

THE ROLE OF **VORSTELLUNG** IN HEGEL'S  
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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THE ROLE OF VORSTELLUNG IN HEGEL'S  
PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

by

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## ABSTRACT

The Purpose of Hegel's Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion is to demonstrate that the true nature of the relation of religion and philosophy is dialectical; that it is the nature of religion to undergo an inner transformation, the result of which is philosophy. No attempt is made there to deduce religion from philosophy or to effect its destruction at the hands of philosophy.

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Rather, it is Hegel's express aim to delineate the true nature of religion and in so doing to preserve its independence from assimilation by philosophy.

It is the intention of this thesis to defend Hegel's arguments in the Lectures. To this end, in chapter one, we present three critical views which are representative of the opposition raised by Hegel's arguments. All fail to consider seriously Hegel's contention that the true nature of the relation is dialectical and all accuse him of threatening the very existence of religion. To counter these criticisms we concentrate on examining and clarifying the nature of the religious consciousness, or, Vorstellung, as Hegel calls it.

To this end, chapter two examines the relation between Vorstellung and reason, or philosophical thought,

on the level of psychology, that is, as "faculties" of mind. This formal examination enables us to see more clearly what Hegel means by the dialectical relationship between the two - how reason emerges as the result of the nature of Vorstellung itself.

This clarification and defense of Hegel continues in chapter three with an examination of the concrete religious consciousness. There it is revealed that Hegel conceived it to be of the nature of religion to undergo an inner transformation, the result of which is the emergence of philosophy, and, at the same time the recognition, by religion, of the necessity of its own independent existence....

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

## CHAPTER I

### OUTLINE OF THE PROBLEM AND REPRESENTATIVE CRITICAL VIEWS

#### (1) Introduction

Our aim is to clarify Hegel's conception of the relation of religion and philosophy,<sup>1</sup> through an examination of the form of the religious consciousness, which Hegel calls Vorstellung.<sup>2</sup>

In the first chapter we intend to provide a context for the later discussion. This occurs first in the form of a general account of Hegel's treatment of religion, and, second via a brief summary of three critical evaluations of that treatment, which we consider indicative of the general approach to the question, an approach with which we disagree.

We proceed in chapter two, by examining the religious consciousness in its purely formal existence, as the psychological "faculty" of Vorstellung, or, mental

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<sup>1</sup>As elaborated in G.W.F. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, trans. E.B. Speirs and J. Burdon Sanderson (New York: Humanities Press Inc., 1968). Hereafter LPR.

<sup>2</sup>The exact meaning of this term can only be grasped in the context of the discussion in chapters two and three. Briefly it may be defined as the "ideational faculty" of mind.

representation and examine this "faculty" in relation to that of reason. This phase of our study reveals that relation to be dialectical, such that Vorstellung is revealed as the necessary, logical prerequisite of reason, and the latter is seen as the logical and necessary result of the former.

In chapter three we move to an examination of Vorstellung in its concrete existence as the religious consciousness. This latter examination, corroborating the findings of our second chapter reveals that the relation of religion and philosophy is likewise a dialectical one, such that religion emerges as the necessary prerequisite of philosophy and the latter is seen as the necessary end or result of religion itself.

(2) Hegel's discussion of philosophy and religion, in brief.

The object of a philosophy of religion, Hegel states, is "... to consider, to examine and to comprehend its [religion's] nature."<sup>3</sup> It is the nature of this 'comprehension' which gives rise to the question of the relation of religion and philosophy. The problem is by no

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<sup>3</sup> LPR, Vol. I, p. 4.

means unique with Hegel, however, having been a prevalent point of contention throughout the whole history of western thought. The question has always been asked in the same way: Can philosophy, the product of a merely human reason, comprehend the divine truth of religion, which is founded in faith?

The period just prior to Hegel's had answered in two different, and, opposing ways. The age of the enlightenment, championing as it did the supremacy of reason, denied to faith and the religious attitude in general any place in the search for truth, relegating it instead to the status of superstition and ignorance. This extreme rejection of religion by the enlightenment led to the equally extreme rejection of reason, a position which is at the centre of romanticism.

Hegel contends that both movements combined equally to destroy the true nature and significance of religion. Approaching the question from two wholly different sides they, nevertheless had the single effect of driving a wedge between religion and philosophy and obscuring the true nature of their relation. Hegel claims that both movements were antithetical to the true religious attitude and it is one of the fundamental aims of the Lectures to restore religion to its true significance and demonstrate its compatibility with philosophy, rather than to further precipitate its destruction at the hands

of the latter. Hegel aims at restoring religion through philosophy; as against both rationalism and romanticism.

We will notice, in the second half of this chapter, that this claim of Hegel's and the means of its accomplishment have been largely ignored by his critics.

It is in the context of an attempted reconciliation of religion and philosophy, then, that Hegel's discussion in the Lectures must be seen. This reconciliation takes both a negative and a positive form. Negatively it takes the form of a sustained critique of enlightenment reason, or, the "metaphysics of the understanding", which, according to Hegel, arbitrarily judges religion, and attempts to reduce religious truth to absurdity by demonstrating its incompatibility with the knowledge that the understanding has accumulated. Against this unphilosophical form of thought, and as the positive pole, Hegel presents speculative philosophy, which seeks to know the concept or notion of religion, to allow religion to develop and emerge as a result of its own inner momentum. Speculative philosophy reveals that the "metaphysics of the understanding" and the faith of the religious believer are both necessary forms or moments of mind's manifestation and as such, their opposition is sublated in this speculative comprehension.

For this reason, speculative philosophy (in the guise of a philosophy of religion) attempts to explicate the nature of religion, to comprehend the nature of its object, God, and the form in which this object is made manifest in religion. It is in the process of uncovering the nature of religion in this way that the true nature of the relation of religion and philosophy emerges...

Hegel begins with a brief discussion of the nature of the religious object. Religion is the knowledge of God, of His Universal and Infinite being, and not of any finite object. In this it is at one with philosophy, for the latter, too, is only concerned with truth as a whole, the Idea, and not with the nature of finite objects. He states the relationship thus: "... the content, the need, and the interest of philosophy represents something which it has in common with religion."<sup>4</sup> To elaborate: "The object of religion as well as of philosophy is eternal truth in its objectivity, God and nothing but God, and the explication of God."<sup>5</sup> The objects of philosophy and religion are identical and as a result, "philosophy only

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<sup>4</sup>LPR, Vol. I, p. 19.

<sup>5</sup>LPR, Vol. I, p. 19.



unfolds itself when it unfolds religion and in unfolding itself it unfolds religion.... The mind in so far as it thinks philosophically immerses itself with ... living interest in this object, and renounces its particularity, in that it permeates its object, "in the same way as religious consciousness does; for the latter also does not seek to have anything of its own, but desires only to immerse itself in this content."<sup>6</sup> At the heart of this statement lies the notion, to be developed in chapter three, that the explication of the religious object by philosophy, is essential to the development of the latter's own self-consciousness and, indeed, is dependent on it.

Having claimed the two possess an identical content, Hegel now outlines the way in which they are to be distinguished. And it is Hegel's fundamental contention that they are distinct and must remain so; he is not advancing an argument which seeks to reduce philosophy to religion, or, which attempts to transform religion into philosophy. Rather, as we have already pointed out, he is seeking to do justice to religion and to maintain its independent value. Again, this is counter

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<sup>6</sup> LPR, Vol. I, p. 19.

to the criticisms which we shall find advanced in section two of this chapter.

Philosophy and religion are distinguished by the form in which each presents its object, by the way in which each permits its object to emerge. Religion presents its object in the form of a Vorstellung, or, mental representation or, idea; philosophy presents its object in the form of reason.<sup>7</sup> This difference between Vorstellung and reason is, we contend, the crux of the difference between religion and philosophy, and only through a careful study of this difference (which we attempt in chapters two and three) can the exact relation between religion and philosophy for Hegel be understood. The differences between the two forms must wait until then, but can be seen superficially, or, abstractly, through a distinction which Hegel makes between two meanings of the word 'signification'.

Hegel distinguishes two meanings of signification which aptly express the difference between philosophy (reason) and religion (Vorstellung). He contends that when we ask what the significance of something is we are asking two different and opposed questions. "In the

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<sup>7</sup> LPR, Vol. I, p. 21.

first place we call what we are thinking of, the meaning, the end or intention, the general thought of this or that expression, work of art, etc; if we ask about its intrinsic character, it is essentially the thought that is in it of which we wish to have an idea".<sup>8</sup> In this instance, when we ask the meaning or significance of something we are asking what end it was intended for, the thought which has gone into it and determined it. We want to know the concept, or, notion of the thing, "... and thus it follows that the notion is the significance;..."<sup>9</sup> If for example, we are asking what the term God signifies, in this case, "... it is the Absolute, the nature of God as grasped by thought [speculative philosophy], the logical knowledge of this to which we desire to attain."<sup>10</sup> The first meaning of signification requires, then, that we state the thought content of the given Vorstellung or idea.

The second meaning which Hegel attributes to significance emerges as the opposite of the first. In the first case we were intent on determining the thought content of our object. In this instance we already possess this thought

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<sup>8</sup> LPR. Vol. I, p. 24.

<sup>9</sup> LPR, Vol. I, p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> LPR, Vol. I, p. 24.

content and want to know what it signifies. We now want "... an idea or a pictorial conception [Vorstellung] of the thought-determination, ... an example of the content which has as yet only been given in thought."<sup>11</sup>

Thus we have the reverse of the previous meaning.

Both meanings of signification are present in the philosophy of religion, and, as we stated above, it is the purpose of the latter to make them explicit. The fulfilment of this purpose is equally the explication of the relation of religion and philosophy. The philosophy of religion in explicating the nature of the religious consciousness, or, the significance of Vorstellung, reveals its nature as a necessary mode of truth's manifestation, and, its necessity to the emergence of the philosophical consciousness. The philosophy of religion reveals that it is in and through religion, or, Vorstellung, that the whole content of nature and finite human spirit receives the explicit form of spirituality, or universality, which is the meaning of that term for Hegel. It is through the tension which arises within Vorstellung as it strives to perfect this activity, and its ultimate self-negation in the recognition that it is unable to provide this universality with its final form, that philosophy emerges. Philosophy, then, arises only as a result of this inner transformation of Vorstellung and hence the latter is essential or necessary to its very

emergence. Far from destroying religion, it will be seen that philosophy is entirely dependent on the activity of the religious consciousness and therefore has an essential interest in preserving its existence.

It is sufficient here that we have indicated the purpose of Hegel's Lectures and the direction of their arguments, which is ultimately to reveal the nature of the relation of religion and philosophy. We will return to these Lectures in chapter three. In the immediately following section we present three critical works which illustrate the usual approach to the question and towards which we have taken an opposing view.

### (3) Representative interpretations of Hegel's objectives

The three criticisms which follow are representative of the usual approach taken to the question of the relation of religion and philosophy in Hegel. Their conclusions, we will argue, are initiated by the inadequacy of their approach to what Hegel himself has to say on the subject.

#### (A) Copleston

In an article entitled "Hegel and the Rationalization of Mysticism",<sup>12</sup> F.C. Copleston states as his purpose, to

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<sup>12</sup> In New Studies in Hegel's philosophy, ed. Warren E. Steinkraus (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1971).

understand Hegel's intentions in his philosophy of religion. After a series of general statements regarding Hegel's philosophical position (he is an absolute idealist, according to Copleston) and his religious beliefs (Lutheran Christian) he selects as a problem that of the relation between the world and God, finite existence and infinite being. While he does not make it clear whether this is a problem for religions in general or just for Christianity, Copleston discusses it only within the context of the latter,<sup>13</sup> specifically within the context of the Christian mystical tradition which has sought to overcome the relational status of the divine and human worlds and achieve a unity of the two, without sacrificing the limitedness of the one or the divinity of the other.

It is within this tradition that Copleston seeks to situate Hegel. Accordingly, he states that the latter is "... trying to give philosophical expression to a mystical insight."<sup>14</sup> In terms of our own discussion (which does no injustice to Copleston), we may characterize him as stating that Hegel is attempting to translate the content of religious language into that of philosophy. He

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 192.



is seeking the transition from Vorstellung to thought, as are we. However, while Copleston appears to be aware that for Hegel such a transition occurs necessarily as a result of the religious standpoint itself, he also appears to be totally unwilling to lend that theory any credence.

Copleston ignores (among other things) the fact that for Hegel, Vorstellung or the religious standpoint, negates itself and that philosophy emerges as a result of this qualitative transformation within religion itself. Copleston gives the impression that Hegel is simply attempting to translate one mode of discourse into another. This can be witnessed from his conclusions, for he goes on to state that Hegel's attempt to translate 'God' into the concepts of speculative philosophy, or, "Absolute Idealism", are a failure. (He goes so far as to say, with McTaggart, that Hegel is attempting a transformation of Christianity into Hegelianism.<sup>15</sup>) The nature of God must, Copleston claims, remain hidden: "Hegel attempted, in my opinion, to do what cannot be done, namely to make plain to view what can only be simply apprehended through the use of analogies and symbols."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

This last statement is perhaps the most illuminating of all for it clearly demonstrates that Copleston has no real inkling of Hegel's conception of the relation of Vorstellung and thought either psychologically or concretely. Copleston here asserts the supremacy of Vorstellung over thought, an assertion which the discussion of our second and third chapters will refute. Vorstellung is completed, necessarily, by virtue of its own nature, in thought and not the other way around. At no time is Hegel attempting to "translate" Vorstellung into thought. Such a claim ignores the dialectical nature of the transition. In arriving at such conclusions, Copleston has ignored Hegel's contention that the internal transformation, the dialectic of Vorstellung, the religious standpoint, itself demands and provides the grounds for its philosophic or speculative comprehension. This same attitude is evident in Lauer's paper, which we will examine next.

(B) Lauer

Quentin Lauer arrives at conclusions similar to Copleston's in a paper entitled, "Hegel on the Identity of content in Religion and Philosophy."<sup>17</sup> He begins with a historical

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<sup>17</sup> In Hegel and the Philosophy of Religion, ed. D.E. Christensen (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), pp. 261-278.

survey and compares Kant's alleged union of the content of morality and religion with Hegel's alleged attempts to unite the content of religion and philosophy. From there he moves to a consideration of Hegel's discussion of that subject in the Phenomenology of Mind.

He states that in this work, Hegel, having abandoned his earlier Kantian, anti-Christian, pro-enlightenment thinking, attempts to synthesize Christianity with rational thinking.<sup>18</sup> However, he states, Hegel's motive for including the subject of religion (which both Fichte and Schelling had left out of their systems) was not so much to rescue religion as to rescue philosophy: "What motivates Hegel in his insistence that the content of religion and science (philosophy) is identical is not his desire to rescue religion. Rather it is his desire to rescue philosophy, which would be less than universal science if the object of religion were out of its domain."<sup>19</sup>

Lauer gives his reader the impression (for he does not state it directly) that Hegel is attempting some

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 264.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 265.

form of deduction, that he is attempting to situate religion in a pre-conceived plan in an arbitrary and contingent manner. This is certainly not the case, as we will demonstrate later.

However, to continue with Lauer's argument, he asks what it can mean to say that religion and philosophy are two forms of spirit possessing an identical content. He states: "Philosophy, then, is the transforming of other forms of consciousness into thought, while in the case of the religious consciousness the content, i.e., Wirklichkeit, remains the same."<sup>20</sup> But again he does not so much engage in a genuine examination of the subject as voice his puzzlement as to how it can be the case: "It is unquestionably difficult to see how the content of philosophy and religion can be identical....Religion as such has never been able to see the identity."<sup>21</sup> Here perhaps is a clue to Lauer's own position for he, obviously, does not see the identity either, lending support to the view that his whole examination has been from the religious point of view rather than that of philosophy. If so, he could not help being unable to see it.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 268.

That he is completely out of sympathy with Hegel is surely obvious from his statements concerning Hegel's supposed aim which was to find a God compatible with modern reason and thought. Lauer is thereby implying that, after all, Hegel is still clearly within the enlightenment tradition in his approach. Hegel, Lauer claims, believed he had found Him in the God of Christianity, but rather, had instead effected a transformation of the Christian religion and a transformed concept of God.<sup>22</sup> In this, Lauer voices his agreement with Fackenheim whose view we will subsequently examine. Again we find Hegel accused of arbitrarily re-working Christianity and the Christian God to his own ends; no effort has been made, to comprehend Hegel's claim that Christianity, the absolute religion, is absolute precisely because within it, on the plane of history, religion has transformed itself.

We now come to Lauer's conclusions, which are even more unacceptable than his other contentions within the body of his paper. He states with regard to the Lectures that "the philosophy of religion of which Hegel speaks is not a philosophizing about religion; it is

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 270.

the thinking philosophically what religion thinks religiously.... No longer is there question merely of an identical content in both religion and philosophy; religion itself is perfected in philosophy in such a way that the two are no longer distinct; religion is now philosophical religion, because it is complete as religion in the form of philosophy."<sup>23</sup> This leads him finally to claim that Hegel has achieved a speculative transformation of revealed religion.<sup>24</sup>

In answer to these last contentions of Lauer's we might quote James Doull whose remarks are addressed directly to these conclusions. Doull states: "This conclusion must be altogether rejected: Hegel neither reduces religion to philosophy nor does he undertake a 'speculative transformation of religion' (p. 274). Rather he distinguished religion and philosophy more clearly and maintains their difference more firmly than any other philosophy. Philosophy of religion has for its purpose, in his view, not to replace religion, but to save it from confusion from other forms of spirit."<sup>25</sup> Doull further

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 279. From the point of view of our own day we can clearly see how necessary this is with the numerous attempts to reduce religion to psychology, anthropology and mythology.



states that philosophy necessarily requires the independence of religion, a fact that Lauer himself should have seen, given his frequent quotations regarding the historical priority of religion over philosophy. Finally, Doull states, "the independence of religion from philosophy is established neither empirically nor on the basis of a particular philosophy - the limits it set to human reason - but from the nature of reason and spirit as disclosed in religion itself."<sup>26</sup> Our second and third chapters are only an elaboration of this last statement.

(C) Fackenheim

The question of the relation of religion and philosophy receives its most comprehensive treatment in E.L. Fackenheim's work, The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought.<sup>27</sup>

The theme of this work, as a whole is "the relation between the religious life which is to be comprehended and the comprehending activity which is Hegel's philosophy,..."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 279.

<sup>27</sup> Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

However, Fackenheim claims, Hegel is not simply concerned with the philosophical comprehension of religion but rather considers his system to be entirely contingent on the success of this comprehension.<sup>29</sup> It is perhaps not too much to say that Fackenheim in making this larger claim has before him the attempts of Fichte and Schelling, which were much criticized by Hegel, to formulate absolute philosophical systems while leaving out religion. In one sense, then, Fackenheim is only claiming what must have been obvious to Hegel himself. As well, however, he will ultimately criticize Hegel for the same reasons for which the latter criticized his two contemporaries. This requires him to interpret the Hegelian system as a whole.

This he does, beginning with the Phenomenology and proceeding to the Encyclopaedia. On the basis of his examination of these two 'attempts' to establish an absolute system Fackenheim concludes that on their own they have not been a success. Hegel can achieve the absolute standpoint within the Phenomenology only by having already adopted it in some a priori fashion.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> While we are not interested in Fackenheim's work as a whole we must, for our own purposes, consider its principal themes to some extent.

<sup>30</sup> Fackenheim, p. 111.

The Encyclopaedia, in turn, can only be a thought which encompasses the world "... on the assumption that it has overreaching power",<sup>31</sup> and not on the basis of its demonstration in that work. Hegel's system, is fundamentally incomplete, Fackenheim claims, and can only be completed if he is successful in giving Christianity its absolutely final form in his Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, to which he therefore turns. It is not our intention to examine this contention, namely, that the Lectures are the cornerstone of the entire Hegelian philosophy.

However, the turn to the Lectures brings us much closer to our own theme. It was necessary to have begun as we did, for only having done so would we be in a position to understand the remainder of Fackenheim's argument, particularly his conclusions regarding the relation of religion and philosophy. Fackenheim quotes Hegel as writing: "Religion can exist without philosophy. But philosophy cannot exist without religion. For it encompasses religion."<sup>32</sup> The rest of his work is concerned

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 116.

solely with examining these statements.

Claiming that the Christian religion is presupposed by Hegel's philosophy, Fackenheim proceeds to "describe"<sup>33</sup> Christianity from an unphilosophically comprehended point of view, which he claims Hegel never attempted. But in doing so, Fackenheim seems to ignore Hegel's claim that the transformation of Christianity does not occur within his philosophy so much as within Christianity itself. It is the nature of Christianity, as the absolute religion, the religion within which God has revealed himself to man in Christ and thereby overcome the divine-human separation, to achieve the liberation of religion from itself, which it has been the aim of the whole history of religion to achieve.

Unfortunately this leads us to say of Fackenheim, as we have already said of Copleston and Lauer, that he approaches the question, not philosophically, but from the point of view of religion, and hence the true nature of the relation eludes him. Fackenheim accuses Christian theologians of never having taken the Lectures seriously.<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately we must conclude the same of him.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 119.

Fackenheim's procedure is one of constantly elaborating the same question over and over again. His reformulation, following his examination of "unphilosophically comprehended religion" is the most significant for us:

Either the representational form of religion is essential to its content, and this is why philosophy requires religion (and the absolute philosophy the Christian religion) as necessary presupposition. But then how can philosophy transcend or transfigure the representational form without loss of the religious content? Or else philosophy does indeed achieve its unprecedented feat: but then was not the representational form all along unessential to the religious content? And does it not then presuppose religion, if at all, only per accidens?<sup>35</sup>

One must hesitate before accusing a scholar of Fackenheim's reputation of ignoring the dialectic of the religious standpoint, but one cannot help but conclude that on examining the Lectures, he has done just that. How else could he speak of philosophy transcending or transfiguring religion? It is the very task of the Lectures to demonstrate that it is religion itself, and not philosophy which precipitates the transformation or transfiguration. The relation is not external or contingent on any particular philosophy which seeks to

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 162.

comprehend it, but rather emerges of necessity out of the nature of religion itself. Religion and philosophy are related by an internal dialectic which it is the task of the Lectures to reveal. The fact that Fackenheim seems to be unaware of this singularly important point demonstrates that his examination of that relation has been carried out entirely from the standpoint of religion rather than of philosophy.

Fackenheim is led, finally, to set down, as the absolute requirement for the success of philosophy, that it be based on "... an actual, and, in principle, final - secular-protestant synthesis in modern life...."<sup>36</sup> only then "can Hegel both venture that final synthesis which is his philosophic thought and yet maintain that it will not end the life which has made it possible."<sup>37</sup>

Nothing could be more contrary to Hegel's intentions. Fackenheim attributes this bourgeois-protestant synthesis to Hegel's nineteenth century world and claims that such a synthesis has long since broken down - as witnessed by the barbarisms of Nazi Germany in particular. Rather it is the case that Hegel is directly opposed to just such

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 212.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 212.



a synthesis, which he attributes, not to his century, but to the secularizing rationalism of the enlightenment and towards which he is in complete opposition, as even a cursory examination of the Lectures will demonstrate.

We must conclude that Fackenheim, too, has missed the point. He has failed to realize that, for Hegel, religion and philosophy are internally linked such that philosophy emerges not as triumphant over religion but as the triumph of the inner transformation of religion itself. Religion's transition to philosophy is due to the fulfillment of its own essential nature and not the result of an arbitrary attempt on the part of philosophy to impose a system upon it.

While these three representative approaches are by no means exhaustive they are typical and have in common the failure to take seriously the dialectical interrelation Hegel ascribes to religion and philosophy. It is the nature of this dialectical relation which we must now turn to consider.

## CHAPTER II

### VORSTELLUNG AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL 'FACULTY'

#### (1) Introduction

In this chapter we shall examine the nature of 'Vorstellung', or, mental representation as a 'faculty' of mind and the role played by it in the overall development of mind. We hope by this examination to clarify the relation between 'Vorstellung' and thinking, as an aid ultimately towards the clarification of the relation of religion and philosophy for Hegel. To comprehend the nature of Vorstellung properly it is first necessary to know what mind is for Hegel.

According to Hegel the need to achieve true knowledge of mind is the meaning of the Delphic oracle: "know thyself."<sup>1</sup> He states that this is not an externally imposed command; nor does it advocate a purely subjective kind of knowledge. Instead, the command to "know thyself" is a command of mind to itself: that it come to a knowledge of itself and thereby realize its nature. Such

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<sup>1</sup>Hegel's Philosophy of mind, translated by William Wallace and A.V. Miller (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), ss. 377. Hereafter PM.

a command does not mean that we examine our own mind or that of other individuals. This type of examination could only yield a contingent and purely subjective kind of knowledge. Instead we must attain knowledge of the concept or Notion (Begriff) of mind.

Mind is the process or activity of apprehending reality, or, the process whereby reality achieves self-consciousness. For Hegel, reality is the Idea and mind is the "... most developed form achieved by the Idea in its self-actualization."<sup>2</sup> However mind does not emerge or exist full-blown, immediately; rather it arises in a process of development, which, Hegel claims, occurs dialectically. He compares it to the growth of the biological organism: "Just as in the living organism generally, everything is already contained, in an ideal manner, in the germ and is brought forth by the germ itself, not by an alien power, so too must all the forms of living mind grow out of its Notion as from their germ."<sup>3</sup> Mind, then, undergoes a process of growth and maturation analogous to that of the natural organism. And just as the organism grows until it reaches maturity, or realizes its potential for development, so are the limits of mind's development set by itself: Mind only

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<sup>2</sup>PM, ss 377.

<sup>3</sup>PM, ss 379.

develops to the limit set by its own essence; to the point at which it is completely conscious of its own true self.

However, there is nothing natural about mind's existence. On the contrary mind develops by reducing the natural to an ideal or inward state or by transforming it into the mental or spiritual.<sup>4</sup> Hegel claims that "every activity of mind is nothing but a distinct mode (or form) of reducing what is external to the inwardness which mind itself is, and it is only by this reduction, by this idealization, of what is external that it becomes and is mind."<sup>5</sup> Mind develops at the expense of the non-mental, and this realization constitutes its triumph over it: "... it is through the other and by the triumph over it, that mind comes to authenticate itself and to be in fact what it ought to be according to its Notion, namely the ideality of the external, the Idea which returns to itself out of its otherness; or expressed more abstractly, the self-differentiating universal which in its difference is at home with itself and for itself."<sup>6</sup>

The activity of idealization and that of manifestation are one and the same. According to Hegel, "the

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<sup>4</sup>The German word Geist carries the meaning of both English terms.

<sup>5</sup>PM, ss 380.

<sup>6</sup>PM, ss 382.

special mode of mental being is manifestation. The spirit (or mind) is not some one mode or meaning which finds utterance and externality only in a form distinct from itself: it does not manifest or reveal something but its very mode and meaning is this revelation."<sup>7</sup> Mind does not reveal that some other 'thing' is the nature of reality but that it itself is that true nature. Mind reveals that it is the Idea and it is the whole goal of the natural and spiritual worlds to make this truth explicit or actual. Put another way the form which mind gives its content cannot be separated from the content. The content and the various modes of its manifestation are one and the same. For this reason mind is the unity of form and content, subject and object. Hegel states: "The manifestation of itself to itself is therefore itself the content of mind and not as it were, a form externally added to the content: consequently mind, by its manifestation, does not manifest a content different from its form, but manifests its form which expresses the entire content of mind, namely its self-manifestation. In mind therefore, form and content are identical with each other."<sup>8</sup>

We have stated in outline the essential nature of mind. The concrete realization of this essential nature,

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<sup>7</sup>PM, ss 383.

<sup>8</sup>PM, ss 383.

or as Hegel refers to it, the forms of absolute mind - are art, religion and philosophy, especially philosophy. He claims that the activity of philosophizing (i.e. reasoning) is that in which mind is fully self-conscious and self-constitutive, fully at home with itself. Philosophy, in his terms, is the actualized notion. Accordingly, Hegel states, "Absolute mind knows that it posits itself, that it is itself the creator of its Other, of Nature and finite mind, so that this Other loses all semblance of independence in face of mind and appears only as a means whereby mind attains to absolute being-for-self, to the absolute unity of what it is in itself and what it is for itself, of its Notion and its actuality."<sup>9</sup>

To be absolute is thus the goal of mind, a goal which when attained constitutes the unity of mind's potential and actual existences, a goal in which all its various other forms and manifestations have been aids in reaching and which are subsumed as moments or elements in this new totality.

Absolute mind, as we stated earlier, is the end or result of a process of development which occurs dialectically, or stated differently which is guided by

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<sup>9</sup>PM, ss 384 Zusatz.

the end to be achieved. Hegel distinguishes two main forms which are dialectically prior to Absolute mind: subjective mind and objective mind. Mure states the nature of this interrelation very lucidly: According to him, mind is a "single self-reconstitutive activity. In every phase of its whole dialectic - in its emergence from nature as Subjective Spirit, in its transition to and manifestation as Objective Spirit, and in its self-completion through the stages of Absolute Spirit - it is a concrete attitude of subject to object. In any one given phase of it the proximate lower phase as a totality has been sublated (aufgehoben) to become the object or content of the subject, which has thereby come to exhibit a fresh attitude to an object which is also fresh, but fresh only in the sense that it is the subject's whole self of the previous phase developed by becoming object or content."<sup>10</sup> The dialectic of mind or spirit moves from lesser to greater mentality or spirituality as a result of a series of internal developments within each phase which undermine it and ultimately cause it to revolt against itself thereby producing a new status quo.

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<sup>10</sup> G.R.M. Mure, A Study of Hegel's Logic (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1950), pp. 1-2.

According to Mure spirit or mind "is in each successive phase more real, more truly possessed of the nature which it claims for itself or, in phases which are not explicitly self-conscious, for its object."<sup>11</sup> We are interested in only one aspect of this dialectical movement: the ultimate form achieved by subjective mind - the development of the "mental faculties," the subject-matter of psychology.

## (2) The Nature of Psychology in general

Psychology conceives of mind only formally, as power. It distinguishes two types of power: that of cognizing, the power of intelligence; and that of willing. Taken as a functioning whole they become what Hegel calls "free mind." As free mind they constitute a fully developed subjectivity or mentality and as such throw off their simply formal character and begin to function concretely as law-givers and creators of systems or codes of morality. Free mind constitutes the limit or the end of the form of mind studied by psychology.

The constitution of free mind - the powers of cognizing and willing - lies in the dialectical negation of the (logically) prior form of subjective mind: consciousness. The goal of subjective mind as a whole,

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 7.



as its name implies, is to manifest itself as a true subjectivity, to become a fully constituted and active inwardness, or, to become mind.

The self-negation of the form of consciousness occurs as a result of its recognition of its inability to achieve this end. Consciousness is necessarily a relation of subject and object, or, of the ego to a non ego. However, in consciousness real subjectivity still does not exist: it is still an abstraction. Consciousness fails to recognize that its object, which (in conformity with the dialectic, outlined above) had previously constituted the spiritual form of soul, actually is spiritual and treats it instead as an external object existing independently of it.<sup>12</sup> Consciousness fails to recognize that it is the power over its object and this latter feature, Hegel states, constitutes the major distinction between it and the form of "free mind". According to Hegel, whereas for consciousness "the progressive determination of the 'I' assumes the appearance of an alteration of the object independently of the activity of the 'I' so that at the level of consciousness the logical consideration of the alteration fell only in us: for free mind, the self-developing and altering

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<sup>12</sup> PM, ss 387 Zusatz.

of the determinations of the object are explicitly the product of free mind itself, the subjectifying of objectivity and the objectifying of subjectivity are its own work."<sup>13</sup> The development and sophistication of this subjectivity, of the mental faculties - in particular the development of the faculty of Vorstellung - will occupy our attention for the rest of the chapter.<sup>14</sup>

We have already partly characterized the general nature of our subject, the manifestation of the intellect. The goal of this manifestation is to transform the 'given' of consciousness into the intelligible and, consequent on this activity, to make the intellect objective, or, to provide it with an actual existence. At first, mind is unaware of the inherent rationality of its object. To attain knowledge of this "... mind must liberate the intrinsically rational object from the form of contingency, singleness and externality which at first clings to it, and thereby free itself from the connection which is for it an Other."<sup>15</sup> The development of intelligence, or, theoretical mind, through its manifestations as the faculties of intuition, Vorstellung and reason is this process. It is a development from passivity to activity:

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<sup>13</sup>PM, ss 441, Zusatz.

<sup>14</sup>We are only interested in the intellectual side of free mind and will disregard the development of will.

<sup>15</sup>PM, ss 441 Zusatz.

from simply "finding" its object in intuition to the ordering and comprehension of it in reason. According to Hegel "... theoretical mind is not a merely passive acceptance of an Other, of a given object, but reveals itself as active by raising the inherently rational content of the object out of the form of externality and singleness into the form of Reason."<sup>16</sup> Intuition, Vorstellung and reason are united and inter-dependent efforts toward a more complete cognition or knowledge of an object. They are not independent faculties but rather "... exist only as 'moments' in the totality of cognition itself."<sup>17</sup> The first (in the sense of dialectically first) or most primitive of these faculties is intuition.

Like consciousness, intuition 'finds' itself confronted by an object. However, it marks an advance on the former in that it gains an intimation, a bare feeling, that its object is inherently rational, or, not truly an Other. Mure refers to this intimation as the "primitive universal."<sup>18</sup> This intimation or manifestation

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<sup>16</sup>PM, ss 444 Zusatz.

<sup>17</sup>PM, ss 445.

<sup>18</sup>Mure, p. 5.

of the primitive universal propels intuition onward from its existence as simply feeling to further fix or attend to its object.

Attention is the activity of fixing the 'given' of feeling and of further recognizing is as intelligible while maintaining it as an Other. Attention, then, is a process of ordering and fixing the object as existing independently of us; "... the activity of intuition produces to begin with simply a shifting of sensation away from us, a transformation of what is sensed into an object existing outside of us."<sup>19</sup> "Sensations are made spatial and temporal by the activity of intuition and this constitutes the first form of universality achieved by intelligence. The ordering of its object is essential to mind for unless it is capable of distinguishing one from another it is unable to comprehend it. This overall activity of distinguishing and ordering constitutes the positive achievement of intelligence in its manifestation as intuition. Its dialectical self-negation occurs as follows, giving rise to the 'faculty' of Vorstellung.

Intuition and Vorstellung are alike in that "in both forms of mind the object is separate from me and at the same time also my own. But (and this is the essential

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<sup>19</sup> PM, ss 448 Zusatz.

difference) the object's character of being mine is only implicitly present in intuition and first becomes explicit in representation (Vorstellung). In intuition the objectivity of the content predominates. Not until it is I who reflect that it is I who have the intuition, not until then do I occupy the standpoint of representation (Vorstellung).<sup>20</sup> Intuition, therefore, must necessarily negate itself: "... the necessity for going beyond mere intuition, lies in the fact that intelligence, according to its Notion (i.e. its true nature), is cognition (the activity of knowing), whereas intuition is not as yet cognitive awareness of the subject-matter since as such it does not attain to the immanent development of the substance of the subject-matter but confines itself rather to seizing the unexplicated substance still wrapped up in the inessentials of the external and contingent. Intuition is therefore only the beginning of cognition."<sup>21</sup> For this reason is intelligence defined as the "self-existent dialectic" which actively "posits intuition as its own, pervades it, makes it into something inward, recollects (inwardizes) itself in it, becomes present to itself in it,

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<sup>20</sup> PM, ss 449 Zusatz.

<sup>21</sup> PM, ss 449 Zusatz.

and hence free. By this withdrawal into itself intelligence raises itself to the stage of mental representation (Vorstellung).<sup>22</sup>

(3) The 'faculty' of Vorstellung

In intuition mind simply finds itself possessing a content which, in Vorstellung<sup>23</sup> it proceeds to inwardize. The Vorstellung or idea is an inwardized intuition. Vorstellung can be sub-divided into three phases of activity. The first is that of inwardizing or recollecting (Die Erinnerung). The recollected image is further liberated from its external features and 're-presented' by a symbol or sign. This is imagination (Die Einbildungskraft). Memory, in turn, is the activity in which signs as words are once more recollected.<sup>24</sup> The dialectically succeeding phases of Vorstellung

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<sup>22</sup>PM, ss 450 Zusatz.

<sup>23</sup>This is a difficult word to translate: Findlay calls it "picture-thought"; Mure, "presentation"; and Miller translates it as "representation". The German meaning is that of the mind re-presenting its object out of itself and hence Miller's is perhaps the closest. It is also important to note that Vorstellung refers to a mental "faculty". If we wish to express the active nature of this faculty we use Vorstellen - the activity of re-presenting. Vorstellung also has the connotation of a product - what is produced by the activity of Vorstellen, or by the faculty of Vorstellung: its "object", as it were.

<sup>24</sup>PM, ss 451 Zusatz.

systematically rid the content of intuition of all its external and sensible features, beginning with the activity of inwardizing.

Since the dialectic of Vorstellung is the process which conditions the emergence of thought and since it is the precise nature of the relation of Vorstellung to thought which is at issue here we must proceed to examine the matter at greater length. We will therefore follow the dialectic with great care, beginning with the form of recollection.

(a) Recollection

As recollection mind actively presents itself with a content. This is the image and the process of its creation unfolds in three phases. The first is its actual formation, its liberation from a particular spatio-temporal existence. As a result of this liberation the image also becomes more general and ceases to exist in a one to one correspondence with its mother object:

"Whereas the immediate presence of the thing is necessary for feeling and intuition, I can form a mental image of something wherever I am, even of what is remotest from me in external space and time."<sup>25</sup> It is this

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<sup>25</sup>PM, ss 452 Zusatz.

freedom which gives the image its status as a universal, the same freedom or universality which though quite undeveloped at this point constitutes the actual nature of mind. The image is more universal than the intuition because it is more 'mental', more in conformity with the nature of mind.

Having formed its image in this way, recollection proceeds in its second phase to forget it.

Our mind does not keep the infinite number of images it possesses forever before it. Most of them mind suppresses or forgets, allowing them to drift off into the unconscious or "night-like mine of the intellect."<sup>26</sup> However, they are still the property of the intellect and can be recalled by it at any time. This facility, as it were, is mind itself present as, this universal power over its images.

But as recollection, it is beyond the intellect's capacity to recall an image at will. Rather, an image requires a new intuition to bring it back into existence: "... what is strictly called recognition is the reference of the image to an intuition - and that as a subsumption of the immediate single intuition (impression) under what

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<sup>26</sup> PM, ss 453.



is, in point of form universal, under the representation (idea) with the same content."<sup>27</sup> In this activity mind authenticates its image, transforms it from a property to a possession (i.e. has it actively present before it), and at the same time distinguishes it from the intuition under which impetus it had been recalled. "Intelligence is thus the force which can give forth its property, and dispense with external intuition for its existence in it."<sup>28</sup> Further, "this 'synthesis' of the internal image with the recollected existence is representation proper: by this synthesis the internal now has the qualification of being able to be present before intelligence and to have its existence in it."<sup>29</sup> But as such intelligence has ceased to be recollection and has become imagination, the second form of Vorstellung.

(b) Imagination

It is its dependence upon external stimulation, or, its inability to recall an image at will which constitutes the negative element in recollection. The nature of mind is freedom, the freedom to exercise its

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<sup>27</sup> PM, ss 454.

<sup>28</sup> PM, ss 454.

<sup>29</sup> PM, ss 454.

capacities independently of anything but its own will, and in recollection this is still unrealized. Recollection does not conform to the notion of mind. Its inner impetus to freedom, in conformity with its implicit nature as mind precipitates the transformation from recollection to imagination. Again, the importance of this transformation should be seen in the continuing liberation of mind from its determination by an external content, or, in the further development of its 'idealizing' power.

Repeated recalling of an image makes a new intuition unnecessary. This unaided activity of recalling images is the reproductive imagination. The element of spontaneity is the main feature distinguishing this new form from recollection. It is also indicative of mind's increasing power. This new power is further developed in the phases of associative and creative imagination.

The connection of images with one another is an activity of a higher order than their simple reproduction. The performing of this higher order activity is the associative imagination.

Since images possess a content that is basically sensible in its origin they may be compared and linked with one another. This linking is performed by my mind and thus "intelligence gives the images a subjective bond

in place of their objective one."<sup>30</sup> However, a divergence still exists between the connecting intelligence and the connected images; the latter have not been integrated into a fully active subjectivity. This is the work of the creative imagination to which the associative gives rise. The negative element is again, then, this lack of conformity with the notion, the fact that mind is still not a fully constituted subjectivity, and it is this negativity which forces the associative imagination to become creative.<sup>31</sup>

As associative imagination, intelligence is simply the power of connecting or associating images. As this simple power it fails to produce the idea or Vorstellung. This is its limit and the cause of its own negation. In creative imagination intelligence possesses the added dimension that it is aware that it is the connecting power, and, "... it is in turning my attention to this connection that I arrive at general ideas (Vorstellungen), or to ideas in the strict sense of this word."<sup>32</sup> Further, in providing its ideas

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<sup>30</sup> PM, ss 455, Zusatz.

<sup>31</sup> PM, ss 455, Zusatz.

<sup>32</sup> PM, ss 456, Zusatz.

(Vorstellungen) with an objective existence in language creative imagination completes the process of producing the Vorstellung.

As creative imagination intelligence "... ceases to be the vague mine and the universal, and becomes an individuality, a concrete subjectivity..."<sup>33</sup> It provides this new concrete subjectivity with an objective existence in language, at first symbolically and then via the sign: "... now ~~its~~ action as reason (intelligence) is from the present point directed towards giving the character of an existent to what in it has been perfected to concrete auto-intuition. In other words, it aims at making itself be and be a fact. Acting on this view, it is self-uttering, intuition-producing; the imagination which creates signs."<sup>34</sup>

In its manifestation as creative imagination intelligence first (in the sense of dialectically first) provides itself with an authentic existence symbolically. "This authentication is, however, itself immediately still a subjective one, since intelligence in the first instance still has regard for the given content of the images, is guided by it in symbolizing its general ideas."<sup>35</sup> In

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<sup>33</sup>PM, ss 457.

<sup>34</sup>PM, ss 457.

<sup>35</sup>PM, ss 457, Zusatz.

expressing itself symbolically intelligence has achieved only a conditional freedom. The symbol is a limited form of expression in that possessing an independent content of its own, it only accidentally provides intelligence with the means of expressing its own nature. For this reason, the transition from a symbolic mode of expression to a significative one in the sign marks a great advance in the liberation of intelligence and its capacity for self-expression.

The dialectical emergence of the significative form of expression from the symbolic occurs in the following way. In uniting its inner self (the idea) with the content of the symbol and thereby achieving a mediated form of authentication or existence; intelligence as universal is, in essence, only uniting with itself, and, in recognizing this turns the mediated form around to become immediate. "By this dialectical movement, the general idea (Vorstellung) reaches the point where it no longer needs the image's content for its authentication, but, is authenticated in and for itself alone, is therefore, immediately valid."<sup>36</sup> Further: "... the general idea (Vorstellung), liberated from the image's content, in making its freely selected external material into something

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<sup>36</sup> PM, ss 457, Zusatz.

that can be intuitively perceived, produces what has to be called a sign, in specific distinction from symbol."<sup>37</sup> The sign, therefore, is a significant advance over the symbol. Intelligence no longer requires the content of sensation or intuition to provide itself with an objective existence. Rather, it has succeeded in liberating itself from such a requirement and provided itself with an objective existence on the strength of its own self.

The objectifying of subjectivity which creative imagination effects in the sign is both its moment of triumph and the beginning of its dissolution. For the nature of the sign as an "...immediate intuition, representing a totally different import from what naturally belongs to it..."<sup>38</sup> creates a gulf between the objective and the subjective which intelligence, in its capacity as creative imagination, is unable to bridge, but, which, in conformity with its notion, it must. Intelligence as Vorstellung therefore ceases to be an "imaging" activity and becomes one of "memorizing."

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<sup>37</sup> PM, ss 457, Zusatz.

<sup>38</sup> PM, ss 458.

## (c) Memory

As creative imagination intelligence gives itself an objective existence in the word. However, as a result it finds itself in a state of self-alienation; a gulf appears between the external and the internal which, as creative imagination it is unable to overcome. In order to re-inwardize the new intuition - which the word is - it must cease to be an imaging activity and become one of memorizing. In its new guise intelligence is the activity of overcoming the distinction between the word and its meaning. Memory is therefore the culminating form of Vorstellung and forms the transition to thinking or cognition - the actualized notion of intelligence.

In its first two phases memory acts as we commonly understand it to do: it is the activity of linking the word and its meaning. This results in the achievement of an ability to link a word with its meaning at will. The activity is significant for two reasons: first because mind is here dealing only with its own creations; "... memory has ceased to deal with an image derived from intuition - the immediate and incomplete mode of intelligence; it has rather to do with an object which is the product of intelligence itself...."<sup>39</sup> It is this

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<sup>39</sup>PM, ss 462.

absence of sensible content which accounts for our need to memorize the meaning of words. And secondly, we think in names.

Our thoughts only become known to us when expressed, when put into words. The achievement of a fully manifest subjectivity is consequent on its externalization in language. According to Hegel, "we only know our thoughts, only have definite, actual thoughts, when we give them the form of objectivity, of a being distinct from our inwardness; and therefore the shape of externality, and of an externality, too, that at the same time bears the stamp of the highest inwardness. The articulated sound, the word, is alone such an inward externality."<sup>40</sup> As the inward externality it is the actualized Vorstellung.

The paradoxical fact that our thoughts achieve their highest existence in being cast out into the world is in keeping with our earlier definition of mind as 'manifestation'. However, the nature of this manifestation is not one of diremption or separation, but, rather demands the unity of subject and object. It is the function of mechanical memory to fulfil this demand.

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<sup>40</sup>PM, ss 462, Zusatz.



Mechanical memory continues the process of inwardizing or eliminating the word-meaning distinction. This occurs in the following way. In linking the thought with the word intelligence "... receives into itself the nature of the thing"<sup>41</sup> (i.e. an external object, which the word is). Accordingly, Hegel claims, intelligence takes on the meaning of the thing; it ceases to distinguish between its subjectivity and the thing, or between the subject and object, and thereby assumes the nature of a mechanical existence. It becomes "... a mindless container of words, that is, a mechanical memory."<sup>42</sup> As such, intelligence succeeds in re-integrating the word and its meaning or in re-inwardizing the new intuition.

Having eliminated any impediment to its freedom of expression intelligence becomes 'empty', a pure potentiality in which the mastered word can be used at will, no longer as a vehicle for intelligence but, literally, as intelligence itself. Thus it is the function of memory, according to Hegel, "to level the ground of the inner life to pure being, or to pure space in which the fact, the implicit content, may reign and unfold itself with no

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<sup>41</sup>PM, ss 462, Zusatz.

<sup>42</sup>PM, ss 462, Zusatz.

antithesis to a subjective inwardness."<sup>43</sup> As a result of its memorizing activity intelligence has actualized the freedom or universality which was its implicit nature all along. It is now manifest as cognition or thinking.

#### (4) Reason and Conclusion of Chapter

We have been tracing the psychological development of mind, of its intellect or faculty of cognition. This process is completed with mind's manifestation as thinking or cognition, with the faculty of reason.

According to Hegel, "thinking is the third and last main stage in the development of intelligence; for in it the immediate, implicit unity of subjectivity and objectivity present in intuition is restored out of the opposition of these two sides in representation as a unity enriched by this opposition, hence as a unity both in essence and actuality."<sup>44</sup> As intuition and Vorstellung intelligence was only cognition implicitly, in conformity with its notion. It is now such explicitly or actually. "The end is accordingly bent back into the beginning."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> PM, ss 464.

<sup>44</sup> PM, ss 465, Zusatz.

<sup>45</sup> PM.

This new unity is achieved by virtue of thought's recognition of itself as "the nature of the thing."<sup>46</sup> Thought recognizes that the essential nature of its object is that it be comprehensible; that it be thought. The recognition that the truth of mind is thought is the end result of our psychological study. According to Hegel, "pure thinking knows that it alone, and not feeling or representation, is capable of grasping the truth of things."<sup>47</sup>

The most significant point of our discussion has been the demonstration that formally, Vorstellung and thinking are related dialectically; the latter emerges out of the former as the truth of its nature, as that towards which it strove and to which it gave birth through its own self-negation. The link between Vorstellung and reason, as faculties of mind, is an inner one, existing necessarily, by virtue of the nature of mind itself. It is a relation that is revealed in its true form only through a dialectical examination such as we have undertaken.

Thought and Vorstellung, thinking and "imaging" are not simply reducible one to another; nor are they

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<sup>46</sup> PM.

<sup>47</sup> PM.

simply opposed, as distinct modes of mind's cognition. Rather, as the following through of the dialectic of Vorstellung has demonstrated, a 'fully developed 'faculty' of 'imaging' is an absolute prerequisite to thinking; thought depends on already established linguistic structures to give it an existence. This is Hegel's meaning when he states that "we think in names", and points to the famous attempts by Mesmer to think instead directly in images, "a procedure which, as Mesmer admitted, almost drove him insane."<sup>48</sup> Mesmer's experiment both demonstrates that thinking cannot be reduced to the activity of "imaging" and that we cannot think without images metamorphized into words. Vorstellung, then, maintains its autonomy as an explicit form contained within thought, not as one which the latter has rendered obsolete but, as the condition of thought's possibility.

Having revealed this inter-relation on the formal or psychological level we intend now, in our next chapter, via the same dialectical method, to demonstrate that such is also the case in the concrete sphere of mind's manifestation, as 'religion and as philosophy.

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<sup>48</sup>PM, ss 462, Zusatz.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE DIALECTIC OF THE RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS

##### (1) Introduction

In this third chapter we continue our examination of the relation of Vorstellung and thought begun in chapter two. Here we will examine it in its concrete form: the relation of religion and philosophy.

Our goal is to clarify the relation of religion and philosophy in Hegel's system. We claim that relation is dialectical in its nature and can only be comprehended as such. In light of this, we further claim that the nature of that relation can be explicated through an examination of the religious consciousness. Such an examination, we think, will reveal the dialectical structure which is the true nature of their relation.

In the following pages, then, we hope to defend Hegel's thesis that religion and philosophy while distinct, are not antithetical modes of consciousness. Further, we hope to show how religion and philosophy are for Hegel not related in any empirical or contingent way, but dialectically, such that philosophy emerges as a result of the inner transformation of the religious consciousness itself. And finally, we hope to show that the true

nature of their relation is not only evident from an examination of the religious consciousness, but, can be seen as well from an examination of the history of religion.

Our defense of the preceding requires that we first clarify the essential features of the religious attitude as a whole, as a unity of form and content. We shall then examine the dialectical interaction of form and content, following through the former's attempts to give adequate expression to the latter. We hope this will demonstrate the true means of comprehending the relation of religion and philosophy to be the study of the dialectical transformation of the former, and, consequently, not in any attempt to deduce the one from the other, or to compare them as disparate standpoints, as we have found Hegel's critics to have done.

However, if our discussion were to end here it would be incomplete. For it is not enough to show that conceptually religion and philosophy are related in this way; we must also show that the same conclusions can be drawn from an examination of the history of religion as well. Thus, subsequent to our study of the dialectic of the religious consciousness we will briefly examine its concrete historical manifestation.

## (2) The religious standpoint in general

The essence of the religious attitude lies in its claim that "God is the absolute truth, the truth of everything, and that religion alone is absolutely true knowledge."<sup>1</sup> Philosophy in turn seeks to comprehend the meaning of this statement. The philosophy of religion is the process of this comprehension; a process in which philosophy seeks to mediate the religious attitude and to elicit its essential features.

Religion, then, has to do with the nature or notion of God, and any attempt by philosophy to grasp the nature of religion must begin by comprehending the nature of this religious object. The basic definition given Him by religion is that He is a Universal, a One or all Encompassing, "the only true reality."<sup>2</sup> As it stands the definition allows of no form of differentiation or distinction; all is God and all contained in Him. As such, admitting of no distinction, the definition is inherently one-sided. It allots no place to the believer, to man's consciousness of God. The recognition that the notion of God must, of necessity, involve an element of

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<sup>1</sup>Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Vol. I, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 93.

relation, or that religion is essentially a relation of man to God, only arises as a result of a shift in emphasis away from the objectivity of God's existence to the subjective side, to His existence in our consciousness.

The recognition that religion is essentially a relation is both the great insight of the modern age and its great prejudice. Its value lies in its recognition that "God is not to be considered apart from the subjective spirit,"<sup>3</sup> or, in the recognition that man's relation to God is an inner relation of spirit. Its great prejudice is that it treats "more of religion than of God."<sup>4</sup> The modern age, having shifted its emphasis from the objectivity of God's existence to the experience of God on the part of the believer has created an imbalance in the truth of the matter as great as that found in the definition of God as a pure substance. By emphasizing the dialectical interpenetration of the subjective and objective sides

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Hegel claims to achieve the balance which is the truth of the relation.

What, for Hegel, the religious attitude does is situate the immediate or finite world in terms of its

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 101.



"absolute substantial essence,"<sup>5</sup> i.e. in terms of its end or goal. "Religion," he states, "is the consciousness of what is in and for itself true, in contrast to sensuous, finite truth and to sense perception."<sup>6</sup> It is a transition from the finite world and a recognition of it in terms of an Other, i.e. in terms of that which is not sensible and finite but rather, infinite. However, it is a turn to an Other which is related to the finite world not only as its end, but as its source as well. The Other is recognized as the power over the finite world. In possessing this point of view, according to Hegel, "the standpoint of religion shows itself in this transition as the standpoint of truth, in which the whole wealth of the natural and spiritual world is contained."<sup>7</sup> As such, religion is the first, true absolute point of view.

### (3) The necessity of the religious standpoint

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Having outlined the general nature of the religious standpoint, Hegel sets about to prove its necessity as a mode of spirit. Such a proof must not, he holds, regard the truth of religion as a truth simply

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

opposed to the standpoint of the finite world and finite spiritual life. Rather, the demonstration rests on a conception of nature and finite consciousness according to which they "... in accordance with their notion abrogate or annul themselves, and their finiteness must not be taken from them merely by a subjective removal of their limits."<sup>8</sup>

Possessing no substantial or independent existence the finite world is the scene of constant turmoil and unrest; it is continually engaged in a process of self-annulment, the truth of which is not present in it directly, but, rather, in terms of the Idea, which both transcends this finite existence and is its underlying principle or absolute prius. The religious standpoint is precisely that in which this truth becomes evident and is consciously apprehended by the religious individual. For the religious individual, then, Nature is the "... process of which the transition to Spirit is the ultimate truth, so that Spirit (Idea) proves itself to be the truth of Nature."<sup>9</sup> And just as this activity of self-annulment and transformation is the truth of Nature so it is also with Spirit.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

Spirit, Hegel claims, appears in two essential forms: (1) as what it is in and for itself, its notion, or, fully developed state, "enclosed in the Idea;"<sup>10</sup> and (2) as subjective, particular consciousness; a condition in which it is finite, being related to an object other than itself. The process of Spirit's development is that of reconciling (1) and (2) such that "absolute" Spirit is the perfection of consciousness in so far as it is consciousness of the true object and the true object attains to its appropriate form of self-consciousness. Thus in its ultimate form spirit is the merging of an infinite form and an infinite content. This achievement is the religious standpoint.

Spirit, as particular consciousness, is finite precisely because it exists in a condition of relation to what appears to be alien to it, with an existence which appears to be non-spiritual. The recognition of an inherently rational dimension to this 'other', and the ~~activity of manifesting it, is identical with Spirit's~~ emergence to a concrete, absolute existence as the self-consciousness of the Idea. Spirit, then, achieves the status of 'absolute' consciousness when "rationality exists for it as a world,"<sup>11</sup> i.e. when it has its own nature,

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

or, rationality as such, as its object.

It is thus the implicit overcoming of the alien dimension of finite existence which constitutes the religious standpoint, in which "God is Object of consciousness as absolute Power and Substance into which the whole wealth of the natural, as of the spiritual world has returned."<sup>12</sup> In its characterization of nature and finite spirit in this manner, the religious standpoint demonstrates that it is the first (dialectically speaking) to exist in and for itself; it is the first which is not based on some presupposition but, rather, recognizes itself as the absolute basis and goal of all that has gone before. These are the necessary features of the religious standpoint as a form of spirit.

There is, as well, an internal necessity to the religious attitude: the dialectic of the religious consciousness in its own internal form and development. Having sketched the nature of the religious consciousness with regards its external necessity we turn now to an examination of its internal necessity and its internal transformations.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

(4) The internal dialectic of this standpoint..

We must examine the religious consciousness "as it ... appears in a condition of relation, and fashions and develops the forms of this relation until the inner necessity develops and attains completeness in the notion itself,"<sup>13</sup> or, until the religious consciousness achieves the limit of its form. The fact that the religious consciousness is inherently relational possesses great significance. The religious consciousness is essentially in relation to truth and not united with it. It is therefore of the nature of this standpoint to assert that there can never be anything but a relation to truth on the part of the finite, human being. Religion, by its very nature places truth in a 'beyond'. The dialectical development of the religious consciousness, however, will be seen to point beyond itself to a form of consciousness which reveals truth in its actual nature and is united with it. This is the standpoint of philosophy or reason proper, and it is to this standpoint that the developing religious consciousness tends.

While the religious attitude possesses a diversity of forms they are all characterized by being the

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 115.

consciousness of God, and all possess the certainty of His existence. It is not enough therefore to deal with the subjective side or the objective side alone, the former being exemplified by the pre-religion form of 'feeling' and the latter by that of intuition.<sup>14</sup> Rather the two sides must be considered in relation to each other, in the true form of the religious consciousness, that of Vorstellung.

It is at this point, as we discuss the nature of the religious consciousness, or Vorstellung, that we begin to distinguish it from thought or philosophy. In chapter two we pointed to the proximity of Vorstellung and thought in the dialectical emergence of the 'faculty' of cognition. This proximity also exists concretely in the relation of religion and philosophy. At first we discuss this relation in comparative terms and in our next section begin to examine the nature of their dialectical relation.

Vorstellung, as we will continue to call the religious attitude, falls short of being truly reasonable. It does not succeed in reducing sensible and finite objects to a truly ideal existence, which a total

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<sup>14</sup> These proto or pre-religious forms of consciousness are examined at some length by Hegel on pp. 118-140 of L.P.R.

explication of the nature of God or the Idea requires. Vorstellung continues to apply categories which are only applicable to the finite and sensible to the comprehension of the nature of God; He is referred to in spatial and temporal terms which do not apply to His nature. Conceived by the religious consciousness in terms applicable only to an object of sensation, God is thereby made contingent and particular. We attribute to Him such qualities as vengefulness or jealousy which, purporting to describe His true nature, succeed only in obscuring it further.<sup>15</sup> And even more significant, the religious consciousness asserts that His nature must remain obscure, being beyond the scope of human comprehension.

The claim that we can never possess true knowledge of God is an essential feature of the religious consciousness. Vorstellung denies that we ever have anything but a relation to truth, that we can ever grasp it in its totality and be united with it. The religious consciousness thus asserts that it is of the very nature of God that only a relational or limited knowledge of Him is possible. It is this claim, essential to the religious attitude, which distinguishes it from philosophy. We

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<sup>15</sup> L.P.R. Vol. I, p. 147.

shall discover that it is not simply in the formal dialectic of the religious consciousness itself that this claim is negated, but, according to Hegel, the very history of religion is the manifestation of the struggle of the religious consciousness to liberate itself from these limits, imposed by its form. It is the great significance of Christianity that in it the religious mentality implicitly transcends itself.

The particular nature of Vorstellung is more clearly defined when we examine it in a closer relation to reason and begin to observe its transition to the latter. What follows is the core of our evidence for claiming that Hegel conceives of the relation of religion and philosophy dialectically.

The willingness to bow to authority and accept truth as a matter of faith, which is the essence of the religious attitude, is not the highest fulfillment of the human spirit. There is a higher consciousness which seeks to know truth through reason, or, which seeks to determine truth for its own self. This consciousness demands to know things purely in their thought, or notion, as Hegel calls it: "It is as compared with the Notion that the religious content in the mode of idea (Vorstellung) or ordinary thought keeps the form of externality,"<sup>16</sup> or, the

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 154



status of a relation to truth. For reason, a thing is certain not as an "external, specific fact," but rather as a thought which is identical with its object, which permits the object to stand firm "on its own basis," and to be "founded in itself"; this is "the Notion which as universal thought differentiates itself within itself, and in the differentiation remains identical with itself."<sup>17</sup> In thought we possess "the truth in the form of truth ... and it is this quality of form which philosophic knowledge imparts to truth."<sup>18</sup>

Further, Vorstellung conceives of its object as a given, as something granted it by authority. Thought, on the other hand, grasps the inner connection of the necessary elements and the universality of its object independently of any standard other than itself as thinking reason.<sup>19</sup> As well, thought grasps its object as a totality whose elements are entirely idealized, or, seem as interrelated in the context of the whole. This Vorstellung fails to do, conceiving the elements as independent in relation to their totality.<sup>20</sup> These abstract, general

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

distinctions between Vorstellung or religion and thought, or, philosophy have now to be observed in more detail as we follow through the mediation of the religious attitude in the form of thought.

(5) The general development of the standpoint in thought

We have already noted that Vorstellung posits its object as a given, as simply existing, without in any way questioning the conditions or causes of that existence. Thus Vorstellung is an immediate form of knowledge and is the opposite or negative of reflecting reason, which is mediated knowledge. The latter seeks to know the causes of its object's existence; reflecting thought seeks to comprehend its object in its relation to other objects. In reflecting thought the contradictions among objects is thereby made evident as are the reconciling factors. Reflecting thought is, therefore, an antithetical mode of thinking to which the dialectic of Vorstellung has given rise. Both are one-sided, however, as will become evident shortly.

In the meantime, we must note in passing that the opposition and hostility between these two modes of thought possesses an historical manifestation in the movement of the Enlightenment. According to Hegel, the Enlightenment is the result of the coming to self-consciousness of religion and its consequent shifting of

emphasis from the objective side, or, God, to the subjective, or, human side of the religious relation. The increasing emphasis on the subjective side resulted, with the Enlightenment, in the human understanding becoming the measure of truth, the supreme mediator.

Now the criterion of knowledge is that it be mediated. As a result, Vorstellung, as the immediate knowledge of God's existence is labelled as superstition and ignorance. Since to a certain extent it is still the dialectic of idea which is at work here, historically, Hegel states, it is possible to see the "enormous importance of the Aufklärung, which that action of understanding was, for the clearing up of thought."<sup>21</sup>

The dichotomy between the two forms of thought is therefore evident. With Vorstellung "immediacy is the leading category ... where the content is known in its simple relation to self."<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, an object exists for thought only if it possesses mediation as an essential attribute. Having established the antitheses in this manner, as arising out of the dialectic of idea itself, Hegel proceeds to ask whether religion actually is an

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 160.

immediate or a mediated knowledge.

Both immediate and mediate knowledge when taken alone are one-sided. Philosophy, or, reason unites them both. According to Hegel, even when regarded from an empirical point of view it is obvious that there is no such thing as immediate knowledge. What may appear as immediate is, upon a closer examination, revealed as mediated. However, there are different forms of mediation; the mediation of one finite thing by an Other is a different form than the mediation of reason or the Notion which "is a mediation within itself."<sup>23</sup> In religion we find this inner mediation at work, even as religion appears to be an immediate form of knowledge.

Religious knowledge is mediated. The faith of a religious individual is mediated by instruction within his religion, and if the religion is of a revealed or positive nature this, too, is a mediating factor. It is through forgetting this external mediation and concentrating on the inner side of faith that the latter is conceived of as immediate. Hegel states that this point is significant for "it involves the truth that positive revelation cannot supply a religion in such a way that it could have the character of something

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 162.

mechanically produced, of something effected from the Outside, and set up within man by an external agency."<sup>24</sup> This last is in conformity with the notion that "religion, justice, morality, all that is spiritual is only aroused in man; he is potentially Spirit, the truth lies in him, and what has to be done is merely to bring it into consciousness."<sup>25</sup> This leads further, to the notion, essential to Hegel's concept of religion, that, "Spirit bears witness to Spirit; this witness is the peculiar inner nature of Spirit. In this weighty idea is involved that religion is not brought into man from the outside, but lies hidden in himself, in his reason, in his freedom, in fact."<sup>26</sup> It is only by abstracting from this notion that we come to think of religion as an immediate form of knowledge.

The most accurate form which this mediated knowledge, outlined above, assumes is in the proofs of the existence of God: "The knowledge of God presents itself in its most precise shape under the form of the proofs of the existence of God. Here the knowledge of God is represented as mediated knowledge."<sup>27</sup> However, the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 165.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 167.

proofs are criticized by Hegel as being too geometric, too objective, and unable to account for the inner rise of thought to God which is essential in religion. The proofs fail to do justice to the subjective side of the relation. According to Hegel, this deficiency is rectified in philosophical thought, for the latter is the unity of the two sides, of the elevation of the spirit and of the objective content. "I, in so far as I think, am myself this passing over, or transition, this spiritual movement...."<sup>28</sup> Hegel now turns to consider this movement. "To begin with ... it is empirical observation and reflection."<sup>29</sup>

(6) The specific development of the standpoint in thought

Reason, or, the ego as supreme mediator, has emerged as the negative moment of the dialectic of Vorstellung. The dialectic of reason, the "spiritual movement" mentioned above, out of which the true nature of God, the infinite, will emerge in speculative reason, further develops this antithesis or negativity in its manifestations as observation and reflection. Observation

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

and reflection together will constitute the negation of negation out of which the speculative conception of God emerges. This negation of negation occurs in the following manner.

For observation, limited as it is to that which is empirical, God does not exist positively in consciousness. He exists there as a higher or beyond, in relation to which the observing ego conceives of itself as dependent, or, negatively determined. This negativity is the fundamental characteristic of observation, Hegel states.<sup>30</sup> But there is another side, also; namely, the positive existence of the ego as self-conscious in relation to its object. The ego's recognition that these two poles are both of its own creation will constitute its overthrow as a simple observer and constitute its emergence as the reflecting or absolute ego.<sup>31</sup> The reflecting or absolute ego further develops the antithesis of Vorstellung while at the same time furthering the emergence of the true, rational, comprehension of God.

In observation, the ego is at first determined as finite, or, negative in relation to the infinite which is there conceived of in turn, as the negative of the

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 173

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 177

finite and therefore, as negative of negative, affirmative. This constitutes the actual limit of observation. However, the ego's recognition of itself as determined and limited by this infinite precipitates a swing to its own affirmation and its emergence as a true ego. The result of observation, then, is the emergence of a truly constituted and active ego.

In reflecting on this infinite, then, and recognizing it as its own product, the ego "destroys the antithesis of finite and infinite, as that relation had existed in observation, and achieves a reconciliation within itself."<sup>32</sup> This reconciliation, however, is only a subjective one: "What we have therefore here is that the finite ego, inasmuch as it is the positing of an infinite beyond itself, has posited the infinite itself as finite, and is therein identical with itself as that which is in like manner finite, and now as being identical with the infinite becomes infinite itself. This is the culminating point of subjectivity,..."<sup>33</sup>

But, in overcoming the antithesis of finite and infinite in such a manner, reflection only succeeds in destroying all objectivity. According to Hegel, "the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 187.



standpoint which has been considered is reflection in its completeness, the abstract subjectivity, the ego, the absolute idealizer, that for which all distinction, determination, content is annulled, or exists only as posited by it."<sup>34</sup> It is obvious that such a point of view can only be antithetical to religion.

However, Hegel states, the difficulty with such an attitude is its close proximity to the true philosophical view.<sup>35</sup> While reflection has succeeded in uniting the finite and infinite - as the ego or reason implicit - it has done so in an illicit fashion, at the expense of all objectivity. Having effected a union devoid of objective existence, reflection has succeeded only in reducing the infinite to the finite. The critical contradiction of this view lies in that "instead of merging the individual, which in itself is without support, in universality and getting a grasp of affirmation in its absolute universality, in which it includes the individual, it conceives of particularity itself as being in an immediate way the universal."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 189.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

Reflection has resulted in a purely subjective relation to God. While this is an essential moment in the religious relation and one which reflection was necessary in developing, "it is only when it is the form for an objective content that the self-conscious spirit has truth."<sup>37</sup> Out of reflection emerges the true nature of the religious relation, in speculative thought.

Hegel's examination of the rational view of the infinite marks the transition from the standpoint of reflection to that of thought proper or speculation. He states that the transition is dialectical by nature and must be examined as such. However, here he is content to consider only the consequences of such a movement, leaving the dialectic to its proper place in the Logic.

To actually examine a subject rationally requires that the absolute subjectivity of reflection be already overcome. The Ego must recognize an objective reality which it regards as true and must recognize that reality in thought, or, rationally. In relating itself to the universal the individual must become universal as well: it must exercise its capacity to reason.<sup>38</sup> According to Hegel this is precisely what occurs as a result of the religious attitude, and, as a result, religion constitutes

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 193.

a concrete example of the true relation of finite and infinite.

The absolute status which subjectivity receives in reflection is overcome through a recognition by the Ego of a non-sensible "objectivity in general."<sup>39</sup> This objectivity must necessarily be recognized as a universal, through which recognition the finiteness or individuality of the Ego is overcome. This finiteness must be overcome if the universal is to be recognized as truly universal and existing objectively, i.e. as with God.

In relation to this objective universal the "subject is characterized as thinking,"<sup>40</sup> for, Hegel states, "Thought is the activity of the universal, having a universal as its object, (and) ..... in thinking the object, thinking the thought of it, the relation of my personality towards it as something particular is got rid of, and I assume an objective attitude; I have renounced myself as an individual, renounced my particularity, and am universal, To do this and to think that the universal is my object, are one and the same."<sup>41</sup> Only in thought does the universal achieve

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

its complete manifestation, and, most significant of all, only in being fully manifest is the universal truly universal. Only in making His nature fully explicit and manifest is God truly God. Only in thought is this full explication possible. The conscious recognition of this fundamental point will constitute the achievement of the speculative conception of religion of religion's liberation from itself.

This thinking relation of the Ego to the Universal is the essence of philosophy. It is also evident in religion in the act of worship, for in worship the Ego gives itself over to God, the universal, renounces its existence as a particular individual and yet remains affirmative and existing in the midst of yielding itself up to God. This is also the true finite-infinite relation, in which the finite is contained as a moment in the infinite, as in worship the finite individual is contained in God.<sup>42</sup> Hegel elaborates on this point and his elaboration may be said to form the core of the speculative conception of religion in which religion overreaches itself: "Thus therefore I do not go beyond the consciousness of myself

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 196.

and this arises from the fact that the universal object is now potentially thought and has the content within itself, it is substance in motion within itself (i.e. spirit), and as an inward process in which it begets its content, is not empty, but is absolute fulness."<sup>43</sup>

The explication of this statement will be the chief task of our examination of the achieved transformation of religion within itself or the attainment of its speculative conception.

#### (7) The speculative spirit

In making the transition to the speculative or philosophical comprehension of religion, in essence the transition from religion to philosophy, it is important to note a fundamental characteristic of the dialectical interaction of form and content, namely, that the revelation of the negative character of the form with regard to the content is equally a positive revelation of the nature of that content. That is, not only is the form transformed but the content as well, such that there is a sense in which the emergence of each new form produces a corresponding new content. In reality, the increasing

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 197.

sophistication of the forms make the content equally more manifest. The dialectic, then, does not simply transform the mode of the content while the latter remains constant or stationary but instead produces a transformation in it as well. This is particularly significant at this point for although we have stated previously that the content of religion and philosophy is the same we must be temperate in our emphasis of that identity.<sup>44</sup>

The transition to the form of speculation, thought proper, has revealed the inadequacy of conceiving the finite and infinite as separate entities. The real nature of the object, God - for philosophy, the Idea - does not conform to this expression.<sup>45</sup> Rather, the infinite must be comprehended as a dynamic unity which encompasses the finite in that unity. The true nature of God, as is revealed speculatively, is one of unity in which all distinctions are encompassed and preserved. Hence "we must get rid of this bug-bear of the opposition of finite and infinite."<sup>46</sup> This is achieved in the rational conception of the object.

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<sup>44</sup>This point is made also by G.R.G. Mure, "Hegel, Luther, and the Owl of Minerva," Philosophy, 41 (1966), 131.

<sup>45</sup>Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, V.I, p. 199.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 200.

It is essential to both religion and philosophy that this opposition be left behind. To refuse is to deny to God His true nature as infinite and universal and to assert the absoluteness of the finite and subjective. Such a "negative relation of consciousness to the Absolute"<sup>47</sup> is rooted in the observational stage of consciousness, which has already been demonstrated to be destructive of true religion. Observation, by its very nature, must deny the possibility of attaining any knowledge of God. This limit, which observation places on itself, has already been seen to be arbitrary by nature and one that is continually gone beyond. All forms of consciousness have therefore been disclosed as negatively related to the Universal and each pointed beyond itself to a new, more adequate form or conception. Reason has been revealed as the true form and as such must now be considered.

Reason is the concrete form of religion, the result of the self-negation of the negative forms of observation and reflection, or the negation of negation. This is the abstract characterization of the relation of this affirmative attitude to religion. According to Hegel, its concrete attributes are as follows: "The standpoint of religion is this, that the True, to which

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 200

consciousness relates itself, has all content within itself, and consequently this condition of relation is what is highest of all in it, is its absolute standpoint."<sup>48</sup> The highest attribute of the content is this relation of finite consciousness to-it, a relation which is ultimately a self-relation, or, of the universal with itself. The most significant point here is the recognition that while God is all content as the object of the religious consciousness, He is unlike any other object in that, possessing all content within Himself, He also encompasses this condition of relation. God is an object for consciousness which encompasses the consciousness of Him as object. Hegel expresses it thus: "As Universal, it is object to itself, and thus determined as a particular, it is this individual: but as universal it reaches over this its 'other' so that its 'other' and itself are comprised in one."<sup>49</sup> It is for this reason that reflection, which establishes concretely the relation of consciousness to an object, solidifies the relation of finite and infinite and is unable to comprehend the true nature of God, the infinite, as also encompassing

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>49</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, Lectures on the History of Philosophy, trans. E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), Vol. I, p. 73.



the condition of relation. Reflection is unable to effect the unity which the true nature of God demands.<sup>50</sup> This has been the great failure of all other forms of consciousness as well. Thus reason is the sole and true home of religion in its concretely developed form.

In considering the nature of this true religious form, it must be remembered that religion is a form of absolute mind, of mind, which, in its concrete form, has itself as its object and is not simply consciousness as such or consciousness of an object. At this stage consciousness is merely an expression of the outward manifestation of mind, indicating its essentially relational character as knowledge of an object. Absolute mind is mind having itself as its object and hence is knowledge of itself. It is therefore inaccurate to emphasize the ~~aspect~~ of consciousness for this implies a relation to an independent object and therefore only a condition of finite mind.<sup>51</sup> Absolute mind, on the contrary, is identity with itself and as such, objectively existing spirit or reason: "The relation of Spirit to self alone is the absolute determination; the divine spirit lives in its own communion and presence."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Lectures on the Philosophy of religion, Vol. I, p. 204.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>52</sup> Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Vol. I, p. 73.

Religion, then, by virtue of its nature as a form of absolute mind, is not simply a form of consciousness, but rather, "a relation of the spirit to absolute Spirit: thus only is Spirit as that which knows also that which is known."<sup>53</sup> In its ultimate form it is "the Idea of the Spirit which relates itself to its own self - it is the self-consciousness of absolute spirit."<sup>54</sup> However, in that religion is a relation to the absolute it is consciousness and consequently possesses a finite element; but is also a "consciousness which is cancelled as finite; for the other which Absolute Spirit knows, it itself is, and it is only absolute spirit in knowing itself."<sup>55</sup>

Having developed to this stage of self-consciousness, at which it recognizes its nature as a form of absolute spirit, having made itself totally conscious of itself, it is in actuality no longer the religious standpoint but instead that of philosophy, of the openness of the nature of Absolute Spirit to itself, of its recognition of itself in the Idea. Having penetrated to the nature of the Idea

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<sup>53</sup> Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Vol. I, p. 206.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

and recognized itself in it, Absolute Spirit is truly absolute, the unity of form and content, subject and object. To this goal Spirit has been aiming and the attainment of it necessarily required religion, for in the latter there appeared the first true conception of the absolute as the True which encompasses all.

#### (8) Christianity as absolute religion

Having, in the foregoing sections, determined the nature of the relation of religion and philosophy for Hegel to be dialectical we now want to indicate that this conclusion does not arise from a consideration of the concept of religion only, but is present, Hegel claims, in the actual history of religion itself. Aside from certain preliminary remarks we shall disregard this history and concentrate our attention instead on Hegel's general conception of Christianity, for it is here, he claims, that the history of religion reaches its end and fruition, in the attainment of the absolute religion.

Hegel claims, then, that the history of religion itself, when examined philosophically (i.e. from the point of view of its realization, or of the Notion) is the process and struggle of religion to liberate itself from itself, to make its object truly manifest and thereby self-conscious. According to Hegel this occurs in Christianity and hence his characterization of it as the

Absolute religion. As a form of absolute spirit or mind, religion is only truly religion after a process of self-production. The historical emergence of the various religions are modes or manifestations of its development to completeness as the absolute religion. Hegel refers to these forms or modes as those of "definite" religion: "Here religion is consciousness of the universal spirit; which is not as yet fully developed as absolute; this consciousness of Spirit at each stage is definite consciousness of itself, it is the path of the education of spirit."<sup>56</sup> The forms of definite religion are moments in the perfected religion which at the same time possess an independent historical existence as distinct religions. They are graded according to the degree to which they conform to the fulfilled notion of religion. According to Hegel, historical religions should be judged on the basis of the truth they possess in comparison with the absolute religion.<sup>57</sup>

Of the history of religion and the characterization of the various religions nothing more will be said. Instead we will turn immediately to Hegel's characterization of Christianity as the absolute religion. We are only interested

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

in those features of Christianity which demonstrate its nature as the absolute religion, or the form in which religion achieves liberation from itself. To do justice to his treatment of Christianity it would be necessary to examine all that he has to say concerning it: this task is impossible here. Not to do so, however, is to miss much that is interesting and important.

The Christian religion comes as the actualization of the true nature of religion, the realization of its concept or Notion. Religion, Hegel states, has been defined as "the self-consciousness of God."<sup>58</sup> In Christianity this conception is realized: the true nature of God as absolute Spirit is revealed and finite spirit comes to know its true relation with Him as one of inseparable unity in distinction. The separation of subject and object which consciousness gives rise to is left behind in a true conception of God as Spirit. Hegel characterizes it in the following way.

In Christianity, "it is revealed what God is: He is no longer a Being above and beyond this world, an unknown, for He has told men what he is, and this not merely in an outward way in history, but in consciousness."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>Lectures on the Philosophy of religion, Vol. II, p. 327.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 328.

Further, according to Hegel, "we have here ... the religion of the manifestation of God, since God knows Himself in the finite spirit."<sup>60</sup> This means that God is revealed - He has revealed Himself - and this is the essential feature of this stage: Christianity is the absolute religion because in it God has revealed Himself absolutely, leaving nothing hidden. God has revealed Himself as Spirit and demands to be worshipped in spirit.

In the revealed religion the form of the relation of consciousness to an object and the consequent reduction of both sides to the status of finite has been overcome in that "it is seen that the content and the object of religion are made up of this very whole, of the consciousness which brings itself into relation with its Essence, the knowledge of itself as the Essence and of the Essence as itself, i.e. Spirit thus becomes the object in religion."<sup>61</sup> As Spirit it is a unity with itself and hence absolute. Hence, in Christianity the unity of subject and object, form and content is achieved; which is to say that God is revealed as being essentially Spirit. Hegel claims that "Here first is Spirit as such the object, the content of religion, and Spirit is only for Spirit,"<sup>62</sup> i.e. the unity

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 328.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 330.

of form and content. In Christianity, then, the essentially relational character of the religious attitude is overcome. "In it the universal Spirit and the finite spirit are inseparably connected, it is their absolute identity which constitutes this religion and is its substance or content."<sup>63</sup> This last point cannot be emphasized too much for in characterizing Christianity in this way Hegel is claiming that the goal of religion has been fulfilled and religion has become self-transparent.

This is as far as we need go in discussing Hegel's characterization of Christianity. Our intention has been to point out that it is not only the concept of religion which demonstrates the dialectical inner transformation of religion into philosophy but rather that this has been the whole aim and end of the history of religion itself, a goal which is achieved in Christianity and hence its character as the absolute religion.

To summarize the main point of our discussion as a whole: We have tried to show that Hegel conceives of the relation of religion and philosophy dialectically. According to him, it is the conception or notion of religion to become philosophy. Philosophy and religion are not related

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 330.

in any external or contingent fashion, but rather, philosophy emerges as the necessary end or fulfilment of religion itself: it is the nature of religion to become philosophy. It is of the <sup>very</sup> notion of religion, both conceptually and historically, to achieve this liberation from itself, according to Hegel.

This is certainly a novel idea and is one that has largely been misunderstood or ignored. Subsequent examiners of Hegel's philosophy have variously claimed that he has destroyed religion, that he has deduced philosophy from religion and that in doing so, he has reduced the latter to nonsense. It should be clear that Hegel has done none of these things and a closer, more open, examination of his actual statements would reveal this. Unless one is prepared to admit the possibility of a dialectical relation between the two and examine it as such, the truth will always evade him.



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