms are seen as accidentally connected. In contrast to this form of the proposition, Hegel claims that philosophy must work toward 'the goal of plasticity' (PS, §64: 39/45). Rather than the rigid understanding of the proposition, the movement, which is the unity, of the statement must be rendered explicit. 'This return of the Notion into itself must be *set forth*. This movement which continues what formerly the proof was supposed to accomplish, is the dialectical movement of the proposition itself. This alone is the speculative *in act*, and only the expression of this movement is a speculation exposition' (PS, §65: 39-40/45). The comprehension of the concept in its movement is the definition of the true.

A similar understanding of plasticity appears in Hegel's preface to the second edition of the *Science of Logic*. 'No subject matter is so absolutely capable of being expounded with a strictly immanent plasticity as is thought in its own necessary development...' (SL, 40/W5: 30). Here, he expands the use of the term, using it not only to describe the form of the discourse, but the process of discourse itself. 'A plastic discourse demands... a plastic receptivity and

---

<sup>438</sup> For the sake of stylistic continuity, I follow Miller's capitalisation of Subject and Predicate.

understanding on the part of the listener' (SL, 40/W5: 31). These references, along with Hegel's discussion of the 'plastic arts', are the inspiration of Malabou's concept of plasticity.

Plasticity indicates three traits which are shared between subjectivity, the dialectical process and being itself. As she explains in *The Future of Hegel*, the term 'being at once capable of receiving and of giving from' (FH, 8) and 'an explosive material... that can set off violent detonations' (FH, 9). Plasticity is thus itself a plastic term indicating 'concrete shapes in which form is crystallized (sculpture) and to the annihilation of all form (the bomb)' (FH, 9).

Applied to subjectivity, plasticity indicates the self-determining activity of spirit. This activity is the relationship of the subject to nature described in the earlier sections on transcendental materialism. The application to the dialectic method is more central to the present discussion. As Malabou explains

The dialectical process is "plastic" because, as it unfolds, it makes links between the opposing moments of total immobility (the "fixed") and vacuity ("dissolution"), and then links both in the vitality of the whole, a whole which, reconciling these two extremes, is itself the union of resistance (*Widerstand*) and fluidity (*Flüssigkeit*). The process of plasticity is dialectical because the operations which constitute it, the seizure of form and the annihilation of all form, emergence and explosion, are contradictory' (FH, 12).

Malabou here succinctly describes the framework for understanding apocalypse in an immanent and materialist context. The applications to apocalyptic political theology only become clearer when this discussion of the dialectical process turns to the issue of temporality. Recalling Hegel's earlier use of plasticity to describe the true nature of the relationship between Subject and Predicate, Malabou claims that plasticity also characterises the relationship of substance and accidents. Accident

can designate *continuation* in both senses of the word, as *consequence*, that is, "what follows" in the logical sense, and as *event*, that is, "what follows" in a chronological sense. Self-determination is thus the relation of substance to that which happens. Following this line of thought we understand the "future" in the philosophy of Hegel as the relation which subjectivity maintains with the accidental (FH, 12).

The future, for Hegel, is not merely the present which has not yet happened. In order to grasp the nature of the Hegelian future it is necessary to understand the plasticity of temporality. In this understanding '[t]ime is a dialectically differentiated instance; its being divided into definite moments determines it only *for a moment*' (FH, 13). Put another way, the future is constituted by a moment of abstraction, a schematisation of moments itself subject to the three-fold determinations of plasticity. For Malabou, understanding future this way shifts from the



vernacular meaning of the world to ‘anticipatory structure’ constitutive of subjectivity. This anticipation is not the simple teleology often attributed to Hegel’s philosophy of history, but a structure which she defines as ‘to see (what is) coming’ which is ‘the interplay, within Hegelian philosophy, of teleological necessity and surprise’ (FH, 13).

This understanding of plasticity adds another conceptual framework for appropriations of eschatology which seek to avoid the teleology of messianism and the baseless hope of opiate religion. Malabou’s understanding of the future acknowledges the primacy of Hegel’s understanding of possibility.<sup>439</sup> What is possible is actual and the becoming of the actual is its necessity. At the same time, there are those things that become necessary. Or, put another way, their necessity is their becoming. And this necessity, like the future, is a moment. Necessity is a judgment which may be undone. This affirms the basic necessity of contingency which affirms that there is nothing unconvertible. Nothing is beyond change except the system of knowing which grasps the fundamental concepts inherent to that change. Everything is plastic.

To state that nothing is unconvertible amounts to claiming the philosophical necessity of the thought of a new materialism, which does not believe in the “formless” and implies the vision of a malleable real that challenges the conception of time as a purely messianic process. It means that we can sometimes decide about the future... which means that there is actually something to do with it, in the sense in which Marx says that men make their own history’ (PD, 77).

The concepts of plasticity and ‘to see (what is) coming’ allow Malabou to articulate an understanding of the future capable of seeing the Not-yet. In other words, the future is not present and any notion of apocalypse which requires seeing the future is eliminated.<sup>440</sup> Malabou discusses a visibility that cannot be confused with presence.<sup>441</sup> This serves her definition of the

---

<sup>439</sup> While differing on the implications of Hegel’s understanding of contingency, the basic outlines of Houlgate and Burbidge are two of the most significant explanations of the relevant passages of the *Science of Logic*. Stephen Houlgate, “Necessity and Contingency in Hegel’s Science of Logic,” *The Owl of Minerva* 27, no. 1 (1995): 37–49,, and Burbidge, *Hegel on Logic and Religion*. Both make reference to Dieter Henrich’s classic essay ‘Hegels Theorie über den Zufall’ in his *Hegel im Kontext*. (Frankfurt (am Main): Suhrkamp, 1971). See section (7.3.0) below for a more detailed discussion.

<sup>440</sup> Here, Roland Boer’s contrast of eschatology and apocalypse (section 2.1.2) is again significant. In his definition, one calling on the study of genres in the biblical historical-critical tradition, apocalypse is defined in part by the seeing of the future. As in the initial chapter, I am using apocalypse in a modified sense. While this has the disadvantage of potentially creating confusion with the more traditional meaning of the term, eschatology does not carry the same notion of destruction as the ground of revelation. It is that potential for destruction that runs through Taubes, Bloch and Malabou.

<sup>441</sup> This notion of seeing without presence is further expanded in the following section which engages with Malcom Bull’s *Seeing Things Hidden*.

plasticity as ‘the open gap in philosophical discourse between its tradition or “metaphysical” form and its “deconstructed” form. In the gaping openness of the face-off between these two forms, a new *figural-textual* depth is created, a space where plastic reading can get to work’ (PD, 56).

This polyvalent understanding of plasticity deepens Taubes’ definition of theology. If Taubes defines the enduring significance of theology as the discourse which names the difference between humanity as it is and as it could be, Malabou’s plasticity identifies the nature of the relationship of this discourse to the traditions which furnish its key terms and concepts. Recalling Rabinbach’s description of 20<sup>th</sup> century German Jewish messianism’s ‘language-work’, Taubes, and Bloch, have a plastic relationship to the apocalyptic traditions whose texts litter their works.

The plastic reading of a text is the reading that seeks to reveal the form left in the text through the withdrawing of presence, that is, through its own deconstruction. It is a question of showing how a text lives its deconstruction.... It is a matter of revealing a form in the text that is both other than the same *and* other than the other, *other than metaphysics, other than deconstruction*. A form that is the fruit of the self-regulation of the relation between tradition and its superseding and which at the same time exceeds that strict binary terms of this relation (PD, 52).

Like Taubes and Bloch, Malabou recognises the value in speaking with traditions, subversively appropriating concepts. Plasticity recognises the negativity within being itself as the motor of thought, tracing the movement between tradition and novelty, exposing the tensions within the present in order to open up spaces for something new.<sup>442</sup>

Not only does plasticity characterise Taubes and Bloch’s relationship to these textual traditions, it can be taken as a description of the relationship between representation and concept in Hegel’s philosophy of religion. This philosophy of religion is plastic in three ways. First, as the dual voices of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* show, the path of spirit is traced by the following of an elusive object. From the initial stages of immediacy onward, the consciousness within the *Phenomenology* finds itself thinking something which slips through its comprehension until consciousness finally recognises that to think the object is to think itself at the same time (PS §25: 14/22). Consciousness is constantly granting form to experience only to experience the shifting nature of objects. Second, Hegel offers an approach that is neither the persistence of pre-critical metaphysics, nor the perpetual deferral of deconstruction. The recognition of the other does not turn the other into a transcendent horizon from which novelty emerges. Novelty

---

<sup>442</sup> On the relation between what presently is, or the actual, and the potential for novelty, see the section on contingency below (7.3.0).

emerges immanently, within history, as a rupture or break. That is, novelty emerges plastically. Finally, Hegel's philosophy of religion describes neither a straightforwardly secularising approach nor a theologically triumphalist post-secularism. Rather he lays the methodological framework for experimenting with theological materials, understood as emerging from the nature of religion itself. Within the political theology of Taubes or Bloch, one finds the plasticity of theological concepts.

This emergence from within the tradition, an immanent critique or deconstruction through self-alienation, is the central theme that Taubes and Bloch both trace back to Joachim de Fiore. Even in light of more historical work which shows that Joachim would be dismayed at the appropriation of his work, there is nevertheless a real sense in which Christianity produces something new. What makes Bloch and Taubes particularly useful for the development of political theology is their rejection of returning to an untarnished origin. Nor do they adopt a strict narrative of the decline of the significance of theology. Rather, they offer a response to the challenge raised by Segundo in the introduction. Here is an effort genuinely to rethink 'religion so that it might accentuate and eventually correct the situation being protested against.'<sup>443</sup> It is 'an act of will from within theology itself, an act of will that could signify a change in the way of treating problems theologically.'<sup>444</sup>

The form of this rethinking is not inevitable. It is not that it was always the case that this form of thinking with theology would emerge. It is this understanding of development which Malabou draws out of Hegel.

For Hegel, philosophical tradition refers to two things simultaneously: 'to the movement through which a particular accident... becomes essential (i.e. it becomes *fate*), and to the way a destiny, standing for the essential, then actualizes itself in its accidents, i.e. in its epochs and stages. Whether one is prior to the other is not something that can be known. This is what Absolute Knowledge *knows*. Hegelian philosophy assumes as an absolute fact the emergence of the random in the very bosom of necessity and the fact that the random, the aleatory, becomes necessary' (FH, 163).

This returns to the point, made above, that the future is a mode of abstraction. Necessity characterises a moment of thought, not the course of thinking itself. In a sense, necessity flies at dusk. The possible only becomes necessary as it becomes actual, but that actuality is always contingent (SL, 550-553/W6: 213-217). Awareness of necessity's late arrival changes the subject's relationship to the future, foregrounding the underlying contingency.

---

<sup>443</sup> Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, 17.

<sup>444</sup> Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*, 18.

### 7.1.1 Plastic Apocalypticism: Taubes and Malabou

Given Malabou's understanding of plasticity, I now turn to its relationship with the form of apocalypticism developed by Taubes. Many of these points of connection have gradually been emerging in the preceding discussion. This present section will make these connections more explicit, providing an initial ground for the following sections which develop the implications of this plasticity.

Recall that in *Occidental Eschatology* Taubes writes, '[t]he apocalyptic principle combined within it a form-destroying and forming power. Depending on the situation and the task, only one of the two components emerges, but neither can be absent' (OE, 10). As shown in the previous section Malabou's understanding of plasticity as 'the union of resistance and fluidity... The process of plasticity is dialectical because the operations which constitute it, the *seizure of form and the annihilation of all form*, emergence and explosion, are contradictory' (FH, 12). In light of the parallel between these two statements, I propose that Taubes offers a plastic understanding of apocalypticism.

The parallel continues in the problem of history and apocalypticism. In this earlier discussion (6.1.3), Bielik-Robson objected Taubes's apocalypticism: the willingness to see it all go down inevitably contradicts his desire to defend modernity against its own worst tendencies. I argued that his willing the annihilation of the world as it is should be taken as the annihilation of the world *as it is*, rather the destruction of the world *tout court*. Here Malabou is again helpful. Following trends of destruction and deconstruction, she calls for readings of texts which give rise to their plastic processes of metamorphosis (PD, 52). In this sense, metamorphosis names a process which, in its plasticity, is annihilation, but always an annihilation which is the granting of form. In the development of an immanent and materialist apocalypticism, Taubes cannot desire the destruction of the world, for the world is all there is. Equipped with Malabou's terminology, it is possible to understand Taubes as calling for the destruction of the world as a plastic process of metamorphosis in which annihilation, explosion and emergence are joined in contradictory relation.

With this confluence of apocalypticism and plasticity in mind, I now turn to applying that plasticity to issues that emerge in the development of a political theology that is both immanent and material. The problem of immanence, for apocalypticism, is the problem of alterity. As noted in chapter two, even in the broadest sense of the term, apocalypse is taken to indicate a shared 'conceptual framework... endorsing a worldview in which supernatural revelation, the

heavenly world, and eschatological judgment played essential parts.<sup>445</sup> The political theology developed by Taubes and the reading of Hegel offered my Malabou reject both the notion of supernatural revelation, at least apart from a representational understanding of that phase, or any external, heavenly world. The question becomes one of offering a concept of immanent alterity capable of sustaining novelty.

### 7.2.0 The Problem of Alterity and the Rejection of the Transcendent

As argued throughout the last chapter, Taubes offers an example of thinking with theological materials. Philosophy returns to religious representation in order to express itself in ways inaccessible to abstract thought. Given the inherent ambiguity of representations, there will be tensions between the reconfigured representation and the orthodox functioning of theological ideas. When considering Taubes's use of apocalyptic ideas, the most pressing concern is apocalypticism's tendency to encourage both passivity and a notion of the transcendent. Both these tendencies take emphasis away from human agency. The result is what Bloch refers to as the patience of the cross in which the temporal suffering of the present is only a momentary distraction from eternal paradise. Against this idea, the young Hegel writes in condemnation of 'the innumerable hypocrites in any church' who embrace ascetic ideals, privileging those who 'have mastered all the requisite knowledge' and who 'live and move in church activities' (ETW, 138/181-182). This form of Christianity 'has taught men to despise civil and political freedom as dung in comparison with heavenly blessings and the enjoyment of eternal life' (ETW, 138/182). For Hegel, it fell to those who would think philosophically about religion to overturn this form of religion: 'it has been reserved in the main for our epoch to vindicate at least in theory the human ownership of the treasures formerly squandered on heaven...' (ETW, 159/209).

While the alienation from theological representations is endemic to the form of those representations, the philosophic comprehension of the relationship between representation and concept allows one to use those representations in light of the ambiguities arising from that alienation. The philosophic employment of representation allows one to experiment with representations in order to clarify particularly problematic ambiguities. The issue of apocalypticism's relation to transcendence is especially concerning.

In this section I first consider how Taubes addresses the issue of transcendence (7.2.1). In order to construct a Hegelian support to Taubes's understanding, I then turn to the work of Malcolm Bull, who uses Hegel's notion of contradiction to develop a theory of apocalypse

---

<sup>445</sup> Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 13.

(7.2.2). This discussion leads to a consideration of Malabou's rejection of transcendence, most clearly demonstrated in her critique of philosophical appropriations of messianism (7.2.3). Together Taubes and Malabou help draw out the immanent apocalypticism of Hegel's dialectic. Or, put another way, Taubes's use of the apocalyptic experiments with theological representations in order to draw the force of the negative in Hegel's philosophy, as articulated in Malabou's concept of plasticity.

### 7.2.1 Taubes and Immanence

In Taubes work, 'theology describes the external horizon of alterity, which in negation and alienation took a stand against culture as the sphere of familiarity and whose antagonistic force he intends to strengthen in a time in which Christian, particularly Protestant, theology in its conventional understanding has long since been incorporated into culture as one of its domains against others.'<sup>446</sup> This summarises the central tension of the Hegelian question under consideration in this chapter. In his advocating for religion's civic role, Hegel pushes for the cultural incorporation of Christianity. In the more open reading of Hegel's understanding of the absolute, the truth which religion represents includes a more disruptive, negative aspect. While this aspect can still be included within a civic understanding of religion, it moves that civic understanding into greater potential conflict with the state. If Hegel's understanding of representation and concept is a 'two-way' relation, as seen in his letter to Göschel, then this more open understanding of the absolute must also be drawn out of religious representations.

Taubes's definition of theology points to a second tension – the question of alterity and externality. In a review of the first volume of Paul Tillich's systematic theology, Taubes discusses Tillich's symbolic topology. Rather than directing theology outward, to the external, Taubes sees Tillich as 'mining the depths'. "The "depth" of reason expresses something that is not reason but that precedes reason and is manifest through it. That which transcends reason is not located "beyond" reason, but the arrow of transcendence points "downward" into the depth. The depth of reason is interpreted as "substance" that appears in the rational structure of reality."<sup>447</sup> Taubes does not offer an evaluation at this point, only noting the importance of depth as an ontological symbol. In the following section, however, he connects his summary of Tillich to Hegel. Taubes reads the *Phenomenology* as offering a logos-theology in which what becomes 'explicit in theology

---

<sup>446</sup> Assmann, Assmann, and Hartwich, "Introduction to the German Edition," xxii.

<sup>447</sup> Taubes, "On the Nature of the Theological Method (1954)," 208.

is the spirit that recognizes itself; it is reason united with its own depth.<sup>448</sup> This logos moves the word that was external to humanity and places it within the movement of the dialectic. Theology allows humanity to speak of its self-alienation before it realises its own role in that process. Achieving this recognition, the process described in the last chapter, results in a ‘Gnostic theology of knowledge’ which ‘has its source in the Alexandrian theology and in the speculations of Joachim of Fiore.’<sup>449</sup> Hegel’s thought is simultaneously theological and philosophical, ‘but it is not a theology in the supernaturalistic sense, for it does not locate the spirit outside of man. In Hegel’s logos-theology the symbols are finally translated into immanent categories.’<sup>450</sup>

In a later paper on surrealism Taubes offers a similar perspective, highlighting the importance of the issue of these spatial terms. Questioning the prefix *sur* of surrealism he asks ‘how the vertical schema of Gnosticism must fundamentally transform itself if it is to become visible in the circumference of post-Copernican immanence.’<sup>451</sup> While acknowledging that it is also possible to argue for a horizontal schema, Taubes advocates interpreting the *sur* in terms of the vertical. Initially adopting the vertical schema might appear to be an affirmation of the transcendent, but Taubes clarifies:

In Gnosticism, the pneumatic Self, which stands in opposition to the world in all its forms, must guarantee its unworldliness though an unworldly God beyond the cosmos. *This is in a certain sense nothing other than the great projection of the revolutionary uncovered non-worldly self.* The surrealist revolt takes place against the infinite world established in modern science of nature and technology that is experienced as a system of domination and coercion, but in its breakout from this endless system of worldly coercion, it cannot invoke the guarantee of a God beyond the world.<sup>452</sup>

A key claim to Taubes’s discussion of surrealism is his exploration of its emphasis, shared by Gnosticism, against the coercion of the necessary, understood variously as common sense, the natural and the status quo.<sup>453</sup>

---

<sup>448</sup> Taubes, “On the Nature of the Theological Method (1954),” 210. Drawing a connection between Hegel and Tillich is not surprising given the latter’s engagement with German Idealism. The nature of religion and theological method, however, is a point of particular confluence. See Merold Westphal, “Hegel, Tillich, and the Secular,” *The Journal of Religion* 52, no. 3 (July 01, 1972): 223–239.

<sup>449</sup> Taubes, “On the Nature of the Theological Method (1954),” 210.

<sup>450</sup> Taubes, “On the Nature of the Theological Method (1954),” 210–11.

<sup>451</sup> Jacob Taubes, “Notes on Surrealism (1966),” in *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 120.

<sup>452</sup> Taubes, “Notes on Surrealism (1966),” 107.

<sup>453</sup> Earlier sections of this chapter have referred to Hegel’s understanding of contingency and necessity, developed below in (7.3.0). Taubes is using ‘necessary’ in an unrelated fashion.

If Taubes's theology involves recognising alterity, but this alterity cannot be transcendent in the usual sense of the external or non-human, an alternative notion of alterity is required. The beyond or alterity indicated by theological symbols, now rendered as immanent categories, signifies not an external alterity but 'an "intensity" of the immanent.'<sup>454</sup> Taubes's reading of Tillich and Hegel brings to mind the earlier discussion of secularisation (4.4.0). Hegel does not offer a story of secularisation in which religion is presented as outdated superstition. Rather religion is an essential moment in the development of Spirit which recognises itself as the agent of its own alienation. The result is not a cessation of alienation, but an understanding of alienation as key to the form of knowledge that is absolute knowing.

### 7.2.2 Contradiction and Immanent Forms of Alterity

If this disruptive alterity is not intruding from On-high, but is a force emerging within the immanent plane of history, how then is it to be understood? It must be both within history but not of history. Malcolm Bull provides a useful understanding of apocalypse as immanent while connecting this understanding back to Hegel. He describes this immanentised apocalyptic force as the return of the excluded or the reinclusion of the undifferentiated. Bull argues that the predominance of binaries within differing cultures establishes a realm of transgressive undifferentiation.<sup>455</sup> For Bull, 'apocalyptic not only describes the reinclusion of the undifferentiated into a pre-existing binary system, it may also go on to reveal a new system, a new millennium that operates on principles different from those of the old.'<sup>456</sup> The apocalyptic revelation does not affirm one side of the binary against the other, persisting a contradiction, but is 'a transcendence of the polarity.'<sup>457</sup> Bull's care in articulating the relationship between apocalypse, the undifferentiated and the binary stems from his acknowledgment of the potentially conservative, cyclical understandings which repeat the expulsion of the undifferentiated.<sup>458</sup>

---

<sup>454</sup> Taubes, "On the Nature of the Theological Method (1954)," 208.

<sup>455</sup> Bull links this to the work of Kristeva on sacrifice and taboo. Bivalence emerges in response to the 'convulsive transition from undifferentiation to difference', which 'whether described in terms of abjection or the scapegoat mechanism, is characterized by the exclusion of the undifferentiated, and the establishment of a symbolic and social order maintained through institutional forms...' (Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 66.). As an example, Bull refers to Levitical law and the expulsion of the scapegoat.

<sup>456</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 79.

<sup>457</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 78.

<sup>458</sup> Bull's awareness of this tension is another point at which the ambiguity in religion as representation is made manifest. As with Hegel's internal tension, the contrasting positions of



Bull then turns to Hegel to understand this transcending of polarity. ‘If apocalypse is the reincorporation of excluded contradiction, then Hegel must be the most apocalyptic of philosophers.’<sup>459</sup> This evaluation is supported by his reading of the opening of Hegel’s *Science of Logic*. In the course of developing his doctrine of being, Hegel examines the relationship between being, nothing and becoming. Pure being and pure nothing are identical, each passing over into the other.<sup>460</sup> Yet their identity is mobile, as they are both the same and ‘absolutely distinct’ at the same time (SL, 82-3/W5: 83). The name of this relationship, in which being and nothing are both same and different, is becoming. This transition is the introduction of dialectic as ‘the higher movement of reason in which such seemingly utterly separate terms pass over into each other spontaneously’ (SL, 105/W5: 111). Having established that ‘dialectical immanent nature of being and nothing’ (SL, 105/W5: 111) manifests their unity in becoming, Hegel turns to the precise nature of this becoming as coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be. As one might expect a similar pattern emerges. The two are not externally related as sublations of the other. Rather ‘each sublates itself in itself and is in its own self the opposite of itself’ (SL, 106/W5: 112). ‘The finite is defined as limited, which establishes the infinite by way of contradiction. Yet the infinite too is defined by its other, the finite, making it finite as well. Finite and infinite ‘are just as much essentially *connected* by the very negation which separates them’ (SL, 140/W5: 153).

Here is where Bull offers his analysis of the implication for apocalyptic thought. Hegel claims that thought

passes from the finite to the infinite. This transcending of the finite appears as an external act... Owing to the inseparability of the infinite and finite... there arises a limit; the infinite has vanished and its other, the finite, has entered. But this entrance of the finite appears as a happening external to the infinite, and the new limit as something that does not arise from the infinite itself but is likewise found as given. And so we are faced with a relapse into the previous determination which has been sublated in vain. But this new limit is itself only something which has to be sublated or transcended. And so again there arises the void, the nothing, in which similarly the said determinateness, a new limit, is encountered – *and so on to infinity* (SL, 141/W5: 154).

Hegel calls this understanding of the infinite the spurious infinite, against which he poses an alternative notion – the affirmative infinity. ‘The infinite, therefore, as now before us is, in fact,

---

Schmitt and Taubes and the discussion of right and left sacred in the introductory chapter, religion is always open to appropriation for a variety of purposes.

<sup>459</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 100.

<sup>460</sup> It is important to note that Hegel is talking about pure, abstract being and nothing. As he explains later in the section, any determination which would enable one to distinguish between the two would shift the conversation to determinate being and determinate nothing (SL, 92/W5: 95).

the process in which it is deposed to being only *one* of its determinations, the opposite of the finite, and so to being itself only one of the finites, and then raising this its difference from itself into the affirmation of itself and through this mediation becoming the *true* infinite' (SL, 148/W5: 163). This true infinite is in fact a becoming which has become further determined from the moment of abstract becoming which characterised the relationship between being and nothing. This infinite does not move in a line, but through self-negation.<sup>461</sup> The infinite is defined by contradiction.<sup>462</sup>

Much of Bull's work is helpful in further developing Taubes's and Bloch's apocalyptic reading of Hegel. Bull connects Hegel to Joachim of Fiore, though with greater historical nuance.<sup>463</sup> His central concern is to use Hegel's understanding of contradiction as a means of cultivating apocalyptic thought. Put more in terms of this present study, he argues that apocalypse as representational form is oriented towards the conceptualisation of contradiction. Finally, he begins to connect dialectics and revelation as related forms of thought in which destruction and construction are related, a relation which will only be fully explained by pairing Taubes and Malabou in the following section.

Bull's understanding of Hegel's apocalypticism poses two problems, however, which threaten his contribution. First, it draws on a controversial reading of Hegel. Second, it depends upon what initially seems like an idiosyncratic definition of apocalypse.

Bull's reading of Hegel is influenced by the work of Graham Priest, who has developed a dialethic reading of Hegel.<sup>464</sup> Dialetheism focuses on the occurrence of true contradictions. 'A dialetheia is a true contradiction, where "contradiction" has its ordinary, logical, sense. Thus, a dialetheia is a true statement of the form A&-A.'<sup>465</sup> The specifics of Priest's understanding of contradiction are not necessary for the present discussion, but, as Bull cites him as the major influence in his reading of Hegel, it is important to note the nature of this influence.

---

<sup>461</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 104.

<sup>462</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 109.

<sup>463</sup> Bull echoes Reeves's assessment of Hegel's access to Joachim's texts, acknowledging that 'as for the evidence of Hegel's actual engagement with primary and secondary apocalyptic texts, it is conspicuous more by its absence than its presence. By these measures, Hegel had fewer apocalyptic concerns than Herder, Kant, Lessing, Schelling or Comte' (Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 113). This concession is balanced by calling on O'Regan's study as a demonstration of the influence of apocalyptic and gnostic ideas in the broader philosophical culture of German Idealism (112).

<sup>464</sup> Bull refers in particular to Priest's *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (CUP Archive, 1995), which contains sections on Hegel's understanding of the infinite.

<sup>465</sup> Graham Priest, "Dialectic and Dialethic," *Science & Society* 53, no. 4 (December 01, 1989): 388.

Priest provides a similar summary of the relationship between finite, spurious infinite and true infinite.<sup>466</sup> Likewise, he concludes with a description of the true infinite taken from the *Science of Logic*: ‘the self-sublation of this infinite and of the finite, as a *single* process – this is the *true* or *genuine infinite*’ (SL, 137/W5: 149). He describes the process of positing the limit of the finite as infinite and the dissolution of this limit through the comprehension of the consequential limit of the infinite, as ‘two moments: forming a bound and breaking a bound. *Seriatim* they constitute the false infinite; *conciunctim* they constitute the true infinite.’<sup>467</sup> Priest observes that this section of the *Logic* demonstrates that Hegel was aware ‘that certain kinds of limits behave in a contradictory fashion’ and ‘fashions a contradictory category to think them.’<sup>468</sup> Priest does not think that Hegel’s understanding of the infinite as a contradictory category is a sufficient concept for thinking contradiction. Nonetheless, it is a ‘rudimentary’ theory which points in the direction of dialetheism.

While not debating the centrality of contradiction for Hegel’s philosophy, the form of contradiction operating in my reading differs from Priest’s and, consequently, Bull’s. Priest’s primary concern is showing that real contradictions do not only appear in reality, they appear in logic.<sup>469</sup> As noted above, Priest’s dialetheism maintains that it is possible for something to be true and false at the same time. Adopting this position, however, is to freeze the movement of thought. It is not that a statement is both true and false at the same time, but that truth is the movement of thought generated by their contradiction. Hegel is not describing a truth of a contradiction, but a truth by contradiction. This understanding of the true is clearly stated in one of the most emblematic statements from the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: ‘The True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development’ (PS, §20: 11/19).

Against Priest I argue that Hegel offers a more dynamic philosophy. Contradiction does not present two opposing positions which must be maintained simultaneously, but is the source of the negativity which drives the process of thought. Comprehending this process as a movement is truth. Another way of identifying the difference between Priest’s position and the one being developed here, is to use the categories of transcendental and speculative thought. As Angelica Nuzzo succinctly summarises, ‘transcendental logic is concerned with the truth of

---

<sup>466</sup> There are a number of translations for the German terms *Schlecht-Unendliche* and *wahrhaft Unendliche*. While I have used spurious and true, Priest prefers false and genuine.

<sup>467</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 120.

<sup>468</sup> Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought*, 121.

<sup>469</sup> Priest, “Dialectic and Dialetheic,” 389–93.

cognition, namely, of thinking in relation to a determinate and particular content or object.<sup>470</sup> This description captures Priest's goal – to consider the 'truth of cognition'. In contrast, speculative logic considers the truth of cognition, but only as a moment in the process of pursuing the cognition of truth. This cognition of truth requires setting 'the logical form in motion', a motion which dialetheism arrests. Again following Nuzzo, 'Speculative truth does not leave anything behind it; it is cumulative and inclusive; it is concrete in that it uses the false as the means to acquire determinates and specification.'<sup>471</sup>

This dynamic understanding of the dialectic is thus neither Priest's dialetheism nor a simple resolution into unity. Priest is right to emphasise the significant role of contradiction; as Hegel writes, 'Finite things... in their indifferent multiplicity are simply this, to be contradictory and *disrupted within themselves and to return into their ground*' (SL, 443/W6: 79). Bull successfully uses contradiction to articulate his theory of apocalypse, but does not need to repeat Priest's preservation of a static contradiction. If, as Bull argues, apocalypse indicates a 'revelation of the contradiction and indeterminacy at the limit of the existing order through the imaginative reversal of the processes that have excluded them' and is consequently 'concerned with the limits of the world',<sup>472</sup> the implications of his definition change slightly if one adopts a speculative understanding of truth. Apocalypse still refers to a persistent contradiction, one which Taubes would describe as the gap between humanity as it is and as it could be, as well as indeterminacy, what Bloch refers to as the Not-yet.

If this brief consideration of Priest's influence resolves the issue of Bull's reading of Hegel, there still remains the problem of Bull's definition of apocalypse. Before explaining apocalypse in terms of contradiction and indeterminacy, Bull begins by defining apocalypse in terms of the return of undifferentiation – 'that which was excluded is reincluded, and a new order is created, less exclusive than that which previously existed.'<sup>473</sup> Here the undifferentiated denotes a primordial state before the commencement of abstraction, which Bull interprets in both epistemological and social terms. While advocating undifferentiation in opposition to

---

<sup>470</sup> Nuzzo, "'... As If 'Truth Were a Coin!' Lessing and Hegel's Developmental Theory of 'Truth,'" 131. I take the strategy of using Nuzzo's emphasis on the dynamism of Hegel's method to respond to Priest from the work of Michela Bordignon. Her parallel refutation of Priest was presented at a conference on 'Hegel's Conception of Contradiction: Logic, Life and History' at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. For her critique of Priest, although without reference to Nuzzo, see her "Contradiction or Non-Contradiction? Hegel's Dialectic Between Brandom and Priest," *Verifiche* XLI, no. 1–3 (2012): 221–245. I am thankful for her feedback on my discussion of Priest.

<sup>471</sup> Nuzzo, "'... As If 'Truth Were a Coin!' Lessing and Hegel's Developmental Theory of 'Truth,'" 153.

<sup>472</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 84.

<sup>473</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 79.

bivalence is understandable, undifferentiation is perhaps too strong a term as Bull moves into his consideration of Hegel. Rather than undifferentiated, one might use Hegel's 'identity of identity and difference'. This preserves the sense of moving beyond bivalence while also preserving a degree of differentiation. The problem with bivalence from the Hegelian perspective is not so much differentiation as the arresting of thought.

If that clarifies the role of Hegel's notion of contradiction, one is still left with the issue of Bull's use of apocalypse in relation to the broader theological traditions from which the term arises. Bull claims that the term apocalyptic has expanded, taking on new meanings not included in its origins as a literary genre.<sup>474</sup> While it is undoubtedly true that the vernacular use of apocalypse does not adhere to the strict definitions of the biblical genre, it is important to establish a more substantial link between the traditional understanding and Bull's philosophical interpretation.

The first step would be, again, to refer to Hegel's understanding of religion as representation. This philosophical framing immediately establishes a distance between the religious understanding as such and the abstract conceptualisation of that which is represented. The task then becomes one of linking the altered version of Bull's understanding of contradiction and exclusion to the symbol of apocalypse. Bull invokes what he deems the culturally universal function of bivalence. This bivalence, despite its dominance in varying world cultures, is 'not a fundamental datum of both mental and natural life.'<sup>475</sup> Challenges to bivalence often occur at the limits of society, thus demanding the management through rituals. Appealing to a variety of anthropological and philosophical sources, Bull observes that '... if there are always mechanisms through which the balance between difference and undifferentiation is regulated, it seems probable that sacrifice and/or taboo sometimes performs this function, and that the process may be imaginatively reversed so that what was excluded is reincorporated.'<sup>476</sup> The reincorporation of the excluded might initially leave open notions of recovering an unspoiled origin. Bull is quick to close off this interpretation.

Apocalyptic not only describes the reinclusion of the undifferentiated into a pre-existing binary system, it may also go on to reveal a new system, a new millennium that operates on principles different from those of the old. Apocalyptic texts often describe a process in which undifferentiated chaos is the prelude to a new order: but where sacrifice is cyclical and conservative - the original binary oppositions can be repeatedly restored by the re-enacted exclusion of the undifferentiated element - apocalyptic is dialectical and revolutionary. It is not the oppositions dissolved in the period of undifferentiation that

---

<sup>474</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 48.

<sup>475</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 54.

<sup>476</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 78.

are re-established, but a new set. The undifferentiated returns, that which was excluded is reincluded, and a new order is created, less exclusive than that which previously existed.<sup>477</sup>

Bull's exploration of apocalypse as 'the revelation of undifferentiation' sees sacrifice and taboo as two predominant modes of maintaining differentiation. In this reading, sacrifice and taboo are thus modes of restraining the apocalyptic. In his discussion of Schmitt, Taubes suggested that he and Schmitt both realised the significance of apocalyptic ideas. Schmitt's goal, as a jurist, was to restrain those forces and preserve the world as it is. This goal gives rise to the idea of the exception as miracle. Taubes, on the other hand, seeks to unleash those forces. He has no commitment to the world as it is. Bull arrives at a quite similar conclusion.

Apocalyptic does not merely invert the processes embodied in taboo or sacrifice, it also differs from these practices in that it positively welcomes the intrusion of chaos into the existing cosmos. As sacrifice and taboo are both mechanisms devoted to keeping chaos at bay, apocalyptic not only assumes that they will cease as part of the future intrusion of the undifferentiated, but may actually dispense with them.<sup>478</sup>

Bull is aware that his definition of the apocalyptic is idiosyncratic, but defends his understanding as more inclusive than traditional theological definitions of the genre.<sup>479</sup>

If apocalyptic is a revelation of the contradiction and indeterminacy excluded at the foundation of the world, then what is revealed may require a particular form of revelation. In societies where bivalence is assumed to be natural, the undifferentiated is inaccessible to normal patterns of thought, so access can be gained only by means that circumvent the accepted modes of cognition.<sup>480</sup>

While Bull's claims about more traditional literary understandings of apocalypse are contentious, his broader point resonates with arguments made throughout earlier chapters: apocalypse is a feature of socially marginal communities which seek to express demands inexpressible within the limits of the predominant social norms. In challenging those norms, it foments chaos, an annihilation which is also the insistence on the emergence of new novel forms of social organisation.

The concluding paragraph of Bull's *Seeing Things Hidden*, much like Taubes's political theology, suggests a new approach to apocalyptic themes. Rather than seeing the persistence of

---

<sup>477</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 79.

<sup>478</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 78–79.

<sup>479</sup> Bull refers to the work of Christopher Rowland's *The Open Heaven*., though his argument is applicable to the definitions discussed in chapter two.

<sup>480</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 83.

apocalypticism within Christianity as an aberration of an otherwise modern religion, it is the work of modernity which uncovers the apocalypticism latent within a Christianity too accommodated to one form of modernity.

One consequence of this account is that it suggests that the apocalyptic hiddenness of contemporary society is not an unwanted by-product of the Enlightenment project but a testimony to its success. If the acknowledgement of others and the de-alienation of the world effects a coming into hiding of excluded contradiction, then the increasing hiddenness of the world comes from the spread of recognition and the lighting up of the necessarily hidden – in which case this apocalypse has to be seen not as a sudden implosion of the world, but rather, as Joachim and Hegel envisaged, a gradual progress towards contradiction brought about by the subtle but irreversible dawning of new aspects on the aspect-blind.<sup>481</sup>

While Bull helps illuminate underlying Hegelian logical structures to apocalyptic thought, the concluding sentence indicates the point of divergence for Malabou and Taubes. While not denying the importance of gradual progress, there is still a place for plasticity as *plastique*.

In summary, Bull's reading of contradiction in Hegel is a useful way of locating the roots of apocalypticism within Hegel's logic. This adds a further range of resources for thinking about Hegel's theology, as other sources tend to focus either on the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* or sections dealing explicitly with theological representations such as the Trinity or Incarnation in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* or the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*. Bull also shows how the representation of apocalypticism relates to concepts at the heart of Hegel's philosophical system. By connecting to the conceptual content, Bull furthers the process of resituating apocalypticism within the immanent plane.

### 7.2.3 Immanent Alterity and Apocalypticism: Against Messianism

In the preceding sections, I have shown how Taubes's understanding of apocalypticism coherently uses the term within an immanent and materialist political theology. I then explored the Hegelian aspects of this immanentisation by using Malcolm Bull's work on apocalypse and contradiction. In this present section, I turn back to Malabou and her reflections on eschatology.

---

<sup>481</sup> Bull, *Seeing Things Hidden*, 294. Bull concludes by contrasting this understanding of apocalypse with utopian thought. His disparaging of utopianism, however, would not apply to Bloch's concrete utopia, but to the more common 'blue print' utopia which Bloch himself opposes. See Ben Anderson, "'Transcending Without Transcendence': Utopianism and an Ethos of Hope," *Antipode* 38, no. 4 (2006): 691–710.

The primary motivation for discussing eschatology is in response to Derrida's 'messianism without a messiah'. Her objections are twofold. First, she rejects transcendence in the form of an external alterity:

And with no irruptive transcendence, there is no open door to the pure event. Nor any messianism. Nothing happens except self-transformation. From modification to metamorphosis, from migration to modification, the torsions, *volte-faces*, and reversals of a single impossibility of escaping unfold... there is no outside, nor is there any immobility. The plasticity of unavoidable transformation. The lifeline of a radical transformation without exoticism (PD, 44).

Malabou writes of a plasticity that, like the destruction and deconstruction that came before it, does not operate as an external force, but emerges from within – an 'alterity that does not come from a yonder' (PD, 67). This is the great challenge for theology – to find the tools of self-transformation from within the very tradition that must be transformed. Malabou's contribution is to clarify this operation so that it can function not only as the motor scheme of philosophy, but of theology. Plasticity denotes forms of novelty that emerge within an immanent plane.

Malabou's stressing of the immanent in her reading of Hegel is not only a rejection of the Derridian or Levinasian messianic preservation of the transcendent, it is also an argument about the nature of the Hegelian absolute. Malabou wants to keep a strong reading of this concept, maintaining with Hegel that there is nothing outside the absolute (FH, 4).<sup>482</sup> This does not

---

<sup>482</sup> Malabou cites the opening sections of the *Philosophy of Mind* to support her position: 'Mind is, therefore, in its every act only apprehending itself, and the aim of all genuine science is just this, *that mind shall recognize itself in everything in heaven and so on earth. An out-and-out Other simply does not exist for mind*' (E3, §377z:1/W10, 9-10; emphasis added). This position is maintained throughout Hegel's work. In addition to the oft cited '[t]he True is the whole' from the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (PS, §20: 11/19), there is Hegel's explanation of the Absolute earlier in the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences*:

the absolute Idea is the universal, but this universal is not merely the abstract form that confronts the particular contents as something-other; on the contrary it is the absolute form into which all determinations, the whole fullness of the content posited by it, have returned. In this perspective, the absolute Idea is to be compared with the old man who utters the same religious statements as the child, but for whom they carry the significance of his whole life. Even if the child understands the religious content, it still counts for him only as something outside of which lie the whole of life and the whole world (E1, §237z: 304/W8, 389).

In the *Science of Logic* he clarifies that the Absolute is not an external logical form, divorced from and applied to the 'real' world.



require a transcendent understanding of the Absolute 'because plasticity works on and within the body of the systematic exposition, without ever extending above it or overdetermining it... it is revealed as the concept capable of accounting for the incarnation, or the incorporation, of spirit' (FH, 18).

It is natural that eschatological ideas give rise to fixation on the transcendent as the source of hope. Representing the absolute as subject, a key step in the development of consciousness, encourages the identification of the absolute as 'a fixed point to which... the predicates are affixed by a movement belonging to the fixed point itself', but this fixity implies externality, whereas grasping the dynamics of the absolute reveal its 'actuality is self-movement' (PS, §23: 13/21).

Malabou's rejection of a transcendent understanding of the absolute, coupled with her insistence that there is nothing outside the absolute, recalls the discussion of the infinite in the preceding section. Defining the infinite as self-negation means there is nothing outside of the infinite. The spurious infinite 'has the fixed determination of a *beyond*, which cannot be reached, for the very reason that *it is not meant* to be reached, because the determinateness of the beyond, of the *affirmative* negation, is not let go' (SL, 142/W5: 156). The finite thus 'perpetually generates itself in its beyond', unaware of its role in generating the infinite against which it defines itself (SL, 143/W5: 156).

In rejecting a transcendent understanding of the absolute, Malabou is arguing for an immanent absolute within the boundaries of history. It is only such an understanding of the absolute which can be constitutive of human freedom. As Houlgate argues

Human beings' own needs, therefore, drive them to the recognition that they are essentially self-conscious, social animals who are able to find freedom only in self-conscious community with other human beings. This initially unintended course of action is, in Hegel's view, rational and necessary and is nothing other than the course of action to which human beings are driven by their own free activity. We are thus not at the mercy of some transcendent Absolute, but we are guided by the logic that is immanent in our own activity...<sup>483</sup>

This while Hegel is clear that the absolute is not God, the concept of God provides the means of thinking God as subject, which is a key stage in recognising the unity of God as subject with the knower of the subject. That unity moves consciousness from consciousness of the absolute to

---

Accordingly, what is to be considered here as method is only the movement of the *Notion* itself, the nature of which movement has already been cognized; but *first*, there is now the added *significance* that the *Notion is everything*, and its movement is the *universal absolute activity*, the self-determining and self-realizing movement (SL, 826/W6: 551).

<sup>483</sup> Houlgate, *Freedom, truth and history*, 25.

the absolute's self-consciousness in the subject. This self-consciousness, in turn, is Hegel's basis for a conception of freedom. Consequently, Malabou offers a helpful means of conceiving of novelty within the immanent sphere, while maintaining a strong understanding of the absolute, complementing the political theologies of Taubes and Bloch who both see religion, as a mode of thought, playing a vital role in the cultivation of human freedom.

Her second critique of messianism stems from her opposition to the notion of time as a 'purely messianic process', a kind of fulfilment of destiny, whether this destiny be the divine of traditional religion or the messianism of humanism (PD, 76-77). For Malabou, both must be rejected as rooted in a notion of the future as merely a 'that which is to be present' – the rigidity of a future that can only be awaited. In rejecting this notion of the future, Malabou also dismisses attempts to graft Hegel's philosophy on to the narrative of the translation of eschatology into progress. As with Taubes, this reading of Hegel is the antithesis of Löwith's understanding of Hegel's role in the development of the philosophy of history. In Malabou's reading of Hegel, Löwith is both right and wrong. He is right to describe Hegel as central to the transformation of theological concepts of temporality into 'secular' philosophy. He is wrong to see this transformation as a crude translation of salvation history into the myth of progress.<sup>484</sup>

Malabou's reading is thus helpful to political theology because it opens up an alternative to a dominant trope in the genealogy of radical politics: namely that Christian apocalyptic and millenarian theologies become secularised in the works of Hegel and Marx, inevitably leading to totalitarianism (as discussed in chapter two). The guaranteed Kingdom of God, the telos of history is transformed into the inevitable realisation of a particular political or social order. Malabou, by foregrounding plasticity, allows us to affirm Hegel's role in transforming theological concepts while rejecting this genealogy. In doing so, she provides further conceptual resources for conceiving of apocalypticism with immanent and materialist political theologies.

Taubes and Malabou thus both reject messianism or any form of apocalypticism that entails a 'passive waiting for an event which will finally lead us out of the world' and instead to see the potential for a process which can finally lead us from the world-as-it-is<sup>485</sup> – apocalypticism instead of messianism. Or to return to Malabou's terms, this is the plasticity of an immanent apocalypticism, 'the movement of the constitution of an exit, there, where no such exit is possible... plasticity renders possible the appearance or formation of alterity where the other is absent. Plasticity is the form of alterity without transcendence' (PD, 66).

---

<sup>484</sup> Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 54–59.

<sup>485</sup> Bielik-Robson, "Modernity," 193.

This apocalyptic notion of temporality thus conceives of history as a series of ruptures and transformations, and rather than awaiting the conclusion of history in the arrival of the messiah, it cultivates and perpetuates a cycle of plasticity. Here is where Taubes, again, must walk ‘the thin line between religion and nihilism.’<sup>486</sup> If apocalypticism is the annihilation and giving of form, and indeed the relation between the two, it nevertheless operates with direction. It must preserve some sense of a telos. If not, and ‘the telos of the revolution collapses, so that the revolution is no longer the means by the sole creative principle, then the destructive desire becomes a creative desire. If the revolution points to nothing beyond itself, it will end in a movement, dynamic in nature but leading into the abyss’ (OE, 10-11). Yet this nihilism is not totally alien to the genuine notion of revolution. For the revolutionary spirit, in pursuit of the ‘absolute telos’ never settles on an ‘adequate shape or manifestation. The revolutionary principle lurches from one manifestation to the next. Each time something is implemented in reality, it threatens the absolute demand of telos. It is the absolute nature of the demand which brings about a state of “permanent” revolution’ (OE, 11). There is thus a tragedy, a persistence of contradiction, within Taubes.

This embracing of a plastic apocalypticism, demands what Rebecca Comay describes as a form of mourning<sup>487</sup> - an awareness of a lost veneer of necessity that congealed around a fantasy only to be washed away by history. It is in precisely this sense that Hegel offers a philosophical apocalypticism. Yes there will be something new. Yes there is the promise that this time the political, social, philosophical or theological novelty will not repeat the error of the moment just sublated. Yet this novelty and its promise are accompanied by an awareness that history will again expose the contingency of the current necessary and the horizon will never be reached. It is apocalypticism as the embracing of plasticity and the abandonment of any pretence to final fulfilment – put another way it is an apocalypticism that is more a logic of temporality than a chronology.

#### 7.2.4 A Blochian Supplement

---

<sup>486</sup> Bielik-Robson, “Modernity,” 194.

<sup>487</sup> Hegel’s presentation of the German ideology comes close to simultaneously dismantling it. ‘He points to a traumatic kernel at the heart of this well-rehearsed teleology. The deferral that drives the movement of imperial expansion will also void any possibility of eschatological fulfilment. In the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel links Spirit’s mobility to a dangerous morbidity. If the Idea must continually relocate, if the torch must be constantly handed on, this is because its incandescence burns, or rather, to shift the metaphor, the poison must continually be expelled; history is the administration of a time-released toxin whose consumption is fatal to those who secrete it’ in Comay, *Mourning Sickness*, 86.

As in the previous chapter, Bloch's development of apocalyptic thought in relation to Hegel provides a useful supplement to Taubes. In the *Future of Hegel*, while critiquing Heidegger's critique of Hegel, Malabou refers to Derrida's description "of a certain simultaneity of the non-simultaneous, in which the alterity and identity of the now are maintained together in the differentiated element of a certain same-ness" (FH, 15), paralleling this later to Hegel's description of the synthetic unity of time as a negative unity (FH, 47). This negative unity of time already disrupts the consistency of a present which is displaced into the past and future as the present that was and the present that will be, respectively (FH, 3).

As explained earlier, Malabou is developing a concept of the future which is not merely 'that which is to come' and arises not of the transcendent alterity of the messianic, but by the identity of identity and alterity. When discussing temporality, Bloch uses the term 'non-contemporaneity' to describe this dialectical identity.<sup>488</sup> The now is contaminated with futures of incomplete pasts, structural remnants of the not yet resolved, a capacity to both transform and destroy the now, not as an external force intruding from without, but as a negativity constitutive of any and every now.

Not all people exist in the same Now. They do so externally, through the fact that they can be seen today. But they are thereby not yet living at the same time with the others...

... Various years in general beat in the one which is just being counted and prevails. Nor do they flourish in obscurity as in the past, but contradict the Now; very strangely, crookedly, from behind (HT, 97).

These non-contemporaneous remnants become irrational features of any new rationality, sites where communities funnel accumulated trauma and rage in moments of rupture - in short they are plastic, or rather they reveal plasticity. Attention to these non-contemporaneous moments becomes the basis for a new apocalyptic political theology, one in which

---

<sup>488</sup> John Russon develops a reading of Hegelian 'non-synchronous temporalities' which is in some way similar to this treatment. Russon does not discuss Bloch, but he is developing an open reading of Hegel in which '[t]he past and the future are not "out there" as existent, alien realities that we somehow have to get to. The past and the future are always of the subject, of spirit. What we have seen from looking at spirit is that history is that identity *as* accomplishment, and what we have seen from looking at the thing and the body is that the future is precisely what those identities *make possible*' ("Temporality and the Future of Philosophy in Hegel's Phenomenology," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (2008): 67.). Russon even cites Malabou as offering a similar reading of temporality in Hegel. Russon, however, emphasises the non-synchronous temporality as a division that occurs within the subject - it is the difference between the temporalities of the subject as living body and the subject as living spirit (66). Bloch's non-contemporaneity denotes an intersubjective phenomenon and while there is a sense of difference humanity as it is and humanity as it could be, this difference does not map on to a body/spirit division.

apocalypticism denotes the capacity for rupture that is constitutive of all nows. Apocalypticism is shorn of its associations with teleology, in the sense of a linear progression towards a determined end. ‘History is no entity advancing along a single line... is a polyrhythmic and multi-spatial entity, with enough unmastered and as yet by no means revealed and resolved corners’ (HT, 62). The future is not-yet, though not a not-yet present, but a not-yet as the indication of the capacity to transform, rupture or remain the same. It is an alterity within history rather than an ‘alterity... from a yonder’ (HT, 67).

For Bloch this not-yet is a horizon rather than a determinative content – it represents an unfulfilled past which is contemporaneous but not simultaneous with the present. In Bloch’s framing, the excess that pushes these movements out of the merely social or political is the non-contemporaneity of the situation.<sup>489</sup> Structural remnants of the not yet resolved past combine with the accumulated rage. The rage is then funnelled through these elements, or in Bloch’s terms the ‘subjectively non-contemporaneous contradiction activates this objectively non-contemporaneous one...’ (HT, 109). Bloch develops his theory of non-contemporaneity while discussing the persistence of messianic and millenarian motifs.<sup>490</sup> Socialism, he claims, has broken away from its theological origins, but ‘may pay respect to the dreams of its youth’ in the process of fulfilling the substance of those dreams and casting of their illusory elements (HT, 118).

Bloch also helps reignite the contradiction frozen in Priest’s dialetheism. While Bloch’s idea of non-contemporaneity might initially seem to have a dialethic air, the persistence of non-contemporaneity does not indicate two simultaneous truths, but a contradictory relationship which is understood in the unified movement of spirit. They are understood as relating to one another as moments of a larger movement, the comprehension of which is truth.

This Blochian supplement to Taubes’s and Malabou’s reading of Hegel, reintroduces transcendental materialist themes discussed above. For Johnston, this approach is concerned with ‘the immanent genesis of the transcendent’, a genesis which is, ‘in short, a self-sundering

---

<sup>489</sup> Non-contemporaneity is a translation of the German *Ungleichzeitigkeit*. It is also translated as non-synchronicity as in Toscano’s *Fanaticism*. Both translations are acceptable, but I will use non-contemporaneity throughout for the sake of consistency.

<sup>490</sup> Bloch also uses the opportunity to draw the contrast between the On-high and From-below: ‘The more the situation of the peasants and ordinary urban citizens worsened, and the more visibly on the other hand mercantile capital and territorial principedom succeeded and the purely feudal empire, founded on economic modes of the past, disintegrated, the more powerfully the prophecy of a new, an “evangelical” age necessarily struck home; in the case of Münzer as peasant – proletarian – petit-bourgeois battle-cry against increased exploitation, in the case of Luther, of course, as the ideology of the princes against central power and the Church’ (HT, 118).

material *Grund* internally producing what (subsequently) transcends it.<sup>491</sup> The immanent genesis of the transcendent echoes Bloch's clearest statement on immanence and transcendence, his notion of transcending without transcendence: 'As the abolition of every On-high which has no place for man; as a transcending with revolt, and equally a revolt with transcending – but without transcendence' (AC, 57).<sup>492</sup> As Bloch explains, this transcending without a transcendent is 'the leap from the Kingdom of Necessity to that of Freedom', which is yet another iteration of the Hegelian understanding of the immanent genesis of freedom from nature. Bloch's insistence on *transcending* rather than the *transcendent* only further clarifies Johnston's formulation of the transcendental materialist understanding of freedom.

These two features of Bloch's philosophy, non-contemporaneity and transcending without transcendence, are related. As Ben Anderson notes, Bloch offers

a unique type of materialism that... enables us to sense how the complex movement, and emergence, of hope enacts topologies of space–time in which plural “goods” or “betters” are synchronous and non-synchronous with matter rather than existing elsewhere (in another space) or else when (in another time). The result is that there is no need for an other-worldly form of transcendence that would intervene in the world from a position “out there” or “up there”.<sup>493</sup>

### 7.3.0 Contingency and Plastic Apocalypticism

If plasticity, in the domain of temporality, indicates a relationship to the future as 'to see (what is) coming', the present becomes what Bloch describes as non-contemporaneity. As seen in the previous section, the present is a disjointed collection of nows. Translated into more Hegelian language, Malabou, Taubes and Bloch advocate for a greater appreciation of possibility within Hegel's philosophy. In this section, I turn to consider this understanding and its implications for Malabou's notion of plasticity and apocalyptic political theology.<sup>494</sup>

---

<sup>491</sup> Johnston, *Zižek's Ontology*, 61.

<sup>492</sup> See also Bloch's discussion of transcending without the 'transcendent-hypostasizing' in his earlier sections on the development of biblical hermeneutics (AC, 39).

<sup>493</sup> Anderson, "Transcending Without Transcendence," 700.

<sup>494</sup> In his review of Malabou's *The Future of Hegel*, William Dudley argues that one of the missed opportunities of the book is engagement with the Anglo-American work done on themes of openness and contingency in Hegel's philosophy. He specifically mentions Kolb and Burbidge, both of whom will feature in this section. I am indebted to Dudley's review for drawing attention to these connections. See William Dudley, "The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic (Review)," *Notre Dame Philosophical Review* (2006), <http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/25128-the-future-of-hegel-plasticity-temporality-and-dialectic/>.

Contingency has become a popular theme in recent philosophy.<sup>495</sup> In terms of German Idealism, it has been a prominent theme in the work of Slavoj Žižek and Markus Gabriel.<sup>496</sup> This more recent work repeats an earlier concern in the study of Hegel, seen most clearly in the work of Stephen Houlgate and John Burbidge. I will look at this earlier work first, before turning to points of connection with the work of Žižek and Gabriel, and then concluding by returning to Malabou, Taubes and the development of apocalyptic political theology.

### 7.3.1 Houlgate and the Necessity of Contingency

Hegel defines the relationship between actuality, possibility and contingency in the section on the doctrine of essence in the *Science of Logic*:

first of all, since the actual and the possible are *formal differences*, their relation is likewise merely *formal* and consists only in the fact that the one like the other is a positedness, or in *contingency*.

Now since in contingency, the actual as well as the possible is *positedness*, they have received determination in themselves; the actual thereby becomes, secondly, *real actuality* and with it equally emerges *real possibility* and *relative necessity*.

Thirdly, the reflection of relative necessity into itself yields *absolute necessity*, which is absolute *possibility* and *actuality* (SL, 542/W6: 202).

---

<sup>495</sup> Most notably in Quentin Meillassoux's work on divine inexistence. He develops a philosophical defense of contingency in *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. Ray Brassier (Continuum, 2010), and uses his understanding of contingency to defend the notion of an in-existent God in "The Spectral Dilemma," *Collapse IV* (2008): 261–276. Unfortunately, Meillassoux's doctoral thesis, which develops this concept further, remains unpublished. Extracts are available as an appendix to Graham Harman, *Quentin Meillassoux: Philosophy in the Making* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011). There is a striking parallel between Bloch's claim that '[t]he idea of the Creator-of-the-world as well as of its Lord, had to retreat continually before that of the Spirit of the Goal, who has no fixed abode. – All the more so, the more the Promised Land beyond the desert was still conceived of in terms of Egypt. The more the Canaan here-and-now was disappointing, in accordance with a God who is himself not yet what he is: who is only in the future of his promise –to-be – if he should keep his word – and in no other way' (AC, 81) and Meillassoux's contention that only an in-existent God is congruent with a demand for justice. Further, the language of divine inexistence recalls language prevalent in Gnostic traditions. However, given that the full-fledged development of his theory is forthcoming, I have chosen to only indicate these points of connection rather than developing it further. Similar ideas connecting Meillassoux and Žižek are developed in Michael O'Neill Burns, "The Hope of Speculative Materialism," in *After the postsecular and the postmodern: new essays in continental philosophy of religion*, ed. Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2010), 316–334.

<sup>496</sup> See Markus Gabriel's *Transcendental Ontology: essays in German Idealism* (New York: Continuum, 2011) and Žižek's work in *The Parallax View* and *Less than Nothing*. They also have collaborated on *Mythology, Madness, and Laughter: Subjectivity in German Idealism* (London; New York: Continuum, 2009).

In other words the relationship between actuality and possibility is contingency. Stated in a formula familiar to the *Logic*, ‘This *absolute unrest* of the *becoming* of these two determinations [actuality and possibility] is *contingency*. But just because each immediately turns itself into its opposite, equally in this other it simply *unites with itself*, and this identity of both, of one in the other, is *necessity*’ (SL, 545/W6: 206).

As Houlgate explains in an essay on this section, for Hegel, ‘although being *is* immediacy and *is* there, it is not *just* that, but – in being what it is – is in fact the process of emerging and of actualizing what it is.’<sup>497</sup> Actuality, in the vernacular sense of the term of the stuff that is, is for Hegel simply immediacy. Hegel has an expanded view in which actuality ‘is thus always the actualizing of possibility; and possibility taken by itself is in its turn always actuality that is *not yet* actualized, and so is the possibility *of* actuality.’<sup>498</sup> The possibility of actuality is always also the possibility of non-actualisation – all possibility thus entails contingency. As Houlgate explains, as ‘possibility *must* take the form of contingency, it is apparent that not only contingency but also *necessity* arises from the ideas of actuality and possibility.’<sup>499</sup> What is this necessity? It is contingency.

This contingency does not denote a free-for-all. There is no abstract contingency as such, only contingencies of possibilities defined by a state of given conditions. A real possibility is defined by its ‘determination, circumstances and conditions’ (SL, 547/W6: 208). Real possibility is posed against a real actuality.

Now this is the posited *whole* of form, it is true, but of the form in its determinateness, namely, of actuality as formal or immediate, and equally of possibility as an abstract in-itself. This actuality which constitutes the possibility of something is therefore not *its own possibility*, but the in-itself of *another* actual; it is only itself the actuality which ought to be sublated, possibility as possibility only. Thus real possibility constitutes the *totality of conditions*, a dispersed actuality which is not reflected into itself but is determined as being the in-itself, but the in-itself of an other, and as meant to return back into itself (SL, 547/W6: 209).

Or, as Houlgate explains ‘[b]ecause necessity has its source in what *possibility* cannot but be, all that can be understood by necessity at his point is the necessity *of* contingency.’<sup>500</sup>

If Hegel allows for contingent events in the realms of nature and history, it does not necessarily follow that he allows for contingency within concepts as well. After all, as seen in the

---

<sup>497</sup> Houlgate, “Necessity and Contingency in Hegel’s Science of Logic,” 38.

<sup>498</sup> Houlgate, “Necessity and Contingency in Hegel’s Science of Logic,” 39.

<sup>499</sup> Houlgate, *The Opening of Hegel’s Logic*, 41.

<sup>500</sup> Houlgate, “Necessity and Contingency in Hegel’s Science of Logic,” 42.



earlier discussion of Kolb, it is conceivable that Hegel would allow for contingency in world events but not in the nature of the concept. Further, Hegel describes his logic as necessary. In the preface to the second edition, he argues that philosophy displays thought ‘in its own immanent activity or what is the same, in its necessary development’ (SL, 31/W5: 19). Houlgate argues that a contingent thing only emerges from a possibility necessarily: ‘since all contingent circumstances and conditions are themselves rooted in prior conditions and give rise to subsequent conditions, it is clear that the whole course of contingency itself must be necessary. But, if the whole course of contingency is necessary, then there can be no real *contingency* in the world at all, since things, could not be otherwise than they are.’<sup>501</sup>

As Houlgate acknowledges, this view of contingency would seem to coincide with the most teleological readings of Hegel. For the purposes of apocalyptic political theology, it would lend itself to the view of history being directed by unseen or impersonal forces towards a predetermined end. Yet Houlgate makes clear that a further step is needed in order to comprehend the relation between contingency and necessity. Insisting on the primacy of necessity, in the manner suggested above, overlooks the contingency of necessity: ‘specific “necessary occurrences” are contingent upon the antecedent conditions, and the whole course of real necessity is itself contingent upon what there actually is or happens to be as a whole. Indeed, the whole course of real necessity *is* simply what there actually and contingently is.’<sup>502</sup>

This brings Houlgate to a conclusion which resonates with a persistent theme of the relation between nature and freedom. As seen in the prior discussions, Hegel’s understanding of freedom is constituted by a negation of nature. The realisation of that freedom is a contingent event. Real necessity describes the realisation of possibilities in nature. So rather than being a determinist, Hegel ‘is in fact simply a *realist* who thinks that the world takes the contingent course it takes until human beings intervene and tease out new possibilities from the conditions they encounter – possibilities which are actually contained in those conditions, but which would not be actualized without human intervention.’<sup>503</sup>

There is still one more layer to Hegel’s understanding of contingency and necessity – Hegel’s concept of absolute necessity. In the concluding pages of the section on actuality, Hegel defines absolute necessity as ‘the truth into which actuality and possibility as such, and formal and real necessity withdraw... that being which in its negation, in essence, is self-related and is being. It is as much simple immediacy or *pure being* as simple reflection-into-self or *pure essence*...’

---

<sup>501</sup> Houlgate, “Necessity and Contingency in Hegel’s Science of Logic,” 44.

<sup>502</sup> Houlgate, “Necessity and Contingency in Hegel’s Science of Logic,” 44.

<sup>503</sup> Houlgate, “Necessity and Contingency in Hegel’s Science of Logic,” 45.

(SL, 552/W6: 215). In short, absolute necessity is ‘*immediate* simplicity, it is *being*’ and this simple immediacy is ‘absolute negativity’ (SL, 552/W6: 215). As Houlgate explains

absolute necessity determines nothing other than the unavoidable fate *of* all contingent things, namely that they will end. The paths laid down by absolute necessity and contingency thus do not constitute two distinct sets of events in the world, but rather form *one* course of events which, in one respect, is wholly contingent and dependent on what there actually is, and in another respect, is structured by the absolute necessity of negation. Absolute necessity and contingency do not stand in relation to one another, therefore, nor does one underlie the other; rather, they are one and the same process...<sup>504</sup>

Absolute necessity is thus finitude – the passing away of all contingent being. This necessity is not only a logical or formal necessity. The grasping of the absolute necessity of the passing away of all finite things is a key element of the development of human freedom. ‘The necessity that is inherent in freedom is not just the formal necessity of contingency, nor just the real necessity that follows from given conditions; nor is it sheer, absolute necessity that just *is* because it is. It is a fourth form of necessity that is *internal* to freedom itself - the necessity that there is because human beings have the *real* capacity for free self-determination.’<sup>505</sup>

Houlgate ultimately concludes that humanity necessarily becomes self-conscious and develops self-determining freedom because that is the nature of humanity. Yet the process of this development occurs through contingent historical events. Nor is this form of necessity characterised by the absoluteness that characterises the necessity of the passing away of finite things. Thus, ‘the necessity which is immanent in freedom and which is at work in history cannot be *all* powerful, but must remain exposed to contingencies that it does not control.’<sup>506</sup> Yet this necessity does not necessarily endure. Hegel’s philosophy, in affirming the absolute necessity of finitude, acknowledges that ‘self-conscious freedom in the state and civil society is itself ultimately subject to the *absolute necessity* of destruction.’<sup>507</sup> It is undeniable that his more optimistic statements about the course of history have had greater influence in the dominant interpretations of his philosophy, but this solemn conclusion is nonetheless an unavoidable consequence of his logic.

This brief summary of Houlgate’s treatment of contingency in Hegel offers some resources for the immanentisation of the apocalypse constitutive of Taubes’s and Bloch’s political theology. There is an emphasis on the contingency of the present form of human

---

<sup>504</sup> Houlgate, “Necessity and Contingency in Hegel’s Science of Logic,” 47.

<sup>505</sup> Houlgate, “Necessity and Contingency in Hegel’s Science of Logic,” 48.

<sup>506</sup> Houlgate, “Necessity and Contingency in Hegel’s Science of Logic,” 49.

<sup>507</sup> Houlgate, “Necessity and Contingency in Hegel’s Science of Logic,” 49.

existence and a break from any notion of impersonal forces of history bringing about a promised utopia, millennium or heavenly community. Houlgate's reading makes clear that, for Hegel, everything must pass away.

### 7.3.2 Burbidge: Contingency All the Way Down

As noted above, John Burbidge offers an important alternative to Houlgate's reading of the same sections. In his reading he argues for a deeper contingency than Houlgate allows. While I will show that he does not allow for the categorial necessity required by Hegel, he develops the theme of contingency in a series of formulations amenable to the apocalyptic reading of Hegel being developed in this chapter. In Burbidge's formulation, by the time the *Logic* has advanced to the end of the section on actuality, the actuality has been transformed, shifting from what is to one of many possible actualities.<sup>508</sup>

Burbidge not only announces this more fundamental contingency, he claims that Hegel's understanding of contingency is necessary for serious philosophical engagement for history.

What distinguishes a theory that takes history seriously is that, within its purview, singular actuals as novel and unique initiate general possibilities. These possibles as universals are not considered to be necessary prior conditions, underlying what is ultimately significant in the actual as individual. Rather, singular actuals provide the necessary condition for the universals generated through reflection and debate. Prior to an action, these general possibilities have no status at all. What uniquely happens is created – coming to be, as it were, out of nothing.<sup>509</sup>

For Burbidge, taking history seriously means beginning with the actual. What is possible is determined by the actual, but not the actual as it immediately appears. Philosophical thought, through its exposures of contradictions, unveils possibilities previously hidden and exposes the inherent finitude of any system.

Burbidge's understanding of contingency states, in the terms of the *Science of Logic*, the conclusions reached in the earlier discussion of Kierkegaard and Abraham. "This is what is really necessary: this dynamic process where contingencies emerge to disrupt totalities, introducing abrasion. The resulting new universality cannot be anticipated, for it will emerge only from the conflict. Yet it will, in Hegel's final sense, be necessary as the end result of the contingent processes. Such necessity can never be deduced a priori from known prior conditions."<sup>510</sup> The

---

<sup>508</sup> Burbidge, *Hegel's Systematic Contingency*, 23.

<sup>509</sup> Burbidge, *Hegel's Systematic Contingency*, 12.

<sup>510</sup> Burbidge, *Hegel's Systematic Contingency*, 9.

retroactive understanding of history and fidelity developed in that context, here appears in its more abstract, conceptual form.

Not only does Burbidge push for a more fundamental level of contingency, he connects self-consciousness' awareness of this contingency to Hegel's discussion of the death of God in the later sections of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. He focuses his reading on §785, shortly before the transition from revealed religion to absolute knowing. Just prior to this key section, Hegel discusses 'the coming into existence of God's individual self-consciousness as a universal self-consciousness' through Christ's sacrifice (PS, §784: 475/418). The death of God as man, 'is *abstract* negativity, the immediate result of the movement which ends in spiritual self-consciousness (PS, §784: 475/418).

Burbidge picks up Hegel's argument as Hegel explains the implications of this transition:

Thus what belongs to the element of *representational thought*, viz. that absolute Spirit *qua* individual, or rather *qua* particular, Spirit, represents the nature of Spirit in its [natural] existence is here shifted into self-consciousness itself, into knowledge that preserves itself in otherness. This self-consciousness does not actually *die*, as the particular self-consciousness is represented as being actually dead, but its particularity dies away in its universality... The death of the Mediator is the death not only of his *natural* aspect or of his particular being-for-self, not only of the already dead husk stripped of its essential Being, but also of the *abstraction* of the divine Being... The death of this representational thought contains, therefore, at the same time the death of the *abstraction of the divine Being* which is not posited as Self. The death is the painful feeling of the Unhappy Consciousness that *God Himself is dead*... This feeling is, in fact, the loss of substance and of its appearance over against consciousness; but it is at the same time the pure *subjectivity* of substance, or the pure certainty of itself which it lacked when it was object, or the immediate, or pure essence. This Knowing is the inbreathing of the Spirit, whereby Substance becomes Subject, by which its abstraction and lifelessness have died, and Substance therefore has become *actual* and simple and universal Self-consciousness (PS, §785: 475-6/418-419).<sup>511</sup>

The experience of the death of God is essential to the emergence of absolute knowing from representational thought. It is only by virtue of this experience that 'Spirit is *self-knowing* Spirit' (§786: 476/419). Though Burbidge does not emphasise the point, the link between contingency and the experience of the death of God starts from the representational understanding of religion. The death of God, the significance of the story of Christ, is the historical enactment of the relationship between the universal, particular and singular. The death of God is the death of the mediator. The death of God as mediator is 'the death of the abstraction of the divine essence: the death of the absolutely reliable, transcendent standard that made life worth living,

---

<sup>511</sup> Translation modified from Miller's.

the death of everything the self has stood for and everything that has defined the meaning of existence.<sup>512</sup>

The crucifixion is the death of any transcendent guarantor. It represents the collapse into immanence. While Burbidge does not develop this line of thought, the resurrection and Pentecost come to represent the birth of the community of spirit which assumes the task of freedom – the rational self-determination at the heart of *Sittlichkeit*. Initially, it seems that this understanding returns to the ‘non-metaphysical’ reading of Lewis. Yet the critique of discursive bias receives indirect support from Burbidge’s more radical form of contingency.

Yet it is precisely this dissolution of all stability that heralds the possibility of absolute knowing. This goal of all epistemology can no longer be a confident claim to certain conclusions, nor a comprehension of everything in its essence. It can only be a flux, pure subjectivity, aware of the past that has brought it to the present, accepting the present as the dynamic life it can only enjoy, but leaving open the future. Though the next stages will emerge from the present, there are no essentials that will have to be maintained. Any aspect may be put in question. Contingencies will surprise us.<sup>513</sup>

It is this capacity for surprise that extends past the discursive bias. As Burbidge considers the significance of this understanding of contingency, the connection to apocalyptic thought becomes even clearer:

someone comes along who is not content to fit into the status quo, who sees very clearly the failures and the inadequacies of the current state of affairs, and who is moved to act. Passion erupts in the committed action of the few who are grasped by the demands of the age; and whose station places them at a critical juncture. They plunge forward, threatening the fragile stability of the social order. Where that happens, and where their passionate acts articulate the unexpressed restlessness of many others, history is ruptured. The comfortable social order is recognized as one-sided, needing correction. But correction does not come piecemeal. Order shatters in revolutionary turmoil. Rebellion evokes resistance and counter attack. Even if the challenge is ultimately defeated, the future will never be like the past. For the new social order will have built into its fabric new conventions that do justice to those passions worn out in the struggle.<sup>514</sup>

This level of disruption, the explosiveness of unexpressed restlessness escapes the encapsulation of social reasoning. Burbidge’s reading does not close off the role of social reasoning. It includes those processes, but sets them atop an absolutely contingent ground. It is the contingency of this ground which is at the heart of apocalyptic fervour. It is possible that it could all be different.

---

<sup>512</sup> Burbidge, *Hegel’s Systematic Contingency*, 64.

<sup>513</sup> Burbidge, *Hegel’s Systematic Contingency*, 62.

<sup>514</sup> Burbidge, *Hegel’s Systematic Contingency*, 6.

Yet Burbidge makes clear that contingency is not synonymous with randomness. As he argues elsewhere, the novel is novel only with respect to what precedes it. The comparison establishing novelty is thus a determination establishing continuity between the new and the old. ‘History develops; it does not haphazardly skip to unrelated stages.’<sup>515</sup> The relationship between the actual, possible, contingent and necessary only is manifested in the movement of thought. Indeed it is this movement which, in the following section, Žižek uses to define Hegel’s cunning of reason. To use Hegel’s language from the preface to the *Phenomenology*, ‘the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development. Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a *result*, that only in the *end* is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this consists its nature, viz. to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself’ (PS §20: 11/19). For Burbidge, this arriving at the result never ceases.<sup>516</sup>

### 7.3.3 Parallels in Recent Philosophies of Contingency

While Houlgate and Burbidge initially appear to offer quite similar accounts of the role of contingency in Hegel’s *Logic*. It is this difference in the ‘depth’ of the contingency which differentiates Burbidge and Houlgate. For Houlgate, it is not contingent that there is anything at all or that humanity knows the way it knows, only that things are the way they are. This point of contention is also at the centre of the difference between Markus Gabriel’s and Žižek’s reading of contingency in German Idealism. Žižek, like Burbidge, sees contingency at the heart of Hegel’s openness to the future. ‘What if the wager of [Hegel’s] dialectic is not to adopt the “point of view of finality” toward the present viewing it as if it were already past, but, precisely, to *reintroduce the openness of the future into the past*, to *grasp that-which-was in its process of becoming*, to see the contingent process which generated existing necessity?’<sup>517</sup> He also presents a similar understanding of the relationship between contingency and necessity, arguing that ‘*the very process*

---

<sup>515</sup> Burbidge, “Hegel’s Open Future,” 182.

<sup>516</sup> It is interesting that Burbidge includes in his series of examples of modern religious movements which confirm Hegel’s position on religion, he includes liberation theology: ‘This new world order, has, however, generated its own reactions: people and societies who appeal back to the traditions of the past not to reinstate what has gone but to integrate past and present into a more comprehensive perspective... Oppressed by the inhumanity of the capitalist economy, Christians of Latin America have discovered the liberation involved when god becomes incarnate in human life’ (Burbidge, “Hegel’s Open Future,” 183.).

<sup>517</sup> Žižek, *Less than Nothing*, 464.

through which necessity arises out of necessity is a contingent process.<sup>518</sup> And like Burbidge, this contingency goes all the way down.

Only if the encompassing unity is contingency can we claim the subject's discovery of necessary truth is simultaneously the (contingent) constitution of this truth itself, that to paraphrase Hegel, the very return to (rediscovery of) eternal Truth generates this truth. So, far from being an "essentialist" who develops the entire content out of the necessary self-deployment of the Notion, Hegel is – to use today's terms – the ultimate thinker of autopoiesis, of the process of the emergence of necessary features out of chaotic contingency, the thinker of contingency's gradual self-organization, of the gradual rise of order out of chaos.<sup>519</sup>

Žižek, then, shares Burbidge's strong notion of contingency, in which '[n]ecessity is thus nothing but the "truth" of contingency, contingency brought to its truth by way of (self-negation).<sup>520</sup>

Gabriel, on the other hand, agrees with Houlgate's assessment that, for Hegel, contingency has its limits. On the issue of contingency, this point differentiates Hegel and Schelling. Hegel includes contingency, but there is a necessity to the logical system, the categories, which comprehend that contingency. For Schelling, however, it could all be different, or not be at all.<sup>521</sup> Put alternatively, Hegel has a concept of absolute necessity but not absolute contingency. The form of being is necessary and this form includes the necessary passing from being to nothing of the various contingent contents that fill that form.

This stand off on the issue of contingency recalls the earlier discussion of Kolb's critique of open Hegelianism. Kolb stands with Houlgate's and Gabriel's view of contingency in Hegel. Kolb's objection to open Hegelianisms centres on what he sees as the essential criteria necessary for any philosophy to be deemed Hegelian: 'the thinker must presuppose that thought, can now or later, permanently to temporarily, achieve unity and self-relation through the dialectical process, or at least that thought can envision this as a satisfactory regulative ideal. But this goal

---

<sup>518</sup> Žižek, *Less than Nothing*, 467.

<sup>519</sup> Žižek, *Less than Nothing*, 467.

<sup>520</sup> Žižek, *Less than Nothing*, 468.

<sup>521</sup> Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 102–103. Gabriel's argument is not that Hegel is right, but that Hegel claims being has a necessary form. This point is part of his larger argument for Schelling's superior philosophy of contingency. 'If I claim that the necessity of  $2+2=4$  could be otherwise, and even that any logical necessity could be otherwise, I am not saying that it is arbitrary to believe that  $2+2=4$  rather than  $2+2=5$ . I am only claiming that the possibility of revision is built into every belief system. And even if mathematics were the attempt to map an eternal realm of laws (whatever that might mean), it would have to map it, and that is to say it would have to consist of claims. Claims are finite, because they are determinate, and determinacy entails higher-order contingency, as I hope to make plausible in this chapter against Hegel's claim to a closure of the indeterminacy of determining' (103).

presupposes that a method which conceives of difference as determinate negation will be able to comprehend all difference and encompass thought.<sup>522</sup> Judging by this criterion, all four of the interpreters discussed in this subsection advocate for too open a reading of Hegel. While they all put forward a notion of achieving self-relation, the unity of the subject is called into question by Hegel's method and the emphasis on contingency. The kind of finality prescribed by Kolb's Hegelianism, in this interpretation, does not make sense. Thus, while Houlgate, for example, would agree with Kolb's position that Hegel does not allow for categorial novelty, those categories include the specific forms of contingency and necessity developed in the *Science of Logic*, which do not allow for the firm conclusions Kolb claims are at the heart of Hegel's philosophy.

Kolb provides a response to this claim in the course of his evaluation of Burbidge. He finds that Burbidge's claims about logic's systematic comprehension of contingency and incompleteness denies that Hegel's emphasis on the *identity* of identity and difference. While admitting that Burbidge offers a compelling reading, ultimately '[t]he circular structure of the system tries to avoid the kind of infinite progress suggested by the methodological interpretation.'<sup>523</sup> Kolb's critique is further supported by Pippin's recent review of Žižek's *Less Than Nothing*, in which Pippin argues that Žižek's reading of Hegel is deeply Schellingian.<sup>524</sup>

#### 7.4.0 Concluding Thoughts on Malabou, Taubes, Bloch and Plastic Apocalypticism

The interpretation developed here finds the greatest resonance with Burbidge's reading but with the qualification that contingency cannot extend all the way down to Schelling's depths. As Houlgate explains, modern subjects

---

<sup>522</sup> Kolb, "What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel," 43.

<sup>523</sup> Kolb, "What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel," 42.

<sup>524</sup> Robert B. Pippin, "Back to Hegel?," *Mediations: Journal For the Marxist Literary Group* 26, no. 1–2 (2013 2012): 7–28. Of course Žižek himself readily admits that influence of Schelling, but Pippin draws out how this influence bleeds over into his reading of Hegel. This connection between openness, contingency and Schelling is also found in Habermas's appraisal of Bloch. See his essay, 'Bloch: A Marxist Schelling' in *Philosophical-Political Profiles* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1983). As will be seen shortly, the more open version of Hegel's philosophy, with an emphasis on contingency, resonates with Bloch's philosophical understanding of the future. There is then, an affinity between the understandings of future and contingency in Bloch, Burbidge and Žižek and a critique that this view of contingency is more appropriately attributed to Schelling, coming from Pippin, Gabriel and, more implicitly, from Kolb.



bring our own categories to bear on our experience and view nature and history through these categories just as any civilization does. The categories we employ – or at least should employ – are, as we have seen, categories such as freedom, development and self-determination. But these categories are not just conventional categories; they are not just the product of technological changes or of ‘paradigm shifts’ which are ultimately a matter of chance. They are the categories which derive from our becoming conscious of the essentially historical character of human activity, and they are the only categories in which that character can be fully revealed. The categories of modern consciousness are historical products, but they are not therefore intrinsically limited categories because they are the categories through which we have become fully aware of our historicity and freedom.<sup>525</sup>

These categories are necessary, though the historical path to the derivation of those categories is *contingent*.

With this one qualification from Houlgate, however, Burbidge offers a thorough reading of Hegel’s notion of contingency, stemming from readings of both the *Science of Logic* and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, leading to an open understanding of the future and drawing upon Hegel’s understanding of religion. The reading of Taubes and Bloch developed in the previous chapter, along with Malabrou’s understanding of plasticity, is granted greater conceptual clarity when supported by Burbidge. This clarity is especially evident with regards to Bloch’s concepts of the Not-yet and concrete utopia, and the synthesis of Taubes and Malabou in plastic apocalypticism.

Contingency clarifies the relationship between the Not-yet and concrete utopia. As Bloch explains, concrete utopia differs from more traditional forms of utopianism.

Concrete utopia is therefore concerned to understand the dream of its object exactly, a dream which lies in the historical trend itself. As a utopia mediated with process, it is concerned to deliver the forms and contents which have already developed in the womb of present society. Utopia in this no longer abstract sense is thus the same as realistic anticipation of what is good; which must have become clear. There is a processive-concrete utopia in both basic elements of the reality discerned by Marxism: in its tendency, the tension of what is due though hindered, and in its latency, the correlate of the not yet realized objective-real possibilities in the world (PH, 2: 623).

As noted in the last chapter, Taubes dismisses Bloch’s utopianism. This dismissal is understandable; the *Principle of Hope*’s encyclopaedic survey of symbols of hope, at times, seems excessive. The underlying theory of concrete utopia, however, is an apocalyptic rendering of the relationship between the actual, possible and contingent. It is the contingency of what is that justifies the belief that it could be different. Taubes’s acknowledgment of the more tenuous relationship between the potential nihilistic and messianic forms of embracing contingency provides a balance to Bloch’s optimism, but Bloch’s concrete utopia allows for a kind of

---

<sup>525</sup> Houlgate, *Freedom, truth and history*, 24.

strategizing that does not directly arise from Taubes. Put another way, Taubes offers an important survey of the situation and considerations of the consequences of actions. Bloch more directly demands action within the situation.

For Bloch this orientation to the future is not divorced from one's relationship to the past. It is rooted in the grasp of the historical trend. As Žižek explains, this requires the application of the concept of contingency to the philosophy of history. The resulting understanding of history is remarkably similar to Bloch's notion of non-contemporaneity:

the task of a true Marxist historiography is not to describe the events the way they really were (and to explain how these events generated the ideological illusions that accompanied them); the task is rather to unearth the hidden potentiality (the utopian emancipatory potential) which was betrayed in the actuality of revolution and in its final outcome (the rise of utilitarian market capitalism).<sup>526</sup>

This parallel becomes even clearer when Žižek describes the cunning of reason as functioning 'to explain how these betrayed radical-emancipatory potentials continue to "insist" as historical "specters" that haunt the revolutionary memory... so that the later proletarian revolution should also redeem (lay to rest) these past ghosts. These alternative versions of the past which persist in a spectral form constitute the ontological "openness" of this historical process...'<sup>527</sup>

Bloch's concrete utopia is thus an aspiration arising from a consideration of the non-contemporaneity of the present situation. In more Hegelian language, concrete utopia is the utopian impulse rooted in actuality. This actuality is one characterised by the absolute necessity of contingency. The possibility of novelty, the apocalyptic potential, emerges from actuality, not from beyond. Apocalypticism, in this understanding, does not await the transcendent, but engages in the act of transcending.<sup>528</sup> As Burbidge explains:

whenever we consider the actual world as a totality on its own, we find it to be a world within which determinate actualities emerge and become necessary and sufficient conditions for other actualities, but whatever does in fact emerge is permeated by contingency. This is the nature of necessity when we consider the total picture – what

---

<sup>526</sup> Žižek, *Less than Nothing*, 464.

<sup>527</sup> Žižek, *Less than Nothing*, 464.

<sup>528</sup> As Hudson explains, 'concrete utopia and the new metaphysics are synonymous: transcending without Transcendence. There is no mythological "Transcendence" and no need for other-worldly assumptions, because the world itself contains immanent reference to a possible perfection towards which it is driving, and a forward driving *transcendere* pervades the process forms' (Hudson, *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch*, 99.). Unfortunately, this present project does not allow sufficient space for an exploration of Bloch's new metaphysics.

Hegel calls ‘absolute necessity’ – and it requires, as a defining feature of its complex dynamic, that there be contingencies...<sup>529</sup>

Grasping this actuality returns the conversation to Malabou’s understanding of plasticity. Plasticity denotes the manners of change conceivable within the contingency of necessity. That is, given that everything could be different (except the categories), plasticity announces the modes of transformation that may occur. Things may be moulded through processes of reform or exploded through apocalyptic movements. Both will result in the emergence of new forms in a process of perpetual transformation.<sup>530</sup> This consistency of form as such, though the form of form may change, is derived from the materialism common to Taubes and Malabou. There is only this world, this actuality. Given the contingency of that actuality, new organisations of that actuality may come, but it will involve the re-organisation of the material that is now.

### 7.5.0 Summary

This chapter has presented the outlines of a political theology rooted in plastic apocalypticism. It began by discussing the three-fold meaning of plastic in Malabou’s philosophy: the ability to give form, to receive form and to annihilate form. Malabou’s reading of Hegel is not only helpful in that it is one in a series of on-going efforts to formulate a more open Hegelianism, but because it offers a way of conceiving of novelty within the immanent plane. Her understanding of plasticity as the simultaneous giving and annihilation of form, two functions which can never be completely separated, strongly parallels Taubes’s definition of apocalypticism (7.1.0). With this initial affinity providing a basis, I then traced the implications for thinking about apocalypticism. First I considered parallels in Taubes’s and Malabou’s rejection of transcendence (7.2.1). In considering resources for thinking about immanent understandings of apocalypticism, I showed that Malcolm Bull’s work on contradiction in Hegel’s logic provided one such ground (7.2.2). I then returned to Malabou’s philosophy and her rejection of the transcendent tendencies of messianism (7.2.3).

In the following section (7.3.0), I explored how Hegel’s understanding of contingency adds to the developing apocalyptic political theology. After considering Houlgate’s reading of the

---

<sup>529</sup> Burbidge, *Hegel’s Systematic Contingency*, 48.

<sup>530</sup> As I have argued throughout, I hold that apocalypticism is the best religious notion to represent this process. Others continue to argue for eschatology or messianism. Graham Ward, for example, reaches a similar conclusion, but finds the latter term appropriate: ‘Governed by a messianic reason, Hegel is committed politically to a condition approaching Lenin’s notion of the permanent revolution. Absolute spirit working in and as the human spirit continually transforms the cultural given’ (Ward, “Hegel’s Messianic Reasoning and Its Politics,” 91).

section on actuality in Hegel's *Science of Logic* (7.3.1) and Burbidge's alternative reading (7.3.2), I demonstrated that these debates map on to current discussions of contingency in German Idealism (7.3.3). I then concluded by linking this understanding of contingency back to the emerging plastic apocalypticism.

Working through Malabou's connection with Taubes, competing readings of contradiction and contingency and the relevance of these discussions for apocalypticism produces a reading of Hegel committed to openness and the potential for novelty, manifested in the representations of religion.

### 8.0.0 Conclusion

I began this argument by establishing two points key points regarding Hegel: first, in chapter two, I showed Hegel's role in the development of political theology; second, in chapters three and four, I summarised relevant divisions within contemporary Hegel scholarship and worked through the fundamental elements of Hegel's philosophy of religion. This discussion culminated in a critical examination of the significance of Hegel's understanding of religion as representation. Emphasising the 'return to representation' I drew upon the work of Thomas Lewis to explain how this understanding performs an immanent transformation of the notion of religion. I further, argued that this understanding offers a model of a philosophically post-secular political theology.

While acknowledging that Lewis provides an excellent analysis of the essential features of Hegel's understanding of religion as representation, I argued that his work on the relation of religion and politics perpetuates the 'non-metaphysical' readings tendency towards discursive bias. This bias is certainly present in Hegel's own work. In the transition from religious representation to philosophy, the key moments of Trinity, Incarnation and the analysis of the cultic community all emphasise the emergence of a self-determining ethical community. In order to counteract this bias, I suggested using the representation of apocalypse to expose the limits of communities as such.

So, for example, Terry Pinkard recognises a shift in the meaning of apocalyptic language:

The Christian teaching that "The kingdom is upon us" is the representation of the idea that the divine is now to be taken as identical with self-conscious spirit, with the human community coming to an understanding that it must take its own rational self-conscious life as absolute, as having intrinsic value. The "kingdom of God", is thus not to be found in some transcendent metaphysical realm but in a set of reformed practices within *the human community*.<sup>531</sup>

He correctly identifies that the kingdom of God is not to be found in a transcendent metaphysical realm. Instead, he follows the reading of Hegel advocated throughout the course of this thesis – the representation is grasped in its philosophical, immanent nature by regarding 'kingdom of God' as a representation of a concept that structures human communal practices. Yet he errs in identifying this concept too strongly with the mutual exchange of reasons within a community, excluding the possible collapse of a given set of institutions. In connecting apocalypse to contradiction and contingency, I have reinstated this connection.

---

<sup>531</sup> Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, 256.

I found precedent for this understanding in the work of Taubes who, along with Bloch, provides an alternative application of religious representations. In order to support this alternative application, I argued that more open, dynamic understandings of Hegel's philosophy could be linked to apocalypticism. In particular work on contradiction and contingency in the *Science of Logic* provided points within Hegel's philosophical system, represented by apocalypse, which may be employed to emphasise the contingent nature of society and the possibility for new forms of existing together. This possibility is captured in the notion of plastic apocalypticism, a form of political theology which employs theological materials in order to think of immanent and material processes of destruction and revelation.

I have suggested throughout his thesis that this reading of Hegel provides an important starting point, but that it is necessary to include more disruptive activities within this set of reformed practices. Religion is not only a way of achieving self-consciousness in the name of social solidarity and communal well-being, but a way of developing rational critiques of society. As I have described it here, Hegel's philosophy of religion provides the basis for such an emancipatory cognitive interest.

In the introduction, I identified four main themes that would be developed over the course of this thesis: emphasising the significance of Hegel's understanding of religion as representation with an emphasis on the return to representation; using Hegel's understanding of religion as a way of interpreting Jacob Taubes's political theology; reading Taubes's treatment of apocalypse as representing the Hegelian concepts of contradiction and contingency; and finally, combining disparate trends of Hegel scholarship in order to develop a systematic, open, dynamic reading of Hegel's philosophy of religion. This reading would allow Hegel's philosophy of religion to work as a resource for social critique as well as social solidarity.

This drive to bring about the latter while preserving the legacy of the former is to affirm the conclusions of the materialist theologian Roland Boer, namely, that liberation theology has brought together Christianity and Marxism in admittedly fruitful dialogue, but stops at the level of polite conversation. Theology, having engaged with the political, now must take this engagement to its 'dialectical extreme.' This brings about 'not a going back to theology... but a theology beyond the initial opposition, one that is the next step, thoroughly politicised and materialised.'<sup>532</sup> I have suggested that Hegel offers an understanding of religion which accomplishes this task.

---

<sup>532</sup> Roland Boer, *Criticism of Heaven: On Marxism and Theology* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009), 451.

Taubes argues that only ‘the conservative aspect of Hegel’s philosophy is relative; its revolutionary character is absolute. For Hegel, like Joachim, conceives of the course of world history as a progression and, consequently, as a constant negation of any system that currently exists.’<sup>533</sup> It remains to be seen if this revolutionary aspect can be drawn out without destroying the system. This thesis has been an initial stage in arguing that such an interpretation is possible. Read in this light, Hegel offers a dynamic philosophical system which, in achieving self-consciousness, opens new horizons for understanding the relationship between philosophy, religion and politics. The three together aim at the cultivation of self-determining ethical communities, attentive to their own limits and committed to self-critique. Hegelian, apocalyptic political theology requires that philosophy take up the task of experimenting with theological materials in the service of those communities.

---

<sup>533</sup> Jacob Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology*, trans. David Ratmoko (Stanford University Press, 2009), 166.

## Appendix of German Quotations

*Where the structure of the German has made it simpler to include slightly more of the original text, I have done so. Clarifications are included in brackets. All italicised text is from the original.*

(48) als die der Form nach äußerliche Anschauungsweise der erstern, dern subjectives Produciern und Zersplittern des substantiellen Inhalts in viele selbständige Gestalten, in der Totalität der zweiten, deren in der Vorstellung sich entfaltendes Auseinandergehen und Vermitteln des Entfalteten, nicht nur zu einem Ganzen zusammengehalten, sondern auch in die einfache geistige Anschauung vereint und dann darin zum selbstbewußten Denken erhoben ist. Diß Wissen ist damit der denkend erkannte Begriff der Kunst und Religion, in welchem das in dem Inhalte Verschiedene als nothwendig, und diß Nothwendige als frei erkannt ist (GW20, 554-555).

(48) Die Vorstellung ist als die erinnerte Anschauung die Mitte zwischen dem unmittelbaren Bestimmt-sich-finden der Intelligenz und zwischen derselben in ihrer Freiheit, dem Denken... Aber indem das Vorstellen von der Anschauung und deren gefundenem Stoffe anfängt, so ist diese Thätigkeit mit dieser Differenz noch behaftet und ihre concreten Productionen in ihr sind noch Synthesen, die erst im Denken zu der concreten Immanenz des Begriffes werden (GW20, 445-446).

(48) Diß Erkennen ist so das Anerkennen dieses Inhalts und seiner Form und Befreiung von der Einseitigkeit der Formen und Erhebung derselben in die absolute Form, die sich selbst zum Inhalte bestimmt und identisch mit ihm bleibt und darin das Erkennen jener an und für sich seyeden Nothwendigkeit ist. Diese Bewegung, welche die Philosophie ist, findet sich schon vollbracht, indem sei am Schluß ihrne eigenen Begriff erfaßt, d. i. Nur auf ihr Wissen zurücksieht (GW20, 555).

(50) Durch diesent Gang ist aber die Positivität nur zum Teil weggenommen; und zwischen dem tungusischen Schamanen mit dem Kierche und Staat regierenden europäischen Prälaten oder dem Mogulitzen mit dem Puritaner un dem seinem Pflichtgebot Gehorchenden ist nicht der Unterschied, daß jene sich zu Knechten machten, dieser frei wäre; sondern daß jener den Herrn außer sich, dieser aber den Herrn in sich trägt, zugleich aber sein eigener Knecht ist (W1, 323).

(51) Insofern der Geist in der Religion sich ihm selbst vorstellt, ist er zwar Bewußtseyn, und die in ihr eingeschlossene Wirklichkeit widerfährt aber in dieser Vorstellung nicht ihr vollkommenes Recht, nemlich nicht nur Kleid zu seyn, sondern selbstständiges freyes Daseyn; und umgekehrt ist sie, weil ihr die Vollendung in ihr selbst mangelt, eine bestimmte Gestalt, die nicht dasjenige erreicht, was sie darstellen soll, nemlich den seiner selbstbewußten Geist. Daß sinse Gestalt ihn selbst ausdrückte, müßte sie slebst nichts anderes seyn als er, und er sich so erscheinen oder wirklich seyn, wie er in seinem Wesen ist (GW9, 365).

(52) Er ist der eine un einzige Gegenstand der Philosophie; - mit ihm sich zu beschäftigen, in ihm Alles zu erkennen, auf ihn Alles zurückzuführen, so wie aus ihm alles Besondere abzuleiten, und Alles allein [zu] rechertigen insofern es aus ihm entspringt, sich in seineme Zusammenhange mit ihm erhält, von seinem Strahle lebt und seine Seele hat. Die Philosophie ist daher Theologie, und die Beschäftigung mit ihr – oder vielmehr in ihr ist für sich Gottesdienst (GW17, 6).

(52) Die sesentliche Bestimmung aber über das Verhältnis von Religion und Staat ergibt sich nur, indem an ihren Begriff erinnert wird. Die religion hat die absolute Wahrheit zu ihrem Inhalt, und damit fällt auch das Höchste der Gesinnung in sie. Als Anschauung, Gefühl, vorstellende



Erkenntnis, die sich mit Gott, als der uneingeschränkten Grundlage und Ursache, an der alles hängt, beschäftigt, enthält sie die Forderung, daß alles auch in dieser Beziehung gefaßt werde und in ihr seine Bestätigung, Rechtfertigung, Vergewisserung erlange (W7, 417).

(54) Die vollendete Religion ist diese, wo der Begriff der Religion zu sich zurückgekehrt ist, - wo die absolute Idee – Gott als Geist, nach seiner Wahrheit und Offenbarkeit für das Bewußtsein der Gegenstand ist – Die frühern Religionen in welchen die Bestimmtheit des Begriffs geringer, abstracter, mangelhaft ist – sind bestimmte Religionen, welche die Durchgangs-Stufen des Begriffs der Religion zu ihrer Vollendung ausmachen – die christliche Religion wird sich uns als die absolute Religion zeigen, von ihrem Inhalt ist es insofern, daß wir handeln werden (GW17, 31).

(54-55) Er [Geist] hat die zwey Seiten an ihm, die oben als die beyden umgekehrten Sätze vorgestellt sind; die eine ist diese, daß die Substanz sich ihrer selbst entäußert und zum Selbstbewußtsein wird, die andre umgekehrt, daß das Selbstbewußtsein sich seiner entäußert und zur Dingheit oder zum allgemeinen Selbst macht. Beyde Seiten sind sich auf diese Weise entgegen gekommen, und hiedurch ihre wahre Vereinigung entstanden. Die Entäußerung der Substanz, ihr Werden zum Selbstbewußtsein, drückt den Uebergang ins Entgegengesetzte, den bewußtlosen Uebergang der Nothwendigkeit, oder diß aus, daß sie an sich Selbstbewußtsein ist (GW9, 403).

(55) Diese Form des Vorstellens macht die Bestimmtheit aus, in welcher der Geist in dieser seiner Gemeine, seiner bewußt wird. Sie ist noch nicht das zu seinem Begriffe als Begriffe gediehene Selbstbewußtsein desselben; die Vermittelung ist noch unvollendet. Es ist also in dieser Verbindung des Seyns und Denkens der Mangel vorhanden, daß das geistige Wesen noch mit einer unveröhnten Entzweigung nach den Disseits und Jenseits behaftet ist. Der Inhalt ist der wahre, aber alle seine Momente haben, in dem Elemente des Vorstellens gesetzt, den Charakter, nicht begriffen zu seyn, sondern als vollkommene selbständige Seiten zu erscheinen, die sich äußerlich aufeinander beziehen (GW9, 408).

(55) Aber wenn eine geläufige Reflexionsbildung einen Inhalt in seinen Zusammenhängen und Gründen rasonierend oder salbungsvoll zu explizieren weiß, so ist von solcher Fertigkeit noch sehr das logische Bewußtsein über die Formen selbst und deren Wert zu unterscheiden, in denen alle Verbindungen der vorgetragenen Vorstellungen gemacht werden. Auf diese Formen aber kommt es in spekulativer Betrachtung nicht nur wesentlich, sondern sogar allein an, denn in dieser höheren Sphäre das Denkens erkennt sich das, was den innersten Punkt ausmacht, die Unwahrheit des Unterschiedes von Form und Inhalt, und daß es die reine Form selbst ist, welche zum Inhalt wird (W11, 357).

(56) Das Begriffen also ist ihm nicht ein Ergreifen dieses Begriffes, der die aufgehobene Natürlichkeit als allgemeine also als mit sich selbst versöhnte weiß, sondern ein Ergreifen jener Vorstellung, daß durch das Geschehen der eignen Entäußerung des göttlichen Wesens, durch seine geschene Menschwerdung und seinen Tod das göttliche Wesen mit seinem Daseyn versöhnt ist. – Das Ergreifen dieser Vorstellung drückt nun bestimmter dasjenige aus, was vorherhin in ihm das geistige Auferstehen genannt wurde, oder das Werden seines einzelnen Selbstbewußtseins zum allgemeinen oder zur Gemeine. – Der Tod des göttlichen Menschen als Tod ist die abstracte Negativität, das unmittelbare Resultat der Bewegung, die nur in die natürliche Allgemeinheit sich endigt...der Tod wird von dem, was er unmittelbar bedeutet, von dem Nichtseyn dieses Einzelnens verklärt zur Allgemeinheit des Geistes, der in seiner Gemeine lebt, in ihr täglich stirbt und aufersteht (GW9, 418).

(56) ... diß stirbt daher nicht wirklich, wie der Besondere vorgestellt wird, wirklich gestorben zu seyn, sondern seine Besonderheit erstirbt in seiner Allgemeinheit, das heißt, in seinem Wissen, welches das sich mit sich versöhnende Wesen ist. Das zunächst vorhergehende Element des Vorstellens ist also hier als aufgehobnes gesetzt, oder es ist in das Selbst, in seinem Begriff, zurückgegangen; das in jenem nur Seyende ist zum Subjecte geworden (GW9, 418-419).

(57-58) Damit gibt sich der Inhalt eine ganz andere Gestalt. Die Unfreiheit der Form, d. i. Des Wissens und der Subjectivität, hat für den sittlichen Inhalt die Folge, daß das Selbstbewußtseyn ihm als nicht immanent, daß er als demselben entrückt vorgestellt wird, so daß er nur wahrhaft seyn solle, als negative gegen dessen Wirklichkeit. In dieser Unwahrheit heißt der sittlich Gehalt ein Heiliges. Aber durch das Sich-einführen des göttlichen Geistes in die Wirklichkeit, die Befreiung der Wirklichkeit zu ihm wird das, was in der Welt Heiligkeit seyn soll, durch die Sittlichkeit verdrängt (GW20, 535).

(61) Die Religion setzt den ganzen Ablauf derselben voraus, und ist die einfache Totalität oder das absolute Selbst derselben. – Der Verlauf derselben ist übrgens im Verhältnisse zur Religion nicht in der Zeit vorzustellen. Der ganze Geist nur ist in der Zeit, und die Gestalten, welche Gestalten des ganzen Geistes als solchen sind, stellen sich in einer Augeinanderfolge dar; denn nur das Ganze hat eigentliche Wirklichkeit, und daher die Form der reinen Freyheit gegen anderes, die sich als Zeit ausdrückt (GW9, 365).

(61-62) ... ihrem *Anfange* zu bedenken gibt: ob sie nämlich in *ihrem Fortgange* nicht an Licht und Bestimmtheit gewinnen würde, wenn sie sich entschiedener *an das Wort Gottes anschlosse*, aus welchem sie sich entwickelt hat, und bestimmter, nämlich *namhafter* (d. h. Mit Nennung des Namens) von der *Sünde* ausginge, welche sich ihr als *Abstraktion* manifestiert hat, ohne deren Voraussetzung kein Verständnis der Welt, ohne deren Anerkennung keine Selbsterkenntnis, ohne deren Aufhebung keine Gotteserkenntnis möglich ist; – ferner, nach dieser Philosophie selbst sei der Gedanke nicht das Höchste, sondern die *Vorstellung*... (RG, 377).

(62) Der Herr Verfasser hat damit einen interessanten Gesichtspunkt berührt, – das Herübergehen überhaupt *von der Vorstellung zum Begriffe* und *von dem Begriffe zur Vorstellung*, ein Herüber – und Hinübergehen, das in der wissenschaftlichen Meditation vorhanden ist und [von dem,] daß es auch in der wissenschaftlichen Darstellung allenthalben ausgesprochen werde, hier gefordert wird... Referent dürfte, wenigstens zum Behufe einer Entschuldigung von Unvollkommenheit seiner Arbeiten nach dieser Seite, daran erinnern, daß eben der *Anfang* den auch der Herr Verfasser nennt, vornehmlich es auflegt, sich fester an den der Vorstellung in oft hartem Kampfe abgerungenen Begriff und dessen Entwicklungsgang, wie sein Ausdruck in dem reinen Gedanken lautet, anzuschließen und in seinem Gleise sich strenger zu halten, um desselben sicher zu werden und die Zerstreungen, welche die Vielseitigkeit der Vorstellungen und die Form der Zufälligkeit in der Verbindung ihrer Bestimmung mit sich führt, gewaltsam abzuhalten diese Vielseitigkeit bringt die Gefahr der Bequemlichkeit zu nahe, in der Strenge der Methode des Gedankens nachzugeben. Die erlangte größere Festigkeit in der Bewegung des Begriffs wird es erlauben, gegen die Verführung der Vorstellung unbesorgter zu seyn und sie unter der Herrschaft des Begriffes freier gewähren zu lassen; wie die Sicherheit, die im göttlichen Glauben schon vorhanden ist, von Haus aus gestattet, ruhig gegen den Begriff zu seyn und sich in denselben sowohl furchtlos über seine Konsequenz, welche bei vorausgesetztem Glauben sich nicht selbst als frei zu erweisen hat, einzulassen (RG, 378-379).

(62-63) Die Einwürfe, wenn sie wirklich mit der Sache, gegen die sie gerichtet sind, zusammenhängen, sind einseitige Bestimmungen, die teils, wie früher angegeben worden, durch Verfälschung des spekulativen Faktums hervorgebracht und zur Anklage gegen dasselbe gemacht,

teils als Behauptungen gegen dasselbe aufgestellt werden. Diese einsitigen Bestimmungen, als mit der Sache zusammenhängend, sind *Momente ihres Begriffs*, die also bei seiner Exposition in ihrer momentanen Stellung vorgekommen und deren negation in der immanenten Dialektik des Begriffs aufgezeigt sein muß; diese Negation ist das, was, indem sie als Einwürfe gestellt worden, in die Form ihrer Widerlegung zu stehen kommt (RG, 380-381).

(66) Aber es kann hiergegen nicht nur auf den Grundbegriff vom Logischen sich berufen werden, sondern der ganze Verlauf desselben, worin alle Gestalten eines gegebenen Inhalts und der Objekte vorgekommen sind, hat ihren Übergang und Unwahrheit gezeigt, und statt daß ein gegebenes Objekt die Grundlage sein könnte, zu der sich die absolute Form nur als äußerliche und zufällige Bestimmung verhielte, hat sich diese vielmehr als die absolute Grundlage und letzte Wahrheit erwiesen. Die Methode ist daraus als *der sich selbst wissende, sich* als das Absolute, sowohl Subjektive als Objektive, *zum Gegenstande habende Begriff*, somit als das reine Entsprechen des Begriffs und seiner Realität, als eine Existenz die er selbst ist, hervorgegangen.

Was hiermit als Methode hier zu betrachten ist, ist nur die Bewegung des *Begriffs* selbst, deren Natur schon erkannt worden, aber *erstlich* nunmehr mit der *Bedeutung*, daß der *Begriff Alles* und seine Bewegung die *allgemeine absolute Tätigkeit*, die sich selbst bestimmende und selbst realisierende Bewegung ist (W6, 551).

(77) Die Religion ist das Verhältnis zum Absoluten *in Form des Gefühls, der Vorstellung, des Glaubens*, und in ihrem alles enthaltenden Zentrum ist alles nur als ein Akzidentelles, sauch Verschwindendes. Wird an dieser Form auch in Beziehung auf den Staat so festgehalten, daß sie auch für ihn das wesentlich Bestimmende und Gültige sei, so ist er, als der zu bestehenden Unterschieden, Gesetzen und Einrichtungen entwickelte Organismus, dem Schwachen, der Unsicherheit und Zerrüttung preisgegeben (W7, 418).

(78-79) die Rechtschaffenheit wird nur etwas Festes, indem die Religion ihr zu Grunde liegt, - indem ihr Innerstes, das Gewißen, darin erst absolute wahrhafte Verpflichtung, absolute Sicherheit seiner Verpflichtung hat, - ferner die Religion tröstet das Individuum im Leiden, Unglücksfällen und im Tode; - der Staat muß wesentlich auf Religion beruhen auf Religion beruhen, die Sicherheit der Gesinnung, der Pflichten gegen denselben wird erst absolut darin, - jede andere Weise der Verpflichtung weiß sich Ausreden, Ausnahmen, Gegengründe zu verschaffen, weiß die Gesetze, Einrichtungen und Individuen der Regierung und Obrigkeit – zu verkleinern, sie unter Gesichtspunkte zu bringen, wodurch er sich von der Achtung gegen dieselbe losmacht – denn eben all diese Gegenstände haben eine zugleich gegenwärtige, endliche Existenz, - sie sind von der Beschaffenheit, daß sie die Reflexion einladen, sie zu untersuchen, sie bey sich zu rechtfertigen, sie anzuklagen u.s.f. – sie rufen die subjective Betrachtung auf; - nur die Religion ist es, welche alles dergleichen niederschlägt, zu nichte macht –also eine unendliche absolute Verpflichtung herbeyführt.

Zusammen: Verehrung Gottes oder der Götter befestigt und erhält die Individuen, die Familien, die Staaten, - Verachtung Gottes – oder der Götter löst die Rechte und Pflichten, die Bande der Familien und der Staaten auf und führt sie zum Verderben (GW17, 43).

(93) Wenn der Inhalt wieder der Methode als gegeben und als von eigentümlicher Natur angenommen wird, so ist sie wie das Logische überhaupt in solcher Bestimmung eine bloß *äußerliche* Form. Aber es kann hiergegen nicht nur auf den Grundbegriff vom Logischen sich berufen werden, sondern der ganze Verlauf desselben, worin alle Gestalten eines gegebenen Inhalts und der Objekte vorgekommen sind, hat ihren Übergang und Unwahrheit gezeigt, und statt daß ein gegebenes Objekt die Grundlage sein könnte, zu der sich die absolute Form nur als äußerliche und zufällige Bestimmung verhielte, hat sich diese vielmehr als die absolute Grundlage und letzte Wahrheit erwiesen. Die Methode ist daraus als *der sich selbst wissende, sich* als das

Absolute, sowohl Subjective als Objective, *zum Gegenstande habende Begriff*, somit als das reine Entsprechen des Begriffs und seiner Realität, als eine Existenz die er selbst ist, hervorgegangen (W6, 551)

(93) Was hiemit als Methode hier zu betrachten ist, ist nur die Bewegung des *Begriffs* selbst, deren Natur schon erkannt worden, aber erstlich nunmehr mit der *Bedeutung*, daß der *Begriff Alles*, und seine Bewegung die *allgemeine absolute Tätigkeit*, die sich selbst bestimmende und selbst realisirende Bewegung ist (W6, 551).

(96) Für sich ist die absolute Idee, weil kein Uebergehen noch Vorauzzetzen und überhaupt keine Bestimmtheit, welche nicht flüssig und durchsichtig wäre, in ihr ist, die reine Form des Begriffs, die ihren Inhalt als sich selbst anschaut. Sie ist sich Inhalt, in sofern sie das ideelle Unterscheiden ihrer selbst von sich, und das eine der Unterschiedenen die Identität mit sich ist, in der aber die Totalität der Form als das System der Inhaltsbestimmungen enthalten ist. Dieser Inhalt ist das System des Logischen. Als Form bleibt hier der Idee nichts als die Methode dieses Inhalts, - das bestimmte Wissen von der Wahrung ihrer Momente (GW20, 228-229).

(103) Diese Ansicht des Verhältnisses der christlichen Religion zum Menschen ist nicht geradezu für sich selbst positiv zu nennen, sie beruht auf der gewiß schönen Voraussetzung, daß alles Höhere, alles Edle und Gute des Menschen etwas Göttliches ist, von Gott kommt, sein Geist ist, der von ihm ausgeht. Aber dann wird diese Ansicht zum grellen Positiven, wenn die menschliche Natur absolut geschieden wird von dem Göttlichen, wenn keine Vermittlung derselben – außer nur in *einem* Individuum – zugelassen, sondern alles menschliche Bewußtsein des Guten und Göttlichen nur zur Dumpfheit und Vernichtung eines Glaubens ein durchaus Fremdes Übermächtiges herabgewürdigt wird (W1, 224-225).

(116) Aber dieß Abstractum hat in seiner Realität die Bedeutung des selbstbewußten Ich erlangt. Der seiner selbst gewisse Geist ruht als Gewissen in sich, und seine reale Allgemeinheit, oder sein Pflicht liegt in seiner reinen Ueberzeugung con der Pflicht. Diese reine Ueberzeugung ist als solche so leer als die reine Pflicht, rein in dem Sinne, daß nichts in ihr, ein bestimmter Inhalt Pflicht ist. Es soll aber gehandelt, es muß von dem Individuum bestimmt werden; und der seiner selbst gewisse Geist, in dem das Ansich die Bedeutung des selbstbewußten Ich erlangt hat, weiß diese Bestimmung und Inhalt in der unmittelbaren Gewißheit seiner selbst zu haben... Es bestimmt aus sich selbst... Alles, was in frühern Gestalten, als Gut oder Schlecht, als Gesetz und Recht sich darstellte, ist ein Anderes als die unmittelbare Gewißheit seiner selbst... (GW9, 346-347).

(116) Da die Moralität in dem Bewußtseyn, die Pflicht erfüllt zu haben, liegt, so wird dem Handeln, das Feigheit, eben so wenig als dem, das Tapferkeit genannt wird, dieß nicht fehlen... es weiß also, was es thut, als Pflicht, und indem es dieß weiß und die Ueberzeugung von der Pflicht das Pflichtmäßige selbst ist, so ist es anerkannt von den Andern... (GW9, 348)

(137n374) Dieß Wesen ist reines Denken, und das reine Denken innerhalb seiner selbst als Gegenstand oder als das Wesen gesetzt; im glaubenden Bewußtseyn erhält dieß Ansich des Denkens zugleich für das für sich seyende Bewußtseyn die Form, aber auch nur die leere Form der Gegenständlichkeit; es ist in der Bestimmung eines Vorgestellten. Der reinen Einsicht aber, indem sie das reine Bewußtseyn nach der Seite des für sich seyenden Selbsts ist, erscheint das Andre als ein negatives des Selbstbewußtseyns (GW9, 299).

(137n374) ein Theil dieser Bewegung ist die Unterscheidung, in welcher die betreffende Einsicht sich selbst als Gegenstand gegenüberstellt; so lange sie in diesem Momente verweilt, ist sie sich

entfremdet. Als reine Einsicht ist sie ohne allen Inhalt; die Bewegung ihrer Realisirung besteht darin, daß sie selbst sich als Inhalt wird, denn ein anderer kann ihr nicht werden, weil sie das Selbstbewußtseyn der Kategorie ist. Aber indem sie ihn zuerst in dem Entgegensetzen nur als Inhalt, und ihn noch nicht als sich selbst weis, verkennt sie sich in ihm. Ihre Vollendung hat daher diesen Sinn, den ihr zuerst gegenständlichen Inhalt als den ihrigen zu erkennen (GW9, 297).

(137n374) sondern hat den Inhalt ohne seine Nothwendigkeit, und bringt statt der Form des Begriffes die natürlichen Verhältnisse von Vater und Sohn in das Reich des reinen Bewußtseyns. Indem es so im Denken selbst sich vorstellend verhält, ist ihm das Wesen zwar offenbar, aber die Momente desselben treten ihm um dieser synthetischen Vorstellung willen theils selbst auseinander, so daß sie nicht durch ihren eignen Begriff sich aufeinander beziehen, theils tritt es von diesem seinem reinen Gegenstand zurück, bezieht sich nur äusserlich auf ihn (GW9, 410-411).

(141) Die Erhebung der vermeinten Natur über das miskannte Denken, um zunächst die Verbannung der äussern Zweckmäßigkeit hat die Form des Zwecks überhaupt in Mißkredit gebracht. Allein, wie auch Aristoteles die Natur als das zweckmäßige Thun bestimmt, der Zweck ist das Unmittelbare, das Ruhende, welches selbst bewegend, oder Subject ist. Seine abstracte Krafft zu bewegen ist das Fürsichseyn oder die reine Negativität. Das Resultat ist nur darum dasselbe, was der Anfang, weil der Anfang Zweck ist; - oder das Wirkliche ist nur darum dasselbe, was sein Begriff, weil das Unmittelbare als Zweck das Selbst oder die reine Wirklichkeit in ihm selbst hat. Der ausgeführte Zweck oder das daseyende Wirkliche ist die Bewegung und das entfaltete Werden (GW9, 20).

(145) Wenn es ein Wissen gibt, wenn wir das Wissen um des Nichtwissens (des nichtigen Wissens, des Wissens des Nichtigen) willen nicht aufgeben wollen, so muß es gleich dem Glauben göttlich und übernatürlich sein; als übernatürlich müssen Philosophie und Glaube das Wort Gottes zur einzigen Grundlage und die Vernichtung der gefallenen Natur, die Erlösung von der Natur zum Zwecke haben. Beide sind übernatürlich, insofern sie den Menschen über die gefallene Natur erheben, welches durch die Natur selbst nicht bewirkt werden kann; beide sind aber auch insofern natürlich, als sie die Wiederherstellung der wirklichen Natur zur Folge haben sollen. An der inhaltslosen Übersinnlichkeit ist es, daß der Rationalismus sich zerarbeitet (RG, 383-384).

(175) Es wird über das Endliche hinausgegangen in das Unendliche. Dies Hinausgehen erscheint als ein äußerliches Tun. Um der Untrennbarkeit des Unendlichen und Endlichen willen... entsteht die Grenze; das Unendliche ist verschwunden, sein Anderes, das Endliche, ist eingetreten. Aber dies Eintreten des Endlichen erscheint als ein dem Unendlichen äußerliches Geschehen und die neue Grenze als ein solches, das nicht aus dem Unendlichen selbst entstehe, sondern ebenso vorgefunden werde. Es ist damit der Rückfall in die vorherige, vergebens aufgehobene Bestimmung vorhanden. Diese neue Grenze aber ist selbst nur ein solches, das aufzuheben oder über das hinauszugehen ist. Somit ist wieder das Leere, das Nichts entstanden, in welchem ebenso jene Bestimmtheit, eine neue Grenze, angetroffen wird – *und so fort ins Unendliche* (W5, 154).

(182-183n482) die absolute Idee sei das Allgemeine, aber das Allgemeine nicht bloß als abstrakte Form, welchem der besondere Inhalt als ein Anderes gegenübersteht, sondern als die absolute Form, in welche alle Bestimmungen, die ganze Fülle des durch dieselbe gesetzten Inhalts zurückgegangen ist. Die absolute Idee ist in dieser Hinsicht dem Greis zu vergleichen, der dieselben Religionssätze ausspricht als das Kind, für welchen dieselben aber die Bedeutung

seines ganzen Lebens haben. Wee auch das Kind den religiösen Inhalt versteht, so gilt ihm derselbe doch nur als ein solches, außerhalb dessen noch das ganze Leben und die ganze Welt liegt (W8, 389).

(183n482) Was hiermit als Methode hier zu betrachten ist, ist nur die Bewegung des *Begriffs* selbst, deren Natur schon erkannt worden, aber *erstlich* nunmehr mit der *Bedeutung*, daß der *Begriff alles* und seine Bewegung die *allgemeine absolute Tätigkeit*, die sich selbst bestimmende und selbst realisierende Bewegung ist (W6, 551).

(189) Aber *zunächst*, indem Wirkliches und Mögliches *formelle Unterschiede* sind, ist ihre Beziehung gleichfalls nur *formell* und besteht nur darin, daß das eine wie das andere ein *Gesetzsein* ist, oder in der *Zufälligkeit*.

Damit nun, daß in der Zufälligkeit das Wirkliche wie das Mögliche das *Gesetzsein* ist, haben sie die Bestimmung an ihnen erhalten; es wird dadurch *zweitens* die *reale Wirklichkeit*, womit ebenso reale *Möglichkeit* und die *relative Notwendigkeit* hervorgeht.

Die reflexion der relativen Notwendigkeit in sich gibt *drittens* die *absolute Notwendigkeit*, welche absolute *Möglichkeit* und *Wirklichkeit* ist (W6: 202).

(189-190) Diese ist nun zwar das gesetzte *Ganze* der Form, abder der Form in ihrer Bestimmtheit, nämlich der Wirklichkeit als formeller oder unittelbarer und ebensowas der Möglichkeit als des abstrakten Ansichseins. Diese Wirklichkeit, welche die Möglichkeit einer Sache ausmacht, ist daher nicht *ihre eigene Möglichkeit*, sondern das Ansichsein eines *anderen* Wirklichen; sie selbst ist die Wirklichkeit, die aufgehoben werden soll, die Möglichkeit als *nur* Möglichkeit. – So macht die reale Möglichkeit das *Ganze von Bedingungen* aus, eine nicht in sich reflektierte, zerstreute Wirklichkeit, welche aber bestimmt ist, das Ansichsein, aber eines Andern zu sein und in sich zurückgehen zu sollen (W6: 209).

(194) Dasjenige, was dem Elemente der Vorstellung angehört, daß der absolute Geist, als ein einzelner oder vielmehr als ein besonderer an seinem Daseyn die Natur des Geistes vorstellt, ist also hier in das Selbstbewußtseyn selbst versetzt, in das in seinem Andersseyn sich erhaltende Wissen; diß stirbt daher nicht wirklich, wie der Besondere vorgestellt wird, wirklich gestorben zu seyn, sonder sein Besonderheit erstirbt in seiner Allgemeinheit... Der Tod des Mittlers ist Tod nicht nur der natürlichen Seite desselben oder seines besondern Fürsichseyns, es stirbt nicht nur die vom Wesen abgezogene schon todte Hülle, sondern auch die Abstraction des göttlich Wesens... Der Tod dieser Vorstellung enthält also zugleich den Tod der Abstraction des göttlichen Wesens, das nicht als Selbst gesetzt ist. Er ist das schmerzliche Gefühl des unglücklichen Bewußtseyns, daß Gott selbst gestorben ist... Diß Gefühl ist also in der That der Verlust der Substanz und ihres Gegenübertretens gegen das Bewußtseyn; aber zugleich ist es die reine Subjectivität der Substanz, oder die reine Geweit seiner selbst, die ihr als dem Gegenstande oder dem Unmittelbaren oder dem reinen Wesen fehlte. Diß Wissen also ist die Begeisterung, wodurch die Substanz Subject, ihre Abstraction und Leblosigkeit gestorben, sie also wirklich und einfaches und allgemeines Selbstbewußtseyn geworden ist (GW9, 418-419).

## Bibliography

- Adams, Nicholas. *The Eclipse of Grace: Divine and Human Action in Hegel*. Oxford: Oxford-Wiley, 2013.
- Anderson, Ben. “‘Transcending Without Transcendence’: Utopianism and an Ethos of Hope.” *Antipode* 38, no. 4 (2006): 691–710.
- Assmann, Aleida, Jan Assmann, and Wolf-Daniel Hartwich. “Introduction to the German Edition.” In *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, by Jacob Taubes, edited by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- Barth, Karl. *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background & History*. London: SCM Press, 2001.
- Baur, Ferdinand Christian. *Die christliche Gnosis oder die christliche Religionsphilosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967.
- Beattie, Tina. “Nothing Really Matters: a Bohemian Rhapsody for a Dead Queen.” In *Theology After Lacan*, edited by Marcus Pound, Clayton Crockett, and Creston Davis. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, forthcoming.
- Beiser, Frederick C. *Hegel*. New York; London: Routledge, 2005.
- . “Hegel, a Non-Metaphysician? A Polemic Review of H T Engelhardt and Terry Pinkard (eds), *Hegel Reconsidered*.” *The Hegel Society of Great Britain* 32 (1995): 1–13.
- . “Introduction: Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics.” In *The Cambridge companion to Hegel*, edited by Frederick C Beiser, 1–24. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- . “Introduction: The Puzzling Hegelian Renaissance.” In *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*, edited by Frederick C Beiser, 1–14. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- . *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Bell, Daniel. *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*. Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1960.
- Bielik-Robson, Agata. “Modernity: The Jewish Perspective.” *New Blackfriars* 94, no. 1050 (2013): 188–207.
- Bloch, Ernst. *Atheism in Christianity: The Religion of the Exodus and the Kingdom*. Second ed. Verso, 2009.
- . *Heritage of Our Times*. Weimar and Now 1. Cambridge: Polity P, 1991.
- . *The Principle of Hope: V. 1*. Translated by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995.
- . *The Spirit of Utopia*. Translated by Anthony A. Nassar. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- Blond, Phillip. “Introduction: Theology before philosophy.” In *Post-secular philosophy: between philosophy and theology*, 1–66. London; New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Boer, Roland. *Criticism of Heaven: On Marxism and Theology*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009.
- . *Political Myth: On the Use and Abuse of Biblical Themes*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.
- . “Review, Jacob Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology*.” *The Bible and Critical Theory* 8, no. 2 (2012): 99–100.

- Bordignon, Michela. "Contradiction or Non-Contradiction? Hegel's Dialectic Between Brandom and Priest." *Verifiche* XLI, no. 1–3 (2012): 221–245.
- Brandom, Robert. *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality*. Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Brooks, Thom. *Hegel's Political Philosophy: a Systematic Reading of the Philosophy of Right*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.
- . *Punishment*. Routledge, 2012.
- Bull, Malcolm. *Seeing Things Hidden: Apocalypse, Vision, and Totality*. London: Verso, 1999.
- Burbidge, John W. *Hegel on Logic and Religion: The Reasonableness of Christianity*. SUNY Series in Hegelian Studies. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1992.
- . "Hegel's Open Future." In *Hegel and the Tradition: Essays in Honour of H.S. Harris*, edited by Michael Baur and John Edward Russon. Toronto, Ont.; Buffalo, N.Y.: University of Toronto Press, 1997.
- . *Hegel's Systematic Contingency*. Basingstoke [England]; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- . *On Hegel's Logic: Fragments of a Commentary*. Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1981.
- Burns, Michael O'Neill. "The Hope of Speculative Materialism." In *After the postsecular and the postmodern: new essays in continental philosophy of religion*, edited by Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler, 316–334. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2010.
- Butler, Clark. "Hegel, Altizer and Christian Atheism." *Encounter* 41 (1980): 103–128.
- . "Hegelian Panentheism as Joachimite Christianity." In *New perspectives on Hegel's philosophy of religion*, 131–142. Albany: State university of New York press, 1992.
- Cavanaugh, William T. *Theopolitical Imagination*. London; New York: T & T Clark, 2002.
- Caygill, Howard. "The Broken Hegel: Gillian Rose's Retrieval of Speculative." *Women: A Cultural Review* 9, no. 1 (1998): 19–27.
- Clark, Malcolm. *Logic and System: A study of the Translation from "Vorstellung" to Thought in the Philosophy of Hegel*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971.
- Cohn, Norman. *The Pursuit of the Millennium*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1957.
- Collins, John Joseph. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*. 2nd ed. The Biblical Resource Series. Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.
- Comay, Rebecca. *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution*. Stanford University Press, 2010.
- Crites, Stephen. *Dialectic and Gospel in the Development of Hegel's Thinking*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.
- de Boer, Karin. "Democracy Out of Joint? The Financial Crisis in Light of Hegel's Philosophy of Right." *Hegel Bulletin* 33, no. 02 (2012): 36–53.
- . *On Hegel: The Sway of the Negative*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Derrida, Jacques. "From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve." In *Writing and difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.
- . *Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- . "The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel's Semiology." In *Margins of philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Desmond, William. *Hegel's God: A Counterfeit Double?* Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003.



- Di Giovanni, George. "Faith Without Religion, Religion Without Faith: Kant and Hegel on Religion." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 41, no. 3 (2003): 365–383.
- Dickey, Laurence W. *Hegel: Religion, Economics, and the Politics of Spirit, 1770-1807*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Dooley, Mark. *The Politics of Exodus Søren Kierkegaard's Ethics of Responsibility*. 1st ed. no. 20. New York: Fordham University Press, 2001.
- Dudley, William. "The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic (Review)." *Notre Dame Philosophical Review* (2006). <http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/25128-the-future-of-hegel-plasticity-temporality-and-dialectic/>.
- Dupré, Louis. "Religion as Representation." In *The Legacy of Hegel. Proceedings of the Marquette Hegel Symposium 1970*, edited by J.J. O'Malley, K.W. Algozin, H.P. Kainz, and L.C. Rice, 137–143. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Ideology: An Introduction*. London; New York: Verso, 1991.
- Engels, Frederick. "Anti-Dühring." In *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 25, Frederick Engels: Anti-Dühring, Dialects of Nature*, translated by Jack Cohen and et. al. New York: International Publishers, 2005.
- Fackenheim, Emil L. *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*. Bloomington ; London: Indiana University Press, 1967.
- Findlay, J. N. *Hegel: A Re-Examination*. London; New York: Allen & Unwin ; Macmillan, 1958.
- Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. London: Penguin, 1992.
- Gabriel, Markus. *Transcendental Ontology: essays in German Idealism*. New York: Continuum, 2011.
- Gabriel, Markus, and Slavoj Žižek. *Mythology, Madness, and Laughter: Subjectivity in German Idealism*. London; New York: Continuum, 2009.
- Göschel, Karl Friedrich. *Aphorismen über Nichtwissen und absolutes Wissen im Verhältnisse zur christlichen Glaubenserkenntniss: ein Beytrag zum Verständnisse der Philosophie unserer Zeit*. Berlin: E. Franklin, 1829.
- Grimshaw, Mike. "Introduction: 'A Very Rare Thing'." In *To Carl Schmitt: letters and reflections*, by Jacob Taubes, translated by Keith Tribe. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Habermas, Jürgen. *Philosophical-Political Profiles*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1983.
- Hammer, Epsen. "Hegel as Theorist of Secularization." *Hegel Bulletin* 68, no. 2 (2013): 223–244.
- Harman, Graham. *Quentin Meillassoux: Philosophy in the Making*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011.
- Harris, H. S. *Hegel's Development: Night Thoughts (Jena 1801-1806)*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983.
- . *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight, 1770 - 1801*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.
- . *Hegel's Ladder I: The Pilgrimage of Reason*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.
- . *Hegel's Ladder II: The Odyssey of Spirit*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997.
- Hartmann, Klaus. "Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View." In *Hegel: a Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Alasdair C. MacIntyre, 101–124. Notre Dame, Ind; London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976.
- Hartwich, Wol, Aleida Assmann, and Jan Assmann. "Afterword." In *The Political Theology of Paul*, by Jacob Taubes. Stanford University Press, 2004.

- Hegel, G.W.F. *Faith and Knowledge*. Translated by Walter Cerf and H. S. Harris. Albany: State University of New York Press, n.d.
- . *Gesammelte Werke*. Hamburg: Felix meiner Verlag, 1968.
- . *Hegel: The Letters*. Translated by Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- . *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind: Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830) with Zusätze*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.
- . *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature: Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830): With Zusätze*. Translated by A.V. Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970.
- . *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*. Translated by T. M. Knox and Stephen Houlgate. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- . *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- . "Review of C.F. Göschel's 'Aphorisms: Part One and Two'." Translated by Clark Butler. *Clio* 17, no. 4 (1988): 369–393.
- . "Review of C.F. Göschel's 'Aphorisms: Part Three'." *Clio* 18, no. 4 (1989): 379–385.
- . *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*. Translated by T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991.
- . *Werke*. Edited by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel. 20 vols. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1969.
- . *Early Theological Writings*. Translated by T. M. Knox and Richard Kroner. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.
- Henrich, Dieter. *Hegel im Kontext*. Frankfurt (am Main): Suhrkamp, 1971.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Norton Library. New York ; London: Norton, 1965.
- Hodgson, Peter C. "Introduction: G.W.F. Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit." In *G.W.F. Hegel: Theologian of the Spirit*, by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, edited by Peter C. Hodgson. The Making of Modern Theology. Edinburgh: T & T Clarke, 1997.
- Hodgson, Peter Crafts. *Hegel and Christian Theology: A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Houlgate, Stephen. *An Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy: Freedom, Truth and History*. London; New York: Routledge, 1991.
- . "Necessity and Contingency in Hegel's Science of Logic." *The Owl of Minerva* 27, no. 1 (1995): 37–49.
- . *The Opening of Hegel's Logic: From Being to Infinity*. Purdue University Press Series in the History of Philosophy. West Lafayette, Ind: Purdue University Press, 2006.
- Hudson, Wayne. *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch*. London: Macmillan, 1982.
- Hyppolite, Jean. *Studies on Marx and Hegel*. Translated by John O'Neill. New York: Basic Books, 1969.
- Jaeschke, Walter. "Christianity and Secularity in Hegel's Concept of the State." *Journal of Religion* 61, no. 2 (1981): 127–145.
- . "Philosophical Theology and Philosophy of Religion." In *New perspectives on Hegel's philosophy of religion*, edited by David Kolb, 1–18. Albany: State university of New York press, 1992.
- . *Reason in Religion: The Foundations of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

- Johnston, Adrian. "Conflicted Matter: Jacques Lacan and the Challenge of Secularising Materialism." *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 19 (2008): 166–188.
- . "Points of Forced Freedom: Eleven (More) Theses on Materialism." *Speculations* no. IV (2013): 91–98.
- . *Žižek's Ontology: A Transcendental Materialist Theory of Subjectivity*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008.
- Johnston, Adrian, and Catherine Malabou. *Self and Emotional Life: Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, and Neuroscience*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Kahn, Paul. *Political Theology: Four New Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*. Translated by Allen W Wood and George Di Giovanni. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling: Repetition*. Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Kierkegaard's Writings 6. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Kirwan, Michael. *Political Theology: A New Introduction*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008.
- Kojève, Alexandre. *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Edited by Raymond Queneau and Allan Bloom. Translated by James H. Nichols, Jr. New York: Basic Books, 1969.
- Kolb, David. "Hegel and Religion: Avoiding Double Truth, Twice." *Hegel Bulletin* 33, no. 01 (2012): 71–87.
- . *New Perspectives on Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*. Albany: State university of New York press, 1992.
- . *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger, and After*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- . "The Necessities of Hegel's Logic." In *Hegel and the analytic tradition*, edited by Angelica Nuzzo, 40–60. London: Continuum, 2009.
- . "What Is Open and What Is Closed in the Philosophy of Hegel." *Philosophical Topics* 19, no. 2 (1991): 29–50.
- Lauer, Quentin. *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1976.
- . *Hegel's Concept of God*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982.
- Lewis, Thomas A. "Beyond the Totalitarian: Ethics and the Philosophy of Religion in Recent Hegel Scholarship." *Religion Compass* 2, no. 4 (July 01, 2008): 556–574.
- . *Freedom and Tradition in Hegel: Reconsidering Anthropology, Ethics, and Religion*. Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005.
- . "Religion and Demythologization in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit." In *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Critical Guide*, edited by Dean Moyar and Michael Quante, 192–209. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- . *Religion, Modernity, and Politics in Hegel*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Lilla, Mark. *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West*. Reprint. Vintage Books USA, 2008.
- Löwith, Karl. *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth Century Thought*. Translated by David E. Green. Garden City, N.Y: Anchor Books, 1967.
- . *Meaning In History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History*. Chicago: Phoenix Books, 1949.
- Lubac, Henri de. *La Postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore. I, I.* Paris; Namur: Lethielleux ; Culture et vérité, 1979.

- . *La Postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore*. 2, 2,. Paris; Namur: Lethielleux ; Culture et vérité, 1981.
- Lumsden, Simon. “The Rise of the Non-Metaphysical Hegel.” *Philosophy Compass* 3, no. 1 (2008): 51–65.
- Magee, Glenn Alexander. *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Magnus, Kathleen Dow. *Hegel and the Symbolic Mediation of Spirit*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2001.
- Malabou, Catherine. *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing: Dialectic, Destruction, Deconstruction*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- . *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing: Dialectic, Destruction, Deconstruction*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- . *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- . *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- . *The New Wounded: from Neurosis to Brain Damage*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2012.
- . *What should we do with our brain?* New York: Fordham University Press, 2008.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. 2nd ed., with supplementary chapter. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954.
- Martin, David. “Towards Eliminating the Concept of Secularization.” In *Penguin Survey of the Social Sciences 1965*, edited by Julius Gould, 169–182. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1965.
- Marx, Karl. “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law.” In *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 3, Marx and Engels: 1843-1844*, translated by Jack Cohen and et. al., 175–187. New York: International Publishers, 2005.
- . *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 3, Marx and Engels: 1843-1844*. Translated by Jack Cohen and et. al. New York: International Publishers, 2005.
- . “Manifesto of the Communist Party.” In *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 6, Marx and Engels: 1845-1848*, translated by Jack Cohen and et. al., 175–187. New York: International Publishers, 2005.
- McDowell, John. *Mind and World: With a New Introduction by the Author*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.
- Meillassoux, Quentin. *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. Translated by Ray Brassier. Continuum, 2010.
- . “The Spectral Dilemma.” *Collapse IV* (2008): 261–276.
- Midtgarden, Torjus. “Conflicting and Complementary Conceptions of Discursive Practice in Non-metaphysical Interpretations of Hegel.” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* (January 23, 2013).
- Min, Anselm K. *Dialectic of Salvation: Issues in Theology of Liberation*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.
- . “Hegel on Capitalism and the Common Good.” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 11, no. 2 (1986): 39–61.
- . “Hegel’s Absolute: Transcendent or Immanent?” *The Journal of Religion* 56, no. 1 (January 01, 1976): 61–87.
- . “The Trinity and the Incarnation: Hegel and Classical Approaches.” *The Journal of Religion* 66, no. 2 (April 01, 1986): 173–193.
- Mulhall, Stephen. *Inheritance and Originality: Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Kierkegaard*. Oxford: Clarendon, 2001.

- Nuzzo, Angelica. “‘... As If Truth Were a Coin!’ Lessing and Hegel’s Developmental Theory of Truth.” *Hegel Studien* 44 (2009): 131–55.
- . “Dialectic as Logic of Transformative Processes.” In *Hegel: New Directions*, edited by Katerina Deligiorgi, 85–104. Chesham, Bucks: Acumen, 2006.
- . *Hegel on Religion and Politics*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013.
- . “The End of Hegel’s Logic: Absolute Idea as Absolute Method.” In *Hegel’s theory of the subject*, edited by David Carlson, 187–205. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- . “The Truth of Absolutes Wissen in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit.” In *Hegel’s Phenomenology of spirit: new critical essays*, edited by Alfred Denker and Michael G Vater, 265–293. Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2003.
- O’Regan, Cyril. *The Heterodox Hegel*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.
- Pinkard, Terry. *Hegel: A Biography*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- . *Hegel’s Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- . “Virtues, Morality and Sittlichkeit: From Maxims to Practices.” *European Journal of Philosophy* 7, no. 2 (1999): 217–239.
- Pippin, Robert B. “Back to Hegel?” *Mediations: Journal Fo the Marxist Literary Group* 26, no. 1–2 (2013 2012): 7–28.
- . “Brandom’s Hegel.” *European Journal of Philosophy* 13, no. 3 (2005): 381–408.
- . *Hegel on Self-Consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- . *Hegel’s Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- . *Hegel’s Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- . “You can’t get there from here: Transition problems in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit.” In *The Cambridge companion to Hegel*, edited by Frederick C Beiser, 52–85. Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Popper, Karl R. *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Revised 2nd Edition, 1952.
- Priest, Graham. *Beyond the Limits of Thought*. CUP Archive, 1995.
- . “Dialectic and Dialethic.” *Science & Society* 53, no. 4 (December 01, 1989): 388–415.
- Rabinbach, Anson. “Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse: Benjamin, Bloch and Modern German Jewish Messianism.” *New German Critique* no. 34 (January 01, 1985): 78–124.
- Rawls, John. *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.
- Redding, Paul. *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- . *Hegel’s Hermeneutics*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1996.
- . “Some Metaphysical Implications of Hegel’s Theology.” *European Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 4, no. 1 (2012): 139–150.
- . “Thom Brooks’s Project of a Systematic Reading of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right.” *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* 66 (2012): 1–9.
- Rockmore, Tom. “Some Recent Analytic ‘Realist’ Readings of Hegel.” In *Hegel and the analytic tradition*, edited by Angelica Nuzzo, 158–172. London: Continuum, 2009.
- Rose, Gillian. *Hegel Contra Sociology*. London: Verso, 2009.
- . *The Broken Middle: Out of Our Ancient Society*. London: Blackwell, 1992.

- Rowland, Christopher. *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity*. London: SPCK, 1985.
- Ruda, Frank. *Hegel's Rabble: An Investigation into Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. London; New York: Continuum, 2011.
- Russon, John. "Temporality and the Future of Philosophy in Hegel's Phenomenology." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (2008): 59–68.
- Schlitt, Dale M. *Hegel's Trinitarian Claim a Critical Reflection*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012.
- Schmitt, Carl. *Political Theory: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. University of Chicago Press Ed. University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- Scott, Peter, and William T. Cavanaugh, eds. *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.
- Segundo, Juan Luis. *Liberation of Theology*. Translated by John Drury. Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002.
- Shanks, Andrew. *Civil Society, Civil Religion*. Oxford; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1995.
- . *God and Modernity: A New and Better Way to do Theology*. London; New York: Routledge, 2000.
- . *Hegel's Political Theology*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Smith, Anthony Paul, and Daniel Whistler. "What is Continental Philosophy of Religion Now?" In *After the postsecular and the postmodern: new essays in continental philosophy of religion*, edited by Anthony Paul Smith and Daniel Whistler, 1–25. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2010.
- Smith, James K. A. *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004.
- Solomon, Robert C. *In the Spirit of Hegel: A Study of G.W.F. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Steinhauer, Kurt, and Gitta Hausen. *Hegel bibliography: background material on the international reception of Hegel within the context of the history of philosophy/Hegel bibliographie: materialien zur Geschichte deer international Hegel-Rezeption und zur Philosophie-Geschichte. Part I*. München: Saur, 1980.
- Steinhauer, Kurt, and Hans-Dieter Schlüter. *Hegel bibliography: background material on the international reception of Hegel within the context of the history of philosophy/Hegel bibliographie: materialien zur Geschichte deer international Hegel-Rezeption und zur Philosophie-Geschichte. Part II, Volume 1*. München: K. G. Saur, 1998.
- . *Hegel bibliography: background material on the international reception of Hegel within the context of the history of philosophy/Hegel bibliographie: materialien zur Geschichte deer international Hegel-Rezeption und zur Philosophie-Geschichte. Part II: Volume 2*. München: K. G. Saur, 1998.
- Stern, Robert. *Hegelian Metaphysics*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- . *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Routledge Philosophy Guidebooks. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Stewart, Jon, ed. *Kierkegaard's Influence on Social-Political Thought*. Vol. 14. Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2011.
- Stewart, Jon. *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Talmon, Yonina. "Pursuit of the Millennium: The Relation Between Religious and Social Change." *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes De Sociologie* 3, no. 01 (1962): 125–148.

- Taubes, Jacob. "Culture and Ideology (1969)." In *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, edited by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- . "Four Ages of Reason (1956)." In *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, edited by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- . *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*. Edited by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- . "Nachman Krochmal and Modern Historicism (1963)." In *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, edited by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- . "Notes on Surrealism (1966)." In *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, edited by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- . *Occidental Eschatology*. Translated by David Ratmoko. Stanford University Press, 2009.
- . *Occidental Eschatology*. Translated by David Ratmoko. Stanford University Press, 2009.
- . "On the Nature of the Theological Method: Some Reflections on the Methodological Principles of Tillich's Theology (1954)." In *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, edited by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- . "Psychoanalysis and Philosophy: Notes on a Philosophical Interpretation of the Psychoanalytic Method (1963)." In *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, edited by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- . "The Dogmatic Myth of Gnosticism (1971)." In *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, edited by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- . *The Political Theology of Paul*. Translated by Dana Hollander. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.
- . "Theodicy and Theology: A Philosophical Analysis of Karl Barth's Dialectical Theology (1954)." In *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, edited by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- . "Theology and Political Theory (1955)." In *From Cult to Culture: Fragments Towards a Critique of Historical Reason*, edited by Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Amir Engel. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- . *To Carl Schmitt: Letters and Reflections*. Translated by Keith Tribe. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- . *To Carl Schmitt: Letters and Reflections*. Translated by Keith Tribe. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013.
- Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.
- . *Hegel*. Cambridge [Eng.]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975.
- Toscano, Alberto. *Fanaticism: On the Uses of an Idea*. London: Verso, 2010.
- Vattimo, Gianni. *After Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.
- Verene, Donald Phillip. *Hegel's Absolute: An Introduction to Reading the Phenomenology of Spirit*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007.

- Ward, Graham. "Hegel's Messianic Reasoning and Its Politics." In *Politics to Come: Power, Modernity and the Messianic*, edited by Arthur Bradley and Paul Fletcher. Continuum, 2010.
- Watts, Daniel. "Dilemmatic Deliberations In Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling." *Faith and Philosophy* 28, no. 2 (2011): 174–189.
- Westphal, Merold. "Hegel, Tillich, and the Secular." *The Journal of Religion* 52, no. 3 (July 01, 1972): 223–239.
- . *Kierkegaard's Critique of Reason and Society*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991.
- Williams, Rowan. "Hegel and the Gods of Postmodernity." In *Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion*, edited by Philippa Berry and Andrew Wernick. London ; New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Worsley, Peter. *The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of "Cargo" Cults in Melanesia*. 2nd ed. London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1968.
- Yerkes, James. *The Christology of Hegel*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*. London; New York: Verso, 2012.
- . *The Parallax View*. The MIT Press, 2006.
- . *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003.
- . *Violence*. London: Profile, 2008.
- Žižek, Slavoj, Clayton Crockett, and Creston Davis. *Hegel & the Infinite: Religion, Politics, and Dialectic*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.